

SECOND SAMUEL

Chapter 17

Ahithophel said to Absalom, “I would choose twelve thousand men and set out tonight in pursuit of David. ² I would attack him while he is weary and weak. I would strike him with terror, and then all the people with him will flee. I would strike down only the king ³ and bring all the people back to you. The death of the man you seek will mean the return of all; all the people will be unharmed.” ⁴ This plan seemed good to Absalom and to all the elders of Israel. ⁵ But Absalom said, “Summon also Hushai the Arkite, so we can hear what he has to say.” ⁶ When Hushai came to him, Absalom said, “Ahithophel has given this advice. Should we do what he says? If not, give us your opinion.” ⁷ Hushai replied to Absalom, “The advice Ahithophel has given is not good this time. ⁸ You know your father and his men; they are fighters, and as fierce as a wild bear robbed of her cubs. Besides, your father is an experienced fighter; he will not spend the night with the troops. ⁹ Even now, he is hidden in a cave or some other place. If he should attack your troops first, whoever hears about it will say, ‘There has been a slaughter among the troops who follow Absalom.’ ¹⁰ Then even the bravest soldier, whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will melt with fear, for all Israel knows that your father is a fighter and that those with him are brave. ¹¹ “So I advise you: Let all Israel, from Dan to Beersheba—as numerous as the sand on the seashore—be gathered to you, with you yourself leading them into battle. ¹² Then we will attack him wherever he may be found, and we will fall on him as dew settles on the ground. Neither he nor any of his men will be left alive. ¹³ If he withdraws into a city, then all Israel will bring ropes to that city, and we will drag it down to the valley until not even a piece of it can be found.” ¹⁴ Absalom and all the men of Israel said, “The advice of Hushai the Arkite is better than that of Ahithophel.” For the LORD had determined to frustrate the good advice of Ahithophel in order to bring disaster on Absalom. ¹⁵ Hushai told Zadok and Abiathar, the priests, “Ahithophel has advised Absalom and the elders of Israel to do such and such, but I have advised them to do so and so. ¹⁶ Now send a message immediately and tell David, ‘Do not spend the night at the fords in the desert; cross over without fail, or the king and all the people with him will be swallowed up.’ ” ¹⁷ Jonathan and Ahimaaz were staying at En Rogel. A servant girl was to go and inform them, and they were to go and tell King David, for they could not risk being seen entering the city. ¹⁸ But a young man saw them and told Absalom. So the two of them left quickly and went to the house of a man in Bahurim. He had a well in his courtyard, and they climbed down into it. ¹⁹ His wife took a covering and spread it out over the opening of the well and scattered grain over it. No one knew anything about it. ²⁰ When Absalom’s men came to the woman at the house, they asked, “Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan?” The woman answered them, “They crossed over the brook.” The men searched but found no one, so they returned to Jerusalem. ²¹ After the men had gone, the two climbed out of the well and went to inform King David. They said to him, “Set out and cross the river at once;

Ahithophel has advised such and such against you.”²² So David and all the people with him set out and crossed the Jordan. By daybreak, no one was left who had not crossed the Jordan.²³ When Ahithophel saw that his advice had not been followed, he saddled his donkey and set out for his house in his hometown. He put his house in order and then hanged himself. So he died and was buried in his father’s tomb.²⁴ David went to Mahanaim, and Absalom crossed the Jordan with all the men of Israel.²⁵ Absalom had appointed Amasa over the army in place of Joab. Amasa was the son of a man named Jether, an Israelite who had married Abigail, the daughter of Nahash and sister of Zeruiah the mother of Joab.²⁶ The Israelites and Absalom camped in the land of Gilead.²⁷ When David came to Mahanaim, Shobi son of Nahash from Rabbah of the Ammonites, and Makir son of Ammiel from Lo Debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite from Rogelim²⁸ brought bedding and bowls and articles of pottery. They also brought wheat and barley, flour and roasted grain, beans and lentils,²⁹ honey and curds, sheep, and cheese from cows’ milk for David and his people to eat. For they said, “The people have become hungry and tired and thirsty in the desert.”

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*. See note on 3:17. Absalom’s rebellion appears to have gained extensive backing from prominent tribal leaders. (CSB)

17:5 *Hushai the Arkite*. See 16:16–19; see also notes on 15:32, 37. (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 determined to frustrate the good advice 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)

17:15 *Zadok and Abiathar.* See 15:24–29, 35–36. (CSB)

17:16 *fords in the desert.* See 15:28 and note. (CSB)

cross 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 *Jonathan and Ahimaaz.* See 15:36. (CSB)

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)

17:18 *Bahurim.* See note on 16:5. (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 *his hometown.* Giloh (see note on 15:12). (CSB)

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 Zeruiah. (CSB)

Abigail, the daughter of Nahash and sister of Zeruiah. Zeruiah was David's sister (1Ch 2:16). Since the father of Abigail and Zeruiah 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)

Rabbah of the Ammonites. See note on 10:3. (CSB)

Makir. See note on 9:4. (CSB)

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)