

Hushai and Ahithophel (c. 974 BC)

2 Samuel 16:15–17:29

Ahithophel Gives Absalom Wise Advice

16:15 Then Absalom and all the people, the men of Israel, entered Jerusalem, and Ahithophel with him.

16 Now it came about when Hushai the Archite, David's friend, came to Absalom, that Hushai said to Absalom, "*Long live the king! Long live the king!*"

17 Absalom said to Hushai, "Is this your loyalty to your friend? Why did you not go with your friend?"

18 Then Hushai said to Absalom, "No! For whom the LORD, this people, and all the men of Israel have chosen, his I will be, and with him I will remain.

19 Besides, whom should I serve? *Should I not serve* in the presence of his son? As I have served in your father's presence, so I will be in your presence."

20 Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, "Give your advice. What shall we do?"

21 Ahithophel said to Absalom, "Go in to your father's concubines, whom he has left to keep the house; then all Israel will hear that you have made yourself odious to your father. The hands of all who are with you will also be strengthened."

22 So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the roof, and Absalom went in to his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel.

23 The advice of Ahithophel, which he gave in those days, *was* as if one inquired of the word of God; so was all the advice of Ahithophel *regarded* by both David and Absalom.

17:1 Furthermore, Ahithophel said to Absalom, "Please let me choose 12,000 men that I may arise and pursue David tonight.

2 I will come upon him while he is weary and exhausted and terrify him, so that all the people who are with him will flee. Then I will strike down the king alone,

3 and I will bring back all the people to you. The return of everyone depends on the man you seek; *then* all the people will be at peace."

4 So the plan pleased Absalom and all the elders of Israel.

God Helps Hushai Frustrate the Wise Advice of Ahithophel

5 Then Absalom said, "Now call Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear what he has to say."

6 When Hushai had come to Absalom, Absalom said to him, "Ahithophel has spoken thus. Shall we carry out his plan? If not, you speak."

7 So Hushai said to Absalom, "This time the advice that Ahithophel has given is not good."

8 Moreover, Hushai said, "You know your father and his men, that they are mighty men and they are fierce, like a bear robbed of her cubs in the field. And your father is an expert in warfare, and will not spend the night with the people.

9 Behold, he has now hidden himself in one of the caves or in another place; and it will be when he falls on them at the first attack, that whoever hears *it* will say, 'There has been a slaughter among the people who follow Absalom.'

10 And even the one who is valiant, whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will completely lose heart; for all Israel knows that your father is a mighty man and those who are with him are valiant men.

11 But I counsel that all Israel be surely gathered to you, from Dan even to Beersheba, as the sand that is by the sea in abundance, and that you personally go into battle.

12 So we shall come to him in one of the places where he can be found, and we will fall on him as the dew falls on the ground; and of him and of all the men who are with him, not even one will be left.

13 If he withdraws into a city, then all Israel shall bring ropes to that city, and we will drag it into the valley until not even a small stone is found there."

14 Then Absalom and all the men of Israel said, "The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel." For the LORD had ordained to thwart the good counsel of Ahithophel, so that the LORD might bring calamity on Absalom.

Hushai Sends Word to David

15 Then Hushai said to Zadok and to Abiathar the priests, "This is what Ahithophel counseled Absalom and the elders of Israel, and this is what I have counseled.

16 Now therefore, send quickly and tell David, saying, 'Do not spend the night at the fords of the wilderness, but by all means cross over, or else the king and all the people who are with him will be destroyed.'"

17 Now Jonathan and Ahimaaz were staying at En-rogel, and a maidservant would go and tell them, and they would go and tell King David, for they could not be seen entering the city.

18 But a lad did see them and told Absalom; so the two of them departed quickly and came to the house of a man in Bahurim, who had a well in his courtyard, and they went down into it.

19 And the woman took a covering and spread it over the well's mouth and scattered grain on it, so that nothing was known.

20 Then Absalom's servants came to the woman at the house and said, "Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan?" And the woman said to them, "They have crossed the brook of water." And when they searched and could not find *them*, they returned to Jerusalem.

21 It came about after they had departed that they came up out of the well and went and told King David; and they said to David, "Arise and cross over the water quickly for thus Ahithophel has counseled against you."

22 Then David and all the people who *were* with him arose and crossed the Jordan; and by dawn not even one remained who had not crossed the Jordan.

Ahithophel Foresees Disaster and Hangs Himself

23 Now when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled *his* donkey and arose and went to his home, to his city, and set his house in order, and strangled himself; thus he died and was buried in the grave of his father.

Absalom Begins His Pursuit of David

24 Then David came to Mahanaim. And Absalom crossed the Jordan, he and all the men of Israel with him.

25 Absalom set Amasa over the army in place of Joab. Now Amasa was the son of a man whose name was Ithra the Israelite, who went in to Abigail the daughter of Nahash, sister of Zeruiah, Joab's mother.

26 And Israel and Absalom camped in the land of Gilead.

27 Now when David had come to Mahanaim, Shobi the son of Nahash from Rabbah of the sons of Ammon, Machir the son of Ammiel from Lo-debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite from Rogelim,

28 brought beds, basins, pottery, wheat, barley, flour, parched *grain*, beans, lentils, parched *seeds*,

29 honey, curds, sheep, and cheese of the herd, for David and for the people who *were* with him, to eat; for they said, "The people are hungry and weary and thirsty in the wilderness."

My Soul Thirsts For You (c. 974 BC)

Psalm 63

A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah.

- 1 O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly;
My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You,
In a dry and weary land where there is no water.
- 2 Thus I have seen You in the sanctuary,
To see Your power and Your glory.
- 3 Because Your lovingkindness is better than life,
My lips will praise You.
- 4 So I will bless You as long as I live;
I will lift up my hands in Your name.
- 5 My soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness,
And my mouth offers praises with joyful lips.
- 6 When I remember You on my bed,
I meditate on You in the night watches,
- 7 For You have been my help,
And in the shadow of Your wings I sing for joy.
- 8 My soul clings to You;
Your right hand upholds me.
- 9 But those who seek my life to destroy it,
Will go into the depths of the earth.
- 10 They will be delivered over to the power of the sword;
They will be a prey for foxes.
- 11 But the king will rejoice in God;
Everyone who swears by Him will glory,
For the mouths of those who speak lies will be stopped.

Save Me, O My God (c. 974 BC)

Psalm 3

A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.

- 1 O LORD, how my adversaries have increased!
Many are rising up against me.
- 2 Many are saying of my soul,
"There is no deliverance for him in God." *Selah.*
- 3 But You, O LORD, are a shield about me,
My glory, and the One who lifts my head.
- 4 I was crying to the LORD with my voice,

- And He answered me from His holy mountain. *Selah*.
- 5 I lay down and slept;
I awoke, for the LORD sustains me.
- 6 I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people
Who have set themselves against me round about.
- 7 Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God!
For You have smitten all my enemies on the cheek;
You have shattered the teeth of the wicked.
- 8 Salvation belongs to the LORD;
Your blessing *be* upon Your people! *Selah*.

David's Forces Quell Absalom's Revolt (c. 974 BC)

2 Samuel 18:1–19:8a

David Prepares His Army for Battle With Absalom

18:1 Then David numbered the people who were with him and set over them commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds.

2 David sent the people out, one third under the command of Joab, one third under the command of Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, and one third under the command of Ittai the Gittite. And the king said to the people, "I myself will surely go out with you also."

3 But the people said, "You should not go out; for if we indeed flee, they will not care about us; even if half of us die, they will not care about us. But you are worth ten thousand of us; therefore now it is better that you *be ready* to help us from the city."

4 Then the king said to them, "Whatever seems best to you I will do." So the king stood beside the gate, and all the people went out by hundreds and thousands.

5 The king charged Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying, "*Deal* gently for my sake with the young man Absalom." And all the people heard when the king charged all the commanders concerning Absalom.

David's Army Defeats Absalom's Forces

6 Then the people went out into the field against Israel, and the battle took place in the forest of Ephraim.

7 The people of Israel were defeated there before the servants of David, and the slaughter there that day was great, 20,000 men.

8 For the battle there was spread over the whole countryside, and the forest devoured more people that day than the sword devoured.

Joab Kills Absalom

9 Now Absalom happened to meet the servants of David. For Absalom was riding on *his* mule, and the mule went under the thick branches of a great oak. And his head caught fast in the oak, so he was left hanging between heaven and earth, while the mule that was under him kept going.

10 When a certain man saw *it*, he told Joab and said, "Behold, I saw Absalom hanging in an oak."

11 Then Joab said to the man who had told him, "Now behold, you saw *him*! Why then did you not strike him there to the ground? And I would have given you ten *pieces* of silver and a belt."

12 The man said to Joab, "Even if I should receive a thousand *pieces* of silver in my hand, I would not put out my hand against the king's son; for in our hearing the king charged you and Abishai and Ittai, saying, 'Protect for me the young man Absalom!'

13 Otherwise, if I had dealt treacherously against his life (and there is nothing hidden from the king), then you yourself would have stood aloof."

14 Then Joab said, "I will not waste time here with you." So he took three spears in his hand and thrust them through the heart of Absalom while he was yet alive in the midst of the oak.

15 And ten young men who carried Joab's armor gathered around and struck Absalom and killed him.

16 Then Joab blew the trumpet, and the people returned from pursuing Israel, for Joab restrained the people.

17 They took Absalom and cast him into a deep pit in the forest and erected over him a very great heap of stones. And all Israel fled, each to his tent.

18 Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and set up for himself a pillar which is in the King's Valley, for he said, "I have no son to preserve my name." So he named the pillar after his own name, and it is called Absalom's Monument to this day.

Ahimaaz and the Cushite Bring David the News of Absalom's Death

19 Then Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said, "Please let me run and bring the king news that the LORD has freed him from the hand of his enemies."

20 But Joab said to him, "You are not the man to carry news this day, but you shall carry news another day; however, you shall carry no news today because the king's son is dead."

21 Then Joab said to the Cushite, "Go, tell the king what you have seen." So the Cushite bowed to Joab and ran.

22 Now Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said once more to Joab, "But whatever happens, please let me also run after the Cushite." And Joab said, "Why would you run, my son, since you will have no reward for going?"

23 "But whatever happens," *he said*, "I will run." So he said to him, "Run." Then Ahimaaz ran by way of the plain and passed up the Cushite.

24 Now David was sitting between the two gates; and the watchman went up to the roof of the gate by the wall, and raised his eyes and looked, and behold, a man running by himself.

25 The watchman called and told the king. And the king said, "If he is by himself there is good news in his mouth." And he came nearer and nearer.

26 Then the watchman saw another man running; and the watchman called to the gatekeeper and said, "Behold, *another* man running by himself." And the king said, "This one also is bringing good news."

27 The watchman said, "I think the running of the first one is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok." And the king said, "This is a good man and comes with good news."

28 Ahimaaz called and said to the king, "All is well." And he prostrated himself before the king with his face to the ground. And he said, "Blessed is the LORD your God, who has delivered up the men who lifted their hands against my lord the king."

29 The king said, "Is it well with the young man Absalom?" And Ahimaaz answered, "When Joab sent the king's servant, and your servant, I saw a great tumult, but I did not know what *it was*."

30 Then the king said, "Turn aside and stand here." So he turned aside and stood still.

31 Behold, the Cushite arrived, and the Cushite said, "Let my lord the king receive good news, for the LORD has freed you this day from the hand of all those who rose up against you."

32 Then the king said to the Cushite, "Is it well with the young man Absalom?" And the Cushite answered, "Let the enemies of my lord the king, and all who rise up against you for evil, be as that young man!"

David Grieves Absalom's Death

33 The king was deeply moved and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept. And thus he said as he walked, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

19:1 Then it was told Joab, "Behold, the king is weeping and mourns for Absalom."

2 The victory that day was turned to mourning for all the people, for the people heard *it* said that day, "The king is grieved for his son."

3 So the people went by stealth into the city that day, as people who are humiliated steal away when they flee in battle.

4 The king covered his face and cried out with a loud voice, "O my son Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

Joab Angrily Confronts David

5 Then Joab came into the house to the king and said, "Today you have covered with shame the faces of all your servants, who today have saved your life and the lives of your sons and daughters, the lives of your wives, and the lives of your concubines, 6 by loving those who hate you, and by hating those who love you. For you have shown today that princes and servants are nothing to you; for I know this day that if Absalom were alive and all of us were dead today, then you would be pleased. 7 Now therefore arise, go out and speak kindly to your servants, for I swear by the LORD, if you do not go out, surely not a man will pass the night with you, and this will be worse for you than all the evil that has come upon you from your youth until now." 8a So the king arose and sat in the gate. When they told all the people, saying, "Behold, the king is sitting in the gate," then all the people came before the king.

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Chronological Notes

- 1) Kidner comments: "The title in the canonical text [of Psalm 63] identifies the desolate scene which set these thoughts in motion, and the mention of the king in verse 11 points to the time when Absalom rather than Saul had made him take to the Wilderness of Judah on his way to the Jordan (cf. 2 Sam. 15:23). Not only is the weariness of the way emphasized in the narrative (e.g. 2 Sam 16:14) but, as Kirkpatrick points out, the strong faith evident in the psalm has its counterpart there as well, in that David was prepared to part with the ark itself (2 Sam. 15:25) in his certainty of God and his commitment to his will."¹

¹ Derek Kidner, "Psalms 1–72," *TOTC*, 242–43.