

Hushai and Ahithophel (c. 974 BC)

2 Samuel 16:15–17:29

Ahithophel Gives Absalom Wise Advice

16:15 Now when Absalom and all the men of Israel arrived in Jerusalem, Ahithophel was with him.

16 When David's friend Hushai the Arkite came to Absalom, Hushai said to him, "Long live the king! Long live the king!"

17 Absalom said to Hushai, "Do you call this loyalty to your friend? Why didn't you go with your friend?"

18 Hushai replied to Absalom, "No, I will be loyal to the one whom the LORD, these people, and all the men of Israel have chosen.

19 Moreover, whom should I serve? Should it not be his son? Just as I served your father, so I will serve you."

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

21 Ahithophel replied to Absalom, "Have sex with your father's concubines whom he left to care for the palace. All Israel will hear that you have made yourself repulsive to your father. Then your followers will be motivated to support you."

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

23 In those days Ahithophel's advice was considered as valuable as a prophetic revelation. Both David and Absalom highly regarded the advice of Ahithophel.

17:1 Ahithophel said to Absalom, "Let me pick out twelve thousand men. Then I will go and pursue David this very night.

2 When I catch up with him he will be exhausted and worn out. I will rout him, and the entire army that is with him will flee. I will kill only the king

3 and will bring the entire army back to you. In exchange for the life of the man you are seeking, you will get back everyone. The entire army will return unharmed."

4 This seemed like a good idea to Absalom and to all the leaders of Israel.

God Helps Hushai Frustrate the Wise Advice of Ahithophel

5 But Absalom said, "Call for Hushai the Arkite, and let's hear what he has to say."

6 So Hushai came to Absalom. Absalom said to him, "Here is what Ahithophel has advised. Should we follow his advice? If not, what would you recommend?"

7 Hushai replied to Absalom, "Ahithophel's advice is not sound this time."

8 Hushai went on to say, "You know your father and his men—they are soldiers and are as dangerous as a bear out in the wild that has been robbed of her cubs. Your father is an experienced soldier; he will not stay overnight with the army.

9 At this very moment he is hiding out in one of the caves or in some other similar place. If it should turn out that he attacks our troops first, whoever hears about it will say, 'Absalom's army has been slaughtered!'

10 If that happens even the bravest soldier—one who is lion-hearted—will virtually melt away. For all Israel knows that your father is a warrior and that those who are with him are brave.

11 My advice therefore is this: Let all Israel from Dan to Beer Sheba—in number like the sand by the sea!—be mustered to you, and you lead them personally into battle.

12 We will come against him wherever he happens to be found. We will descend on him like the dew falls on the ground. Neither he nor any of the men who are with him will be spared alive—not one of them!

13 If he regroups in a city, all Israel will take up ropes to that city and drag it down to the valley, so that not a single pebble will be left there!"

14 Then Absalom and all the men of Israel said, "The advice of Hushai the Arkite sounds better than the advice of Ahithophel." Now the LORD had decided to frustrate the sound advice of Ahithophel, so that the LORD could bring disaster on Absalom.

Hushai Sends Word to David

15 Then Hushai reported to Zadok and Abiathar the priests, "Here is what Ahithophel has advised Absalom and the leaders of Israel to do, and here is what I have advised.

16 Now send word quickly to David and warn him, "Don't spend the night at the fords of the desert tonight. Instead, be sure you cross over, or else the king and everyone who is with him may be overwhelmed."

17 Now Jonathan and Ahimaaz were staying in En Rogel. A female servant would go and inform them, and they would then go and inform King David. It was not advisable for them to be seen going into the city.

18 But a young man saw them on one occasion and informed Absalom. So the two of them quickly departed and went to the house of a man in Bahurim. There was a well in his courtyard, and they got down in it.

19 His wife then took the covering and spread it over the top of the well and scattered some grain over it. No one was aware of what she had done.

20 When the servants of Absalom approached the woman at her home, they asked, "Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan?" The woman replied to them, "They crossed over the stream." Absalom's men searched but did not find them, so they returned to Jerusalem.

21 After the men had left, Ahimaaz and Jonathan climbed out of the well. Then they left and informed King David. They advised David, "Get up and cross the stream quickly, for Ahithophel has devised a plan to catch you."

22 So David and all the people who were with him got up and crossed the Jordan River. By dawn there was not one person left who

had not crossed the Jordan.

Ahithophel Foresees Disaster and Hangs Himself

23 When Ahithophel realized that his advice had not been followed, he saddled his donkey and returned to his house in his hometown. After setting his household in order, he hanged himself. So he died and was buried in the grave of his father.

Absalom Begins His Pursuit of David

24 Meanwhile David had gone to Mahanaim, while Absalom and all the men of Israel had crossed the Jordan River.

25 Absalom had made Amasa general in command of the army in place of Joab. (Now Amasa was the son of an Israelite man named Jether, who had married Abigail the daughter of Nahash and sister of Zeruiah, Joab's mother.)

26 The army of Israel and Absalom camped in the land of Gilead.

27 When David came to Mahanaim, Shobi the son of Nahash from Rabbah of the Ammonites, Makir the son of Ammiel from Lo Debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite from Rogelim

28 brought bedding, basins, and pottery utensils. They also brought food for David and all who were with him, including wheat, barley, flour, roasted grain, beans, lentils,

29 honey, curds, flocks, and cheese. For they said, "The people are no doubt hungry, tired, and thirsty there in the desert."

My Soul Thirsts For You (c. 974 BC)

Psalm 63

A psalm of David, written when he was in the Judean wilderness.

- 1 O God, you are my God! I long for you!
My soul thirsts for you,
my flesh yearns for you,
in a dry and parched land where there is no water.
- 2 Yes, in the sanctuary I have seen you,
and witnessed your power and splendor.
- 3 Because experiencing your loyal love is better than life itself,
my lips will praise you.
- 4 For this reason I will praise you while I live;
in your name I will lift up my hands.
- 5 As if with choice meat you satisfy my soul.
My mouth joyfully praises you,
- 6 whenever I remember you on my bed,
and think about you during the nighttime hours.
- 7 For you are my deliverer;
under your wings I rejoice.
- 8 My soul pursues you;
your right hand upholds me.
- 9 Enemies seek to destroy my life,
but they will descend into the depths of the earth.
- 10 Each one will be handed over to the sword;
their corpses will be eaten by jackals.
- 11 But the king will rejoice in God;
everyone who takes oaths in his name will boast,
for the mouths of those who speak lies will be shut up.

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

Psalm 3

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

- 1 LORD, how numerous are my enemies!
Many attack me.
- 2 Many say about me,
"God will not deliver him." (Selah)
- 3 But you, LORD, are a shield that protects me;
you are my glory and the one who restores me.
- 4 To the LORD I cried out,

- and he answered me from his holy hill. (Selah)
- 5 I rested and slept;
I awoke, for the LORD protects me.
- 6 I am not afraid of the multitude of people
who attack me from all directions.
- 7 Rise up, LORD!
Deliver me, my God!
Yes, you will strike all my enemies on the jaw;
you will break the teeth of the wicked.
- 8 The LORD delivers;
you show favor to 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 David assembled the army that was with him. He appointed leaders of thousands and leaders of hundreds.
- 2 David then sent out the army—a third under the leadership of Joab, a third under the leadership of Joab's brother Abishai son of Zeruah, and a third under the leadership of Ittai the Gittite. The king said to the troops, "I too will indeed march out with you."
- 3 But the soldiers replied, "You should not do this! For if we should have to make a rapid retreat, they won't be too concerned about us. Even if half of us should die, they won't be too concerned about us. But you are like ten thousand of us! So it is better if you remain in the city for support."
- 4 Then the king said to them, "I will do whatever seems best to you." So the king stayed beside the city gate, while all the army marched out by hundreds and by thousands.
- 5 The king gave this order to Joab, Abishai, and Ittai: "For my sake deal gently with the young man Absalom." Now the entire army was listening when the king gave all the leaders this order concerning Absalom.

David's Army Defeats Absalom's Forces

- 6 Then the army marched out to the field to fight against Israel. The battle took place in the forest of Ephraim.
- 7 The army of Israel was defeated there by David's men. The slaughter there was great that day—20,000 soldiers were killed.
- 8 The battle there was spread out over the whole area, and the forest consumed more soldiers than the sword devoured that day.

Joab Kills Absalom

- 9 Then Absalom happened to come across David's men. Now as Absalom was riding on his mule, it went under the branches of a large oak tree. His head got caught in the oak and he was suspended in midair, while the mule he had been riding kept going.
- 10 When one of the men saw this, he reported it to Joab saying, "I saw Absalom hanging in an oak tree.
- 11 Joab replied to the man who was telling him this, "What! You saw this? Why didn't you strike him down right on the spot? I would have given you ten pieces of silver and a commemorative belt!"
- 12 The man replied to Joab, "Even if I were receiving a thousand pieces of silver, I would not strike the king's son! In our very presence the king gave this order to you and Abishai and Ittai, 'Protect the young man Absalom for my sake.'
- 13 If I had acted at risk of my own life—and nothing is hidden from the king!—you would have abandoned me."
- 14 Joab replied, "I will not wait around like this for you!" He took three spears in his hand and thrust them into the middle of Absalom while he was still alive in the middle of the oak tree.
- 15 Then ten soldiers who were Joab's armor bearers struck Absalom and finished him off.
- 16 Then Joab blew the trumpet and the army turned back from chasing Israel, for Joab had called for the army to halt.
- 17 They took Absalom, threw him into a large pit in the forest, and stacked a huge pile of stones over him. In the meantime all the Israelite soldiers fled to their homes.
- 18 Prior to this Absalom had set up a monument and dedicated it to himself in the King's Valley, reasoning "I have no son who will carry on my name." He named the monument after himself, and to this day it is known as Absalom's Memorial.

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

- 19 Then Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said, "Let me run and give the king the good news that the LORD has vindicated him before his enemies."
- 20 But Joab said to him, "You will not be a bearer of good news today. You will bear good news some other day, but not today, for the king's son is dead."
- 21 Then Joab said to the Cushite, "Go and tell the king what you have seen." After bowing to Joab, the Cushite ran off.
- 22 Ahimaaz the son of Zadok again spoke to Joab, "Whatever happens, let me go after the Cushite." But Joab said, "Why is it that you want to go, my son? You have no good news that will bring you a reward."

23 But he said, “Whatever happens, I want to go!” So Joab said to him, “Then go!” So Ahimaaz ran by the way of the Jordan plain, and he passed the Cushite.

24 Now David was sitting between the inner and outer gates, and the watchman went up to the roof over the gate at the wall. When he looked, he saw a man running by himself.

25 So the watchman called out and informed the king. The king said, “If he is by himself, he brings good news.” The runner came ever closer.

26 Then the watchman saw another man running. The watchman called out to the gatekeeper, “There is another man running by himself.” The king said, “This one also is bringing good news.”

27 The watchman said, “It appears to me that the first runner is Ahimaaz son of Zadok.” The king said, “He is a good man, and he comes with good news.”

28 Then Ahimaaz called out and said to the king, “Greetings!” He bowed down before the king with his face toward the ground and said, “May the LORD your God be praised because he has defeated the men who opposed my lord the king!”

29 The king replied, “How is the young man Absalom?” Ahimaaz replied, “I saw a great deal of confusion when Joab was sending the king’s servant and me, your servant, but I don’t know what it was all about.”

30 The king said, “Turn aside and take your place here.” So he turned aside and waited.

31 Then the Cushite arrived and said, “May my lord the king now receive the good news! The LORD has vindicated you today and delivered you from the hand of all who have rebelled against you!”

32 The king asked the Cushite, “How is the young man Absalom?” The Cushite replied, “May the enemies of my lord the king and all who have plotted against you be like that young man!”

David Grieves Absalom’s Death

33 The king then became very upset. He went up to the upper room over the gate and wept. As he went he said, “My son, Absalom! My son, my son, Absalom! If only I could have died in your place! Absalom, my son, my son!”

19:1 Joab was told, “The king is weeping and mourning over Absalom.”

2 So the victory of that day was turned to mourning as far as all the people were concerned. For the people heard on that day, “The king is grieved over his son.”

3 That day the people stole away to go to the city the way people who are embarrassed steal away in fleeing from battle.

4 The king covered his face and cried out loudly, “My son, Absalom! Absalom, my son, my son!”

Joab Angrily Confronts David

5 So Joab visited the king at his home. He said, “Today you have embarrassed all your servants who have saved your life this day, as well as the lives of your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your concubines.

6 You seem to love your enemies and hate your friends! For you have as much as declared today that leaders and servants don’t matter to you. I realize now that if Absalom were alive and all of us were dead today, it would be all right with you.

7 So get up now and go out and give some encouragement to your servants. For I swear by the LORD that if you don’t go out there, not a single man will stay here with you tonight! This disaster will be worse for you than any disaster that has overtaken you from your youth right to the present time!”

8a So the king got up and sat at the city gate. When all the people were informed that the king was sitting at the city gate, they all came before him.

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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.