



Absalom Claims the Throne

2 Samuel 16-17



2 Samuel 16:1-14 – Two “Saul” Encounters



Encounter #1

1. 16:1-4 – Encounter with Ziba

- Ziba meets David with “a couple of saddled donkeys, and on them were two hundred loaves of bread, a hundred clusters of raisins, a hundred summer fruits, and a jug of wine.”
- Ziba says Mephibosheth is in Jerusalem hoping for a restoration of Saul’s kingdom.
- David gives all that belongs to Mephibosheth to Ziba.

In 2 Samuel 19

We discover that Ziba's account of Mephibosheth was not correct, and some of the land given to Ziba is restored.



Encounter #2

2. 16:5-14 – Encounter with Shimei

- Shimei assaults David's group verbally and physically, throwing "stones at David and at all the servants."
- He calls David a "man of bloodshed, and worthless fellow," and says David is now being paid back in kind for his treatment of Saul.
- David prevents his men from acting against Shimei.

In 2 Samuel 19

Shimei meets David at the Jordan and begs forgiveness; David forbids his men from killing him.

However, that is not the last time that Shimei appears in Scripture.



Meanwhile, Back in Jerusalem...



2 Samuel 16:15-19

15 Then Absalom and all the people, the men of Israel, entered Jerusalem, and Ahithophel with him. **16** Now it came about when Hushai the Archite, David's friend, came to Absalom, that Hushai said to Absalom, "Long live the king! Long live the king!" **17** Absalom said to Hushai, "Is this your loyalty to your friend? Why did you not go with your friend?" **18** Then Hushai said to Absalom, "No! For whom the Lord, this people, and all the men of Israel have chosen, his I will be, and with him I will remain. **19** Besides, whom should I serve? Should I not serve in the presence of his son? As I have served in your father's presence, so I will be in your presence."

Absalom Arrives in Jerusalem

- Prominent among the entourage is Ahithophel.
- Hushai, David's friend, finds himself in the presence of Absalom and performs one of the most successful acts of deceit and subterfuge recorded in Israelite history.
- Notice his first words: "Long live the king!"

Absalom is Surprised to See Hushai

“Is this your loyalty to your friend? Why did you not go with your friend?”

• Unfazed, Hushai continue to speak “truthfully” –

“For whom the Lord, this people, and all the men of Israel have chosen, his I will be, and with him I will remain.”

Hushai Speaks Truth

- The Lord chose David as king (1 Sam. 16:1)
- Israel chose David as king (2 Sam. 5:1-3)
- Even Hushai's declaration, "As I have served in your father's presence, so I will be in your presence" is a silent affirmation of his loyalty to David.

Absalom's vanity makes him believe that these statements all refer to him.

Absalom Had Taken Jerusalem

- Without spilling a drop of blood.
- He now seeks to strengthen his grip on the throne and the city.
- Ahithophel offers a brazen and simple plan to accomplish both.



2 Samuel 16:20-23

20 Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, “Give your advice. What shall we do?” **21** Ahithophel said to Absalom, “Go in to your father’s concubines, whom he has left to keep the house; then all Israel will hear that you have made yourself odious to your father. The hands of all who are with you will also be strengthened.” **22** So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the roof, and Absalom went in to his father’s concubines in the sight of all Israel. **23** The advice of Ahithophel, which he gave in those days, was as if one inquired of the word of God; so was all the advice of Ahithophel regarded by both David and Absalom.

Ahithophel's Strategy

1. By exercising privileges reserved only for Israel's king, Absalom would unambiguously demonstrate his claim to Israel's throne.
2. At the same time, his outrageous act would energize those supporting him in the coup—by modeling a flamboyant rejection of King David, others would be emboldened to do the same.



Sweet Revenge for Ahithophel

- David had unlawful sexual relations with his granddaughter at the royal palace in Jerusalem, even though she was married to another.
- So now, unlawful sexual relations with David's harem would take place at the same palace—only now the retribution would be tenfold and public.



Ahithophel's Reputation for Wisdom

- Absalom follows his advice because of his reputation.
- **However, the plan had a fatal flaw:**
It required Absalom to perform a deed strictly forbidden in the Torah.



Leviticus 20:11

“If there is a man who lies with his father’s wife, he has uncovered his father’s nakedness; both of them shall surely be put to death, their bloodguiltiness is upon them.”

Divine justice always prevails.



Remember David's Prayer? (15:31)

“O Lord, I pray,
make the counsel of
Ahithophel
foolishness.”



It Is Also Judgment on David

2 Samuel 12:11 Thus says the Lord, ‘Behold, I will raise up evil against you from your own household; I will even take your wives before your eyes and give them to your companion, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. **12** Indeed you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and under the sun.’”

And It Is Quite Possible...

**Absalom's immorality
may have taken place
on the very roof where
David had committed
adultery.**



2 Samuel 17:1-4

1 Furthermore, Ahithophel said to Absalom, “Please let me choose 12,000 men that I may arise and pursue David tonight. **2** I will come upon him while he is weary and exhausted and terrify him, so that all the people who are with him will flee. Then I will strike down the king alone, **3** and I will bring back all the people to you. The return of everyone depends on the man you seek; then all the people will be at peace.” **4** So the plan pleased Absalom and all the elders of Israel.

Now That He Has The Throne...

- Absalom must move to eliminate the only legitimate threat to his rule: David.
- And that is easier said than done...
- David has never been captured or defeated in battle.
- But Ahithophel has a plan!



Bold, Simple, and Likely Successful

- It incorporated 3 hallmarks of classic military strategy:

1. **Overwhelming Force**

2. **The Element of Surprise**

3. **A Focused Objective**



Ahithophel's Plan is Brilliant

1. Overwhelming Force

- 12,000 men (David has less than 2,000)

2. The Element of Surprise

- The attack would happen “tonight”

3. A Focused Objective

- Kill David



2 Samuel 17:5-10

5 Then Absalom said, “Now call Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear what he has to say.” **6** When Hushai had come to Absalom, Absalom said to him, “Ahithophel has spoken thus. Shall we carry out his plan? If not, you speak.” **7** So Hushai said to Absalom, “This time the advice that Ahithophel has given is not good.” **8** Moreover, Hushai said, “You know your father and his men, that they are mighty men and they are fierce, like a bear robbed of her cubs in the field. And your father is an expert in warfare, and will not spend the night with the people. **9** Behold, he has now hidden himself in one of the caves or in another place; and it will be when he falls on them at the first attack, that whoever hears it will say, ‘There has been a slaughter among the people who follow Absalom.’ **10** And even the one who is valiant, whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will completely lose heart; for all Israel knows that your father is a mighty man and those who are with him are valiant men.

Hushai Offers an Alternative

His speech is masterful; it simultaneously discredits Ahithophel, undermines Absalom's confidence, magnifies his worst fears, and buys David precious time to escape and regroup.

Without this speech, David probably never returns to Jerusalem.



Hushai's Rebuttal

1. Do not misjudge David and his men.
 - They are “mighty” and “fierce.”
2. David “is an expert in warfare” and would never allow himself to be taken by surprise.
 - He is not with his people, but has “hidden himself in one of the caves...”
3. David would set traps for Absalom's troops and slaughter them.
 - As a result, the troops would lose hope and Absalom's coalition would crumble.

2 Samuel 17:11-14

11 But I counsel that all Israel be surely gathered to you, from Dan even to Beersheba, as the sand that is by the sea in abundance, and that you personally go into battle. **12** So we shall come to him in one of the places where he can be found, and we will fall on him as the dew falls on the ground; and of him and of all the men who are with him, not even one will be left. **13** If he withdraws into a city, then all Israel shall bring ropes to that city, and we will drag it into the valley until not even a small stone is found there.” **14** Then 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 thwart the good counsel of Ahithophel, so that the Lord might bring calamity on Absalom.

Hushai's Alternative Strategy

1. Absalom should muster troops “from Dan even to Beersheba.”
2. Not only should David be killed, but all of his men.
3. A full scale war campaign should be conducted complete with siege warfare.



Absalom's Decision

“The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel.”

Why?

“For the Lord had ordained to thwart the good counsel of Ahithophel, so that the Lord might bring calamity on Absalom.”



One Commentator Puts It This Way:

“Hushai has kept his integrity, Absalom has been blinded by his own egoism, and the reader is permitted to see one example of the outworking of God’s providence.”



2 Samuel 17:15-16

15 Then Hushai said to Zadok and to Abiathar the priests, “This is what Ahithophel counseled Absalom and the elders of Israel, and this is what I have counseled. **16** Now therefore, send quickly and tell David, saying, ‘Do not spend the night at the fords of the wilderness, but by all means cross over, or else the king and all the people who are with him will be destroyed.’”

Hushai Had Done His Job

- Without hesitation, he seeks out Zadok and Abiathar and informs them about the strategy debated in the palace.
- Just in case Absalom changes strategies, David needs to be warned right away.



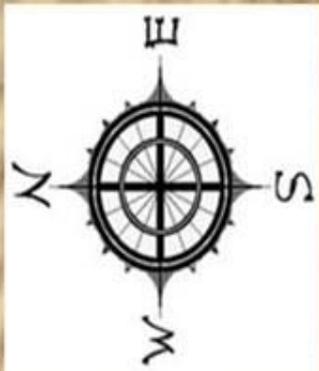
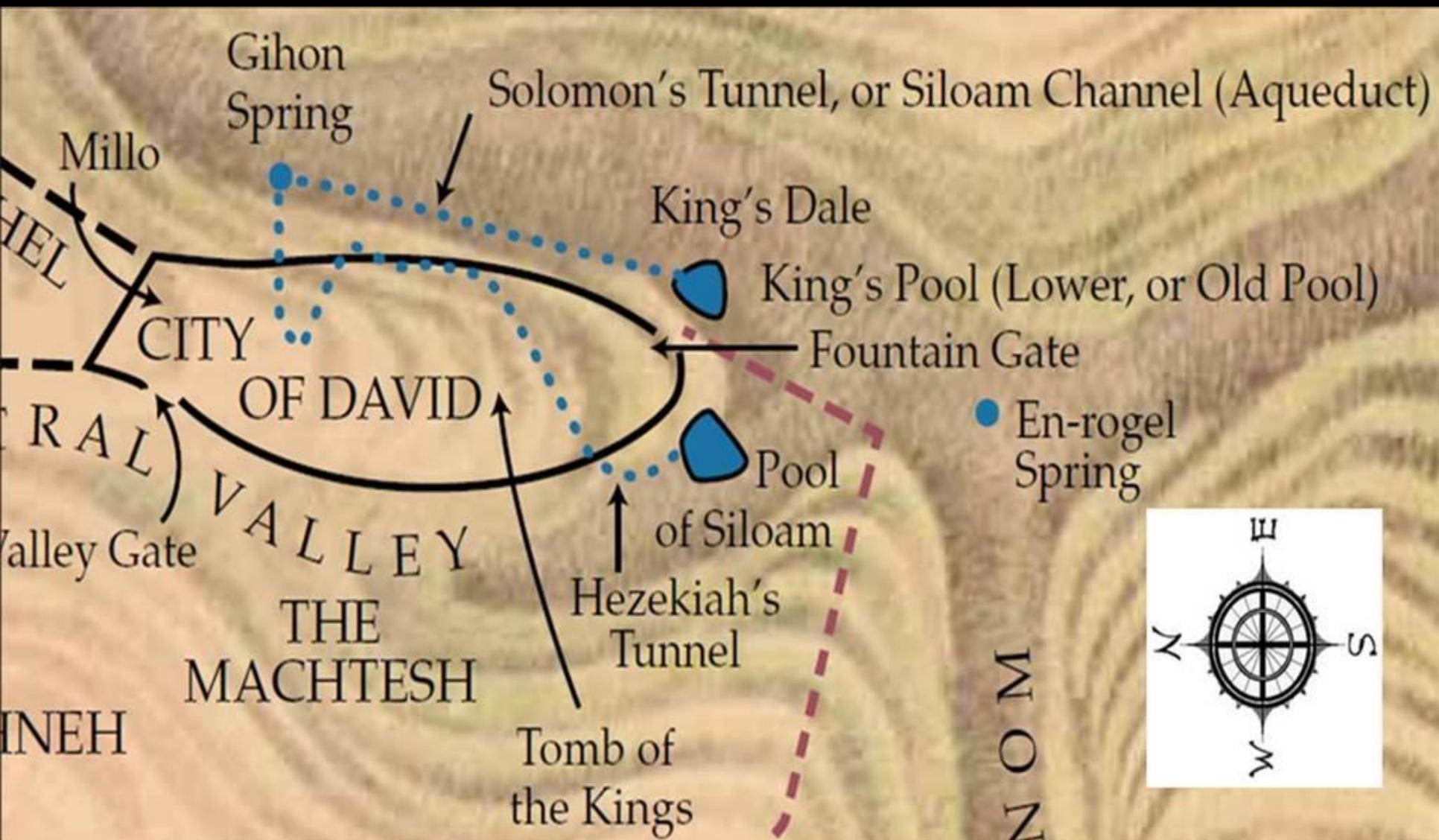
2 Samuel 17:17-20

17 Now Jonathan and Ahimaaz were staying at En-rogel, and a maidservant would go and tell them, and they would go and tell King David, for they could not be seen entering the city. **18** But a lad did see them and told Absalom; so the two of them departed quickly and came to the house of a man in Bahurim, who had a well in his courtyard, and they went down into it. **19** And the woman took a covering and spread it over the well's mouth and scattered grain on it, so that nothing was known. **20** Then Absalom's servants came to the woman at the house and said, "Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan?" And the woman said to them, "They have crossed the brook of water." And when they searched and could not find them, they returned to Jerusalem.

The Plan

- A servant girl is employed to pass the information to “Jonathan and Ahimaaz” at En-rogel.
- En-rogel is a spring about a $\frac{1}{4}$ mile south of Jerusalem, so the servant girl could use the task of gathering water as a cover for her mission.





Unfortunately...

- “a lad did see them (Jonathan and Ahimaaz) and told Absalom”
- The sons realize they are in grave danger, and flee “to the house of a man in Bahurim.”
- This man must have been a supporter of David because he hides them in a well in his courtyard.



ANCIENT JERUSALEM

Tribe of Benjamin

▲ Mount of Olives

Temple Mount

Jerusalem

Ophel?

Jebus

City of David

En-rogel

Valley of Hinnom

(Gehenna)

Kidron Valley

Tribe of Judah



**The man
and his wife
are
questioned.**

**“They have
crossed the
brook of
water.”**

**Does this
remind you
of another
story?**



2 Samuel 17:21-22

21 It came about after they had departed that they came up out of the well and went and told King David; and they said to David, “Arise and cross over the water quickly for thus Ahithophel has counseled against you.”

22 Then David and all the people who were with him arose and crossed the Jordan; and by dawn not even one remained who had not crossed the Jordan.



Jonathan & Ahimaaz Arrive

- They assume a worst case scenario: a midnight raid is on the way, and David needs to evacuate immediately.
- David and his hungry, exhausted group traveled all night and crossed the Jordan River before dawn.



2 Samuel 17:23

23 Now when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his donkey and arose and went to his home, to his city, and set his house in order, and strangled himself; thus he died and was buried in the grave of his father.



Ahithophel's Advice is Ignored

- He knew that Absalom's best opportunity to kill David and keep the throne had been lost.
- In addition, he realized that his own hope of retaining his powerful position in the royal court had also disappeared.
- He sees the writing on the wall, and when David returned, he knew he would be executed as a traitor.

What's the Point?

I believe this is a
blatant critique
of human
wisdom.





One Other
Thought:

I see a New
Testament
parallel here, as
well.

Any Guesses?

2 Samuel 17:24-26

24 Then David came to Mahanaim. And Absalom crossed the Jordan, he and all the men of Israel with him. **25** Absalom set Amasa over the army in place of Joab. Now Amasa was the son of a man whose name was Ithra the Israelite, who went in to Abigail the daughter of Nahash, sister of Zeruah, Joab's mother. **26** And Israel and Absalom camped in the land of Gilead.



“Then David came to Mahanaim”

- Walled City
- Ish-bosheth’s capital during his reign

“Absalom camped in the land of Gilead.”

- Led by Amasa
- Absalom must have support there



2 Samuel 17:27-29

27 Now when David had come to Mahanaim, Shobi the son of Nahash from Rabbah of the sons of Ammon, Machir the son of Ammiel from Lo-debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite from Rogelim, **28** brought beds, basins, pottery, wheat, barley, flour, parched grain, beans, lentils, parched seeds, **29** honey, curds, sheep, and cheese of the herd, for David and for the people who were with him, to eat; for they said, “The people are hungry and weary and thirsty in the wilderness.”

David Still Has Supporters

- The individuals mentioned here probably owed their wealth and safety to David's military campaigns in the region.
- **Machir once housed Mephibosheth.**
- These people provide David and his company with generous food and provisions.



Some Think These Provisions Inspired

• Psalm 23:5a –

“You prepare a table
before me in the
presence of my
enemies”





Next Week: **The End of the Rebellion**



