

## STUDIES IN SAMUEL

### A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 17

- Vv. 1-14 *Hushai's counsel.* Hushai had been left in Jerusalem by David to counteract the advice of Ahithophel. Although his advice was not sound, Absalom took it.
- Vv. 15-24 *David urged to cross over Jordan.* As soon as Absalom had determined not to pursue David immediately, Hushai sent word to David that he should hurry across the Jordan river into Gilead. The little bit of time which David had gained through Hushai's counseling Absalom to wait for awhile in Jerusalem gave David an opportunity to gather his forces and organize his strategy.
- Vv. 25-29 *David helped by the Gileadites.* The people on the east side of the Jordan rallied to David's support. They brought him supplies for his troops and gave him the necessary assistance.

### LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *The Lord appoints man's ways.* The writer of the scriptures says that "the Lord had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel" (v. 14). The ways of men are in the hand of God. He does not overrule their freedom of the will, but he does bring about his will and purpose. Consequently, man should entrust his affairs to the guidance of almighty God.
2. *"God will provide"* (Genesis 22:8; Matthew 6:33). Abraham trusted God to provide a sacrifice when he took Isaac into Mt. Moriah (Genesis 22:8). Jesus taught his disciples that they should seek first the kingdom of Heaven and that all the necessary things of life would be added to them (Matthew 6:33). David must have wondered how he would ever be able to gather

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enough material and supplies to wage a war. He had been driven out of his capital city and was again a fugitive. God raised up many friends for David in the land of Gilead, and he was able to supply and maintain his army. Help will come for faithful Christian workers from many unexpected sources, for God will provide.

### 3. The Rebellion Defeated, 17:1—18:33.

#### *Hushai's Counsel.* 17:1-14

Moreover Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Let me now choose out twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue after David this night:

2 And I will come upon him while he *is* weary and weakhanded, and will make him afraid: and all the people that *are* with him shall flee; and I will smite the king only:

3 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.

4 And the saying pleased Absalom well, and all the elders of Israel.

5 Then said Absalom, Call now Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear likewise what he saith.

6 And when Hushai was come to Absalom, Absalom spake unto him, saying, Ahithophel hath spoken after this manner: shall we do *after* his saying? if not; speak thou.

7 And Hushai said unto Absalom, The counsel that Ahithophel hath given *is* not good at this time.

8 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.

9 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.

10 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.

11 Therefore I counsel that all Israel be generally gathered unto thee, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, as the sand that *is* by the sea for multitude; and that thou go to battle in thine own person.

12 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.

13 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 no one small stone 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 appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the Lord might bring evil upon Absalom.

1. *What actions did Ahithophel suggest? 17:1*

Ahithophel asked Absalom to allow him to choose 12,000 soldiers and go out to catch David that first night. He thought that the situation called for immediate action and that an immediate attack on David would frighten the people who were with him so badly that they would forsake him and flee for their lives. Had this happened David would have been open to attack personally, and Ahithophel believed that he could defeat David with one bold stroke. He knew that this would leave most of Israel without a leader, and they would naturally turn to Absalom, who had seized the throne.

2. *How did Absalom receive this advice? 17:4*

Absalom believed that Ahithophel's counsel was right. It was viewed the same way by the elders of Israel, and David was in immediate danger. Hushai had made such a good impression on Absalom, however, that he decided to call him and ask his advice before implementing Ahithophel's strategy.

3. *How was Ahithophel's second counsel defeated? 17:7*

Ahithophel's counsel was good, because David's men were worn out and frustrated. Moreover, David was joined by an innumerable company a few days after the beginning of his flight. Hushai's advice was plausible, because surely David would not be able to stand against all Israel; but no more strength would come to Absalom, and it would have been far better for Absalom to strike at once. Hushai's counsel appealed to Absalom's vanity. A campaign involving all Israel and administering an overwhelming defeat to David would be very impressive.

4. *What was the fallacy in Hushai's counsel? 17:8*

Hushai built up David's prowess too much, and made Absalom afraid to strike him immediately. Although David was a valiant man and was attended by some of his mighty men they were at a distinct disadvantage and distressed. Hushai may have been correct in pointing out how difficult it would be to catch David personally, but David would hardly hide alone as Hushai suggested. The major error in Hushai's counsel was in his suggestion that all Israel could be generally gathered together under Absalom's leadership. His scheme was very grandiose as he depicted Israel going to whatever city might be David's hideout and pulling down the stones one at a time. It was this exaggerated view of the outcome of the battle which appealed to Absalom's vanity and led to his accepting Hushai's counsel.

5. *In what way had the Lord appointed the defeat of Ahithophel? 17:14*

The unexpected turn of events brought on by Absalom's accepting the counsel of Hushai and rejecting the counsel of Ahithophel after he and the elders of Israel had formerly accepted it was providential. Such a turn of events could hardly be explained, except the hand of the Lord be seen. Therefore the defeat of the good counsel of Ahithophel was attributed to God. All of this ultimately led to the downfall of Absalom.

*David Urged to Cross Over Jordan. 17:15-24*

15 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.

16 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

21 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.

22 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.

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 sepulcher of his father.

24 Then David came to Mahanaim. And Absalom passed over Jordan, he and all the men of Israel with him.

6. *What action did Hushai take? 17:15*

Hushai had been sent back to Jerusalem in order that he might have access to the court of Absalom and observe his activity. As soon as he learned that his counsel had been accepted by Absalom, he counseled with Zadok and Abiathar, the priests who had also been sent back to aid David's cause. Since time had been gained by Hushai's counseling of Absalom to wait until he could gather a large army, David would have opportunity to prepare for a major campaign. Hushai thought that David dare not stay in the plains of the Jordan river but should cross over into Gilead.

7. *Where was En-rogel? 17:17*

J. W. McGarvey found En-rogel to be the only un-failing well around Jerusalem when he visited there a century ago. This ancient well had seen the coming and going of a number of civilizations and peoples. It was known in the Old Testament and in the days of earliest Christian travelers as En-rogel, but after the Mohammedan invasion it was called the Well of Job by the Arabs. The Greek and Latin priests in Jerusalem called it the "Well of Nehemiah" from a tradition mentioned in II Maccabees

1:19-22. Dr. Barclay measured the well and found it to be 125 feet deep. Though the mouth of it was narrow, it was a very large well and had large collecting chambers near the bottom. In the winter time it frequently overflowed and sent a lively stream down the valley. Since it stood at the junction of the valley of Jehoshaphat and the valley of Hinnom, it had a very strategic location and made a good place for Jonathan and Ahimaaz, the sons of the high priests, to hide themselves and wait for word which they could carry to David.

8. *How was the message almost intercepted? 17:18*

A young man saw the young woman who carried the message from Zadok and Abiathar to their sons, Jonathan and Ahimaaz. The young maiden is called a *wench*, but there is no need to attach to her the disreputable character generally suggested by the word in our use today. The Septuagint translators used the same word to translate this word as they used to describe Ruth (Ruth 4:12). The young sons of the priests knew that they were observed; and they fled quickly to Bahurim, a little further away from the city and hid again in a well of a court in a man's house. The mouth of the well was covered with stalks of grain making it appear to be threshing floor, and the young men were not found.

9. *Was the woman justified in her lie? 17:20*

Absalom's servants came to the woman of the house where Jonathan and Ahimaaz were hiding and asked her where they were. She replied that they had gone over the brook of water. Her answer was not true for she was implying that they had gone over the little water brook which was nearby, but she was not making reference to the well where the men were hiding. Even though the standard of morality was not high in pre-Christian days, this woman should not be justified in her lie. She could have refused to answer and depended upon the hiding place to be secure.

*10. How did David escape? 17:22*

Jonathan and Ahimaaz were able to escape from the well where they were hiding, and they arrived safely at David's hideout. They informed him of the counsel of Ahithophel and the instructions given by Hushai. David arose and took the people with him, leading them across the Jordan river. By the next morning, every one of them had escaped into Gilead.

*11. Why did Ahithophel commit suicide? 17:23*

Ahithophel had shown himself to be a very wise counselor. He had directed David correctly and was attempting to do the same for Absalom. He knew that Absalom was taking the wrong step, and there was nothing but ruin ahead. Ahithophel probably foresaw that there was nothing but a traitor's end ahead for himself. When Hushai was taken completely into Absalom's confidence, he would be in a position to ask for Ahithophel's head. Suicide seemed the best escape for the discredited old counselor.

*12. Why did David go to Mahanaim? 17:24*

David's treatment of the men who had murdered Ish-bosheth would incline the people towards David in a favorable way. His friendship towards Mephibosheth would also strengthen his relationships with these people. More than this, David had shown himself a true friend of Abner. The people of the city were more than likely following Abner, not Ish-bosheth. All of this kindness toward them and their true leaders had completely won the hearts of the people of Mahanaim. Besides all this, Mahanaim was a well fortified city.

*David Helped by the Gileadites. 17:25-29*

25 And Absalom made Amasa captain of the host instead of Joab: which Amasa *was* a man's son, whose name *was* Ithra an Israelite, that went in to Abigail the daughter of Nahash, sister to Zeruah Joab's mother.

26 So Israel and Absalom pitched in the land of Gilead.



27 And it came to pass, when David was come to Mahanaim, that Shobi the son of Nahash of Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and Machir the son of Ammiel of Lo-debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite of Rogelim,

28 Brought beds, and basins, and earthen vessels, and wheat, and barley, and flour, and parched *corn*, and beans, and lentils, and parched *pulse*,

29 And honey, and butter, and sheep, and cheese of kine, for David, and for the people that *were* with him, to eat: for they said, The people *is* hungry, and weary, and thirsty, in the wilderness.

13. *What was the relationship between Absalom and Amasa? 17:25*

These two men were cousins. A question may be raised with regard to the mother of Joab and Abishai. Zeruah was David's sister. By taking into consideration I Chronicles 2:15, 16, some ask how her sister could be the daughter of Nahash. Genealogies of the period are difficult to trace for us today, and some commentators take Nahash to be Jesse's other name.

Another question is raised with regard to the two titles of Ithra. I Chronicles 2:14-18 must be compared with the passage in II Samuel. There is a confusion between Ithra the Israelite, and Jethro the Ishmaelite, but the reference is probably to an Israelite who dwelt with the Ishmaelites and was known among them by another form of his Israelite name.

14. *Why was Shobi friendly? 17:27*

When one country conquered another, the conqueror often left a native king on the throne. David had made Shobi friendly to him by putting him on the throne of the conquered kingdom (II Samuel 10:1-6). When David fled to his territory, Shobi was quite willing to aid him. He joined with others of his area to back David in his war against Absalom.

15. *Who were David's other helpers? 17:27 b*

Machir was the man who had befriended Mephibosheth and from whose home David had called the lame prince when he wanted to reinstate him in his family home. David's kind treatment of Mephibosheth would have inclined Machir to align himself with David (II Samuel 9:4). Barzillai was an octogenarian of apparent wealth who lived in a place that is otherwise unmentioned in the Scriptures and unknown to modern archaeologists. The town must have been a spot in Gilead, not too far from where the battle was pitched between Absalom and David. These men brought the necessary provisions for an army in the field—beds, cups, vessels of various kinds, wheat, barley, flour, parched grain, beans, lentils, parched garden vegetables, honey, butter, sheep, and cheese. The long listing of the materials was impressive and indicated the abundant way in which the supplies were made available to the men in the field. Such assistance must have been invaluable to David and his weary men.

16. *How were the leading men of Israel divided?*

Although the conspiracy led by Absalom was described as being strong (II Samuel 15:12) and the people with him increased continually, most of the leading men stayed with David. Joab, his captain, remained faithful, as did his brother Abishai. Zadok and Abiathar, the priests, were with David. Ittai, the Gittite, a valiant soldier, remained faithful. Jonathan and Ahimaaz, the young sons of the priests were on David's side as were the leading men in Gilead—Shobi, Machir, and Barzillai. Ahithophel was the outstanding man who backed Absalom. With him was Amasa, a descendant of the family of Jesse who became Absalom's captain. Shimei, the man of Benjamin, was opposed to David and may be considered as a supporter of Absalom. Ziba and Mephibosheth both avowed their loyalty to David at one time or another; but as David left the city, Ziba said that Mephibosheth had stayed be-

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hind, hoping that he could receive the throne since he was a descendant of Saul. The realization of such aspirations would be highly improbable, and Ziba must have been attempting to ingratiate himself with David by the report which he brought to him. On the surface Israel was badly divided, but the larger number of important men supported David.

### CHAPTER 17 IN REVIEW

1. Which councilor advised Absalom to attack David at once? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How many men did he want to muster? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Which councilor advised waiting? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Which man's advice was taken? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What did the loser do? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What were the names of the priests' sons? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Who carried the message from the priests to their sons? \_\_\_\_\_
8. To what city in Gilead did David flee? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Who became Absalom's captain? \_\_\_\_\_
10. What three Gileadite men brought supplies to David? \_\_\_\_\_