

The Death of Absalom

2 Samuel 18:1 – 19:8

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David mustered his troops and told them, "I will march out with you."

His men objected. "You mustn't go. Even if half of us die, Absalom's army won't care. They're only interested in you. You're worth ten thousand of us. "

David stayed in the city. As his troops marched out, he ordered Joab and his other commanders, "For my sake, deal gently with my son Absalom."

David's men trounced the army of Israel, and twenty thousand men died that day. During the battle, Absalom tried to escape. He rode his mule under a massive oak tree, and his hair became tangled in its branches. His mule kept going, and he was left hanging in midair.

Joab took three spears and plunged them into Absalom's chest. Then ten of Joab's men surrounded Absalom and killed him. They took the body down from the tree, threw it into a pit, and piled a heap of rocks over it.

A runner brought David the news. He burst into tears and cried aloud, "O my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you! O Absalom, my son, my son."

The king's grief turned the army's joy of victory into deep sadness. Joab went to David and said, "Your behavior is humiliating to the men who saved your life today. You love those who hate you and hate those who love you. Your commanders and their men mean nothing to you. You would be pleased if Absalom were still alive and we were all dead. I swear by the Lord, if you don't go out to see your troops, every one of them will desert you by nightfall."

David went out and took his seat at the city gate, and all his men gathered around him.