

## 2 Samuel 15:1-37 **Absalom rivaled David for the kingdom**

### Absalom campaigned for the hearts of the people

**1** After this it happened that Absalom provided himself with chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him.

**2** Now Absalom would rise early and stand beside the way to the gate. So it was, whenever anyone who had a lawsuit came to the king for a decision, that Absalom would call to him and say, "What city are you from?" And he would say, "Your servant is from such and such a tribe of Israel." **3** Then Absalom would say to him, "Look, your case is good and right; but there is no deputy of the king to hear you." **4** Moreover Absalom would say, "Oh, that I were made judge in the land, and everyone who has any suit or cause would come to me; then I would give him justice."

**5** And so it was, whenever anyone came near to bow down to him, that he would put out his hand and take him and kiss him. **6** In this manner Absalom acted toward all Israel who came to the king for judgment. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.

**7** Now it came to pass after forty years that Absalom said to the king, "Please, let me go to Hebron and pay the vow which I made to the Lord. **8** For your servant took a vow while I dwelt at Geshur in Syria, saying, 'If the Lord indeed brings me back to Jerusalem, then I will serve the Lord.'"

**9** And the king said to him, "Go in peace." So he arose and went to Hebron.

**10** Then Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, "As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then you shall say, 'Absalom reigns in Hebron!'" **11** And with Absalom went two hundred men invited from Jerusalem, and they went along innocently and did not know anything. **12** Then Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor, from his city — from Giloh — while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy grew strong, for the people with Absalom continually increased in number.

### David Escapes from Jerusalem

**13** Now a messenger came to David, saying, "The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom."

**14** So David said to all his servants who were with him at Jerusalem, "Arise, and let us flee, or we shall not escape from Absalom. Make haste to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly and bring disaster upon us, and strike the city with the edge of the sword."

**15** And the king's servants said to the king, "We are your servants, ready to do whatever my lord the king commands." **16** Then the king went out with all his household after him. But the king left ten women, concubines, to keep the house. **17** And the king went out with all the people after him, and stopped at the outskirts. **18** Then all his servants passed before him; and all the Cherethites, all the Pelethites, and all the Gittites, six hundred men who had followed him from Gath, passed before the king.

**19** Then the king said to Ittai the Gittite, "Why are you also going with us? Return and remain with the king. For you are a foreigner and also an exile from your own place. **20** In fact, you came only yesterday. Should I make you wander up and down with us today, since I go I know not where? Return, and take your brethren back. Mercy and truth be with you."

21 But Ittai answered the king and said, "As the Lord lives, and as my lord the king lives, surely in whatever place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also your servant will be."

22 So David said to Ittai, "Go, and cross over." Then Ittai the Gittite and all his men and all the little ones who were with him crossed over. 23 And all the country wept with a loud voice, and all the people crossed over. The king himself also crossed over the Brook Kidron, and all the people crossed over toward the way of the wilderness.

24 There was Zadok also, and all the Levites with him, bearing the ark of the covenant of God. And they set down the ark of God, and Abiathar went up until all the people had finished crossing over from the city.

25 Then the king said to Zadok, "Carry the ark of God back into the city. If I find favor in the eyes of the Lord, He will bring me back and show me both it and His dwelling place. 26 But if He says thus: 'I have no delight in you,' here I am, let Him do to me as seems good to Him." 27 The king also said to Zadok the priest, "Are you not a seer? Return to the city in peace, and your two sons with you, Ahimaaz your son, and Jonathan the son of Abiathar. 28 See, I will wait in the plains of the wilderness until word comes from you to inform me." 29 Therefore Zadok and Abiathar carried the ark of God back to Jerusalem. And they remained there.

30 So David went up by the Ascent of the Mount of Olives, and wept as he went up; and he had his head covered and went barefoot. And all the people who were with him covered their heads and went up, weeping as they went up.

31 Then someone told David, saying, "Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom." And David said, "O Lord, I pray, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness!"

32 Now it happened when David had come to the top of the mountain, where he worshiped God — there was Hushai the Archite coming to meet him with his robe torn and dust on his head. 33 David said to him, "If you go on with me, then you will become a burden to me. 34 But if you return to the city, and say to Absalom, 'I will be your servant, O king; as I was your father's servant previously, so I will now also be your servant,' then you may defeat the counsel of Ahithophel for me. 35 And do you not have Zadok and Abiathar the priests with you there? Therefore it will be that whatever you hear from the king's house, you shall tell to Zadok and Abiathar the priests. 36 Indeed they have there with them their two sons, Ahimaaz, Zadok's son, and Jonathan, Abiathar's son; and by them you shall send me everything you hear."

37 So Hushai, David's friend, went into the city. And Absalom came into Jerusalem.  
NKJV

#### Facts Revealed:

- ✧ Absalom waited requesting to see his father for 2 years, before he burned Joab's field to get attention. [[2 Samuel 14:28-32](#)]
- ✧ Joab asked the king to allow Absalom to see his face, David authorized it and kissed his son. [[2 Samuel 14:33](#)]
  - ◇ David had 2 years to render justice for the rape of Tamar, and failed to do it.
  - ◇ David wanted to go to Absalom his son in exile, and failed to do it.

- ✧ After 3 years in exile, David allowed his son to return to Jerusalem but refused to see him.
- ✧ After 2 years in Jerusalem, Absalom is getting anxious because he is treated as an outcast.
- ✧ This is a total of 7 years David has had opportunity to make things right in his own house, but failed to do so. All David did was to kiss his son, but there was no reconciliation in it.
- ✧ Failure on David's part, bred resentment in the heart of his son Absalom, compounding the animosity in David's house in fulfillment of the words of Nathan the prophet. [2 Samuel 12:10-11]

### Absalom campaigned for the hearts of the people [2 Samuel 15:1-12]

- ✧ By age, Absalom is the second in line for the throne after the death of Amnon David's firstborn. [2 Samuel 3:2-5]
- ✧ Absalom became a politician and began exalting himself in a campaign for public approval.
  - ✧ His campaign began with his public image as he provided himself with chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him. [2 Samuel 15:1]
  - ✧ He followed that by playing for the hearts and minds of the people, suggesting they will find better justice if they come to him for favorable judgment. [2 Samuel 15:2-4]
  - ✧ He played the old political game of kissing whoever came and bowed down to him. [2 Samuel 15:5-6]
- ✧ Now it came to pass after forty years that Absalom said to the king, "Please, let me go to Hebron and pay the vow which I made to the Lord. For your servant took a vow while I dwelt at Geshur in Syria, saying, 'If the Lord indeed brings me back to Jerusalem, then I will serve the Lord.'" [2 Samuel 15:7-8 NKJV, see also KJV, NASU, NASB, ASV ]
  - ✧ The 40 years seems a little unusual since Absalom was born after David became king of Judah. David died after being king of Judah 7 years, and over all Israel 33 years for a total of 40 years, and this rebellion occurred well before the end of David's reign. Therefore, Absalom could not even be 40 years old at the time. [2 Samuel 5:4-5]
  - ✧ Some say it was 40 days instead of 40 years, but that would not give Absalom time to accomplish all he did to this point.
  - ✧ Others suggest it was 4 years instead of 40 years, and this seems more plausible considering all that was accomplished, and the events that followed in the reign of David. [2 Samuel 15:7 NIV, RSV, Amplified Bible]
  - ✧ The appeal to keeping a vow and serving the Lord struck a resonant note with David who had such a great love for the Lord and would most certainly approve the request.
- ✧ David the king said to him, "Go in peace." So he arose and went to Hebron. [2 Samuel 15:9]
  - ✧ At this point it appears that David had no idea of the things Absalom was doing or the threat that was looming.
- ✧ Absalom secretly arranged for the declaration of his reign in Hebron. [2 Samuel 15:10]
- ✧ Openly, Absalom invited 200 men from Jerusalem to accompany him to Hebron to worship the Lord and they went along innocently not knowing anything of the plot in play. [2 Samuel 15:11]
- ✧ While he was offering sacrifices in Hebron, Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor from Giloh. [2 Samuel 15:12]
- ✧ The conspiracy grew strong as the people with Absalom continually increased in number. [2 Samuel 15:12]

### David Escapes from Jerusalem [2 Samuel 15:13-37]

- ✧ A messenger came to David, saying, "The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom."
- ✧ David said to all his servants who were with him at Jerusalem, "Arise, and let us flee, or we shall not escape from Absalom. Make haste to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly and bring disaster upon us, and strike the city with the edge of the sword."
  - ✧ This is all the warning David needed to realize what was at stake.

- ✧ The heart of David was for all Israel and the beloved city of Jerusalem. [[Psalm 122:1-9](#)]
- ✧ David knew that the trouble with Absalom was the result of his sin with Bathsheba and Uriah, and he would rather turn the city over to Absalom than to fight and see the city destroyed.
- ✧ David also knew that Absalom would want to take the city by force and the lives of those loyal to David were in jeopardy.
- ✧ David had been accustomed to living in the wilderness with a great following, and was willing to do it again until he could discern where the Lord would lead him through this situation.
- ✧ David's servants were ready and willing to follow him into the wilderness again, they had done well there before.
- ✧ David's exit from Jerusalem was hasty but well planned.
- ✧ David took his entire house except for the ten women who were his concubines who he left to keep the house.
- ✧ They stopped at the Kidron Brook on the outskirts of the city, and he sent all his servants over the Kidron Brook, the Cherethites, Pelethites, Gittites, 600 men who had been with him as he fled from Saul and returned from Gath of the Philistines. [[1 Samuel 27:1-4](#)]
- ✧ The Kidron valley lies between the eastern gate of Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives.
- ✧ Ittai the Gittite who had just come to Jerusalem insisted on following David, so he and all his house crossed over the Kidron.
- ✧ Then David crossed over the Brook Kidron and headed toward the wilderness, as all the country wept with a loud voice.
- ✧ Zadok the priest and all the Levites with him, bearing the ark of the covenant came and set down the ark of God until all the people crossed over toward the wilderness.
- ✧ David instructed Zadok and his people to return to Jerusalem with the Ark of God, and become David's eyes and ears in the city. So David set up a communication link between himself and Zadok so he could be kept informed of all that was going on.
- ✧ David placed himself in the hands of the Lord and was willing for the Lord to do as He saw fit in the matter.
- ✧ Zadok and his people returned to Jerusalem as David had requested.
- ✧ David and his people went up the ascent of the Mount of Olives toward the wilderness weeping as they went with their heads covered. David had his head covered and went barefoot.
- ✧ Then someone told David, saying, "Ahithophel (David's former counselor) is among the conspirators with Absalom." And David said, "O Lord, I pray, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness!" [[2 Samuel 15:31](#)]
- ✧ At the top of the Mount of Olives, David worshipped God.
- ✧ There Hushai the Archite was coming to meet David with his robe torn and dust on his head.
- ✧ David sent Hushai back to mingle with the advisors of Absalom, to overturn the counsel of Ahithophel, and to send word to David through Zadok and Abiathar the priests.
- ✧ So Hushai returned to Jerusalem. [[2 Samuel 15:32-37](#)]
- ✧ Absalom came into Jerusalem.