

TROUBLE IN THE “HOUSE OF DAVID”

2 Samuel, chapters 10-20

Act 1: The Ammonites	Act 2: Bathsheba	Act 3: Absalom kills Amnon	Act 4: Absalom takes throne	Act 5: Death of Absalom
Narrator David An Ammonite Hanun King of Aram Joab	Narrator David Servant #1 Servant #2 Servant #3 Messenger Joab Nathan, the prophet	Narrator Absalom David Jonadab Woman of Tekoa Joab	Narrator David Hushai Shimei Abishai Zadok Ittai the Gittite Messenger Absalom A man A woman	Narrator David Absalom Hushai Israelite #1 Israelite #2 Messenger Soldier Joab Abishai Wise woman

ACT 1: The Ammonites insult David and suffer the consequences

NARRATOR: After David was firmly established as king over all of Israel, he continued to enlarge the kingdom. The Philistines had been defeated so many times that they finally gave up and didn't make any more trouble for David. Then David turned to the east and began conquering the nations of Moab and Edom. He destroyed two thirds of the Moabite army. He also fought against the Arameans and captured a thousand of their chariots. The Arameans surrendered and were forced to give up huge amounts of valuable items made of gold and bronze.

Up until now, the kingdom of Ammon was not considered any enemy. David was on friendly terms with their king. Then the king died and his son, Hanun, came to power.

DAVID: I should show kindness to this new king of Ammon. His father was always kind to me. I think I will send some messengers to Hanun with a message of sympathy. I will tell him I was sad to hear about the death of his father and I that I hope we can be friends, just like his father and I were friends.

NARRATOR: So David sent some of his men to Hanun to give him this friendly message. However, when the men of Ammon saw the delegation of Israelites coming, they were alarmed. They went to king Hanun and spoke to him.

AN AMMONITE: King Hanun, messengers from King David are on their way. Don't trust them! They are probably spies. They will pretend to greet you friendly, but they were probably sent to spy out your kingdom in preparation for war!

HANUN: Hmmm... maybe you are right. Capture David's men and punish them for spying. Shave off half of their beards and cut off their tunics so they are half naked!

NARRATOR: When the news came to David that his men had been humiliated by king Hanun he was not pleased. He gave orders for the men not to come home until their beards had grown back, so they would not have to be ashamed in front of their family and friends. Meanwhile, king Hanun realized his mistake.

HANUN: Oops, I think we made a mistake. Those men were not spies after all. They really were messengers of peace. And now look what we did. We are in big trouble. David will be very angry. We had better prepare for him to attack us.

AN AMMONITE: King Hanun, our army is not strong enough to face the Israelites. You will need to ask another king for help.

HANUN: You are right. I will ask the king of Aram to lend me some soldiers.

NARRATOR: When David heard that the Arameans had sent soldiers to king Hanun, he was alarmed. Now David had to prepare for war. He sent Joab and Abishai out with their troops.

JOAB: Abishai, I and my troops will fight the Aramean soldiers. You concentrate on the Ammonites. If the Arameans are too strong for me, then you will have to come and help me out, and if the Ammonites are too strong for you, my troops will come down and join yours.

NARRATOR: Joab need not have worried too much. When the Arameans saw Joab coming, they turned and ran away. Then when the Ammonites were told that their Arameans helpers were gone, they got scared and went back into their cities. Joab and Abishai then turned around and went home.

KING OF ARAM: What? My men ran away? They will not get away with this! I am going to send out even more men this time to face David. I'll gather soldiers from the outer parts of my kingdom and bring them in for this battle. I will not let Israel make us look like fools!

NARRATOR: So the king of Aram decided to attack Israel. David himself went out with the troops this time and Israel won a great victory. The Arameans surrendered and decided not to help the Ammonites anymore.

After a few months of rest back in Jerusalem, David decided to send his troops out again, this time to fight against the Ammonites. Up until this time, David almost always went out and fought alongside his troops. For some unknown reason, David decided to stay home and let Joab command the army by himself. Joab was an excellent army commander and could handle the army on his own. So David took a spring vacation and stayed home. This was the beginning of one of the biggest mistakes of his life.

ACT 2: Bathsheba

DAVID: I can't sleep. I am lying here in bed and I am just not tired. I think I will go for a walk.

NARRATOR: A nice place to walk was the very large roof of the palace. In those days, roofs were often used as places to walk or even to sleep if the bedrooms were too hot in the summer months. So David went for a stroll on his roof. He looked out over his city.

DAVID: What a beautiful city I have built here in Jerusalem. And speaking of beautiful, I see someone else out on their roof at night. Who is that? Wow, she is really pretty. I wonder who she is. Servant, come here!

SERVANT #1: Yes, my lord the king. What can I do for you?

DAVID: Do you see that woman over there?

SERVANT #1: The one taking a bath on the roof?

DAVID: Yes, of course! Go and find out who she is.

SERVANT #1: Yes, my lord. I shall do as you say.

NARRATOR: David was hoping she was an eligible young maiden that he could take to be another one of his wives. Back in those days, kings were allowed to have lots of wives so they could have lots of children. But they could not steal other men's wives. This was forbidden by God in his Commandments.

SERVANT #1: My lord, the king. I have disturbing news. She is a married woman. Her name is Bathsheba and you already know her husband-- he is Uriah the Hittite, one of your Thirty Valiant Men. And her father is

Eliam, also one of your Thirty Valiant Men. And... her grandfather is Ahithophel, your most trusted advisor.

DAVID: I don't care. I want her as my wife anyway. I'll think of some way to arrange it. Bring her to me immediately. I want to meet her.

SERVANT #1: Yes, my lord the king. I shall bring her.

NARRATOR: David's mind was clouded by his thoughts of meeting this pretty woman. He should have been thinking of the terrible danger he was in. Even bringing her to the palace would be an act of betrayal to her husband, father and grandfather—brave men who were faithful to David! What would they think? And David had so many wives already, he did not need really need another.

When Bathsheba arrived, it was love at first sight for David. He insisted that she stay for the rest of the evening. When he finally sent her home, it was still dark outside and he hoped she could sneak home so that no one but his trusted private servants would know that she had been there.

Now David had to arrange for a way to get rid of Bathsheba's husband, Uriah.

DAVID: Uriah is out fighting in the war right now. If he happened to die in battle, Bathsheba would then be a widow. Widows are allowed to get remarried. So Bathsheba could then marry me. Hmm... perhaps Joab could help me out a bit.

NARRATOR: David sent a letter to Joab. It said:

DAVID: Put Uriah on the front line where the fighting is the most fierce. Then withdraw from him so that he will be struck down and die.

NARRATOR: Joab was faithful to David even when David made bad decisions. He did not question David's motives. For all Joab knew, Uriah had done something wrong and needed to be punished. Joab did not know about Bathsheba.

JOAB: Uriah, go and fight up there on the front lines. Be brave and attack the Ammonites right near the wall!

NARRATOR: Uriah obeyed, and, just as David hoped, Uriah was killed by the Ammonites.

MESSENGER: My lord the king, I have a message from Joab. Here is news of how the battle is going. He says that the attack near the wall was a disaster and that among the dead is Uriah the Hittite.

DAVID: Send a message back to Joab and tell him that I am not upset. I know that even brave soldiers can die in battle. Tell Joab not to be discouraged and to keep fighting.

MESSENGER: Yes, my lord. I will deliver the message to Joab.

NARRATOR: Now, with Uriah gone, David thought his problems were over. After Bathsheba went through the customary weeks of mourning for her husband, David brought her to his palace and married her. He was happy to have Bathsheba there and she soon had a baby. David thought everything had turned out just fine in the end. But God was not pleased. David had stolen another man's wife, then ordered him to be killed. He had broken two of God's commandments.

God told the prophet Nathan to go to David and confront him about this grievous sin.

NATHAN: My lord the king, may I speak to you.

DAVID: Yes, Nathan. God's prophets are always welcome.

NATHAN: I have a story to tell you, my lord. There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. The rich man had a large number of sheep and cattle, but the poor man had nothing but one little lamb.

The poor man raised this lamb as a pet and it grew up with his children. The lamb was almost a member of the family. It ate with the family, and slept with the family. The children loved the lamb and it was like a sister to them.

One day a traveler came to visit the rich man. The rich man wanted to make a feast for his guest but instead of using one of his own sheep or cattle as the meal, he went and took the little pet lamb from the poor man and cooked it!

DAVID: That is so unfair! As surely as the Lord lives, that rich man deserves to die! He must pay for that little lamb four times over, because he was mean to that poor man and showed no pity on him!

NATHAN: You are that rich man! Hear the Lord's word to you: "I anointed you king over Israel in place of Saul. I made you rich and allowed you to have many wives and children. Why did you then do what is evil in my eyes? Why did you steal Uriah's wife, then have him murdered? Because you have done this wicked deed, the sword shall never depart from your house. I am going to bring great punishment upon you and your family. You did your sin in secret, but your punishment shall be in the sight of all Israel.

DAVID: Nathan, I have committed a great sin against the Lord!

NATHAN: God will not cause you to die because of this. You will remain the king. But as part of your punishment, Bathsheba's baby will die.

NARRATOR: Right after Nathan left, a servant came in with news for David.

SERVANT: My lord the king, I regret to inform you that your baby son is very sick.

DAVID: I will pray to the Lord. Perhaps the Lord will heal him.

NARRATOR: David fasted and prayed for several days. It was during this time that he wrote Psalm 51.

DAVID: Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love.
Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.
Against you, and you only, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight.
Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.
Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of salvation.

SERVANT #2: David is lying on the ground and will not get up. Not even to eat.

SERVANT #3: Let's try to get him to eat something.

SERVANT #2: My lord, the king, please get up. Please eat something.

DAVID: No! Can't you see how sad I am? I must keep praying and fasting.

SERVANT #3: Please, my lord. It has been three days now. Please eat something.

DAVID: No, I will not. I am too sad.

NARRATOR: Then, when the baby was seven days old, it died.

SERVANT #2 (whispering): How are we going to tell him that the baby has died?

SERVANT #3 (whispering): You're right. If he gets any sadder, he might hurt himself. Maybe we should not tell him at all.

DAVID: What are you two whispering about? Has the baby died?

SERVANT #2: Umm....

DAVID: The baby died, didn't he?

SERVANT #2: Well.... yes.

NARRATOR: David immediately got up and went and changed his clothes. Then he went to the house of the Lord (where the ark of the Covenant was) to worship God. Then he went to his own house and began to eat.

SERVANT #2: I don't understand. While the baby was still alive you were so sad that you would not eat. But now, after the baby has died, you are not sad anymore?

DAVID: While the baby was still alive I fasted and prayed to God to spare his life. But now there is no point in praying that way anymore. I can't bring him back. I'll see him again some day, but not here.

NARRATOR: David really was sorry for what he had done. And God did forgive him. Bathsheba eventually had another baby, and they named him Solomon, which means "peace." David could be at peace with God because of God's abundant mercy and forgiveness.

ACT 3: Absalom kills Amnon

NARRATOR: Solomon was one of David's youngest sons. David also had older sons who were fully grown up by now. Some of them were even married and had children. David's oldest son was named Amnon. He was the son of David's first wife, Ahinoam. David's second son was Kileab, whose mother was Abigail. His third son was Absalom, whose mother was a princess from the kingdom Geshur, to the east of the Sea of Galilee. She was not an Israelite and had grown up worshiping false gods. Her son, Absalom, would prove to be nothing but trouble for David and for Israel.

Absalom had a sister named Tamar, who was strikingly beautiful. Amnon, David's oldest son, could not help but feel attracted to her. She was only a half-sister to Amnon and had been raised by a different mother so Amnon did not feel brotherly feelings toward her like Absalom did. One day Amnon grabbed Tamar and began kissing her. She told him not to, but he didn't listen and forced her to allow him to go on kissing her. He made her do things she did not want to do. When Absalom found out what Amnon had done to Tamar, he was very angry.

ABSALOM: Tamar, come and live at my house and I will protect you from Amnon. I will get revenge on him some day and punish him for treating you badly. But for now, let's keep quiet and pretend we are not too upset. That will give me time to plan my revenge on him.

NARRATOR: It took two years for Absalom to finally get his revenge upon Amnon. One day Absalom gave a party and invited all of David's older sons to come. David did not want Amnon to go, perhaps because Amnon was the crown prince, and if something happened to David very suddenly, Amnon would have to be ready to step in immediately as the next king. But Absalom insisted. Finally, David agreed to let Amnon go to the party.

ABSALOM: Listen, my faithful servants. After the party has been going for a while, and everyone has had plenty of wine to drink, then be on the alert for my signal. When I say, "Now!" then strike down Amnon and kill him. Don't worry, you will not get in trouble for doing this. I will protect you. Just do as I say.

NARRATOR: Absalom's men followed his instructions and at his signal they rose up and killed Amnon. Suddenly the party was over. The other princes went and jumped on their donkeys and rode away as fast

as they could. News of the deadly party spread quickly. Rumors were flying. A messenger soon arrived at David's palace.

MESSENGER: My lord, the king. Absalom has struck down all the king's sons! Not one of them is left!

NARRATOR: David tore his clothes and lay face down on the ground in grief. He had just been told that almost all of his sons were dead. He was lying there, in shock, when his nephew Jonadab came in.

JONADAB: My lord, the king. I have come to inform you of a great disaster. Your son, Amnon is dead. Absalom has killed him.

DAVID: What? I thought all of my sons are dead. Are you sure it is just Amnon?

JONADAB: Yes, my lord, I was there to see it. Only Amnon is dead. Your other sons got away.

NARRATOR: Absalom knew that David would be very angry at him for killing Amnon, so he ran away. He went to Geshur to live with his mother's family, the royal family of Geshur, and stayed there three years. At the end of three years, David began to miss Absalom. Absalom was a handsome man, and David was very proud of him. Joab could see that David wanted Absalom to come back and devised a clever way to convince David to allow Absalom to return. Joab hired an old woman to pretend to be a widow who needed help from the king. He told her everything she was to say to David.

WOMAN OF TEKOA: My lord, the king, I need your help.

DAVID: What is troubling you?

WOMAN OF TEKOA: I am a widow and I had two sons. They got into a fight one day and one of them killed the other. Then the people of the town came to me and said, "Hand over your living son, that justice may be done to him. He is a murderer and deserves the death penalty. He must be executed for his crime." And if my remaining son is executed, then our family will cease to exist. There will be no one to inherit our property.

DAVID: Go home in peace. I will grant your request and issue an order on your behalf. Your son shall not die.

WOMAN OF TEKOA: My lord, the king, may I speak a word to the king?

DAVID: Speak freely.

WOMAN OF TEKOA: When the king pronounces this judgment, does he not condemn himself? For his own son is under judgment and is in exile. Absalom is now the rightful heir to the throne. He is our crown prince. Yet he is unable to inherit your throne because he is living under the threat of death for his crime. He should be pardoned and allowed to return home.

DAVID: Tell me the truth—did Joab tell you to say this?

WOMAN OF TEKOA: Truly, my lord, the king, you have the wisdom of an angel of God. Yes, it is as you say. Joab put these words in my mouth. He told me to tell that story.

DAVID: Joab!

JOAB: Here I am, my lord.

DAVID: Very well, Joab. I will do it. Go and bring back the young man Absalom from Geshur.

NARRATOR: So Joab went to Geshur and told Absalom to come back to Jerusalem. But when Absalom returned, he still would not go to see David until another two years had passed.

ACT 4: Absalom takes the throne and David flees

NARRATOR: After a few years had passed, Absalom's crime was forgotten. It was almost like old times. David not only forgave Absalom but began showing favoritism towards him. It was easy to see why. Absalom was the most handsome man in all of Israel. He was physically perfect. Any father would be proud to have a son like Absalom.

It was obvious to everyone that David was likely to choose Absalom as his heir. In fact, Absalom was so sure that he was going to be the next king that he began planning toward that goal. First, he got himself a fancy chariot to ride around in. He hired 50 men to run in front of his chariot so he would look really impressive as he drove around town. Then, he began a campaign of being overly friendly with the common people, to make them like him. He would stand outside the city gate and greet people.

ABSALOM: Good day, my friend, what brings you to Jerusalem today?

A MAN: I have come to Jerusalem from way up north. I have a legal matter to discuss with the king. I was hoping that he could find time to act as a judge and hear my case.

ABSALOM: My dear friend, I am afraid that the king is running short on time these days. He has so many important tasks to attend to that he no longer has time to judge legal cases for his citizens. I am sure your legal claims are perfectly in order. And you do have a right to be heard. But kings are just so busy, you know.

A MAN: So you don't think I should try to see the king?

ABSALOM: I wish my father would appoint me to be a judge in the land. Look, here I am talking to you. I have time to talk with ordinary folk. My countrymen are important to me. Oh, yes— if I were a judge I would make sure everyone got justice, and quickly!

A MAN: Prince Absalom, you are amazing. I bow before you.

ABSALOM: No, no, none of that bowing stuff—not to me! Stand up and let me give you a big hug. Just think of me as an honorary brother!

A WOMAN: We love you Absalom! You should be our next king!

A MAN: Long live prince Absalom!

NARRATOR: And in this way, Absalom stole the hearts of the people of Israel. When Absalom realized how popular he was with all the people, it occurred to him that he might not have to wait until the death of his father to be king. Perhaps the people were loyal enough to him that he could go ahead and claim the throne now. He decided to go down to Hebron and see if he could rally enough followers to pull it off. But first he had to give an excuse to his father for going to Hebron.

ABSALOM: Father, may I have your permission to go down to Hebron for a while?

DAVID: Why do you need to go there?

ABSALOM: Well, you see, while I was living over in Geshur, I made a vow to the Lord that if I ever came back to Jerusalem, I would show my thanks to God by going down to Hebron to offer sacrifices there.

DAVID: Go my son, and God bless you.

NARRATOR: Absalom had lied, of course. But the lie worked, and David suspected nothing as Absalom headed for Hebron. Absalom invited hundreds of people, including soldiers, to go along with him. Most of them had no idea what Absalom was really up to, but certainly a few of them must have figured it out.

The most important person Absalom invited down to Hebron was Ahithophel, David's most trusted advisor. Remember, Ahithophel was Bathsheba's grandfather. Though the Bible does not specifically say so, we have to wonder whether Ahithophel now saw a chance to get even with David for what he had done to Bathsheba, causing the death of her husband, Uriah. For some reason, Ahithophel accepted Absalom's offer and became one of the leaders of the conspiracy against David. Absalom now had a huge advantage over David. With Ahithophel there to give him advice, Absalom felt that he could not lose.

Absalom now sent secret messengers all over Israel to distribute this message:

MESSENGER: When you hear the sound of the trumpets, say, "Absalom is king in Hebron!"

NARRATOR: This secret message did not stay secret very long. Pretty soon, a messenger came and told David the news:

MESSENGER: Absalom is proclaiming himself king down in Hebron. He has won the hearts of the men of Israel and they are supporting him.

NARRATOR: David was frightened. And with Ahithophel no longer there to give him advice, he felt his only option was to flee. He spoke to all his palace officials:

DAVID: Come! We must flee, or none of us will escape from Absalom. We must leave immediately before Absalom gets here and kills us all!

NARRATOR: So David set out with his entire household: all his wives and children, his personal soldiers and guards, and all of the palace officials. Also, 600 Gittites went with him. They were Philistine soldiers from Gath. They had joined David's forces during the time he was running away from Saul. When David went back to Israel after Saul's death, these Gittite soldiers had followed him and were now living among the Israelites in Jerusalem. They were still living in Jerusalem after all these years.

DAVID: Ittai, you and the other Gittites don't have to follow me. Why should you come with me? You are a foreigner, not an Israelite. Why should you have to wander about with me? I don't even know where I am going. Go back and stay in your homes in Jerusalem.

ITTAI: As surely as the Lord lives, and as my lord the king lives, wherever you go, whether it means life or death, I and my people will follow you.

DAVID: Go ahead, then. March on.

NARRATOR: Zadok and many other priests had also come along, carrying the ark with them.

DAVID: Zadok, take the ark of God back into Jerusalem. If God has mercy on me, I will eventually return to Jerusalem and be able to worship God there again.

ZADOK: Yes, my lord the king. We shall do as you say. Also, we and our sons can be your eyes and ears in Jerusalem and send out secret messengers to let you know what is going on here.

NARRATOR: When David had gone out of the city and climbed to the top of the Mount of Olives, a man named Hushai met him there. Apparently, Hushai was a wise man, whose advice was well respected by everyone. He offered his services to David.

DAVID: No, my friend, you should not come with me. The best way you can help me is to go to Jerusalem and pretend to betray me. Say to Absalom that you have decided to serve him as king, just as you served me as king. Make Absalom believe that you can be trusted. Then you will be in a position to counter all the advice Ahithophel will give him. Don't let Absalom follow Ahithophel's advice.

HUSHAI: I will do as you say. I will go to Jerusalem and pretend to serve Absalom.

NARRATOR: As David continued on, away from Jerusalem, a man named Shimei came out along the road and began cursing David and throwing stones at him. Shimei was from the same tribe and the same family clan as Saul, so he was probably still upset that kingdom now belonged to David's family instead of Saul's.

SHIMEI: Get out, get out, you man of blood! You're a scoundrel! The Lord is repaying you for all the blood you shed in the house of Saul! You have come to ruin because you are a man of blood!

ABISHAI: David, how can we let this man talk to you like this? He's a dead dog compared to you. Can we go over and cut off his head?

DAVID: Perhaps he is cursing because the Lord told him to do it. My own son has turned against me. It should be no surprise, then, that this man from Saul's family is upset at me. Just leave him alone. It might be God's will that this is happening. Maybe I deserve it. Perhaps if I suffer patiently, God will see my distress and will repay me with good.

ACT 5: The death of Absalom and the return of David

NARRATOR: Meanwhile, Hushai had just arrived at the royal palace in Jerusalem.

HUSHAI: My lord, the king. I am here to serve you.

ABSALOM: What? You, Hushai? I thought you were my father's friend. Some friend you turned out to be! Have you turned into a traitor?

HUSHAI: My loyalty is to the king of Israel, no matter who that man is. You are now the king, so I will serve you. And you are David's son, after all. It is not disloyal of me to serve the father's son.

ABSALOM: Very well, you may serve me. But Ahithophel will also be here next to me. I will take advice from both of you. What do you propose that I do next?

AHITHOPHEL: Choose twelve thousand men and set out tonight and pursue David. Attack him while he is weary and weak. But strike down only the king. Capture the people that are with them and bring them all back.

ABSALOM: That seems like a good plan. But let's see what Hushai says.

HUSHAI: The counsel of Ahithophel is usually good. But this time, don't listen to him. You know your father and his men. They are fierce fighters, and right now they will be as dangerous as a wild she-bear robbed of her cubs. Also, your father is an experienced soldier. He will not spend the night with the troops. Even now he is probably hiding in a cave somewhere and you will never find him. Don't go out tonight. Wait a few days until you can gather soldiers from all parts of the kingdom. Then you will have enough troops to be able to attack him with confidence. If you go in now, with a small number of troops, you might suffer a defeat. Then everyone will be afraid and will abandon you.

ABSALOM: I will follow Hushai's advice. We will wait to attack until I have gathered more soldiers.

NARRATOR: Hushai then went to see Zadok the priest and told him Absalom's plans.

HUSHAI: Zadok, send a secret message to David and tell him not to spend the night where he is, just in case Absalom decides to go ahead and attack. Tell him to cross over the river at once, and spend the night on the other side.

ZADOK: I will send my son, Ahima'az, and Abiathar's son, Jonathan, to tell David this message.

NARRATOR: Now when Ahithophel saw that Absalom had not followed his advice, he saddled his donkey and rode him. He took care of any financial matters that needed to be taken care of, then he hanged himself. He probably had a suspicion that Hushai was acting as a spy and would bring ruin to Absalom. That would mean ruin for Ahithophel, as well, and he didn't want to face that. He thought it would be better to die now than later.

When David crossed over the river, several of his faithful friends who lived in that area brought blankets, food, pots and utensils for all of David's people.

Now David had to prepare for battle. He knew Absalom was on the way and had gathered many soldiers to fight. David divided his troops into three units, headed by Joab, Abishai and Ittai the Gittite. David intended to go out an fight as well, but his soldiers would not let him.

JOAB: The king must stay here, in this protected area. We will go out and do the fighting. You must stay safe.

DAVID: I see your point. I guess you are right. But please, if you capture Absalom, be gentle with him for my sake. After all, he is still my son.

NARRATOR: David carefully repeated these instructions about Absalom to every group of soldiers. He gave strict instructions to be gentle with Absalom. Then the battle began. The most intense fighting took place in a forest. Absalom's army was driven into a forest thick with oak trees. Some of them even got stabbed by branches and died. Absalom followed his army into the forest. As he was passing under an oak tree, his hair got caught in its branches. He could not get free. His mule kept on going and left Absalom danging there in mid-air, caught by his hair! One of David's men happened to see Absalom hanging there and went to tell Joab.

SOLDIER: Joab, I just saw Absalom hanging by his hair in an oak tree!

JOAB: What?! You saw Absalom? Why didn't you kill him?

SOLDIER: How could I possibly do that? You heard what David told everyone before we left. He warned all of us to be gentle with Absalom. What would have happened to me if I had killed him?

JOAB: I don't have time for nonsense like this. I'll take care of Absalom myself!

NARRATOR: Joab grabbed three spears and went to find Absalom. He plunged the three spears into Absalom's heart. Some of Joab's men also stabbed Absalom, just to make sure he was really, really dead. Then Joab sounded the trumpet and stopped the attack.

JOAB: Men, throw that traitor's body into that pit over there, and then pile stones on top of it.

NARRATOR: When the news came to David that Absalom was dead, he was very shaken. He began to weep.

DAVID: Absalom, O Absalom, my son! If only I had died instead of you! O Absalom, my son, my son!

NARRATOR: When David's troops returned, they were told that David was crying for Absalom, so they sneaked in very quietly. They could hear David wailing and crying.

DAVID: Absalom, O Absalom! O my son, Absalom! My son, my son, my son...

JOAB: David, get a grip! Your son was out to kill you! Your men saved your life today by going out and fighting the entire army of Israel on your behalf. You are humiliating them by all this carrying on about Absalom. He was your enemy! You'd better start showing your gratitude to your troops for protecting you! Now get out there and thank them for what they did!

NARRATOR: So David pulled himself together and went out to greet his troops. Meanwhile, all the soldiers who had been fighting on Absalom's side went home. There was no one to fight for anymore. They began to discuss among themselves what to do next.

ISRAELITE #1: With Absalom gone, who will be king now?

ISRAELITE #2: Why not bring back David? After all, he has been our nation's hero for years. He delivered us from the hands of the Philistines, and he defeated the Moabites, the Edomites, the Ammonites and the Arameans.

ISRAELITE #1: Yes, let's bring David back. I didn't like Absalom all that much anyway.

ISRAELITE #2: Me neither. I'd rather have David as king for a while longer than take another risk on one of his sons. Let's keep David as the king.

NARRATOR: Soon the news reached David that the people were talking about bringing him back. He sent a message to the elders in Jerusalem:

MESSENGER: King David says that he will return to Jerusalem. He also says that Joab will no longer be the commander of his army. Absalom's commander, Amasa, will now become David's commander.

NARRATOR: David hired Amasa for two reasons. The biggest reason was that David wanted to punish Joab for killing Absalom. The second reason was that promising Amasa the job as army commander would let everyone know that David intended to make peace with those who had supported Absalom. David would not be out for revenge. This would encourage everyone in Jerusalem to welcome David back home again.

On his way back home, David met Shimei again. Shimei was the man who had cursed him and pelted him with stones.

SHIMEI: May my lord the king not hold me guilty. Do not remember how I did you wrong on the day you left Jerusalem. May the king put it out of his mind. I know that I sinned, and to show you how sorry I am, I ran down here as fast as I could so I could be the first one to help you cross back over the river.

ABISHAI: Shouldn't Shimei be put to death for his crimes against the king?

DAVID: No one shall be put to death today. This is a day of rejoicing and gladness. Yes, today there will be nothing but joy and happiness.

NARRATOR: But David was wrong. The situation suddenly took a turn for the worse. A man named Sheba, another member of Saul's clan, thought that it might still be possible for a revolt to be successful and for the kingdom to return to the tribe of Benjamin, Saul's tribe. Sheba sounded a trumpet and called out:

SHEBA: We have no share in David, no part in Jesse's son! Everyone to your own tent, O Israel!

NARRATOR: Suddenly many of the Israelite soldiers who had followed Absalom began following Sheba. The men of Judah all stayed loyal to David, of course. David let Sheba go for the meantime, and went home to the palace in Jerusalem. After a few days, he made plans of how to deal with Sheba. He called Amasa, his new army commander, and told him to go summon the men of Judah and prepare for a fight against Sheba. Amasa took longer than David expected and David began to get nervous about getting this job done quickly. So David spoke to Abishai.

DAVID: Sheba is now becoming as big a threat to me as Absalom was. Go and take as many men as you can find and go after Sheba. Get him before he finds fortified cities to hide in.

ABISHAI: Yes, my lord the king. Right away.

NARRATOR: So Abishai took all of his troops and also Joab and his troops and marched out. They stopped at Gibeon and while they were there, here came Amasa to greet them. Joab saw his chance to get even. He pretended to be friendly and went out to greet Amasa. Joab and Amasa were cousins so it was reasonable for Amasa to be fooled into thinking Joab would be friendly.

JOAB: How are you, my brother?

NARRATOR: Joab grabbed Amasa by the beard as if to pull him closer for a traditional Middle Eastern greeting, but instead, Joab pulled out his dagger and plunged it into Amasa's belly. His guts spilled out onto the ground. Someone pulled Amasa off the road into a ditch, then Joab and Abishai and all the troops went on to hunt for Sheba.

They discovered that Sheba was hiding out in the town of Abel Beth Maacah. The troops built a siege ramp up to the city and began attacking it. They began to hit the wall with a battering ram to tear it down. Suddenly, a woman appeared at the top of the wall and began yelling to them.

WISE WOMAN: Stop! Stop! Why are you attacking our city?

JOAB: A man named Sheba has raised his hand against the king and we've been told he is hiding in your city. We must destroy him to protect the king.

WISE WOMAN: We are a peaceful city. We don't want to fight. Long ago there was a proverb about us. "Get your answer at Abel," they used to say. Our city is like a mother in Israel. Why do you want to destroy the Lord's inheritance?

JOAB: Far be it from us to destroy the Lord's inheritance. No, we only want to stop Sheba and prevent him from leading a revolt. If you hand him over to us, we will immediately withdraw from your city.

WISE WOMAN: We will throw his head over the wall.

NARRATOR: As gruesome as it sounds, that is what happened. Sheba was killed and the uprising was prevented. Then all the troops went home. For a while, Jerusalem was peaceful.