

SOLOMON “CLEANS HOUSE”

1 Kings 2,3

Narrator
Adonijah
Bathsheba
Solomon
Messenger
Joab
Shimei
Benaiah
Voice of God

NARRATOR: Solomon began reigning as king even before his father, David, died. But he waited until after his father's death to carry out his last instructions. David had told Solomon to bring to an end some matters that had been left hanging, in particular the matters of Adonijah, Abiathar the priest, Joab, and Shimei.

Adonijah had begged for mercy and told Solomon he was very sorry for trying to take the throne by force. Solomon told Adonijah that if he behaved himself he would not be put to death. However, if he proved to be a trouble-maker, Solomon would have him executed.

One day Adonijah went to ask Bathsheba for a favor.

ADONIJAH: Bathsheba, may I speak to you?

BATHSHEBA: Do you come in peace?

ADONIJAH: Yes, of course. I just have something to ask you.

BATHSHEBA: Then ask it.

ADONIJAH: Please ask King Solomon something for me. I know he will not refuse you because you are his mother.

BATHSHEBA: What do you want?

ADONIJAH: Please, ask that Abishag the Shunammite be given to me as my wife.

BATHSHEBA: Very well, I will speak to the king on your behalf.

NARRATOR: Now this might sound like a very innocent request. Adonijah was simply asking for the hand of a maiden in marriage. But who was Abishag? At the end of David's life, he began to be ill all the time. He needed constant nursing care. So his officials searched the kingdom for a young lady to care for him. Now as this was ancient times, the girl had to be beautiful, of course. "Nothing but the best for the king" was their motto. We don't know if this girl actually knew anything about taking care of sick people, but perhaps she did. Anyway, she stayed in David's room all the time and cared for him. She never became David's wife, but she was still considered his personal property. (Remember, this was ancient times!) It was very improper and indecent for Adonijah to ask for a woman who had belonged to his father. This was just not done. Even if Adonijah really liked her, he knew she was off limits. He knew Solomon would see this as a challenge to his authority.

When Bathsheba went to see Solomon he was very pleased to see her. He had a second throne brought in so she could sit next to him.

SOLOMON: What is your request, my mother?

BATHSHEBA: Please, my son, grant me one little request. Do not refuse me.

SOLOMON: I will not refuse you, my mother. What is your request?

BATHSHEBA: Please allow your brother, Adonijah, to marry Abishag the Shunammite.

SOLOMON: What? Why are you requesting this? You might as well request the whole kingdom for him! Yes, he is my older brother, why not? And while you are at it, let's give the kingdom to Abiathar the priest, and to Joab, too! May God deal with me, be it ever so severely, if Adonijah does not pay for this request with his life. As surely as the Lord lives, Adonijah shall be put to death today!

NARRATOR: So Solomon gave orders to have Adonijah executed. Benaiah, the captain of the army, went and struck down Adonijah and he died. Then Solomon decided to take on the matter of Abiathar, the priest. Remember, Abiathar has sided with Adonijah when he tried to take the crown. Abiathar had betrayed David and Solomon.

SOLOMON: Abiathar, go back to work in your fields. You are no longer a priest. I will not execute you because you are a holy priest and have carried the ark of the Lord. You also supported my father for many years and endured many hardships with him. Therefore, you shall not die.

NARRATOR: This was to fulfill the prophecy that Samuel had spoken against the house of Eli. God had determined that the descendants of Eli would be removed from the priesthood because of the sin of Eli and his sons.

Now for Joab. Not only had Joab killed innocent men during his lifetime, he also had joined Adonijah.

MESSENGER: My lord the king, Joab has fled to the tent of the Lord and is holding on to the horns of the altar, begging for mercy.

SOLOMON: Benaiah, go to the tent of the Lord and strike down Joab.

BENAIAH: Yes, my lord the king. I shall do as you say.

NARRATOR: So Benaiah went to the tent of the Lord. There was Joab clinging to the altar.

BENAIAH: Come out, Joab! The king commands you to come out right now!

JOAB: No! I will not come out. You will have to come in if you want to kill me. I will die here.

NARRATOR: Joab probably thought that he could not be killed as long as he held on to the altar of God.

BENAIAH: Messenger, go and tell King Solomon that Joab won't come out.

MESSENGER: King Solomon, Joab will not let go of the altar and come out.

SOLOMON: Then strike him down where he is. The Lord will repay him for the innocent blood he shed. Joab killed two men without my father's knowledge: Abner and Amasa. Both men were more righteous than he. Joab will now pay for his sins, and the house of David shall be cleared of the guilt of these murders.

NARRATOR: So Benaiah struck down Joab and he died. He was buried in his own land, in the desert.

Then Solomon sent for Shimei. Remember, Shimei was the man who had cursed David as he left Jerusalem during Absalom's revolt. At the time, David had said that no one was to punish Shimei for what he was doing. But now, David was gone, and the fact remained that Shimei had done a terrible thing. There was no such thing as freedom of speech in the ancient world. If you cursed the king, you were guilty of treason and deserved the death penalty. Shimei knew this.

SOLOMON: Shimei, build for yourself a house right here in Jerusalem, where I can keep an eye on you. You are never to leave the city. If you leave the city and cross the Kidron Valley, I will see to it that you receive the death penalty. Do you understand?

SHIMEI: Yes, my lord the king. What you say is good. Your servant will do as my lord the king says.

NARRATOR: So Shimei did what Solomon told him to do, and lived in Jerusalem. Everything was fine until one day three years later. Two of Shimei's slaves ran away and went to Gath. Shimei either forgot about his agreement with Solomon, or figured that Solomon had probably forgotten about it by that time. So Shimei got on his donkey and went down to Gath to get his slaves back. When Shimei returned, it was reported to Solomon what he had done.

SOLOMON: Shimei, did I not tell you never to leave Jerusalem? Remember, we had an agreement. You told me you would cooperate and do what I said and never leave. But now you have broken our deal. Now the Lord will repay you for the wrong you did to David, my father. You knew it was wrong to curse the king! Benaiah, strike down Shimei!

NARRATOR: And so Shimei was executed. Now Solomon had fulfilled all the tasks his father David had told him to do.

After this, Solomon went to Gibeon, one of the places where people went to sacrifice to the Lord. Solomon offered a thousand burnt offering on the altar there. That night God appeared to him in a dream.

VOICE OF GOD: Ask me for anything you want, and I will give it to you.

SOLOMON: O Lord, you have showed great kindness to my father by giving him a son to sit on his throne this day. And now, O Lord, I feel like a little child, not knowing how to govern this large nation. Please give me a wisdom and teach me how to be a good king.

VOICE OF GOD: Because you have asked for wisdom, and not for great riches or for the death of your enemies, I will not only give you the wisdom you have asked for, but I will also give you great riches. In your lifetime you will have no equal among kings. And if you walk in my ways, I will also give you a long life.

NARRATOR: The next day, Solomon went back to Jerusalem and offered more sacrifices in front of the ark of the Lord.