

2 Samuel 17 Commentary

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Chart from recommended resource [Jensen's Survey of the OT](#) - used by permission
[2 Samuel Chart](#) from Charles Swindoll

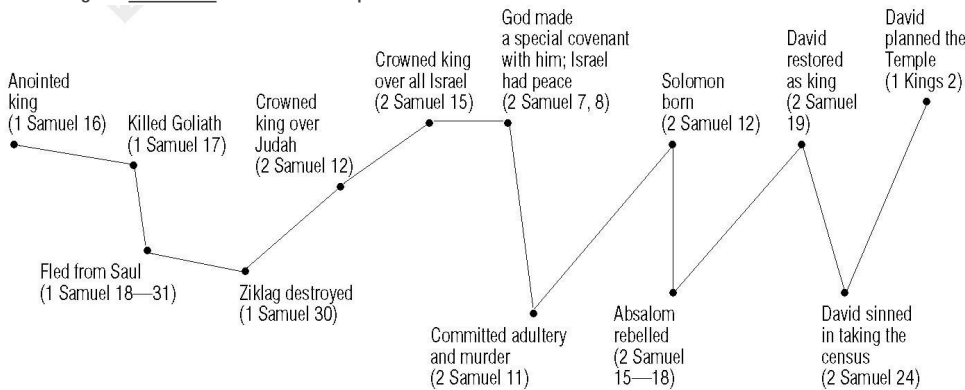
TIMELINE OF THE BOOKS OF SAMUEL, KINGS & CHRONICLES									
1107	1011				971	931	853	722	586
1 Samuel	2 Samuel				1 Kings	1 Kings	2 Kings		
31	1-4	5-10	11-20	21-24	1-11	12-22	1-17	18-25	
1Chr 10		1 Chr 11-19		1 Chr 20-29	2 Chronicles 1-9	2 Chronicles 10-20	2 Chronicles 21-36		

Legend: B.C. dates at top of timeline are approximate. Note that 931 BC marks the division of the Kingdom into Southern Tribes (Judah and Benjamin) and Ten Northern Tribes. To avoid confusion be aware that **after the division** of the Kingdom in 931 BC, the Southern Kingdom is most often designated in Scripture as "**Judah**" and the Northern Kingdom as "**Israel**." Finally, note that 1 Chronicles 1-9 is not identified on the timeline because these chapters are records of genealogy.



Map of David's Kingdom-ESV Global

Map of Cities in 2 Samuel



HIGHS AND LOWS OF DAVID'S LIFE
Source: [Life Application Study Bible](#) (borrow)

2 Samuel 17:1 Furthermore, Ahithophel said to Absalom, "Please let me choose 12,000 men that I may arise and pursue David tonight.

- **arise:** Pr 1:16 Pr 4:16 Isa 59:7,8
- **tonight:** Ps 3:3-5 Ps 4:8 Ps 109:2-4
- [2 Samuel 17 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

2 Samuel 11:3 So David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is this not **Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam**, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?"... 23:34 Eliphelet the son of Ahasbai, the son of the Maacathite, **Eliam the son of Ahithophel** the Gilonite,

**THE TRAITOROUS COUNSELOR
WANTS TO LEAD CALVARY CHARGE**

Furthermore - This means in addition. So in addition to what? This forces us to check the context (remember chapter breaks are man made, not inspired and can be misleading) and in the immediately preceding verses we have seen the betrayer (once David's counselor) Ahithophel's counsel which Absalom readily received, because his advice was "as if one inquired of the word of God" (2Sa 16:23+). So now he asks Absalom this question. King David has fled **Mahanaim** east of the Jordan.

Mattoon adds this note on Ahithophel's counsel - He has counseled Absalom to take David's concubines and have sex with them inside the royal tents on top of the palace rooftop where all could see what he was up to. Taking the harem of a former king was an act symbolizing the taking of the throne. This would also be an act which would prevent reconciliation between David and Absalom. Such reconciliation would mean the end of Ahithophel. Absalom heeds this counsel. (Rod Mattoon - [Treasures from 2 Samuel](#))

Ahithophel said to Absalom, "Please let me choose 12,000 men that I may arise and pursue David tonight- Why would **Ahithophel** who is normally a counselor and not a military man want to pursue David (and even do **ittonight** implying great desire on his part)? Good question! Do you remember the name of Bathsheba's father? It was Eliam who (2Sa 23:34) says was the son of Ahithophel. That would make Ahithophel Bathsheba's grandfather. Could he have had a little grudge against David for his adultery with his granddaughter and his murder of her husband? The text does not state with certainty, but given that he is a political adviser and not a military man, this smacks somewhat of a desire to seek revenge on David!

Note that Ahithophel advises moving **without delay** attacking while David is down and disorganized, while Hushai will advise a plan that calls for **delay** and gives David a time to escape and organize.

QUESTION - [Who was Ahithophel in the Bible?](#)

ANSWER - Ahithophel was originally the counselor of [King David](#), but he later betrayed David, aiding [Absalom](#) in his rebellion to overthrow David's kingship. Ahithophel was well-known for his advice, so much so that "Absalom followed Ahithophel's advice, just as David had done. For every word Ahithophel spoke seemed as wise as though it had come directly from the mouth of God" (2 Samuel 16:23, NLT). Ahithophel had the gift of wisdom.

After Absalom captured Jerusalem, Ahithophel's first piece of advice to him was that he sleep with all his father's concubines—in a public manner—so as to become a "stench in your father's nostrils," and to strengthen his following (2 Samuel 16:21–22). In those days, taking possession of a king's [concubines](#) was a declaration of one's right to the throne. This fulfilled God's word to David after his adultery with Bathsheba: "This is what the Lord says: 'Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity on you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will sleep with your wives in broad daylight. You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel'" (2 Samuel 12:11–12). Absalom followed the advice of Ahithophel and performed this wicked act on the top of the palace roof for all Israel to see (2 Samuel 16:22).

When Absalom began his rebellion, King David knew that Ahithophel's advice would be dangerous in the hands of his son. During his escape up the Mount of Olives, David prayed to the Lord that Ahithophel's counsel would be turned into foolishness (2 Samuel 15:31). In answer to David's prayer, when David reached the summit of the Mount of Olives, he met Hushai the Arkite. David sent Hushai back to Absalom in Jerusalem as a secret agent to frustrate the advice of Ahithophel (2 Samuel 15:32–37). In Jerusalem Hushai pledged his loyalty to Absalom but began to give advice to work to David's benefit (2 Samuel 17:14).

Absalom asked his counsellors what next step he should take. Ahithophel said to pursue David immediately with an army of twelve thousand men and "attack him while he is weary and weak" (2 Samuel 17:1). Hushai, however, counselled Absalom to delay the attack, form a larger force, and totally annihilate David and his men (2Sa 17:7–13). Absalom chose to follow the advice of Hushai and reject Ahithophel's counsel. This was of God, since "the Lord had determined to frustrate the good advice of Ahithophel in order to bring disaster on Absalom" (2Sa 17:14).

When Absalom rejected his advice, Ahithophel's pride was injured, and "he put his house in order and then hanged himself" (2 Samuel 17:23). In following Hushai's advice, Absalom was defeated and received the punishment due his rebellion (2 Samuel 18:6–15).

Because of Ahithophel's betrayal of David, many scholars see him as a type of [Judas Iscariot](#). Just as David's counselor betrayed him, so also did Jesus' disciple Judas betray Him. Similarities between Ahithophel and Judas include the following:

- they both were trusted friends who betrayed their friend (2 Samuel 15:31; Matthew 26:14–16).
- they both sided with the enemy to plot their king's death (2 Samuel 17:1–4; Luke 22:2–6).
- they both hanged themselves once the betrayal was complete (2 Samuel 17:23; Matthew 27:5).

In Psalm 41:9 David laments, "Even my close friend, someone I trusted, one who shared my bread, has turned against me." This is, most immediately, a reference to the treachery of Ahithophel. But it is also a prophetic reference to Judas, as Jesus points out in John 13:18, where He quotes Psalm 41:9. Like Judas, Ahithophel will forever be remembered as a traitor. [GotQuestions.org](#)

2 Samuel 17:2 "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,

- **weary:** 2Sa 16:14 Dt 25:18
- **I will strike:** 1Ki 22:31 Zec 13:7 Mt 21:38 26:31 Joh 11:50 18:4-8
- [2 Samuel 17 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

AHITHOPHEL IS CALLING FOR A "SURGICAL STRIKE"

I will come upon him while he is weary and exhausted and terrify him - Watch Ahithophel's repetitive use of "I" ("I may" - v1, "I will...I will v2, "I will" v3). Is this not an expression of his pride? (Rhetorical) Pr 11:2 says "When pride comes, then comes dishonor," and he would soon be dishonored! Pr 16:18 says "Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before stumbling," which proved true for him!

He describes a **surgical strike** (attack intended to damage only legitimate military target with minimal collateral damage), a sneak attack, an ambush, knowing he is tired from fleeing because he is probably 60+ now and not young like he was fleeing from Saul. So he will be tired and weak and easily frightened.

Mattoon - Ahithophel made all these plans of what he was going to do, but he forgot about one key thing. He forgot about the God factor. He forgot about all the ways God protected David in the past. The lion and the bear The giant Goliath From the pursuits of Saul. Ahithophel's counsel was deadly. It was good military strategy. He believed David would be weary and weak. He believed David would be weary and weak describing his emotional and physical condition. The word "weary" means "exhaustion which goes along with hard labor or physical strain." He also believed David would be "weak handed" which means "to sink down, let drop, be disheartened." It is an image of a man whose hands drop to his side because of weariness. It has the idea of letting down your guard. David would probably be close to this condition, that is why the counsel was deadly. Ahithophel advises an attack. ([Treasures from 2 Samuel](#))

So that (purpose clause - purpose of the surprise attack) **all the people who are with him will flee** - Ahithophel is being a bit grandiose thinking all of David's mighty men will flee in fear!

Then (marks progression) **I will strike down the king alone** - Notice his "slip of the tongue" calling David **the king**! He knew who the real king was! The Septuagint supports this premise for it has the definite article (ton = "the") in front of **king** (basilea) which means "the specific king." David a mighty warrior who has slain giants and who God has promised to help in battle will be killed by a counselor? I don't think so! But note the repetition of I will, the final being that he himself would take David's life. This surely seems to smack of a desire for personal vengeance for his sin against his grand-daughter Bathsheba.

2 Samuel 17:3 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."

BGT 2 Samuel 17:3 κα πιστρ ψω π ντα τ ν λα ν πρ ς σ ν τρ πον πιστρ φει ν μφη πρ ς τ ν νδρα α τ ς πλ ν ψυχ ν ν ς νδρ ς σ ζητε ς κα παντ τ λα σται ε ρ νη

LXE 2 Samuel 17:3 And **I will bring back all the people to thee, as a bride returns to her husband:** only thou seekest the life of one man, and all the people shall have peace.

KJV 2 Samuel 17:3 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.

NET 2 Samuel 17:3 and will bring the entire army back to you. In exchange for the life of the man you are seeking, you will get back everyone. The entire army will return unharmed."

CSB 2 Samuel 17:3 and bring all the people back to you. When everyone returns except the man you're seeking, all the people will be at peace."

ESV 2 Samuel 17:3 and **I will bring all the people back to you as a bride comes home to her husband.** You seek the life of only one man, and all the people will be at peace."

NIV 2 Samuel 17:3 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."

NLT 2 Samuel 17:3 and I will bring all the people back to you as a bride returns to her husband. After all, it is only one man's life that you seek. Then you will be at peace with all the people."

NRS 2 Samuel 17:3 and **I will bring all the people back to you as a bride comes home to her husband.** You seek the life of only one man, and all the people will be at peace."

NJB 2 Samuel 17:3 and **I shall then bring all the people back to you, like a bride returning to her husband.** You seek the life of one individual only; the people as a whole will have peace.'

NAB 2 Samuel 17:3 Then **I can bring back the rest of the people to you, as a bride returns to her husband.** It is the death of only one man you are seeking; then all the people will be at peace."

YLT 2 Samuel 17:3 and I bring back all the people unto thee -- as the turning back of the whole is the man whom thou art seeking -- all the people are peace.

GWN 2 Samuel 17:3 **I'll return all the people to you as a bride is returned to her husband.** Since you will be seeking the life of only one man, all the people will have peace."

BBE 2 Samuel 17:3 And **I will make all the people come back to you as a bride comes back to her husband:** it is the life of only one man you are going after; so all the people will be at peace.

RSV 2 Samuel 17:3 and **I will bring all the people back to you as a bride comes home to her husband.** You seek the life of only one man, and all the people will be at peace."

- **I will bring:** 2Sa 3:21
- shall be: Isa 48:22 57:21 1Th 5:3
- [2 Samuel 17 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

AHITHOPHEL PLAN AVOIDS A CIVIL WAR

and I will bring back all the people to you - This is the third "I will," which speaks of his excessive confidence and egocentricity. Not those with him to help him kill David, but "I" myself!

The return of everyone depends on the man you seek - His point is the return of the whole nation depends on seeking out and destroying David, then they will seek only Absalom.

NET NOTE - *Heb* "like the returning of all, the man whom you are seeking." The LXX reads differently: "And I will return all the people to you the way a bride returns to her husband, except for the life of the one man whom you are seeking." The other early versions also struggled with this verse. Modern translations are divided as well: the NAB, NRSV, REB, and NLT follow the LXX, while the NASB and NIV follow the Hebrew text. (SEE TRANSLATIONS ABOVE)

Then all the people will be at peace ([shalom](#); Lxx - [eirene](#)) - In other words everyone else will return safely and will be unharmed and peaceful.

Walton points out that "By eliminating David, Ahithophel believed that any opposition to Absalom's rule would collapse. A quick attack on the disorganized, exhausted "army" of David might well be successful in killing the king and routing his already demoralized forces in a place of their choosing. This was not to be a pitched battle but a surgical strike with a fixed purpose." (See page 346 [IVP Bible Background Commentary](#))

Utley summarizes - **Here is what he hopes will happen.**

1. come upon him while he is weary and exhausted
2. he will be terrified and his supporters will flee
3. Ahithophel will personally kill David
4. all David's supporters will return to Absalom
5. all Israelites will then seek peace (i.e., no civil war)

2 Samuel 17:4 So the plan pleased Absalom and all the elders of Israel.

- **So the plan:** 1Sa 18:20,21 23:21 Es 5:14 Ro 1:32
- **pleased Absalom:** Heb. was right in the eyes of Absalom, 2Ch 30:4 Es 1:21
- [2 Samuel 17 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

ABSALOM PLEASED WITH AHITHOPHEL'S PLAN

So the plan pleased Absalom and all the elders of Israel - NET - "This seemed like a good idea to Absalom and to all the leaders of Israel." Why might a military plan from a counselor please Absalom and the elders? Remember the immediately preceding context that stated "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." (2Sa 16:23). Not to mention that his "concubine plan" had been a major hit! (2Sa 16:21-22).

Rod Mattoon - Absalom finds himself facing conflicting counsel. He must make a choice on what to do. You and I are faced with the same dilemma almost everyday. We face a struggle, a clash from conflicting counsel. Your friends may say one thing, and your parents may say another. Hollywood tells us one way to live and the Bible tells us God's way. The Government says this is right, and this is wrong. It tells us that what the Bible and the Church says is right is actually wrong, and what is wrong is OK to do. The Government says it Ok to be immoral, abort a baby, live a homosexual life and it is wrong to pray in our schools. As the old TV commercial put it, "What is a mother to do?" Our kids are asking, "Who do I believe?" The answer is you believe the Word of God for God's Word is the TRUTH! The Bible will provide you with security, direction, and peace when faced with the clash of conflicting counsel. ([Treasures from 2 Samuel](#))

2 Samuel 17:5 Then Absalom said, "Now call Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear what he has to say."

- **Hushai:** 2Sa 15:32-37 16:16-19
- [2 Samuel 17 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

ABSALOM CALLS FOR HUSHAI'S COUNSEL

Then Absalom said, "Now call Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear what he has to say"(*Heb* "what is in his mouth") - Now enter David's [secret agent](#) Hushai! Given the fact that Ahithophel's plan received unanimous support, one has to wonder why call in another counselor (who has no obvious track record of success with Absalom like Ahithophel has!) This is clearly an answer to the prayer in 2Sa 15:31+ where David prayed "O LORD, I pray, **make the counsel of Ahithophel foolishness.**" Now, truth be told, I thought Ahithophel's somewhat egocentric plan was a bit foolish, but it was accepted by fools. Now God moves in Absalom's heart (Pr 21:1) to call Hushai and this allows David's secret agent to wax eloquent.

QUESTION - [Who was Hushai in the Bible?](#)

ANSWER - Hushai first appears in the Bible in 2 Samuel 15:32 as part of the story of [Absalom's](#) coup and [David's](#) departure from Jerusalem. Absalom, David's son, had started a rebellion against his father and "stole the hearts of the people of Israel" ([2 Samuel 15:6](#)). David and his officials in Jerusalem fled the city for fear of their lives (2 Samuel 15:14). They climbed the Mount of Olives, "weeping as they went" (verse 30). Then, "when David arrived at the summit, where people used to worship God, Hushai the Arkite was there to meet him, his robe torn and dust on his head" (verse 32).

The [tearing of one's robe](#) was an ancient way of showing mourning, grief, and loss. The dust on Hushai's head added to the expression of grief. It was a day of tragedy, and Hushai mourned on behalf of his king and his nation. Hushai is described as "the king's friend" in 1 Chronicles 27:33ESV).

When Hushai met David on [Mt. Olivet](#), the king had an idea. David told Hushai to return to Jerusalem and to work against Absalom on David's behalf. David gave Hushai the words to say to Absalom: "Your Majesty, I will be your servant; I was your father's servant in the past, but now I will be your servant" (2 Samuel 15:34). If Hushai could ingratiate himself, then he could sabotage Absalom's plans.

The ploy to use Hushai as a secret agent was necessary because Ahithophel, one of David's respected counselors, had defected and joined forces with Absalom (2 Samuel 15:31). Ahithophel had double-crossed his king and was giving David's son advice on how to defeat David. When David heard this news, he prayed that God would "turn Ahithophel's counsel into foolishness" (verse 31).

Hushai was the instrument of God through which that prayer would be answered.

Hushai obeyed David's order and returned to Jerusalem, arriving there just as Absalom was entering the city (2 Samuel 15:37). Unbeknownst to Absalom, other men loyal to David were also in the city: the priests [Zadok](#) and [Abiathar](#) were there to act as spies, and the priests' sons, Ahimaaz and Jonathan, would relay the intel the priests gathered to David (2 Samuel 15:35–36).

When Hushai met Absalom in the capital city, Hushai greeted him with "Long live the king! Long live the king!" (2 Samuel 16:16). Absalom was suspicious at first: "This is the love you show your friend [David]? If he's your friend, why didn't you go with him?" he asked (verse 17). Hushai responded by pouring on the praise, calling Absalom "the one chosen by the Lord, by these people, and by all the men of Israel" (verse 18). Then he told Absalom what David had instructed him to say: "Just as I served your father, so I will serve you" (verse 19). Absalom was satisfied that Hushai meant what he said.

Later, as Absalom was considering the best strategy to defeat his father, he asked the advice of both Ahithophel and Hushai. Ahithophel said, "Choose twelve thousand men and set out tonight in pursuit of David. 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 and bring all the people back to you" (2 Samuel 17:1–3). This was actually a sound strategy, but then Hushai was given a chance to thwart the plan.

Hushai presented a different strategy meant to frustrate the wisdom of Ahithophel (see 2 Samuel 15:34). Hushai said that Absalom needed a bigger force to deal with David and his desperate men. Also, Absalom should not focus on killing David but on wiping out David's entire army: "Let all Israel . . . be gathered to you, with you yourself leading them into battle. Then we will attack him wherever he may be found. . . . Neither he nor any of his men will be left alive" (2 Samuel 17:11–12).

Hushai also reminded Absalom that David was well acquainted with the lay of the land and that he was an expert in avoiding capture. If Absalom were to come at him, per Ahithophel's counsel, David would escape. That would place David in a position to strike first, causing Absalom's men to lose heart (2 Samuel 17:7–10).

After hearing both plans, Absalom and his advisors believed that Hushai's counsel was better than Ahithophel's (2 Samuel 17:14). Hushai's advice certainly was better—better for David! Hushai's advice was meant to cause Absalom to delay deploying his army. That delay would provide David the opportunity to strategize and prepare. God was in all of this. Absalom chose the advice of Hushai because "the Lord had determined to frustrate the good advice of Ahithophel in order to bring disaster on Absalom" (verse 14).

Ahithophel did not take rejection well. "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" (2 Samuel 17:23). Meanwhile, Hushai sent word of the battle plan to David through the priestly spies. Hushai's advice to David was, "Do not spend the night at the fords in the wilderness; cross over without fail" (2 Samuel 17:16).

The battle between the forces of David and Absalom took place "in the forest of Ephraim" (2 Samuel 18:6). The forces of Absalom were routed, and the battle "spread out over the whole countryside" (2Sa 18:8). Absalom himself was killed by Joab, one of David's commanders (2 Samuel 18:14). The coup was ended.

Through Hushai, God answered David's prayer and preserved David's throne. Absalom made his choices, but God was sovereign all the while. "We can make our plans, but the Lord determines our steps" (Proverbs 16:9NLT). GotQuestions.org

2 Samuel 17:6 When Hushai had come to Absalom, Absalom said to him, "Ahithophel has spoken thus. Shall we carry out his plan? If not, you speak."

- **His plan:** Heb. word, 2Sa 17:6
- [2 Samuel 17 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

ABSALOM GIVES HUSHAI OPTION TO REFUTE AHITHOPHEL'S PLAN

When Hushai had come to Absalom, Absalom said to him, "Ahithophel has spoken thus. Shall we carry out his plan? If not, you speak - Absalom apparently gives Hushai "*carte blanche*" (complete freedom to act as one wishes or thinks best) to cancel the plan they have already accepted!

2 Samuel 17:7 So Hushai said to Absalom, "This time the advice that Ahithophel has given is not good."

- **not good:** Pr 31:8
- [2 Samuel 17 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

HUSHAI REBUFFS AHITHOPHEL'S PLAN

So Hushai said to Absalom, "This time the advice that Ahithophel has given is not good(sound) - **This time** is like an acknowledgement that Ahithophel's advice was usually good. In other words it is a clever use of words as Hushai is not saying Ahithophel never gives good advice. The implication is perhaps there is a better idea. It is just this time that his plan is not good and he has made a mistake.

Utley - The heart of Hushai's advice is "delay" because David is a fierce military man and his warriors are valiant men. Wait until you can gather all Israelite conscripts and attack in force. You personally must lead the force (2Sa 17:11). This advice was from YHWH (2Sa 17:14).

2 Samuel 17:8 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.

NET - Hushai went on to say, "You know your father and his men—they are soldiers and are as dangerous as a bear out in the wild that has been robbed of her cubs. Your father is an experienced soldier; he will not stay overnight with the army.

- **mighty men:** 2Sa 15:18 21:18-22 23:8,9,16,18,20-22 1Sa 16:18 17:34-36,50 1Ch 11:25-47 Heb 11:32-34
- **fierce** Jdg 18:25
- **like a bear robbed:** 2Ki 2:24 Pr 17:12 28:15 Da 7:5 Ho 13:8
- **your father is an expert:** 1Sa 23:23
- [2 Samuel 17 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

HUSHAI'S LOGIC IS HISTORICALLY SOUND

Moreover - Hushai continues, apparently without questions or interruption, to explain why Ahithophel's counsel is not sound.

Hushai said, "You know your father and his men, that they are mighty([gibbor](#); Lxx - [dunatos](#) - powerful) **men and they are fierce, like a bear robbed of her cubs in the field** - Note his reasons refuting Ahithophel's counsel (1) **Mighty Men**—David's warriors were strong men (2) **Mad Men**—These men would be angry like a bear robbed of her cubs. Hushai presents a great word picture of a mad mother bear (bears were still in the forests in these days), and this would make even stout warriors take note of the ferocity of David's mighty men.

Utley - they are fierce, like a bear robbed of her cubs (lit. "bitter of soul" for being run out of their homes in Jerusalem)

And your father is an expert in warfare(lit "man of war"), **and will not spend the night with the people**- Hushai's third and fourth reasons focus on David himself (and they are interrelated), reminding them of David's military expertise (he might be old but he is still very experienced and knows how to fight) and the fact that he might not even be present if they tried a surprise attack. Surely the tales of David's ability to hide from Saul would have been well-known, so this is a very believable reason to not attack him.

2 Samuel 17:9 "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.'

NET 2 Samuel 17:9 At this very moment he is hiding out in one of the caves or in some other similar place. If

it should turn out that he attacks our troops first, whoever hears about it will say, 'Absalom's army has been slaughtered!'

CSB 2 Samuel 17:9 He's probably already hiding in one of the caves or some other place. If some of our troops fall first, someone is sure to hear and say, 'There's been a slaughter among the people who follow Absalom.'

ESV 2 Samuel 17:9 Behold, even now he has hidden himself in one of the pits or in some other place. And as soon as some of the people fall at the first attack, whoever hears it will say, 'There has been a slaughter among the people who follow Absalom.'

NIV 2 Samuel 17:9 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.'

NLT 2 Samuel 17:9 He has probably already hidden in some pit or cave. And when he comes out and attacks and a few of your men fall, there will be panic among your troops, and the word will spread that Absalom's men are being slaughtered.

NRS 2 Samuel 17:9 Even now he has hidden himself in one of the pits, or in some other place. And when some of our troops fall at the first attack, whoever hears it will say, 'There has been a slaughter among the troops who follow Absalom.'

NJB 2 Samuel 17:9 At this moment he is concealed in some hollow or other place. If at the outset there are casualties among our troops, word will go round that the army supporting Absalom has met with disaster.

- **he has now hidden himself** : Jdg 20:33 1Sa 22:1 1Sa 24:3
- **or in another place**: Jos 7:5 8:6 Jud 20:32 1Sa 14:14,15, over thrown, Heb. fallen
- [2 Samuel 17 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

1 Samuel 22:1 So David departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam; and when his brothers and all his father's household heard of it, they went down there to him.

1 Samuel 23:22 Go now, make more sure, and investigate and see his place where his haunt is, and who has seen him there; for I am told that he is very cunning.

1 Samuel 24:3 He came to the sheepfolds on the way, where there was a cave; and Saul went in to relieve himself. Now David and his men were sitting in the inner recesses of the cave.

DAVID IS WELL HIDDEN & HIS ATTACK WILL CAUSE PANIC

Behold, he has now hidden himself in one of the caves or in another place- Hushai is saying that David is already well hidden in a cave or a pit and who would argue that David was a master at hiding (1Sa 23:22+) for he had 10 years of practice evading the evil eye of Saul! You can almost see the audience (except for Ahithophel) nodding in agreement as the stories of David's fugitive days would have been well known to all.

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 - Hebrew = "that he falls on them [i.e., Absalom's troops] at the first [encounter]; or "that some of them [i.e., Absalom's troops] fall at the first [encounter]." Hushai uses a bit of a "fear tactic" here saying that if David attacks their troops first (imply surprise or ambush, etc), this would cause a panic and discourage the soldiers who would begin to shout that Absalom's men are being overwhelmed. So far, Hushai's logic seems reasonable.

2 Samuel 17:10 "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.

BGT 2 Samuel 17:10 κα γε α τ ς υ ς δυν μεως ο καρδ α καθ ς καρδ α το λ οντος τηκομ νη τακ σεται τι ο δεν π ς Ισραηλ τι δυνατ ς πατ ρ σου κα υ ο δυν μεως ο μετ α το

LXE 2 Samuel 17:10 Then even he that is strong, whose heart is as the heart of a lion,-- it shall utterly melt:

for all Israel knows that thy father is mighty, and they that are with him are mighty men.

KJV 2 Samuel 17:10 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.

NET 2 Samuel 17:10 If that happens even the bravest soldier— one who is lion-hearted— will virtually melt away. For all Israel knows that your father is a warrior and that those who are with him are brave.

CSB 2 Samuel 17:10 Then, even a brave man with the heart of a lion will melt because all Israel knows that your father and the valiant men with him are warriors.

ESV 2 Samuel 17:10 Then even the valiant man, whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will utterly melt with fear, for all Israel knows that your father is a mighty man, and that those who are with him are valiant men.

NIV 2 Samuel 17:10 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.

NLT 2 Samuel 17:10 Then even the bravest soldiers, though they have the heart of a lion, will be paralyzed with fear. For all Israel knows what a mighty warrior your father is and how courageous his men are.

NRS 2 Samuel 17:10 Then even the valiant warrior, whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will utterly melt with fear; for all Israel knows that your father is a warrior, and that those who are with him are valiant warriors.

NJB 2 Samuel 17:10 And then even the valiant, the truly lion-hearted, will be demoralised; for all Israel knows that your father is a champion and that the men with him are valiant.

- **heart:** 2Sa 1:23 23:20 Ge 49:9 Nu 24:8,9 Pr 28:1
- **completely lose heart:** Ex 15:15 Dt 1:28 Jos 2:9-11 Isa 13:7 19:1
- **your father is a mighty man:** 1Sa 18:17 Heb 11:34
- **those who are with him:** Song 3:7
- [2 Samuel 17 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

FEAR WILL SET IN & CHECKMATE ABSALOM'S MEN

And even the one who is valiant (bravest), **whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will completely lose heart; for** (term of explanation) **all Israel knows that your father is a mighty** ([gibbor](#); Lxx - [dunatos](#) - powerful) **man and those who are with him are valiant** (courageous, brave) **men** - NLT = "Then even the bravest soldiers, though they have the heart of a lion, will be paralyzed with fear." Hushai emphasizes that even Absalom's best soldiers will lose their courage in the face of David and his men's military prowess. In short, David's valiant men will effectively "[checkmate](#)" and trump Absalom's valiant men.

Checkmate is any game position in chess and other chess-like games in which a player's king is in [check](#) (threatened with [capture](#)) and there is no possible escape. **Checkmating the opponent wins the game.**

2 Samuel 17:11 "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.

- **all Israel:** 2Sa 24:2 Jud 20:1
- **as the sand:** Ge 13:16 22:17 Jos 11:4 1Ki 4:20 20:10
- **that you personally go into battle:** 2Sa 12:28 Ps 7:15,16 9:16
- [2 Samuel 17 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

HUSHAI'S ALTERNATIVE BATTLE PLAN

But - Term of contrast, marks a change of direction from pondering the reasons not to attack David like Ahithophel suggested to consideration of Hushai's plan.

I counsel - This is my advice or what I suggest (as the alternative plan).

That all Israel be surely gathered to you, from Dan even to Beersheba (idiom for all the promised land), **as the sand that is by the sea in abundance** (numberless), **and that you personally go into battle** - Ahithophel called for 12,000, but Hushai calls for Absalom to mobilize the entire army of Israel, from north to south, Dan being in the north and Beersheba in the south (Dan to Beersheba - Jdg. 20:1; 1Sa 3:20; 2Sa. 3:10; 2Sa 24:2,15). He is appealing to Absalom's pride to gather a massive force. By doing this he would assemble an army that would vastly outnumber David's forces. **As the sand that is by the sea** is imagery is often used of military forces (Josh. 11:4; Jdg. 7:12; 1Sa 13:5, Rev 20:8) but also for anything great numerically (Ge 22:17, Ge 32:12, Ge 41:49, 1Ki 4:20, 29, Ps 78:27, Jer 15:8, 33:22, Hos 1:10, Ro 9:27, Heb 11:12) Gathering all these troops would take time, exactly the goal that Hushai hoped his counsel would accomplish!

and that you personally go into battle - Finally he exhorts Absalom himself to lead this mighty juggernaut into battle. Recall that in Ahithophel's plan, *Ahithophel* led the battle but in Hushai's plan, *Absalom* led the battle. This would appeal to Absalom's pride, but would also expose him to danger, the very thing David's men counseled David not to do! In fact Absalom leading would lead to loss of his life!

Walton - Carrying out the role of double agent assigned him by David (2Sa 15:32-36), Hushai argues against Ahithophel's immediate strike against David. He suggests a militarily sound strategy of consolidating Absalom's control over the capital and the nation before moving in great force against the deposed king. He also raises the specter of a possible defeat early in Absalom's rule that could raise questions about his fitness and restore David's chances of return. He skillfully manipulates Absalom's pride as he paints the grand picture of the new king riding at the head of an endless sea of soldiers ready to overwhelm any meager opposition. Procrastination and additional time for strategic planning are accepted as wisdom here despite the advantages inherent to Ahithophel's strategy (see Amasa's fate when he failed to respond to Sheba's revolt with dispatch in 2 Sam 20:4-13). (See page 346 [IVP Bible Background Commentary](#))

2 Samuel 17:12 "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.

- **So we shall come to him in one of the places:** 1Sa 23:23
- **we will fall on him as the dew falls:** 1Ki 20:10 2Ki 18:23 19:24 Isa 10:13,14 Ob 1:3
- [2 Samuel 17 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

HUSHAI POETICALLY PAINTS THE VICTORY PICTURE

So we shall come to him in one of the places where he can be found- Hushai assures Absalom they will find David, but does not mention that Saul was unable to accomplish this feat successfully though he looked for him for almost 10 years. And even one time when he found him, God stepped in to save David (cf 1Sa 23:25-26, 27, 28+). One wonders if this objection entered the minds of any of the counselors who were listening along with Absalom?

and we will fall on him as the dew falls on the ground- This comparison with dew is striking for everyone knew that the dew in Palestine falls fast, sudden, and heavy; and falls upon every spot of earth, so that not a blade of grass escapes it. It is therefore an apropos symbol of a large army as Hushai says Absalom would have if he assembled troops from all Israel.

and of him and of all the men who are with him, not even one will be left- Hushai pictures the resulting battle would be a complete annihilation of David's army.

2 Samuel 17:13 "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."

- **one small:** Mt 24:2
- [2 Samuel 17 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

HUSHAI'S GLOWING BACKUP PLAN

If he withdraws into a city - Hushai counters any arguments that raise the possibility David might retreat to a fortified 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- This is a very optimistic plan to simply pull down the walls of the city with ropes. Again Hushai emphasizes victory would be so complete that not even a pebble or small stone would remain in the city. Surely this would appeal to Absalom's imagination!

Walton - drag the city down with ropes. One of the strategies employed in siege warfare was the use of scaling ladders. It is possible that grappling hooks, attached to ropes, may also have been used for this purpose. These could be climbed as attackers swarmed over the walls or used to dislodge stones from the walls and make them more vulnerable to battering rams. Depictions of sieges in Assyrian palaces include the demolition of walls using picks, but hooks and ropes may also have been used by attackers. (See page 345 [IVP Bible Background Commentary](#))

2 Samuel 17:14 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.

- **the Lord:** 2Sa 15:31 Ge 32:28 Ex 9:16 De 2:30 2Ch 25:16,20
- **ordained:** Heb. commanded, Ps 33:9,10 La 3:37 Am 9:3
- **to thwart the good counsel of Ahithophel:** 2Sa 15:34 2Sa 16:23 Job 5:12-14 Pr 19:21 21:30 Isa 8:10 1Co 1:19,20 1Co 3:19
- **good counsel:** Lu 16:8
- [2 Samuel 17 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

2 Samuel 15:31, 34+ Now someone told David, saying, "Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom." And David said, "**O LORD, I pray, make the counsel of Ahithophel foolishness.**"....34 (**DAVID'S ADVICE TO HUSHAI**) "But if you return to the city, and say to Absalom, 'I will be your servant, O king; as I have been your father's servant in time past, so I will now be your servant,' then you can **thwart** ([parar](#)) the counsel of Ahithophel for me.

HUSHAI SPOKE BUT GOD WAS IN CONTROL

Then - Marks progression in the narrative, in this case actually marking the conclusion of what will be the final plan, Ahithophel's or Hushai's?

Absalom and all the men of Israel said, "The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel." - **Absalom** does an "about face," for in verse 4 Ahithophel's plan pleased Absalom and all the elders. Theoretically there should have been no need for an alternative plan, but as alluded to earlier (and worth reiterating) God was in full control for "The king's (Absalom's) heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes." (Pr 21:1). Thus Absalom "just happened" to call for another option, an option from David's secret agent Hushai who was inside the citadel and whose word was now unanimously accepted!

THOUGHT - God may appear to be behind the scenes of your life and mine, but He is always (mysteriously, supernaturally) controlling the scenes He is behind! This immutable truth should either comfort the afflicted or afflict the comfortable! G Campbell Morgan says it this way "This is one of the great principles of life which every page of the Bible emphasizes and illustrates. Men cannot escape God. They go their own way, but that way never sets them free from the authority and the invincible power of God."

For - This is a strategic term of explanation, explaining why Hushai's plan was a "[slam dunk](#)!" If you say that something is a slam dunk, you mean that a success or victory will be easily achieved.

The LORD had ordained (determined, resolved, appointed) **to thwart** ([parar](#) ; Lxx - diaskedazo = scatter to the winds) **the good counsel** (shrewd advice) **of Ahithophel** - This is the ultimate reason the advice of Ahithophel was rejected. Notice the juxtaposition of **Yahweh's sovereignty** in thwarting the good counsel of Ahithophel and **man's responsibility**, with Hushai presenting the alternative plan (and all woven together with David's prayer that Ahithophel's plan be thwarted 2Sa 15:31). Yahweh had supernaturally arranged for Ahithophel's plan to be rejected (even though it was in fact the better plan from a military standpoint - a quick, strategic surprise attack). God's will will be accomplished on earth and He usually uses people (willing and not willing, believers and non-believers) to accomplish His will (e.g., Moses Ex 3:7-10 who was not so willing at the outset!).

Guzik - We see that the LORD **purposed to defeat the good advice of Ahithophel because David prayed.** Prayer moves the hand of God, and David prayed: *O Lord, I pray, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness!*(2 Samuel 15:31)

So that (term of purpose) **the LORD might bring calamity on**(bring to ruin) **Absalom** - The purpose of the LORD commanding the good advice be defeated is so that Yahweh would bring disaster on Absalom.

Guzik - **That the LORD might bring disaster on Absalom** In all of this there was a severe chastening for David, and he knew it. Yet God did not forsake David during this time of chastening. He was there for David at this time also. He was not out to *destroy* David but to *correct* him.

Rod Mattoon - Hushai's counsel was considered better because God made it better. He was appointed to defeat the counsel of Ahithophel. It was God's will, way, and plan to deliver David, defeat Ahithophel, and destroy Absalom. God was demonstrating His power to David by controlling the situation and the hearts of David's enemies and putting Ahithophel's counsel on the back burner....Even though David's character was not the greatest, God did not forsake him. The faithfulness of God cannot be changed by the inconsistencies of His people. God is always faithful to us even though we may be unfaithful to Him. ([Treasures from 2 Samuel](#))

Thwart (06565) **pārar** is a verb meaning to break, to divide, to frustrate, hinder, prevent, thwart, frustrate. This word is often used in conjunction with a covenant or agreement. The Lord warned the Israelites what would happen if they broke the covenant with Him (Lev. 26:15); and pledged to them that He would not break it (Lev. 26:44). Asa, king of Judah, asked the king of Aram to break a covenant Aram had made with Israel (1 Kgs. 15:19). This word is also used to refer to the frustration of plans, as the enemies of Israel did to the Israelites trying to rebuild the Temple (Ezra 4:5). However, the Lord's purposes cannot be frustrated (Isa. 14:27).

Parar - 47v - annul(4), annulled(1), break(12), breaking(3), broke(4), broken(7), cease(1), do away(1), fail(1), frustrate(2), frustrated(2), frustrates(1), indeed annuls(2), ineffective(1), made my void(1), nullifies(1), shattered(1), thwart(2), thwarted(1). Gen. 17:14; Lev. 26:15; Lev. 26:44; Num. 15:31; Num. 30:8; Num. 30:12; Num. 30:13; Num. 30:15; Deut. 31:16; Deut. 31:20; Jdg. 2:1; 2Sa 15:34; 2Sa 17:14; 1 Ki. 15:19; 2 Chr. 16:3; Ezr. 4:5; Ezr. 9:14; Neh. 4:15; Job 5:12; Job 15:4; Job 16:12; Job 40:8; Ps. 33:10; Ps. 85:4; Ps. 89:33; Ps. 119:126; Prov. 15:22; Eccl. 12:5; Isa. 8:10; Isa. 14:27; Isa. 24:5; Isa. 33:8; Isa. 44:25; Jer. 11:10; Jer. 14:21; Jer. 31:32; Jer. 33:20; Jer. 33:21; Ezek. 16:59; Ezek. 17:15; Ezek. 17:16; Ezek. 17:18; Ezek. 17:19; Ezek. 44:7; Zech. 11:10; Zech. 11:11; Zech. 11:14

Gilbrant - The Hebrew verb **pārar** can mean "to break," "to annul," "to frustrate," "to foil," "to thwart," "to invalidate," "to stir" or "to shake." It is found about fifty times in the OT with most occurrences concentrated in the Pentateuch and the prophetic Books. In each case, a disruption of something previously thought to be established occurs.

Pārar commonly denotes the concept of removal or annulment of an agreement, for example, the vows taken by newly married, divorced or widowed women (Num. 30:8, 12f, 15). Under the Law, a marriage could only be annulled by the groom and had to be done immediately. The husband could also nullify any vow, rash promise or oath made by his wife without his prior knowledge (Num. 30:6–15). Further, any Israelite who intentionally broke the commands of God had to be cut off from the community (Num. 15:31; cf. Ezra 9:14). Job's friend Eliphaz accused him of withdrawing his "fear of God" (Job 15:4), while God asked Job if he wanted to annul his judgment (Job 40:8).

Pārar occurs twenty-three times with *b erīth* (HED # 1311), "covenant," as the object, thus making pārar the most commonly used term for violation of an agreement. Usually, man is responsible for breaking the Covenant, but God is occasionally mentioned as a possibility for doing so also, in the sense of annulment due to the unfaithfulness of Israel (Lev. 26:44; Judg. 2:1; Jer. 14:21; Zech. 11:10). But despite Israel's unfaithfulness, God remains faithful to the Covenant, which is most fully expressed in his promise of a new covenant. "The days come, says the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah" (Jer. 31:31). This will be necessary because Israel broke her vows to God like an adulterous wife against her husband (v. 32).

Pārar is occasionally found with the nuance of "thwarting" or "foiling" the plots of others. For example, God "foils the plans of the nations; he thwarts the purposes of the peoples" (Ps. 33:10, NIV). God also frustrated the plans of Israel's enemies who desired to prevent them from rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem following the exile (Neh. 4:15; cf. Job 5:12). Isaiah 14:27 asks the rhetorical question concerning God's purposes, "Who will disannul it?" Proverbs asserts that "without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established" (Prov. 15:22; cf. Ezra 4:5). David devised a successful plan of sending Hushai to spy upon the advisers of Absalom in order to frustrate the advice of Ahithophel (2 Sam. 15:34; 17:14).

Three times pārar occurs with the meaning "to split," "to divide" or "to tear." Two instances refer to the judgment and power of God resulting in natural disasters of cataclysmic proportions (Ps. 74:13; Isa. 24:19). Elsewhere, Job used this strong verb to describe

how God had savagely broken him in two (Job 16:12). ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

G Campbell Morgan (borrow [Life applications from every chapter of the Bible](#)) - The Lord had ordained to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the Lord might bring evil upon Absalom. - 2 Sam. 17:14. These words stand out revealingly at the centre of a story of strange and complex intrigue. Absalom is seen listening to two counsellors. On the one hand, Ahithophel gave him the counsel which would undoubtedly have led to the success of his rebellion, at any rate for the moment. David had not yet had time to gather about him any large body of men. Let a company be set to capture him, and that immediately. Hushai, on the other hand, gave him counsel which appealed to his vanity. It would have been a far more spectacular thing to lead a great army in person, and gain a great victory. His vanity ensured his ruin. Thus amid the complexities of human cleverness, the will of God is seen moving inexorably forward to the accomplishment of His high purposes. The pressure of the Divine power compelled the true inwardness of the thought and vanity of Absalom to act in accordance with itself, and so to bring about his utter defeat. This is one of the great principles of life which every page of the Bible emphasizes and illustrates. Men cannot escape God. They go their own way, but that way never sets them free from the authority and invincible power of God. The very fact that they are compelled by God to carry out their own way, is the assurance of their ultimate discomfiture and defeat. Man's way for himself, as apart from God, is ever the wrong way, and cannot lead to success.

2 Samuel 17:15 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.

- **Zadok:** 2Sa 15:35
- [2 Samuel 17 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

2 Samuel 15:35-36- "Are not Zadok and Abiathar the priests with you there? So it shall be that whatever you hear from the king's house, you shall report to Zadok and Abiathar the priests. 36 "Behold their two sons are with them there, Ahimaaz, Zadok's son and Jonathan, Abiathar's son; and by them you shall send me everything that you hear."

THE GAME IS A FOOT!

Then - Marks progression in the narrative, specifically the clandestine portion!

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 - Why would Hushai go to the priests and not to the sons **Jonathan and Ahimaaz**? Who would suspect Hushai is a counter agent if he is simply going to the priests, ostensibly for religious reasons? On the other hand, palace spies might have become suspicious if he had gone straight to **Jonathan and Ahimaaz**.

Rod Mattoon - True friends are never more loyal than in time of need. David is warned to flee over the plains and not delay. Jonathan and Ahimaaz stayed at Enrogel. This was the fuller's well, the place where they tread clothes with their feet as they washed them. A wench or girl delivered the message to these men and they contacted David. ([Treasures from 2 Samuel](#))

ILLUSTRATION - Visitors to the Ft. Myers, Florida, home of Thomas Alva Edison, are intrigued by a path in his garden that he called "the walk of friendship." The uniqueness of this walk is that each of the stones that constitute the walk was given to Edison by a friend. The pathway is designed as a memorial to friendship, the kind of friendship that Hushai had with David. Friends lead friends step by step out of danger into delight. If you have a close friend, rejoice in that friend and thank God for him or her. Enjoy that bond of friendship that you have. In fact, why not write or call that friend today and tell him you love him in the Lord and are praying for him. You will never know what it will mean to him if you don't. Dear follower of Jesus, you have a Friend Who sticks closer than a brother, for He lives within your heart!

[What a Friend we have in Jesus,](#)

All our sins and griefs to bear!

What a privilege to carry

Ev'rything to God in prayer!

O what peace we often forfeit,

O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Ev'ry thing to God in prayer.

2 Samuel 17:16 "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.'"

BGT 2 Samuel 17:16 κα ν ν ποστε λατε ταχ κα ναγγε λατε τ Δαυιδ λ γοντες μ α λισθ ς τ ν ν κτα ν Αραβωθ τ ς ρ μου κα γε διαβα νων σπε σον μ ποτε καταπ τ ν βασιλ α κα π ντα τ ν λα ν τ ν μετ α το

LXE 2 Samuel 17:16 And now send quickly and report to David, saying, Lodge not this night in Araboth of the wilderness: even go and make haste, lest one swallow up the king, and all the people with him.

KJV 2 Samuel 17:16 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.

NET 2 Samuel 17:16 Now send word quickly to David and warn him, "Don't spend the night at the fords of the desert tonight. Instead, be sure you cross over, or else the king and everyone who is with him may be overwhelmed."

CSB 2 Samuel 17:16 Now send someone quickly and tell David, 'Don't spend the night at the wilderness ford of the Jordan, but be sure to cross over, or the king and all the people with him will be destroyed.'

ESV 2 Samuel 17:16 Now therefore send quickly and tell David, 'Do not stay tonight at the fords of the wilderness, but by all means pass over, lest the king and all the people who are with him be swallowed up.'

NIV 2 Samuel 17:16 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.' "

NLT 2 Samuel 17:16 "Quick!" he told them. "Find David and urge him not to stay at the shallows of the Jordan River tonight. He must go across at once into the wilderness beyond. Otherwise he will die and his entire army with him."

NRS 2 Samuel 17:16 Therefore send quickly and tell David, 'Do not lodge tonight at the fords of the wilderness, but by all means cross over; otherwise the king and all the people who are with him will be swallowed up.'

NJB 2 Samuel 17:16 Send with all speed to David and say, "Do not camp in the desert passes tonight, but get through them as fast as you can, or the king and his whole army may be annihilated." '

- **Do not spend the night at the fords** 2Sa 15:28
- **send quickly** 2Sa 17:21,22 15:14,28 1Sa 20:38 Ps 55:8 Pr 6:4,5 Mt 24:16-18
- **with him will be destroyed:** 2Sa 20:19,20 Ps 35:25 56:2 57:3 1Co 15:54 2Co 5:4
- [2 Samuel 17 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

HUSHAI'S WARNING PASSED TO DAVID

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 (Heb "swallowed up") - If they did not cross the Jordan River, their backs would have been against the River and a frontal attack would have placed them at a major military advantage.

Uitley on **destroyed** or literally swallowed - The [Masoretic Text](#) has the VERB (BDB 118, KB 134, *Pual* IMPERFECT) which literally means "to swallow," "to engulf," which is an idiom for destruction. It views death as (1) an animal with a large mouth (i.e., Jer. 51:34) or (2) the ground opening and the earth swallowing (i.e., descent into *Sheol*, cf. Ex 15:12; Nu 16:30,32; Dt. 11:6; Isa. 28:4)

NET NOTE on **fords** - The [Masoretic Text](#) reads "the rift valleys (עֲרֻוֹת, 'aravot) of the wilderness." The plural form typically refers to the gently sloping plains at the basin of the [rift valley](#) just north of the Dead Sea (while the [larger rift valley](#) extends from Galilee to the Gulf of Aqaba). Many translations render as the "fords" (NASB, ESV, NIV, NRSV) assuming the reversal of two letters as עֲרָוֹת ('avarot, "fords, crossing").

2 Samuel 17:17 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.

- **Jonathan:** 2Sa 15:27,36
- **were staying :** Jos 2:4-24
- **at En-rogel** Jos 15:7 18:16 1Ki 1:9
- [2 Samuel 17 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

2 Samuel 15:27; 36+ (**DAVID ENCOURAGES PRIEST TO RETURN TO JERUSALEM**) The king said also to Zadok the priest, "Are you not a seer? Return to the city in peace and your two sons with you, your son Ahimaaz and Jonathan the son of Abiathar.....36 "Behold their two sons are with them there, Ahimaaz, Zadok's son and Jonathan, Abiathar's son; and by them you shall send me everything that you hear."

HUSHAI'S WARNING THROUGH A FOUR COURIER CHAIN

Now Jonathan and Ahimaaz were staying at En-rogel - En-rogel (also known as Job's Well - See **En Rogel** in map above - see [Wiki](#)) was near Jerusalem on the border between Judah and Benjamin (see dotted line above in map) and permanent source of water for the pool of Siloam and provided a place for David's spies, Jonathan and Ahimaaz to hide.

Walton - En-rogel - A spring half a mile south of the [Gihon Spring](#), near the junction of the [Hinnom](#) and [Kidron](#) Valleys, En Rogel most likely shared the same water source as Gihon (associated with Bir Ayyub, "Job's Well"). It served the needs of the people immediately outside the walls of Jerusalem. Since it was frequented by many people, it would be a place to hear the gossip and it would not be suspicious for Jonathan and Ahimaaz to be stationed here, waiting for word from the city. (See page 346 [IVP Bible Background Commentary](#))

and a maidservant would go and tell them, and they would go and tell King David So notice the chain of communication from (1) Hushai to (2) the priests to (3) a loyal maidservant to (4) **Jonathan and Ahimaaz** who were not even in the city.

for they could not be seen entering the city - This explains the cloak and dagger aspect of their counterespionage. Absalom's spies would clearly be watching who went in and out of the city gates.

2 Samuel 17:18 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.

- **Bahurim:** 2Sa 3:16 16:5 19:16
- [2 Samuel 17 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

ABSALOM ALERTED OF NEARBY SPIES

But a lad did see them and told Absalom - The "jig's up" potentially because of this eagle eyed lad. How he knew they were David's men is not clear from the text.

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 - The well depicted above is probably much deeper than the one they were hidden in! Obviously **Jonathan and Ahimaaz** somehow realized they were spotted so moved quickly to take cover in an unlikely hiding place, a well. But a "wise woman" would soon make it look like a storage site for grain and not a well below!

Walton - Bahurim. Located north of the Mount of Olives, Bahurim was a Benjaminite village (probably Ras et-Tmim or Khirbet Ibaq'dan). It is a bit ironic that David's spies would be aided and hidden in a well by an inhabitant of Bahurim, since it was also the home of Shimei ben Gera, who had cursed the king (2 Sam 16:5) (See page 346 [IVP Bible Background Commentary](#))

THOUGHT- "Adversity is the testing ground for loyalty. Fair-weather friends are unworthy of trust. David's friends were like bright diamonds on black velvet. They were with him through thick and thin, good and bad, up and down, in and out. Beloved, treasure the friends that you have. They are more precious than gold. David's friends were ordinary, everyday, little, big people: a counselor, priests, messengers, two faithful women, and unknown soldiers who refused to desert their king when death was imminent. God is in the business of using little people so that He gets the glory.

* A little maid was used to save Naaman, a Syrian general infected with leprosy. (2Ki 5:2-4)

* An Ethiopian rescues Jeremiah from the well. (Jeremiah 38:7-10)

* A little lad surrendered his lunch to Jesus who in turn fed over 5000 people. (John 6:9)

Are you little enough in your own eyes to be used of God? The problem with some people is they feel too good to do something for the Lord. Others feel they have put in their time and so it is someone else's turn to work. Some feel they have done enough. Beloved, our enough is not enough. Don't put the Lord's will on the back burner of your life, it will ruin you." (Matttoon - [Treasures from 2 Samuel](#))

2 Samuel 17:19 And the woman took a covering and spread it over the well's mouth and scattered grain on it, so that nothing was known.

- **a covering:** Jos 2:4-6,5-24
- **nothing was known:** Ex 1:19
- [2 Samuel 17 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passage:

Joshua 2:4-6+ (**RAHAB THE HARLOT**) But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them, and she said, "Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. 5 "It came about when it was time to shut the gate at dark, that the men went out; I do not know where the men went. Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them." 6 But **she had brought them up to the roof and hidden them in the stalks of flax which she had laid in order on the roof.**

A DAVID LOYALIST HIDES THE SPIES

And the woman took a covering and spread it over the [well's](#) mouth and scattered grain on it, so that nothing was known - The owner (man) is described in 2Sa 17:18, but this unnamed woman of the house (forever immortalized in Scripture) boldly steps forward as a friend (see [note](#)) of David (Listen to Carole King's "[You've Got a Friend](#)" - do you have a friend like that? Are you a friend like that?). This woman was the man of Bahurim's wife who covered the well opening and scattered grain so you could not tell the well was underneath. Obviously this [well](#) would have been more like a hole dug in the ground without a crank and bucket complex over it.

THOUGHT - Did you notice the importance of women (all unnamed) in the life of David (and I'm not speaking of his adultery, his wives or his concubines which had a generally negative influence!) - a **wise woman** from Tekoa (2Sa 14:2-19+), the **maidservant** courier (2Sa 17:17), the "wise" **woman** at Bahurim who must have read Joshua and imitated Rahab the harlot's actions ([see above](#)) (2Sa 17:19-20), a **wise woman** at Abel Beth-maacah (2Sa 20:15-22+).

2 Samuel 17:20 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.

- **They have crossed the brook of water.** 2Sa 15:34 Ex 1:19 Jos 2:4,5 1Sa 19:14-17 21:2 27:11,12

- **when they searched and could not find them:** Jos 2:22-23
- [2 Samuel 17 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

SEARCHERS FAIL TO FIND WELL HIDDEN SPIES

Then Absalom's servants came to the woman at the house and said, "Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan?" - The search party even knew the names of the men. This is interesting because it implies they knew who their fathers were, the priests Zadok and Abiathar! But no action is recorded against the priests.

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 woman lied like [Rahab the harlot](#) had lied, and sent the searchers on a "wild goose chase!"

2 Samuel 17:21 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."

- **Arise:** 2Sa 17:15,16
- **Ahithophel:** 2Sa 17:1-3
- [2 Samuel 17 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

SPIES SUCCEED IN WARNING DAVID

It came about after they had departed that they came up out of the well and went and told King David - They must have thought that was a close one, what if one of us had coughed or sneezed!

And they said to David, "Arise and cross over the water quickly for thus Ahithophel has counseled against you - The spies instructed David to cross quickly because that is where Ahithophel had advised attacking them.

NET NOTE - *Heb* "for thus Ahithophel has devised against you." The expression "thus" is narrative shorthand, referring to the plan outlined by Ahithophel (see 2Sa 17:1-3). The men would surely have outlined the plan in as much detail as they had been given by the messenger.

F B Meyer - Our Daily Homily - Arise, and pass quickly over the water.

The water of Jordan may serve as an illustration for our position. Our David has passed over the waters of death, and in doing so has taken us with Him. There is a sense in which in the morning light of Easter Day all who believed passed over with Him, so that "by the morning light there lacked not one of them that was not gone over to Jordan."

We all hold the doctrine of Substitution: Do we sufficiently realize that of Identification? Not only did Jesus die for us, but we died with and in Him. In Him, as the true Noah's Ark, the whole Church passed over the Jordan of death from the old world to the new. There are some who do not understand that in the purpose of God we are already standing on resurrection ground. Across the water we can hear the murmur of the world, and detect its corruption; but we are the inheritors of the world in which there is no death nor corruption nor the dominion of sin. When a man realizes this he no longer braces himself up to meet death, because he knows that in the person of Christ he has left it behind forever.

What is true, however, in God's purpose should be the aim and goal of our daily striving. To us there comes the unceasing call, "Arise, and go over Jordan." There is always a thither and a hither side for every experience and act. We may always do as the world does; this is to stay on the death side. We may always do as Christ does; this is to pass over to the risen and living side. Reckon that you have died, and mortify the deeds of your body. "And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness."

2 Samuel 17:22 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.

- **crossed the Jordan:** 2Sa 17:24 Pr 27:12 Mt 10:16

- **not even one remained:** Nu 31:49 Joh 18:9
- [2 Samuel 17 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

DAVID AND ALL HIS PEOPLE'S SAFE PASSAGE

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](#) - The spies warning was heeded and not one person failed to make it across the Jordan River.

2 Samuel 17:23 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.

- **saw:** Pr 16:18 19:3
- **his city:** 2Sa 15:12
- **set his house in order:** Heb. gave charge concerning his house, 2Ki 20:1
- **and strangled himself:** 2Sa 15:31 1Sa 31:4,5 1Ki 16:18 Job 31:3 Ps 5:10 55:23 Mt 27:5
- [2 Samuel 17 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

AHITHOPHEL SEES HANDWRITING ON WALL AND COMMITS SUICIDE

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 knew his plan would succeed in defeating David, but now saw the "[handwriting on the wall](#)" and realized that David might not be defeated by Absalom which would make his life as the say "[toast!](#)". He would rather hang than face an angry king! Another reason for his suicide was that Ahithophel was publicly disgraced by Absalom's rejection of his plan. He was wise to **set his house in order**, which begs the question is your (my) life in order if unexpected tragedy should strike? Ahithophel lived up to the meaning of his name "brother of folly or of ruin or of foolishness." Suicide is foolish and selfish and leads to ruin, which is truly ironic as his counsel was considered by both David and Absalom "as if one inquired of the Word of God!" (2Sa 16:23+)

Spurgeon - I desire to call your attention to the text on account of its very remarkable character. *He put his house in order, and hanged himself.* To put his house in order, showed that he was a prudent man; to hang himself, proved that he was a fool. Herein is a strange mixture of discretion and desperation, mind and madness. Shall a man have wisdom enough to arrange his worldly affairs with care, and yet shall he be so hapless as to take his own life afterwards?...Thousands set their houses in order, but destroy their souls; they look well to their flocks and their herds, but not to their hearts' best interests (**ED:** SEE "A CERTAIN RICH MAN" DESCRIBED BY JESUS - Lk 12:16-19, 20, 21+ = "So is the man who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."). They gather broken shells with continuous industry, but they throw away priceless diamonds. They exercise forethought, prudence, care, everywhere but where they are most required. They save their money, but squander their happiness; they are guardians of their estates, but suicides of their souls. (Excerpts from [Spurgeon's sermon Very Singular](#) - 2Sa 17:23)

G Campbell Morgan - Suicide is always the ultimate action of cowardice. In the case of Saul, and in many similar cases, it is perfectly natural; but let it never be glorified as heroic. It is the last resort of the man who dare not stand up to life.

Mattoon - He could not bear the rejection of his advice. Playing second fiddle, being put on the back burner was too humiliating for this man who was a victim of pride and vanity. His pride leads to his destruction and fall. He terminates his brilliant career. Ahithophel was a slave to the opinions of the crowd and the praise of men. This was very important to him and led to his downfall. God gives a warning about being addicted to the favor of the crowd. Jeremiah 9:23, 24, 1Sa 15:30. It is interesting to note that most of the things that Ahithophel said he would do to David ended up happening to him. He was going to make David afraid and ended up afraid himself. He became weary and weak emotionally and very depressed. He was broken by the back burner. Instead of smiting David, he ended up smiting himself. God's Word teaches in Psalm 7:16.... "His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate." His mischief fell back on himself. Ahithophel might have been great, but was not! He had the opportunity to be one of the greats of Hebrew history. Instead, he fades into insignificance. He could not play second fiddle. He was broken by the back burners because he felt he had to be number one. All of this could have been avoided if Ahithophel knew how to forgive. He would not forgive David for what he did to Bathsheba and Uriah. This was the root problem of the matter. (**ED:** Ahithophel allowed a root of unforgiveness and bitterness to spring up and fester in his heart. The writer

of Hebrews gives us a strong warning against this "poisonous root" - "See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up **causes trouble**, and by it **many be defiled**." - Hebrews 12:15+).

THOUGHT - How do you (I) respond to rejection? We (all) need to learn that we should seek to daily live to be pleasing to an audience of One, the Lord God. If we please Him, then truly nothing else matters and rejection by men is much easier to handle. A good prayer to pray for one another in this regard is Colossians 1:9-10+ praying and asking "that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that (PURPOSE OF BEING FILLED) you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, **to please Him in all respects**, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God."

Ryrie - Ahithophel, perceptive to the end, realized that his cause was lost. Other suicides recorded in the Bible are those of Abimelech (Jdg 9:54), Samson (Jdg. 16:30), Saul (1Sa 31:4), Zimri (1Ki 16:18), and Judas (Mt. 27:5).

Walton - Ahithophel's actions. Suicide is not condemned in the Hebrew Bible. The six examples (Abimelech, Samson, Saul, his armorbearer, Ahithophel and Zimri) that appear in the text even suggest a measure of honor and courage is attached to the act, in much the same way as it is described in Seneca (70th Epistle). The Roman philosopher says, "The wise man will live as long as he ought, not as long as he can." Thus Ahithophel's departure is a reasoned journey. He clears up his affairs at home, presumably writing a will and insuring orderly transference of property to his heirs, and then hangs himself. He also cheats the executioner, since his support of Absalom would be interpreted as treason against the Lord's anointed. (See page 346 [IVP Bible Background Commentary](#))

DIGGING OUT THE ROOT OF BITTERNESS - Alan Carr (excerpted)

Now, I am not much of a gardener, but I do know this: some plants, especially some weeds, will never die unless you dig out their roots and utterly destroy them. You can cut them off at the surface time after time, but they just keep coming back. However, when the root is exposed and removed from the soil, the plant is gone. It takes work to dig out roots, but it is worth the effort, since it protects the other plants in the garden. Resentful...has the idea of brooding anger over that which has happened in your life. This anger produces a bad spirit within a person. It is a spirit of hostility and coldness toward God or others. Where does bitterness come from? Bitterness can come about as the result of what others do to us or say about us. Sometimes, bitterness can result from the events of life themselves, as we blame God or others for our troubles. Bitterness will affect every relationship within your life, but it will affect your relationship with the Lord most of all. The Bible talks about this "root of bitterness" that is a possibility in our lives. Notice: Heb. 12:15 and Deut. 29:18. These verses refer to that "root of bitterness". It is called a root because it begins hidden within the soil of your heart. From there, its roots will entwine themselves around your heart and mind, until they choke the life out of you emotionally and spiritually. If allowed to grow unchecked, this "root of bitterness" will spring up into a plant that will cast a shadow over everything you are and do. A "root of bitterness" in your life will literally come to dominate your very existence. In our text, we are presented with a man who was in the strangle hold of a massive "root of bitterness". Ahithophel met a tragic end because he allowed a root of bitterness to flourish in his life.

I. THE TESTIMONY OF AHITHOPHEL'S LIFE

A. He Had The Testimony Of A Saved Man – Many things in this man's life give the indication that he was a saved man.

1. He Sacrificed To God – 2Sa 15:12 – The very first time Ahithophel appears in the Bible, he appears engaged in the act of worship. This indicates that he was a keeper of the Law and a worshiper of the Lord.

2. He Spoke For God – 2Sa 16:23 – Ahithophel had the reputation as a man who gave good, godly counsel. In fact, this verse says that hearing a word from Ahithophel was just like getting the word directly from the mouth of God.

B. He Had The Testimony Of A Serving Man – Reading about this man's life teaches us that he did not just believe in God, but he also served God by serving others.

1. He Was A Counselor To God's Man – 2Sa 15:12 – Great leaders have always surrounded themselves with good counselors and David was no exception. Ahithophel was one of the men David trusted for advice and direction as he governed the nation of Israel.

2. He Was A Companion Of God's Man – Ps 41:9 – In this Psalm, which looks back on the treachery of Ahithophel's life, David refers to him as "my familiar friend". The word "familiar" comes from the same root that is often translated "peace". These men were at peace on with another. They were as close as men could be. The word "friend" comes from a word that can be translated "great champion or husband". (Which, by the way, is how my wife sees me!) I think that in using these two words, David is saying, "Ahithophel and I were

closer than brothers. Our hearts were wedded together as one and we walked together in peace.” He was a friend to the man of God!

In spite of the fact that Ahithophel gave every outward indication that all was well between himself and the Lord and between himself and David, there was something working in his heart that would destroy everything. Even during these times of his life, Ahithophel was being eaten alive, from the inside out, by an event that had happened years earlier.) I pointed out all those positive things from the life of Ahithophel to say this to you: You cannot always tell from the outward signs what is happening in a person’s heart! You may be thinking: “Preacher, no one here has a root of bitterness in this heart. After all, we are at church on a Sunday evening. We have a smile on our faces; we are joyous; we are worshipping together; everything is alright.” I think Ahithophel is about to teach us that what you see on the outside does not always show you the true condition of the heart! Have you ever heard of the word “hypocrite”? It was how Jesus referred to the scribes and Pharisees, Matt. 23:13-15; 23, 25, 27. It is an interesting word! It was originally used to refer to “an actor, or one who plays a part.” In the famous Greek tragedies, one actor would often play many parts. This actor would have a different mask for each part he was to play. As he transitioned from part to part, he would simply switch one mask for another. Hence, hypocrisy came to refer to someone who “plays different parts by hiding behind different masks.” Someone who wears their church face on Sunday and lives like the world on Monday is a hypocrite. By the same token, someone who loves you to your face, but secretly despises you in their hearts is also a hypocrite. They are merely playing a part and hiding behind a mask. What is the bottom line? What you see is not always what you get! People tend to try and hide a lot of themselves from others. But, we all need to remember, God sees it all, even that which you think you have hidden, Heb. 4:13.)

II. THE TRAGEDY OF AHITHOPHEL’S LIFE

The bitterness that was hidden within the heart of Ahithophel finally came out. Notice how it manifested itself in his life.

A. A Tragic Conspiracy – When David’s son Absalom rebelled against his father, Ahithophel saw his chance to enact his revenge upon King David. Ahithophel joined the rebellion and stood against God’s anointed, 2 Sam. 15:31; Psa. 41:9.

B. A Tragic Counsel – Out of his hatred for David, Ahithophel gave Absalom two words of counsel. The first recommendation he made was designed to disgrace King David, 2 Sam. 16:20-23. By having Absalom go into his father’s concubines, he publicly disgraced David and created a rift between father and son that could never be healed. The second recommendation was designed to destroy King David, 2 Sam. 17:1-4. Had this second piece of advice been followed, it is possible that David would have been defeated.

C. A Tragic Conclusion – Thankfully, David had a true friend in Absalom’s court, a man by the name of Hushai. Hushai had originally planned to go with David when he fled from Absalom, but at David’s request, he stayed behind in the city to try and overthrow the counsel of Ahithophel, 2 Sam. 15:32-37. Hushai comes to Absalom and professes his loyalty, 2 Sam. 16:16-19. After he has gained Absalom’s confidence, Hushai contradicts the wise counsel of Ahithophel, 2 Sam. 17:1-22, which resulted in Absalom accepting Hushai’s counsel and David being warned of what is about to take place and thus David is spared. Of course, the key verse is 2 Sam. 17:14. God was behind all this intrigue, because David, not Absalom, was the king of Israel!

When Ahithophel sees that his counsel has been rejected and that his plans to defeat and destroy David have failed, he returns to his house, puts everything in order and commits suicide! What a tragic end to what had been a good life!

Ahithophel did all these evil things because there was a root of bitterness in his life. He hated David and had merely pretended to be his friend all those years. As that root of bitterness grew in his life, Ahithophel lost sight of his former friendship with David. He lost sight of his walk with the Lord. Everything of value in his life had been choked out and he was left with nothing but bitterness and hatred. The root of bitterness had utterly consumed this man.)

As tragic as these events may be, I would like to point out that there are many in our Baptist church who are also afflicted with a root of bitterness. Because of some events in your past; because of what someone said to you or about you; because you didn’t get your way at some point, your feelings are hurt and nothing means as much to you as getting your pound of flesh. You are angry at someone else and you want revenge. You are hurt and you want them to hurt. You are offended and so you give them the cold shoulder, or purposely go out of your way to avoid having to speak to them. You think you are hurting them, but in reality, you are hurting no one but yourself! How? Friend, your bitterness will kill no one but you! When you and I allow bitterness over the hurts, slights and events of life to control us, we are committing slow, spiritual suicide. We are allowing our very spiritual life to be strangled right out of us! When we allow our hurts to linger, they will grow into a root of bitterness that will stifle anything spiritual within our lives. It is a tremendous tragedy when saved; spiritual people allow their lives to be consumed by hate, anger and bitterness! The best thing you can do is build a bridge and get over it before it kills you!

III. THE TEACHING OF AHITHOPHEL’S LIFE

As we look at Ahithophel’s life, I think you would agree with me that his life is a tragedy. His life is a lesson in foolishness. This man

truly lives up to his name. Ahithophel means “Brother of Folly; or Brother of Ruin”. Knowing what happened to him, I think we would all confess that we do not want the same thing to happen to us. So, what lessons can we take away from this study tonight? There are a couple.)

A. The Reasons That Produced His Fall – I have talked a lot about Ahithophel’s bitterness, but I have not yet told you what he was bitter over. I think we need to know. There are three passages that reveal the reasons behind this man’s bitterness and hatred toward David. They are: 2 Sam. 11:1-27; 2 Sam. 23:34. Looking at these two passages together you can see that Bathsheba was the grand-daughter of Ahithophel. David had treated his grand-daughter like she was a plaything and had arranged the murder of her husband Uriah the Hittite.

Considering what David did to Bathsheba, it is no wonder that Ahithophel was angry! And, he allowed his anger to burn for some 9 years, all the while feigning friendship toward David, biding his time until he could exact revenge. This bitterness ate Ahithophel alive until he was brought to the point of intrigue and murder, 2 Sam. 17:1-4. Then, when he saw that his plans had failed and the man he hated would return to the throne, Ahithophel took his own life, rather than face David.

Can you see the danger in allowing a root of bitterness to flourish in your life? Yet, in all of this, Ahithophel forgot two important truths.

1. God is sovereign and He is able to deal with the sins of His children, 2Sa 17:14; Rev. 3:19.
2. David had already paid dearly for his indiscretion with Bathsheba, 2Sa 12, and he would continue to pay for the murder of Uriah for the rest of his life, 2 Kings 12:9-10. God’s children never get away with sin!

B. The Remedies That Prevent Our Failure – With all this in mind, what can we do to avoid being consumed by a root of bitterness? Thankfully the Bible holds the answer to this question.

1. Acknowledge you own sin in allowing a root of bitterness to flourish. When you harbor resentment in your heart and fail to extend forgiveness to those who hurt you, then you are just as guilty as they are in the eyes of the Lord. Your first step is to admit your own wrong before the Lord, 1 John 1:9.
2. People must be forgiven! This is not an option; it is a necessity, Matt. 18:15-17; Matt. 18:21-35; Luke 17:1-5; Eph. 4:32. It is better to confront those who have offended you and get things settled than it is to allow bitterness to consume from the inside out! Remember, God knows how to take care of His Own children, Heb. 12:6-12; Rev. 3:19; Rom. 12:17-21.
3. Past events must be forgotten! What happened yesterday can never be changed. But, you do hold the key to tomorrow. You should never allow the hurts of yesterday to control your life today. It is a shame when we drag around the baggage of what someone said, what someone did or how we were hurt. It does nothing but strangle the spiritual life right out of you! You say, “I can’t forget it!” Jesus says, “Come unto me, all ye who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.”, Matt. 11:28. He also says, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”, 2 Cor. 12:9. Where we fail, He prevails! He will give you the grace to forgive and He will give you the grace to forget, if you will bring it to Him, 1 Pet. 5:7! If you will bring it to Him, He can really make the past the past!
4. Hatred and anger must be forsaken! Eph. 4:26-27, give serious warning concerning anger within our lives. It allows our adversary, the devil, a foothold, or a beachhead from which he can attack every area of our lives! You must bring your bitterness to the Lord!

Conclusion - Friend, are you afflicted with a root of bitterness? If so, then let me challenge you to bring it before the Lord and let Him dig it out of your life tonight. If you will honestly confess your hurt to the Lord, seek to forgive the offending party, and then God will give the grace needed to make that a reality in your life. You don’t need to let that root of bitterness live another minute! **Of course, some are bitter against others** and maybe even against God and they know it, but they have no intentions of forgiving or forgetting, choosing rather to seethe in their anger and to feel sorry for themselves. If that describes you friend, then you are in danger tonight. You need to lead the charge to this altar, seeking the Lord for your own forgiveness and restoration, so you can begin the healing process. **Others need to get up and go to another Brother or Sister** and say, “I’m sorry for what I said or what I did. Please forgive me!” That would be a blessing! **Still others are harboring a hurt and nursing a wounded spirit** and the person you are hurt at doesn’t even know they have done anything to you. The best thing you can do is to get before the Lord and deal with that matter in your own life. If you can’t get over, then do what the Bible says and go to that Brother or that Sister and talk it over in a spirit of humility and love. I have done what the Lord asked me to do tonight. I have delivered the mail. Now, it is up to you to read it and to do what the Lord is speaking to your heart. My friends, let’s be honest with our own hearts and with one another tonight. Until we deal with our roots of bitterness, the power of God and the ability of the Spirit of God to convict hearts, save sinners and move in power will be hindered.

NECKTIE PARTY 2 Sam. 17:23... Ahithophel ... put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died....(by Eric Hayden)

The last week, Sunday, or weekday of the year is a time of great spiritual opportunity. It is a time for taking inventory in shops and warehouses; it should also be a time for taking spiritual stock. It is a solemn time, the end of another twelve months. The books are closed, the figures added up and audited. It is as dramatic a time as the incident described in 2 Samuel 17. We might call it a drama in two acts. Like many plays it begins with a

Prologue

A prologue is a preliminary speech outlining the events to be enacted in a play. Our prologue is the context, the description of the brief career of a man whose name means "brother of foolishness" (although he himself was the foolish person). He led a rebellion that backfired and came to a sticky end (a "necktie party"—a hanging). Ahithophel took his own life to avoid the embarrassment of shameful, public dishonor.

He was a man of keen perception, a master of diplomacy, farseeing, and cautious. He had been counselor to King David for a long time and then decided to change sides and join the popular party (Absalom's). But the latter would not follow his advice! So he hurried home, and knowing that all was lost, arranged his affairs and hung himself. We must recognize that there is an Ahithophel in every one of us.

Act 1

The scene is set in Ahithophel's house. He is busy with his deed box and private papers.

Now imagine what you have to put in order at the end of another year. Perhaps it is the house of friendship. Maybe your friends have let you down during the past year. (Remember, the best friend to have is Jesus, the Friend "who sticks closer than a brother.") Perhaps it's the house of one-up-manship. Maybe you have been unsuccessfully trying to keep up with the Joneses during the past year. Your goal has been the top rung of the ladder, a larger house, a bigger car; and in the race you have forgotten that "a man's life consists not in the abundance of things which he possesses."

Act 2

The scene is now an outbuilding or barn. A rope is dangling from a beam and a body has finished twitching with death throes. This is not being morbid. Life ends for all in one way or another as "it is appointed unto man once to die." We may call the mortician and lay out the bodies in chapels of rest; but "all flesh is as grass." It grows, then withers, then ends up on a bonfire.

Of the death of Gladstone it was said, "On the morning of the nineteenth, his family all kneeling around the bed on which he lay, ... without a struggle he ceased to breathe. Nature without—wood and wide lawn and far-off sky—shone at her fairest." In other words, the great statesman lay dead but life went on. Death is not the end for the Christian, for Jesus said, "Because I live, ye shall live also. I am the resurrection, and the life."

Epilogue

The epilogue is a speech addressed to the audience at the end of a play. In other words, it is the punch line, the moral, the application of the message of the play.

Ahithophel died on a homemade gibbet. He took his own life. Centuries later Jesus Christ died on a Roman gibbet, but He yielded up His own life, saying, "No man taketh it [Christ's life] from me." Ahithophel's death meant his end; Christ's death meant the beginning for all who put their faith in Him.

Queen Victoria was once given a tour of a paper mill. While she was there, she saw and remarked on a pile of filthy old rags. The next day she was presented with a gift of fine note paper, complete with royal crest, made from the old rags. So Christ can take the dregs of humanity such as drug addicts or alcoholics, and He can take decent, moral men and women with the greatest of all sins in their lives ("because they believe not on me") and turn them into saints.

Related Resources:

- [What is the Christian view of suicide? What does the Bible say about suicide? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [If a Christian commits suicide, is he/she still saved? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Why should I not commit suicide? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [GotQuestions.org Podcast Episode 29, Parts 1 and 2 - What about suicide?](#)
- [How can I help someone who is suicidal? | GotQuestions.org](#)

- [What are some Bible verses about suicide? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [SPECIAL TOPIC: SUICIDE](#)

2 Samuel 17:24 Then David came to Mahanaim. And Absalom crossed the Jordan, he and all the men of Israel with him.

- **Mahanaim:** 2Sa 2:8 Ge 32:2 Jos 13:26
- [2 Samuel 17 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

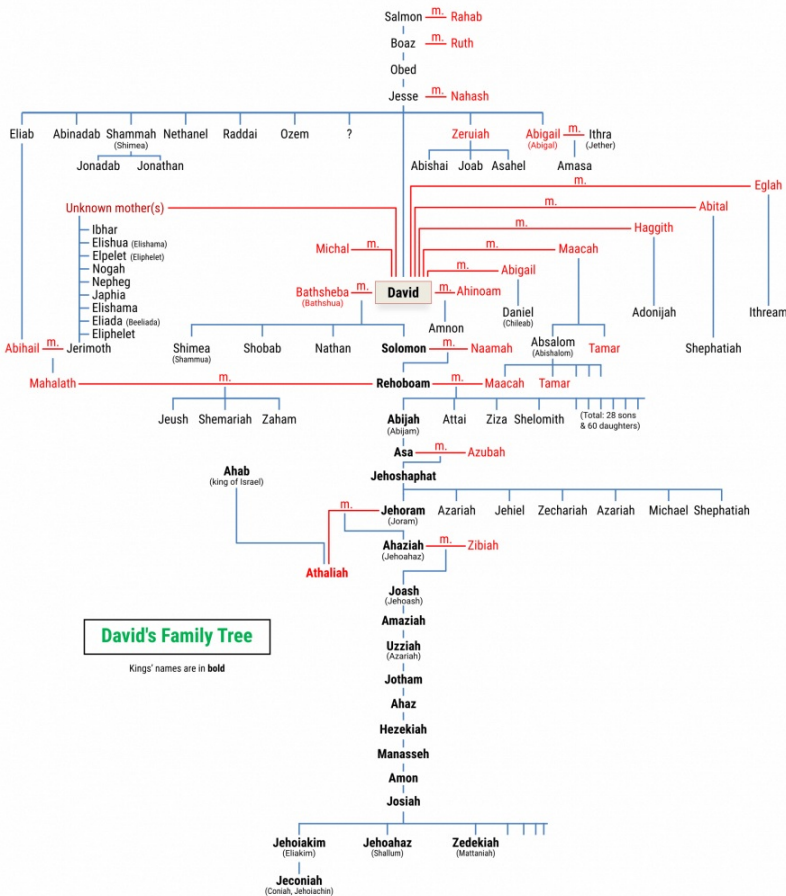
ABSALOM'S VANITY ENSURE HIS RUIN

Then David came to Mahanaim. And Absalom crossed the [Jordan](#), he and all the men of Israel with him - Absalom's pride cause him to desire to lead his troops to victory and attain the associated acclaim! But as **G Campbell Morgan** quipped "Absalom's vanity ensured his ruin." Presumably Absalom did not cross the Jordan until some time after David had left the fords and traveled to **Mahanaim**, about thirty-five miles from the fords at Jericho. The land in this area was fertile and flourishing, watered with heavy dews and ten inches of rainfall. It had rich farmland, grazing land, and wheat fields and also contained forests of great oak trees and thick shrubs and bushes, steep cliffs and hills.

Mahanaim (means two camps or two hosts) and was a place near the [Jabbok](#) and east of the Jordan River, where Jacob was met by the "angels of God," and where he divided his retinue into "two hosts" on his return from Padan-aram (Ge. 32:1-2). This name was afterwards given to the town which was built at that place. It was the southern boundary of Bashan (Josh. 13:26, 30), and became a city of the Levites, specifically the town with its "suburbs" was allotted to the service of the Merarite Levites. (Joshua 21:38, 39; 1Ch 6:80). **Mahanaim** was within the territory of Gad, (Joshua 21:38,39) and therefore on the south side of the torrent Jabbok. Mahanaim had become in the time of the monarchy a place of mark. Here Saul's son Ishbosheth reigned (2Sa 2:8, 12), while David reigned at Hebron. Here also, after a troubled reign, Ishbosheth was murdered by two of his own bodyguard (2Sa 4:5-7), who brought his head to David at Hebron, but were, instead of being rewarded, put to death by him for their cold-blooded murder. Many years after this, when he fled from Jerusalem on the rebellion of his son Absalom, David made Mahanaim, where Barzillai entertained him, his headquarters, and here he mustered his forces which were led against the army that had gathered around Absalom (2Sa 17:24; 1Ki 2:8). It was while sitting at the gate of this town that tidings of the great and decisive battle between the two hosts and of the death of his son Absalom reached him, when he gave way to the most violent grief (2Sa 17:24-27). The only other reference to Mahanaim is as a station of one of Solomon's purveyors (1 Kings 4:14).

2 Samuel 17:25 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 Zeruihah, Joab's mother.

- **Amasa:** 2Sa 19:13 20:4,9-12
- **Ithra:** 1Ch 2:16,17, Jether the Ishmaelite
- **Nahash:** or, Jesse. 1Ch 2:13,16
- [2 Samuel 17 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries



Click to Enlarge David's Family Tree
 Source: Bibletales.online

AMASA ASSIGNED COMMANDER IN CHIEF

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 Zeruiah, Joab's mother - The family interrelationships associated with David can be very confusing (thus the well done family tree above). That said, **Amasa**, son of David's sister **Abigail**, was a cousin of Absalom as well as cousin of Joab, Abishai and Asahel (who were sons of David's other sister Zeruiah). Ithra an Israelite in 1 Chronicles 2:17 says Amasa's father was "Jether the Ishmaelite." Aside from the two different forms of the same name, the probable explanation of this difference is that Jether (or Ithra) was an Ishmaelite proselyte to the faith of Israel. Here is one key point the consequences of David's sin in 2Sa 11 that result in a civil war also completely divided the family of David, several times fatally! (e.g., Absalom's and Amasa's deaths both at the hands of their cousin Joab!).

2 Samuel 17:26 And Israel and Absalom camped in the land of Gilead.

- land of the Gilead, Nu 32:1-42 De 3:15 Jos 17:1
- [2 Samuel 17 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

And Israel and Absalom camped in the land of Gilead - Absalom's army is now on the east side of the Jordan, probably south of where David and his men are at [Mahanaim](#)

2 Samuel 17:27 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,

- the son of Nahash: 2Sa 10:1,2 12:29,30 1Sa 11:1
- Machir: 2Sa 9:4-5
- Barzillai: 2Sa 19:31-32 1Ki 2:7 Ezr 2:61

- [2 Samuel 17 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

2 Samuel 9:4-5+ So the king said to him, "Where is he (**MEPHIBOSHETH**)?" And Ziba said to the king, "**Behold**, he is in the **house of Machir** the son of Ammiel in Lo-debar." (WHICH WAS NOT FAR FROM MAHANAIM) 5 Then King David sent and brought him from the **house of Machir** the son of Ammiel, from Lo-debar.

Mahanaim is in NE corner of the pink-shaded area of Gad
(click to enlarge)

MEN BRING SUPPLIES FOR DAVID

Now when David had come to Mahanaim ([Wikipedia](#)) - It is fascinating that this same town was the refuge for another king, Ishbosheth (2Sa 2:8), David's competitor for rule over Israel!

Shobi the son of Nahash (an Ammonite) **from Rabbah of the sons of Ammon**, **Machir** (an Israelite) **the son of Ammiel from Lo-debar**, and **Barzillai** (an Israelite) **the Gileadite** (see [Gilead](#) from the tribe of Manasseh) **from Rogelim** - Wealthy **Machir** supported Mephibosheth (2Sa 9:4-5+) who of the family of Saul (Jonathan's son) and now willingly supports his succession from the tribe of Judah, King David! Clearly he has a kind, compassionate, generous heart! It is interesting that of these 3 men (**Shobi...Machir...Barzillai**) we only read of David rewarding Barzillai after his victory over Absalom. Of course this does not mean the others were not also rewarded. Barzillai's home territory was [Gilead](#) ([Wiki](#)) and [Rogelim](#) was his residence probably located near Mahanaim, David's home base in exile. **Barzillai** was old (80), rich and generous as shown by the following verses. After David's victory he sought to reward **Barzillai** who said he was too old for court life and wanted to die in his hometown (see 2Sa 19:31-39+)

Friends in the time of need are friends indeed.

Shobi is interesting because (1) he is son of Nahash, the man who apparently showed kindness to David when he was a fugitive from Saul, (2) he is an Ammonite from Rabbah, the chief city of the Ammonites which David had defeated in 2Sa 12:26-29 and (3) Shobi is apparently the brother of Hanun who went to war with David in 2Sa 10:2-19+.

[David Guzik](#) makes an excellent point that "These helpers of David were not dramatic warriors, but they helped David in this crisis as much as the bravest soldier. They were specially sent by God to comfort David in his affliction."

SHOBI - An Ammonite prince, son of King Nahash; one of those who assisted David during the rebellion of Absalom (2Sa 17:27). He was a brother of Hanun, who succeeded his father Nahash as king of the Ammonites and whose shameful treatment of David's envoys produced the wars between Israel and Ammon (2Sa 10:2-19). It appears that David, following his capture of the royal city of Rabbah (2Sa 12:26-31), appointed Shobi to rule in his brother's place. Shobi then returns the blessing by supplying David in his time of need while fleeing from Absalom.

Rod Mattoon - THE PROVISIONS FOR THE KING—2 Sa 17:27-29

David finds that circumstances are not as bad as they look. At a critical, desperate time, God brings three musketeers into David's life to meet his needs of food, filth, fatigue, and fellowship. God is very much concerned about your needs.

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

God brings these men, all from different areas, to this place to encourage David. They saw people with needs, were moved with compassion, and motivated to action. Their example teaches important lessons to us. These men...

- Rallied to David's side.
- Responded to his shortage.
- Refreshed his spirit.
- Replenished his supplies.

These men were....

1. **Shobi** = "Restore" (**ED: BUT MEANING IS UNCERTAIN**) He was an Ammonite, the son of Nahash. (**ED:** possibly the king of the Ammonites who replaced Hanun by David's command) God uses him to restore David. When David was a fugitive early in his life, his father king Nahash befriended David. When Nahash died, David sent servants to Ammon to pay respect to the son. Hanun

(Shobi's brother) was cruel to the servants. He thought they were spying. War develops and Hanun was conquered. Shobi is in charge now. He was gracious. He could have given the excuse, "David fought our people so we won't help him." He shows kindness and love to David.

2. Machir = "To Give One's Self Up" This man had a servant's attitude. He gave of himself to David. He helped the underdogs. He cared for crippled Mephibosheth before David started doing this. In gratefulness, he cares for David now. He could have given the excuse, "I've paid my dues. David is on his own now." He doesn't do this at all. David reaps the kindness he has sown. He had also helped Mephibosheth in 2Sa 9:4.

3. Barzillai = It means "Made of Iron." (ED: "iron" [strong], "man of iron," and one reference "iron hearted") He was a godly man who gave strength to David. He was loyal to David and used of God in a great way. He demonstrates that **you are never too old to be used of God (ED: SEE THOUGHT)**. You are never too sick to help others.

2 Samuel 19:35—He is 80 years old. He was struggling with deafness, partial blindness (? text), and insensitive to taste. He did not let these setbacks stop him. He could have given the excuse, "I'm too old; my health is bad; I'm retired." Instead, we find this guy was a **man of iron. He sharpens David.**

Proverbs 27:17 Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.

(Rod Mattoon - [Treasures from 2 Samuel](#))

2 Samuel 17:28 brought beds, basins, pottery, wheat, barley, flour, parched grain, beans, lentils, parched seeds,

NET 2 Samuel 17:28 brought bedding, basins, and pottery utensils. They also brought food for David and all who were with him, including wheat, barley, flour, roasted grain, beans, lentils,

CSB 2 Samuel 17:28 brought beds, basins, and pottery items. They also brought wheat, barley, flour, roasted grain, beans, lentils,

ESV 2 Samuel 17:28 brought beds, basins, and earthen vessels, wheat, barley, flour, parched grain, beans and lentils,

NIV 2 Samuel 17:28 brought bedding and bowls and articles of pottery. They also brought wheat and barley, flour and roasted grain, beans and lentils,

NLT 2 Samuel 17:28 They brought sleeping mats, cooking pots, serving bowls, wheat and barley, flour and roasted grain, beans, lentils,

- **beds:** These no doubt consisted of skins of beasts, mats, carpets, and such like. 2Sa 16:1,2 1Sa 25:18 Isa 32:8
- **basins:** or, cups, {Sappoth,} probably wooden bowls, such as the Arabs still eat out of, and knead their bread in.
- **pottery:** literally, "vessels of the potter."
- [2 Samuel 17 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

brought beds, basins, pottery, wheat, barley, flour, parched grain, beans, lentils, parched seeds - In these days the armies were supplied by local residents.

NET NOTE - The Masoretic Text adds "roasted grain" 'לֶחֶם (vqali) ("parched") at the end of v. 28, apparently accidentally repeating the word from its earlier occurrence in this verse. With the LXX, the Syriac Peshitta, and an Old Latin manuscripts the translation deletes this second occurrence of the word. (ED: NOTE THE LAST "PARCHED" IS ALSO DELETED FROM ESV, NIV, NLT, NRSV, NJB.

Walton - Once again David receives provisions for himself and his men (see Abigail's supplies in 1 Sam 25:18 and Ziba's proffered provisions in 2 Sam 16:2). In each of these cases, these foodstuffs could be construed as tribute or as the duty expected of a vassal. The Ammonites had been subdued by Saul (1 Sam 11) and later by David (2 Sam 10). Thus the king is acknowledged by his allies with hospitality and respect despite his forced departure from Jerusalem. (See page 346 [IVP Bible Background Commentary](#))

2 Samuel 17:29 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."

- **cheese of the herd:** 1Sa 17:18
- **for David:** Lu 8:3 Php 4:15-19
- **to eat:** 2Sa 17:2 Ps 34:8-10 84:11
- **The people:** Jdg 8:4-6 Ec 11:1,2 Isa 21:14 58:7
- **in the wilderness:** 2Sa 16:2,14
- [2 Samuel 17 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

NOURISHMENT FOR THE WEARY EXILES

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