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2SAMUEL 15: 1 After this, Absalom prepared him a chariot and horses, and fifty men to run before him.

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Absalom conspires against his father, and uses various methods to seduce the people from their allegiance to their king, 2Sam 15:1-4. Under pretense of paying a vow at Hebron, he obtains leave from David to go thither; and, by emissaries sent through the land, prepares the people for revolt, 2Sam 15:7-11. He gains over Ahithophel, David's counsellor, 2Sam 15:12. David is informed of the general defection of the people; on which he, and his life-guards and friends, leave the city, and go towards the wilderness, 2Sam 15:13-18. The steadfast friendship of Ittai, the Gittite, 2Sam 15:19-22. David's affecting departure from the city, 2Sam 15:23. He sends Zadok and Abiathar with the ark back to Jerusalem, 2Sam 15:24-29. He goes up Mount Olivet; prays that the counsel of Ahithophel may be turned into foolishness, 2Sam 15:30-31. He desires Hushai to return to Jerusalem, and to send him word of all that occurs, 2Sam 15:32-37.

#### Verse 1

Absalom prepared him chariots and horses - After all that has been said to prove that horses here mean horsemen, I think it most likely that the writer would have us to understand chariots drawn by horses; not by mules or such like cattle.

Fifty men to run before him - Affecting in every respect the regal state by this establishment. Of this man Calmet collects the following character: "He was a bold, violent, revengeful, haughty, enterprising, magnificent, eloquent, and popular prince; he was also rich, ambitious, and vain of his personal accomplishments: after the death of Amnon, and his reconciliation to his father, he saw no hindrance in his way to the throne. He despised Solomon because of the meanness of his birth, and his tender years. He was himself of the blood royal, not only by his father David, but also by his mother Maacah, daughter to Talmai, king of Geshur: and, doubtless, in his own apprehension, of sufficient age, authority, and wisdom, to sustain the weight of government. There was properly now no competitor in his way: Amnon, David's first-born, was dead. Of Chileab, his second son by Abigail, we hear nothing; and Absalom was the third: see 2Sam 3:2-5. He, therefore, seemed to stand nearest to the throne; but his sin was, that he sought it during his father's life, and endeavored to dethrone him in order to sit in his stead.

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2SAMUEL 15: 2 Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate. It was so, that when any man had a suit which should come to the king for judgement, then Absalom called to him, and said, "What city are you from?" He said, "Your servant is of one of the tribes of Israel."

2SAMUEL 15: 3 Absalom said to him, "Behold, your matters are good and right; but there is no man deputed by the king to hear you."

2SAMUEL 15: 4 Absalom said moreover, "Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man who has any suit or cause might come to me, and I would do him justice!"

2SAMUEL 15: 5 It was so, that when any man came near to do him obeisance, he stretched out his hand, and took hold of him, and kissed him.

2SAMUEL 15: 6 Absalom did this sort of thing to all Israel who came to the king for judgement. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.

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#### Verse 6

So Absalom stole the hearts - His manner of doing this is circumstantially related above. He was thoroughly versed in the arts of the demagogue; and the common people, the vile mass, heard him gladly. He used the patriot's arguments, and was every thing of the kind, as far as promise could go. He found fault with men in power; and he only wanted their place, like all other pretended patriots, that he might act as they did, or worse.

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2SAMUEL 15: 7 At the end of forty years, Absalom said to the king, "Please let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed to the LORD, in Hebron.

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#### Verse 7

After forty years - There is no doubt that this reading is corrupt, though supported by the commonly printed Vulgate, the Septuagint, and the Chaldee. But the Syriac has arba shanin, Four years; the Arabic the same arba shinin, Four years; and Josephus has the same; so also the Sixtine edition of the Vulgate, and several MSS. of the same version. Theodoret also reads four, not forty; and most learned men are of opinion that ארבעים arbaim, Forty, is an error for ארבע arba, Four; yet this reading is not supported by any Hebrew MS. yet discovered. But two of those collated by Dr. Kennicott have יום yom instead of שנה shanah, i.e., forty Days, instead of forty Years; and this is a reading more likely to be true than that in the commonly received text. We know that Absalom did stay Three years with his grandfather at Geshur, 2Sam 13:38; and this probably was a year after his return: the era, therefore, may be the time of his slaying his brother Amnon; and the four years include the time from his flight till the conspiracy mentioned here.

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2SAMUEL 15: 8 For your servant vowed a vow while I stayed at Geshur in Syria, saying, 'If the LORD shall indeed bring me again to Jerusalem, then I will serve the LORD.'"

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#### Verse 8

While I abode at Geshur in Syria - Geshur, the country of Talmi, was certainly not in Syria, but lay on the south of Canaan, in or near Edom, as is evident from Jdg 1:10; 1Sam 27:8; 2Sam 13:37. Hence it is probable that ארם Aram, Syria, is a mistake for אדום Edom; ד dalet and ר resh being easily interchangeable. Edom is the reading both of the Syriac and Arabic.

I will serve the Lord - Here he pretended to be a strict follower of Jehovah, even while he was in a heathen country; and now he desires liberty to go and perform a vow at Hebron, which he pretends to have made while he was resident at Geshur. And all this was the more perfectly to organize his system of rebellion against his venerable father.

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2SAMUEL 15: 9 The king said to him, "Go in peace." So he arose, and went to Hebron.

2SAMUEL 15: 10 But Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, "As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then you shall say, 'Absalom is king in Hebron!'"

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#### Verse 10

Absalom sent spies - These persons were to go into every tribe; and the trumpet was to be blown as a signal for all to arise, and proclaim Absalom in every place. The trumpet was probably used as a kind of telegraph by the spies: trumpet exciting trumpet from place to place; so that, in a few minutes all Israel would hear the proclamation.

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2SAMUEL 15: 11 Two hundred men went with Absalom out of Jerusalem, who were invited, and went in their simplicity; and they didn't know anything.

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#### Verse 11

Went two hundred men - These were probably soldiers, whom he supposed would be of considerable consequence to him. They had been seduced by his specious conduct, but knew nothing of his present design.

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2SAMUEL 15: 12 Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city, even from Giloh, while he was offering the sacrifices. The conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom.

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#### Verse 12

Sent for Ahithophel - When Absalom got him, he in effect got the prime minister of the kingdom to join him.

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2SAMUEL 15: 13 A messenger came to David, saying, "The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom."

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#### Verse 13

The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom - It is very difficult to account for this general defection of the people. Several reasons are given:

1. David was old or afflicted, and could not well attend to the administration of justice in the land.
2. It does appear that the king did not attend to the affairs of state, and that there were no properly appointed judges in the land; see 2Sam 15:3.

3. Joab's power was overgrown; he was wicked and insolent, oppressive to the people, and David was afraid to execute the laws against him.
4. There were still some partisans of the house of Saul, who thought the crown not fairly obtained by David.
5. David was under the displeasure of the Almighty, for his adultery with Bath-sheba, and his murder of Uriah; and God let his enemies loose against him.
6. There are always troublesome and disaffected men in every state, and under every government; who can never rest, and are ever hoping for something from a change.
7. Absalom appeared to be the real and was the undisputed heir to the throne; David could not, in the course of nature, live very long; and most people are more disposed to hail the beams of the rising, than exult in those of the setting, sun.

No doubt some of these causes operated, and perhaps most of them exerted less or more influence in this most scandalous business.

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2SAMUEL 15: 14 David said to all his servants who were with him at Jerusalem, "Arise, and let us flee; for else none of us shall escape from Absalom. Make speed to depart, lest he overtake us quickly, and bring down evil on us, and strike the city with the edge of the sword."

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#### Verse 14

David said - Arise - let us flee - This, I believe, was the first time that David turned his back to his enemies. And why did he now flee? Jerusalem, far from not being in a state to sustain a siege, was so strong that even the blind and the lame were supposed to be a sufficient defense for the walls, see 2Sam 5:6. And he had still with him his faithful Cherethites and Pelethites; besides six hundred faithful Gittites, who were perfectly willing to follow his fortunes. There does not appear any reason why such a person, in such circumstances, should not act on the defensive; at least till he should be fully satisfied of the real complexion of affairs. But he appears to take all as coming from the hand of God; therefore he humbles himself, weeps, goes barefoot, and covers his head! He does not even hasten his departure, for the habit of mourners is not the habit of those who are flying before the face of their enemies. He sees the storm, and he yields to what he conceives to be the tempest of the Almighty.

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2SAMUEL 15: 15 The king's servants said to the king, "Behold, your servants are ready to do whatever my lord the king chooses."

2SAMUEL 15: 16 The king went out, and all his household after him. The king left ten women, who were concubines, to keep the house.

2SAMUEL 15: 17 The king went out, and all the people after him; and they stayed in Beth Merhak.

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#### Verse 17

And tarried in a place - He probably waited till he saw all his friends safely out of the city.

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2SAMUEL 15: 18 All his servants passed on beside him; and all the Cherethites, and all the Pelethites, and all the Gittites, six hundred men who came after him from Gath, passed on before the king.

2SAMUEL 15: 19 Then the king said to Ittai the Gittite, "Why do you also go with us? Return, and stay with the king; for you are a foreigner, and also an exile. Return to your own place."

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#### Verse 19

Thou art a stranger, and also an exile - Some suppose that Ittai was the son of Achish, king of Gath, who was very much attached to David, and banished from his father's court on that account. He and his six hundred men are generally supposed to have been proselytes to the Jewish religion.

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2SAMUEL 15: 20 Whereas you came but yesterday, should I this day make you go up and down with us, since I go where I may? Return, and take back your brothers. Mercy and truth be with you."

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#### Verse 20

Mercy and truth be with thee - May God ever show thee mercy, as thou showest it to me, and his truth ever preserve thee from error and delusion!

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2SAMUEL 15: 21 Ittai answered the king, and said, "As the LORD lives, and as my lord the king lives, surely in what place my lord the king shall is, whether for death or for life, even there also will your servant be."

2SAMUEL 15: 22 David said to Ittai, "Go and pass over." Ittai the Gittite passed over, and all his men, and all the little ones who were with him.

2SAMUEL 15: 23 All the country wept with a loud voice, and all the people passed over: the king also himself passed over the brook Kidron, and all the people passed over, toward the way of the wilderness.

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#### Verse 23

The brook Kidron - This was an inconsiderable brook, and only furnished with water in winter, and in the rains. See Joh 18:1.

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2SAMUEL 15: 24 Behold, Zadok also came, and all the Levites with him, bearing the ark of the covenant of God; and they set down the ark of God; and Abiathar went up, until all the people finished passing out of the city.

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## Verse 24

Bearing the ark - The priests knew that God had given the kingdom to David; they had no evidence that he had deposed him: they therefore chose to accompany him, and take the ark, the object of their charge, with them.

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2SAMUEL 15: 25 The king said to Zadok, "Carry back the ark of God into the city. If I find favour in the eyes of the LORD, he will bring me again, and show me both it, and his habitation;

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## Verse 25

Carry back the ark - David shows here great confidence in God, and great humility. The ark was too precious to be exposed to the dangers of his migrations; he knew that God would restore him if he delighted in him, and he was not willing to carry off from the city of God that without which the public worship could not be carried on. He felt, therefore, more for this public worship and the honor of God, than he did for his own personal safety.

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2SAMUEL 15: 26 but if he say thus, 'I have no delight in you;' behold, here am I. Let him do to me as seems good to him."

2SAMUEL 15: 27 The king said also to Zadok the priest, "Aren't you a seer? Return into the city in peace, and your two sons with you, Ahimaaz your son, and Jonathan the son of Abiathar.

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## Verse 27

Art not thou a seer? return into the city in peace - That is, As thou art the only organ of the public worship, that worship cannot be carried on without thee; and as thou art the priest of God, thou hast no cause to fear for thy personal safety: the nation has not abandoned their God, though they have abandoned their king. It appears also, that he wished these priests, by means of their sons, Ahimaaz the son of Zadok, and Jonathan the son of Abiathar, to send him frequent intelligence of the motions and operations of the enemy.

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2SAMUEL 15: 28 Behold, I will stay at the fords of the wilderness, until word comes from you to inform me."

2SAMUEL 15: 29 Zadok therefore and Abiathar carried the ark of God again to Jerusalem; and they stayed there.

2SAMUEL 15: 30 David went up by the ascent of the Mount of Olives, and wept as he went up; and he had his head covered, and went barefoot: and all the people who were with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up.

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## Verse 30

Had his head covered - This was not only the attitude of a mourner, but even of a culprit; they usually had their heads covered when condemned. See the case of Haman. When the king had pronounced his condemnation, they immediately covered his face, and led him out to punishment; Est 7:8 (note). See also Quintus Curtius, De Philota, cap. vi.: I, Lictor; caput obnubito.

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2SAMUEL 15: 31 Someone told David, saying, "Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom." David said, "LORD, please turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness."

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#### Verse 31

Turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness - Ahithophel was a wise man, and well versed in state affairs; and God alone could confound his devices.

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2SAMUEL 15: 32 When David had come to the top, where God was worshipped, behold, Hushai the Archite came to meet him with his coat torn, and earth on his head.

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#### Verse 32

Where he worshipped God - Though in danger of his life, he stops on the top of Mount Olivet for prayer! How true is the adage, Prayer and provender never hinder any man's journey! Reader, dost thou do likewise?

Hushai the Archite - He was the particular friend of David, and was now greatly affected by his calamity.

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2SAMUEL 15: 33 David said to him, "If you pass on with me, then you will be a burden to me;

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#### Verse 33

Then thou shalt be a burden unto me - It appears that Hushai was not a warrior, but was a wise, prudent, and discreet man, who could well serve David by gaining him intelligence of Absalom's conspiracy; and he directs him to form a strict confederacy with the priests Zadok and Abiathar, and to make use of their sons as couriers between Jerusalem and David's place of retreat.

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2SAMUEL 15: 34 but if you return to the city, and tell Absalom, 'I will be your servant, O king. As I have been your father's servant in time past, so will I now be your servant; then will you defeat for me the counsel of Ahithophel.'

2SAMUEL 15: 35 Don't you have Zadok and Abiathar the priests there with you? Therefore it shall be, that whatever thing you shall hear out of the king's house, you shall tell it to Zadok and Abiathar the priests.

2SAMUEL 15: 36 Behold, they have there with them their two sons, Ahimaaz, Zadok's son, and Jonathan, Abiathar's son; and by them you shall send to me everything that you shall hear."

2SAMUEL 15: 37 So Hushai, David's friend, came into the city; and Absalom came into Jerusalem.

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#### Verse 37

Absalom came into Jerusalem - It is very probable that he and his partisans were not far from the city when David left it, and this was one reason which caused him to hurry his departure.

Reader, behold in the case of David a sad vicissitude of human affairs, and a fearful proof of their instability. Behold a king, the greatest that ever lived, a profound politician, an able general, a brave soldier, a poet of the most sublime genius and character, a prophet of the Most High God, and the deliverer of his country, driven from his dominions by his own son, abandoned by his fickle people, and for a time even by his God! See in his desolate state that there is none so exalted that God cannot abase, and none so abased that God cannot exalt. He was forsaken for a time, and his enemies triumphed; God returned, and his enemies were confounded. His crime, it is true, was great and God had declared by Nathan what had now come to pass. God is just, and in numberless instances sees right to show his displeasure even at those sins which his mercy has forgiven. In all cases it is a fearful and bitter thing to sin against the Lord.