

2 Samuel Chapter 16

Verses 1-4

David was too quick to believe Ziba's story, which turned out to be untrue (19:24-29).

His snap judgment had lasting consequences for Mephibosheth.

2 Samuel 16:1 "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 a hundred bunches of raisins, and a hundred of summer fruits, and a bottle of wine."

This was the Mount of Olives, the ascent of which he is said to go up by, to the top of it (see 2 Samuel 15:30).

"Behold, Ziba, the servant of Mephibosheth, met him": (of whom see 2 Sam. 19:2).

"Mephibosheth":

Saul's grandson by Jonathan (see note on 4:4).

"With a couple of asses saddled":

And so fit to ride on, but for the present he used them to another purpose.

"And upon them two hundred loaves of bread":

A hundred on each ass very probably.

"And a hundred bunches of raisins":

Or dried grapes, as the Targum.

"And a hundred of summer fruits":

Not in number, but in weight, as apples, pears, plums, apricots, etc. so the Targum, a hundred pounds of figs.

"And a bottle of wine":

A cask or flagon of wine; for a bottle, such as is in use with us, would have signified nothing in such a company.

We remember, in a previous lesson, that David had taken the land of Ziba and then he had given it to Mephibosheth.

Ziba had been a servant of Saul.

This food would raise the spirits of those with David.

It is not explained why he brought this.

2 Samuel 16:2 "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."

Are they to be as said, or are they presents?

"And Ziba said, the asses be for the king's household to ride on":

For himself, his wives, and children, his courtiers, and the principal officers of his house; it being usual in those times and countries for great personages to ride on asses (see Judges 5:10).

"And the bread and summer fruits for the young men to eat":

The king's menial servants, his guards and his soldiers.

"And the wine, that such as be faint in the wilderness may drink":

Where no water was to be had, that their fainting spirits might be revived, and they be able whether to fight or march.

David had no idea why Ziba would do this and he asks him.

These things are much needed by David's people, but I am not sure the purpose of Ziba is to bless David.

2 Samuel 16:3 "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, Today shall the house of Israel restore me the kingdom of my father."

"Where is thy master's son?"

According to (9:9-10), Ziba was able to garner such food and drink.

His master had been Saul before his death and was then Mephibosheth.

"Restore me the kingdom of my father":

Ziba, evidently trying to commend himself in the eyes of David by bringing these gifts, accused his master of disloyalty to the king and participation in Absalom's conspiracy for the purpose of bringing down the whole Davidic house.

Thus, the house of Saul would re-take the throne, and he would be king.

This was a false accusation (see 19:24-25), but it was convincing to David, who believed the story and made a severe and rash decision that inflicted injury on a true friend, Mephibosheth.

David is inquiring of Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son.

We know the answer Ziba gives is not true.

Absalom wanted the throne for himself, not for the family of Saul.

He was a cripple and it was difficult for him to leave in a hurry.

This would have been a more correct answer.

2 Samuel 16:4 "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."

The truth about Ziba's lies would eventually surface (see 19:24-30).

It is difficult to believe, that David would not question the motives of this Ziba.

David tells Ziba, that he, now, owns all of Mephibosheth's wealth.

He has taken it back from Mephibosheth, and given it to Ziba.

Verses 5-8

"Shimei":

Shimei was a distant relative of Saul, from the tribe of Benjamin, who cursed David as a "man of bloodshed" (verses 7-8), and a "worthless fellow" (see note on 1 Sam. 2:12).

He could possibly be the Cush (of Psalm 7).

Shimei declared that the loss of David's throne was God's retribution on his past sins (verse 8), and David accepted his curse as from the LORD (verse 11).

It could be that Shimei was accusing David of the murders of Abner (3:27-39), Ish-bosheth (4:1-12), and Uriah (11:15-27).

In (verses 5-14), “Shimei” blamed David for the deaths of Abner, Ish-bosheth, Saul and his sons.

David showed great restraint in not punishing him, consistent with his behavior at other times when he was opposed.

He even wondered if this mistreatment was part of God’s punishment for his sin.

He trusted God to bring about justice, “to repay” him “with good.”

Later on, Shimei had a change of heart (19:16-20).

2 Samuel 16:5 "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."

The Targum is Alemath, perhaps the same that is said to be a city of the Levites, given unto them out of the tribe of Benjamin (1 Chron. 6:60).

For the man next described, who was of this place, he was a Benjamite (2 Sam. 19:16; see 2 Sam. 3:16).

David was not yet come to the city itself, but into the neighborhood of it, the fields adjacent to it.

"Behold, thence came out a man of the family of Saul":

A descendant of a branch of his family, who had entertained a private grudge and secret enmity against David, to whom he imputed the fall of the family of Saul.

"Whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera":

Which might be a name common in the tribe of Benjamin as one of Benjamin's sons was named Gera (Gen. 46:21).

Some say he was the same with Nebat, the father of Jeroboam; but he was of the tribe of Ephraim, this of Benjamin.

"He came forth, and cursed still as he came":

He came out of Bahurim, of which place he was, and all the way he came continued cursing David, until he came near unto him.

“Bahurim”:

See note on 3:16.

This man was so dedicated to the house of Saul that he seemed not to even care that he might lose his life.

He cursed David.

2 Samuel 16:6 "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."

Not that he was within the reach of them, or could hurt them, by casting them at them.

But this he did to show his contempt of them, and to intimate that they deserved to be stoned, and especially David, at whose adultery he might point by it.

"And all the people, and all the mighty men were on his right hand, and on his left":

That is, of David; which is observed, not so much to indicate the safety of David's person, as the impudence and madness of Shimei, to cast stones at David when so guarded.

It was as if he was trying to provoke them into killing him.

It seemed not to matter that he was one man against 600.

2 Samuel 16:7 "And thus said Shimei when he cursed, Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial:"

Or rather, "go out, go out"; that is, out of the nation, where he deserved not to live, as he judged, and out of the kingdom, which he had usurped, as he supposed.

The repeating the words not only denotes his vehement desire to have him gone, but the haste he should make to get out, or he was liable to be overtaken by Absalom and his forces.

Upbraiding him also with the hurry he was in, and the speedy flight he was making.

"Thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial":

Or wicked man; perhaps referring by these characters in the one to the murder of Uriah, and in the other to his adultery with Bath-sheba.

And these crimes coming fresh into David's mind hereby, might make him more mild and humble under his reproaches.

(See the note on 20:1).

David certainly was a bloody man in battle.

Shimei possibly, was still angry with him for the death of Saul's sons.

2 Samuel 16:8 "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."

Which he would suggest was shed by David, or, however, that he was the cause of its being shed.

As if he had stirred up the Philistines to that battle in which Saul and his sons were slain, and had a hand secretly in the deaths of Ish-bosheth and Abner, all which were false insinuations.

And it may be the seven sons of Saul before this time, though after related, were delivered into the hands of the Gibeonites to be hanged, to which respect may be had.

"In whose stead thou hast reigned":

Not by right, but by usurpation he suggests.

"And the LORD hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son":

In this he seems to contradict himself; for if David had got the kingdom by usurpation, it would rather have, been delivered by the LORD into the hand of one of Saul's family, and not of David's.

"And behold, thou art taken in thy mischief":

Punished for his sins; the mischief he had brought on others was retaliated to him.

"Because thou art a bloody man":

Guilty of slaying, as the Targum, of shedding innocent blood, and so worthy of death.

The rise of Absalom against David has caused this man to do such a foolish thing.

He has been convinced, probably by Absalom, that David will fall as king and Absalom will reign as king in his stead.

He is cursing David, because of the blood he has shed in battle.

David however, had nothing to do with the death of Saul.

2 Samuel 16:9 "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."

For the phrase "dead dog" (see the note on 1 Samuel 24:14).

“Abishai”:

See note on 2:18.

“Dead dog”:

I.e., worthless and despised (compare 9:8).

This was something terrible for David and his people to hear.

Abishai did not like this man insulting David in this manner.

He offers to go over and kill him.

He was running along a ledge, screaming down at David and throwing rocks at him.

Verses 10-14

The patience and restraint of David on this occasion was amazingly different than his violent reaction to the slanderous words of Nabal (1 Sam. 25:2).

On that occasion, he was eager to kill the man until placated by the wisdom of Abigail.

He was a broken man at this later time and knew that while the rancor of Shimei was uncalled for, his accusations were true.

He was penitent.

2 Samuel 16:10 "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?"

It seems as if Joab, the brother of Abishai, joined with him in this request to have leave to take off the head of Shimei; and though David had to do with them as his relations, his sister's sons, and as they were generals in his army.

Yet in this case he would have nothing to do with them, would not take their advice, nor suffer them to take revenge on this man for his cursing him.

Or "what is it to me, or to you"?

What signifies his cursing?

It will neither hurt me nor you.

"So let him curse":

Go on cursing after this manner; do not restrain him from it, or attempt to stop his mouth: or, "for he will curse".

So is the textual reading; you will not be able to restrain him, for the following reason.

"Because the LORD hath said unto him, curse David":

Not by way of command, or a precept of his; for to curse the ruler of the people is contrary to the word and law of God (Exodus 22:28), nor by any operation of his spirit moving and exciting him to it.

For the operations of the Spirit are to holiness, and not to sin; but by the secret providence of God ordering, directing, and overruling all circumstances relative to this affair.

Shimei had conceived enmity and hatred to David; God left him to the power of this corruption in his breast, opened a way in Providence, and gave him an opportunity of exercising it on him.

It was not a bare permission of God that Shimei should curse David; but it was his will, and he ordered it so in Providence, that he should do it.

Which action was attended with the predetermined concourse of divine Providence, so far as it was an action; though, as a sinful action, it was of Shimei, sprung from his own heart, instigated by Satan.

But as a correction and chastisement of David, it was by the will, order, and appointment of God, and as such David considered it, and quietly submitted to it.

"Who shall then say, wherefore hast thou done so?"

For though Shimei might justly be blamed, and reprov'd for it, yet the thing itself was not to be hindered or restrained, it being according to the will and providence of God, to answer some good end with respect to David.

This is David's sister's son who wants to go and kill him.

David speaks to him harshly here, thinking that perhaps, this message is from God and it is not from Shimei.

He is in a sense saying, "shall I fight against God"?

2 Samuel 16:11 "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."

In order to make them easy, and reconcile them to this usage of him.

"Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life":

Meaning Absalom.

"How much more now may this Benjamite do it?"

Who was not only of the same tribe that Saul was, but of the same family, and so bore an ill will to David because of his succession in the throne.

"Let him alone, and let him curse":

Do nothing to restrain him, not even by words, and much less by any violent actions, and still less by taking away his life.

"For the LORD hath bidden him":

In the sense explained (in 2 Sam. 16:10).

David suddenly believes that this, too, is a punishment from God.

He is disturbed, because his own son has turned against him to overthrow his kingdom.

His son had done such a complete job of breaking David's heart, it really did not matter what this man said.

David believes the LORD has sent this man to curse him.

2 Samuel 16:12 "It may be that the LORD will look on mine affliction, and that the LORD will requite me good for his cursing this day."

By the rebellion of his son which was now aggravated by the cursing of Shimei.

That is with an eye of pity and commiseration; and deliverance of him out of it.

Or "look upon my eye"; for there is a various reading; the tear of mine eye, as the Targum; so Jarchi and R. Isaiah; the tears in it, which fell plentifully from it, on account of his troubles, and particularly the curses and reproaches of Shimei.

"And that the LORD will requite me good for his cursing this day":

He does not speak with assurance, yet with hope.

He knew his sins deserved such treatment, but also that God was gracious and merciful, and pitied his children, and resented all ill usage of them.

And therefore, hoped he would favor him with such intimations of his love as would support him, comfort, refresh him, and do him good (see Rom. 8:28).

David thinks this too is for the wrong he had done in the past.

"Requite" means to turn back.

If David does not kill this man for the terrible things he says, perhaps the LORD will look kindly on David.

Verses 13-14

“David” humbly accepts Shimei’s wicked cursing as God’s judgment and then leaves matters with the LORD.

God alone could forgive and restore David, and David would leave the fate of Shimei with Him.

Shimei would later have reason to regret his actions and would learn that David could be a gracious and forgiving person (19:16-23).

2 Samuel 16:13 "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."

In the high road that led to Bahurim, taking no notice of the cursing of Shimei, which made him bolder and more impudent.

Here is a large pause in the Hebrew text, in the midst of this verse.

"Shimei went along on the hill side over against him":

As David and his men walked in the plain, Shimei went on a range of hills that ran along right against them.

"And cursed as he went":

Continued his curses and imprecations, to which he was the more emboldened by the behavior of David and his men.

"And threw stones at him, and cast dust":

In a way of contempt, though the stones recoiled on his own head, and the dust flew in his own face, as the consequence of things showed; and now David composed and penned the seventh psalm (Psalm 7:1).

This is just explaining again, that the man continued the insults and the rock throwing from a ledge above and to the side of where David was walking.

2 Samuel 16:14 "And the king, and all the people that [were] with him, came weary, and refreshed themselves there."

With their journey, and through grief and trouble at what they met with.

"And refreshed themselves there":

That is, at Bahurim, with food and rest.

Which revived their spirits, and put as it were new life and soul into them, as the word here used does signify.

Josephus says, when David came to Jordan, he refreshed his weary men.

This just means that David and the people with him, stopped to rest from their journey for a while.

Verses 15-23

Absalom set up his royal court in Jerusalem.

2 Samuel 16:15 "And Absalom, and all the people the men of Israel, came to Jerusalem, and Ahithophel with him."

Probably a considerable time before David reached the banks of Jordan, to which he was marching to.

When David quitted Jerusalem, it was upon a persuasion that Absalom would make all the haste he could to possess himself of the capital, and, if possible, to surprise his father in it.

And as he judged, so, it appears, it came to pass.

"Ahithophel":

See note on 15:12.

The scene has changed to Jerusalem, here.

We remember that Ahithophel is Bath-sheba's grandfather, who is with Absalom.

He is counselling him.

2 Samuel 16:16 "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."

“Hushai”:

See note on 15:32.

Hushai was pretending to be the subject of Absalom.

Absalom was aware that he was David's friend.

Hushai could be blessing David, because he did not specify who the king was.

2 Samuel 16:17 "And Absalom said to Hushai, [Is] this thy kindness to thy friend? why wentest thou not with thy friend?"

Meaning to David; though he would not mention his name, nor his title, nor even the relation of a father he stood in to him, only speaks of him as Hushai's friend.

Hushai had professed great friendship to David, and David had been a friend to Hushai, had raised him to great honor in making him a counsellor, and had bestowed many favors and benefits on him, as Absalom knew full well.

And therefore, to try his integrity, he puts this question, not as displeased with him, but overjoyed that such a trusty friend of David, and a wise counsellor of his, had deserted him, and come over to him and his party.

Nor does he mean to charge him with ingratitude, which he could not do without therefore reproaching himself.

On whom it might be justly retorted, is this thy kindness to thy father that begot thee, and has always expressed such a strong affection for thee, as to rebel against him?

"Why wentest thou not with thy friend?":

With David, when he went out of Jerusalem; for Absalom knew not that Hushai had been with David, but thought he stayed behind at Jerusalem, when David fled, which made him less suspicious of him.

Absalom still does not trust Hushai, and asks him why he did not go with David.

“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.”

“Nay, but whom the LORD, and his people, and all the men of Israel choose”.

Here again he speaks very ambiguously; (for this attempt to be evasion with many words), or descriptive character of the king of Israel.

Better agrees with David, whom he might bear in mind, than with Absalom.

For the LORD had chosen David, and he was anointed by his order, and all the people of Israel had chosen and anointed him likewise.

But as for Absalom, it was only part of them that had declared for him, nor was there any evidence of the LORD's choosing him.

Though Hushai undoubtedly would be understood of him; and as interpreting the voice of the people to be the voice of God.

"His will I be, and with him will I abide":

"Though he designed no such thing, which was a great piece of dissimulation and hypocrisy; and so if he meant David, that was a large piece of deceit and equivocation.

There is a various reading in the first clause; we follow the marginal reading, "to him" or "his", but the textual reading is "not": and both may be taken in by rendering the words by an interrogation, "shall I, or should I not be his"?

I will; that is, be his servant, faithfully obey his commands, be closely attached to him, and continue with him as a loyal subject.

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."

Notice again, that Hushai still does not lie.

He will go with the LORD's anointed.

Hushai believes that to be David.

He did not say he was loyal to Absalom.

Absalom was so sure he would be the chosen of the people and the LORD that he thought that was what he said.

2 Samuel 16:19 "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."

Or "secondly", a second reason is here given for serving Absalom: the first was the choice of God and the people, the second follows.

"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":

He signifies, that as the kingdom was not translated into another family, but continued in succession in David's house, the alteration made was of no great consequence.

It was indifferent to him whom he served, the father or the son; and he could as freely, and would as faithfully serve the son as the father.

Nor did he think it any breach of friendship to David, nor would David resent it, that he should serve his son, and do the best offices, and give him the best counsel he could.

And he seems to bespeak the office of a counsellor, in which he had been to David, that he might be admitted into the presence of Absalom, and be of his privy council, and have the opportunity of giving his best advice.

He still does not pledge his loyalty to Absalom.

He just says he will serve in his presence.

2 Samuel 16:20 "Then said Absalom to Ahithophel, Give counsel among you what we shall do."

Having two such able counsellors as he and Hushai, he directs his speech to Ahithophel, as being his first and chief counsellor.

"Give counsel among you what we shall do":

He orders them to form a counsel, consult among themselves what was proper to be now done at Jerusalem, whether it was right to stay here or pursue after David and his men.

Absalom did not send to the high priest to ask counsel of God, by Urim and Thummim before the ark, but wholly confided in his privy council.

Absalom inquires what he should do from Ahithophel, because he is thought to be speaking as an oracle of God.

David had prayed that he would give bad advice though.

Verses 21-22

"Thy father's concubines":

David had left behind in Jerusalem 10 concubines to take care of the palace (15:16).

In the Near East, possession of the harem came with the throne.

Ahithophel advised Absalom to have sexual relations with David's concubines and thereby assert his right to his father's throne.

On the roof of the palace in the most public place (11:2), a tent was set up for this scandalous event, thereby fulfilling the judgment announced by Nathan in 12:11-12.

See the note on 3:7-10.

2 Samuel 16:21 "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."

"Absalom's actions fulfilled Nathan's prophecy (12:11-12).

It was the custom of the land for the king to take the harem of the king who is moved out.

This would not be thought of as incest in that case.

This is an abomination.

These concubines belong to his father.

He is not king yet.

The advice that Ahithophel had given, and he had taken, will get him into terrible trouble with God as well as with David.

He thinks the people will proclaim him king, when he does this terrible thing.

2 Samuel 16:22 "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."

This is a direct fulfillment of God's decree in 12:11.

The "concubines" Absalom took were the ones David had left behind to care for the house (15:16; see notes on 3:7).

Absalom's maneuverings from the throne and dishonor of this father David were done in full view of all of Israel.

This was more of a military move, than it was a desire for these women.

The entire town would be witness to the fact that he went in to the concubines of those belonging to David.

2 Samuel 16:23 "And the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counselled in those days, [was] as if a man had inquired at the oracle of God: so [was] all the counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom."

Hushai would only be successful in subverting the revered Ahithophel (15:34) if God helped him (see 17:14).

Ahithophel had been highly thought of as a counselor for David, and then for Absalom.

He has, now, done a terrible thing, with this advice he gave Absalom.

2 Samuel Chapter 16 Questions

1. Who met David just a little past the top of the hill?
2. What did he have for David?
3. What do we remember about Ziba from before?
4. What were the asses for?
5. Who did David ask Ziba about?
6. What false statement did Ziba make about Mephibosheth?
7. What does David do for Ziba?
8. Who came out, and began to curse David at Bahurim?
9. What did he do, besides curse?
10. What did he call David in verse 7?
11. What was the man accusing David of?
12. What did Abishai offer to do?
13. What is David's reply to his offer?
14. Why did David let him continue cursing him?
15. Why did it not matter to David about the cursing this man was doing?

16. What does "requite" mean?
17. How did the man stay out of reach?
18. The scene changes, in verse 15, to where?
19. Who is Ahithophel?
20. What did Hushai say, when he came to Absalom?
21. What was Hushai pretending to be?
22. Why does Absalom not trust Hushai?
23. What did Absalom ask of Ahithophel?
24. What did he tell Absalom to do?
25. Why did he tell him to do this?
26. Where did this take place, so all could see him go in to them?