



# FEED MY SHEEP

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## Why Ahithophel Betrayed David

Previously, we took note that David made Zadok a co-high priest with Abiathar, and we gave some background from 2 Samuel 8 on these two men. All of this is going to culminate in a change in the line of the priesthood, but that will not occur until Solomon reigns. Let us continue to examine some background on the high priest-line-elect, as it were—Zadok.

Chronologically, the first place we encounter Zadok is in 1 Chronicles 12. This is where Saul had just died and David went to Hebron and was made king.

**1 Chronicles 12: 23** *And these are the numbers of the bands that were ready armed to the war, and came to David to Hebron, to turn the kingdom of Saul to him, according to the word of the LORD. ...*

**27** *And Jehoiada was the leader of the Aaronites, and with him were three thousand and seven hundred;*

**28** *And Zadok, a young man mighty of valour, and of his father's house twenty and two captains.*

This is further confirmation that Zadok is of the lineage of Aaron. There must have been some reason, of which we are not told, that God purposed to use Zadok, so that David was led to make him co-high priest with Abiathar. Next, after David conquers Jerusalem from the Jebusites, he brings the ark up to Jerusalem. It is Zadok and Abiathar who are put in charge of bringing it up to Jerusalem properly.

The next incident is the current story, Absalom's attempted coup d'état. Later, when Abiathar sides with Adonijah, Zadok sides with Solomon. Consequently, he is rewarded with sole possession of the office of high

priest, thus fulfilling an ancient prophecy, the details of which we shall provide when teaching on the life of Solomon some time in the future. Those are the thumbnail sketches of the two high priests. Now to continue with the narrative.

**2 Samuel 15:25** *And the king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the LORD, he will bring me again, and show me both it, and his habitation:*

Keep in mind that David had already had the tragic experience at Nob where priests were massacred by Saul and Doeg because of their minimal association with David. You can imagine David's mindset now as he imagines these priests being slaughtered as well, if they were to remain in his company as he flees the new Saul, which is his son Absalom. Of course, Abiathar needed no prodding to return to Jerusalem.

**2 Samuel 15:26** *But if he [YHWH] thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.*

It seems apparent from this that David is recognizing that all this trouble is part of God's judgment on him for the whole Bathsheba/Uriah affair, and so David is in a mode of total surrender—not to Absalom, but he is surrendering completely to the will of God. He says to Zadok: "Look, my dear friend, you and Abiathar take the ark back to Jerusalem. If God is merciful to me, I will come back and I will see you at the tabernacle. But I am deserving of no such mercy, so it is quite possible that God is now taking me out of

the picture forever. I just don't know. I have surrendered to Him. He will do with me whatever He wills. Then, in the *hope* that God will restore him, and in order to do whatever is in his own power to do, David gives Zadok some further instructions.

**27 The king said also unto Zadok the priest, Art not thou a seer? return into the city in peace, and your two sons with you, Ahimaaz thy son, and Jonathan the son of Abiathar.**

**28 See, I will tarry in the plain of the wilderness, until there come word from you to certify me.**

**29 Zadok therefore and Abiathar carried the ark of God again to Jerusalem: and they tarried there.**

In verse 27, David seems to be making a little play on words when he says: "Are you not a seer?" Zadok, as one of the two high priests, was a seer in the sense that he was given to *see* the divine will by means of the ephod, including the Urim and Thummim. But David plays on the *seeing* part and says: "If you are a seer, then go back to Jerusalem and *see* for me. Observe what is going on when Absalom occupies the city. And send reports back to me through your respective sons.

**30 And David went up by the ascent of mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot: and all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up.**

This is a picture of a man in great sorrow, and it is a perfect type and shadow of what the Greater David would undergo *in the very exact same location a millennium later*.

Immediately following the last supper, Jesus and the disciples crossed the brook Kidron.

**Luke 22:39 And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him.**

Then followed Jesus' agony, sweating "as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." He was discouraged to find his disciples sleeping, and then came Judas to do his dark deed.

**47 And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the**

**twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him.**

**48 But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?**

Thus Jesus fulfilled the antitype. He walked in sorrow to the Garden of Gethsemane, which was located on the mount of Olives, and there he agonized over his impending suffering. There in the Garden, he was betrayed by Judas. Judas had been one of the twelve; one of his inner circle, one who had been among those closest to him for nearly three years. Jesus called him "friend," and yet this friend betrayed him.

All this is portrayed here in type form in the story of David. Here we find Ahithophel becoming the type for which Judas was the antitype. As with Christ a thousand years later, one of David's inner circle, one of his closest advisors is betraying him.

**2 Samuel 15:31 And one told David, saying, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom. And David said, O LORD, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.**

Let's explore Ahithophel a little closer, wherein we will discover a startling relationship. To do so, we are going to 2 Samuel 23 to re-examine a passage which we studied once before.

In connection with the matter of identifying Bathsheba's husband, Uriah the Hittite, we found the list of mighty men in 2 Samuel 23, and by reading the whole chapter it is evident that many of these men had been the bravest men in Israel, and had been with David from the time he was in the wilderness fleeing Saul. We shall find near the end of the list.

**2 Samuel 23:35 Hezrai the Carmelite, Paarai the Arbite,**

**36 Igal the son of Nathan of Zobah, Bani the Gadite,**

**37 Zelek the Ammonite, Naharai the Beerothite, armourbearer to Joab the son of Zeruiah,**

**38 Ira an Ithrite, Gareb an Ithrite,**

**39 Uriah the Hittite: thirty and seven in all.**

Does it not seem reasonable to assume that David was not merely *acquainted* with his mighty

men, but that he knew them all very, very well? The point is that Uriah the Hittite was not the average, anonymous, rank and file soldier who had never met the king. As one of the 37 mighty men who had been with David from many years back, through many battles side-by-side with David, it is clear that he and David were very well known to each other. Uriah had undoubtedly been in the top ranks of David's army for many years.

However, not only was David well acquainted with Uriah, but when David had gazed from his rooftop porch down into Bathsheba's garden or wherever she was bathing, he was not looking upon someone he did not already know at that time either. As we read the next verse carefully, something ought to jump out at you in connection with the current context. You see, Bathsheba was no stranger to David either! Not only was she Uriah's wife, there was more. Notice—

**2 Samuel 23:34 Eliphelet the son of Ahasbai, the son of the Maachathite, Eliam the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite,**

Earlier, we learned that Bathsheba was the daughter of Eliam (2 Samuel 11:3). Therefore, this means that Bathsheba's *father* was one of David's mighty men also! Both her husband and her father were among David's closest cadre. That proves that David had to have known Bathsheba, but now what is even more intriguing from the verse above is realizing that Ahithophel, who was one of David's trusted wise men and counselors, was *none other than Bathsheba's own grandfather!*

Hence, it is evident why this man, Ahithophel, even while serving as one of David's closest advisors, must have been *for years* suppressing his anger, burning with resentment and bitterness at David for what he had done to his granddaughter and her husband, Uriah. Thus, from Ahithophel's perspective, with the rebellion of Absalom comes an opportunity for revenge.

He joins the conspiracy. Some commentators have gone so far as to suggest that it was really Ahithophel's rebellion. It was Ahithophel, acting behind the scenes who saw that he could manipulate Absalom's pride and lust for power in order to extract his own revenge upon David for seducing his granddaughter and killing her husband. My goodness! This sounds like a script for a Hollywood soap opera.

Upon hearing of the betrayal by Ahithophel, David simply prays that Ahithophel's advice to rebellious Absalom be turned into foolishness.

Over the course of these studies, we have seen numerous examples in the life of David of how he trusts *fully* in the sovereignty of God, and I have tried on many occasions to drive home to my readers and listeners that believing in the sovereignty of God, and therefore in the predestination of all things, does not mean that we are to sit back and do nothing. One can be fully surrendered to the will and plan of God, and yet that does not mean one should sit back and do nothing. Here is a perfect example.

David knows that God is in charge of everything, but does David sit back and have the attitude that "well, I really blew it with the Bathsheba and Uriah affair those many years ago, so I guess there is nothing more for me to do but to give up trying to be an overcomer." Is that David's attitude?

No! First, he *prays* and *then he takes action*. He prays that God will turn the advice of Ahithophel into foolishness. He has already sent Zadok and Abiathar and their sons back with the ark with orders for them to spy for him. And now, realizing that there is something more he can do, David sends another spy into the presence of the enemy.

**2 Samuel 15:32 And it came to pass, that when David was come to the top of the mount, where he worshipped God, behold, Hushai the Archite came to meet him with his coat rent, and earth upon his head:**

Hushai was another of David's inner circle counselors.

**33 Unto whom David said, If thou passest on with me, then thou shalt be a burden unto me:**

**34 But if thou return to the city, and say unto Absalom, I will be thy servant, O king; as I have been thy father's servant hitherto, so will I now also be thy servant: then mayest thou for me defeat the counsel of Ahithophel.**

**35 And hast thou not there with thee Zadok and Abiathar the priests? therefore it shall be, that what thing soever thou shalt hear out of the king's house, thou shalt tell it to Zadok and Abiathar the priests.**

**36 Behold, they have there with them their two sons, Ahimaaz Zadok's son, and Jonathan Abiathar's son; and by them ye shall send unto me every thing that ye can hear.**

**37 So Hushai David's friend came into the city, and Absalom came into Jerusalem.**

All together then, we know of at least five men whom David has sent back to Jerusalem to conduct espionage activities for him. The saga continues.

**2 Samuel 16:1 And when David was a little past the top of the hill, behold, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him, with a couple of asses saddled, and upon them two hundred loaves of bread, and an hundred bunches of raisins, and an hundred of summer fruits, and a bottle of wine.**

**2 And the king said unto Ziba, What meanest thou by these? And Ziba said, The asses be for the king's household to ride on; and the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat; and the wine, that such as be faint in the wilderness may drink.**

Does that name Ziba sound familiar? We ran into him back in chapter 9. He was a servant in the house of Saul. And when David became king over all 12 tribes, he restored Saul's personal lands to Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son, and David commanded Ziba to take care of the land for Mephibosheth. Mephibosheth was handicapped, you will recall, lame in the feet due to his nurse accidentally dropping him as an infant. David had treated both Mephibosheth and Ziba with great kindness. So now comes Ziba catching up to King David, his family and his retinue as they are fleeing Jerusalem, and Ziba brings transportation and provisions of food and drink. And David wonders: Ziba, you are servant to Mephibosheth; why isn't he with you?

**3 And the king said, And where is thy master's son? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he abideth at Jerusalem: for he said, To day shall the house of Israel restore me the kingdom of my father.**

*Uh-oh!* Ziba is telling David that Mephibosheth has decided that Absalom's rebellion is the means by which God will restore Saul's kingdom to him. Is Mephibosheth, son of Jonathan, also power hungry?—like Absalom? David might have been surprised at the ingratitude of the crippled Mephibosheth whom David

had fed at the royal table now for many years. And this betrayal is what he gets in return? It must have added further hurt to David.

**4 Then said the king to Ziba, Behold, thine are all that pertained unto Mephibosheth.**

That means that David has just given all of the property of Mephibosheth to Ziba.

**And Ziba said, I humbly beseech thee that I may find grace in thy sight, my lord, O king.**

But *was Ziba telling the truth about Mephibosheth?* Did Mephibosheth really think that the people would desire that the nation be turned over once again to the House of Saul? The answer lies several chapters ahead and so we will leave that question suspended for now. There is a lesson we can draw from Ziba's action, regardless of Mephibosheth's situation, and that is that Ziba came to David and joined forces with him in a time of crisis and great need. There was no assurance whatsoever that David would regain his throne, and so it took courage on the part of Ziba to cast his lot with David.

So it is with each of us. We all come to times of crisis in our lives. Those who come to our aid when we are down, when we have great need, those are the people who leave lasting impressions on us for the good they have done us. As the saying goes... are your friends only fair weather friends or are they stormy weather friends, are they real friends? Conversely, what kind of friend are you? Do you see someone who is in a crisis? ...in your family? ...in the body of believers? ...or even a family you don't know, but who may have lost their home in a fire or whatever? Can you bless them with some sort of assistance in their time of need? This should be second nature to us as believers. Correct that: this should be *first* nature to Christians who are really serious about their faith. We will continue our study of the character of David next month, Lord willing.

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