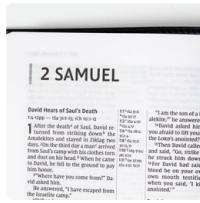


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2 Samuel 17 - 19



2 Samuel - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg discusses 2 Samuel 17-19, which tells the story of Absalom's rebellion against his father, King David. The elders of Israel were pleased with Absalom, while Ahithophel plotted against David during his vulnerable period. However, Hushai advised Absalom not to pursue David, and instead, to lead his own army out. The battle took place in the forest, and despite being vastly outnumbered, David's men emerged victorious. Joab killed Absalom, and David mourned his son's death. Despite the unrest in Israel, David was eventually brought back to the throne, and Judah showed special loyalty to him.

Transcript

The story of Absalom's rebellion continues in 2 Samuel 17, and there we find further counsel from Ahithophel. At the end of chapter 16, Ahithophel, who had been formerly David's counselor, one of his most respected wise men in his administration, had defected now to Absalom, and was now counseling Absalom, which was a very dangerous situation for David, because Ahithophel's counsel was usually flawless. His counsel was usually as reliable for being right as if he had been a prophet of God.

He was not a prophet of God. In fact, he wasn't even a godly man, as it turns out at this point in his life, but his counsel was reputed as being as good as seeking an oracle from a prophet of God. And that being so, he has counseled Absalom at the end of chapter 16 to put a complete breach between himself and his father, and drive a permanent wedge there that would give the public the impression that there's never any hope of reconciliation between David and Jonathan, by taking David's concubines, ten of which he had left behind to keep the house when he fled from the city, and setting up a tent on the roof, and Absalom himself going in and sleeping with David's concubines, which was the supreme insult that one could offer to the previous king.

And it was the most vivid demonstration that the previous king was out of power, and that that which he would have protected most if he could is no longer under his protection, and that another man has moved into his role. All very symbolic and all very important, and we will find later on that Adonijah, another son of David after David is

dead, seeks to do something similar to that as a play to get the throne from Solomon. And actually Abner apparently did the same kind of thing in a bid for the throne of Ish-bosheth.

He slept with Ish-bosheth's concubines. So we see this is kind of a normal way in which a man would show himself to be the supplanter of the previous king. And Ahithophel told Absalom to make no delay in doing this, and Absalom did.

He set up a tent on the roof in the sight of the sun, as it says. And that's exactly the terminology that Nathan had used, telling David that because David had secretly stolen his neighbor's wife, that his neighbor, as it turns out his son, would publicly take his wife's. And so this is part of the fulfillment of that prophecy.

Now Ahithophel has more to say to Absalom. Moreover Ahithophel said to Absalom, Now let me choose twelve thousand 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 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.

And the same pleased Absalom and all the elders of Israel. Now there were two steps that had to be taken to make sure that David would never recover power. One was to get the people convinced that there was no hope of David ever recovering power without a war with Absalom, and that was accomplished by Absalom sleeping with David's concubines.

The second was to get rid of David altogether, because although people might have reached the conclusion that David and Absalom will never be reconciled, there was always the possibility that David could still defeat Absalom and take over the kingdom again. Now Ahithophel, wicked as his counsel is, is no doubt wise. That is, it is shrewd and it is prudent.

David is in fact disheartened. We know that. He is leaving the city with his head hanging down, his head covered.

There is even a man throwing dust and dirt after him, Shimei, and cursing him, and David refuses to even defend himself. He is disheartened. He is giving up.

His life has gotten about as low as it can get. He has had one of his sons murdered by Absalom. He has had his daughter raped by Amnon.

He had been separated from Absalom, wanting reconciliation. Absalom has been rebellious against him and now wants to kill him. It can't get very much worse than that.

David has lost his will to live, for the most part, though those who are with him have not lost their will to live, so they are going to encourage him and try to keep him propped up. Ahithophel knows that this is the most vulnerable time for David. He has not repositioned himself.

He is fleeing, but he doesn't know exactly where he is going. He is disorganized. He is dispirited.

This would be a good time to strike. Ahithophel wanted to lead the armies against David. He wanted 12,000 men.

We don't know how many people went away with David, but Ahithophel probably had some idea of how many, and 12,000 troops would have been enough to conquer them in all likelihood. In fact, he probably would have allowed himself a bit of a margin just because David and his mighty men are not easy men to overcome. Probably David only had a couple of thousand.

I don't know if we are even told how many people David had with him total at this point, but probably only a few thousand. Ahithophel thought that with 12,000 that would be enough to overtake him and defeat him and cement the victory in the hands of Absalom. The same pleased Absalom and all the elders of Israel.

Then Absalom said, Now call Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear what he says too. Hushai the Archite was David's friend who had fled with David, but David sent him back to be a spy on David's behalf. Therefore Hushai had convinced Absalom that Hushai was now going to be loyal to the new king, Absalom, as opposed to David.

This meant that he was in a position not only to be eyes and ears in the palace for David and to send him information as necessary, but also since he was also a respected counselor, he could possibly defeat the council of Ahithophel, which needed to be defeated at this point. Hushai liked what Ahithophel had to say, so he decided to get a second opinion about this. When Hushai came to Absalom, Absalom spoke to him, saying, Ahithophel has spoken in this manner.

Shall we do as he says? If not, speak up. Hushai said to Absalom, The counsel that Ahithophel has given is not good at this time. In other words, he usually gives good counsel, but this is sort of an exception.

I don't think he's seen things as clearly as he usually does. For, said Hushai, 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. Now, of course, this is not at all David's attitude, but Absalom didn't know that.

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 upon him as the dew falls on the ground. And of him and all the men who are with him there will not be one left, not so much as one. Moreover, if he has withdrawn into a city, then all Israel will bring ropes to that city, and we will pull it into the river until there is not one small stone found there.

Now he's being a little bit enthusiastic here in order to really convince Absalom that he really is not on David's side. Obviously he's going a little overboard here, not leaving one little small stone of the city that he hides in. That's how angry we will be with anyone who helps David.

Of course Hushai is helping David secretly. So Absalom and all the men of Israel said, The council of Hushai the Archite is better than the council of the Hithithel. For the Lord had purpose to defeat the good council of the Hithithel, to the intent that the Lord might bring disaster on Absalom.

So the author is saying Ahithithel's council would have worked better for Absalom. It was a better council from Absalom's point of view, for his interests. But God wanted to destroy Absalom, so he defeated that council.

Now the differences in the council between these two councillors was as follows. Ahithithel wanted to lead the armies himself. Hushai said, No Absalom, you should lead them personally.

You should be the hero here. Ahithithel wanted to take 12,000 men and spare all the men who were with David, except David himself, and kill him. Hushai said, No, we need to wipe out everyone who's with David.

And we need more men than 12,000. We need to gather all of Israel from Dan, Dabir, Sheba. We need to have an overwhelming fighting force, because David and his men are mighty men.

And if you pursue him now, it's no good, because he's already expecting you to chase him. He's probably found a very good hiding space. He's a very experienced man of war.

He's not going to be sleeping in where you expect him to be. He's not going to make

himself vulnerable. You'll probably end up not finding him, and there will be a war.

And if you only have 12,000 men, his men might actually worst you people, and then your people loyal to you will lose heart. They'll hear that you're losing. Better to wait until you've got an overwhelming force.

We can gather them together tomorrow, and then you yourself can lead them out. And we will not leave anyone alive who's following David. And so the council is different on virtually all points.

But it made Absalom the hero, and it made sense to Absalom, because God wanted it to make sense to him. And it probably would have been good counsel if, indeed, David was in a fighting mood at that time, as Hushai said. Hushai said, you know your dad.

He's like a bear robbed of its whelps. He's going to be nasty. He's going to be harsh.

He's going to be fighting with all he's got, and he's a tough character. You don't want to face him at a time like this with only 12,000 men. And, of course, that wasn't the mood that David was in at all.

But since it was a realistic suggestion, Absalom was deceived by it. Then Hushai said to Zadok and Abiathar the priests, 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 and the wilderness, but speedily cross over, meaning over the Jordan, lest the king and all the people who are with him be swallowed up.

So actually Hushai's counsel was dangerous to David, because it did involve bringing overwhelming forces against David. But since it would have Absalom on the battlefield, the battle could be won even against overwhelming forces if they could just kill the commander. If Absalom could be killed, then that would be the end.

No matter how many troops he had with him, with the death of Absalom, the war would be over. And so Hushai's main counsel of value was to get Absalom on the battlefield where he could be killed. However, the counsel did put David at serious risk.

It bought David a little bit of time, because Ahithophel wanted to pursue him immediately, and he might well have caught up with him. And yet Hushai bought him time, because he said, we need to gather all Israel from Dan to Beersheba. That would take at least a day, and David could get further away and get entrenched and in some safer place than before.

But he'd have to do it in a hurry. But he had to also know about it. And so messengers had to be sent to David to let him know what was up.

Now Jonathan and Ahimeah stayed at En-Rogel, for they dared not be seen coming to the city. Now these were the sons of the two priests, and the sons were going to be the messengers. So Hushai told the priests, and the priests told their sons, and these men were now the carriers of the message to David.

He said they dared not be seen coming into the city, so a maidservant would come and tell them, and they would go and tell King David. Nevertheless, Elad saw them and told Absalom. But both of them came 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. So they had a good hiding place, briefly, as the soldiers would come looking for them. Some little boy reported them.

How he knew what they were up to, we don't know. He may have actually heard the young maid transmit the message to them, and so he apparently felt that was news that had to be passed along to the powers that be. And the messengers would have no doubt been caught except for this one home that had a well that could be concealed, and when they went down in the well, they covered it with cloth so that it looked like they were threshing grain on that spot of ground, and it didn't look like there was a well underneath, so it worked.

The thing was not known. And when Absalom's servants came to the woman at the house, they said, Where are Ahimeaz and Jonathan? So the woman said to them, They have gone over the water brook. And when they had searched and could not find them, they returned to Jerusalem.

Now it came to pass after they had departed that they came up out of the well and went and told King David, and said to David, Arise and cross over the water quickly, for thus has Ahithophel counseled against you. 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.

Now that was not a place of absolute safety. Obviously armies could cross the Jordan. If David could cross the Jordan, so could Absalom.

But it was just more cut off from the supply lines of Jerusalem and so forth. It was more inconvenient for those who were stationed in Jerusalem to wage war against someone who was now across the river. It could be done, but it was just something of a barrier that would give a greater advantage to David and his men.

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. Now on the surface it

may just seem like Ahithophel got himself in a little hissy fit because for the first time people didn't follow his counsel.

He's always been counted to be the sage that no one would deny what he says to be true. Now suddenly someone has disagreed with him and the other person's counsel has been followed and his ego is hurt and his hurt pride has caused him to not, I can't live with this, I'm going to just kill myself. I don't think he was that much of a wimp.

Ahithophel was a wise, mature man, an evil man at this point, but still not so wimpy that he just couldn't take an insult, I don't think. I think the problem here was Ahithophel was just wise enough to see that this was going to be disaster for Absalom and then there'd be nothing for Ahithophel but to be hanged as a traitor as soon as David would come back. So better to die at his own hand and feel like he's in control than to have to face David.

I think Ahithophel could see the writing on the wall, wise as he was, he knew that Hushai's counsel was going to lead to the defeat of Absalom, that Absalom would die, then Ahithophel would die because he was now known as a traitor and when David would come back to power there'd be nothing for it but to kill Ahithophel. So rather than have that happen to him, he hanged himself. Then David went to Mahaniim and Absalom crossed over the Jordan, he and all the men of Israel with him.

And Absalom made Amasa captain of the army instead of Joab, that's because Joab was with David. This Amasa was the son of a man whose name was Jethra, an Israelite who had gone in to Abigail, the daughter of Nahash, sister of Zeruah, Joab's mother. So Israel and Absalom encamped in the land of Gilead on the east of the Jordan.

Now it happened when David had come to Mahaniim that Shobi, the son of Nahash from Rabba, of the people of Ammon, Makar, the son of Amiel from Lodibar, and Barzilai, the Gileadite from Rogillin, brought beds and basins, earthen vessels and wheat, barley and flour, parched grain and beans, lentils and parched seeds, honey and curds, sheep and cheese of the herd, for David and the people who were with him to eat. For they said, the people are hungry and weary and thirsty in the wilderness. Now these people who helped David, one was an Ammonite, and then Makar, the son of Amiel from Lodibar, I don't know what his nationality was, although Makar is a name that had typically been associated with the tribe of Manasseh, and so he was probably a Manassite.

Then Barzilai was a Gileadite. Gileadites were also Manassites or Reubenites. They were people who were on the east of Jordan, Jews.

But the one man was an Ammonite, apparently. He was of the people of Ammon. Maybe he was just from the city of Rabba, which was of the people of Ammon.

He may have been himself a Jew as well. They were wealthy, and therefore they brought

provisions for David to support his men in the wilderness there. Chapter 18, And David numbered the people who were with him, and he set captains of thousands and captains of hundreds over them.

Then David sent out one-third of the people under the hand of Joab, one-third under the hand of Abishai, Joab's brother, the son of Zeruah, and one-third under the hand of Ittai the Gittite. Now Ittai the Gittite, remember, was a Philistine, and he was the chief over the Cherethites, apparently the Philistine bodyguard of David, and here David is entrusting a third of his army under a loyal Philistine leader. And the king said to the people, I also will surely go out with you myself.

But the people answered, You shall not go out, for if we flee away, they will not care about us, nor if half of us die will they care about us. But you are worth ten thousand of us now, for you are now more help to us in the city. So the king said to them, Whatever seems best to you, I will do.

So he's the king, but he's going ahead and taking counsel from his people, and he'll do whatever they say. He's not going to just say, No, I'm the king, you don't tell me what to do. He's kind of subservient at this point in his life.

So the king stood beside the gate, and all the people went out by hundreds and by thousands. Now the king had commanded Joab, Abishai, and Ittai, saying, Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom. And all the people heard when the king gave all the captain's orders concerning Absalom.

Now, he means don't kill Absalom. It's not a very reasonable suggestion. David is not at his most rational point.

He's lost a few of his children already as a judgment for his sin, and he certainly doesn't want to lose the one who was his favorite son, Absalom too. However, he's not being rational. Of course Absalom had to die.

Absalom was himself wanting to kill David. Absalom would not be reconciled to David, and there's no way that David could reign and have his reign established while Absalom was living. It was very clear that Absalom wanted David's throne and would make attempts as long as he was alive to get it.

The only way for David to survive would be for Absalom not to survive, but David wasn't thinking clearly and was more obviously sentimental toward his own son as a man might be expected to be, but he wasn't thinking like a king. He was thinking like a father. So the people went out into the field of battle against Israel, and the battle was in the woods of Ephraim.

The people of Israel were overthrown before the servants of David, and a great slaughter of 20,000 men took place there that day. Now, I'm not sure why David's men, who were

clearly in the minority since all the troops of Israel from Dan to Beersheba had come against him, why they got the victory, except of course God gave them the victory. It may also be there were natural advantages.

They were in the woods. The battle was fought in the forest. That's not a normal place of battle.

That's a place where people like, you know, people who are accustomed to the wilderness have an advantage over people who are not, and David had spent much of his time, and the mighty men who were with him had spent much of their time before he was made king, when he was fleeing from Saul, in the woods, and they were wilderness fighters, you know, like Robin Hood and his merry men in the forest. You know, they had the advantage over King John or whoever it was that was the bad guy, and they couldn't easily stop Robin Hood because he was in the forest, and it's not an easy place for armies to fight battles, and, you know, people who are more guerrilla warfare oriented definitely are going to have the advantage in the woods, and David and his men had experience in these forests, and that may be the reason why we're told that the battle took place in the forest and David's men routed the people of Israel who were coming against him. And it says in verse 8, for the battle there was scattered over the face of the whole countryside, and the woods devoured more people that day than the sword devoured.

So apparently a lot of the soldiers of Israel somehow fell prey to the forest itself. Now exactly how this is so is not very clear. Perhaps their horses tripped over under brush and broke their legs, and men were thrown from their horses, or as in Absalom's case, his head got caught in branches of the trees and he was dangling there.

Perhaps other men weren't so lucky as to dangle. Maybe they got decapitated or their necks were broken or something like that. It doesn't really explain how it is that the woods killed more people than the sword did, but it's obvious that though David had valiant men fighting, he also had nature on his side, or really God on his side, but using the natural features of the terrain, it worked to David's advantage greatly.

Then Absalom met the servants of David, and he said to them, I just saw David and Absalom rode on a mule, and the mule went under the thick boughs of a great terebinth tree, and his head caught in the terebinth. So he was left hanging between heaven and earth, and the mule that was under him went on. Now a certain man saw it and told Joab, and said I just saw Absalom hanging on a terebinth tree.

Then Joab said to the man who told him, you just saw him, and why did you not strike him there to the ground? I would have given you ten shekels of silver and a belt. Probably means a promotion in the army. But the man said to Joab, though I were to receive a thousand shekels of silver in my hand, I would not raise my hand against the king's son, for in our hearing the king commanded you and Abishai and Ittai, saying

beware lest anyone touch the young man Absalom.

He says yeah, you'd give me ten shekels. No you wouldn't, otherwise I would have dealt falsely against my own life, for there is nothing hidden from the king, and you yourself would have set yourself against me. Joab, you're saying you would have rewarded me, but I know that when the king turned against me, you'd be on the king's side.

You wouldn't stand with me. You don't fool me. Now talking that way to your general might be a little sassy, but this is in the heat of battle.

People are speaking their minds, and it was an urgent situation. Obviously, presumably, Absalom would somehow get himself disentangled and get away if someone didn't act quickly, so Joab had to take matters into his own hands. Then Joab said I cannot linger with you, and he took three spears in his hand and thrust them through Absalom's heart while he was still alive in the midst of the terebinth tree, and ten young men who bore Joab's armor surrounded Absalom and struck him and killed him.

Now it seems to me like the three spears in the heart would have been what killed him, but this indicates that they dogpiled on top of him, and no one paid attention to when he actually died. He was killed by a variety of attacks, spears that were thrust through him, ten men no doubt striking with their swords probably after he was struck to the ground. It may well be that the spears were the death of him, but he was still lingering briefly when he hit the ground, so they all finished him off.

So that wicked young man came to a very gruesome end. Part of that was due to his hair. He had three pounds of hair that got cut off his head every year, and I'm sure it was his hair that got caught in the tree.

You could imagine a man's head getting caught in the tree if it's a low branch and it gets caught in the fork of a branch, but he's not going to be stuck there for a long time while people go and report it and come back and so forth. There was something that made it impossible for him to disentangle himself, and it must have been the hair tangled in the tree. If he'd had his sword, he could have cut his hair and cut himself loose, but he probably had lost his sword in the flight.

So he was stuck and vulnerable, and he was struck dead. And Joab blew the trumpet, and the people returned from pursuing Israel, for Joab had held back the people. They didn't need to fight anymore, because once the enemy's commander is dead, there's no one to lead the armies.

There's no one for the armies to fight for, so it's all over when he's down. And they took Absalom and cast him into a large pit in the woods and laid a very large heap of stones over him. Then all Israel fled, everyone to his tent.

It says, Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and set up a pillar for himself, which is on

the king's valley. For he said, I have no son to keep my name in remembrance. And he called the pillar after his own name, and to this day it is called Absalom's Monument.

Now this has been a problem in the minds of some people, because we are earlier told that Absalom had children. In chapter 14, verse 27, in 2 Samuel 14, verse 27, it says, To Absalom were born three sons and one daughter, whose name was Tamar. She was a woman of beautiful appearance.

So he had four children, three sons and a daughter. Yet in his lifetime, in chapter 18, verse 18, it says, he set up a pillar in memory of himself, since he had no son to keep his name in remembrance. And so many have felt there's a contradiction in the Bible here.

Of course, there's not a contradiction. Obviously, the writer would have remembered that he had mentioned that Absalom had three sons. Obviously, his sons had died.

And that may be why their names are not given. It's very unusual to give the daughter's name and not the son's name. It says he had three sons who will remain anonymous.

And he had a daughter whose name is remembered, because she probably survived. In all likelihood, his three sons died at infancy. They may never have been lived long enough to be named.

Their names are not recorded. But in any case, it's not at all necessary to assume a contradiction when it says a man had three sons born to him, and later in his life, he had no sons. David had lost three sons by this time, too.

Absalom being the third. No, he'd only lost two now. He's going to lose another one, and I'm just going to die, too.

But the point is, you can have sons at one point and not have sons at a later point. It's a sad thing when a father outlives his own children. It shouldn't be that way, but it is sometimes.

And that was apparently the case with Absalom. So his sons died. He knew that he would not be remembered by lineage, by having offspring, so he set up a pillar as the next best thing to remember himself by.

So the man is remembered by this monument, but he's not remembered favorably because he was a rebel. He was an evil son and an evil man. Then Ahimeaz, the son of Zadok, said, Let me run now and take the news to the king how the Lord has avenged him on his enemies.

And Joab said to him, You shall not take the news this day, for you shall take the news another day. But today you shall take no news because the king's son is dead. Then Joab said to the Cushite, Go tell the king what you have seen.

So the Cushite bowed himself to Joab and ran. And Ahimeaz, the son of Zadok, said again to Joab, But whatever happens, please let me also run after the Cushite. And Joab said, Why will you run, my son, since you have no news ready? But whatever happens, he said, let me run.

So he said to him, Run. Then Ahimeaz ran by way of the plain and outran the Cushite. Now David was sitting between the two gates, and the watchman went up to the roof over the gate to the wall, lifted up his eyes and looked, and there was a man running alone.

Then the watchman cried out and told the king, And the king said, If he is alone, there is news in his mouth. And he came rapidly and drew near. Then the watchman saw another man running, and the watchman called to the gatekeeper and said, There is another man running alone.

And the king said, He also brings news. So the watchman said, I think the running of the first is the running of Ahimeaz, the son of Zadok. And the king said, He is a good man.

He comes with good news. And Ahimeaz called out and said to the king, All is well. Then he bowed with his face to the earth before the king and said, Blessed be the Lord your God, who has delivered up the men who raised their hand against my lord the king.

Now the good news is the battle is over in your favor. And the king said, Is the young man Absalom safe? And Ahimeaz answered, When Joab sent the king's servant to me, and me your servant, I saw a great multitude, but I did not know what it was about. Well, this isn't quite true.

He's been evasive. He wanted to bring the good news that David's side had won, but he didn't want to be the carrier of the news that Absalom had been killed, knowing that this would be seen as bad news. So he just says, I'm not really sure what happened there.

And the king said, Turn aside and stand here. So he turned aside and stood still. Just then the Cushite came.

And the Cushite said, There is good news, my lord the king, for the Lord has avenged you this day on all those who rose against you. And the king said to the Cushite, Is the young man Absalom safe? And the Cushite answered, May the enemies of my lord the king and all who rise against you to do you harm be as that young man is. In other words, no, it did not go well for Absalom.

Now just a point of interest here about these two runners. The impression I have is that they used different runners for different kinds of news. Some runners were used for good news and some for bad news.

And Ahimeas would have been a runner that was used for good news, which is why Joab

said, No, you can't run today. The news is bad. The king's son is dead.

This is not a good message. This is not your day to run. I'm going to send this Cushite instead.

Now Cushite was of course an Ethiopian. Cush was Ethiopia. And therefore a man who by his skin color could be seen at a distance.

His color could be seen at a distance because he would be distinguished by that. And so it may well be that they used runners who could be recognized at a distance to be not the bearers of the good news. So that the king would be forewarned.

The news is going to be bad. Brace yourself. It does seem like they used different runners for different news.

Because Joab specific, I mean Abishai, I mean not Abishai, Ahimeas was definitely the faster runner of the two. He outran the Cushite, but Joab didn't think it was right for Ahimeas to take it. Now it may be, as I said, that Ahimeas was a man who would be associated with good news and the Cushite a man who would be associated with bad news.

And like I said, that way the person seeing the runner coming, even before they get the news, they have a sense, is this going to be good news or bad news I'm about to receive. There's another possibility here, and it may be that Joab wasn't sure what David would do to the bearer of the bad news. Because the person who bore the news that Saul was dead, David killed him.

But of course that was because the man claimed himself to have killed Saul. And the men who killed Ishbosheth and brought news to him, David killed them too. And it's possible that Joab thought, you know, Ahimeas, he's the son of a priest, he's the son of Zadok, we don't want to put him in harm's way.

We better send somebody less valuable than him, somebody who's just a regular footman, not one of the priests, in case David flies off the handle, in case David kills him. One or the other, for some reason Joab declined to let Ahimeas run. And he said, because the news is bad.

This may mean that I can't put you at risk at this point, you're a priest. We need our priests. We'll just send a regular footman, a foot soldier, a regular messenger to send the message, just in case David does him harm.

But I think it's more likely that there were recognized messengers that were used for good or bad news, just to forewarn the person receiving it. And I get that from verse 20, where Joab says, no Ahimeas, you can't do it because the news is bad. And also, when Ahimeas actually did outrun the Cushite, David said, oh, he's a good man, he brings

good news.

So it would appear that the messengers were chosen because they would be associated either with good news or bad news. In any case, when the Cushite arose, David did not react violently against the news, but he was certainly devastated. And it says in verse 33, Then the king was deeply moved and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept.

And as he went, he said thus, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom, if only I had died in your place, O Absalom, my son, my son. Chapter 19, And Joab was told, behold, the king is weeping and mourning for Absalom. So the victory that day was turned into mourning for all the people.

For the people heard it said that day, the king is grieved for his son. And the people stole back into the city that day, as people who are ashamed steal away when they flee in battle. But the king covered his face, and the king cried out with a loud voice, O my son Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son.

Then Joab came into the house of the king and said, Today you have disgraced all your servants who today have saved your life, the lives of your sons and daughters, the lives of your wives, the lives of your concubines, in that you love your enemies and hate your friends. For you have declared today that you regard neither princes nor servants. For today I perceive that if Absalom had lived and all of us had died today, then it would have pleased you well.

Now therefore rise and go out and speak comfort to your servants. For I swear by the Lord, if you do not go out, no one will stay with you this night, and that will be worse for you than all the evil that has befallen you from your youth until now. Then the king arose and sat in the gate, and they told all the people, saying, There is the king sitting in the gate.

So all the people came before the king, for everyone of Israel had fled to his tent. Everyone was afraid the king might punish them, because Absalom had died. So they fled and were hiding and were ashamed.

And so David had to come out and reassure them. It's tough being the king in a case like this. I mean, how could you not grieve the death of your favorite son when you've just heard that he's been killed? I mean, you're going to mourn, but when you're the king, you've got to put up a bold face.

And by the way, your son and you have political offices, political ramifications. And so it's not just a matter of a family crisis, it's a matter of a national crisis. And so the king has to maintain his composure and his regal bearing.

David had a hard time with that. He was emotionally pretty much at the end of his

tether, it would seem. And so we now read in the rest of this chapter of David's coming back to Jerusalem and meeting on the way various parties and getting filled in on things.

And so it says, Now all the people were in a dispute throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, The king saved us from the hand of our enemies. He delivered us from the hand of the Philistines, and now he has fled from the land because of Absalom. But Absalom, whom we anointed over us, has died in battle.

Now therefore, why do you say nothing about bringing back the king? Now this was the way that the people who had been on Absalom's side were reasoning among themselves. Okay, we sided with Absalom, but he's dead now. And David obviously is the person who should be the king.

There isn't really somebody else. I guess Mephibosheth, the descendant of Saul, could have been put in the position. But they recognized that David was the one who had delivered them from the Philistines.

They should have thought of that before they sided with Absalom, no doubt. But they couldn't deny that they owed him something. And so they thought, well, we should bring him back.

It's likely that David would not be able to just come back if these people didn't welcome him back. They had fought against him. They had driven him out of the city.

Their leader was dead. But they could be fought to appoint another leader. If they've rebelled against David and thrown him out of his office, just the fact that his rival is dead doesn't mean that they'd put him back in that position.

So that's being discussed. Of course, if they didn't put him back in position, Joab and the boys would go and make war against them and make them hurt for it. So, I mean, they were definitely in a spot.

They had backed the wrong horse. And now they were vulnerable to being punished by David. And should they accept him back as the king or take their chances with someone else? But they apparently decided that it was more sensible and more right to bring David back as king.

Then King David sent to Zadok and Abiathar the priest, saying, speak to the elders of Judah, saying, why are you the last to bring the king back to his house, since the words of all Israel have come to the king, even to his house? Now, in other words, the people of Israel were discussing bringing David back, but the people of Judah were being lax about it. And David is of the tribe of Judah. Why wouldn't Judah be the first to bring him back? That's what's being asked here.

You are my brethren. You are my bone and my flesh. Why then are you the last to bring

back the king? And say to Amasa, are you not my bone and my flesh? Now, Amasa is the one who's leading Absalom's armies and was therefore the enemy of David, trying to kill David.

And David sends a message to him since they're cousins. He says, are you not my bone and my flesh? God do so to me and more also if you are not the commander of the army before me continually in place of Joab. So this is a really foolish thing David is doing.

He's angry at Joab because Joab killed Absalom. Well, it's true the king had commanded the generals not to kill Absalom. But David was not thinking like a king.

He was thinking like a dad. And Joab was thinking like a person concerned about the national interests. And Joab did really the right thing, though it was the different thing than what David said.

And it went against David's. David was angry at Joab for that. And to go further, Joab had been unsympathetic toward David's feelings as David was mourning and weeping.

Joab just said, get up and go out and stand there like a king instead of alienating the people, making them think that you don't appreciate what they did. So David is now saying that Amasa is going to be in the place of Joab. Well, of course, if I were Amasa, I would not want to be the one appointed in the place of Joab.

Because Abner was once positioned for that honor. And Joab assassinated him. And Joab is not likely to take it well if somebody is going to replace him.

So he swayed the hearts of all the men of Judah just as the heart of one man, because he showed kindness, in other words, to the general who had fought against him. Again, he showed himself to be gracious to his enemies and it swayed people over to him. So they sent this word to the king, return you and your servants.

It may be that this kindness to Amasa was what the people of Judah were waiting for and why they were reluctant. Amasa was of their tribe, as David was. And it may be that they were thinking, well, David should come back, but man, what's that going to do to our hero Amasa? He's our general.

I mean, David's going to really do him harm. So they were perhaps hesitating to give David power again. And then when David offered this olive branch, as it were, to Amasa, the people of Judah decided to bring him back.

Then the king returned and came to Jordan, the Jordan, the river, and Judah came to Gilgal to go and meet the king and escort the king across the Jordan. And Shimei, the son of Gerar, remember him? He's the one who's throwing rocks and dust at David and cursing him? A Benjamite, who was from Behurim, hastened and came down with the men of Judah to meet King David. He realized that he had made a mistake.

There were a thousand men of Benjamin with him. He was a Benjamin, so he brought down a thousand other men of Benjamin. I'm not sure for what purpose.

I'm not sure if it's to be a show of support for David or merely a protection from retribution. And Ziba, the servant of the house of Saul, and his fifteen sons and his twenty servants with him, and they went over the Jordan before the king. Then a ferry boat went across to carry over the king's household and to do what he thought good.

Now Shimei, the son of Gerar, fell down before the king when he had crossed the Jordan. Then he said to the king, Do not let my lord impute iniquity to me or remember what wrong your servant did on the day that my lord the king left Jerusalem, that the king should take it hard. For I, your servant, know that I have sinned.

Therefore, here I am, the first to come today of all the house of Joseph to go down to meet my lord the king. But Abishai, the son of Zeruah, answered and said, Shall not Shimei be put to death for this because he cursed the Lord's anointed? And David said, What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruah, that you should be adversaries to me this day? Shall any man be put to death today in Israel? For do I not know that today I am the king over Israel? Therefore the king said to Shimei, You shall not die. And the king swore to him.

However, Shimei did die later, but not at David's hand, but Solomon's, as we shall see in 1 Kings. So David says, Listen, I know I'm the king. I don't have to prove who I am by killing all my enemies.

I'm secure. My position is secure. The Lord has established me.

I don't have to be the tough guy and kill everyone who has opposed me. I can be gracious. Now Mephibosheth, the son of Saul, came down to meet the king, and he had not cared for his feet nor trimmed his mustache nor washed his clothes from the day the king departed until the day he came back in peace.

Which makes it seem like he really is sincere in this. So it was when he had come to Jerusalem to meet the king, that the king said to him, Why did you not go with me, Mephibosheth? And he answered, O my lord, O king, my servant deceived me. For your servant said, meaning I said, I will saddle donkey for myself, and I may ride on it and go with the king, go to the king, because your servant is lame.

And he has slandered your servant, to my lord the king. But my lord the king is like the angel of God. Therefore do what is good in your sight, in your eyes.

For all my father's house were but dead men before my lord the king. Yet you set your servant among those who eat at your own table. Therefore what right have I still to cry out any more to the king? So the king said to him, Why do you speak any more of your matters? I have said, You and Ziba divide the land.

Then Mephibosheth said to the king, Rather let him take it all, inasmuch as my lord the king has come back in peace to his own house. So now we've heard two stories, neither of them can be verified. Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth had accused Mephibosheth of rejoicing at David's exile, and saying, Oh now my family's house, he was a descendant from Saul, my family's house will be reestablished on the throne.

This is my opportunity. That's what Ziba had said. And on that occasion David had said to Ziba, Then all that I had given to Mephibosheth is now yours.

But now David hears the other story, and this sounds more convincing. After all, Mephibosheth had not cared for himself. He had not groomed himself.

He had not done anything. In other words, he had all the signs of mourning. And this was so from the time that David was driven out.

Which means that Mephibosheth's reaction to David's being driven out was not a happy one. He had gone into mourning, and had refused to care for himself from the day that David left. Which makes it seem like he was sincere.

Furthermore, David said, Well, you and Ziba just divide the stuff. Mephibosheth then of course just said, Well, I don't even care for any of it. I'm just glad you're back.

Let Ziba have it all. So we can see that Mephibosheth is not against David as Ziba had suggested. Actually, Ziba should have been put to death.

Because Ziba no doubt was lying in this matter. And under the law of Moses, if you bear false witness against somebody, then your penalty is to be the same as the penalty would have been of the person that you bore false witness against. So if you say someone committed murder and they didn't and you're found out, you'll be put to death.

Because that would have been the penalty for murder. So a false witness was to receive the same penalty that his victim of his slander would have received. Certainly Mephibosheth would have deserved to die if he had on this occasion sought to exploit David's calamity and tried to reassert himself to the throne.

Ziba falsely accused him. I'm of the opinion Ziba's accusation was false. But David was not in the mood to be killing people today.

He'd lost his son. He thought there's been enough killing. That was the whole reason why he was not allowed to build the temple and Solomon would be, because David had been a man of war.

His hands had shed blood. I think at this point, since a lot of that blood that's been shed is now his own son's blood, he's starting to see the ugliness of war and killing and bloodshed. I think it's turned his stomach.

I think he has no interest in it. So he's just trying to resolve things without violence. No one's going to die today, he said.

Verse 31, In Barzillai the Gileadite, this is one of the men who sent provisions to David when he was still on the run, came down from Rogelion or Rogelion, excuse me, and went across the Jordan with the king to escort him across the Jordan. Now Barzillai was a very aged man, 80 years old, and he had provided the king with supplies while he stayed in Mahanaim, for he was a very rich man. And the king said to Barzillai, Come across with me, and I will provide for you while you are with me in Jerusalem.

But Barzillai said to the king, How long have I to live that I should go up with the king to Jerusalem? I am today 80 years old. Can I discern between good and bad? In other words, can I make, can my palate discern between royal food and ordinary food? What do I care about the king's food? I'm too old to even be able to tell the difference between one kind of food and another. That's what he means there.

Can your servant taste what I eat and what I drink? Can I hear any longer the voice of singing men and singing women? Why then should your servant be further burdened to my lord, further burdened to my lord, the king? Your servant will go a little way across the Jordan with the king, and why should the king repay me with such a reward? Please let your servant turn back again, that I may die in my own city and be buried by the grave of my father and my mother. But here is your servant Chimham. Let him cross over with my lord the king, and do for him what seems good to you.

And the king answered, Chimham shall cross over with me, and I will do for him what seems good to you. Now whatever you request of me, I will do for you. Then all the people went over the Jordan, and when the king had crossed over, the king kissed Barzillai and blessed him, and he returned to his own place.

Now we don't know who Chimham was. In fact, until a few verses earlier, we didn't know who Barzillai was, but Chimham apparently was somebody whom Barzillai was willing to pass off his privileges to, and may well have been his son, or maybe a favored servant of his. But Barzillai didn't need the king's honors.

Eating at the king's table wouldn't be anything that would be special to him, and listening to the singers and so forth in the king's palace. He said, I'm too old to appreciate that kind of stuff. I'd rather die where my parents died and be buried with them.

You can take Chimham if you want, and do those things for him. And so David did. Now the king went to Gilgal, and Chimham went on with him, and all the people of Judah escorted the king, and also half the people of Israel.

Just then, all the men of Israel came to the king, and said to the king, Why have our

brethren, the men of Judah, stolen you away, and brought the king, his household, and all David's men with him across the Jordan? So all the men of Judah answered the men of Israel, Because the king is a close relative of ours. Why then are you angry over this matter? Have we ever eaten at the king's expense, or has he given us any gift? Now, this is kind of a common reaction we find in the book of Judges, and here where when there's a war, and some of the tribes are left out, especially if it's Ephraim. Ephraim gets really upset when they're not invited to participate in the battle.

And it would appear that it's either Ephraim or Ephraim with other tribes of the north that are now getting upset that Judah has brought David back, and it hasn't been a joint effort of all the tribes. And the implication seems to be, maybe Judah's seeking special favors from the king, and therefore leaving the other tribes out so that Judah will get special favors, maybe tax breaks or something, which the other tribes won't get. And they said, well, listen, have we ever asked for anything from the king? We've never asked him for any favors.

We just did it because he's our relative. And the men of Israel answered the men of Judah and said, we have ten shares in the king, therefore we also have more right to David than you. All these people professing their great loyalty to David, who the day before were on the side of the one trying to kill him.

Fickle, fickle people. Why then do you despise us? Were we not the first to advise bringing back our king? Yet the words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel. So, there is at this early stage, and there has already been previously, some distinction made between Judah and the rest of the tribes.

They are still all one kingdom. But when they divide into two kingdoms in the days of Rehoboam, this almost is simply the extreme outbreak of something that's been festering for apparently generations. The people of Judah were geographically separate from the other tribes for the most part.

Judah's territory stretched all the way from the Jordan or the Dead Sea, all the way over to the Mediterranean, therefore the whole strip at the southern end of the country was Judean. And the rest of the tribes had sort of a patchwork of territories to the north in the rest of the country, which meant that the ten tribes to the north kind of intermixed with each other considerably more than Judah did geographically. It was easier for Judah to sort of act like a separate territory alone, almost like a separate country.

And eventually it did become a separate country from the other ones when the split took place. But even before that, they apparently already were thinking of themselves as separate. They had been given special honor, even in the days of Moses.

Even though Moses was of the tribe of Levi, it was the tribe of Judah that followed the priests and led the rest of the tribes in the procession of the ark through the wilderness.

And it was Judah that the Oracle had appointed to go first up against the Canaanites once they came into the land of Canaan. Even though Joshua was of the tribe of Ephraim, when Joshua led the people in, it was the tribe of Judah that was selected by the Oracle of God to lead the conquest.

So Judah really had a prominent place among the tribes already. And there was a great hostility and rivalry between Judah and Ephraim especially. And this broke out into the political split in the days of Rehoboam when they became two different countries.

But here we see they're arguing again, and it just seems like a petty and distasteful thing to David to have these people arguing as if they're, you know, I'm more loyal to the king. No, I'm more loyal to the king. None of them had been loyal to the king.

They all had sided with Absalom. We're not having an argument here between those who were with David and those who were against him. These are all people who were against him.

And the people of Judah said, no, we made friends with him again first. And the people of the north said, no, it was our idea first. And they have an argument that the men of Judah, their words are fiercer than the other men's.

It's evident that David now has been restored, but there's definitely strife in the kingdom. What Absalom has done has tended to deteriorate the national unity to a certain extent. And we find that there's actually going to be a rebellion in the north led by a man named Sheba, and that's going to be a further problem to David.