

# SECOND SAMUEL

## Chapter 17

### *Hushai Saves David*

Moreover, Ahithophel said to Absalom, “Let me choose twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue David tonight. 2 I will come upon him while he is weary and discouraged and throw him into a panic, and all the people who are with him will flee. I will strike down only the king, 3 and I will bring all the people back to you as a bride comes home to her husband. You seek the life of only one man, and all the people will be at peace.” 4 And the advice seemed right in the eyes of Absalom and all the elders of Israel. 5 Then Absalom said, “Call Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear what he has to say.” 6 And when Hushai came to Absalom, Absalom said to him, “Thus has Ahithophel spoken; shall we do as he says? If not, you speak.” 7 Then Hushai said to Absalom, “This time the counsel that Ahithophel has given is not good.” 8 Hushai said, “You know that your father and his men are mighty men, and that they are enraged, like a bear robbed of her cubs in the field. Besides, your father is expert in war; he will not spend the night with the people. 9 Behold, even now he has hidden himself in one of the pits or in some other place. And as soon as some of the people fall at the first attack, whoever hears it will say, ‘There has been a slaughter among the people who follow Absalom.’ 10 Then even the valiant man, whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will utterly melt with fear, for all Israel knows that your father is a mighty man, and that those who are with him are valiant men. 11 But my counsel is that all Israel be gathered to you, from Dan to Beersheba, as the sand by the sea for multitude, and that you go to battle in person. 12 So we shall come upon him in some place where he is to be found, and we shall light upon him as the dew falls on the ground, and of him and all the men with him not one will be left. 13 If he withdraws into a city, then all Israel will bring ropes to that city, and we shall drag it into the valley, until not even a pebble is to be found there.” 14 And 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 defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, so that the LORD might bring harm upon Absalom. 15 Then Hushai said to Zadok and Abiathar the priests, “Thus and so did Ahithophel counsel Absalom and the elders of Israel, and thus and so have I counseled. 16 Now therefore send quickly and tell David, ‘Do not stay tonight at the fords of the wilderness, but by all means pass over, lest the king and all the people who are with him be swallowed up.’” 17 Now Jonathan and Ahimaaz were waiting at En-rogel. A female servant was to go and tell them, and they were to go and tell King David, for they were not to be seen entering the city. 18 But a young man saw them and told Absalom. So both of them went away quickly and came to the house of a man at Bahurim, who had a well in his courtyard. And they went down into it. 19 And the woman took and spread a covering over the well's mouth and scattered grain on it, and nothing was known of it. 20 When Absalom's servants came to the woman at the house, they said, “Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan?” And the woman said to them, “They have gone over the brook of water.” And when they had sought and could not find them, they returned to Jerusalem. 21 After they had gone, the men came up out of the well, and went and told King David. They said to David, “Arise, and go quickly over the water, for thus and so has Ahithophel counseled against you.” 22 Then David arose, and all the people who were with him, and they crossed the Jordan. By daybreak not one was left who had not crossed the Jordan. 23 When Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his donkey and went off home to his own city. He set his house in order and hanged himself, and he died and was buried in the tomb of his father. 24 Then David came to Mahanaim. And Absalom crossed the Jordan with all the men of Israel. 25 Now Absalom had set Amasa over the army instead of Joab. Amasa was the son of a man named Ithra the Ishmaelite, who had married Abigail the daughter of Nahash, sister of

**Zeruiah, Joab's mother. 26 And Israel and Absalom encamped in the land of Gilead. 27 When David came to Mahanaim, Shobi the son of Nahash from Rabbah of the Ammonites, and Machir the son of Ammiel from Lo-debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite from Rogelim, 28 brought beds, basins, and earthen vessels, wheat, barley, flour, parched grain, beans and lentils, 29 honey and curds and sheep and cheese from the herd, for David and the people with him to eat, for they said, "The people are hungry and weary and thirsty in the wilderness."**

**17:1–3** Ahithophel's advice to Absalom envisioned a cheap and easy victory that would not leave the nation weakened. (CSB)

**17:1** *pursue David tonight.* A good and effective plan. It would almost certainly have been a quick, decisive victory for Absalom. (TLSB)

**17:3** *as a bride ... husband.* Ahithophel spoke of his king as a husband who has a rightful claim to his wife's loyalty (the loyalty of the people). (TLSB)

**17:4** *all the elders of Israel.* Absalom's rebellion appears to have gained extensive backing from prominent tribal leaders. (CSB)

**17:7–13** Hushai's advice subtly capitalizes on Absalom's uncertainty, his fear and his egotism. (CSB)

**17:7** *not good.* Ahithophel's counsel was actually quite good, but not for David! Nor was it according to God's will. Hushai's plan was to buy David time by telling Absalom to prepare for a large army. (TLSB)

**17:8** *a bear robbed of her cubs.* Extremely fierce and angry. (TLSB)

**17:9** *one of the pits.* Cf 18:17. (TLSB)

**17:10** *like the heart of a lion.* Very courageous. (TLSB)

**17:11** *Dan to Beersheba.* The north and south extremities of Saul's kingdom; the chief Israelite region. (TLSB)

*in person.* Appeal to Absalom's vanity. (TLSB)

**17:12** *we ... we.* Hushai carefully links himself with the revolt. (CSB)

*as the dew falls on the ground.* Large army would be like a blanket completely covering David and his men. (TLSB)

**17:14** *the LORD had ordained to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel.* An answer to David's prayer (see 15:31; cf. Ps 33:10; Pr 21:30). (CSB)

Although the Lord chose to use Absalom's sinful rebellion to discipline David (12:9–11), He still held Absalom accountable for his sins. Cf Mt 26:24. (TLSB)

**17:16** *pass over.* Hushai advises David to cross the Jordan River, knowing that Absalom might change his mind and immediately set out after him. (CSB)

In case Absalom would follow Ahithophel's advice. (TLSB)

**17:17** *En Rogel.* A spring in the Kidron Valley just outside the walls of Jerusalem. (CSB)

A well at Jerusalem's southeast corner. (TLSB)

*A servant girl.* A servant girl going to the spring for water would attract no attention. (CSB)

**17:19** *the woman.* The householder's wife. (TLSB)

*well's mouth.* Likely a dry cistern. (TLSB)

*scattered grain on it.* As though she were drying it to produce parched grain. No one would likely disturb the drying grain in search of a hiding place beneath. (TLSB)

**17:20** *over the brook.* Chem: "To conceal something for an honest and just cause in matters which need not be said for reasons of right or usefulness, is not a lie.... It is lawful to use figurative language [e.g., a riddle] which does not reveal the points under discussion" (*LTh* 2:425). Cf Mt 26:64. (TLSB)

**17:23** *hanged himself.* Ahithophel was convinced that the rebellion would fail and that he would be found guilty of treason as a co-conspirator. (CSB)

More than wounded pride is evident in Ahithophel's suicide. He was deliberate, first setting his house in order. With his great wisdom, he reckoned that David would prevail and return to the throne, and that his own life would be forfeited because of his high treason. Perhaps he also recognized God's hand at work against him (v 14). (TLSB)

**17:24** *Mahanaim.* Ironically the same place where Ish-Bosheth had sought refuge after Saul's death (2:8). (CSB)

**17:25** *Amasa.* Nephew of David and cousin of both Absalom and Joab son of Zeruah. (CSB)

*Abigail, the daughter of Nahash and sister of Zeruah.* Zeruah was David's sister (1Ch 2:16). Since the father of Abigail and Zeruah is Nahash rather than Jesse, it would appear that their unnamed mother married Jesse after the death of Nahash. (CSB)

**17:27** *Shobi son of Nahash.* Apparently the brother of Hanun (see 10:2–4), whom David had defeated earlier in his reign (12:26–31). (CSB)

Apparently the governor of Rabbah after David defeated his brother Hanun (10:4–14; 12:26–30). Like his father, Nahash (10:2), Shobi dealt loyally with David. (TLSB)

*Makir.* Provided for Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son, before David restored to him all Saul's land and brought him to eat at the king's table. (TLSB)

*Barzillai.* A wealthy benefactor of David during his flight to Mahanaim (see 19:32; 1Ki 2:7). After the Babylonian exile, there were claimants to the priesthood among his descendants (Ezr 2:61–63; Ne 7:63). (CSB)

A very old and very rich non-Israelite. (TLSB)

**Ch 17** David is on the run. Though apparently at the mercy of his enemies and the elements, David is under the mercy of God, who chastens him as a father disciplines his son, yet all the while maintaining His steadfast love for him. The Lord will humble all who exalt themselves, whether sooner or later. We should pray that the Lord would humble us each day, through discipline unto repentance, so that we may not be humbled before Him in the final judgment! For this repentance, and for the forgiveness of sins, the

Lord has instituted the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. In it, we are crucified, dead, and buried with Christ Jesus, in order to be raised with Him to new life. • We praise You, O God. We bless You and magnify You, that as our dear Father You discipline us in love and provide for all our needs of body and soul, now and forever. Amen. (TLSB)