

Hushai's Advice is Declared Better Than Ahithophel's

Second Samuel 17: 5-16

DIG: What different approach did ADONAI direct Hushai to take when giving counsel to Absalom? Why was Hushai's advice better than Ahithophel's? Why was it successful? Why do you think Absalom didn't go with the bloodless, easy victory? What word did Hushai send to David? Why? Did loyalty to David justify deceiving Absalom or confounding Ahithophel? Why or why not?

REFLECT: What risks is the LORD asking you to take for Him? What "enemy lines" are you willing to cross, as Hushai did? Why "spy messages" will you communicate for your Master in disregard for your own comfort and safety, as Zadok and Abiathar did? When making decisions, what did Absalom substitute for seeking the LORD? When have you caught yourself doing the same thing? Why do we sometimes fall into that trap? As you look back on your life as a believer, can you discern the hidden sovereignty of God?

977 BC

This is part of a 24-hour period starting at 15:13 and extending all the way to 17:23.

Humanly speaking, if Absalom followed Ahithophel's plan, David would have been killed and Absalom's problems would have been solved. But David had prayed that YHVH would turn Ahithophel's counsel into foolishness (Second Samuel 15:31), and God used Hushai to do just that. It is important to understand that Ahithophel put himself front and center by using phrases like: **I would choose . . . I would attack . . . I would strike**. He wanted to be the general of the army because he wanted personally to supervise the murder of the king. His plan was a good one: use a small army that could move swiftly, attack suddenly at night and have David's death be the only goal. He would then bring back David's followers who would swear loyalty to the new king. It would be a quick, bloodless victory.⁴²⁰

But this decision was so important that Absalom wanted a second opinion. Hushai wasn't in the room when Ahithophel outlined his plan, so Absalom said: **Summon also Hushai the Arkite, so we can hear what he has to say as well**. God was in control. Absalom didn't merely ask Hushai what he thought, but he divulged Ahithophel's entire plan and asked for his opinion. In this way, Hushai knew exactly what he was up against and how to counter it.⁴²¹

When Hushai came to him, Absalom said, "Ahithophel has given this advice. Should we do what he says? If not, give us your opinion." Directed by ADONAI, Hushai took an entirely different approach and focused on the ego of the young king. Hushai's reply wasn't a series of **I would** statements about himself, but rather a series of statements about the new king that couldn't help but ignite Absalom's imagination and inflate his ego. Hushai laid out an effective verbal trap, and Absalom fell right into it.⁴²²

Hushai replied to Absalom, saying: The advice Ahithophel has given is not good at this time (although it had been good at other times). Hushai knew that Ahithophel's advice was excellent, and if carried out would prove fatal to David. So now he must find a way to gain time for David to regroup his troops. Being master of the double-talk, Hushai began his deception based on David's track record: **You know your father and his men; they are fighters, and as fierce a wild bear robbed of her cubs. Besides, your father is an experienced fighter.** Being a son of the royal house, Absalom could not deny the prowess of his father, which had become proverbial. Then Hushai proceeded to weave a web of conjectures. Furthermore, David was too smart to stay with the troops; **he will not spend the night with the people. Even now, he is hidden in a cave or some other place.** If that were true (which it was not) Ahithophel would not be able to surprise him and kill him quickly as he claimed. **If he should attack your troops first, whoever hears about it will say, "There has been a slaughter among the troops who follow Absalom."** Then there will be panic among Absalom's men, and **even the bravest soldier, whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will melt with fear, for all Isra'el knows that your father is a fighter and that those with him are brave**" (Second Samuel 17:5-10).

Then Hushai presented a plan that overcame all of those difficulties. First, the new king himself needed to lead the army and it needed to be the biggest army he could possibly assemble. So Hushai advised: **Let all Isra'el, from Dan to Beersheba - as numerous as the sand on the seashore - be gathered to you.** Of course this not only appealed to Absalom's ego, but would also have taken some time to accomplish, giving David time to mobilize his army.⁴²³ And Hushai also advised Absalom to lead his men into battle himself. This would eventually be Absalom's undoing and lead to his death. **Then we will attack him wherever he may be found. If we catch him in the open field, then we will fall on him with great numbers as dew settles on the ground. Neither he nor any of his men will be left alive.** Realizing that Absalom might worry about the time element, Hushai proposed that **if he withdraws into a city, then all Isra'el (a rhetorical exaggeration) will bring ropes to that city, and we will drag it down to the valley until not so much as a pebble is left** (Second Samuel 17:11-13). What a demonstration of power! With his con completed Hushai was dismissed. The contrast couldn't be clearer: the simple, quick plan of Ahithophel verses the slow, grandiose strategy of Hushai. Common sense would dictate embracing the former.⁴²⁴

Absalom and all the men of Isra'el said: The advice of Hushai is better than that of Ahithophel (Second Samuel 17:14a). He had been persuaded by a speech that pulled the wool over his eyes. Smoke and mirrors. With this decision, Hushai had saved David and doomed Absalom. It gave David the opportunity to shape his troops, recover his strength, and decide on the terrain advantageous in the coming battle.⁴²⁵ This is one of the key verses in Samuel for the narrator tells us immediately why Hushai prevailed. It was all a part of the sovereignty of God. For the LORD had determined to frustrate the good advice of Ahithophel in order to bring disaster on Absalom (Second Samuel 17:14b). The choice had been made, not because of clever deception but because ADONAI had commanded it. Isra'el's history has within it this hidden Agent who works for David's advantage. David prayed that the counsel of Ahithophel should be rejected (2 Samuel 15:31). In Second Samuel 17:14, David's prayer was answered and the advice of Ahithophel was rejected.⁴²⁶

More often than not that is how **God** works. **His** scepter is unseen, **His** sovereignty hidden behind the conversations and decisions and activities and crises of our lives. We only see grocery lines and diaper changes and school assignments; but through and over and behind it all . . . **the LORD** reigns. **He** is not absent, but neither is **He** obvious. Sometimes we need to be told that, lest we become too enamored with "the Hushai" in all of us.⁴²⁷

You must remember that you know the secret: **YHVH** was at work to protect **David** and fulfill **His** covenant relationship with **him**. You know what **Ha'Shem** had decided about **Absalom** and what ruin **the LORD** intended to bring upon **him**. The narrator knows this and you know this, but the folks in the drama don't have this information. In fact, **Hushai** didn't even know what **Absalom** had decided. **He** had been dismissed before **the king** had made up **his** mind. **He** could only tell **David** what **he** and **Ahithophel** had both said and urge **him** to act on the assumption that **Ahithophel's** advice would prevail.⁴²⁸ Therefore, **Hushai** told **Zadok** and **Abiathar**, the priests, "Ahithophel has advised Absalom and the elders of Isra'el to do such and such, but I have advised them to do so and so. Now send a message at once and tell David, 'Do not spend the night at the fords in the west side of the Jordan River; cross over to the east side of the Jordan without fail, or the king [David] and all the people with him will be swallowed up' (Second Samuel 17:15-16)."