

## 2 Samuel 17:1-29

### The Opposing Counsels of Ahithophel and Hushai

**2 Samuel 17:1-3** - "Moreover Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Let me now choose out twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue after David this night: And I will come upon him while he is weary and weak handed, and will make him afraid: and all the people that are with him shall flee; and I will smite the king only: And I will bring back all the people unto thee: the man whom thou seekest is as if all returned: so all the people shall be in peace."

Ahithophel's plan sounded great. He personally would immediately pursue with 12,000 men. The number would seem like it represented all twelve tribes, although there was no time to actually gather men from each tribe. David's army would flee. David would be killed (something Absalom probably didn't want to happen), and David's men would realize it was over, Ahithophel would spare their lives, and all would return to pay allegiance to Absalom.

Absalom then calls in Hushai, a wise counselor, older than Ahithophel, who had known David when he was a fugitive from Saul. Why ask for more counsel when Absalom had already approved of Ahithophel's plan? He probably didn't like the part about actually killing David, so he hoped Hushai would propose a better scenario. But Hushai had already agreed with David to thwart any plan of Ahithophel.

### Hushai's Counsel

**2 Samuel 17:7-10** - "And Hushai said unto Absalom, The counsel that Ahithophel hath given is not good at this time. For, said Hushai, thou knowest thy father and his men, that they be mighty men, and they be chafed in their minds, as a bear robbed of her whelps in the field: and thy father is a man of war, and will not lodge with the people. Behold, he is hid now in some pit, or in some other place: and it will come to pass, when some of them be overthrown at the first, that whosoever heareth it will say, 'There is a slaughter among the people that follow Absalom.' And he also that is valiant, whose heart is as the heart of a lion, shall utterly melt: for all Israel knoweth that thy father is a mighty man, and they which be with him are valiant men."

He explains that David, a renowned and clever warrior, will anticipate an attack and probably go into hiding. He won't be there when you come upon his men, and even if only some of your army is killed, a rumor will spread that Absalom's army was slaughtered. If he is cornered, David will only fight harder and inspire his men to do so too.

**2 Samuel 17:11-13** - "Therefore I counsel that all Israel be generally gathered unto thee, from Dan even to Beersheba, as the sand that is by the sea for multitude; and that thou go to battle in thine own person. So shall we come upon him in some place where he shall be found, and we will light upon him as the dew falleth on the ground: and of him and of all the men that are with him there shall not be left so much as one."

Moreover, if he be gotten into a city, then shall all Israel bring ropes to that city, and we will draw it into the river, until there be not one small stone found there."

Hushai plays on Absalom's vanity to persuade him to first wait and gather troops from all the tribes, and then to lead the army himself. (In Ahithophel's plan, Ahithophel would lead the attack). And Hushai suggests a massive force would destroy David's army, and allow him to be captured rather than killed.

**2 Samuel 17:14** - "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 appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the LORD might bring evil upon Absalom."

### Spies Take the Word to David

**2 Samuel 17:15-16** - "Then said Hushai unto Zadok and to Abiathar the priests, Thus and thus did Ahithophel counsel Absalom and the elders of Israel; and thus and thus have I counseled. Now therefore send quickly, and tell David, saying, Lodge not this night in the plains of the wilderness, but speedily pass over; lest the king be swallowed up, and all the people that are with him."

### A Woman Saves David

**2 Samuel 17:17** - "Now Jonathan and Ahimaaz stayed by Enrogel; for they might not be seen to come into the city: and a wench went and told them; and they went and told king David."

i.e. a wench (female servant) would act as go-between. She would bring word from the priests Zadok and Abiathar to Jonathan and Ahimaaz, and then they would carry a message to David.

Jonathan and Ahimaaz were hiding at En-rogel, a spring on the outskirts of Jerusalem toward the south at the edge of the Valley of Hinnom, that marked the boundary between Judah and Benjamin. En-Rogel = Hebrew for "eye of the traveller." A spring was considered an "eye" (*ayin*) of the landscape. It was also called the "Well of Job," where Job washed his diseased body, and also later the "Dragon or Serpent Well" in **Nehemiah 2:13** - and from its vantage point Nehemiah viewed the ruined walls of Jerusalem.

It is also known as the Well of Nehemiah, or *Puteus ignis* (well of fire), in reference to the location in which the sacred fire was hidden during the Jewish captivity in **2 Maccabees 1:19-22**.

It was a significant location. Later Solomon's half-brother would hold a feast there at a stone called Zoheleth (or the "serpent stone") in his own attempt to usurp the throne from Solomon (**1 Kings 1:9**). And indeed this place now became a key in David's return to claim his kingdom.

**2 Samuel 17: 18** - "Nevertheless a lad saw them, and told Absalom: but they went both of them away quickly, and came to a man's house in Bahurim, which had a well in his court; whither they went down."

Bahurim was the village where Shimei had come out to curse David just days before. But they desperately needed shelter since they knew Absalom's men would be looking for them. The rabbis say this actually WAS Shimei's house, but his wife did not share his antipathy toward David, so she told neither him nor Absalom's men.

**2 Samuel 17:19** - "And the woman took and spread a covering over the well's mouth, and spread ground corn thereon; and the thing was not known."

Was this the well/spring of En-Rogel? It doesn't say, but no doubt it was at least fed by that same spring.

**2 Samuel 17:20** - "And when Absalom's servants came to the woman to the house, they said, Where is Ahimaaz and Jonathan? And the woman said unto them, They be gone over the brook of water. And when they had sought and could not find them, they returned to Jerusalem."

We read this chapter after we just celebrated Purim. And here is another quick-thinking and courageous woman - unnamed - who saves David by hiding his two messengers. This is also very similar to Rahab's actions in hiding the Israelite spies at Jericho (**Joshua 2-6**).

**2 Samuel 17:21-22** - "And it came to pass, after they were departed, that they came up out of the well, and went and told king David, and said unto David, 'Arise, and pass quickly over the water: for thus hath Ahithophel counseled against you.' Then David arose, and all the people that were with him, and they passed over Jordan: by the morning light there lacked not one of them that was not gone over Jordan."

They told "King David" - this is the first time in the story that he is referred to as King David, perhaps to show that God had ended his judgment on him for his sin, and was now moving to restore his kingdom.

### **Ahithophel's Demise**

**2 Samuel 17:23** - "And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his ass, and arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father."

### **Compare this to Judas' fate:**

"So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself. The chief priests picked up the coins and said, 'It is against the law to put this

into the treasury, since it is blood money.' So they decided to use the money to buy the potter's field as a burial place for foreigners. That is why it has been called the Field of Blood to this day" (**Matthew 27:5–8**). Apparently, when his body was cut down, it burst, spilling his intestines on the ground (**Acts 1:18–19**).

This is really remarkable. Like Esau, Judas had remorse for his actions, but not repentance. Apparently it was the same for Ahithophel. The rabbis say he lost his place in the world to come. He "put his household in order" but did not repent to put his soul in order.

**2 Samuel 17:26** - "So Israel and Absalom pitched in the land of Gilead."

Both armies were on the east side of the Jordan River, about to confront each other in battle. David's group was "hungry, and weary, and thirsty, in the wilderness" but miraculously the son of an old enemy - a Gentile, Shobi the son of Nahash of Rabbah of the children of Ammon, as well as Machir of the Tribe of Manasseh and also Barzillai the Gileadite who were friendly to David, brought them provisions.

Previously, captured treasures from the Ammonite defeat had been taken by David to use in the future Temple. Now as an ally in a vassal kingdom, Shobi willingly brought more. The Israelite Machir had cared for Jonathan's son Meribaal. Another Israelite Barzillai is mentioned a few more times, and is noted for his willingness to think about others rather than himself.

Here, they all showed a willingness to aid the king despite the risk and without calculating the poor prospects of David's situation.

It reminds us of the scripture in Haggai:

- **Haggai 2:6-7** - "For thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts."

"desire" can also be translated as "treasure." In the same way the wise men brought the newborn Christ gifts, here we see a Gentile leader bringing David provisions at just the right time, in cooperation with Israelite leaders.

After David's lowest point of humiliation, his exile was about to end.

### Summary -

David had prayed, "O Lord, I pray, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness!" (**2 Samuel 15:31**). God listens to our prayers, and He is moved by them.

## God's Provision

**Philippians 4:19** - "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

That includes physical needs, healing, spiritual strength, everything.

## **Luke 12:22-34** -

"And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment. Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls? And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest? Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith? And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."