

In 2 Samuel 14, Joab orchestrates Absalom's return to Jerusalem after three years of exile for killing Amnon. Using a wise woman from Tekoa, Joab persuades David to reconcile with Absalom. Though back in the city, Absalom can't see the king for two more years. Eventually, he is fully restored but shows growing ambition, hinting at the events of 2 Samuel 15.

ABSALOM'S CONSPIRACY (2 SAMUEL 15:1-12)

Absalom prepared an entourage to show his strength and power (v. 1) as part of his plan to become king of Israel. He readied "chariots and horses," possibly the same ones David had spared in 2 Samuel 8:4. Absalom also had "fifty men to run before him," enhancing his public image as "king material" rather than a "conniving murderer" (2 Sam. 13).

Rashi, an 11th-century Jewish commentator, noted these men had their spleen and the flesh of their soles cut off. This reflects an ancient belief that such practices could make a man run faster and endure long distances barefoot.

Absalom, always charming and cunning, quickly set up a charade to win over Israel. He positioned himself by the city gate, intercepting those with legal disputes. He would sympathetically lament that no one was deputed by the king to hear them and declare, "Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice!" (v. 4). To seal the deal, he would take hold of the complainer and kiss him, stealing "the hearts of the men of Israel" (v. 6).

While King David was busy with the kingdom, Absalom was busy undermining him. After forty years (v. 7), Absalom moved to the second phase of his plan. Most scholars believe this "forty years" refers to the kingdom's timeline from Saul's coronation or David's anointing. The conspiracy began when Absalom requested permission to "pay my vow" (v. 7) in Hebron. David granted permission (v. 9), but Absalom had other plans.

Absalom sent secret messengers throughout Israel, proclaiming, "Absalom reigneth in Hebron" (v. 10). He invited two hundred men from Jerusalem, who knew nothing of the conspiracy (v. 11), adding credibility to his claim. He also sent for Ahithophel, David's counselor, whose defection was a significant blow to David (v. 12).

Ahithophel was Bathsheba's grandfather, possibly harboring animosity towards David. The conspiracy grew strong, and Absalom's following increased (v. 12). This rebellion was the result of years of Absalom's efforts to undermine David and position himself as the preferred leader..

DAVID'S FLIGHT FROM JERUSALEM (2 SAMUEL 15:13-30)

In verses 13-14, a messenger warns David: "The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom." Absalom's conspiracy poses a serious threat. David quickly tells his servants in Jerusalem to flee to avoid being overtaken and the city being harmed.

David's swift decision to flee could be due to exhaustion and demoralization, or the influence of Absalom's psychological tactics making it seem like he had lost support.

David's servants wanted to remain loyal, but he insisted on fleeing, leaving behind ten concubines to keep the house, a decision that would later lead to tragedy (v. 16).

David and his followers fled and stayed in a distant place (v. 17). The "place that was far off" is Beth-hammerhah, possibly a proper noun rather than a description.

Verse 18 mentions David's loyal groups: the Cherethites, Pelethites, and Gittites. The Cherethites and Pelethites were elite guards, while the Gittites were men from Gath who had followed David since he fled from Saul. Despite being non-Israelites, they remained loyal to David.

In verses 19-22, David tells Ittai the Gittite, a newcomer, to stay in Jerusalem. Ittai pledges loyalty, willing to follow David even to death.

David's departure is marked by mourning (v. 23). He carries the Ark of the Covenant, symbolizing God's presence, but instructs Zadok to return it to Jerusalem, expressing hope that if he finds favor with God, he will return (v. 25). This act shows David's resignation and acceptance of his fate (v. 26).

David asks Zadok and Abiathar to return to Jerusalem with their sons and relay news to him (vv. 27-28). This underscores David's isolation and reliance on others for information.

The priests comply, taking the Ark back to Jerusalem (v. 29). David's ascent of the Mount of Olives, weeping and barefoot, displays his deep sadness and turmoil as he flees from his son Absalom (v. 30).

JERUSALEM FALLS, HOPE REMAINS (2 SAMUEL 15:31-37)

As David nears the top of the Mount of Olives, he learns that "Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom." David prays, "I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness" (v. 31).

Reaching the top, David worships the Lord, casting a final look at Jerusalem. His servant Hushai joins him, arriving "with his coat rent, and earth upon his head" (v. 32).

Hushai, unknown until now, will play a key role in countering Absalom's rebellion. An Archite is from the town of Archi, near Ephraim and Benjamin in ancient Israel.

David, seeing Hushai's loyalty, devises a plan. He tells Hushai to return to Jerusalem and pretend to be loyal to Absalom. By acting as a double agent, Hushai will provide David with intelligence and work to undermine Ahithophel's counsel.

David also instructs Hushai to collaborate with priests Zadok and Abiathar. They will relay information to their sons, Ahimaaz and Jonathan, who will inform David of any developments. Hushai returns to Jerusalem as a spy, while Absalom enters as the new King, setting the stage for conflict.