



FEED MY SHEEP

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Issue #109

December 2007

A Lesson in Blessing

As we commence our study this month, King David is returning to Jerusalem. The rebellious son, Prince Absalom, is dead. With his death the revolution also died. The question now becomes: what will be the fate of all those who had joined Absalom in the revolt? Will David have them executed for treason?

As David comes to the east bank of Jordan, preparing to cross over and travel the last several miles back to Jerusalem, many of his fellow Judahites came down to the river to meet him. But notice who else comes down to meet the king—it's Shimei, the stone-throwing, dirt-kicking, screaming, cursing Saul partisan. Remember how he had done all those things to David as he was crossing Jordan to flee from Absalom?

2 Samuel 19:16 And Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite, which was of Bahurim, hasted and came down with the men of Judah to meet king David.

No doubt, Shimei had already heard of David's grace, mercy and forgiveness towards the Judahites and so he came tagging along with them, knowing David would be in an ebullient mood. Shimei calculates that this would be his best chance to be forgiven also.

17 And there were a thousand men of Benjamin with him, and Ziba the servant of the house of Saul, and his fifteen sons and his twenty servants with him; and they went over Jordan before [in the presence of] the king.

Let us envision the scene. David and his company have arrived from Mahanaim at the Jordan river, but they are still on the east side. The elders of Judah and

many others, no doubt, have come down to the west bank of Jordan to welcome him and accompany him back to Jerusalem in a triumphant procession.

Joining them on the west bank is Shimei, who has managed to assemble 1,000 Benjamites with him, presumably to demonstrate to David that he is a man of influence and that if David forgives him, he can guarantee the loyalty and allegiance of many other Benjamites as well.

The verse also mentions another Benjamite: Ziba, whom David had assigned to be the servant of Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth. It was Ziba who had earlier told David that Mephibosheth did not take flight with David because Mephibosheth saw this as an opportunity for God to place him on the throne instead of both David and Absalom.

Ziba brings 15 sons and 20 servants with him and they all cross Jordan in the presence of the king. David is still on the eastern shore and Shimei and Ziba and his family and servants all come across Jordan to approach the king.

18 And there went over a ferry boat to carry over the king's household, and to do what he thought good. And Shimei the son of Gera fell down before the king, as he [Shimei] was come over Jordan;

19 And said unto the king, Let not my lord impute iniquity unto me, neither do thou remember that which thy servant did perversely the day that my lord the king went out of Jerusalem, that the king should take it to his heart.

20 For thy servant doth know that I have sinned: therefore, behold, I am come the first this day of all the house of Joseph to go down to meet my lord the king.

Those are the *words* of repentance. But the real question is whether or not Shimei had truly repented in his heart. Or was he just siding with the winner now? We cannot say for certain, but we should bear that in mind as we proceed.

Notice that Shimei is bragging that he is the first of “all the house of Joseph” to go and meet the king. This is the first time that the phrase *the house of Joseph* is used to stand for the northern tribes of Israel. It is noteworthy that Benjamin claims part with the northern tribes. That only makes sense, because Ishbosheth, Saul’s son, of the tribe of Benjamin, had served as king for a short time over all the northern tribes while David ruled over Judah only. Moreover, there was still a lot of animosity among many in Benjamin because their tribe did not retain the monarchy.

Looking at this from the types and shadows, i.e., the prophetic perspective; does this possibly indicate that at the second appearing of Christ, that the Benjamin company will be among the first to welcome King Jesus back? The fact that the Judahites and Benjamites were among the first to welcome David back saw its partial fulfillment when after the death and resurrection of Christ, many of the Benjamites and Judahites were the first to believe and carry the news to their Israelite brethren of the northern tribes. These Israelites were by then scattered chiefly in Asia Minor and Europe, including Britain.

21 But Abishai the son of Zeruijah answered and said, Shall not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the LORD’s [Yahweh’s] anointed?

When David answers, he addresses “the sons of Zeruijah,” implying that Joab was in conspiracy with Abishai to demand execution of Shimei. From a strictly legalistic, letter of the law perspective, this demand is reasonable. The law in Exodus says:

Exodus 22:28 Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people.

But is it a *capital* crime? We find in Exodus 21:

Exodus 21:17 And he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death.

By analogy to the parents, the rulers of the family, many have interpreted this to mean that anyone who curses the king (or president?) should be put to death. Abishai uses that phrase “Yahweh’s anointed” in an attempt to justify the proposed execution of Shimei. Yet it reminds David how he himself was totally opposed to striking down King Saul when he had the opportunity to do so (1 Samuel 26:7-9). Have you noticed throughout the whole life of David how his three nephews, the three sons of his sister, Zeruijah—Joab, Asahel and Abishai—were always quick to desire to shed blood?

David, of course, shed blood only out of righteous necessity, ...uh...*except* of course, in his major lapse into fornication with Bathsheba after which he felt it necessary to murder her husband, Uriah. But overall, even though David was a warrior most of his life, he was nonetheless not a bloodthirsty man. So here, once again, as he had done on the way out of the city, David rebukes Abishai for his bloodlust.

2 Samuel 19:22 And David said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruijah, that ye should this day be adversaries unto me? shall there any man be put to death this day in Israel? for do not I know that I *am* this day king over Israel?

Yet, would it not have been lawful to put Shimei to death. Is that not God’s law? As I said, that is an interpretation of the letter of the law. But David apparently sought for ways to show mercy, similar to Jesus who found a lawful way to show mercy to the woman caught in adultery. We are taught that *mercy triumphs over judgment*. [James 2:13, NASV]

23 Therefore the king said unto Shimei, Thou shalt not die. And the king sware unto him.

Amasa had previously received an unconditional pardon. Now Shimei is forgiven as well. Ziba, we recall, had sided with David and brought him many provisions of food as he had fled across Jordan. Now look who appears on the scene.

24 And Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king, and had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the

day he came again in peace.

Let me tell you a true story: Back when I was in seminary boarding school, one of our classmates named Mike Milner (last name altered to protect the guilty—*chuckle, chuckle*) broke his leg and/or ankle. I don't recall for sure which it was, but the point is that he came back from the hospital with a cast which covered his foot and leg up to about mid-calf. His toes stuck out and were free-moving. This left an opening at the end of the cast from which any resident odors could emanate. In those days there was nothing but hard plaster casts for broken bones. Mike was an all-right guy, but when he was told at the hospital not to get the cast wet, he took that to mean that he couldn't take a shower!

Let me tell you, after a couple of weeks, you could literally tell when he walked into a room; the stench was that bad! This was boarding school, remember, so that we classmates really could not ever get too far away from him. We went classes together, we ate together, we worked together, played *sweaty* sports together, and we slept in big, open dorms.

But even in a room that size, the pungent and putrid odor permeated the dormitory at night. Why the priests of our seminary faculty and staff never said anything to him is beyond me, but boy, did Mike ever get made fun of. That cast stayed on for six weeks and by the last couple of weeks, nobody wanted to even get close enough to talk to him.

You kind of wanted to feel sorry for him, so that he would have at least one friend; but then the olfactory assault was so overpowering that soon your best intentions just went out the window as you gasped for fresh air. He did not get a permanent nickname over that incident, but that was because the slot had already been filled by another classmate whose last name was Minnon (name altered to protect the guilty again).

His first name escapes, but when he first started at the seminary, he apparently thought that a *weekly* shower was sufficient. The reason I don't remember his first name is because all through boarding school the only way we ever referred to him was by his nickname "Stink Minnon."

Well, now here's Mephibosheth, who was lame in both his feet. I don't suppose he had casts on his feet, but I would bet he would give old Stink Minnon

and Mike Milner a run for their money because he had neither dressed (attended to) his feet, nor trimmed his beard, *nor washed his clothes*, from the day the king departed. Okay, so he had good intentions for not washing his clothing, but my goodness, I imagine he was quite smelly as well.

Of course, the reason Mephibosheth didn't wash his clothes and trim his beard was as a sign of mourning. Knowing that, we have to question if old Ziba was telling the truth about Mephibosheth when he claimed to David that Mephibosheth was thinking he was going to ascend to the throne.

25 And it came to pass, when he was come to Jerusalem to meet the king, that the king said unto him, Wherefore wentest not thou with me, Mephibosheth?

26 And he answered, My lord, O king, my servant deceived me: for thy servant said, I will saddle me an ass, that I may ride thereon, and go to the king; because thy servant is lame.

27 And he hath slandered thy servant unto my lord the king; but my lord the king is as an angel of God: do therefore *what* is good in thine eyes.

28 For all of my father's house were but dead men before my lord the king; yet didst thou set thy servant among them that did eat at thine own table. What right therefore have I yet to cry any more unto the king?

29 And the king said unto him, Why speakest thou any more of thy matters? I have said, Thou and Ziba divide the land.

Remember that originally David had given to Mephibosheth all of Saul's personal family land, but since he was lame, he had also directed that Ziba and his family and servants work the land. Then, Ziba and his company would make a living from it, but the profits over and above that were to accrue to Mephibosheth. That is essentially what David meant when he said: "I have said:...divide the land."

But then when David fled Jerusalem and Ziba came to him with a multitude of provisions and told David how Mephibosheth was supposedly just biding his time in the hopes of obtaining the throne; it is obvious that David believed Ziba, and it was at that point that David gave all the land and its profits to Ziba. Thus Mephibosheth was dispossessed.

However, now, after hearing the rest of the story,

David seems in a quandary as to whom to believe, and so he resorts to the original arrangement of them splitting the land and its profits. Perhaps one could say that David here is showing *impatience*—not an admirable character quality.

But that might be a hasty judgment on our part because we do not know how long the argument might have gone back and forth between Ziba and Mephibosheth. Plus, just coming back to the palace after a forced “vacation,” David has a very full “to-do” list at this point, and so he might simply be deferring the matter until he can make a more thorough examination later.

30 And Mephibosheth said unto the king, Yea, let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house.

31 And Barzillai the Gileadite came down from Rogelim, and went over Jordan with the king, to conduct him over Jordan.

32 Now Barzillai was a very aged man, even fourscore years old: and he had provided the king of sustenance while he lay at Mahanaim; for he was a very great man.

Let us refresh our memory of how Barzillai and others were a great help to David in his time of severe need.

2 Samuel 17:27 And it came to pass, when David was come to Mahanaim, that Shobi the son of Nahash of Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and Machir the son of Ammiel of Lodebar, and Barzillai the Gileadite of Rogelim,

28 Brought beds, and basons, and earthen vessels, and wheat, and barley, and flour, and parched corn, and beans, and lentiles, and parched pulse,

29 And honey, and butter, and sheep, and cheese of kine, for David, and for the people that were with him, to eat: for they said, The people is hungry, and weary, and thirsty, in the wilderness.

Note that even a foreigner, an Ammonite, those cursed people with whom Israel had been forbidden to intermarry—even an Ammonite named Shobi showed kindness to David on this occasion.

2 Samuel 19:33 And the king said unto Barzillai, Come thou over with me, and I will feed thee with me in Jerusalem.

34 And Barzillai said unto the king, How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king unto Jerusalem?

35 I am this day fourscore years old: and can I discern between good and evil? can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women? wherefore then should thy servant be yet a burden unto my lord the king?

36 Thy servant will go a little way over Jordan with the king: and why should the king recompense it me with such a reward?

37 Let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in mine own city, and be buried by the grave of my father and of my mother. But behold thy servant Chimham; let him go over with my lord the king; and do to him what shall seem good unto thee.

38 And the king answered, Chimham shall go over with me, and I will do to him that which shall seem good unto thee: and whatsoever thou shalt require of me, that will I do for thee.

Chimham was probably the son of Barzillai. Apparently David gave him a parcel of land near Bethlehem, because over 400 years later, there was a place near there called the inn of Chimham (Jer. 41:17). Makes you think of another inn at Bethlehem, doesn't it? ...Especially at this time of year.

39 And all the people went over Jordan. And when the king was come over, the king kissed Barzillai, and blessed him; and he returned unto his own place.

To conclude for this month, there is a tiny lesson there. If you want to bless someone, but they are not really in need of anything, or for some other reason, they cannot receive your blessing; you can bless them by blessing their children. Bless someone today!

40 Then the king went on to Gilgal, and Chimham went on with him: ... (to be continued).

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