

2Samuel 17:1 ¶ Moreover Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Let me now choose out twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue after David this night:
2Samuel 17:2 And I will come upon him while he *is* weary and weak handed, and will make him afraid: and all the people that *are* with him shall flee; and I will smite the king only:
2Samuel 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.

The narrative continues from the previous chapter.

Ahithophel next advised Absalom to let him choose 12,000 men to lead in pursuit of David that very night. He reasoned that David and his men would be weary and weak from their escape. The sight of the enemy approaching would incite fear and cause the people with him to run away. He promised that he would only kill the king—Absalom’s father. (It’s interesting that Ahithophel still referred to David as “the king.”) He declared that he would bring all the people that were with David back (to put in prison?) and the people would be at peace.

It seems as though the roots of bitterness in Absalom ran deep to be so intent on seeing his father dead. I believe he was still seething over how his father had responded to his brother Amnon’s rape of Tamar, Absalom’s sister, and, in turn, his subsequent exile for exacting vengeance on that act by having his brother killed.

2Samuel 17:4 And the saying pleased Absalom well, and all the elders of Israel.
2Samuel 17:5 Then said Absalom, Call now Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear likewise what he saith.
2Samuel 17:6 And when Hushai was come to Absalom, Absalom spake unto him, saying, Ahithophel hath spoken after this manner: shall we do *after* his saying? if not; speak thou.

Absalom and the elders of Israel were pleased with Ahithophel’s advice, but Absalom decided to send for Hushai the Archite and get his input as well. When Hushai came before Absalom, he told him what Ahithophel had proposed and asked if he agreed with what Ahithophel had said.

2Samuel 17:7 And Hushai said unto Absalom, The counsel that Ahithophel hath given *is* not good at this time.
2Samuel 17:8 For, said Hushai, thou knowest thy father and his men, that they *be* mighty men, and they *be* chafed in their minds, as a bear robbed of her whelps in the field: and thy father *is* a man of war, and will not lodge with the people.
2Samuel 17:9 Behold, he is hid now in some pit, or in some *other* place: and it will come to pass, when some of them be overthrown at the first, that whosoever heareth it will say, There is a slaughter among the people that follow Absalom.
2Samuel 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.

Hushai told Absalom that Ahithophel's advice was not good at this time. He reminded Absalom that David and his men were mighty men, experienced soldiers. At this time they were feeling like a mama bear robbed of her cubs—dangerous and full of rage. David was a man of war and would not spend the night among his people. He was most likely hidden in a pit or somewhere more set apart and safe. If he hears that Absalom's troops are slaughtering his people, he will respond as the warrior he is. All the men of Israel knew how courageous, skilled and experienced a warrior David was and how mighty were the men that followed him. The troops of Absalom would most likely end up retreating in fear in the face of their attack.

The picture Hushai painted was of a mighty warrior and his mighty men. He must have been quite a persuasive speaker since this definitely did not fit with the man seen running away, albeit surrounded by his mighty men, and basically ceding his throne to his son.

2Samuel 17:11 Therefore I counsel that all Israel be generally gathered unto thee, from Dan even to Beersheba, as the sand that *is* by the sea for multitude; and that thou go to battle in thine own person.

2Samuel 17:12 So shall we come upon him in some place where he shall be found, and we will light upon him as the dew falleth on the ground: and of him and of all the men that *are* with him there shall not be left so much as one.

2Samuel 17:13 Moreover, if he be gotten into a city, then shall all Israel bring ropes to that city, and we will draw it into the river, until there be not one small stone found there.

Hushai went on to advise Absalom to gather together a multitude of men from all over Israel. He should then personally lead that army into battle. Once they find David, they will then be able to destroy David and all the men with him. If, perchance, David had taken refuge in a city, they would destroy that city so that not even a small stone was left in it.

This was a calculated appeal to the pride of Absalom and inferred that his leadership of a mighty army to such a victory would exalt him in the eyes of the people.

JFB provides some insight: "In besieging a town, hooks or cranes were often thrown upon the walls or turrets, by which, with ropes attached to them, the besiegers, uniting all their force, pulled down the fortifications in a mass of ruins."

2Samuel 17:14 And Absalom and all the men of Israel said, The counsel of Hushai the Archite *is* better than the counsel of Ahithophel. For the LORD had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the LORD might bring evil upon Absalom.

Absalom and the men of Israel all decided that Hushai had provided better counsel than Ahithophel. This was an act of the LORD. He had determined to void Ahithophel's counsel in order to bring grievous harm to Absalom.

2Samuel 17:15 ¶ Then said Hushai unto Zadok and to Abiathar the priests, Thus and thus did Ahithophel counsel Absalom and the elders of Israel; and thus and thus have I counselled.

2Samuel 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.

2Samuel 17:17 Now Jonathan and Ahimaaz stayed by Enrogel; for they might not be seen to come into the city: and a wench went and told them; and they went and told king David.

Hushai went to see Zadok and Abiathar the priests and told them all that Ahithophel had counseled and how he had countered that counsel. It seems that Hushai was not confident that Absalom would take his advice because he urged them to quickly get a message to David to immediately get out of the plains in the wilderness to save their lives.

Jonathan and Ahimaaz, the two sons of the priests, were staying in Enrogel. A female servant was sent to give them the message that they were to deliver to David.

2Samuel 17:18 Nevertheless a lad saw them, and told Absalom: but they went both of them away quickly, and came to a man's house in Bahurim, which had a well in his court; whither they went down.

2Samuel 17:19 And the woman took and spread a covering over the well's mouth, and spread ground corn thereon; and the thing was not known.

2Samuel 17:20 And when Absalom's servants came to the woman to the house, they said, Where *is* Ahimaaz and Jonathan? And the woman said unto them, They be gone over the brook of water. And when they had sought and could not find *them*, they returned to Jerusalem.

2Samuel 17:21 And it came to pass, after they were departed, that they came up out of the well, and went and told king David, and said unto David, Arise, and pass quickly over the water: for thus hath Ahithophel counselled against you.

In spite of all their planning, there was a boy that learned what had transpired and informed Absalom. Meantime, the two young men escaped to Bahurim—evidently to a friend's home. They hid in a well in his court, and his wife or daughter I assume covered the well and spread corn all over it to hide its presence. (This was a common way to dry the corn out.) When Absalom's servants came to the house, they asked the woman where Ahimaaz and Jonathan were. She told them that they had gone over the brook. Though they went to look for them, they never found them and returned to Jerusalem.

After Absalom's men had left, the two young men came up out of the well and hurried to deliver the message to king David.

2Samuel 17:22 ¶ Then David arose, and all the people that *were* with him, and they passed over Jordan: by the morning light there lacked not one of them that was not gone over Jordan.

2Samuel 17:23 And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled *his ass*, and arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father.

David and all the people with him quickly moved to get across the Jordan. By morning not one person was left on the west side.

When Ahithophel realized that his counsel had not been followed, he quickly returned home to his own city. He put his household in order then hanged himself and died. He was buried in the family tomb.

It seems that Ahithophel understood that Absalom would be defeated and David restored as king. He knew that he would be accounted a traitor and probably killed.

Guzik used an insightful quote attributed to Morgan regarding suicide: "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."

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

2Samuel 17:25 And Absalom made Amasa captain of the host instead of Joab: which Amasa *was* a man's son, whose name *was* Ithra an Israelite, that went in to Abigail the daughter of Nahash, sister to Zeruah Joab's mother.

David and his people reached Mahanaim by the time that Absalom was leading his army across the Jordan. Most commentators note that this was the former place from which Ishbosheth, Saul's son, established his rule.

Absalom made Amasa the captain of his military forces, the position Joab held under David. Amasa was Joab's cousin; their mother's were sisters. These were also David's sisters, which made Amasa Absalom's cousin as well.

2Samuel 17:26 So Israel and Absalom pitched in the land of Gilead.

2Samuel 17:27 And it came to pass, when David was come to Mahanaim, that Shobi the son of Nahash of Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and Machir the son of Ammiel of Lodebar, and Barzillai the Gileadite of Rogelim,

2Samuel 17:28 Brought beds, and basons, and earthen vessels, and wheat, and barley, and flour, and parched *corn*, and beans, and lentiles, and parched *pulse*,

2Samuel 17:29 And honey, and butter, and sheep, and cheese of kine, for David, and for the people that *were* with him, to eat: for they said, The people *is* hungry, and weary, and thirsty, in the wilderness.

Absalom and the troops of Israel made camp in the land of Gilead.

When David got to Mahanaim, three of his allies—Shobi the son of Nahash of Rabbah of Ammon, Machir the son of Ammiel of Lodebar and Barzillai the

Gileadite of Rogelim—brought supplies to provide for the needs of David and his people. They brought beds, dishes, utensils, wheat, barley, flour, parched grain, beans, lentils, parched corn, honey, butter, sheep and cheese. They knew that David and his people needed nourishment to sustain them in the wilderness.