

240918-4 2Samuel 18, Absalom's Death & David's Sorrow—CThurman

In the previous chapter Ahithophel counseled Absalom to allow him to take twelve thousand men of Israel so that he might immediately attack David's forces. This attack would cause everyone to forsake David so that Ahithophel could kill him. Now this counsel appealed to Absalom, but before he decided anything he wanted to hear what Hushai's had to say about the matter.

Hushai directly contradicted Ahithophel's counsel as flawed, not properly estimating David's valor and that of the men with him, particularly given their present circumstance. They are like a sow bear robbed of her cubs in the field. What should be done instead is that Absalom should gather all of the warriors of Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, and overwhelm David's forces until all opposition is crushed. And to this Absalom agreed. In this, the Lord defeated Ahithophel's counsel, answering David's prayer concerning Ahithophel's treacherous act to join with Absalom in the rebellion.

2Sa.15.31 ... turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.

And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, ... he went home, set his household in order, and hanged himself ... (2Sa.17.23)

Absalom then appointed Amasa to be commander of his military force. (2Sa.17.25) Of particular interest is that the conflict involves those of the same family. The major figures in this conflict are all of the house of Jesse, David's father. Jesse fathered seven (or, 8, 1Sa.17.12) sons (of whom, one was David), and two daughters, Zeruah and Abigail. Zeruah bore Abishai, Joab and Asahel; and Abigail bore a son named Amasa. These are David's nephews, or to say it another way, David is their uncle. Absalom, Joab, Abishai, Asahel, and Amasa are cousins. (cf. 1Chr.2.12-17)

Now, David and those with him assembled in the city of Mahanaim. While there three prominent men came to his aid; Shobi, son of king Nahash of Ammon (perhaps affected by the kindness of David to show sympathy to his family when his father, Nahash had died), Ammiel of Lodebar (perhaps affected by the kindness David had shown to Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth), and Barzillai, a very old man (80 yrs. of age) that lived about 25 miles north of Mahanaim, at Rogelim.

In the mean-time Absalom gathered his men nearby, in the land of Gilead. (2Sa.17.26) But the conflict will take place on the other side (western side) of the Jordan River, in the forests of Ephraim, the heartland of Israel.

Chapter 18

1 ¶ And David numbered the people that [were] with him, and set mustered

numbered, Qal fut. of the verb **טָקַף**, tss. *to number, to appoint, to visit, to remember, to count, to charge, to enjoin, to muster, etc.*

set, Qal fut. of the verb **שָׁם**, tss. *to set, to put, to appoint, to mark, to order, to ordain, to lay, etc.*

captains of thousands and captains of hundreds over them.

So, a very large force has remained loyal to David, and he arranges them into three *divisions*, and under their three *generals* and several *captains* (thousands & hundreds).

2 And David sent forth a third part of the people under the hand of Joab, and a third part under the hand of Abishai the son of Zeruiah,

(mother to both Abishai and Joab, and nephews to David)

Joab's brother, and a third part under the hand of Ittai the Gittite.

Ittai was a stranger (i.e., not of the people of Israel) and an exile (perhaps rejected by his own people and fled to Israel) who might have been a proselyte to nation of Israel.

2Sa 15:19 Then said the king to Ittai the Gittite, Wherefore goest thou also with us? return to thy place, and abide with the king: for thou [art] a stranger, and also an exile.

Ittai is one of 37 mighty men which were of David's army. (cf. 2Sa.23.29)

**And the king said unto the people, I will surely go forth with you myself also.
3 But the people answered, Thou shalt not go forth: for if we flee away,**

If we are overwhelmed on the battlefield and we must flee ...

they will not care for us; neither if half of us die, will they care for
set their heart on set their heart on

us: but now [thou art] worth ten thousand of us: therefore now [it is] better that
good

thou succour us out of the city.
you be to us for help from

succour, Qal infin. of the verb עִזַּר, also tss. *help*.

You can help us by remaining here in Mahanaim, by coordinating provision shipments, reinforcements, communications, and prayers.

4 And the king said unto them, What seemeth you best I will do.
That which is good to you I will do.

And the king stood by the gate side,

I can only imagine how difficult it was for this king, very likely in the last few years of his life (nearing 70), having to watch his brethren go out to battle and he having to remain behind. But there was a service he could do that these could not, and there was a service that they now could do that he could not.

David was a man of war. But this time he was being asked to sit this one out, and very likely because of his age. But later he'll get right back into it with the Philistines, and had it not been for Abishai he would have died. The men retired him at that point. (cf. 2Sa.21.17)

David's service was not over just because he became an old man, but it was altered. And, if the Lord will, and we come to be of a good old age, our

services are going to be altered too. I suppose we could let this discourage us. But praise God for the new laborers that the Lord raises up to fill those places where we once served.

and all the people came out by hundreds and by thousands.

5 And the king commanded Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying, [Deal] gently

gently, טֹאֵ, adv., tss. gently, softly, secret.

נֶעֶר

for my sake with the young man, [even] with Absalom.

for me

In this chapter, Absalom is called a young man four times.

By David, three times (18.5, 10, 32), by the man that reported Absalom's death to Joab (18.12), and by Cushai, who brought the report of Absalom's death to David.

He is probably in his late twenties/early thirties. His father David is in his mid-to-late sixties (dies at 70 yrs. age).

And all the people heard when the king gave all the captains charge concerning Absalom.

v.12 And the man (a certain and unnamed man, v.10) said unto Joab ... in our hearing the king charged thee and Abishai and Ittai, saying, Beware that none [touch] the young man Absalom.

6 So the people went out into the field against Israel: and the battle was in the wood of Ephraim;

forest, vss. 8, 17

wood, יַעַר, masc. sing. noun tss. wood, forest, the comb of honey-comb.

David and those with him left Jerusalem, crossed the Jordan River, and came to Mahanaim, which is in the land of Gilead. (cf. 2Sa.17.22, 24)

Absalom also crossed the Jordan River, and came into Gilead. (cf. 2Sa.17.26)
But the battle is engaged on the other side (western side) of the Jordan River, in the hill country and forests of Ephraim. The heartland of Israel.

and the battle was in the wood of Ephraim;

7 Where the people of Israel were slain before the servants of David,

were slain, Niphal fut. of the verb נָגַף, tss. *to hurt, to smite, to plague, to strike, to dash, to slay, to put to the worse*. See the noun directly below.

and there was there a great slaughter that day of twenty thousand
(in the forest)

[men].

slaughter, מַגִּפָּה, fem. noun tss. *plagues, slaughter, stroke*. See the verb directly above.

8 For the battle was there scattered over the face of all the country:
(in the forest) אֶרֶץ
earth, land

scattered, Niphal part. of the verb פָּיַץ, tss. *to disperse, to scatter (18.8; 22.15), to be spread abroad, to dash, to retire (20.22)*.

and the wood devoured more people that day
forest ate, consumed
vss.6, 17

than the sword devoured.
ate, consumed

More soldiers died by various hazards in the forest than by the sword; such things as pits (v.17), cliffs, rivers, trees, wild beasts and whatever else.

9 ¶ And Absalom met the servants of David. And Absalom rode upon a mule, and the mule went under the thick boughs of a great oak,

thick boughs, שׁוֹבֵר, a masc. noun, only this once in the OT; see also the noun שְׁבָר, *nets*, only once in the OT; see noun שְׁבָכָה, tss. *checker, network, lattice, wreathen work, snare*; the verb שָׁבַר, is not in the OT. Obviously, an oak with twisted boughs.

I can imagine that this means that Absalom met David's men of war and as he began to flee in haste ...

and his head caught hold of the oak,

(note: NOT HIS HAIR)

and he was taken up between the heaven and the earth;
(caused to be) (and so suspended
BY HIS HEAD)

was taken up, Hophal (causative pass.) fut. of the verb נָתַן, tss. *to give, to deliver, to pay, to put, to yield, to take up*.

and the mule that [was] under him went away.
עָבַר, Qal pret.
passed on, passed over

... leaving Absalom's head stuck in this tree and with nothing to support himself so that he might free himself.

10 And a certain man saw [it], and told Joab, and said, Behold,
נִגַּד, Hiphil fut.
reported, declared (to)

I saw Absalom hanged in an oak.
hanging, suspended (by his head & still alive, v.14, *while he was yet alive*)

hanged, Qal part. Poel, and always tss. with the English *to hang*. **4.12, Qal fut.; 18.10, Qal part. Poel; 21.12, Qal pret.**

11 And Joab said unto the man that told him, And, behold, thou sawest [him],

נָכָה, Hiphil pret.

and why didst thou not smite him there to the ground?

kill, strike, beat

and I would have given thee ten [shekels] of silver, and a girdle.

girdle, חֲגוּרָה, a fem. noun tss. apron, armour, girdle; this refer to that article that when donned upon the mid-section of the body increases strength.

A ¼ shekel of silver is equal in weight to \$2.56 today. Joab would have given to the man that killed Absalom ten shekels of silver, so \$102.40, and a very nice belt to boot.

Compare, in 2Sa.24.24: David brought Araunah's threshingfloor and oxen for a sum of 50 shekels, or \$514.00.

12 And the man said unto Joab, Though I should receive a thousand [shekels] of silver in mine hand, [yet] would I not put forth mine hand against the king's son: for in our hearing the king charged thee and Abishai and Ittai, saying,

ears

שָׁמַר, imper. pl. masc.

Beware that none [touch] the young man Absalom.

Watch, observe, take heed, mark, etc.

v.5 ... all the people heard when the king gave all the captains charge concerning Absalom.

13 Otherwise I should have wrought falsehood against mine own life:

done

(my) soul

by doing what I knew should not be done.

falsehood, שקר, masc. noun tss. vain, false, lying, wrongfully, deceit, feignedly.

against mine own life, בְּנַפְשׁוֹ, having the prefixed preposition בְּ, in, with, at, against + 3ps. masc. suffix + to the noun נַפֶּשׁ, tss. life, soul, mind, etc.

for there is no matter hid from the king,
concealed

hid, Niphal fut. of the verb כָּתַד, tss. to cut off, to cut down, to hide, to be desolate, to concealed.

The king would find out who did this thing. And then ...

and thou thyself wouldst have set thyself against [me].

wouldst have set thyself, Hithpael fut. of the verb יָצַב, tss. to stand, to resort, to remain, to present oneself, to stand forth, to set thyself.

14 Then said Joab, I may not tarry thus with thee.

As if to say, 'I don't have time to stand around and debate this matter with you.' But the man was quite correct to say what he did.

And he took three darts in his hand, and thrust them through the heart of Absalom, while he [was] yet alive in the midst of the oak.

(hanging by the head)

Clearly these three spears into the heart of Absalom would have killed him, but ...

15 And ten young men that bare Joab's armour compassed about and weapons

נָכָה, Hiphil fut.

smote Absalom, and slew him.

kill, strike, beat

Joab and ten of his armour bearers: Eleven is a number that often is associated with judgment.

The LORD determined to bring the evil of judgment upon David’s son, Absalom for rebelling against God’s anointed (king), and for defiling the king’s ten concubine-wives. By eleven men Absalom was killed (cf. 2Sa.17.14; 18).

Absalom is dead. The conflict is over. The rebellion is ended.

16 And Joab blew the trumpet, and the people returned from pursuing
(of David) following after, chasing

Qal infin. of הָרַד

after Israel: for Joab held back the people.
(those with Absalom) withheld, hindered, refrained

Qal pret., הָשַׁב

17 And they took Absalom, and cast him into a great pit in the wood,
(his body) threw hole forest, vss.6, 8

פֶּחַת, masc. noun

cast, Hiphil fut. of the verb הָשַׁב, tss. to hurl, to cast, to cast down, to cast away, to cast out, to throw, etc.

and laid a very great heap of stones upon him: and all Israel fled every one to his tent.

A parenthetical statement concerning Absalom’s memory:

18 Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and reared up for himself a pillar,
set

עֵמֶק, masc. noun

which [is] in the king's dale: for he said, I have no son to keep my name in valley

remembrance: and he called the pillar after his own name: and it is called unto

יָד, common noun

this day, Absalom's place.

hand, power, tenon

It appears that Absalom, even at an early age, was concerned that he had no surviving sons to carry on his name. There were born to him three sons and a daughter (2Sa.15.27), but whether these were legitimate by marriage is not revealed. Perhaps these had died. Again, this isn't revealed in Scripture. And if he had never married it doesn't appear that he had any plans to do that. So, he raised up a monument for a memorial to him. Quite vain.

19 ¶ Then said Ahimaaz the son of Zadok, Let me now run, and bear the king tidings, how that the LORD hath avenged him of his enemies.

judged, defended (from the hand)

tidings, of the Piel verb כָּשַׁר; only once is this verb not in Piel (intensive act.), and that is in **v.31**, Hithpael (reflexive) fut., 2Sa.18.31. Otherwise it is tss. in the OT, *to bear tidings, to publish, to be a messenger, to be a bringer of good tidings.*

19, and ... bear tidings

20, twice, thou shalt bear tidings; and publish

26, bringeth tidings

31, tidings

hath avenged, Qal pret. of the verb שָׁפַט, tss. *to judge, to avenge, to rule, to defend, to condemn.* (**v.31**)

20 And Joab said unto him, Thou shalt not bear tidings this day,

tidings, the fem. noun בְּשׂוֹרָה, always tss. *tidings*, *reward for tidings*, *good tidings*. (vss.20, 22, 25, 27)

but thou shalt bear tidings another day: but this day thou shalt bear no tidings, because the king's son is dead.

The reputation of Ahimaaz was to be a bearer of good news. This was not the right messenger for David at this time.

v.27, David said of him, *he is a good man, and cometh with good tidings*.

21 Then said Joab to Cushi, Go tell the king what thou hast seen.
report (to)

And Cushi bowed himself unto Joab, and ran.

and did obeisance, of the verb פָּקַד, tss. *to do obeisance*, *to bow or fall down*, *to do reverence*, *to worship*, *to be humble*, *to stoop*, *to crouch*; see **2Sa.16.4**, Hithpael pret., *I humbly beseech thee*; Hithpael infin., *to do obeisance*; Hithpael fut., *and did obeisance*, **14.22, 33; 18.21; 24.20**, *and bowed himself*, **15.32**, *he worshipped*, **18.28**, *he fell down*.

22 Then said Ahimaaz the son of Zadok yet again to Joab, But howsoever,
regardless

let me, I pray thee, also run after Cushi. And Joab said, Wherefore
For what (reason)

wilt thou run, my son, seeing that thou hast no tidings ready?
when there is found no tidings for you

23 But howsoever, [said he], let me run. And he said unto him, Run.
regardless

Then Ahimaaz ran by the way of the plain, and overran Cushi.
perhaps meaning over passed
'of a shortcut'

the plain, of the fem. noun כְּפֶרֶת, tss. plain, talent, loaf, morsel.

The messengers, leaving the forested area of Ephraim, and running down into the Jordan River valley, back up on the other side, and over to the city of Mahanaim.

24 And David sat between the two gates: and the watchman dwelt

went up to the roof over the gate unto the wall, and lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold a man running alone.
by himself

25 And the watchman cried, and told the king. And the king said,
reported

If he [be] alone, [there is] tidings in his mouth. And he came apace,
by himself continued coming

and drew near.

26 And the watchman saw another man running: and the watchman called unto the porter, and said, Behold [another] man running alone.
doorkeeper, gatekeeper by himself

porter, of the masc. noun שׁוֹעֵר, tss. porter, doorkeeper; see also the masc. noun שַׁעַר, tss. porter, gate, door, cities.

And the king said, He also bringeth tidings.

27 And the watchman said, Me thinketh the running of the foremost is like
I see first

the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok. And the king said, He [is] a good man, and cometh with good tidings.

שָׁלוֹם
28 And Ahimaaz called, and said unto the king, All is well. And he fell down
Peace bowed himself

fell down, Hithpael fut. of the verb שָׁחָה, tss. to do obeisance, to bow or fall down, to do reverence, to worship, to be humble, to stoop, to crouch; see 2Sa.16.4, Hithpael pret., I humbly beseech thee; Hithpael infin., to do obeisance; Hithpael fut., and did obeisance, 14.22, 33; 18.21; 24.20, and bowed himself, 15.32, he worshipped, 18.28, he fell down.

to the earth upon his face before the king, and said, Blessed [be] the LORD thy God, which hath delivered up the men that lifted up their hand
enclosed, shut up

hath delivered up, Piel pret. of the verb סָעַר, tss. to shut, to shut up, to repair, to inclose, to shut in, to shut out, to deliver.

against my lord the king.

שָׁלוֹם לְנֶעֱר לְאַבְשָׁלוֹם
29 And the king said, Is the young man Absalom safe?
Peace to the young man, to Absalom?

And Ahimaaz answered, When Joab sent the king's servant, and [me] thy servant, I saw a great tumult, but I knew not what [it was].
rumbling, disturbance

tumult, of the masc. noun הַמִּוֶּן, tss. many, multitude, tumult, noise, abundance, store, riches, sounding, rumbling, Hamon[-gog].

30 And the king said [unto him], Turn aside, [and] stand here. And he turned aside, and stood still.

The question is why Ahimaaz desired to be the first to give a report to David. But it might be that he thought to lessen the impact that the word of his son's death would bring to the king. He was truthful in what he did

say and choose to reveal. He certainly could have said more, but that was Cushy's part.

31 And, behold, Cushy came; and Cushy said, Tidings, my lord the king: for the LORD hath avenged thee this day of all
judged, defended, v.19 out of the hand of

them that rose up against thee.

So, good news, king, the insurrection is stamped out.

הַשְׁלוֹם לְנֶעֱר לְאַבְשָׁלוֹם
32 And the king said unto Cushy, [Is] the young man Absalom safe?
Peace to the young man, to Absalom?

And Cushy answered, The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do [thee] hurt, be as [that] young man [is].
– for evil –

33 And the king was much moved, and went up to the
trembled
was shaken

and ... was much moved, וַיִּרְגַז, Qal fut. of the verb רָעַז, tss. to tremble, to rage, to be disquieted, to be moved (Qal fut., 2Sa.18.33, and was much moved; 22.8, moved), to quake, to stand in awe, to fall out, to be wroth, to fret, to shake.

and went up, Qal fut. of עָלָה, tss. to arise, to go up.

and wept, Qal fut. of בָּכָה, tss. to weep, to mourn, to bewail.

chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son

Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died
would (that) Qal infin. of מָוֹת, to die

for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!
instead of

An online Hebrew translator ap: 'May my death be under you, Absalom, my son' and the idea is that he desired to precede his son in death.

The firstborn son, Amnon was dead. Absalom arranged for his death. And it could be that David's mourning over him was three years.

2Sa.13.38 So Absalom fled, and went to Geshur, and was there three years.

39 And [the soul of] king David longed to go forth unto Absalom (who fled to his mother's house, to Geshur): for he was comforted concerning Amnon, seeing he was dead.

It is also thought that David's second born son, Chileab, preceded him in death. We know that the fifth-born son, Bathsheba's first, died. And now his thirdborn son, Absalom is dead.

Every personal loss brings deep hurt. David expresses what every loving parent would at the death of their child; that he had rather died instead. I don't doubt that as we are called upon to say goodbye to those closest to us we would wish the same thing that David did here, '*would God I had died for thee.*'

We don't all experience the same sense of loss. But generally our losses hurts very deeply. And we all handle it differently. Perhaps at the first we are weak to do anything about our sorrow. And later unwilling to alter it at all. Jacob *refused* to be comforted concerning the report of the death of his son Joseph.

Ge 37:34 And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days.

35 And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him.

There is a time for mourning. (cf. Ec.3.4)

Ps 30:5 ... weeping may endure for a night, but joy [cometh] in the morning.

There is a time when we begin to put away the sorrow. When that time is relative. Putting away the sorrow does not mean that we are insensitive (unloving, hard or cold), or that we are forgetting our loved ones. As long as we live, our loved ones will never be forgotten. To this day, I was about 6 years old when someone came to our house and told us my cousin had died in a car accident. I've never forgotten my friend. But as I understand the words of the apostle Paul, it sounds like we have the ability to put off sorrow.

1Th.4.13 ¶ But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

It is my opinion, that we act against the thoughts which bring sorrow by continuous acts of our will, until we begin to feel *almost* normal again. But sorrow is like carrying around a heavy weight.

Lu 22:45 And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow ...

But the Lord not only provides sufficient grace for every trial now, but also promises that there is coming a time when we shall never sorrow again.

Re.21.1 ¶ And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God [is] with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, [and be] their God.

4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

5 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.

The time for David to mourn Absalom is now. But he must put it away soon.

2Sa 19:7 Now therefore arise, go forth, and speak comfortably unto thy servants: for I swear by the LORD, if thou go not forth, there will not tarry one with thee this night: and that will be worse unto thee than all the evil that befell thee from thy youth until now.