

18[1] And David numbered the people who were with him, and he set over them leaders of thousands and leaders of hundreds. [2] And David sent the third of the people in Joab's hand, and the third in the hand of Abishai, son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, and the third in the hand of Ittai, the Gittite. And the king said to the people, "I also will surely go out with you." [3] And the people said, "You will not go out. For surely, if we flee, they will not put to us a heart. And if half of us die, they will not put to us a heart. For now like ten thousand of us, so now you will be for us for a help from a city." [4] And the king said to them, "What is good in your eyes I will do." And the king stood beside¹ the gate, and all the people went out by hundreds and thousands.

[5] And the king commanded Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying, "Deal gently for me to the young man, to Absalom." And all the people heard the king's command with all the leaders over the matter of Absalom. [6] And the people went out to the field to meet Israel, and the battle was in Ephraim's forest. [7] And Israel's people were struck there before David's servants, and the slaughter was great there on that day, twenty thousand. [8] And the battle there was scattered upon the face of all the land. And the forest consumed among the people more than the sword consumed on that day. [9] And Absalom met David's servants, and Absalom was riding upon the mule. And the mule came under the boughs of the great terebinth, and his head stuck in the terebinth. And he was set between the heavens and the earth, and the mule that was under him passed on.²

[10] And one man saw and told Joab and said, "Behold, I saw Absalom hanging in the terebinth." [11] And Joab said to the man who told him, "So behold, you saw, and why did you not strike him there to earth? And it would have been upon me to give to you ten silver and one belt." [12] And the man said to Joab, "And if I was weighing upon my palm a thousand silver, I would not send my hand to the king's son. For in our ears the king commanded you and Abishai and Ittai, saying, 'Beware who is against the young man, against Absalom.' [13] Otherwise, I would have dealt with his soul³ deceitfully, and nothing is hidden from the king. And you yourself would have stood against me."

[14] And Joab said, "I will not wait so before you." And he took three rods⁴ in his palms and thrust them into Absalom's heart while yet alive in the heart of the terebinth. [15] And ten young men who were carrying Joab's equipment went around and struck Absalom and killed him. [16] And Joab blew in the horn and returned from pursuing after Israel, for Joab held back the people. [17] And they took Absalom and threw him in the forest to the great pit, and they laid a very great heap of stones over him. And all Israel fled, each to his tent.

[18] And during his life, Absalom had caused to stand for himself a pillar, which is in the valley of the king. For he said, "I have no son to remember my name."⁵ And he called the pillar after his name. And she is called Absalom's

1 אֶל-יָד (el-yad) "beside" - more literally, "to the hand of" the gate.

2 In other words, the mule kept going and left Absalom hanging in the tree.

3 Written: בְּנַפְשׁוֹ (venaphsho) "against his soul"; read בְּנַפְשִׁי (venaphshiy) "against my soul"

4 שֵׁבִטִים (shevâtîym) "rods"; NKJV, NAS "spears"; YLT, KJV "darts" - same word as in 2 Samuel 7:14 "rod."

5 Apparently, this was built before he had children. Or, the sons died. See 2 Samuel 14:27 (& 2 Chronicles 11:21).

monument⁶ unto this day.

[19] And Ahimaaz, son of Zadok, said, “Please, let me run and bring news to the king. For Yehvah has avenged him from his enemies' hand.” [20] And Joab said to him, “You are not a man of news this day. So, you shall bring news another day. But, this day you shall not bring news, because the king's son is dead.” [21] And Joab said to the Ethiopian,⁷ “Go, tell the king what you have seen.” And the Ethiopian bowed to Joab and ran. [22] And Ahimaaz, son of Zadok, added yet again and said to Joab, “And whatever will be, please let me run, me also, after the Ethiopian.” And Joab said, “Why is this, you running, and you have found no news?” [23] “So, whatever will be, let me run.” And he said to him, “Run.” And Ahimaaz ran the way around and passed ahead of the Ethiopian.

[24] And David was sitting between the two gates, and the watchmen went to the roof of the gate to the wall and lifted his eyes and looked and behold, a man running by himself. [25] And the watchman called out and told the king. And the king said, “If he is by himself there is news in his mouth.” And he continued coming and drew near. [26] And the watchman saw another man running. And the watchman called out to the gatekeeper and said, “Behold, a man running by himself.” And the king said, “Also, this one brings news.”

[27] And the watchman said, “I see the running of the first one as the running of Ahimaaz, son of Zadok.” And the king said, “This one is a good man, and he brings good news.” [28] And Ahimaaz called out and said to the king, “Peace.” And he bowed to the king with his nose to earth. And he said, “Blessed be Yehvah your Gods, who has delivered up the men who lifted up their hand against my lord the king.” [29] And the king said, “Peace to the young man, to Absalom?” And Ahimaaz said, “I saw the great tumult when the servant of the king, Joab, sent your servant, and I did not know what it was.” [30] And the king said, “Turn aside and stand here.” And he turned aside and stood.

[31] And behold, the Ethiopian came, and the Ethiopian said, “There is news, my lord the king. For Yehvah has avenged you today from the hand of all who rose up against you.” [32] And the king said to the Ethiopian, “Is there peace to the young man, to Absalom?” And the Ethiopian said, “May the enemies of my lord the king be as the young man, and all who rise up against you for bad.” [33H19:1] And the king trembled⁸ and went up upon the roof chamber of the gate and wept. And thus he said as he went, “My son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom. Who will give⁹ my death, I instead of you? Absalom my son, my son.”

6 יָד (yad) “monument” - lit. “hand” - see also 1 Samuel 15:12.

7 כּוּשִׁי (kushiy) “Ethiopian” CJB; “Cushite” NKJV – see Genesis 10:6 footnote.

8 יָרָגַז (yirgaz) “trembled” Green; “trembleth” YLT; “deeply moved” NKJV

9 מִי־יִתֵּן (miy-yittên) “Who will give”; WYC “who giveth”; NKJV “if only” - see footnote for Exodus 16:3.