

# CHAPTER 16

## INTRODUCTION TO SECOND SAMUEL 16

In this chapter is an account of Ziba, the servant of Mephibosheth, getting his inheritance by misrepresentation of him, and by presents to David, (<sup><106E></sup>2 Samuel 16:1-4); and of Shimei's cursing David as he passed along, which David bore patiently, and would not suffer others to avenge it on him, (<sup><106E></sup>2 Samuel 16:5-14); and of Hushai's offer of his service to Absalom, who admitted him to be of his privy council, (<sup><106E></sup>2 Samuel 16:15-19); and of the counsel which Ahithophel gave, (<sup><106D></sup>2 Samuel 15:20-23).

**Ver. 1.** *And when David was a little past the top [of the hill],* etc.] Of the mount of Olives, the ascent of which he is said to go up by, and to come to the top of it, (<sup><106D></sup>2 Samuel 15:30,32);

*behold, Ziba, the servant of Mephibosheth, met him;* of whom (see <sup><106E></sup>2 Samuel 9:2);

*with a couple of asses saddled:* and so fit to ride on, but for the present he used them to another purpose:

*and upon them two hundred [loaves] of bread;* an hundred on each ass very probably:

*and an hundred bunches of raisins;* or dried grapes, as the Targum:

*and an hundred of summer fruits:* not in number, but in weight, as apples, pears, plums, apricots, etc. so the Targum, an hundred pounds of figs:

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

**Ver. 2.** *And the king said unto Ziba, what meanest thou by these?* etc.] Are they to be said, or are they presents?

*and Ziba said, the asses [be] for the king's household to ride on;* for himself, his wives, and children, his courtiers, and the principal officers of

his house; it being usual in those times and countries for great personages to ride on asses, (see <sup><1750></sup>Judges 5:10);

*and the bread and summer fruits for the young men to eat*; the king's menial servants, his guards and his soldiers:

*and the wine, that such as be faint in the wilderness may drink*; where no water was to be had, that their fainting spirits might be revived, and they be able whether to fight or march.

**Ver. 3.** *And the king said, and where [is] thy master's son?* etc.] The son of Saul, who was Ziba's master, meaning Mephibosheth:

*and Ziba said unto the king, behold, he abideth at Jerusalem*; as there was reason for it, since he was lame of both his feet, (<sup><1093></sup>2 Samuel 9:13), though he could have rode upon an ass, and followed the king, as he proposed to do; but his servant deceived him, and carried off the asses to serve a purpose for himself, (see <sup><1025></sup>2 Samuel 19:26);

*for he said, today shall the house of Israel restore unto me the kingdom of my father*; his father Saul; which was far from his thoughts; and a most wicked suggestion of his servant to blacken his character, and get his estate from him; nor was there the least probability of the kingdom coming to him, but all the reverse; for let it go how it would with David, Absalom, and not Mephibosheth, stood fair for the kingdom.

**Ver. 4.** *Then said the king to Ziba, behold, thine [are] all that [pertaineth] to Mephibosheth,* etc.] Being forfeited to the king by an overt act of treason as they had been before by the rebellion of Ishbosheth, but had been graciously restored to Mephibosheth; and had it been true what Ziba suggested, it would have been a righteous thing to have taken them from him; though it seems to be too hasty a step in David to take and give them away without further inquiry:

*and Ziba said, I humbly beseech thee [that] I may find grace in thy sight, my lord, O king*; he had found favour already, but seems not to be sufficiently thankful for it, and satisfied with it, but craved more and other favours, when opportunity should serve.

**Ver. 5.** *And when King David came to Bahurim,* etc.] The Targum is, Alemath, perhaps the same that is said to be a city of the Levites, given unto them out of the tribe of Benjamin, (<sup><1310></sup>1 Chronicles 6:60) for the man

next described, who was of this place, was a Benjaminite, (<sup>10916</sup>2 Samuel 19:16); (see Gill on “<sup>10816</sup>2 Samuel 3:16”); David was not yet come to the city itself, but into the neighbourhood of it, the fields adjacent to it: and

*behold, thence came out a man of the family of Saul*; a descendant of a branch of his family, who had entertained a private grudge and secret enmity against David, to whom he imputed the fall of the family of Saul:

*whose name [was] Shimei, the son of Gera*: which might be a name common in the tribe of Benjamin, one of Benjamin’s sons being named Gera, (<sup>04421</sup>Genesis 46:21). Some say <sup>f268</sup> he was the same with Nebat, the father of Jeroboam; but he was of the tribe of Ephraim, this of Benjamin:

*he came forth, and cursed still as he came*; he came out of Bahurim, of which place he was, and all the way he came continued cursing David, until he came near unto him.

**Ver. 6.** *And he cast stones at David, and at all the servants of King David*, etc.] Not that he was within the reach of them, or could hurt them, by casting them at them; but this he did to show his contempt of them, and to intimate that they deserved to be stoned, and especially David, at whose adultery he might point by it:

*and all the people, and all the mighty men [were] on his right hand, and on his left*; that is, of David; which is observed, not so much to indicate the safety of David’s person, as the impudence and madness of Shimei, to cast stones at David when so guarded.

**Ver. 7.** *And thus said Shimei, when he cursed, come out, come out*, etc.] Or rather, “go out, go out” <sup>f269</sup>; that is, out of the nation, where he deserved not to live, as he judged, and out of the kingdom, which he had usurped, as he supposed; and the repeating the words not only denotes his vehement desire to have him gone, but the haste he should make to get out, or he was liable to be overtaken by Absalom and his forces; upbraiding him also with the hurry he was in, and the speedy flight he was making:

*thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial*; or wicked man; perhaps referring by these characters in the one to the murder of Uriah, and in the other to his adultery with Bathsheba; and these crimes coming fresh into David’s mind hereby, might make him more mild and humble under his reproaches.

**Ver. 8.** *The Lord hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul,* etc.] Which he would suggest was shed by David, or, however, that he was the cause of its being shed; as if he had stirred up the Philistines to that battle in which Saul and his sons were slain, and had an hand secretly in the deaths of Ishbosheth and Abner, all which were false insinuations; and it may be the seven sons of Saul before this time, though after related, were delivered into the hands of the Gibeonites to be hanged, to which respect may be had:

*in whose stead thou hast reigned;* not by right, but by usurpation he suggests:

*and the Lord hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son;* in this he seems to contradict himself; for if David had got the kingdom by usurpation, it would rather have, been delivered by the Lord into the hand of one of Saul's family, and not of David's:

*and behold, thou [art taken] in thy mischief;* punished for his sins; the mischief he had brought on others was retaliated to him:

*because thou [art] a bloody man;* guilty of slaying, as the Targum of shedding innocent blood, and so worthy of death.

**Ver. 9.** *Then said Abishai the son of Zeruiah unto the king,* etc.] A sister's son of his, and a general in the army, who could not bear to hear the king abused in this manner:

*why should this dead dog curse my lord the king?* be suffered to do it with impunity; a "dog" he calls him, because of his vileness and baseness, and because of his impudence, and on account of his reproachful and abusive language, aptly signified by the snarling and barking of a dog; and a "dead" dog, as being useless, detestable, and abominable:

*let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head;* go over the plain where David and his men were, to the hill on which Shimei was, and strike off his head with his sword; which he could easily do, and soon put an end to his cursing.

**Ver. 10.** *And the king said, what have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah?* etc.] It seems as if Joab, the brother of Abishai, joined with him in this request to have leave to take off the head of Shimei; and though David had to do with them as his relations, his sister's sons, and as they

were generals in his army; yet in this case he would have nothing to do with them, would not take their advice, nor suffer them to take revenge on this man for his cursing him: or “what [is it] to me, [or] to you”<sup>f270</sup>? what signifies his cursing? it will neither hurt me nor you:

*so let him curse*; go on cursing after this manner; do not restrain him from it, or attempt to stop his mouth: or, “for he will curse”<sup>f271</sup>; so is the textual reading; you will not be able to restrain him, for the following reason:

*because the Lord hath said unto him, curse David*; not by way of command, or a precept of his; for to curse the ruler of the people is contrary to the word and law of God, (<sup>(1228)</sup>Exodus 22:28), nor by any operation of his spirit moving and exciting him to it; for the operations of the Spirit are to holiness, and not to sin; but by the secret providence of God ordering, directing, and overruling all circumstances relative to this affair. Shimei had conceived enmity and hatred to David; God left him to the power of this corruption in his breast, opened a way in Providence, and gave him an opportunity of exercising it on him: it was not a bare permission of God that Shimei should curse David; but it was his will, and he ordered it so in Providence, that he should do it; which action was attended with the predetermined concourse of divine Providence, so far as it was an action; though, as a sinful action, it was of Shimei, sprung from his own heart, instigated by Satan; but as a correction and chastisement of David, it was by the will, order, and appointment of God, and as such David considered it, and quietly submitted to it:

*who shall then say, wherefore hast thou done so?* for though Shimei might justly be blamed, and reproved for it, yet the thing itself was not to be hindered or restrained, it being according to the will and providence of God, to answer some good end with respect to David.

**Ver. 11.** *And David said to Abishai, and all his servants*, etc.] In order to make them easy, and reconcile them to this usage of him:

*behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life*; meaning Absalom:

*how much more now [may this] Benjamite [do it]?* who was not only of the same tribe that Saul was, but of the same family, and so bore an ill will to David because of his succession in the throne:

*let him alone, and let him curse*; do nothing to restrain him, not even by words, and much less by any violent actions, and still less by taking away his life:

*for the Lord hath bidden him*; in the sense explained in (~~1060~~ 2 Samuel 16:10).

**Ver. 12.** *It may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction*, etc.] Through the rebellion of his son, and now aggravated by the cursing of Shimei; that is, with an eye of pity and commiseration, and deliver him out of it: or “look upon my eye”<sup>f272</sup>; for there is a various reading; the tear of mine eye, as the Targum; so Jarchi and R. Isaiah; the tears in it, which fell plentifully from it, on account of his troubles, and particularly the curses and reproaches of Shimei:

*and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day*; he does not speak with assurance, yet with hope; he knew his sins deserved such treatment, but also that God was gracious and merciful, and pitied his children, and resented all ill usage of them; and therefore hoped he would favour him with such intimations of his love as would support him, comfort, refresh him, and do him good, (see ~~4188~~ Romans 8:28).

**Ver. 13.** *And as David and his men went by the way*, etc.] In the high road that led to Bahurim, taking no notice of the cursing of Shimei, which made him bolder and more impudent; here is a large pause in the Hebrew text, in the midst of this verse:

*Shimei went along on the hill side over against him*; as David and his men walked in the plain, he went on a range of hills that ran along right against them:

*and cursed as he went*; continued his curses and imprecations, to which he was the more emboldened by the behaviour of David and his men:

*and threw stones at him, and cast dust*; in a way of contempt, though the stones recoiled on his own head, and the dust flew in his own face, as the consequence of things showed; and now David composed and penned the seventh psalm, (~~1900~~ Psalm 7:1-17).

**Ver. 14.** *And the king, and all the people that [were] with him, came weary*, etc.] With their journey, and through grief and trouble at what they met with:

*and refreshed themselves there*: that is, at Bahurim, with food and rest; which revived their spirits, and put as it were new life and soul into them, as the word used signifies. Josephus <sup>f273</sup> says, when David came to Jordan, he refreshed his weary men.

**Ver. 15.** *And Absalom, and all the people, the men of Israel, came to Jerusalem,* etc.] At the same time that David and his people came to Bahurim; which, as Josephus <sup>f274</sup> says, was a place near to Jerusalem; and, according to Bunting <sup>f275</sup>, was little more than a mile from it; though elsewhere <sup>f276</sup> he makes it three miles; so that had not David made the hasty flight he did, he had fallen into the hands of Absalom:

*and Ahithophel with him*: a famous counsellor, and who had been of David's privy council, and chief in it, (see ~~<10152>~~ 2 Samuel 15:12,31) and whom David refers to in (~~<18512>~~ Psalm 55:12-14).

**Ver. 16.** *And it came to pass that when Hushai the Archite, David's friend, was come unto Absalom,* etc.] Who came into Jerusalem at the same time that Absalom did, and who, no doubt, took the first opportunity to make his court to him, (~~<10157>~~ 2 Samuel 15:37);

*that Hushai said unto Absalom, God save the king, God save the king;* or "may the king live" <sup>f277</sup>, live long, and his kingdom be permanent; these words are very ambiguous, he might mean David, who was true and lawful king, though he would have them understood of Absalom, who was king by usurpation, in which he used great deceit and flattery; and that he might not be suspected of it, but be thought to be sincere and truly loyal to Absalom, he repeats the wish.

**Ver. 17.** *And Absalom said to Hushai, [is] this thy kindness to thy friend?* etc.] Meaning to David; though he would not mention his name, nor his title, nor even the relation of a father he stood in to him, only speaks of him as Hushai's friend: Hushai had professed great friendship to David, and David had been a friend to Hushai, had raised him to great honour in making him a counsellor, and had bestowed many favours and benefits on him, as Absalom knew full well; and therefore, to try his integrity, he puts this question, not as displeased with him, but overjoyed that such a trusty friend of David, and a wise counsellor of his, had deserted him, and come over to him and his party; nor does he mean to charge him with ingratitude, which he could not do without reproaching himself; on whom it might be

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

*why wentest thou not with thy friend?* with David, when he went out of Jerusalem; for Absalom knew not that Hushai had been with David, but thought he stayed behind at Jerusalem, when David fled, which made him less suspicious of him.

**Ver. 18.** *And Hushai said to Absalom,* etc.] In answer to his questions:

*nay, but whom the Lord, and his people, and all the men of Israel choose:* here again he speaks very ambiguously; for this circumlocution, or descriptive character of the king of Israel, better agrees with David, whom he might bear in mind, than with Absalom; for the Lord had chosen David, and he was anointed by his order, and all the people of Israel had chosen and anointed him likewise; but as for Absalom, it was only a part of them that had declared for him, nor was there any evidence of the Lord's choosing him; though Hushai undoubtedly would be understood of him, and as interpreting the voice of the people to be the voice of God:

*his will I be, and with him will I abide;* though he designed no such thing, which was a great piece of dissimulation and hypocrisy; and if he meant David, it was a piece of deceit and equivocation: there is a various reading in the first clause; we follow the marginal reading, **wl** , “to him” or “his”, but the textual reading is **al** , “not”: and both may be taken in by rendering the words by an interrogation, “shall I, or should I not be his”<sup>f278</sup>? I will; that is, be his servant, faithfully obey his commands, be closely attached to him, and continue with him as a loyal subject.

**Ver. 19.** *And again, whom should I serve?* etc.] Or “secondly”<sup>f279</sup> , a second reason is here given for serving Absalom: the first was the choice of God and the people, the second follows:

*[should I] not [serve] in the presence of his son? as I have served in thy father's presence, so will I be in thy presence:* he signifies, that as the kingdom was not translated into another family, but continued in succession in David's house, the alteration made was of no great consequence; it was indifferent to him whom he served, the father or the son; and he could as freely, and would as faithfully serve the son as the father; nor did he think it any breach of friendship to David, nor would David resent it, that he should serve his son, and do the best offices, and



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

**Ver. 20.** *Then said Absalom to Ahithophel*, etc.] Having two such able counsellors as he and Hushai, he directs his speech to Ahithophel, as being his first and chief counsellor:

*give counsel among you what we shall do*; he orders them to form a counsel, consult among themselves what was proper to be now done at Jerusalem, whether it was right to stay here or pursue after David and his men. Absalom did not send to the high priest to ask counsel of God, by Urim and Thummim before the ark, but wholly confided in his privy council.

**Ver. 21.** *And Ahithophel said unto Absalom*, etc.] Either immediately of himself, without consulting with others; or after a consultation had been held between them, he as the president of it, and their mouth, gave the following advice; though the former seems most correct:

*go in unto thy father's concubines, which he hath left, to keep the house*; and lie with them; there were ten of them, (<sup><0056></sup>2 Samuel 15:16);

*and all Israel shall hear that thou art abhorred of thy father*; this fact will be so abominable to him, and he will so highly resent it, as never to forgive thee, and be reconciled unto thee:

*then shall the hands of all that [are] with thee be strong*; he intimates that they were now weak, and did not act with spirit; they were fearful that David and Absalom would be reconciled, and then they should be reckoned traitors, and fall a sacrifice to David's vengeance, for their treason against him: but by Absalom's taking such a step as this, which would make him for ever the object of his father's hatred, their hands and hearts would be strengthened, and their fears removed, and they would not have the least jealousy of a reconciliation between them, and of their being left to the resentment of David. Some think this was not his only reason for giving this counsel, but also to revenge David's abuse of Bathsheba, his son's daughter, as she is supposed to be, (see Gill on "<sup><0052></sup>2 Samuel 15:12"); however, it was so ordered in Providence, that this advice should be given and taken, to fulfil the prophecy of the Lord to Nathan, (<sup><0021></sup>2 Samuel 12:11).

**Ver. 22.** *So they spread Absalom a tent on the top of the house,* etc.] On the top of his father's palace; this, as houses in Jerusalem and Judea were, was built flat, (<sup><1628></sup>Deuteronomy 22:8); and it was on the very spot from whence David had a sight of Bathsheba, and conceived an impure lust after her. The Targum renders it, a canopy; which Kimchi describes as consisting of four pillars, upon and round about which curtains were hung:

*and Absalom went in unto his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel;* they saw the tent or canopy erected, and saw him go into it, and might reasonably conclude he lay with his father's concubines, or half wives, in it; and this being done in so public a manner fulfilled the prophecy, which said it should be done in the sight of the sun, and of all Israel, (<sup><1021></sup>2 Samuel 12:11,12); this shows how corrupt the people of Israel were at this time, at least those that were with Absalom, that there should be none to object to the counsel Ahithophel gave, nor any to remonstrate against the execution of it, but all seemed to look upon it with pleasure; nor even did Hushai, David's friend, oppose it; perhaps he saw it was to no purpose.

**Ver. 23.** *And the counsel of Ahithophel, which he had counselled in those days,* etc.] Both in the days of David, and in the days of Absalom, before and since the rebellion:

*[was] as if a man had inquired of the oracle of God;* such an opinion was entertained of it, so well satisfied were they with it, and as confident of success in taking it, as if the Lord himself had been consulted by Urim and Thummim; this is a very great exaggeration of Ahithophel's counsel, and is observed as a reason why it was so readily taken, though so bad in the preceding instance:

*so [was] all the counsel of Ahithophel, both with David and with Absalom;* Ahithophel was a crafty man, a time server, that temporized with princes, and knew how to suit his counsels with their tempers and interests: to David he gave good counsel, what was acceptable with him, and to Absalom bad counsel, which was pleasing to him.