

BARZIILLAI ... who went home to wait for God  
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(2 SAMUEL 19: 33-37)

Dear Barzillai,

You are one of the not-so-well-known characters of the ancient writings, for your story is hidden in history-but we have found you out! You didn't like a lot of publicity, and perhaps even now you will shrink from being brought into the limelight. Accept our apologies, noble sir, and if our actions seem to offend, grant an indulgence. We like you ; we like you a lot, for in that wise old head of yours you possess much wisdom. Again and again we have read the brief record of your exploits, and it seems to us that you passed through four definite phases. Forgive us if we seem to be chopping up your story; but, dear friend, we are preachers. I suppose that proves one thing or another. I don't know which!

Your Personal Regard

We have been told that when David fled from the rebellion of Absalom, you with others, " Brought beds, and basons, and earthen vessels, and wheat, and barley, and flour, and parched corn, and beans, and lentiles, and parched pulse. 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 " (2 Sam. 17:27-29). Nice work, Barzillai! You thought of everything in that hour of emergency. In these modern days people would have taken a collection of tinned foods, and would have forgotten the tin opener! We have often considered your liking for David. Surely you thought a great deal of your master, for at the time of your allegiance the outlook was gloomy. We admire loyalty and faithfulness, and your glorious deed became an immortal example. Well done, old man. We are proud of you.

Your Persistent Refusal

How we would have loved to see David's face when you disappointed him. Oh, Barzillai! He had planned to give you the time of your life. What a present for your eightieth birthday-a royal present, too ; and you refused it. How long did David try to persuade you to alter your mind? Old friend, we know many people who would have, jumped at the chance to accompany David to the palace, to live in the lap of luxury. The soft lights and sweet music of the kingly household would ravish their hearts, and on no consideration would they refuse a king's offer. We can still hear David saying, "Come thou over with me, and I will feed thee with me in Jerusalem (I 9: 33)-and you shook your head.

Your Potent Realization

" 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? . . . 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." You crafty old man-you were an expert diplomat. Even David could not have been offended at the refusal, for your arguments were unassailable. You could not hear-you could not taste-quite right, Barzillai, but you could see, and there was a great deal to be seen in David's presence. But you were

BARZILLAI ... who went home to wait for God looking elsewhere, your eyes were on eternity. " How long have I to live?" you asked. and at the same time you could have supplied an approximate answer. "A few weeks, a few months, but at most a few years. Should I waste my precious moments on the frivolities of earth, when soon I shall commence the important journey into the hereafter? No, David, I am going home to attend to the most important business in life."

#### Your Peaceful Readiness

Old friend, we would like to ask a question. How long had you to wait before the call came? We see you sitting peacefully at home ; we appreciate the deep content filling your soul. Your lifetime of ready service was a source of constant satisfaction ; your opportunities had not been lost. The unknown road ahead did not fill you with misgivings. Your people had gone that way, and their Guide would soon be coming to guide their aged son. Of course, you could not tell us about your funeral ; but we believe it was a procession of quiet dignity. It wasn't a funeral, but a home-going and a reunion. You were ready for the eternal call, and God was proud to welcome you. Fortunate man! How we wish that all men would learn from your story. We struggle and scheme, we save and plan, and so often forget that a similar call could come to us at any moment. Oh, Barzillai, we are all mixed up. We say, " a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," but that is not always true. A mansion in Immanuel's land would be worth a city in this land. Barzillai, we have much to learn!

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