

CHAPTER 15

INTRODUCTION TO SECOND SAMUEL 15

This chapter relates how that Absalom by various artful methods stole away the hearts of the people of Israel, (^{<10151>}2 Samuel 15:1-6); that pretending a vow he had made, he got leave of the king to go to Hebron to perform it, (^{<10157>}2 Samuel 15:7-9); where he formed a considerable conspiracy, (^{<101510>}2 Samuel 15:10-12); of which David having information, thought it advisable to depart from Jerusalem, both for his own safety, and the good of the city, which he did with his family, and guards, and much people, (^{<101513>}2 Samuel 15:13-18); though he would have persuaded Ittai the Gittite to have returned, but could not prevail upon him, (^{<101519>}2 Samuel 15:19-23); however, he sent back the priests and the Levites with the ark, lest any harm should come to that, (^{<101524>}2 Samuel 15:24-29); and as he and the people went up the mount of Olives weeping, it was told him that Ahithophel was among the conspirators, on which he put up a prayer that his counsel might be infatuated, (^{<101530>}2 Samuel 15:30,31); and Hushai the Archite coming to him at that juncture, he sent him back to Jerusalem to defeat the counsel of Ahithophel, and to send him word by the priests what he should hear there from time to time, (^{<101532>}2 Samuel 15:32-37).

Ver. 1. *And it came to pass after this,* etc.] After the reconciliation of David and Absalom, and the latter was admitted to court again:

that Absalom prepared him chariots and horses; to make himself look grand and respectable among the people; perhaps he got these from his grandfather at Geshur in Syria:

and fifty men to run before him; which added to his pomp and magnificence; and such great personages in later time have had; Nero the Roman emperor never went on a journey with less than a thousand calashes or chariots, and a great number of men that ran before him ^{f253}; and this was tacitly setting himself up for king, at least preparing for it, as Adonijah afterwards did in the same way and manner, (^{<10106>}1 Kings 1:5).

Ver. 2. *And Absalom rose up early,* etc.] Every morning, to show how diligent and industrious he should be, and closely apply himself to business,

was he in any office trader the king, and especially when he should be king himself; this he did to ingratiate himself into the affections of the people:

and stood beside the way of the gate; either of the king's palace, so Josephus^{f254}, or of the city, where courts of judicature are held: the former seems most probable by what follows:

and it was [so], that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment; that had a controversy with another man on any account, and came to the king to have it decided according to law, or the rules of justice and equity:

then Absalom called unto him, and said, of what city [art] thou? which question he asked, only to lead on to some further discourse:

and he said, thy servant [is] of one of the tribes; that is, of one of the cities of the tribes of Israel, and not of a city of another nation.

Ver. 3. *And Absalom said unto him*, etc.] After some further talk, and finding he had a suit at law to bring on, and either seeing it drawn up in writing, or hearing his account of it, at once declared, without hearing the other party:

see, thy matters [are] good and right; thy cause is a good cause, and if it could be heard by proper persons there is no doubt but things would go on thy side, and thou wouldest carry thy cause:

but [there is] no man [deputed] of the king to hear thee; the king is grown old himself and his sons are negligent, and do not attend to business, and there are none besides them appointed to hear causes; and he suggested, as appears by what follows, that he was not in commission, but if he was, or should he appointed a judge, he would attend to business, and people should not go away after this manner, without having justice administered unto them,

Ver. 4. *Absalom said, moreover*, etc.] To the same persons, at the same time:

oh that I were made judge in the land; by which it appears that he had no office under the king; partly either because of his crime, and so not thought fit, and partly because he appeared to be an ambitious aspiring man, and so it was thought not safe to put him into any office:

that every man that hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice; at once, without any further trouble, or coming often, and in vain, and to no purpose.

Ver. 5. *And it was [so], that when any man came nigh [to him] to do him obeisance,* etc.] To pay his respects, and bow to him, as being the king's son, a prince of the blood, and heir to the crown, as was supposed:

he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him; he put out his hand and shook hands with him, or took him about the neck and kissed him, and by this free, familiar, affable, and courteous manner, strangely won upon and gained the affections of the people, as follows. Fortunatus Schacchus ^{f255} thinks he put forth his hand to be kissed by them, and then kissed them, which was more than was usual.

Ver. 6. *And in this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment,* etc.] Told them there was none to be had, wished that he was in office to administer it to them, and behaved in the above loving manner towards them:

so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel; got the affections of the people in a private and clandestine manner, and robbed the king of them, who had the best right unto them.

Ver. 7. *And it came to pass after forty years,* etc.] Or four years; so long it was from the reconciliation of Absalom to David, as Josephus ^{f256} says; and so read Theodoret on the place, the Syriac and Arabic versions: but some say it was either forty years from the time Israel first had a king; and which might be an era of reckoning with the Jews, as the era of Seleucidæ was with the Greeks, on the like account; or from the time Saul slew the priests at Nob, as Jerom ^{f257}; or from the time of David's being anointed by Samuel; or this was the year of Absalom's age, or of David's reign: but these, and other attempts made to account for this passage, are not entirely satisfactory; and therefore one may be tempted to conclude there must be a mistake in the copy, of "arbaim" for "arba", forty for four; which makes it quite easy, and confirms the first sense:

that Absalom said unto the king, I pray thee, let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed unto the Lord, in Hebron; not what he vowed in Hebron; for according to his own account he had vowed it in Geshur, as in (~~1018~~ 2 Samuel 15:8); but his request is, that he might pay it in Hebron; which place he fixed upon, being his native place, and where David was

anointed king; and which, being about twenty miles from Jerusalem, was at a proper distance to lay the scene of his conspiracy in, and bring it to perfection.

Ver. 8. *For thy servant vowed a vow while I abode at Geshur in Syria,* etc.] When at his grandfather's court there:

saying, if the Lord will bring me again indeed to Jerusalem; which he might be sincerely desirous of:

then I will serve the Lord; but it is a question whether he ever made a vow to this purpose, or concerned himself about serving the Lord; but it rather may be, this was a lie of his, now framed in order to get leave of the king to go to Hebron.

Ver. 9. *And the king said unto him, go in peace,* etc.] He gave him leave to go, and wished happiness and prosperity might attend him:

so he arose and went to Hebron; with a company of men, whose number is after mentioned.

Ver. 10. *But Absalom sent spies throughout all the land of Israel,* etc.] To sound the disposition of the people towards him, to insinuate things into their minds in favour of him, and to improve every opportunity of recommending him to their esteem and affections:

saying, as soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet; in any place; and which it is probable he employed men to sound in many places:

then ye shall say, Absalom reigneth in Hebron: which is the cause of the trumpet's sounding; and by this means they would learn how the people stood affected to him, whether the news was grateful or not.

Ver. 11. *And with Absalom went two hundred men out of Jerusalem, [that were] called,* etc.] Invited by him to go with him and partake of his peace offerings, as the payment of his vow in Hebron; part of which was made a feast of for his friends, whomsoever he should think fit to invite, as he did to the number of two hundred, and for the entertainment of whom a large provision ought to be made; the Jews^{f258} have a tradition, that he had leave of his father only to invite two to go with him, and that he asked two more unknown to the first, and so on, two after two, until they amounted to two hundred:

and they went in their simplicity; to partake of the feast of the peace offerings, to which they were invited; being quite harmless and upright in their intentions, having no thought of disloyalty and rebellion in their breasts:

and they knew not anything; of an intended conspiracy; howbeit, doubtless many of them were drawn into it when got thither; and as these may be supposed to be some of the principal men of Jerusalem, it was a great weakening of David's interest, and laid a considerable foundation for Absalom to begin upon.

Ver. 12. *And Absalom sent for Ahithophel, the Gilonite, David's counsellor*, etc.] To advise with about this treasonable affair he was engaged in, and to get out of him David's secrets, who was reckoned the best counsellor in the land; and he might rather hope he would come to him, if he was the grandfather of Bathsheba, as say the Jews, (^{<0118>}2 Samuel 11:3 23:34); since he might be disgusted with and resent David's adultery with Bathsheba his granddaughter, and the murder of her husband Uriah: him he sent for,

from his city, [even] from Giloh; a city in the tribe of Judah, in the mountainous part of it, near to Hebron, where Absalom now was; and, according to Bunting ^{f259}, twenty miles from Jerusalem, (see ^{<0658>}Joshua 15:48,51,54);

while he offered sacrifices; not Ahithophel, but Absalom, his peace offerings at Hebron, to which he invited Ahithophel to come and partake of:

and the conspiracy was strong; or there was a great number in the conspiracy, who were assembled together:

for the people increased continually with Absalom; being drawn to him by the comeliness of his person, his affable behaviour, the pomp and magnificence in which he appeared, the great number of the principal inhabitants of Jerusalem with him, and he the king's eldest son, and so heir to the crown; whereas it might begin to be rumoured about, that David designed Solomon, a son of Bathsheba, a young prince, to be his successor, which did not meet with general approbation at first.

Ver. 13. *And there came a messenger to David*, etc.] Perhaps one of the two hundred that went with Absalom, ignorant of his design; which, when

discovered, he disapproved of, and got away from him, and came to David, and informed him how things were:

saying, the hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom; to make him king.

Ver. 14. *And David said unto all his servants that [were] with him at Jerusalem,* etc.] His courtiers and ministers of state, the officers of his household, as many of them as were with him in the city; for some of them very probably were in the country, as Ahithophel was, and some might be along with Absalom, whom he had invited to his peace offerings:

arise, and let us flee; it is much that a man of such courage and valour as David should be so intimidated at once as to make a flight as soon as he heard of a conspiracy forming against him:

for we shall not [else] escape from Absalom; his fears ran so high, that he fancied he would be upon them presently:

make speed to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly; which still more clearly shows the panic he was in:

and bring evil upon us; kill them, or make them prisoners:

and smite the city with the edge of the sword; the inhabitants of it, should they make resistance.

Ver. 15. *And the king's servants said unto the king,* etc.] In answer to him, and to show that they were quite conformable to his pleasure:

behold, thy servants [are ready to do] whatsoever my lord the king shalt appoint; or “choose”^{f260}, whether to prepare to fight, and defend him and the city, or to depart and make their escape.

Ver. 16. *And the king went forth,* etc.] Which determined the case:

and all his household after him family and his court; they followed his example, and attended him in his flight:

and the king left ten women, [which were] concubines, to keep the house; not to defend it, which they were unable to do, but to look after the household goods and furniture, that they were not damaged by the conspirators; though one would think they could be of little service, and may wonder what he should leave them behind for; but this seems to be

ordered by the overruling providence of God, to bring about what was threatened him, (<3021>2 Samuel 12:11); and it is much he had not thought of it; but it was hid from his eyes, that it might be fulfilled.

Ver. 17. *And the king went forth*, etc.] From Jerusalem; which is repeated, that it might be observed in what a hurry and fright he was:

and all the people after him; his family, court, and servants, and as many of the people of Jerusalem as chose to go with him:

and tarried at a place that was afar off; when they had got at some distance from the city, they stopped and stayed a while; it could not be a great way from it, for they had not as yet passed over the brook Kidron, (<3053>2 Samuel 15:23).

Ver. 18. *And all his servants passed on beside him*, etc.] Or at his hand or side; his household servants walking perhaps some on one side of him, and some on the other, (see <3066>2 Samuel 16:6);

and all the Cherethites, and all the Pelethites; which were his bodyguards, (see <3088>2 Samuel 8:18);

and all the Gittites, six hundred men which came after him from Gath; which either came with him from Gath, when he conquered that city, and took it out of the hands of the Philistines, (<3086>2 Samuel 8:1); compared with (<3380>1 Chronicles 18:1); and who might become proselytes, and be incorporated into the commonwealth of Israel, and into David's army, a troop of men, of which Ittai, after mentioned, was captain, (<3052>2 Samuel 15:22); or else these were Israelites, so called, because with David they sojourned in Gath a while, when he fled from Saul; and so Josephus ^{f261} says, they were companions of him in his first flight, when Saul was living; and this number is just the number of the men that were with him at Gath, (<3027>1 Samuel 27:2,3); and it may be David kept a troop of men always of the same number, to whom he gave this name in memory of them, having been a set of trusty and faithful men to him: these, with the Cherethites and Pelethites,

passed on before the king: in this form and manner David and his men marched in their flight.

Ver. 19. *Then said the king to Ittai the Gittite*, etc.] Who was over the band of Gittites, the six hundred men, (<3052>2 Samuel 15:22);

wherefore goest thou also with us? one should think the king should not have discouraged any from joining and following him, when his numbers were not very large, and the in such fear on account of Absalom:

return to this place; to Jerusalem, where his station was:

and abide with the king; with Absalom, who set himself up for king, and whom the people perhaps had proclaimed as such in Hebron, where the conspiracy began:

for thou [art] a stranger, and also an exile; not a native of Israel, but of another nation, and at a distance from it, and therefore not altogether under the same obligations to attend David in his troubles as others were; and by this it seems that he was a Gittite by nation, whatever the six hundred men were, and rather favours the first sense given of them in (^{<DOLISIS>}2 Samuel 15:18).

Ver. 20. *Whereas thou camest [but] yesterday,* etc.] From Gath, or from an expedition he and his men had been on:

should I this day make thee, go up and down with us? wander up and down from place to place with David, when he was but just come off a journey, weary and fatigued:

seeing I go whither I may; where it will be most safe for me, I know not where; may be obliged to flee here and there, which would be very inconvenient to Ittai in his circumstances:

return thou, and take back thy brethren; the six hundred men under him, and whom David could ill spare at this time, and yet, consulting their ease, advises to return to Jerusalem with them:

mercy and truth [be] with thee; the Lord show mercy and kindness to thee, in that thou hast shown favour and respect to me, and make good all his promises to thee, who hast been true and faithful to me.

Ver. 21. *And Ittai answered the king, and said,* etc.] With an oath, as follows:

[as] the Lord liveth, and [as] my lord the king liveth; which he took to confirm what he after says, and to put an end to the debate between them:

surely, in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be; signifying that he would attend him wherever he went, hazard his life in his cause, and live and die with him.

Ver. 22. *And David said unto Ittai, go, and pass over*, etc.] It being his resolution to abide with him, he urged him no more to depart, but bid him pass over the brook Kidron before him:

and Ittai the Gittite passed over, and all his men; the six hundred Gittites that were under his command:

and all the little ones that [were] with him; that belonged to him and his men, and no doubt their wives also.

Ver. 23. *And all the country wept with a loud voice*, etc.] The people that came out of the country villages round about, upon the report of the king's leaving Jerusalem, because of his son's conspiracy against him; these wept when they saw him in the circumstances in which he was, obliged to fly from a rebellious son:

and all the people passed over; the people that were with David passed over Kidron, and so the Cherethites, and Pelethites:

the king also himself passed over the brook Kidron; this explains what place it was they passed over, which is not before mentioned, but is particularly named in the account of the king's passing over it; over which same brook the Messiah, his antitype, passed a little before his sufferings and death; of which brook, (see Gill on "~~4~~John 18:1"). It is often by Josephus^{f262} called a valley, sometimes a brook, it having little water, except in winter; Mr. Maundrell^{f263} says, it ran along the bottom of the valley of Jehoshaphat, a brook in the wintertime; but without the least drop of water in it all the time, says he, we were in Jerusalem; and so Reland^{f264}, that in summertime it ceases to be a river, and has the name of a valley; and Leviticus Bruyn says^{f265}, it is at present dried up; it runs along the valley of Jehoshaphat, and is not above three paces broad; it has no other but rain water, which flows from the adjacent hills:

and all the people passed over to the way of the wilderness; which lay between Jerusalem and Jericho.

Ver. 24. *And, lo, Zadok also*, etc.] The priest, as he is called, (~~10~~2 Samuel 15:27);

and all the Levites [were] with him: with Zadok, or with David, and indeed with both; but the former is rather meant here, being the immediate antecedent:

bearing the ark of the covenant of God: these were the Kohathite Levites, whose business it was to bear the ark when carried from place to place, (^{<4083>}Numbers 3:31 4:15 7:9); called the ark of the covenant, because the law which was the covenant between God and the people, was put into it:

and they set down the ark of God: from off their shoulders, on which they carried it:

and Abiathar went up; who was the high priest, and whose business it was to attend the ark, and inquire before it, as occasion required; he went up very probably to the mount of Olives, later mentioned, (^{<4053>}2 Samuel 15:30):

until all the people had done passing out of the city; for from the top of that mountain he could see the city of Jerusalem, and the people as they passed out of it, and observe when they were all come out, or however ceased coming, and so knew when it was a proper time to march forward.

Ver. 25. *And the king said unto Zadok, carry back the ark of God into the city,* etc.] The reason of which is not easy to account for, since being carried back it would fall into the hands of the conspirators; and now the priests were with it to take care of it, and there might be occasion to inquire at it before the Lord; but David thought it being a sacred thing would not be violated by Absalom and his men, and that it would be safest in its own habitation or tabernacle, which David had built for it; for, that the reason of it should be, what Procopius Gazaeus suggests, cannot be given into, that he could not bear to carry about him the law, which accused of adulteries and murders:

if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord: if he will appear for me, be on my side, and deliver me from those who have risen up against me:

he will bring me again: to Jerusalem, and to his palace there:

and show me [both] it and his habitation; the ark, and the tabernacle he had erected for it, (^{<4067>}2 Samuel 6:17).

Ver. 26. *But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee,* etc.] As a king, or in his temporal prosperity, though he might and had delight in him as a

chosen vessel of salvation, as a saint and child of God, and in his spiritual and everlasting welfare:

behold, [here am] I; his humble servant, ready to be, and do and suffer whatever is his pleasure:

let him do to me as seemeth good unto him; strip me of all the ensigns of royalty, dispossess me of my crown and kingdom, and dispose of me as seems good in his sight; who is a sovereign Being, and has a right to do with his creatures what he pleases.

Ver. 27. *And the king said unto Zadok the priest, [art not] thou a seer?* etc.] A prophet, as well as a priest; (see ^{<000>}1 Samuel 9:9); or a seeing, knowing, man; one that can penetrate into men and things, and so might be of more service to David at Jerusalem than with him: wherefore he said to him,

return into the city in peace; to the city of Jerusalem with peace, quietness, and satisfaction of mind; where he doubted not, at least hoped and wished, he would be in safety and prosperity, being one of the Lord's priests:

and your two sons with you, Ahimaaz thy son, and Jonathan the son of Abiathar; the one was of the line of Eleazar, and the other of the line of Ithamar.

Ver. 28. *See, I will tarry in the plain of the wilderness*, etc.] Towards the way of which David and the people went when they came over Kidron, (^{<0523>}2 Samuel 15:23);

until there come word from you to certify me; of the truth of the conspiracy, of the number of the conspirators, and who they are, what progress they have made, whether come to Jerusalem, and how they behave there, if come; or of anything relative hereunto he could get intelligence of.

Ver. 29. *Zadok therefore and Abiathar carried the ark of God again to Jerusalem*, etc.] That is, ordered it to be carried, and took care that it was carried, by the Kohathite Levites, and they themselves attended it:

and they tarried there; at Jerusalem; though their two sons that went with them entered not into the city, but stayed at a place called Enrogel, at some little distance from it, (^{<0077>}2 Samuel 17:17).

Ver. 30. *And David went up by the ascent of [Mount] Olivet*, etc.] So called from the olive trees that grew upon it, which is often mentioned in the New Testament, and where our Lord Jesus Christ, the antitype of David, often was, in his state of humiliation, (^{<4151>}Matthew 26:30 ^{<4145>}Mark 14:26) (^{<4223>}Luke 22:39), and from whence he ascended to heaven after his resurrection, (^{<4012>}Acts 1:12); it was about a mile from Jerusalem, to the east of it:

and wept as he went up; thinking perhaps of the wickedness and rebellion of his son, of his own hard case, to be obliged to quit his metropolis and palace, and make his flight afoot; and perhaps also of his own sins, which were the cause of his calamities:

and had his head covered; with his mantle, with which he enwrapped himself as a mourner, (^{<1094>}2 Samuel 19:4); so the Egyptians used to cover their heads in mourning, and the Romans in later times ^{f266}; so Megara in sorrowful circumstances is represented as having her head covered with a garment ^{f267}:

and he went barefoot; in token of mourning also, and like one forlorn, and going into captivity, (see ^{<3012>}Isaiah 20:2 ^{<3001>}Micah 1:8);

and all the people that [was] with him covered every man his head; as David did, and in imitation of him, and sympathizing with him; and which was sometimes done when men were ashamed and confounded, (^{<3443>}Jeremiah 14:3,4);

and they went up, weeping as they went up; the mount of Olivet, grieved for their king, and the distresses and calamities that were coming upon them.

Ver. 31. *And [one] told David*, etc.] That came either from Hebron or from Jerusalem:

Ahithophel [is] among the conspirators with Absalom; Absalom sent for him, and it seems he came to him, and continued with him, (see ^{<10512>}2 Samuel 15:12);

and David said, O Lord, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness; either suffer him to give foolish counsel, or confound the schemes projected by him, and let them not be carried into execution; for God can, and sometimes does, disappoint crafty counsellors, that they

cannot perform what they devise, but they are taken in their own craftiness, and their counsel is carried headlong, (^{<K&B2>}Job 5:12,13); this prayer was answered, (^{<O174>}2 Samuel 17:14,23).

Ver. 32. *And it came to pass, that [when] David was come to the top [of the mount],* etc.] Of the mount of Olives:

where he worshipped God; by prayer and praise; here very probably he composed and sung the third psalm (^{<B&B2>}Psalm 3:1-8), which, as the title shows, was made when he fled from Absalom:

behold, Hushai the Archite came to meet him, with his coat rent, and earth upon his head; in token of mourning, and as a bringer of bad tidings, (see ^{<O102>}2 Samuel 1:2); perhaps he was an inhabitant of Archi, at least originally, which lay on the borders of the tribe of Ephraim, (^{<B&B2>}Joshua 16:2); from whence he had his name.

Ver. 33. *Unto whom David said,* etc.] After he had heard what he had to say, and what tidings he brought:

and if thou passest on with me; in his march and flight:

then thou shalt be a burden to me; being to be maintained by him; and David having but scanty provisions, and so could not receive useless persons, as Hushai might be, perhaps an old man, that could be of no service to him, and unfit for travelling, and so would rather be an hinderance than an help unto him.

Ver. 34. *But if thou return to the city,* etc.] To the city of Jerusalem, from whence it seems he came:

and say unto Absalom, I will be thy servant, O king; as he was by usurpation, and by the proclamation of the people with him. David directs him to address him thus, that he might have no suspicion of him, having been an old friend of his:

[as] I [have been] thy father's servant hitherto; perhaps in the character of a counsellor, as it should seem, since as such he was afterwards employed by Absalom:

so [will] I now also [be] thy servant; in whatsoever thou shall please to employ me under thee:

then mayest thou for me defeat the counsel of Ahithophel; for being taken into Absalom's service, and made one of his counsellors, he would be privy to the advice of Ahithophel, and so be able to work against him.

Ver. 35. *And [hast thou] not there with thee Zadok and Abiathar the priests?* etc.] To assist in forming schemes directly opposite to Ahithophel's, or to whom he could communicate the secrets of Absalom's court:

therefore it shall be [that] what thing soever thou shalt hear out of the king's house; Absalom's, who had now, at possession of the house and palace of David:

thou shalt tell [it] to Zadok and Abiathar the priests; to whom he might have recourse without suspicion, pretending he had business with them as priests, on religious accounts, to offer sacrifices for him, etc.

Ver. 36. *Behold, [they have] there with them two sons, Ahimaaz, Zadok's [son], and Jonathan, Abiathar's [son],* etc.] As in (^{<10152>}2 Samuel 15:27); not that they were in the city with them, but they were near it, (^{<10172>}2 Samuel 17:17); with whom they had a communication:

and by whom ye shall send unto me everything that ye can hear; that is, by the sons of the priests; he telling the priests how things were at court, and they sending their sons with messages to David; which was a good scheme to get intelligence, and easy to be put into execution.

Ver. 37. *So Hushai David's friend came into the city,* etc.] The city of Jerusalem, by the direction and persuasion of David, and in obedience to him, in order to serve him to the uttermost:

and Absalom came into Jerusalem: just at the same time; so that he knew not that Hushai had been out of it, and been with David, and which also appears from what he said to him, (^{<10167>}2 Samuel 16:17).