

## Exegetical Notes – 2 Samuel 15:13-37

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### 2 Samuel 15:13-37

(For more information about Absalom, David's son and Israel's Crown Prince after Amnon's murder, read 2 Samuel 13:1 – 15:1-12 and the exegetical notes prepared for those passages.)

#### Verses 13-17

<sup>13</sup> *A messenger came and told David, “The hearts of the people of Israel are with Absalom.”*

<sup>14</sup> *Then David said to all his officials who were with him in Jerusalem, “Come! We must flee, or none of us will escape from Absalom. We must leave immediately, or he will move quickly to overtake us and bring ruin on us and put the city to the sword.”*

<sup>15</sup> *The king’s officials answered him, “Your servants are ready to do whatever our lord the king chooses.”*

<sup>16</sup> *The king set out, with his entire household following him; but he left ten concubines to take care of the palace.* <sup>17</sup> *So the king set out, with all the people following him, and they halted at the edge of the city.*

- See 2 Samuel 14:1-15:12. After paying homage to his father as king of Israel and swearing allegiance to him, Absalom went to Hebron to offer sacrifices fulfilling a promise he had made to God, or so he said. He invited 200 men to join him there and sent secret messages to all the tribes proclaiming himself king in David's place. Those invited to attend the sacrifice with Absalom did not know of his intention to rebel against David.
- He also had Ahithophel, one of David's chief advisors and Bathsheba's grandfather, brought to the sacrifices to make it look as though Ahithophel was also part of the conspiracy against David.
- Then a messenger was sent to David in Jerusalem informing him that Absalom had proclaimed himself king and that “the men of Israel were with him.”

- When David heard the news of Absalom's rebellion, he ordered the government and his household to flee from Jerusalem. It is hard to know why David fled. Perhaps he wanted to protect Jerusalem from attack. Perhaps he hoped to avert bloodshed between him and his son. Perhaps he believed that all was lost. We do not know the why of his actions.
- It seems that David was planning to return to the palace in Jerusalem because he left ten of his concubines there (how many concubines did he have?) to keep house in his absence.

### Verse 18

<sup>18</sup> ***All his men marched past him, along with all the Kerethites and Pelethites; and all the six hundred Gittites who had accompanied him from Gath marched before the king.***

- The retreat from Jerusalem was orderly. David had the 600 men who composed his personal bodyguard with him. The Gittites were Philistine mercenaries who served David.

### Verses 19-22

<sup>19</sup> ***The king said to Ittai the Gittite, "Why should you come along with us? Go back and stay with King Absalom. You are a foreigner, an exile from your homeland.*** <sup>20</sup> ***You came only yesterday. And today shall I make you wander about with us, when I do not know where I am going? Go back, and take your people with you. May the LORD show you kindness and faithfulness."***

<sup>21</sup> ***But Ittai replied to the king, "As surely as the LORD lives, and as my lord the king lives, wherever my lord the king may be, whether it means life or death, there will your servant be."***

<sup>22</sup> ***David said to Ittai, "Go ahead, march on." So Ittai the Gittite marched on with all his men and the families that were with him.***

- Ittai was the commander of the Gittites who served as David's bodyguard. David's intention was to send the entire bodyguard back to Jerusalem. He apparently believed that their purpose was to be the king's bodyguard not his personal defenders. But he was grateful to Ittai for his loyalty and blessed him for it.
- But Ittai refused to leave David. He declared that he and his men would stay with David no matter what.

### Verse 23

<sup>23</sup> *The whole countryside wept aloud as all the people passed by. The king also crossed the Kidron Valley, and all the people moved on toward the wilderness.*

- There were many people who remained loyal to King David. They mourned when his procession passed by.

### Verses 24-30

<sup>24</sup> *Zadok was there, too, and all the Levites who were with him were carrying the ark of the covenant of God. They set down the ark of God, and Abiathar offered sacrifices until all the people had finished leaving the city.*

<sup>25</sup> *Then the king said to Zadok, “Take the ark of God back into the city. If I find favor in the LORD’s eyes, he will bring me back and let me see it and his dwelling place again. <sup>26</sup> But if he says, ‘I am not pleased with you,’ then I am ready; let him do to me whatever seems good to him.”*

<sup>27</sup> *The king also said to Zadok the priest, “Do you understand? Go back to the city with my blessing. Take your son Ahimaaz with you, and also Abiathar’s son Jonathan. You and Abiathar return with your two sons. <sup>28</sup> I will wait at the fords in the wilderness until word comes from you to inform me.” <sup>29</sup> So Zadok and Abiathar took the ark of God back to Jerusalem and stayed there.*

- Zadok was Israel’s high priest at the time. When David fled, Zadok and the priestly families went with the king. They took the Ark of the Covenant with them.
- But David instructed them to go back to Jerusalem with the Ark. He explained that he was leaving matters in God’s hands. If God wanted David restored as king, God would restore him. If not, that was God’s will.
- David made arrangements to be informed about what was happening in Jerusalem through the sons of Zadok and Abiathar.

### Verses 30-31

<sup>30</sup> *But David continued up the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went; his head was covered and he was barefoot. All the people with him covered their heads too and were weeping as they went up. <sup>31</sup> Now David had been told, “Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom.” So David prayed, “LORD, turn Ahithophel’s counsel into foolishness.”*

- The Mount of Olives was 2700 feet high and was directly opposite the place where Israel’s temple would eventually be built. It is 200 feet higher than the Temple Mount. It was the perfect place to watch what was happening in

Jerusalem. This is the first mention of it in the Bible. It will play a prominent place in Jesus' ministry.

- David and all those with him were dressed for mourning, not for battle.
- When David heard that Ahithophel had joined Absalom, he prayed that Ahithophel's advice to Absalom would be foolishness.

### Verses 32-37

*<sup>32</sup> When David arrived at the summit, where people used to worship God, Hushai the Arkite was there to meet him, his robe torn and dust on his head. <sup>33</sup> David said to him, “If you go with me, you will be a burden to me. <sup>34</sup> But if you return to the city and say to Absalom, ‘Your Majesty, I will be your servant; I was your father’s servant in the past, but now I will be your servant,’ then you can help me by frustrating Ahithophel’s advice. <sup>35</sup> Won’t the priests Zadok and Abiathar be there with you? Tell them anything you hear in the king’s palace. <sup>36</sup> Their two sons, Ahimaaz son of Zadok and Jonathan son of Abiathar, are there with them. Send them to me with anything you hear.”*

*<sup>37</sup> So Hushai, David’s confidant, arrived at Jerusalem as Absalom was entering the city.*

- When David arrived at the top of the Mount of Olives, he found Hushai waiting there for him. In verse 37, Hushai is called “David’s confidant”. The Hebrew actually says, “David’s best friend.” This is apparently a title given to the king’s most trusted advisor.
- Hushai had, apparently, brought his entire household with him. The number of people he brought would have made it difficult for David. So, David asked Hushai to stay in Jerusalem and pretend to be Absalom’s advisor. This way Hushai could become the answer to David’s prayer in verse 31. He could counter the advice of Ahithophel and keep David informed about what Absalom was doing through the sons of the high priest.

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