

2 Samuel 16 - The Kindness of Ziba; Shimei Curses David; The Counsel of Ahithophel and Hushai

III. David's foes (13:1—20:26)

(1) Turmoil in David's immediate family (13:1—18:33)

(B) Absalom's rebellion (14:1—18:33)

(b) Absalom gains control of the nation and David flees into exile (15:1—16:14)

(c) Absalom's reign (16:15—17:29)

2 Samuel 16

(b) Absalom gains control of the nation and David flees into exile (15:1—16:14)

1 Now when David had gone on a little beyond the summit, behold, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him with a team of saddled donkeys, and on them *were* two hundred loaves of bread, a hundred cakes of raisins, a hundred summer fruits, and a jug of wine.

1 Now when David had passed a little beyond the summit, behold, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him with a couple of saddled donkeys, and on them *were* two hundred loaves of bread, a hundred clusters of raisins, a hundred summer fruits, and a jug of wine.

1 Now just as David happened to have passed the summit of the Mount of Olives, suddenly Mephibosheth's servant Ziba met him, accompanied by a couple of saddled donkeys loaded with 200 loaves of bread, 100 clusters of raisins, 100 pieces of summer fruit, and a skin of wine!

1 And when David was a little past the top of the hill, behold, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him, with a couple of asses saddled, and upon them two hundred loaves of bread, and an hundred bunches of raisins, and an hundred of summer fruits, and a bottle of wine.

2 And the king said to Ziba, "Why do you have these?" And Ziba said, "The donkeys are for the king's household to ride, the bread and summer fruit are for the young men to eat, and the wine, for whoever is weary in the wilderness to drink."

2 The king said to Ziba, "Why do you have these?" And Ziba said, "The donkeys are for the king's household to ride, and the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat, and the

wine, for whoever is faint in the wilderness to drink."

2 The king asked Ziba, "What are those for?"

Ziba replied, "The donkeys are for the king's household to ride, the bread and summer fruit are for your young men to eat, and the wine is for whoever wants to drink if they get weary in the wilderness."

2 And the king said unto Ziba, What meanest thou by these? And Ziba said, The asses be for the king's household to ride on; and the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat; and the wine, that such as be faint in the wilderness may drink.

3 Then the king said, "And where is your master's son?" And Ziba said to the king, "Behold, he is staying in Jerusalem, for he said, 'Today the house of Israel will restore the kingdom of my father to me!'"

3 Then the king said, "And where is your master's son?" And Ziba said to the king, "Behold, he is staying in Jerusalem, for he said, 'Today the house of Israel will restore the kingdom of my father to me!'"

3 Then the king asked, "Where is your master's son?"

"He's staying in Jerusalem!" Ziba answered the king. "He's saying 'The nation of Israel will restore my father's kingdom to me today!'"

3 And the king said, And where is thy master's son? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he abideth at Jerusalem: for he said, To day shall the house of Israel restore me the kingdom of my father.

- Ziba reported Mephibosheth's reaction to the news that Absalom had rebelled against David

— However, the report appears to be untrue (Cf. 19:24-28)

— David accepted Ziba's report too quickly, without getting all the facts, perhaps in part because Ziba showed himself to be a friend in providing David and his men with provisions

Ziba rendered an important service to David by meeting him as he crossed Olivet, with two strong donkeys saddled with bread, raisins, fruits, and wine. With shrewd political intuition, betting on the failure of the rebellion, Ziba gained David's favor at the cost of Mephibosheth, whom he misrepresented as staying at Jerusalem in expectation of regaining the kingdom.

Mephibosheth had everything to lose and nothing to gain from Absalom's success. A cripple and a Benjamite could never dream of being preferred by Judah over the handsome Absalom; interest and gratitude bound him to David. Ziba had it completely in his power to leave him unable to stir from Jerusalem during the rebellion, by taking away the asses; the king and his friends were gone.

4 So the king said to Ziba, "Behold, all that belongs to Mephibosheth is yours." And Ziba said, "I prostrate myself; may I find favor in your sight, my lord, the king!"

4 So the king said to Ziba, "Behold, all that belongs to Mephibosheth is yours." And Ziba said, "I prostrate myself; let me find favor in your sight, O my lord, the king!"

4 So the king told Ziba, "Pay attention! Everything that belongs to Mephibosheth is now yours!"

In response Ziba said, "I'm submitting to you. Let me find favor in your sight, your majesty the king!"

4 Then said the king to Ziba, Behold, thine are all that pertained unto Mephibosheth. And Ziba said, I humbly beseech thee that I may find grace in thy sight, my lord, O king.

- In hasty credulity, David stripped the generous pension he had given Mephibosheth earlier, and gave it all to Ziba (Cf. 9:7,13)

- As we will learn in 2 Sam 19, upon David's return to Jerusalem, Mephibosheth told David the truth: that Ziba had deceived him when he desired to saddle the donkey and go to the king, and had slandered him (19:24-30)

— The same depressed spirit of Mephibosheth appears in 19:26-28: his squalid appearance, with unwashed feet, unattended beard, and soiled clothes, indicated the deepest mourning since the king departed, and attested to his truthfulness

— David saw his error, but did not have the courage to rectify it; Ziba's service to him during his flight outweighed his commitment to Mephibosheth

5 When King David came to Bahurim, behold, a man was coming out from there from the family of the house of Saul, and his name was Shimei, the son of Gera; he was coming out, cursing as he came.

5 When King David came to Bahurim, behold, there came out from there a man of the family of the house of Saul whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera; he came out cursing continually as he came.

5 Later on, as King David approached Bahurim, Gera's son Shimei, who was related to the family of Saul's household, went out to meet David, cursing continually as he approached.

5 And when king David came to Bahurim, behold, thence came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera: he came forth, and cursed still as he came.

- David next encountered Shimei, another relative of Saul, who greeted the fleeing monarch and his officials at Bahurim (east of the Mount of Olives) with curses and physical abuse, pelting them with stones

— The misfortune of his family, and the occupation by David of what they considered their rightful possessions, afforded a natural, if not a justifiable cause for this barrage of rude insults and violence. He upbraided David as an ambitious usurper, and charged him, as one

whose misdeeds had recoiled upon his own head, to surrender a throne to which he was not entitled.

6 He also threw stones at David and all the servants of King David; and all the people and all the warriors were on his right and on his left.

6 He threw stones at David and at all the servants of King David; and all the people and all the mighty men were at his right hand and at his left.

6 He threw rocks at David and all of David's staff who were accompanying him, while all the rest of the entourage, including all of David's security detail, were close by him.

6 And he cast stones at David, and at all the servants of king David: and all the people and all the mighty men were on his right hand and on his left.

7 This is what Shimei said when he cursed: "Go away, go away, you man of bloodshed and worthless man!

7 Thus Shimei said when he cursed, "Get out, get out, you man of bloodshed, and worthless fellow!

7 "Get out of here! Get out!" Shimei yelled as he cursed. "You murderer! You who think you're above the law!

7 And thus said Shimei when he cursed, Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial:

David may have written Psalm 7 at this time (if "Cush" is another name for Shimei).

8 The LORD has brought back upon you all the bloodshed of the house of Saul, in whose place you have become king; and the LORD has handed the kingdom over to your son Absalom. And behold, you are *caught* in your own evil, for you are a man of bloodshed!"

8 The LORD has returned upon you all the bloodshed of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned; and the LORD has given the kingdom into the hand of your son Absalom. And behold, you are *taken* in your own evil, for you are a man of bloodshed!"

8 The LORD has repaid you personally for murdering the entire dynasty of Saul, whose place you've taken to reign! And the LORD has given the kingdom into your son Absalom's control. Now look! Your own evil has caught up with you, because you're guilty of murder!"

8 The LORD hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned; and the LORD hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son: and, behold, thou art taken in thy mischief, because thou *art* a bloody man.

- Shimei taunted David in that since he was a man of blood, God was now avenging the death of Saul and his family by driving David from power

— While it was true that David was a man of much bloodshed, including the murder of Uriah, it was untrue that he had raised his hand against Saul, whom he regarded as the anointed of the Lord. Instead, David had taken every measure to deal graciously with Saul's survivors.

— Shimei's real complaint, as is evident from his own admission, was that David sat on the throne of Saul ("Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned")

9 Then Abishai the son of Zeruiah said to the king, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Now let me go over and cut off his head."

9 Then Abishai the son of Zeruiah said to the king, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over now and cut off his head."

9 At this point, Zeruiah's son Abishai asked the king, "Why should this dead dog be cursing your majesty the king? May I have permission to go over and cut off his head?"

9 Then said Abishai the son of Zeruiah unto the king, Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head.

- Cursing the king was a capital crime

— Abishai, David's bodyguard and nephew, begged the king to let him decapitate Shimei, whom Abishai called a dead dog (i.e., worthless and despised; Cf. 9:8)

10 But the king said, "What *business* of mine is yours, you sons of Zeruiah? If he curses, and if the LORD has told him, 'Curse David,' then who should say, 'Why have you done so?'"

10 But the king said, "What have I to do with you, O sons of Zeruiah? If he curses, and if the LORD has told him, 'Curse David,' then who shall say, 'Why have you done so?'"

10 But the king responded, "What do I have in common with you sons of Zeruiah? If he continues to curse—and if the LORD has told him, 'Curse David!'—then who are you to be demanding to know 'Why have you done this?'"

10 And the king said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah? so let him curse, because the LORD hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so?

- Remember, the "sons of Zeruiah" were "half-relatives" from Jesse's marriage to Zeruiah, the Ammonite (Cf. notes on 2 Sam 2)

- It is remarkable that David acted more independently of the sons of Zeruiah in this season of great distress than he could often muster courage to do in the days of his prosperity and power

11 Then David said to Abishai and to all his servants, "Behold, my son who came out of my own body seeks my life; how much more now *this* Benjaminite? Leave him alone and let him

curse, for the LORD has told him.

11 Then David said to Abishai and to all his servants, "Behold, my son who came out from me seeks my life; how much more now this Benjamite? Let him alone and let him curse, for the LORD has told him.

11 So David ordered Abishai and all of his staff: "Look! My own son wants to kill me! How much more now is this descendant of Benjamin? Leave him alone and let him go on cursing, because the LORD has ordered him to do this.

11 And David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now may this Benjamite do it? let him alone, and let him curse; for the LORD hath bidden him.

- David forbid Abishai's revenge, and it appears that he believed that his present situation may be God's punishment for killing Uriah (Cf. 12:11)

— He reasoned that if his own son was trying to kill him, why should the cursing of Shimei be a concern?

— God would someday vindicate David, but for now there must be no recompense for Shimei's evil conduct

12 Perhaps the LORD will look on my misery and return good to me instead of his cursing this day."

12 Perhaps the LORD will look on my affliction and return good to me instead of his cursing this day."

12 Perhaps the LORD will take note of my troubles and return good to me instead of curses today!"

12 It may be that the LORD will look on mine affliction, and that the LORD will requite me good for his cursing this day.

- He hoped that by showing Shimei mercy, God might be merciful to him (Cf. 22:26)

— David's attitude was entirely different from Abishai (Cf. 1 Sam 26:8) and his brother Joab, who often seized the initiative from God

— Instead of letting Shimei's criticism elicit an improper response, he listened for the voice of God in Shimei's words (Cf. Nabal, 1 Sam 25:26,32-34)

— For David to control his temper was a greater victory than slaying Goliath (Prov 16:32)

It is an interesting theological view that the hate-filled rantings of an apparent madman might be the voice of God to David. The willingness to listen to one's critics and even to one's enemies may be the only way to discover the truth of God. The natural tendency is to surround ourselves with friends who are often reluctant to tell us the things we need to know. This opens the possibility that we may do well at times to listen to people who wish

us harm but tell us the truth. Here again we see David's willingness to expose himself to God's word for his life and to God's judgment upon his life.

13 So David and his men went on the road; and Shimei kept going on the hillside close beside him, and as he went he cursed and threw stones and dirt at him.

13 So David and his men went on the way; and Shimei went along on the hillside parallel with him and as he went he cursed and cast stones and threw dust at him.

13 So David and his entourage went on their way, and Shimei walked along the hillside with him, cursing, throwing rocks, and tossing dirt at David as they went along.

13 And as David and his men went by the way, Shimei went along on the hill's side over against him, and cursed as he went, and threw stones at him, and cast dust.

- Shimei continued his cursing, stone-throwing, and dirt-tossing as David continued on the road to his destination

14 And the king and all the people who were with him arrived exhausted, and he refreshed himself there.

14 The king and all the people who were with him arrived weary and he refreshed himself there.

14 Eventually, the king and his entourage arrived exhausted at their destination, and David refreshed himself there.

14 And the king, and all the people that were with him, came weary, and refreshed themselves there.

A Glimpse of Destiny(!):

When we get to the Book of Esther, we encounter a dramatic contest between the evil Haman, Xerxes' prime minister, and Esther's benefactor, Mordecai.

It is interesting that Haman was an "Agagite," a royal Amalekite, the last of his proud house to occupy a position of influence and power [Josephus, *Antiquities*, xi 6, § 5], and thus a descendant of the Agag, whom Saul failed to kill, and the reason he lost the kingdom.

Mordecai was a descendant of Shimei, whom David declined to kill (Esther 2:5). If David had let Abishai kill Shimei, perhaps the drama of Haman's attempt to exterminate the Jews might have ended differently!?

The story doesn't end in this chapter...in 19:6, Shimei wisely was the "first of the house of Joseph" to meet David on his victorious return over the Jordan. A thousand Benjamites, and Ziba with his 15 sons and 20 servants, were with him. He fell down before the king, confessing his sin, and begging David not to "impute iniquity" to him, or remember and take to heart his perversity [spiritually compare Matt 5:25; Ps 32:1-6].

Abishai would again have slain Shimei, but David felt his day of restoration to the kingdom was no day for avenging wrongs, and said "thou shalt not die." However on his deathbed, David felt that though he forgave Shimei the personal wrong, yet public justice required his punishment in some form, for David was not likely, in going to appear before God, to cherish revenge after having spared him twice when he might justly have slain him. To Solomon he committed the fulfillment of the duty unfulfilled by himself; "thou knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him." The impunity of Shimei, as of Joab, had brought the law into discredit, for Shimei was living in court favor at Jerusalem, "thou hast with thee Shimei" (1 Kings 2:8). Anticipating from Shimei's restless spirit that he would attempt some fresh lawlessness, David says, "his hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood." [However, as Solomon did not put him to death but gave him a chance of life, some understand "not" after "bring thou down," taken from the former clause "hold him not guiltless," and "bring not down his hoar head," etc. So in 1 Sam 2:3, where two prohibitions come together, the negative is expressed only in the first clause and understood in the second.]

Solomon bound him on pain of death to build a house, and stay at Jerusalem, and not cross the Kedron which separated him from the road to his old abode at Bahurim. After the lapse of three years Shimei went after two slaves of his, who had fled to Achish of Gath. His breach of his own oath brought on him the king's threatened penalty; he was slain by Benaiah. Thus he brought, "on his own head" his wickedness towards David which David had left unavenged; justice had its course by "taking away the wicked from before the king, his throne was established in righteousness" (Prov 25:5; 1 Kings 2:36-46; Ps 7:16; Ezek 17:19).

(c) Absalom's reign (16:15—17:29)

15 Then Absalom and all the people, the men of Israel, entered Jerusalem, and Ahithophel with him.

15 Then Absalom and all the people, the men of Israel, entered Jerusalem, and Ahithophel with him.

15 Right about then, Absalom and his entourage from the people of Israel entered Jerusalem, accompanied by Ahithophel.

15 And Absalom, and all the people the men of Israel, came to Jerusalem, and Ahithophel with him.

- Meanwhile Absalom arrived in Jerusalem and was immediately met by Hushai, a friend of David who pretended to be loyal to Absalom

— His mission as contradictor to the counsel of Ahithophel, Absalom's chief adviser, would be implemented later

16 Now it came about, when Hushai the Archite, David's friend, came to Absalom, that Hushai said to Absalom, "*Long live the king! Long live the king!*"

16 Now it came about when Hushai the Archite, David's friend, came to Absalom, that Hushai said to Absalom, "*Long live the king! Long live the king!*"

16 When David's friend Hushai the Archite approached Absalom, Hushai greeted Absalom, "Long live the king! Long live the king!"

16 And it came to pass, when Hushai the Archite, David's friend, was come unto Absalom, that Hushai said unto Absalom, **God save the king**, God save the king.

- "...God save the king" [KJV] - a cry of respect for the royal personage. The usual explanation is that it means, "May the king live for a long time!"

— The repetition of this phrase by Hushai expressed his feigned enthusiasm for the new regime

17 But Absalom said to Hushai, "Is this your loyalty to your friend? Why did you not go with your friend?"

17 Absalom said to Hushai, "Is this your loyalty to your friend? Why did you not go with your friend?"

17 But Absalom asked Hushai, "So this is how you demonstrate your loyalty to your closest friends? Why didn't you leave with your friend?"

17 And Absalom said to Hushai, Is this thy kindness to thy friend? why wentest thou not with thy friend?

18 So Hushai said to Absalom, "No! For whomever the LORD, this people, and all the men of Israel have chosen, his I shall be, and with him I shall remain.

18 Then Hushai said to Absalom, "No! For whom the LORD, this people, and all the men of Israel have chosen, his I will be, and with him I will remain.

18 Hushai replied, "No! On the contrary, whomever the LORD, this group, and all the men of Israel choose is where I'll be, and I'll remain with him!

18 And Hushai said unto Absalom, Nay; but whom the LORD, and this people, and all the men of Israel, choose, his will I be, and with him will I abide.

- Hushai was loyal to David primarily because he was the Lord's anointed

— His words to Absalom implied that he was supporting the revolution, but everything that Hushai said could have been taken as supporting David, which he did

19 Besides, whom should I serve? *Should I* not serve in the presence of his son? Just as I have served in your father's presence, so I shall be in your presence."

19 Besides, whom should I serve? *Should I* not serve in the presence of his son? As I have served in your father's presence, so I will be in your presence."

19 Besides, who else should I be serving? Why not the son? The same way I served your father, I'll serve you."

19 And again, whom should I serve? should I not serve in the presence of his son? as I have served in thy father's presence, so will I be in thy presence.

20 Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, "Give your advice. What should we do?"

20 Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, "Give your advice. What shall we do?"

20 So Absalom asked Ahithophel, "What's your advice? What should we do?"

20 Then said Absalom to Ahithophel, Give counsel among you what we shall do.

21 Ahithophel said to Absalom, "Have relations with your father's concubines, whom he has left behind to take care of the house; then all Israel will hear that you have made yourself repulsive to your father. The hands of all who are with you will also be strengthened."

21 Ahithophel said to Absalom, "Go in to your father's concubines, whom he has left to keep the house; then all Israel will hear that you have made yourself odious to your father. The hands of all who are with you will also be strengthened."

21 Ahithophel responded, "Go inside and have sex with your father's mistresses, whom he left to keep the palace in order. Then everyone in Israel will hear how your father has come to hate you and everyone who has joined you will be emboldened to act."

21 And Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Go in unto thy father's concubines, which he hath left to keep the house; and all Israel shall hear that thou art abhorred of thy father: then shall the hands of all that are with thee be strong.

- Ahithophel's first advice to Absalom was to assume the right to the throne through a public seizure of David's concubines. At this time, the public appropriation of a king's concubines signaled the transfer of power to his successor.

— By doing this, Absalom broke the Mosaic Law (Lev 18:7-8) to gain power

— This act was not actually viewed with abhorrence by the Israelites, whose feelings on such matters were blunted by the practice of polygamy

— Following this counsel would cause an irreparable breach between father and son

— Ahithophel's advice was colored by his own agenda toward David

22 So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the roof, and Absalom had relations with his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel.

22 So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the roof, and Absalom went in to his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel.

22 So they erected a tent for Absalom on the palace roof and Absalom went in and had sex with his father's mistresses right in front of all Israel.

22 So they spread Absalom a tent upon the top of the house; and Absalom went in unto his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel.

- Filled with lust for power, Absalom followed Ahithophel's advice and ordered a tent put up on the palace roof and, "in the sight of all Israel," violated these women as a claim on the kingdom and open disdain for his father

— Absalom brought about one of the judgments God (through Nathan) had predicted would come on David for his sin (12:11-12)

— This act was also a great insult to David, and it jeopardized Absalom's inheritance rights (Cf. Reuben, Gen 35:22; 49:3-4)

— By taking David's concubines, Absalom showed his supporters that he would never be reconciled to David, and strengthened their commitment to him

23 Now the advice of Ahithophel, which he gave in those days, *was taken* as though one inquired of the word of God; so *was* all the advice of Ahithophel *regarded* by both David and Absalom.

23 The advice of Ahithophel, which he gave in those days, *was* as if one inquired of the word of God; so *was* all the advice of Ahithophel *regarded* by both David and Absalom.

23 Now Ahithophel's advice that he provided at that time was being compared to one who inquired of God, so highly regarded was Ahithophel's counsel by both David and Absalom.

23 And the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counselled in those days, was as if a man had enquired at the oracle of God: so was all the counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom.

- The words of counsel that Ahithophel gave Absalom were given credence as though they came directly from God, so highly regarded was his wisdom. Hushai's assignment would be difficult indeed.