



## Vayechi: 1 Kings 2:1-12

The Book of Samuel presents David’s extraordinary life in rich detail. The Book of Kings opens when King David is very old, recounting the rise of his heir, Solomon, to the throne. Solomon’s rise features prominently in the Haftarat for Genesis.<sup>1</sup> Just as Jacob passes his legacy, blessings, and advice onto his twelve sons in the Parashah, so does David for his heir.

In the episode preceding the Haftarah, an ailing King David denied the claim of his son, Adonijah, to the throne, instead publicly installing his young son, Solomon, as the rightful heir. The Haftarah recounts David’s instructions to King Solomon and concludes with David’s death at 70 years old- the longest lived of all Biblical kings. David directs Solomon to follow God and the Torah. To help Solomon secure the throne, David emphasizes his son’s wisdom while advising him how to act with three men<sup>2</sup>:

### Who’s Who

**Joab, son of Zeruiah**, was David’s nephew and commander of his army. He aided David in many conquests, but also caused problems for David. Joab violated David’s command by killing David’s rebellious son, Absalom. In his parting words to Solomon in the Haftarah, David’s primary concern is Joab’s peacetime, cold-blooded murder of generals, Abner and Amsa. Joab also initially sided with Adonijah’s effort to succeed David, making him Solomon’s natural rival.

Wealthy **Barzillai the Gileadite** was one of several people who provided for the needs of David and his household as they fled from the rebellious uprising of his son, Absalom. David offered to repay this kindness by supporting Barzillai at his royal table. Already elderly, Barzillai declined the offer, preferring to live out his remaining years at home.

**Shimi, son of Gera**, cursed and taunted David during his escape from Absalom. Shimi later sought and received David’s forgiveness.

### Haftarah Breakdown

Verses 1-4: David commands his heir, Solomon, to follow God’s laws. This will bring him success and secure his royal dynasty, as promised by God.

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| I Kings 2:3  | מלכים א ב:ג   |
| Keep the charge of the Lord your God to walk in His ways, keeping His statutes, commandments, judgments, and testimonies, as is written in Moses’s law- so that you will prosper in all you do, and wherever you turn. | וּשְׁמַרְתָּ אֶת־מִשְׁמַרְתּוֹ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְלַכֵּת בְּדַרְכָּיו לְשַׁמֵּר חֻקֹּתָיו מִצְוֹתָיו וּמִשְׁפָּטָיו וְעִדּוּתָיו בְּכָתוּב בְּתוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה לְמַעַן תִּשְׁכִּיל אֶת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה וְאֵת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר תִּפְגַּח שָׁם: |

<sup>1</sup> The others are the Haftarat of [Chavei Sarah](#) and [Miketz](#).

<sup>2</sup> See [Who’s Who](#) for a description of some of the historical background that led to David’s harsh instructions to Solomon regarding Joab and Shimi. Abarbanel, Hertz, the “Hirsch” Haftarah commentary, [R. Moshe Lichtenstein](#), and others discuss whether, and if so how, these instructions were justifiable from moral, halachic, political, spiritual, and other perspectives.

Verses 5-6: David advises Solomon to act shrewdly and possibly harshly with **Joab**.

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| I Kings 2:5  | מלכים א ב:ה  |
| You also know what <b>Joab</b> son of Zeruiah did to me, [namely] what he did to the two captains of Israel's armies- Abner the son of Ner and Amasa the son of Jether. He killed them, shedding the blood of war in peace[time], and placing the blood of war upon his girdle [around] his loins, and on his shoe[s] on his feet. | וְגַם אַתָּה יָדַעְתָּ אֶת־אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה לִי יוֹאָב בֶּן־זְרוּיָהוּ וְאֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לְשְׁנֵי־שָׂרֵי צְבָאוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל לְאַבְנֵר בֶּן־נֵר וְלַעֲמָשָׂא בֶן־יֶתֶר וַיַּהַרְגוּם וַיִּשְׂמוּ דַמִּי־מִלְחָמָה בְּשָׁלֹם וַיִּתְּנוּ דַמִּי מִלְחָמָה בְּתוֹגָתוֹ וְאֲשֶׁר בְּמַתְּנָיו וּבַנְּעָלוֹ אֲשֶׁר בְּרַגְלָיו: |

Verses 7-9: David instructs Solomon to support **Barzillai's** descendants, and to be wary of, and to execute if necessary, **Shimi**.

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| I Kings 2:7-8   | מלכים א ב:ז-ח   |
| Show kindness to <b>Barzillai the Gileadite's</b> descendants; let them be among those who eat at your table. For they came close to me during my flight from Absalom, your brother. Behold, <b>Shimi son of Gera</b> the Benjamite from [the town] of Bahurim is with you. He cursed me with a harsh curse when I traveled to Mahanaim. He came down to meet me at the Jordan [River]. I swore to him by the Lord, saying, "I will not put you to death with the sword." | וּלְבָנָי בְּרוּזַי הַגִּלְעָדִי תַעֲשֶׂה־חֶסֶד וְהָיוּ בְּאֶחָדִי שֶׁלְתַנְּךָ כִּי־כָל קָרְבֵי אֵלָי בְּבָרְחִי מִפְּנֵי אַבְשָׁלוֹם אַחִיד: וְהִנֵּה עִמָּךְ שְׁמֵעִי בֶן־גֵּרָא בֶן־הַיְמִינִי מִבְּחָרִים וְהוּא קָלָלָנִי קָלָלָה נְמֻרָצָת בְּיוֹם לְכַתִּי מִתְּנַגִּים וְהוּא־יָרַד לְקִרְאָתִי הַיַּרְדֵּן וְאַשְׁבַּע לוֹ בַּה' לֵאמֹר אִם־אֶצְמִיתֶךָ בְּחֶרֶב: |

Verses 10-12: After reigning for forty years in Hebron and seven years in Jerusalem, David dies and is buried in his city. Solomon firmly secures the throne.

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| I Kings 2:12  | מלכים א ב:י"ב   |
| Solomon sat upon the throne of his father, David. His reign was firmly established. | וַיִּשְׁלַמֶּה יֵשֵׁב עַל־כִּסֵּא דָוִד אָבִיו וַתִּכְנַן מַלְכָּתוֹ מְאֹד: |

### Connections

Maimonides' ruling about the **halachic prerogatives of Jewish kings** assert that Shimi deserved royal execution.

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| Mishneh Torah, Kings and Wars 3:8   | משנה תורה, הלכות מלכים ומלחמות ג:ח   |
| An Israelite king has permission to execute anyone who rebels against him. Even if he decreed that one of his subjects must go to a particular place, but he did not go there; or, that [a subject] may not leave his house, but he left - [such a rebel] is liable to the death penalty. If [the king] wishes to kill [the rebel], he must be executed, as [Joshua 1:18] states, "Any man who rebels against [commands issued by] your mouth [...shall be put to death.]" Similarly, the king has permission to execute anyone who disgraces or insults the king, such as <b>Shimi, son of Gera</b> . The king has permission to execute only by the sword. He may imprison and beat someone with a whip for the sake of his [royal] honor. However, he may not declare property to be ownerless; if he [does so] it is theft. | כָּל הַמְּוֹרֵד בְּמִלְכּוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשׁ לְמִלְכּוֹ רְשׁוּת לְהַרְגוֹ. אִפְלוּ גָזַר עַל אֶחָד מִשְׂאֵר הָעָם שֶׁיֵּלֶךְ לְמָקוֹם פְּלוּנִי וְלֹא הֵלֵךְ אוֹ שְׁלֹא יֵצֵא מִבֵּיתוֹ וְיֵצֵא חָזֵב מִתּוֹ. וְאִם רָצָה לְהַרְגוֹ יִהְרַג. שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ א יח) "כָּל אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִמְרָה אֶת פִּי." וְכֵן כָּל הַמְּבַזֵּה אֶת הַמֶּלֶךְ אוֹ הַמְּחַרְפוֹ יֵשׁ לְמִלְכּוֹ רְשׁוּת לְהַרְגוֹ. כְּשִׁמְעִי בֶן גֵּרָא. וְאִין לְמִלְכּוֹ רְשׁוּת לְהַרְגַּ אֶלְא בְּסִיף בְּלַבָּד. וְיֵשׁ לוֹ לְאַסֵּר וּלְהַכּוֹת בְּשׁוֹטֵיין לְכַבּוּדוֹ. אֲבָל לֹא יִפְקִיר מִמּוֹן וְאִם הִפְקִיר הָרִי זֶה גָּזֵל: |

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