

Shim'i Curses David

Second Samuel 16: 5-14

DIG: What significance do you see in Shim'i's family ties? Why else is Shim'i so mad at David? Is his anger justified? What does Abishai think? What does David think? Why does David attribute Shim'i's cursing to God? What does this tell you about David's character? About his view of God's character? What similarities are there between the life of Christ and the life of David?

REFLECT: What strong conviction about ADONAI did David have throughout his flight from Jerusalem? When have you, like David, been under the LORD's discipline? What for? Could you take "the heat," however it was dished out? How did you respond? When the heat on you is not "from YHVH," how do you respond?

977 BC

This is part of a 24-hour period starting at 15:13 and extending all the way to 17:23.

David's forced flight from **Jerusalem** not only put his own kingdom in jeopardy, but it also opened the door to further contention for the throne between the dynasties of **Sha'ul** and **David**. **Absalom** was apparently in the process of seizing power in **Tziyon**, but that was by no means implied that he could also gain control over the northern kingdom of **Isra'el**. In fact, the shakeup in **David's** own family began to revive hope among the descendants of **Sha'ul** that they might be able to recover the Kingdom for themselves.³⁹⁸

Through **Ziba's** lies (see Dr - **David and Ziba**) the **Adversary** attacked **David** as a **serpent** who **deceives** (**Second Corinthians 11:3; Genesis 3:1-7**), and then through **Shim'i's** words and **stones**, the **devil** came as a **lion** who **devours** (**First Peter 5:8**). **Ziba** told lies and **Shim'i** threw **stones**, and both were making it hard for **David** on his retreat from **Zion**.³⁹⁹

The Cursing of Shim'i: As King **David** approached **Bahurim**, a **Benjamite** city, a man from the same clan as **Sha'ul's** family came out from there. His name was **Shim'i** son of **Gera**, and like a human volcano he cursed as he came out. **Shim'i** was on the side of the hill (**verse 13**), which was apparently overlooked on the road followed by **David** and his company, but was separated from it by a narrow valley (**verse 9**). He thought he was close enough to do some damage, but far enough to be safe. Not content with hurling **curses** at the king, **Shim'i** pelted **David** and all the king's officials with **stones**, though all the troops and the special guard were on **David's** right and left (**Second Samuel 16:5-7**). **Shim'i** could not resist the temptation of taunting **David** in his hour of humiliation.

The charge of Shim'i is important. As he cursed, Shim'i yelled: **Get out, get out, you murderer. You are a worthless rat. ADONAI has repaid you for all the blood you shed specifically in the household of Sha'ul, in whose place you have reigned. Shim'i interprets Absalom's rebellion as divine punishment for David's actions against the house of Sha'ul. The LORD has given the Kingdom into the hands of your son Absalom. You have come to ruin because you are a murderer (Second Samuel 16:8)! There were enough people in the northern Kingdom who believed that David had something to do with the deaths of Sha'ul (2 Samuel 31:2-6), Ish-Bosheth (2 Samuel 4:5-12) and Abner (2 Samuel 3:26-27) to make this a potential problem for the king. Indeed, we have noted in Second Samuel Chapters 2-4 that great care is taken by the narrator to clear David of all charges, which generated the energy behind the charge. At any rate, Shim'i, and doubtless many if not most of his countrymen, were apparently ready to acknowledge Absalom as their new king.**

However, Shim'i violated the Torah while venting his anger at David, for Exodus 22:28 says: **Do not curse God or curse the ruler of your people.** In addition, to curse a descendent of Abraham is to invite divine retribution (Genesis 12:3), and Shim'i's headstrong actions would not ultimately go unpunished (see Fg - [David's Last Charge to Solomon](#)) despite his repenting from them (Second Samuel 19:18-20).⁴⁰⁰

The Sparing of Shim'i: David's attitude was one of submission because he accepted Shim'i's abuse as from the hand of God. Shim'i's charge evoked the rage of Abishai. Then David's nephew Abishai said to the king, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over and cut off his head." Abishai had always been violently loyal to David (First Samuel 26:8; Second Samuel 19:21). Oh, right. That's all David needed right then, another assassination! He had all the trouble he could handle with Absalom. He didn't need to hand all those loyal to Sha'ul an excuse to come out of the woodwork to join Absalom (if they had not already done so). David would have none of it. So the king said: **What does this have to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah (two nephews of King David who had a long history of shedding blood)?**

David had merely accepted the cursing of Shim'i as part of God's discipline. If Shim'i is cursing because the LORD said to him, "Curse David," who can ask, "Why do you do this?" Then David said to Abishai and all his officials, "My son, my own flesh and blood, is trying to kill me. How much more, then, can I expect respect from this Benjamite! Leave him alone; let him curse, for YHVH has told him to. Notice that David didn't say he was innocent. He knew that he was an adulterer and a murderer who deserved to die. Yet Ha'Shem let him live. Why should he complain about someone calling him names and throwing some stones at him? And if Absalom, David's own son, was out to kill him, why should a total stranger be punished for slandering the king? David hoped that God would look upon his misery and consider it enough punishment, and restore him to the LORD's covenant blessing instead of His curse today."

So Shim'i's pelting David with stones and cursing him didn't stop. David and his men continued slowly along the road while Shim'i was going along the hillside parallel to him, cursing as he went and throwing stones at him showering him with dirt. David had faith that God would one day take care of people like Absalom and Shim'i. Perhaps David was thinking of Deuteronomy 32:35, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay."⁴⁰¹

The king and all the people with him arrived at their destination beyond Bahurim some twenty miles to the ford of the Jordan River where they rested. And there David refreshed himself (Second Samuel 16:9-14). Very early the next morning they crossed the river and proceeded to Mahanaim (Second Samuel 17:22-24), where Jacob had prepared to meet his brother, Esau, and had wrestled with God (see commentary Genesis Hw - Jacob Wrestles with God). Perhaps David remembered the army of angels that YHVH sent to protect Jacob.⁴⁰²

What did all that suffering do for David? It made him more like Jesus. David was rejected by his own people and betrayed. He gave up everything for the sake of his people and would have surrendered his own life to save his rebellious son who deserved to die. Like Messiah, David crossed the Kidron and went up the Mount of Olives. He was falsely accused and shamefully treated, and yet he submitted to Ha'Shem's sovereign will. David had lost his throne, but ADONAI-Tzva'ot was still on the throne and would keep His promises to His suffering servant. Faithful to His covenant (see Ct - The LORD's Covenant with David), God remembered David and all the hardships that he endured (see Cu - ADONAI Swore an Oath to David), and He remembers us today.⁴⁰³