

AHITHOPHEL'S COUNSEL—Longer Version (2 Samuel 15-17)

Parts: Narrator
King David
Servant
Hushai
Ahithophel
Absalom, Absalom's men
Zadok
Abiathar
Jonathan
Ahimaaz
maidservant, boy, woman at well

Narrator:

[After this it happened that] Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel [from David his father].... And Absalom said to the king:

Absalom:

"Please, [my Lord,] let me go to Hebron and pay the vow which I vowed to Yehowah. For your servant vowed a vow while I dwelt in Geshur in Syria, saying, 'If Yehowah indeed brings me back to Jerusalem, then I will serve Yehowah.' "

King David:

"Go in peace."

Narrator:

So Absalom arose and went to Hebron. Then Absalom sent spies throughout the tribes of Israel.

Absalom *(to a group of messengers):*

"As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then you shall say, 'Absalom reigns in Hebron!' "

(messengers exit)

(To another messenger) "Go, get Ahithophel the Gilonite and bring him to me."

Narrator:

And the conspiracy grew strong, for the people who were with Absalom continually increased in number. And a messenger came to David.

Servant:

"[My Lord,] the hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom. [He is gathering an army to take over the kingdom.]"

King David:

"Arise, and let us flee; or else we shall not escape from Absalom. Make haste to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly and bring evil upon us, and smite the city with the edge of the sword."

Servant:

"We are your servants. Whatever my lord the king commands."

Narrator:

And the king went out and all the people after him, and stopped at the outskirts [of the city]. And all his servants passed before him. ... And all the country wept with a loud voice. And all the people crossed over [the Brook Kidron] toward the way of the wilderness.

And behold, there was Zadok also, and all the Levites with him, bearing the ark of the covenant of God. And they set down the ark of God.

King David:

"Zadok, carry the ark of God back into the city. If I find favor in the eyes of Yehowah, He will bring me back again, and show me both it, and His habitation. But if He says, 'I have no delight in you,' behold, here I am, let Him do to me as it seems good to Him."

"Are you not a seer, Zadok? Return to the city in peace, and your two sons with you. See, I will wait in the plains of the wilderness until word comes from you to inform me."

Zadok:

"Yes, my lord."

Narrator:

So Zadok and Abiathar carried the ark of God back to Jerusalem and they stayed there.

And David went up by the ascent of the Mount of Olives, and wept as he went up; and he had his head covered and he went barefoot. And all the people who were with him covered their heads and went up, weeping as they went up.

Then someone told David:

Servant:

"[My Lord, your counselor] Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom."

King David:

"O Yehowah, I pray, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness!"

Narrator:

And it came to pass, when David had come to the top of the Mount of Olives, where he worshipped God, behold, Hushai the Archite came to meet him with his robe torn, and earth on his head.

King David:

"Hushai, if you go on with me, you will be a burden to me, but if you return to the city, and say to Absalom, 'I will be your servant, O king; just as I have been your father's servant,' then you may defeat the counsel of Ahithophel for me."

"And do you not have Zadok and Abiathar the priests with you there? ... Whatever you hear from the king's house, you shall tell to Zadok and Abiathar the priests. Indeed, they have their two sons with them there, Ahimaaz Zadok's son, and Jonathan Abiathar's son; and by them you shall send me everything you hear."

Hushai:

"Yes, my lord!"

Narrator:

So Hushai, David's friend, went into the city.

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

Hushai (*greeting Absalom*):

"Long live the king! Long live the king!"

Absalom:

"Is this your loyalty toward your friend? Why did you not go with your friend?"

Hushai:

"No, but the one whom Yehowah and all the men of Israel choose, I will be his and will remain with him. Furthermore, whom should I serve? Should I not serve in the presence of his son? As I have served in your father's presence, so I will be in your presence."

Absalom:

"Very well, Hushai, remain with me."

Hushai:

"Thank you, my lord."

Absalom:

"Ahithophel, give counsel as to what we should do."

Narrator:

Now the counsel of Ahithophel, which he gave in those days, was as if one had inquired at the oracle of Yehowah. So was all the counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom.

Ahithophel:

"Let me choose 12,000 men and I will arise and pursue David tonight. I will come upon him while he is weary and weak, and make him afraid. And all the people who are with him will flee, and I will strike only the king. Then I will bring back all the people to you. When all return except the man whom you seek, then all the people will be at peace."

Absalom:

"Now call Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear what he says too." (*Hushai steps forward*) "Ahithophel has spoken in this manner. Shall we do as he says? If not, speak up."

Hushai:

"The counsel that Ahithophel has given is not good at this time. For you know your father and his men, that they are mighty men, and they are enraged in their minds like a bear robbed of her cubs in the field; and your father is a man of war, and will not camp with the people. Surely by now he is hidden in some pit, or in some other place. And it will be, when some of them are overthrown at the first, that whoever hears it will say, 'There is a slaughter among the people who follow Absalom.' And even he who is valiant, whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will melt completely. For all Israel knows that your father is a mighty man, and those who are with him are valiant men."

"Therefore I counsel that all Israel be fully gathered to you, from Dan to Beersheba, like the sand that is by the sea for multitude, and that you go to battle in person. So we will come upon him in some place where he may be found, and we will fall on him as the dew falls on the ground. And there shall not be left so much as one of him and all the men who are with him."

Absalom (to his men):

"What do you think? Which counsel shall we follow?"

Absalom's men:

"The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel."

Narrator:

For Yehowah had purposed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that Yehowah might bring disaster on Absalom.

Narrator:

Now Hushai went secretly to the tabernacle and found Zadok and Abiathar.

Hushai:

"Thus and so Ahithophel counseled Absalom and the elders of Israel, and thus and so I have counseled. Now therefore send quickly and tell David, saying, 'Do not spend this night in the plains of the wilderness, but speedily cross over, lest the king and all the people who are with him be swallowed up.' "

Narrator:

And Zadok and Abiathar gave the message to a maidservant to take to Jonathan and Ahimaaz.

(Zadok and Abiathar instruct the maidservant.)

Now Jonathan and Ahimaaz had stayed at En Rogel, for they dared not be seen coming into the city. And the maidservant came and told them Hushai's message....

(Maidservant enters, talks secretly with Jonathan and Ahimaaz.)

Nevertheless a lad saw them, and told Absalom.

(A boy standing at a distance sees and runs off to tell Absalom.)

Narrator:

But Jonathan and Ahimaaz went away quickly and came to a man's house in Bahurim, who had a well in his court; and they went down into it.

Then the woman took and spread a covering over the well's mouth, and spread ground grain on it; and the thing was not known.

Absalom's men *(searching the house, address woman):*

"Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan?"

Woman:

"They have gone over the water brook."

Narrator:

And when they had searched and could not find them, they returned to Jerusalem.

Now it came to pass, after they had departed, that Jonathan and Ahimaaz came up out of the well. And they went and told King David.

King David (*greeting Ahimaaz and Jonathan*):

"What news, Ahimaaz and Jonathan?"

Ahimaaz:

"My Lord, Arise and cross over the water quickly. For thus has Ahithophel counseled against you."

Narrator:

So David and all the people who were with him arose and crossed over the Jordan. By morning light not one of them was left who had not gone over the Jordan....

Narrator:

Now when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his donkey, and arose and went home to his house, to his city. Then he put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died; and he was buried in his father's tomb.

(The End)