**2 Samuel 16-18**

David and Ziba

**16**When David had gone a short distance beyond the summit, there was Ziba, the steward of Mephibosheth, waiting to meet him. He had a string of donkeys saddled and loaded with two hundred loaves of bread, a hundred cakes of raisins, a hundred cakes of figs and a skin of wine.

**2**The king asked Ziba, “Why have you brought these?” Ziba answered, “The donkeys are for the king’s household to ride on, the bread and fruit are for the men to eat, and the wine is to refresh those who become exhausted in the wilderness.” **3**The king then asked, “Where is your master’s grandson?” Ziba said to him, “He is staying in Jerusalem, because he thinks, ‘Today the Israelites will restore to me my grandfather’s kingdom.’” **4**Then the king said to Ziba, “All that belonged to Mephibosheth is now yours.” “I humbly bow,” Ziba said. “May I find favor in your eyes, my lord the king.”

Shimei Curses David

**5**As King David approached Bahurim, a man from the same clan as Saul’s family came out from there. His name was Shimei son of Gera, and he cursed as he came out. **6**He pelted David and all the king’s officials with stones, though all the troops and the special guard were on David’s right and left. **7**As he cursed, Shimei said, “Get out, get out, you murderer, you scoundrel! **8**The Lord has repaid you for all the blood you shed in the household of Saul, in whose place you have reigned. The Lord has given the kingdom into the hands of your son Absalom. You have come to ruin because you are a murderer!”

**9**Then Abishai son of Zeruiah said to the king, “Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over and cut off his head.” **10**But the king said, “What does this have to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah? If he is cursing because the Lord said to him, ‘Curse David,’ who can ask, ‘Why do you do this?’” **11**David then said to Abishai and all his officials, “My son, my own flesh and blood, is trying to kill me. How much more, then, this Benjamite! Leave him alone; let him curse, for the Lord has told him to. **12**It may be that the Lord will look upon my misery and restore to me HIS covenant blessing instead of His curse today.”

**13**So David and his men continued along the road while Shimei was going along the hillside opposite him, cursing as he went and throwing stones at him and showering him with dirt. **14**The king and all the people with him arrived at their destination exhausted. And there he refreshed himself.

The Advice of Ahithophel and Hushai

**15**Meanwhile, Absalom and all the men of Israel came to Jerusalem, and Ahithophel was with him. **16**Then Hushai the Arkite, David’s confidant, went to Absalom and said to him, “Long live the king! Long live the king!” **17**Absalom said to Hushai, “So this is the love you show your friend? If he’s your friend, why didn’t you go with him?”

**18**Hushai said to Absalom, “No, the one chosen by the Lord, by these people, and by all the men of Israel - his I will be, and I will remain with him. **19**Furthermore, whom should I serve? Should I not serve the son? Just as I served your father, so I will serve you.” **20**Absalom said to Ahithophel, “Give us your advice. What should we do?”

**21**Ahithophel answered, “Sleep with your father’s concubines whom he left to take care of the palace. Then all Israel will hear that you have made yourself obnoxious to your father, and the hands of everyone with you will be more resolute.” **22**So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the roof, and he slept with his father’s concubines in the sight of all Israel. **23**Now in those days the advice Ahithophel gave was like that of one who inquires of God. That was how both David and Absalom regarded all of Ahithophel’s advice.

**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 as well.” **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 so much as a pebble is left.” **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 at once and tell David, ‘Do not spend the night at the fords in the wilderness; 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 female servant 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 at once 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 they 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.

Absalom’s Death

**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 Jether, an Ishmaelite 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 Rogelim **28**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 exhausted and hungry and thirsty in the wilderness.”

**18**David mustered the men who were with him and appointed over them commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds. **2**David sent out his troops, a third under the command of Joab, a third under Joab’s brother Abishaison of Zeruiah, and a third under Ittai the Gittite. The king told the troops, “I myself will surely march out with you.”

**3**But the men said, “You must not go out; if we are forced to flee, they won’t care about us. Even if half of us die, they won’t care; but you are worth ten thousand of us. It would be better now for you to give us support from the city.” **4**The king answered, “I will do whatever seems best to you.”

So the king stood beside the gate while all his men marched out in units of hundreds and of thousands. **5**The king commanded Joab, Abishai and Ittai, “Be gentle with the young man Absalom for my sake.” And all the troops heard the king giving orders concerning Absalom to each of the commanders.

**6**David’s army marched out of the city to fight Israel, and the battle took place in the forest of Ephraim. **7**There Israel’s troops were routed by David’s men, and the casualties that day were great - twenty thousand men. **8**The battle spread out over the whole countryside, and the forest swallowed up more men that day than the sword. **9**Now Absalom happened to meet David’s men. He was riding his mule, and as the mule went under the thick branches of a large oak, Absalom’s hair got caught in the tree. He was left hanging in midair, while the mule he was riding kept on going.

**10**When one of the men saw what had happened, he told Joab, “I just saw Absalom hanging in an oak tree.” **11**Joab said to the man who had told him this, “What! You saw him? Why didn’t you strike him to the ground right there? Then I would have had to give you ten shekels of silver and a warrior’s belt.”

**12**But the man replied, “Even if a thousand shekels were weighed out into my hands, I would not lay a hand on the king’s son. In our hearing the king commanded you and Abishai and Ittai, ‘Protect the young man Absalom for my sake.’ **13**And if I had put my life in jeopardy- and nothing is hidden from the king - you would have kept your distance from me.”

**14**Joab said, “I’m not going to wait like this for you.” So he took three javelins in his hand and plunged them into Absalom’s heart while Absalom was still alive in the oak tree. **15**And ten of Joab’s armor-bearers surrounded Absalom, struck him and killed him. **16**Then Joab sounded the trumpet, and the troops stopped pursuing Israel, for Joab halted them. **17**They took Absalom, threw him into a big pit in the forest and piled up a large heap of rocks over him. Meanwhile, all the Israelites fled to their homes.

**18**During his lifetime Absalom had taken a pillar and erected it in the King’s Valley as a monument to himself, for he thought, “I have no son to carry on the memory of my name.” He named the pillar after himself, and it is called Absalom’s Monument to this day.

David Mourns

**19**Now Ahimaaz son of Zadok said, “Let me run and take the news to the king that the Lord has vindicated him by delivering him from the hand of his enemies.”

**20**“You are not the one to take the news today,” Joab told him. “You may take the news another time, but you must not do so today, because the king’s son is dead.”

**21**Then Joab said to a Cushite, “Go, tell the king what you have seen.” The Cushite bowed down before Joab and ran off.

**22**Ahimaaz son of Zadok again said to Joab, “Come what may, please let me run behind the Cushite.” But Joab replied, “My son, why do you want to go? You don’t have any news that will bring you a reward.” **23**He said, “Come what may, I want to run.” So Joab said, “Run!” Then Ahimaaz ran by way of the plainand outran the Cushite.

**24**While David was sitting between the inner and outer gates, the watchman went up to the roof of the gateway by the wall. As he looked out, he saw a man running alone. **25**The watchman called out to the king and reported it.

The king said, “If he is alone, he must have good news.” And the runner came closer and closer. **26**Then the watchman saw another runner, and he called down to the gatekeeper, “Look, another man running alone!” The king said, “He must be bringing good news, too.” **27**The watchman said, “It seems to me that the first one runs like Ahimaaz son of Zadok.” “He’s a good man,” the king said. “He comes with good news.”

**28**Then Ahimaaz called out to the king, “All is well!” He bowed down before the king with his face to the ground and said, “Praise be to the Lord your God! He has delivered up those who lifted their hands against my lord the king.”

**29**The king asked, “Is the young man Absalom safe?” Ahimaaz answered, “I saw great confusion just as Joab was about to send the king’s servant and me, your servant, but I don’t know what it was.” **30**The king said, “Stand aside and wait here.” So he stepped aside and stood there.

**31**Then the Cushite arrived and said, “My lord the king, hear the good news! The Lord has vindicated you today by delivering you from the hand of all who rose up against you.” **32**The king asked the Cushite, “Is the young man Absalom safe?”

The Cushite replied, “May the enemies of my lord the king and all who rise up to harm you be like that young man.”

**33**The king was shaken. He went up to the room over the gateway and wept. As he went, he said: “O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you - O Absalom, my son, my son!”