

2ND SAMUEL

Week 26, chapters 16 and 17

David had barely escaped Jerusalem with his entourage of warriors, advisors, and family when Absalom and his rebel forces arrived. When David heard that a widespread and well organized revolt had happened, and that his own son was its leader, King David fled to the east, crossed the Kidron Valley and then climbed up and over the summit of the Mount of Olives by means of a pathway known as the Way of the Wild Olive Trees. Along the way he met a litany of well-wishers as well as messengers who brought him tidings of treachery and bad news.

The two High Priests **Evyatar** and **Tzadok** accompanied by the Levites carrying the Ark of the Covenant dutifully followed their king in the sad procession, but David told them to go back and return the Ark to its resting place and for them to remain in Jerusalem with the Ark where they could act as informers.

David's two closest royal advisors were **Achitofel**, Bathsheba's grandfather, and **Hushai** who was awarded the honorary title of Friend of David. As he walked barefoot and head-covered along the Way of the Wild Olive Trees the king was given the heart-sinking news that **Achitofel** had thrown in with **Avishalom** and in fact had been instrumental in organizing the son of David's insurgency. Fortunately the aged Hushai remained faithful (as appropriate of his title) and insisted that he accompany David into the wilderness; but David appealed to **Hushai's** logic and told him that he'd be more burden than blessing by such a choice and that he could help David far more by offering up his service to Absalom and in the so-doing try to counteract the sound wisdom that **Achitofel** would be offering the new king. For **Achitofel's** brilliant mind was so highly regarded by one and all that it was said of him that his thoughts and advice were as though it had come directly from God.

Thus the cunning David, who had been violently shaken by God out of his long period of spiritual slumber and ambivalence, spontaneously set up a counter-intelligence operation (as he was leaving) that had **Hushai** as his ears in the royal court of Absalom, who reported what he heard to the two High Priests, who forwarded the information they had received to their

firstborn sons, who then communicated it to David in exile.

I mentioned in an earlier lesson that several of the Psalms we read in our Bibles were written by the despondent David during the period of Absalom's rebellion. We've read a couple of them and I'd like to add another so that we might see the mindset of David at this terrible period in his life.

READ PSALM 3

I'd like to point out a couple of things about this particular Psalm of David. First, there may be no greater Bible hero than King David. That he was a fallible man who sinned and even found himself subject of God's direct curse doesn't change that. We don't have to wonder how Yehoveh felt about David, because it is recorded for us:

(1Sa 13:13-14 CJB)

¹³ Sh'mu'el said to Sha'ul, "You did a foolish thing. You didn't observe the mitzvah of ADONAI, which he gave you. If you had, ADONAI would have set up your kingship over Isra'el forever.

¹⁴ But as it is, your kingship will not be established. ADONAI has sought for himself a man after his own heart, and ADONAI has appointed him to be prince over his people, because you did not observe what ADONAI ordered you to do."

And St. Paul reminds his listeners of this special position that David held in the Lord's eyes with this statement:

(Act 13:21-23 CJB)

²¹ Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Sha'ul Ben-Kish, a man from the tribe of Binyamin. After forty years,

²² God removed him and raised up David as king for them, making his approval known with these words, 'I found David Ben-Yishai to be a man after my own heart; he will do

everything I want.'

²³ ***"In keeping with his promise, God has brought to Israel from this man's descendants a deliverer, Yeshua.***

So David's day to day behavior wasn't the measure of God's eternal love and approval of David. That is something that we can fall back upon when we inevitably stumble because it was David's unyielding trust in the Lord, and his firm understanding that the Lord will have mercy upon whom He will, and that it was this divine reality that brought David a saving righteousness not strict adherence to the Law. Yet, David's trespasses against the Law of Moses (including adultery and murder amongst other sins) indeed brought earthly consequences and divine punishment; even God's anointed king was subject to justice in the form of wrath and curse. We are subject to the same when we choose to be disobedient to the Lord's commandments. But we are also delivered to the same spiritual salvation when we firmly trust in the Lord by means of acknowledging His Son as our Messiah.

Second, look at Psalm 3 verse 3. There it says:

^{CJB} ***Psalm 3:3 how countless those who say of me, "There is no salvation for him in God." (Selah)***

In other words, many around King David (probably friend and foe alike) say that for what he has done there can be no deliverance, earthly or otherwise, in the God of Israel. David has committed offenses for which there IS no legal atonement. The Torah Law gives no remedy, no substitutionary sacrifice or ritual, to atone for murder or adultery. So from a purely physical and earthly perspective, those accusations that David is hearing are quite correct. However, for those who trust in God while there may not be deliverance from earthly consequences (up to and including death for such terrible sins) there can be heavenly, spiritual, eternal deliverance.

What makes this verse so interesting is the Hebrew word chosen here for deliverance or salvation (depending on your translation). Adding this familiar Hebrew word back into the verse makes it read in an unexpected way:

It says: "There is no yeshua for him in God". That's right; the word is Yeshua, the name of our

Messiah. The people are literally saying to David that he is so cursed by God, that all of his hope is gone; his sins are so great that there can be no Yeshua for him no matter how much he may regret those sins! And David knows that they are wrong.

Are you worried that because of your terrible sins perhaps there can be no Yeshua for you? Have you looked back upon your life and determined that it is probably useless to approach your Creator because you can't see how He could possibly give you Yeshua in light of the abominable things you have done? Well there's good news for you. Despite what others thought, David was convinced that Yeshua was for him too, provided he maintained his trust in God and confessed with a contrite heart and depended on God's glory to be his righteousness.

By no means does this mean that behavior doesn't matter. It sure mattered for David as he would be hit by curse after curse until the day he died because of his bad behavior. And even in the New Testament, Messianic Believers like Ananias and Sapphira were supernaturally killed by God for their sins. Righteous behavior is expected (and is our duty) for those who call upon the name of the God of Israel through his Son our Messiah. However righteous behavior is not the path to salvation; faith in Yeshua is. Yeshua is for salvation; righteous behavior by being obedient to the Torah commandments is but the appropriate response owed to God for that salvation.

RE-READ 2ND SAMUEL 16 all

When we last met we ended with this fellow **Tziva**, Mephibosheth's gentile servant, bringing gifts to David as David was fleeing Jerusalem. On the one hand David is certainly happy for the needed provisions that **Tziva** has brought with him, but on the other David is perplexed and angry that Mephibosheth would show such little gratitude for what David had done for him that he didn't even personally come to the king's aid in his time of need.

But it gets worse; **Tziva** tells David that Mephibosheth was thrilled by this rebellion because it meant that, "Today the house of Israel will restore my father's kingship to me". **Tziva** is claiming that Mephibosheth believes that after David is deposed Absalom will turn the throne over to its rightful owner, a descendant of King Saul, who is none less than Mephibosheth himself! One can imagine why David's response to **Tziva** was that as of this moment

everything that belonged to Mephibosheth was now ripped away from him and turned over to **Tziva**. The whole thing was one big lie (as we'll soon find out) and yet as preposterous as it even sounds if one were to just pause and ponder Tziva's improbable claims, David gave it credence and accepted it as truth.

After accepting these supplies from **Tziva** David moved on to a place called Bachurim and there encountered a very hostile man, a distant relative of King Saul's. Bachurim was a village on the outskirts of Jerusalem, but it was in the tribal territory of Benjamin. The location is pertinent because Benjamin was Saul's tribe and obviously his family and his tribe had never gotten over their bitterness that not only had their Benjamite King died in battle, but his dynasty was no longer ruling and instead had been replaced by his nemesis, David, who was of the rival tribe of Judah.

It was because of this location in what was essentially "unfriendly territory" that a lone assailant, the elderly **Shimei**, had the gall to attack the King of Israel with curses and insults. That David was surrounded by his personal bodyguard makes it all the more astounding and can only mean that many other of the local Benjamite residents were looking on in a menacing way and so Shimei felt emboldened to assault the king and his large party of people.

"Killer", **Shimei** yelled out. "Good-for-nothing". In Hebrew **Shimei** called David an **ish hadam** (a man of blood) and an **ish belial** (a man of worthlessness). These are the strongest possible curse words usually reserved for heinous criminals. Perhaps **Shimei** had David's murder of Uriyah and scandalous affair with Bathsheba in mind, but I don't think so. While those events might have been disturbing to Shimei, there was certainly nothing personal in it. What would have mattered more to him was long simmering matters of family honor. Shimei was accusing David of something that was much dearer to his heart than the death of a stranger from another tribe; it was the murders of Abner (Saul's Benjamite general) and King Ishbosheth (Saul's son who had gained the throne) that enraged him. Though it wasn't true, and David had gone to great length to prove that he had no part in those deaths, Saul's extended family, and the tribe of Benjamin in general, and many throughout the northern tribes of Israel remained skeptical. No matter how one looked at it, technically innocent or not, David benefited because these murders helped to consolidate David's power by eliminating rivals at the same time it removed all power and authority from the tribe of Benjamin.

The king and his procession kept on moving, trying to ignore the screaming **Shimei** but now the situation escalates as he begins to hurl stones and dirt at David. **Avishai**, David's nephew and one of his military commanders, can tolerate no more of this and tells David that he is going to separate this man from his head for daring to curse the King of Israel. But David won't

allow it. In a remarkably humble and pious attitude David first chastises **Avishai** for being so quick to want to take Shimei's life for mere words. Never more truly had the older self finally re-appeared in David; and refreshing it was to see it in such a volatile situation. At this moment David had a sense of deserving everything Shimei was dishing out; and in any case this was merely the Lord using this incensed old man to say out loud what everyone else was silently thinking. It was pointless to crush Shimei or any other man who felt this way; rather David's only hope of deliverance was from the one who had cursed him in the first place: Yehoveh, God of Israel.

In this story one cannot help but recall the scene of Messiah Yeshua journeying to Jerusalem near the end of His earthly ministry. He and His disciples came to a notoriously unfriendly village in Samaria where Yeshua was insulted and so His enraged followers wanted to take deadly action. I prefer the way this reads from the NAS version.

(Luk 9:51-56 NAS)

⁵¹ And it came about, when the days were approaching for His ascension, that He resolutely set His face to go to Jerusalem;

⁵² and He sent messengers on ahead of Him. And they went, and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make arrangements for Him.

⁵³ And they did not receive Him, because He was journeying with His face toward Jerusalem.

⁵⁴ And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?"

⁵⁵ But He turned and rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what kind of spirit you are of;

⁵⁶ for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." And they went on to another village.

The villagers of Samaria were doing no more in their reaction to this Jewish Messiah than what had been divinely prophesied from times past and so Yeshua was not about to punish them for it. And this is just as **Shimei** was doing no more than what YHWH prophesied to King David would happen to him as a divine curse, so David inherently knew that he had no right to punish this man for something God sent him to do. Messiah said that His purpose was that He came to save, not to kill. David's purpose was that leaving Jerusalem was to spare lives, so he was

not now about to kill. Jesus' reaction was to chastise His followers that did not seem to understand what kind of Spirit they were now of (a Holy Spirit), but since the Son of Man indeed was of the Holy Spirit (the same as theirs, really) and was acutely aware of it, He had no animosity towards those Samaritans and was not about to end their lives over a mere insult. David's reaction was to chastise the sons of **Tz'ruiyah** (his sister) who although of the same bloodline as David, possessed the kind of character that wanted to respond to mere insults with deadly force. This was not David's character and he would not kill his own people for such a petty reason. Thus the two stories (of Yeshua in Samaria and of David in Bachurim) are remarkably parallel.

Verse 14 explains that despite the animosity showed towards David (and by inference all who continued on in their loyalty to David) the people were exhausted and so stopped and rested in Bachurim.

Verse 15 changes the scene from David at Bachurim to Absalom at Yerushalayim. Accompanying Avishalom are Achitofel and Hushai. Hushai, still loyal to David, says to Avishalom, "Long live the king!" This was an effort to gain Absalom's trust, but notice he cleverly did not say, "Long live Avishalom". Essentially Hushai was able to say "Long live the king" in reference to David while Absalom of course assumed the honor was meant as towards himself. However Absalom was skeptical and Hushai had to make it clear that his calling was to serve the Kingdom of Israel, and therefore whatever king sat on the throne would be the beneficiary of his council.

Absalom now turns to Achitofel for advice on what the next step in bringing this coup to its desired ending ought to be. And Achitofel says that the first thing Absalom should do is to go and have sexual relations with the 10 concubines that David had left behind to care for the palace. Why would Achitofel suggest such a thing? No doubt Achitofel and the other leaders of the rebellion had concern that reconciliation between David and his son Absalom was still a possibility (no matter how unlikely). David having proved to be the ever-indulgent father might accept this prodigal son back into his good graces should Absalom get cold feet or his efforts fall short and David is returned to the throne. In such a situation it goes without saying that while Absalom would probably survive, his co-conspirators definitely would not. So to shut off all avenue of possible reconciliation Achitofel proposes this reprehensible act by which Absalom would (in a very public display on the palace roof) take David's concubines one-by-one and have sex with them. The point of no-return would have been passed.

Interestingly this was all part of the curse that the Lord had laid upon David. In 1Sam12, the Prophet Nathan told David:

(2Sa 12:11-12 CJB)

¹¹ *Here is what ADONAI says: 'I will generate evil against you out of your own household. I will take your wives before your very eyes and give them to your neighbor; he will go to bed with your wives, and everyone will know about it.*

¹² *For you did it secretly, but I will do this before all Isra'el in broad daylight.'*"

Let's move on to chapter 17.

READ 2ND SAMUEL 17: 1- 20

Achitofel continues his advice to **Avishalom** by telling him that King David must be done away with immediately or there will likely be a protracted civil war. So **Achitofel** wanted to choose a force of men sufficient to quickly chase down David. The idea of choosing 12,000 is so that it would symbolize 1000 men from each of the 12 tribes (indicating unity and consensus among all the tribes of Israel), even though no doubt the composition of the force would not be of an exactly equal number of men from each tribe. This would be largely a group of northern tribes who had retained a resentment against David and a loyalty towards Saul's family.

The idea was that since this was all happening so quickly and everything was still unsettled and in disarray, while David and his outnumbered men were still somewhat disorganized, weary, and dispirited, the 12,000 would fall upon them at night, David's followers would panic and flee leaving David vulnerable, and he would be easily assassinated. Then the people would be told that they are pardoned from having continued loyalty for a time to their now dead king, and persuaded to come home where they could pledge their loyalty to Absalom. Thus long running blood feuds would be avoided, and with David dead the people would understand that the government is now firmly **Avishalom's** and there is no point in resisting it. **Achitofel's** strategy is diabolically cunning and had every chance of succeeding.

We'll continue next time.

