

Chapter Thirteen

Because the story in the chapter at hand is laid out clearly enough, the notations offered here do not attempt to reiterate the events at hand but to consider them from the stated purpose of this document, *lectio divina*. Obviously the same holds true for all of Second Samuel.

Chapter Thirteen begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “now,” giving it an ominous tone. The reason? After the death of David’s son, it is the second tragic event which sets in motion a whole series of calamities affecting his own household as well as the nation of Israel. David realized that trials were destined to come his way and did his best to brace himself for their onslaught. It helped, of course, but nothing really could prepare him adequately except maintaining a humble acknowledgment of having told the prophet Nathan that he had sinned against the Lord. The literal translation is more to the point, “I have sinned to (*l-*) the Lord” [12.13].

Two sons and one daughter of David are mentioned in vs. 1 who set in motion that second tragic event to afflict their entire household: Absalom (David’s third born son), Amnon (his first born son) and Tamar (his daughter by Maacah), all three mentioned at the beginning of Chapter Three. Surely they were old enough to know about their father’s affair with Bathsheba which must have affected them deeply. Also they had to put up with others who knew this affair must have rubbed off on them.

The root of the problem is Amnon’s love (*‘ahav*, cf. 12.24) or better, his uncontrollable lust for Tamar who is described simply as beautiful, *yaphah* also as fair. Although generally applied to a woman, see 14.25 where it describes Absalom: “Now in all Israel there was no one so much to be praised for his beauty as Absalom.” The same applies to David in 1Sam 17.42: “For he was but a youth, ruddy and comely in appearance.” As for this illicit attraction, note the time frame: “after a time” perhaps suggesting that Amnon was smitten when he became older.

Amnon’s uncontrollable desire for Tamar tormented him, *tsarar* (cf. 1.26) fundamentally as to be pressed. The solution? He induced some kind of illness to gain her sympathy. Chances are he really did this as opposed to faking it. However, Amnon faced a dilemma. Tamar was a virgin or *betulah* (cf. vs. 18) which drove him even crazier, the Hebrew putting it literally as “he is being marvelous in his eyes.” The verb is *pala’*, to be marvelous or wonderful. Cf. 1.26 (not noted there): “your love

to me was wonderful.” In other words, *pala’* suggests something so great that it’s beyond achievement and well describes Amnon being afflicted with lust.

At this early stage, Amnon bears a certain resemblance to his father David before bringing about the murder of Uriah in order to unlawfully snatch his wife Bathsheba. Amnon, of course, knew about this...like father, like son. Now he brings into his orbit a certain friend by the name of Jonadab who’s related to King David and described in vs. 3 as “a very crafty man.” The adjective is *chakam* also as wise with the adverb *me’od* (cf. 12.4) which connotes excessiveness. For a similar use of *chakam*, cf. 14.2: “Joab sent to Tekoa and fetched from there a wise woman.”

Like most verses, vs. 4 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “and” to show the nature of this quick-paced narrative. The singling out of Jonadab by Amnon shows that like attracts like, the two being inherently devious. After having observed Amnon for some time, Jonadab asks why he’s walking around so haggard, the adjective being *dal* usually as poor (cf. 3.1). He’s like this morning after morning, literally, “in morning in morning” for emphasis. Then Amnon comes straight out with it, that he’s madly in love with Tamar. Without further ado, Jonadab advises his friend whom he calls in vs. 4 as “son of the king” to pretend to be ill and summon his father, David. Amnon is to ask for Tamar to take care of him by providing food, etc. A reasonable sounding request with David not having the slightest suspicion who goes ahead by asking Tamar to visit Amnon.

Tamar visits Amnon, first by kneading dough for some bread in his presence, baking them and then served the cakes. All the while during this rather lengthy preparation Amnon is gazing lustfully at Tamar who appears quiet ignorant of his intent. Once the cakes are ready, he refuses to eat and dismisses everyone else from the room. Presumably these are household servants who always are in attendance to members of the royal family. Once the room is cleared, Amnon grabs Tamar forcefully, asking her to lie with him, she refusing. Tamar rightly claims that to do such a thing is prohibited in Israel, calling it wanton folly. The noun for this is *nevalah* which is from the same verbal root for the proper name Nabal, husband of Abigail whom David had married. “For as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him” [1Sam 25.25]. Despite her protestations, Amnon refused to listen and laid with Tamar even though she begged him to ask David for permission to do so.

Vs. 15 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “then” to show the almost instantaneous transition from love to hatred. The contrast is laid out powerfully through the literal translation, “He is hating her Amnon hatred great very that great

the hatred which he hated her from love which he loved her” (whew). Without a doubt, you couldn’t get more powerful than these words. Two verbs are contrasted, *sane’* and *‘ahav* (cf. 5.8 but not noted there and vs. 1). Both are separated by the preposition *min* or from prefaced to the noun love. As for the former, it’s modified by the adjective *gadol* and adverb *me’od* (cf. vs. 3) implying excessive greatness.

The response from Amnon is what you’d expect. He dismisses Tamar outrightly, but she responds by saying that the wrong (*rahah*, cf. 12.18) he does by this dismissal is greater than the abuse he had heaped upon her. Predictably, Amnon didn’t listen and had Tamar thrown out, his servant bolting the door to his room after her. While she left, Tamar couldn’t be struck by the loud slam of the door and bolt behind her.

Vs. 18 continues the fast-faced action with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “now.” Tamar had been wearing a long robe with sleeves, typically worn by virgin daughters of the king. This reads literally as “tunic of distinction,” the latter being *pasym* which has four other biblical references including vs. 19. The others refer to the tunic belonging to Joseph: “And he (Israel) made him a long robe with sleeves” [Gn 37.3]. Tamar then went into mourning with the customary ashes on her head, etc, crying aloud wherever she went which must have made quite a scene. The trouble is nobody seemed to know the reason why.

Finally Absalom approached his sister Tamar who got wind of how she had been treated. He bade her to hold her peace, the verb being *charash*, fundamentally as to plow as well as to be silent or dumb. “Now therefore why do you say nothing about bringing the king back” [19.11]? Then he gives some lame advice, that she’s not to take it to heart (*lev*, cf. 7.27). In light of getting her nowhere, Tamar spent the rest of her days in Absalom’s house as a desolate woman. “To apportion the desolate heritages” [Is 49.8]. However, upon hearing this, King David was outraged and became incensed, the verb being *charah* with the adverb *me’od* (cf. 12.4 and vs. 15). So while David could barely contain himself, there was bad blood between Absalom and Amnon which was bound to come to a head not immediately but in the future.

Vs. 23 brings us forward two years, an interval made short due to the conjunctive *v-* translated as “after.” In the meantime the four characters—Tamar, Absalom, Amnon and David—were seething with all sorts of plots of revenge one way or another. At the same time they were barely able to get along but careful not to create an incident that would make their feud public. Finally Absalom saw an opportunity to take vengeance. He asked his father to accompany him on a sheep shearing venture, but David declined. Nevertheless, he gave his son a blessing, the verb *barak* (cf. 6.18).

Absalom knew his father wouldn't come even before asking which gave him the opportunity to request Amnon go in his stead. David knew of the tension between them and declined though finally relented. Perhaps two brothers working together might be an opportunity to resolve the issue between them.

Absalom would take no for an answer from his father. Therefore he pressed him, *parats* also as to break through, to destroy (cf. 5.20 but not noted there). He managed to have all David's sons accompany Amnon which would give the appearance that things were on the mend. Despite outward appearances that all was well, Absalom put into action his plan to murder his brother through his servants. First they'd get him drunk and then let him have it, urging those about to carry it out by being courageous and valiant, *chazaq* (cf. 10.12). In fact, he called these assassins literally "sons of valor" or *chyl* (cf. 2.7). As soon as they heard of the murder, David's sons virtually flew back home in case they were next in line.

Vs. 30 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as "while" and shows that matters devolve further. Again, keep in mind Nathan's prophecy to David, "The sword shall never depart from your house" [12.10]. Everyone involved couldn't get these words out of their ears and saw no end to the strife they had brought on themselves. Actually vs. 30 conveys some shocking news. Absalom has put to death each and every son of his father. David's first reaction was, of course, shock. Immediately he took off his royal garments and lay on the ground. How long he remained prostrate isn't given, but it must have not been too long because someone brought good news. Only Amnon is dead at the hand of Absalom, not the others.

Absalom had no choice but to flee while at the same time David's sons made their way back home, shocked at what their brother had done. Upon their arrival both they, David and his servants wept bitterly, literally as "exceedingly great" *gadol* and *me'od* (cf. vs. 21). As for Absalom, he made his way to Talmai, king of Geshur and father of King David's wife Maccah (cf. 3.3), remaining there for three years. One wonders what he was doing all that time. Given events to follow, he must have started plotting against his father though most likely wouldn't dare inform Talmai.

David was struck to the heart over the death of Amnon, for he mourned "day after day" [vs. 37], that is, over the course of three years. Not only that, Absalom was the instigator. David knew right away that this was his own doing, for it bore some similarities to his murder of Uriah which was done out of lust. As for Absalom having fled to be with Talmai, there's no word as to David attempting to make contact. So during those interminable years David longed (*kalah*, cf. 6.18 but not

noted there) to see Absalom. Nevertheless, he was comforted (*nacham*, cf. 12.24) at the death of Amnon. A footnote in the **NIV** puts this well: “With Absalom a refuge, David had lost both of his oldest living sons. Moreover, he could not bring Absalom to account for what he did to Amnon since he had blood on his own hands.” Thus that dreadful sword predicted by Nathan comes back to haunt David.

1) ‘ahav, yaphah, tsarar, 2) betulah, pala’, 3) chakam, me’od, 4) dal, 12) nevalah, 15) sane’, ‘ahav, gadol, me’od, rahah, 19) pasym, 20) charash, lev, shamah, 21) charah, me’od, 25) barak, 27) parats, 28) chazaq, chyl, 36) me’od, 39) kalah, nacham

Chapter Fourteen

This new chapter begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “now” to show as it often does the close connection between two events. Here it’s with respect to Absalom who had fled after having connived the murder of Amnon. Joab, ever sensitive to his master’s moods as well as for any opportunity for self-aggrandizement, perceived that the king’s heart went out to Absalom. The verb is *yadah* (cf. 7.20) or to know intimately with *lev* (heart, cf. 13.20) and reads literally as “upon (*hal-*) Absalom.” Obviously Joab was privy to all David’s misdeeds and could take advantage of him, but it was too early in the game. Surely another opportunity will present itself, he being just as familiar with Nathan’s prophecy.

Joab decided to bring in a “wise (*chakam*, cf. 13.3) woman” from Tekoa, David’s home territory, and ask her to assume the disguise of a mourner, *evel* (cf. 11.27 but not noted there) often as one who mourns professionally. She enters unidentified and is instructed not to anoint herself with oil, giving the appearance (and indeed, smell) of someone who has been at it for a long time. She and David have an extended conversation, unusual for a king, but as a footnote in the **RSV** says, “Perhaps this (she and David coming from the same neighborhood) helps to explain why the king allowed the woman to speak so long and so freely,” that is, through vs. 20. Also we’re dealing with a pretty much small-time kingdom where everyone knew everyone else.

Joab puts words (*davar*, cf. 12.21) into this woman’s mouth so she would know precisely what to say about Absalom but without mentioning his name. And so the woman did as she was told, entering David’s presence by doing the customary obeisance, *shachah* (cf. 12.20). Right away she blurted out her need for help, *yashah* (cf. 3.18) also as to save. Although she and David came from the same territory, the king pretended not to recognize her even though she had disguised herself. He sensed

something not quite right was up, this proving to be true. Nevertheless, David went along with her game and asked about her trouble which reads literally as “what to you?”

At this, the woman began her tale of woe in accord with Joab’s prompting, the two most likely having rehearsed it thoroughly beforehand. She goes into considerable detail about being a widow left with two sons who got into an argument, one having killed the other, the details of which she doesn’t spell out. The real problem, so she claims, is that the entire family turned against her. They demanded that she hand over the one who struck his brother and therefore take blood vengeance. If they carried through on this, the woman would be left without any recourse.

Between vs. 8 and vs. 20 there’s a rather drawn-out dialogue between David and the woman, the former starting it off. All the while we can picture Joab lurking in the background, possibly coaching her with signs or gestures, he being no stranger to the royal court. David said that he’d give orders (*tsava’*, cf. 6.18) concerning her once she returns home. To this she blurted out that she will assume any guilt (*havon*, cf. 3.8), not the king, he responding that if anyone touch her, he would pay dearly for it.

Next (cf. vs. 11) the woman from Tekoa asks King David to invoke the Lord that the avenger of blood protect her son, and he agrees whole-heartedly, the verb being *zakar*, fundamentally as to remember. “Let not my lord hold me guilty or remember how your servant did wrong” [19.19]. *Zakar* can be taken almost as a coded word, for it suggest to David that he remember how he had brought about the murder of Uriah. And so obviously David concurs.

In vs. 12 the woman senses that she has gotten King David in her corner and continues, from time to time furtively casting a glance at Joab in some dark corner. Now she asks to speak a word (*davar*, cf. vs. 3) which gets to the reason why she had come. Without mentioning Absalom who’s called the banished one in vs. 13 (*nadach*, cf. vs. 14), she asks why David has planned such a thing against the people of God, *chashav* also to compose, to invent. “Let not my Lord hold me guilty” [19.19], this verse being quoted in the paragraph above. Bold words indeed, especially bringing the nation of Israel into the discussion. In other words, why has David delayed in having Absalom return from being with Talmai for three long years.

The way the woman puts it is as though David were guilty, that is, having convicted himself. Literally this reads as “from to speak of the king the word this is guilty.” In other words, the verb *davar* and the noun *davar* with the adjective ‘*asham* also as

faulty. It has two other biblical references, Gn 42.21 and Ezr 10.10, the former quoted here: “In truth we are guilty concerning our brother.” She finishes off this direct accusation with reference to God who can arrange (*chashav*, cf. vs. 13) for a banished person (*nadach*, cf. vs. 13) not remain as such.

In vs. 15 the woman reverts to her original fabricated tale while apparently not giving David a chance to respond to her remarks about the not mentioned Absalom. She continues saying that her own people struck fear into her, intending to do away with her and her son. She believes that the king’s *davar* (cf. vs. 13) will give her rest or *menuchah*. “He leads me beside still waters (waters of rest)” [Ps 23.2]. She likens the king to an angel or *mal’ak* which fundamentally means a messenger as in 2.5 but not noted there. That is to say, he is able to discern good from evil, the verb being *shamah* (cf. 13.20) or to hear.

Vs. 18 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “then” as in vss. 12 and 15 as well as vs. 21 to show the quick-paced nature of the dialogue at hand. King David had seen through this woman right from the beginning and could tell she was up to something by the way Joab stood off in corner. Now he asks her directly to come forward, mentioning Joab outrightly as the instigator. Vs. 19 reads literally, “Is the hand of Joab with you in all this?” Knowing that she was put on the spot, she had no choice but to admit that Joab had put all her *davar* (cf. vs. 17) in her mouth. The reason for such *davar* is that he might change the course or literally “face” of events, the verb being *savav* (cf. 3.12) with *davar*.

Next (the conjunctive *v-* as ‘but’) the woman tries to wiggle out of her tight spot by again calling King David a *mal’ak* (cf. vs. 17) or better, that he had the wisdom or *chakmah* of one, this noun implying skill or know-how. “Then the woman went to all the people in her wisdom” [20.22]. Since an angel...messenger...comes from God, he knows everything going on literally “in (*b-*) the earth, the verb being *yadah* (cf. vs. 1). Joab off in the corner wanted to slink away into the shadows, but he’d look even more guilty if he did so. He had no other choice but to remain where he was.

To Joab’s great relief, David addresses him directly, bidding him to bring back Absalom. His response was to fall down on the ground and do obeisance (*shachah*, cf. vs. 4) after which he shows gratitude for such favor or *chen* (also grace) with regard to the woman from Tekoa. “If I find favor in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me back” [15.25]. Thus David found no fault with her being used as a pawn, for at stake was his son Absalom, and he didn’t want to lose him. Actually all along he knew this woman, if not personally, and decided to play her out to see what would come of it.

The king laid down one important condition, however. Absalom could return home but never could enter his presence, literally as “not see the face of the king.” Such a decision was made out of emotion without foresight, for being away from the king’s face meant that Absalom could plot against him with some impunity.

Vs. 25 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “now” to show the quick transition to Absalom once he has returned home. In 1Sam 16 12 David is described as being ruddy, having beautiful eyes and downright handsome. No small wonder that Absalom as son is described in similar terms for his beauty or *yaphah* (adjective, cf. 13.1), one reason why he attracted so many followers. This same verse really lays it on by saying he lacked any blemish from head to toe, the noun being *mum*, also a blot. “You are all fair, my love; there is no flaw in you” [Sg 4.7]. If this weren’t enough, each year Absalom would cut his hair and weigh it. Note how the text says that at the end of a given year his hair became heavy. This was a sign for all the women to gather for such an event, their anticipation growing stronger as the new year approached in their desire to get souvenirs, considering any locks of Absalom as a kind of love potion.

Vs. 28 finds Absalom following his father’s advice faithfully for two whole years by not seeing the face of the king as vs. 24 puts it. At the end of this time he grew antsy, wanting to see his father. So Absalom asked Joab on two separate occasions and was met with a rebuff. Having no luck, he decided to have his servants set Joab’s field of barley on fire. Joab rushed to Absalom, demanding to know why he had committed such an act of vandalism. Again, Absalom asked why Joab refused his request but finally relented. Joab doesn’t show any sign of taking revenge because his situation was delicate, caught between the king and his son. Finally Absalom gets his request, enters his father’s presence, does the customary obeisance, after which David kisses him. No details are given as to what came of this meeting, hopefully a reconciliation. Soon events would prove otherwise.

1) yadah, lev, 2) chakam, ‘evel, 3) davar, 4) shachah, yashah, 8) tsava’, havon, 11) zakar, 12) davar, 13) chashav, davar, ‘asham, nadach, 14) nadach, chashav, 17) davar, menuchah, mal’ak, shamah, 19) davar, 20) savav, davar, mal’ak, chakmah, yadah, 21) shachah, 22) chen, 25) yaphah, mum

Chapter Fifteen

The conjunctive *v-* beginning this new chapter goes untranslated and serves to show how quickly Absalom put into motion his plot to overthrow his father’s legitimate

kingship after the two had an apparent reconciliation. Given David's steadfast love, it remains somewhat of a mystery why Absalom would engage in such a treachery. As soon as Absalom left his father he mustered a small but loyal group of men, more as a kind of bodyguard from which he would build an army. Then he took a highly visible position by the city gate (presumably Jerusalem) and assumed the role of a judge or arbiter of any grievance people would bring before him, *ryv* also as strife, dispute. "You delivered me from strife with the peoples" [22.44]. Being the charismatic son of a popular king, Absalom was sure to grab attention. Then there was his gorgeous hair noted in 14.25-26 which drew women to him like a magnet. Also by setting himself up as a judge, Absalom was recalling the good old days when judges ruled instead of kings.

By reason of his fame, quickly people were attracted to Absalom for pronouncing judgment on various matters, *mishpat* (cf. 8.15). First he'd get the identity of the claimant and give what seems to be a favorable verdict into the proposed claim (*davar*, cf. 14.20), apparently minus any research into the matter. However, a problem existed but didn't deter Absalom. He wasn't authorized by the king to render adequate judgment. After making quite a show of himself, deliberately in order to build up popular momentum, Absalom exclaimed out loud, that he wished to be a judge in order to render proper judgment. He must have done this earlier in the morning or later in the afternoon, not during the noonday heat. In this way the maximum number of people could hear him as the nearby market place by the gate. And so Absalom stole the hearts of many an Israelite, the verb *ganav* and the noun *lev* (cf. 14.1). "And the people stole into the city that day as peal steal in who are ashamed when they flee in battle" [19.3].

Vs. 7 begins some four years later (the Hebrew has forty years) during which Absalom presumably continued to drum up business for himself in the city gate. Obviously King David got wind of it early on but out of paternal devotion, decided to let it continue which to his associates seemed too long. In other words, his judgment may have been clouded. Finally Absalom approached his father, asking permission to pay a vow at Hebron, the verb being *shalam* (cf. 10.19) with the noun *neder*. "And she (Hannah) vowed a vow" [1Sam 1.11]. He explains that he had made this vow while in Geshur although there's no record of it in Second Samuel. Absalom promised to worship the Lord should he return to Jerusalem, the common verb *havad* being used which can apply to being a servant or even a slave.

King David allowed his son to leave, bidding him to go in peace or *shalom* (cf. 3.21). David had a special love for Absalom, and despite recent troubles, wanted to

maintain a close relationship although he was aware of what Absalom had been doing at the city gate. Once at Hebron he sent out secret messengers, the participle *ragal* (cf. 10.3) fundamentally as to spy. The text implies that Absalom had a whole network of spies whose first contact would be those whom he had judged favorably. Then, in turn, would rouse the people to his cause. These spies had a specific message. When a trumpet sounds at the same time and in virtually every place, his supporters are to proclaim that Absalom is king. It was so well coordinated that many outlying places such as farms could hear it.

When Absalom departed Jerusalem for Hebron, by no means did he go alone. In fact, he assembled some two hundred men which vs. 11 says went in simplicity (*tam*) without knowing (*yadah*, cf. 14.20) anything. As for *tam*, it also means sincerity as well as integrity which indeed was true. If they were otherwise, such a large contingent would have aroused David's suspicion. "As David walked with integrity of heart and uprightness" [1Kg 9.3]. Most likely some were those for whom Absalom had judged favorably when at the city gate.

When at Hebron offering sacrifices to honor his supposed vow as noted above, Absalom sent for Ahithophel, counselor to King David, *yahats* being the verb, also to advise. "Now in those days the counsel which Ahithophel gave was as if one consulted the oracle of God" [16.23]. Absalom sensed this man's loyalty was shaky and could be persuaded easily. Perhaps Ps 41.9 and Ps 55.12-14 refer to Ahithophel's betrayal. Once Ahithophel was on board, it was easier to get others to come around, thereby strengthening the conspiracy or *qesher* which derives from a verbal root meaning to bind. "Now the rest of the acts of Zimri and the conspiracy which he made, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel" [1Kg 16.20]? Two adjectives describe the growth of this *qesher*, *'amyts* and *rav* (cf. 14.2 but not noted there). The former has three other biblical references, Is 28.2 being quoted here: "Behold, the Lord has one who is mighty and strong."

Vs. 13 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as "and" to show the quick development of Absalom's conspiracy and King David getting wind of it. A messenger comes to David saying simply that the hearts of the men of Israel have gone over to Absalom. The participle *nagad* (cf. 1.5 but not noted there) is used for messenger, to tell. Also the singular *lev* (cf. vs. 6) or heart with the plural "men" suggests that everyone in Israel was against David by joining Absalom. Apparently his diligence at dispensing justice had paid off. This was nothing new for David who had been keeping close watch on his son, hoping that the conspiracy would peter out.

David then bade his servants to run for it because Absalom was hell-bent on doing evil (*rahah*, cf. 13.15) by killing everyone associated with the king.

Throughout this chaotic situation David displays remarkable calm which at this darkest hour was his chief asset by giving support to his followers. Those with him marveled at this, wondering why their master hadn't taken action beforehand to prevent such a calamity. As noted earlier, two factors are involved: David's constant love for his son and knowledge that Nathan's prophecy is in another phase of playing itself out. And so with no other choice left, David and his entire household abandoned Jerusalem, leaving behind ten concubines, possibly as a kind of peace offering. Also it could be a fulfilment of what Nathan had prophesied in 12.11: "I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun."

The retinue that followed David left in good order, pausing at the last house on the road so as to get one final look at Jerusalem which now lay vacant. The only inhabitants were the ten concubines, some poor and infirm as well as informants whom David had planted to keep an eye out on what would happen when Absalom took over. Surprisingly a large contingent of Philistines were in David's entourage. Absalom was aware of this which troubled him since the Philistines were renowned warriors and had the potential of giving trouble to his large but rag-tag following. This, course, proved to be true.

Vs. 19 has David addressing Ittai the Gittite, this being a proper form designating people from Gath, hometown of Goliath whom David had slain. Apparently the two were fond of each other, and David was concerned about Ittai's well-being. He showed this by urging him to remain in Jerusalem with Absalom whom he calls here as king. After all, Ittai is a foreigner and exile, *nakry* and *golah*. The former often applies to someone from another country whereas the latter (a participle) applies to someone not living in his native land. For the former: "I have become a stranger to my brethren, an alien to my mother's sons" [Ps 69.8]. For the latter whose verbal root also means to reveal, to uncover: "No one discloses to me when my son makes a league with the son of Jesse" [1Sam 22.8]. David also tells Ittai that he hasn't been in the service to the throne for long and doesn't want him to be wandering all over the place. He concludes by again bidding him to return, for the Lord will show his love and faithfulness, *chesed* and *'emeth* (cf. 10.2 and 2.6).

Despite these protestations, Ittai refuses, saying that he'll stay with David through thick and thin. He must have been thinking too of what Absalom would do once he

got his hands on him. David relented and told Ittai to pass on, that is, from that last house noted in vs. 17, the outskirts of Jerusalem. So while Ittai and his followers did so along with King David, the entire country wept aloud. ‘*Erets* (cf. 3.12) is the word for country which here can mean not only anyone standing by but the very earth itself. It’s interesting to compare this with, for example, the “men of Israel” as in vs. 13 who supposedly comprise the entire nation in Absalom’s camp.

Vs. 24 continues describing this dreary yet disciplined procession from Jerusalem into the wilderness (cf. vs. 23) by next mentioning Abiathar, the only priest to have escaped Saul’s massacre at Nob as well an important member of the priestly class. Apparently he was in charge of the Levites who come on the scene bearing the ark of the covenant. They paused until the last person in the retinue had left Jerusalem as if to make an account of them.

Once the Lord had counted the very last person, David turned to the high priest named Zadok, commanding him to return the ark to Jerusalem. This must have taken aback those present. Fortunately the bulk of the population had passed by the ark and was counted by the Lord. Obviously the people assumed the ark continued with them. However, David took the long view. Traveling with such a precious cargo would endanger it. Best to leave in the city and hope that Absalom would respect it. Then David expressed a wish for the Lord that he return him and see the ark and his habitation, *naveh*. This noun is mentioned in 7.8 with reference to sheep and also refers to them in terms of a fold.

On the other hand, in vs. 26 David is willing to accept the Lord having no pleasure in him, *chaphets* also as to delight. “Whoever favors Joab” [cf. 20.11]. Still, David expresses his willingness to accept anything the Lord may send him. Then he bids Zadok and Abiathar to return to Jerusalem in peace (*shalom*, cf. vs. 9) along with their sons. Even though David is headed for the wilderness—nothing yet is said of his destination though he must have it in mind—he will await *davar* (cf. vs. 2) from them about Absalom’s return. That implies adopting a strategy to take back Jerusalem and hopefully capture Absalom as alive, not dead. And so the two followed David’s orders, returning with the ark of God. It must have been extremely difficult hanging around a practically deserted city awaiting an unknown fate.

And so David proceeded up the Mount of Olives, weeping (*bakah*, cf. 3.34 but noted there) as he ascended, trying not to glance back at Zadok and Abiathar bearing the ark to Jerusalem. Not only that, he and those accompanying him covered their heads and went barefoot. While continuing his advance, news came that his advisor

Ahithophel had gone over to Absalom's side. This hit David particularly hard, exclaiming that his counsel turn into foolishness. The first (*hetsah*, cf. vs. 34) is a noun whereas the second is a verb (*sakal*, cf. vs. 24.10 but not noted there).

David reached the summit of the Mount of Olives which in vs. 32 is called a place where God was worshiped (*shachah*, cf. 14.21), presumably in the form of idols before the Israelites took Jerusalem. Perhaps some still engaged in these practices, but the way the text is framed people no longer do so. There he met his friend Hushai who had his coat torn and earth on his head. Without asking why he appeared as such, David bids him not to come along because he'd be a burden to him, *masa'*. "Why then should your servant be an added burden to my lord the king" [19.35]? Instead, David tells Hushai to return to Jerusalem and await the coming of Absalom. Then he will claim to be Absalom's servant just as he had been with his father. In this way he will defeat the counsel of Ahithophel, *parar* fundamentally as to split, to divide. "For the Lord had ordained to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel" [17.14]. And so Chapter Fifteen draws to a close with Hushai, Zadok and Abiathar put in place within Jerusalem in order to report on Absalom and thus feed information to King David. In the way he will know the opportune time to recapture his rightful place on the throne. In other words, Hushai and the others are to send any *davar* (cf. vs. 27) they may hear. This was risky business, to be sure, but given the circumstances, it seemed the best approach to adopt. The three along with several others just made it back in time, for Absalom entered Jerusalem. Nothing is said of his reception for the city was virtually deserted.

2) ryv, mishpat, davar, 6) ganav, lev, 7) shalam, neder, 8) havad, 9) shalom, 10) ragal, 11) tam, yadah, 12) yahats, qesher, 'amyts, rav, 13) nagad, lev, 14) rahah, 19) nakry, golah, 20) chesed, 'emeth, 23) 'erets, 25) naveh, 26) chaphets, 27) shalom, davar, 30) bakah, 31) hetsah, sakal, 32) shachah, 33) masa', 34) parar, 36) davar

Chapter Sixteen

Not unexpectedly, this chapter begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as "when" with regard to David having just passed by the summit of the Mount of Olives. In other words, it's a more dramatic way of saying that he and his retinue have left Jerusalem behind...for how long, nobody knows for sure. At this point, Ziba, the servant of Mephibosheth, who's mentioned in Chapter Nine as the crippled son of King Saul, approaches David. Ziba knew this was a good time, for as long as Jerusalem was in sight of the king, it'd be more difficult to speak with him.

David asked Ziba why he had come with such a huge load of provisions intended for his rag-tag group, rightly suspecting his intent. This servant of Mephibosheth thus revealed himself an opportunist trying to curry David's favor. At once the king saw through Ziba, asking for the whereabouts of his master's son. To this Ziba replied that Mephibosheth is in Jerusalem, presumably waiting Absalom's triumphant return. He expected that his father's kingdom would be returned to him which seemed based on false information. Given what we know of Absalom thus far, by no means was he disposed to act this way. Finally Ziba does obeisance to King David, *shachah* (cf. 15.32), asking to find favor in his sight, *chen* (cf. 14.22). That was that. Ziba knew this wouldn't happen, but it was his way of trying to back out of a difficult situation gracefully. So despite Jerusalem being virtually deserted, Ziba, Mephibosheth, Zadok, Abiathar and Hushai returned there, two parties with two different agendas.

In vs. 5 David moves on to nearby Bahurim when a family member from Saul's house named Shimei confronted him, *mishpachah* also meaning a tribe which is more generic designation (cf. 14.7 but not noted there). David not only saw Shimei coming but heard him cursing continuously, *qalal* also as to despise (cf. 6.22). The adverb "continuously" is rendered literally as "going forth to go forth" or the double use of the common verb *yatsa'*. In other words, Shimei came at David no holds barred. Not only that, he threw stones at David and everyone accompanying him all the while cursing them, telling David to go away, *yatsa'*. In his eyes the king was worthless or a "man of worthlessness," *belyahal* which is comprised of *bely* and *yahal*, not or without benefit. "Now there happened to be there a worthless fellow whose name was Sheba" [20.1].

Shimei seemed to be sent by the Lord precisely to do this cursing, that he has avenged upon David all the blood of Saul's house rendered as "the Lord has returned upon you all the blood (etc.)." Such is the reason Absalom is about to take over; the Lord has brought ruin (*rahah* or evil, cf. 15.14) upon David, a man of blood. Standing next to David and enduring this constant cursing and stoning is Abishai, one his commanders. Actually he goes way back to having accompanied David on a mission of stealth into Saul's camp (cf. 1Sam 26.5-12). Abishai calls Shimei a dead dog who should be dispatched at once, but David refused.

The king acknowledges that Shimei was sent on a mission by the Lord to do what he is doing and should be allowed to continue cursing and casting stones. Only David knew, no one else, that this was yet another phase of Nathan's prophecy as to the

murder of Uriah and seduction of his wife Bathsheba. Perhaps the Lord will regard his affliction, *hony* also as distress. “O Lord of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your maid servant” [1Sam 1.11]. If the Lord does so, he may exchange this cursing with what is good (*tov*, cf. 11.2).

Finally the party arrived at the Jordan River though that’s not mentioned in the Hebrew text. Most likely Shimei didn’t follow them all the way, cursing and casting stones. As some point he stopped, his words echoing in David’s ears even when out of hearing distance. They arrived (i.e., minus the Jordan) completely tired, *hayeph* also as languishing which applies not just to their journey but the circumstances under which they had to flee Jerusalem. “The people are hungry and weary and thirsty in the wilderness” [17.29]. Because of this, the people refreshed themselves, *naphash* being the verbal root for *nephesh* (soul) meaning to take breath. It has two other biblical references, Ex 23.12 and 31.17, the latter being quoted here: “In six days the Lord made heaven and earth and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.”

Vs. 15 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “now” where Absalom enters Jerusalem, pretty much on the heels of David’s departure. It’s made all the more dramatic by mentioning the following two: 1) “all the people, the men of Israel” accompanied him, a show of strong support contrasted with the near exhaustion of David and his entourage. 2) Ahithophel is mentioned specifically, former counselor to King David and now traitor.

Vs. 16 mentioned Hushai as “David’s friend” who counters the traitorous presence of Ahithophel now in the service of Absalom. He had to be very careful, feigning this because the ever watchful Ahithophel knew his identity and doubted his allegiance. It seems that Absalom as well had his doubts, for straightaway he asks two rhetorical questions. The first, “Is this your loyalty to your friend?” Note the noun *chesed* (cf. 15.20) which is far more inclusive. The second is just as direct, “Why did you not go with your friend?” Note two uses of friend or *rah* (cf. 13.3 but not noted there) which also means neighbor.

Such pointed questions didn’t bother Hushai who expected them. He came off with an immediate response, the conjunctive *v-* translated as “and” beginning vs. 18 as indicative of this. Hushai told Absalom that he will be loyal and continue to be so with the one whom the Lord and the people of Israel had chosen. It took a lot of courage to utter such words, but that was the ploy he and David had agreed upon. Hushai further said that he will be just as loyal to Absalom as he had been to David.

In vs. 20 we have Ahithophel coming into Absalom's presence right after Hushai. Chances are the two met in passing but didn't share a word, let alone barely glance at each other. Right away Absalom asks for counsel, *hetsah* (cf. 15.31) and is told to go to his father's concubines, the ten as noted in 15.16. They're treated almost as objects (and most likely were), prize possessions of the king, and left at the mercy of Absalom. In this way, so Ahithophel reasons, he will become odious to all Israel, the verb *ba'ash* (cf. 10.6) being quite strong, more like a stink. Without hesitation, Absalom goes ahead which seems not the proper thing to do. The reason: why become a foul odor when you have such apparent universal support? It demonstrated that Absalom was willing to engage in some strong-arm tactics and show that he, not David, was in charge.

Absalom follows through on his word. A tent was pitched on the roof (presumably the palace) where he had sexual relations with the concubines, this reflecting Nathan's words in 12.11 about David's wives being given to someone else "in the sight of the sun." So it happened that Ahithophel's advice paid off, for it was as though one consulted the oracle of the Lord, *sha'al* and *davar* (cf. 5.23 and 15.36). After all, both Absalom and his father held it in the highest esteem.

4) *shachah*, *chen*, 5) *mishpachah*, *qalal*, *yatsa'*, 7) *belyahal*, 8) *raha*, 12) *hony*, *tov*, 14) *hayeph*, *naphash*, 17) *chesed*, *rah*, 20) *hetsah*, 21) *ba'ash*, 23) *sha'al*, *davar*

Chapter Seventeen

Vs. 1 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as "moreover" to introduce the interaction between Ahithophel and Hushai, the former coming to Absalom confidently asking for a contingent of twelve thousand men to go after David that very night. Presumably such a large amount of troops was available on short notice consisting most likely of those who were ready to besiege and conquer Jerusalem if it were necessary. Ahithophel continues pressing his case with considerable force and eagerness, completely ignorant, willfully or otherwise, as to knowledge about the true and tried nature of David's men. Indeed they were weary and discouraged, the verb *yagah* 23.10 and the adjective *raphah*. The former also means to labor as to the point of exhaustion: "He rose and struck down the Philistines until his hand was weary." The latter derives from a verbal root meaning to loosen, to droop and has three other biblical references, one of which is Numb 13.18: "and see what the land is, and whether the people who dwell in it are strong or weak." In the verse at hand *raphah* is used with the noun "hand," literally "slack hands."

Such, thought Ahithophel, was the condition of David's men, an ideal situation to have them throw into a panic, *charad* fundamentally as to tremble. "And he (Gideon) threw all the army into a panic" [Jdg 8.12]. He goes on to say that once those with King David have fled, he will strike him down. Then the people will see they have no choice but to return to Absalom as a bride returning to her husband. In this way peace (*shalom*, cf. 15.27) will return. Such a display of confidence or *davar* (cf. 16.23) won over not Absalom but the elders with him which is rendered literally as "the *davar* is upright" or *yashar*. "And the plan seemed right to the king and all the assembly" [2Chron 30.4]. All this is shocking indeed, a son plotting his father's demise which doesn't seem to have any basis except jealousy. Only David realized it was brought about by the Lord to fulfill the larger scheme of Nathan's prophecy as to ongoing dissension within his household.

The conjunctive *v-* beginning vs. 5 translated as "then" shows the quick unfolding of Ahithophel's plan when summons Hushai that he may express his opinion. Apparently he had been on the sidelines listening in because without hesitation he says that the counsel (*hetsah*, cf. 16.20) just offered isn't good (*tov*, cf. 16.12). As Hushai proceeds, he can't help but think of David sending him to Jerusalem in order to frustrate Absalom's plans. Also he was concerned especially if Ahithophel would detect his cover-up which would result in an immediate death warrant. Rightly Hushai says that while David's men may be exhausted, by no means are they down and out, being experienced soldiers and able to cope with all sorts of difficulties. He puts it to Absalom in stark terms, they being mighty men (*gibor*, cf. 1.25) like a mother bear robbed of her cubs. Surely Absalom as David's son knew what he was talking about.

Hushai continues by saying that David's men are so expert in military tactics that they can take on anything that Absalom hurls at them. After going on like this a while in an attempt to strike fear into Absalom, Hushai advises "all Israel" be assembled to go after David. It's so sad to read how Absalom acts, that is, as though his father were a mortal enemy. On the other hand, David as a father didn't have similar feelings. Absalom knew that was his father's character, and it must have aggravated him all the more. Nevertheless, Absalom concurred with Hushai's counsel; not only that but so did "all the men of Israel" [vs. 14]. An exaggeration, of course, because it was impossible for the whole nation to be present at court. The reference must be to representatives from all over the country. Without a doubt, most knew of David's military prowess and that of his men; chances are slim that they would succeed. However, letting on to this in the present situation was unwise.

And so vs. 14 concludes with Hushai successfully winning over Absalom and everyone else, that is, minus Ahithophel who at this point must have felt abandoned. Indeed, the Lord had ordained to defeat his counsel, the verb *tsava'* (cf. 14.8) meaning to order, and to bring evil (*rahaḥ*, cf. 16.8) upon ('el- or 'to') Absalom. One can only wonder what ran through Ahithophel's mind as he glowered at Hushai...almost certainly plotting to do away with him. However, he had to maintain his composure as a professional counselor before Absalom.

Vs. 15 continues the fast-paced action with the conjunctive *v-* translated as "then." That is to say, Hushai wasted no time to consult with the two priests, Zadok and Abiathar, secretly ensconced in Jerusalem. Obviously the meeting had to be done away from the prying ears and eyes of Ahithophel and any of his agents. Hushai tells both men that he succeeded in counseling Absalom and dispatches them off to David as quickly as possible so he can take the necessary precautions against, as vs. 16 puts it, being swallowed up (*balah*). "The Lord will swallow them up in his wrath; and fire will consume them" [Ps 21.9].

Vss. 17-20 go into some detail about two men dispatched to inform King David about what Hushai had learned from his undercover work. However, they were discovered hiding in a well but managed to escape. As a footnote in the **RSV** puts it to the point, "Only a person with intimate knowledge of the events could have written these words." Upon reaching David, the two informed him to hasten over the water meaning the Jordan River which they did. Upon discovering that his counsel wasn't followed (*hasah* or the common verb to do, cf. 8.13), Ahithophel heads home, sets his house in order (*tsava'*, cf. vs. 14) and hangs himself. He did this, convinced that Absalom's rebellion would fail and that he'd be tried and executed as a traitor.

Vs. 24 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as "then," again showing the quick unfolding of events. Absalom musters his men, crosses the Jordan River with Amasa in charge instead of the more experienced Joab. This part of the drama concludes with "Israel and Absalom encamped in the land of Gilead" [vs. 26], again showing that the entire nation was allied against David. And so Chapter Seventeen concludes with some local people bringing David and his men all sorts of food to support them. Implied is that Absalom and his force lacked such supplies and weren't in as good a shape for the battle to take place.

2) *yagah*, *raphēh*, 3) *shalom*, 4) *davar*, *yashar*, 7) *hetsah*, *toḅ*, 8) *gibor*, 14) *tsava'*, *rahaḥ*, 16) *balah*, 23) *hasah*, *tsava'*

Chapter Eighteen

The conflict between father and son—David and Absalom—now moves into high gear. Many details as to this lengthy chapter aren't given because they're more factual by nature and don't lend themselves as well to reading the text in the spirit of *lectio divina*. For example, throughout this chapter and those like it have little or no mention of how God plays into the action. However, as said often, this latest round of woes is in accord with Nathan's prophecy, of how the sword shall never depart from your house" [12.10]. Certainly the death of Absalom is a major turning point in this ongoing saga.

The drama opens with the conjunctive *v-* to show as it usually does the quick developments in this drama about to reach a tragic climax. David took action by mustering those with him, *paqad* (cf. 3.8 but not noted there) fundamentally as to number, to commit. Part of this mustering is setting men in charge of thousands and hundreds, perhaps an exaggeration but a way of showing that essentially David has both the military expertise as well as the upper hand. Once all this had been taken care of (and it must have been done quickly), David dispatched his army into three units, he wanting to be part of the action. However, the troops denied his request. They put it in an admirable, selfless way by saying it's one thing if they flee but another if their king is captured or slain. Perhaps someone reminded David of how the Philistines slew Saul on Mount Gilboa, a sober reminder.

David concedes to the demand of his troops, a huge relief to them. He took up a visible position to review his troops march off into battle, the three divisions as noted above. Despite the unceasing treachery and deceit coming from Absalom, David gave strict orders to the three leaders, Joab, Abishai and Ittai, to deal gently with his son, calling him a young man (*nahar*, cf. 1.6). The verb in Hebrew reads literally as "say gently" or the adverb 'at (sometimes as *la'at*) which has three other biblical references, one of which is Is 8.6: "Because this people have refused the waters of Shiloah that flow gently." Vs. 5 is careful to note that everyone heard David's *davar* (cf. 17.4) as to treating Absalom. Some were in awe at his compassion while others must have been dismayed, given the treachery involved. Nevertheless, they were bound to carry out his orders.

Vs. 6 sets in motion the inevitable, the conjunctive *v-* intimating this by being translated as "so." The battle was engaged in a forest resulting in the defeat of Israel,

this amounting to a kind of civil war with Israelite fighting Israelite. Apparently it was widespread, not untypical of such home-grown conflicts where the forest consumed more men than the sword. Forest in this case seems to be a kind of jungle or swamp.

Vs. 9 begins the dramatic story of Absalom's unusual, even humorous demise, followed by his death. By chance he came across some of David's men here called servants, this being rendered literally as "meeting (*qara'*, cf. 1.6) to the faces of the servants of David." Absalom was on a mule or *pered* an animal favored by the royalty. "Then all the king's sons arose, and each mounted his mule and fled" [13.29]. Having his head caught in the branches of a tree, he was left suspended there unable to extricate himself. One of David's soldiers found him and was rebuked by Joab for not having dispatched him on the spot. Joab rebuffed this soldier's loyalty to the king for not doing so and saw this as a golden opportunity to finish him off. Apparently there was no dialogue between Absalom, the soldier and Joab just before he cast three darts into his heart.

Joab was fully aware of David's strict injunction to treat Absalom kindly. However, he disregarded it completely, figuring that he being an invaluable asset was immune. This turned out to be a fatal mistake. When David was on his deathbed, he told his son Solomon to do Joab in, his service and treachery no longer a threat. After summoning the troops to cease from battle, Joab had Absalom unceremoniously cast into a pit in the forest, covering it with stones. Those allied with Absalom quickly got word of his death and fled to their respective homes.

As for Absalom's place of burial, earlier in life he had erected a pillar or *matseveh* which has four other biblical references, one of which being Gn 35.14: "And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he had spoken with him, a pillar of stone." The reason for such a monument is that the text says he had no son is an error (cf. 14.27).

Ahimaaz, Zadok the priest's son, asked permission to run off to the king and inform him of what to him was good news. Joab wisely restrained him, keeping in mind that David wanted Absalom alive. Then Joab picked out a man identified as a Cushite or a non-Israelite to inform the king. He is to inform David literally as to "what you have seen" [vs. 21]. This can be taken as him being ignorant of how Absalom died. While this was going on, Ahimaaz stepped in again, jealous almost to the point of being obsessed, asking a second time to run off. Joab relented, knowing full well that earlier Ahimaaz was ordered to say nothing about Absalom who seems to have

suspected that his death was suspicious. And so the two men engaged in a kind of marathon, Ahimaaz overtaking the Cushite.

Vs. 24 has David sitting between two gates as he was awaiting word of the battle's outcome and especially if Absalom had been captured alive. The story of the marathon between Ahimaaz and the Cushite ends with what seems to be a near tie. When asked about Absalom, the former said that he had witnessed a great tumult, not knowing about it. Then the Cushite came and blurted out that Absalom was dead. Not only that, he said brazenly that all the king's enemies should suffer such a fate.

This story is reminiscent of the first chapter of Second Samuel when a survivor from the slaughter at Mount Gilboa told King David that Saul had perished, he expecting a reward. Perhaps the two men who came to David were ignorant of it but certainly not Joab who may have wished they met the same fate. Unfortunately for him it didn't turn out that way. Chapter Eighteen concludes with the well known heart-felt lament of his son Absalom which was heard by everyone.

1) paqad, 5) nahar, la'at, 'at, davar, 9) qara', pered, 18) matseveth

Chapter Nineteen

Please note: 18.32 is the conclusion to Chapter Eighteen in the Hebrew text. Here the **RSV** enumeration is followed.

Ragaz (cf. 7.10) is a perfect verb opening this new chapter prefaced with the conjunctive *v-*, for it shows the profound impact Absalom's death had upon King David, meaning to shake, to be disturbed. Upon having received news, he goes to a chamber over the city gate and loudly gives voice to his lament. It's as though David chose this place deliberately so that everyone passing through the gate below could hear him. In other words, all things have a political ramification as he knows so well.

This upper room is emphasized by three words with *hal-*(upon): *yahal*, *hal-* and *halyath* (went up, upon and chamber). Apparently neither Ahimaaz nor the Cushite mentioned in the last chapter revealed that Joab was the one who had slain Absalom. Later someone informed him, and in turn he informed the army that had defeated the rebels. This resulted in them grieving like David, their victory having turned into mourning, *teshuhah* and 'evel (14.2). The former is found next in 23.10: "And the

Lord wrought a great victory that day.” vs. 2 concludes with what’s almost an afterthought, namely, “The king is grieving for his son.”

As a result of this turn of events, the people entered the city ashamed as though they had been defeated in battle despite their decisive victory. *Ganav* (cf. 15.6) is the verb in vs. 3 meaning to steal, to take away secretly, and aptly fits the way the people entered the city. They did so passing through that gate, hearing the loud and deliberate groaning of their king for his son. Although some sympathized, the vast majority cursed under their breath, having lost comrades in battle. While the verb *kalam* (cf. 10.5) means to be ashamed, many were dismayed at such a loss of life while David didn’t seem to care about them.

Vs. 4 finds King David still mourning aloud but this time within his house which Joab entered. Now he has his face covered, saying...rather crying...aloud the name of his son, Absalom. Since Joab was a close confidant, he approached David and said boldly, enough is enough. He exclaimed that this loud, even boisterous non-stop moaning has covered his servants with shame, *bosh*. “They urged him until he was ashamed” [2Kg 2.17]. After all, the people had put their very lives on the line, including members of his own household. Joab continues saying that David loves those who hate him and visa versa. All in all, his persistent loud lamentation was confusing everyone.

Should David persist with this unprecedented mourning, many would turn against him, wishing that Absalom had gotten the upper hand. Joab’s warning had the benefit of forcing David to address the people before things deteriorated further. Now he made a somewhat dramatic descent from the chamber over the city gate to meet people there, for it was central passageway and an ideal spot to defuse the tension. Unfortunately nothing further is said as to how he explained himself. However, vs. 8 concludes with what seems a contradictory statement, namely, that “Israel had fled everyman to his own home.” Yet another instance of Nathan’s prophecy coming true. At this juncture David must have wondered when...if...the prophecy, more as a curse, will ever come to an end.

Vs. 9 doesn’t put David’s mind to rest as to the prophecy, for strife was rampant everywhere, *dyn* being the verb which fundamentally means to judge, this being the only instance where it’s used this way. One example of the common use: “The Lord will judge the ends of the earth” [1Sam 2.10]. As for the source of this abandonment, the verse at hand puts it well. That is to say, the people exclaim as one voice that while they appreciated that their king had delivered them from their enemies as well

as the Philistines, he had fled from his own son, Absalom. The two verbs relative to saving are *natsal* and *malat* 12.7 to snatch and to escape (cf. 12.7 and 19.5, the latter not noted).

In vs. 10 the people admit to having anointed Absalom as king who now is dead. Then they ask why nothing is said about bringing back the king, i.e., David. As a footnote in the **RSV** says, “The Israelites made the first overtures to renew allegiance to David.” Hopefully this process of reconciliation will be the beginning of the end of Nathan’s prophecy. The first sign favorable in this direction, one of several in Chapter Nineteen: David called Amasa his bone and flesh, he having been a leader under Absalom whom the king now places at head of his army. This major step in reconciliation managed to sway the heart of the men of Judah as one, *natah* (cf. 16.22 as to pitch a tent) fundamentally as to stretch out. Note singular *lev* (cf. 15.13) or heart with respect to the plural “men of Judah.” This worked, and David met up with Judah. It should be noted that this chapter will end on a very different note.

Vss. 16 and 17 have Shimei and Ziba rushing to David’s support, ready to do his pleasure or *tov* (cf. 17.7). All came with a certain fear and trembling, looking out for their own interests. For example, Shimei begged King David not to hold him guilty or better, not to remember any guilt on his part. Next we have Abishai asking David to put Shimei to death for having cursed and stoned him as he left Jerusalem. David responded with a rhetorical question, saying that Abishai was an adversary or *satan*. “Lest in the battle he become an adversary to us” [1Sam 29.4]. He continues by saying that if anyone deserves to be put to death, it’s him after which he swore an oath (*shavah*, cf. 3.35 but not noted there) to Shimei that he is forgiven.

Next on the scene is Mephibosheth (vs. 24), the son of Saul, who approached King David totally disheveled. David asked why he didn’t come with him. Mephibosheth was put on the spot, claiming that he had been deceived by one of his servants, *ramah* fundamentally as to cast, to throw. “Why have you deceived me thus and let my enemy go” [1Sam 19.17]? Nevertheless, his loyalty was genuine, laying it on thick by telling David that he is like an angel (*mal’ak*, cf. 14.19)...a messenger...of God which indeed he was. Despite a dispute between Mephibosheth and Ziba over land, the former concedes, saying the most important thing for him is that David had returned home.

Next in line is Barzillai who earlier had provided for David in his need and now eighty years old. For his loyalty, Barzillai was provided for. There’s a fairly extensive dialogue between the two over his future, Barzillai going to his own home.

Last but not least are “all the men of Israel” who approached the king in vs. 41. They asked about the antagonism existing between them and Judah which unfortunately was not resolved. In fact, their *davar* (cf. 18.5) were fiercer than those of the Israelites, the verb *qashah* meaning to be hard. “The case that is too hard for you, you shall bring to me, and I will hear it” [Dt 1.17].

Unfortunately this last incident is to have further repercussions insofar as it put an end to David’s hope that Nathan’s prophecy had run its course and that things would return to normal. Such is underlying tension that is revealed in Chapter Nineteen as well as in other chapters subsequent to Uriah’s death. And it doesn’t stop there. The prophecy reverberates throughout the rest of Israel’s history.

1) ragaz, 2) teshuhah, ‘evel, 3) ganav, kalam, 5) bosh, 9) dyn, natsal, malat, 14) natah, lev, 17) tov, 22) satan, 23) shavah, 24) ramah, 27) mal’ak, 43) davar, qashah

Chapter Twenty

The conjunctive *v-* beginning this new chapter translates as “now,” showing the close connection between the so-called fierce words of the men of Judah at the close of the last chapter and someone who comes on the scene named Sheba. He’s described as a “worthless fellow” or *ysh belyahal* as in 16.7, “man of worthlessness.” Not only that, he’s from the tribe of Benjamin which of all the twelve tribes was the most disaffected chiefly because King Saul had belonged to it. Add that to the continuing effects of Nathan’s prophecy, and you don’t have a pretty situation.

Without any warning, Sheba blew a trumpet or *shophar* (cf. 6.15) having the preposition *b-* (in) prefaced to it, “in the trumpet.” This was a means of getting attention for some kind of emergency or major announcement which indeed it was. Often such proclamations are coordinated throughout the land, but this one appears isolated and thus indicative of Sheba’s lack of support by starting a rebellion. Anyway, the very sound of the trumpet heralded his demise. Sheba exclaimed that we (i.e., the Benjaminites) have no portion in David, *cheleq* as that which is divided or apportioned. “For as his share is who goes down into the battle, so shall his share be who stays by the baggage” [1Sam 30.24].

Sheba further says that we (the Benjaminites again) have no inheritance *nachalah* (cf. 14.16 but not noted there). To add injury to insult he calls David “son of Jesse,” a way

of denigrating his family's lineage. Finally Sheba tells everyone to flee to their tents. This exhortation is found again in 1Kg 12.16 with the revolt of Rehoboam, unfortunately a future manifestation of Nathan's prophecy which turns out to be a never-ending curse. Surely by that time people forgot the source and just went along with events as best they could. If it were kept fresh in mind, perhaps the divine curse might be lifted or alleviated.

Significantly vs. 2 mentions "all the men of Israel," similar words with respect to Absalom's rebellion. While both may be exaggerated somewhat, such wording is indicative of a fairly sustained resistance to David's rule. The king's first response was to make sure the ten concubines were put under guard (*byth-mishmereth*) for safety's sake. Should Sheba get hold of them, at least symbolically he would have usurped the throne. This protection of the royal concubines turned out to be permanent, they living shut up as widows until the day they died. Apparently King David wasn't going to take any more chances after two challenges to his authority.

In vs. 4 David asks Amasa (first mentioned in 17.4), bypassing Joab, to summon the men of Judah and have them present themselves within three days. Amasa acted accordingly, *zahaq* being the verb to muster, more as an urgent cry (cf. 19.28 but not noted there). However, Amasa wasn't as experienced as Joab because he delayed beyond three days, the reason not given but indicative of his incompetency. *Mohed* is the noun for the time agreed upon, also as a season or feast. "So the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning until the appointed time" [24.15].

In frustration at this delay and apparent no communication from Amasa, David decided to consult Abishai who is first mentioned in 2.18. After his recent encounter with Absalom, David was in no mood to take any chances. He told Abishai to summon troops and cut off Sheba lest he take fortified cities and organize himself further to usurp the crown. However, Joab got wind of Amasa being sent out by the king and took the opportunity to murder him which is described in gruesome detail in vs. 10.

Having dispatched Amasa summarily, Joab and Abishai went after Sheba. However, Joab saw an opportunity to commit a second murder, so he did away with Abishai. Now Joab was free to pursue Sheba without fear of having to share any glory from the king.

In vs. 14 Sheba, now on the run, mustered as many people he could to his cause, again words such "all the tribes of Israel" being used. Most likely as before it is an exaggerated way of presenting the threat to King David's authority. Joab caught up

with Sheba in the town of Abel of Bethlehem and besieged it. Then in vs. 16 a woman known to be wise (*chakam*, cf. 14.2) asked to speak with Joab. Although she isn't named, she adopts a subservient position, calling herself a maidservant, 'amah (cf. 14.16 but noted there). A footnote in the **RSV** says of vs. 18 when this woman is speaking, "This verse is not clear in the original, but it would seem that the town had a reputation for wisdom and the settling of disputes." With this in mind, perhaps that's why Sheba had fled to Abel, desperately seeking counsel as what to do next.

As for the town of Abel, the wise woman told Joab a saying that had been used in the past and most likely remains current, that counsel can be found there. This is rendered literally as "to say to ask they shall ask," the verb being *sha'al* (cf. 16.23). Such asking had resulted in matters of dispute being settled as noted in the last paragraph, *tamam*. For another meaning, cf. 15.24 but not noted there: "until the people had all passed out of the city." She continues by saying that she is both peaceable and faithful, *shalam* and 'aman (cf. 15.7 and 7.16), so why would Joab want to destroy Abel which has the reputation of being a mother to Israel? *Balah* is the verb as in 17.16 which means to swallow up as it pertains to Israel's heritage or *nachalah* (cf. vs. 1).

Joab knew that this woman heard of his reputation, hence the strong words. However, he protested vigorously but persisted in claiming that Sheba no longer can take refuge in Abel. All she has to do is hand him over, and that's that. Without missing a beat, the woman spoke with her fellow townspeople about the conversation, almost ironically putting it in vs. 22 "in her wisdom." Next they beheaded Sheba and tossed his head over the wall to Joab. Thus ends the siege of Abel with its reputation in tact.

The remaining few verses of Chapter Twenty state that Joab was in command of the army with a few others mentioned as holding certain important posts.

1) belyahal, shophar, cheleq, nachalah, 5) zahaq, mohed, 16) chakam, 17) 'amah, 18) sha'al, tamam, 19) shalam, 'aman, balah, nachalah

Chapter Twenty-One

The notations on this chapter are sparse due to many instances relative to warfare, intrigue and revenge. In other words, the material generally is less suitable for

reading the text in the spirit of *lectio divina*, the intent of this document. Despite this, a few points of interest relative to *lectio* are examined.

This time instead of a human crisis introducing a new chapter we have a famine, the conjunctive *v-* translated as “now.” It lasted a total of three years, not uncommon in ancient times, but the severity is intimated by the way it’s described, “year after year.” Furthermore, David sought the Lord’s face, *baqash* (cf. 12.16) being the verb and implies touching and hence desperation. He was surprised...delighted...that the Lord responded so quickly to his *baqash*, vs. 2 indicative of this translated as “and.” However, the response, quick and succinct as it is, has no direct bearing upon the famine. Instead, the Lord claims that some blood-guilt remains on Saul and his household, *dam* being the noun used meaning blood in and by itself. The reason? Saul had put the Gibeonites to death although there’s no record of it. As for the Gibeonites, when Joshua and the Israelites entered Canaan, they disguised themselves so as not to be killed (cf. Jos 9.4-6). Nevertheless, during his reign, Saul he sought to exclude any non-Israelites compared with David’s more inclusive policy.

In light of this unexpected revelation, David decides to follow through and summon the Gibeonites, a remnant of the Amorites whom Israel had protected despite Saul’s hostility toward them. It seems that since David had ascended the throne the Gibeonites were pretty much minding their own business, enjoying freedom from persecution. In his typically gracious style, David asked what he could do for them, including making expiation, *kaphar* being the verb essentially as to cover. “When our transgressions prevail over us, you forgive them” [Ps 65.3]. Such expiation will enable the Gibeonites to bless the Lord’s heritage, that is, Israel (*barak* and *nachalah*, cf. 13.25 and 20.19).

You’d think that in response to such graciousness the Gibeonites would show profound gratitude. Instead, they get right down to what has been gnawing at them. Though vs. 4 doesn’t mention it explicitly, the Gibeonites claim that they have no right to put anyone to death in Israel. Even before reaching what they have to say, David knew what was at stake, vengeance upon surviving member of Saul’s household. They recounted what David had known, namely, that Saul had sought not to give them any land in Israel. After getting this grievance out in the open, the Gibeonites blurted out what they really wanted. Keep in mind that this is taking place within the context of the three year famine noted at the beginning of this chapter. To the Gibeonites, that’s irrelevant.

The demand the Gibeonites put forth was death to the seven sons of Saul. They wanted to take vengeance out in a spectacular fashion, hanging all seven “before the Lord” at Gibeon. Without blinking an eye, David consented.

Vs. 7 mentions one exception to the sons of Saul, that is, Mephibosheth, due to an oath made between David and Jonathan. However, he had no hesitation of delivering the others. After they had been slain, Rizpah, a former concubine of Saul, went to great length preserving the bodies left exposed. This compelled David to remove the bones of Saul and Jonathan simply to put an end to this rampage initiated (and in a way, sanctioned by him) by the Gibeonites. With a certain irony vs. 14 says that “God heeded the supplication for the land.” The verb is *hatar* as in 24.25, the very last verse of Second Samuel: “So the Lord heeded supplications for the land, and the plague was averted from Israel.”

If this bloody tale of retribution weren’t enough, vs. 15 to the end of this chapter speaks of war between Israel and the Philistines which pretty much is ongoing throughout Israel’s history. As expected, it begins with the untranslated conjunctive *v-*. Obviously it’s another phase of Nathan’s prophecy. There are three phases: vs. 15, vs. 18, vs. 19 and vs. 20, the latter three beginning with the tiresome words “After this there was again war.” Interestingly the last conflict mentions Gath which had a warrior resembling Goliath whom David had slain. By adding this rather spectacular victory with regard to King David, hopefully it will contribute to elevating him in the eyes of both friend and foe.

1) baqash, dam, 3) kaphar, nachalah, 14) hatar

Chapter Twenty-Two

A new chapter with the expected conjunctive *v-* translated as “and.” However, this time it’s different. Usually it shows the close connection between events that had just taken place with the present one. However, we’re on the threshold of King David’s hymn of praise which signals one thing, that he’s preparing himself to die and pass off the scene. The hymn is presented in terms of *davar* (cf 19.43) belonging to a song or *shyrah*, similar to *shyr* as noted in the Psalms. “Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the Lord” [Ex 15.1]. At first it seems to come us suddenly, for the insertion of such often is indicative that the author is close to death. This we don’t discover until the first verse of Chapter Twenty-Three, “Now these are the last words of David.” They are in the form of a song though not

mentioned as such through vs. 7. Also the song can be taken in the context of perhaps the major theme of Second Samuel, the playing out of Nathan's prophecy. David is relieved it will end with his death. However, Nathan was very clear by using the term "house" [12.10] meaning that the prophecy will continue indefinitely afterwards.

As for the theme of David's song, it's within the context of "the day" ('when' in the RSV) the context of two deliverances (the verb *natsal* or to pull, to draw out; cf 19.9): all his enemies and Saul, "hand" being used in both which makes the image more graphic. The former refer mostly to threats as from the Philistines as well as from Absalom whereas the latter chiefly before David assumed kingship over Israel. Reference to Nathan's prophecy is omitted though certainly it was on his mind if not dominating it.

In vs. 2 David begins his song with "he said" or '*amar*, the more common verb to speak. It seems inconsequential enough and used prefacing such utterances. However, "and he said" (conjunctive *v-* in the Hebrew) represents some forethought as to planning the song to be uttered for public consumption. It's as though the person speaking had just remembered something and wants to blurt it out. Thus "and he" said has a certain child-like quality about it which is difficult to get across unless you're sensitive to the context.

Vs. 2 contains three of ten titles, if you will, that King David ascribes to the Lord. All three have the personal pronoun "my" except one and the last which is a verb. The three in the verse at hand: rock, fortress and deliverer or *selah*, *metsudah* and *palat*. Ps 18.2 contains all three: "The Lord is my rock and my fortress and deliverer." As for the second and third, cf 5.17 but not noted there and 22.44.

Vs. 3 contain the remaining seven titles which David mentions quickly, almost stumbling over each one as he races through his song. Note that it parallels Psalm Eighteen to which many words are referenced. Also some parts from **Notes on the Psalms** (also on this homepage) are borrowed, especially from vs. 4 to the end:

-God or '*Elohyim* from which the others flow.

- Rock along with take refuge: *tsur* noted last in 21.10 but not noted there also as a stone or pebble. Compare with *selah* of vs. 2 which connotes height. In (*b-*) this *tsur* David takes refuge or *chasah*, also as to trust. "He is a shield for all those who take refuge in him" [vs. 31].

-Shield: *magen*, also as in vs. 31 just above.

-Horn of salvation: *qeren* and *yeshah*: the first as in Ps 18.3, same wording, and vs. 36: “You have given me the shield of your salvation” [vs. 36].

-Stronghold: *misgav*, also as defense. “The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble” [Ps 9.9]

-Refuge: *manus*, also as a place to flee. “My refuge in the day of affliction” [Jer 16.19].

-Savior: *yashah* or particle; cf 14.4. This same verb is used a second time as “to save” from violence or *chamas* as in vs. 49: “You delivered me from men of violence.”

Vs. 4 first has the verb *halal* or “worthy of all praise” first as in 14.25 but not noted there. An alternate meaning is to be foolish, to glorify. Next comes *qara'* or to call upon (cf 18.9). The result of such *qara'* is *yashah* from enemies (cf vs. 3).

Vs. 5: Death is perceived as waves meaning it comes continuously, not once. The verb is *'aphaph* as in Ps 18.4: “The cords of death encompassed me, the torrents of perdition assailed me.” As for “waves” (*mishbar*), cf Ps 42.7: “All your waves and billows have gone over me.” If the continuous rolling in of waves (i.e., death) weren't enough, David is hit with two more, the first being torrents (the second in the next verse) or *nachal*, also as a valley (cf 17.13 but not noted there). Perhaps the association of torrents and valleys is that the force of water is so strong it gouges out such depths. Associated with this noun is perdition or *belyahal* (cf 20.1) which assaults David, *bahat* fundamentally as to be afraid. “The cords of death encompassed me, the torrents of perdition assailed me” [Ps 18.4].

Vs. 6: *Chevel* is the noun for cord, also a measuring line as well as a snare which here belongs to *Sheol*. Because *Sheol* is the underworld, the image is of such cords springing up from the earth to wrap around the feet of those passing by. References to these two words are Ps 18.4 where death translates as *Sheol*. *Savav* (cf 14.20) is the verb meaning to surround.

As for snares or *moqesh*, they are used with the verb *qadam* or to confront, this also as a coming before, of taking precedence, where death is depicted as a treacherous villain lying in wait.

In vs. 7 David speaks of his distress or distress or *tsar*, from same verbal root as rock in vs. 2, *tsur*. The psalmist calls upon the Lord in (*b-*) such *tsar* or literally “in distress to (*l-*) me.” The verb is *qara'* (cf vs. 4) used twice or in reference to the two prepositions *b-* with *l-* (‘in’ with ‘to’) and *'el-* (toward-which). The first (*b-*) is more

along the lines of the dative case whereas the latter implies more moving in a certain direction (i.e., to-which). Also note the two forms of address, Lord and God.

As for the temple or *heykal*, it can be taken as the one at Jerusalem, the most obvious place for a Jew to contact God. Presumably David's palace was nearby, so it was a matter of simply speaking to someone next door. Note that these words are in the past tense, that David is recounting deliverances that had taken place earlier yet continue to impact the present. The verb *shuah* used for "my cry" which literally has reached "in (b-) God's ears" or has fully penetrated them.

Vs. 8 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as "then," for what comes now flows from David's confession of the Lord as his protector and the sufferings which had afflicted him. Between here and vs. 16 we have a period of time, if you will, when God prepares himself for responding to David. Such preparation consists in a loud and showy display of force which has a somewhat humorous quality by reason of its child-like presentation.

The two verbs *gahash* and *rahash* (to reel and to rock) sound similar and suggest the violent shaking of an earthquake. Note that the former can refer to a state of drunkenness. *Mosadoth* as foundations comes from a verbal root similar to that of fortress whereas *metsudah* connotes firmness which here is applied to mountains. These mountains *ragaz* and *gahash*, the latter word being the second instance in the same verse. The verb to be angry is *charah* which connotes burning.

Vs. 9 is consonant with *charah* mentioned in the previous verse along with another example of such smoke or *hashan* as expressive of divine wrath and in Sg 3.6 an image of the divine bridegroom: "Who is that coming up from the wilderness, like a column of smoke?" The noun '*aph* as "face" fundamentally means nostrils.

As for mouth or *peh*, it's the source of smoke and associated with devouring fire, the adjective coming from '*akal*, to eat. *Peh* also means according to, suggesting an intimate union between the mouth that which is connected with it.

Vs. 10: *shamayim* is the common word for heaven throughout the Bible and often in the plural as here. More often than not, it refers to the boundary of creation, that is, vis-a-vis God's transcendence. Here this heavenly creation is put in perspective regarding divine transcendence by saying that he bowed them, *natah* indicating something inclined as well as a stretching. Since vs. 9 indicates that God bended or stretched out *shamayim*, it is not apparent how he came down (*yarad*) or made a

transition from above the *heavens* to below them, more accurately, from a transcendent to a created realm. *Natah* seems to conceal God just as much as to reveal him. For an example of *yarad* which imparts this sense, cf Ex 19.18: “And Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and the smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain quaked greatly.”

Haraphel is the noun for thick darkness and is associated with clouds and the revelation of God to Moses on Mt. Sinai: “And the people stood afar off, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was” [Ex 20.21]. This word is also indicative of final judgment: “A day of clouds and thick darkness” [Jl 2.2]. Note that such *haraphel* is under God’s feet, i.e., this symbol of transcendence or of an ultimate boarder from the human point of view is for God insignificant because these words of vs. 9 indicate the subjection of *haraphel* to him.

In vs. 11 the Lord comes riding or *rakav* is an image appropriate to a chariot and is the first manifestation of God after the above mentioned bowing of heavens. Such a chariot is likened to a cherub or *keruv* which rhymes with *rakav* and is first mentioned as guarding paradise: “He placed the cherubim and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life” [Gen 3.24]. Later in the Old Testament images of cherubim were located in the innermost part of the temple: “And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work shall you make them, on the two ends of the mercy seat” [Ex 25.18].

Not only did God *rakav* on a cherub, he flew, *huph* being a word naturally associated with the flight of birds: “Oh that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest” [Ps 55.6]. This *huph* reveals God’s manner of descent from behind the *shamayim* or heavens as already mentioned; furthermore, it signifies a soaring over the division between divine and human spheres as a result of sin

The verb *da’ah* as to come swiftly implies the rapid motion of birds of prey; only two other references exist, Dt 28.49 & Jer 48.40, 49.22, which imply destruction for Israel. Wings (*kanphy*) and wind or *ruach* are both invisible, so to use these two words together suggests the source of wind’s power. *Ruach* is the well known word for Spirit.

In vs. 12 is another image of darkness as divine transcendence, the term being *cheshek* within the larger context of Psalm 18's imagery of divine power manifested through natural powers. The Book of Exodus is the classical locus for such imagery although

the particular word *cheshek* has a defensive overtone as in 14.20: “And there was the cloud and the darkness; and the night passed without one coming near the other all night.”

The verbal root for covering or *satar* has a charming connotation as in Gen 31.49: “The Lord watch between you and me, when we are absent one from the other,” i.e., when we (Laban and Jacob) are out of contact with each other. Despite such *satar*, God nevertheless watches or *tsaphah* as in Jer 6.17: “I set watchmen over you.” This *tsaphah* is characteristic of a prophet’s vocation to watch, of paying attention. In vs. 11, note that such *seter* (the noun) is around him, *sevyvothayu*, namely, completely enveloping God.

Not only is darkness a covering around God, he has a canopy or *sukah* which is associated with booth as in Lev 23.42-3: “You shall dwell in booths for seven days; all that are native in Israel shall dwell in booths, that you generations may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt.” Such dwelling in a *sukah* for seven days represents the (Genesis) six days of creation and the day when God rested from his work. Note the purpose of *sukah*, to recall Israel’s deliverance from Egypt.

Hav for thick pertains to a cloud as in Ex 19.9: “Lo, I am coming to you in a thick cloud.” Here cloud equals *hanan*. In vs. 11 the Hebrew words thick clouds follow dark with water or *cheshkath-maym* where the word *chashak* is first found in Gen 1.2: “and darkness was upon the face of the deep.” This association of *cheshek* (the noun) with the very beginning of creation upon which “the Spirit of God was moving” is one image the psalmist may have in mind vis-a-vis the coming of God to deliver him in Ps 18. Water or *maym* can be taken as related to that deep of Gen 1.2, *tehom*.

Vs. 13: The mention of light, brightness, within the broader context of images pertaining to darkness. The word used is *nogah* which more accurately implies a type of illumination. “And for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until her vindication goes forth as brightness and her salvation as a burning torch” [Is 62.1]. As for coals of fire (*gachaley-‘esh*), they are mentioned first in Ps 18.8; there *‘esh* or fire is lacking.

Vs. 14: Scientifically speaking the precedence of thunder before lightening is correct; here it is identified with YHWH’s voice, and the verb *raham* is associated with the expression of anger. Such *raham* is also a warning: “The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces; against them he will thunder in heaven” [1 Sam 2.10]. Note that *raham* precedes utterance of God’s voice; the Hebrew text reads, “gave his voice,” a

more poetic expression signifying preparation or intention of what such thundering will mean to whomever listens to it, not simply hear it. Most High or *Helyon* is used, indicating the lofty position from which comes the divine *raham*.

Hailstones and coals of fire are elements which were mentioned in the previous verse are associated with God's voice; note the contrast between the cold of the former and heat of the latter. In vs. 12 they were associated with God's brightness, i.e., visual manifestation, whereas in vs. 13 their association is with his voice, auditory manifestation.

Vs. 15: The dispatch of arrows (*chets*, singular) refers to lightening bolts. This noun is mentioned frequently throughout the Psalter, usually in a negative sense or when referring to the psalmist's adversaries. The image of lightening bolts, especially plural as with vs. 14, is one of awesome power yet of disarray, a fact emphasized by the verb used, *puts*: "Should your springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets" [Prov 5.16]? *Puts* is sometimes used in reference to Israel's dispersion abroad: "countries in which you have been scattered" [Ezk 11.17]. This image of arrows scattering foes may apply to Israel on those occasions when it aggravated God.

A better way of reading the Hebrew for the flashing of lightning is as follows: "He multiplied his shafts and routed them." The multiplication or *ravah* of such shafts intensifies the earlier words of this verse. Note the distinction between arrow and shaft (*chets* and *baraq*), the latter more specifically referring to a bolt of lightning. The use of *baraq* in this context can allude to Ezk 21.15: "I have given the glittering sword; ah! It is made like lightning." The multiplication or *ravah* of such swords suggests an army composed of soldiers with shafts which they hurl all at once to route God's foes, *hamam*. "For indeed the hand of the Lord was against them, to destroy them from the camp until they had perished" [Dt. 2.10], a verse at the beginning of Israel's wandering in the desert after coming from Egypt. Perhaps the author had in mind Ex 14.24: "And in the morning watch the Lord in the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down upon the host of the Egyptians and discomfited them." What God had done then he is expected to do again.

Vs. 16: This verse speaks of channels and foundations which are commonly associated with the bottom or utmost reaches of creation in contrast to the upper reaches of heaven described in earlier verses. Channel or '*aphyq* (verbal root means to restrain; cf vs. 4, 'The cords of death encompassed me') are a kind of ancient plumbing system and the source of water which is associated with chaos as we see in the opening words of Genesis. For a similar verse, cf 2 Sam 22.16: "Then the channels

of the sea were seen, the foundations of the world were laid bare, at the rebuke of the Lord, at the blast of the breath of his nostrils.” ‘*Aphyq* may also be found in Sg 5.12: “doves by the rivers of waters.” Thus this word contains the alternate meaning of water as nourishing.

Two types of becoming visible: channels were seen (verbal root is the common *ra’ah*) and foundations were laid bare, *galah* also in the sense of making naked. The former pertains to an object becoming visible, whereas the latter with its sense of uncovering suggests revelation, a discovery of something which previously had remained hidden or unknown. The imagery of vs. 15 is that of channels lying on the foundations, a network of tubing which taps into the ground beneath to reach the source of those “waters under the firmament” [Gen 1.7]. *Galah* may apply to God’s manifestation: “There he [Jacob] built an altar and called the place El-Bethel because there God had revealed himself to him” [Gen 35.7]. For a negative sense of this verb: “and the earth will disclose the blood shed upon her and will no more cover her slain” [Is 26.21].

Galah is connected with foundations, *mosadoth*, as in Prov 8.29: “When he marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was beside him, like a master workman.” Master workman or ‘*amon*, a rare Hebrew word perhaps associated with ‘*aman*, from which we get our amen and which connotes faithfulness in the sense of being a support. We thus may take the psalmist as being an ‘*amon* with God who makes the foundations *galah*.

The divine rebuke (from the verbal root *gahar*) is the agent which caused seeing and revealing, that is, *ra’ah* and *galah*. Without such a rebuke, the sea’s channels and earth’s foundations would not become manifest. An example of such *gahar* as related to the created realm which is put to service of the people of Israel: “He rebuked the Red Sea, and it became dry” [Ps 106.9]. This general type of rebuke is amplified by the blast of the breath of the Lord’s nostrils. The main word breath, *nashamah* (from *nasham*, to pant) which modifies breath or *ruach* is the word generally used to indicate divinity in action, the Holy Spirit of the New Testament. The source of this divine *ruach* is God’s nostrils or ‘*aph* which can mean anger and face.

Vs. 17: Perhaps this reaching or *shalach* (fundamentally means to send) is primarily through God’s *ruach* of the last verse, so it is invisible to human sight. “Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took (*laqach* as in vs. 16) him” [Gen 5.24]. Since Enoch lived in between the two floods, as it were—those of the first creation and those before Noah—such taking at the early stage of human history is etched in Israel’s collective mind as an archetype.

With regard to the many waters, compare Ex 2.10: “And the child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh’s daughter, and he became her son; and she named him Moses, for she said, ‘Because I drew him out of the water.’” The same verb is used here, *mashah* forming the root for the name Moses, indicative of his future role of drawing Israel from Egypt through the Red Sea.

Vs. 18: This verse is easy to apply to the Exodus at the Red Sea. The verb *natsal* (to deliver) has the connotation of pulling away or drawing out; it deals with emancipation of a rather sudden, unexpected nature as before the Egyptian forces. With this in mind, it could be intimated that “In the morning watch the Lord in the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down upon the host of the Egyptians and discomfited the host of the Egyptians” [Ex 14.24, cf vs.14 above]. Thus *natsal* is connected with this divine looking down or *shaqaph*, which implies looking from a window, almost in a furtive manner.

In addition to an enemy which is strong (*haz*), the psalmist is rescued from those who hated me and who are marked by might, from the verbal root ‘*amats* which implies alertness: “And when Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more” [Rt 1.18].

Vs. 19: The verb *qadam* means to precede, to come before (cf Ps 17.13), implying suddenness or surprise attack which is countered by God’s *shaqaph* of Ex 14.24 just above. The use of day with regard to calamity or ‘*eyd* implies a burden; such a day does not especially mean from sunrise to sunset but an occasion or special event. Thus the two, day and calamity, are one: “For the day of their calamity is at hand” [Dt 32.25]. And, “I will show them my back, not my face, in the day of their calamity” [Jer 18.17].

Mishhen or staff is closely related to *mishheneth*, staff: “Your rod and your staff, they comfort me” [Ps 23.4]. This word is different from the *mateh* of Moses: “Take your rod and cast it down before Pharaoh, that it may become a serpent” [Ex 7.9]. *Mateh* also means tribe as those composing Israel (cf Num 1.4-49).

Vs. 20: Obviously, the broad place is the other side of the Red Sea after Israel’s deliverance; it can also refer to the Promised Land. *Merchav* is the destination, distinct from the narrow confines of day of my calamity of vs. 18. Such *merchav* is also a day, an occasion, worthy of commemoration: “This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord” [Ex 12.14]. Such an

injunction to recall the most important event in Israel's history is frequently repeated in the Old Testament; the *merchav* into which the people entered after crossing the Red Sea is the real place-where that is commemorated.

Note the similar sound of deliver and delight, a fact which implies their unity: *chalats* and *chaphats*. Cf Ps 6.4 for the double sense of to draw out and to be ready. *Chalats* has the sense of drawing out or taking away; its secondary meaning is to be manful, active as in Dt 3.18: "The Lord your God has given you this land to possess; all your men of valor shall pass over armed." With this second use of *chalats* in mind, we may say that God has delivered the psalmist as well as having armed him. *Chaphats* as to delight implies a deep sense of ardor, of longing after something, and in the following verse is linked with marriage: "But you shall be called My delight is in her and your land Married, for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married" [Is 62 4].

Vs. 21: An exact correspondence between divine reward and righteousness as indicated by the word according to, *k-*. *Gamal* as to reward also means to wean: "As a child weaned at its mother's breast, like a child that is weaned is my soul" [Ps 131.2]. For *gamal* as to ripen: "For before the harvest when the blossom is over, and the flower becomes a ripening grape, he will cut off the shoots with pruning hooks" [Is 18.5]. The notion of reward/wean applies to the psalmist's righteousness (*tsadaqah*) as discussed earlier in several places. In the next few verses the psalmist boasts of his *tsadaqah* which appears alien to genuine religious sensibility.

Another form of divine redress applies to the psalmist's hands. Such cleanliness or bor also can mean son, from the verbal root *bara'*, to beget, create. Two instances of *bor*: "The choice one of her who bore her" [Sg 6.9] and "fair as the moon, clear as the sun" [Sg 6.10]. The notion of creating and cleanliness can imply the correct use of the psalmist's hands, that is, with regard to divine service. The verb *yashav* (to recompense) implies a dwelling or permanent lodging; applied to the psalmist, his recompense is therefore an abiding reality.

Vs. 22: Such ways (*derek*, singular) imply treading and therefore feet, however, the keeping of this verse (*shamar*) often refers to the Divine Law as spelled out in Ps 119 and may equally apply to the cleanliness of my hands of the last verse. Departure from God is disagreeable for the psalmist which he emphasizes by the verb *rashah*, to do evil. The Hebrew lacks departed and reads, "have not done wickedly from my God." From (*m-*) suggests this turning away in the **RSV**.

Vs. 23: *Mishpat* or ordinance occurs frequently in the Psalter and closely related to the *Torah*. Note that they are before me (*negedy*), implying constant attention by the psalmist's eyes, a fact which concurs with keeping the ways of the Lord in vs. Ps 18.21. Such putting away or *sur* means in this context, a removal from sight or that *negedy* just above. *Sur* connotes not just this but more specifically a departure from divine statutes, *chuqah* (singular); this word whose verbal root applies to something which is established means that the psalmist is determined to keep the divine statutes. Note that we have here from me (*meny*), whereas earlier vs. 22 reads before me, *negedy*.

Vs. 24: Blameless or *tamym* (from the verbal root *tamam*) implies perfection in the sense of something having been accomplished or fulfilled: "I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless" [Gen 17.1]. It also applies to a sacrificial victim, for example, when the Israelites celebrated the first Passover: "Your lamb shall be without blemish" [Ex 12.5], words applicable to Jesus Christ as in "Behold, the lamb of God" [Jn 1.36], a statement which John the Baptist immediately applied to Christ upon seeing him. Before him or *himu* is better rendered in the Hebrew as "with him," signifying an abiding presence.

Shamar is used with keeping as in the Divine Law or *Torah* which has this secondary sense of constantly refraining from guilt or *hon* which suggests punishment.

Vs. 25: *Shuv* for recompense as discussed with regard to Ps 14.7 ('When the Lord restores the fortunes of his people'), namely, to restore something which had been in the psalmist's possession, has lost, and got back again. I.e., this three-fold action is implied in the verb *shuv*, here in conjunction with righteousness (*tsadaqah*), more precisely my righteousness or that righteousness inherent as being made in God's image and likeness.

The second "according to" or *k-* in this verse which closely parallels vs. 20 ('according to the cleanness of my hands he recompensed me'), only the present verse refers this *bor* to God's sight or better, his eyes, faculties which do the actual seeing with regard to the psalmist.

Vs. 26: An equal exchange of loyalty, *chesed* being used and one of its multiple meanings; the use of *chesed* (which equates the New Testament *agape*) is related to the earlier verses where the psalmist has described the exchange of qualities he shares with the divinity, this one being the most noble. It should be noted that there are approximately 127 references to *chesed* in the Psalter. As for blameless, it's *tamym*

first encountered in vs. 23. “For the upright will inhabit the land, and men of integrity will remain in it” [Prov 2.21].

Vs. 27: Still yet another correspondence between God and the psalmist, all qualities which reflect a person being made in God’s image. *Bor* or pure was discussed in vs. 24 above in reference to hands; here the whole person is implied. The opposite of *bor* is described by the equation of a crooked person—the verbal root is *haqash* which means to twist—with God being perverse or *patal* which has a similar meaning emphasizing the quality of deceit. This interplay of human *haqash* and divine *patal* reveals the mirror quality of *eikon* or image; whatever a person chooses is reflected upon God which, in turn, is reflected back and in a more intense manner.

Vs. 28: An instance of the verbal root of Jesus, *yashah*, this time in conjunction with a humble people with the adjective derived from *hanah* with its alternate meanings of to answer, to sing, to testify. “Towards the scorners he is scornful, but to the humble he shows favor” [Prov 3.34].

As for humble and eyes (*hany* and *henyaym*), note the play on words. The verb *shaphal* (to bring down) does not necessarily apply to the humble people or to put haughty eyes on this level. “The Lord makes poor and makes rich; he brings low, he also exalts” [1 Sam 2.7]. Vs. 27 specifies the such arrogance, by associating it with eyes, a familiar image to describe a contemptuous attitude. This image is in contrast to God’s eyes as in Ps 11.4, “His eyes behold, his eyelids test, the children of men.”

Vs. 29: The image suggests God being a wick bending over to light the psalmist as a lamp, something one does at the approach of evening. Here we have the general word for light (*or*), a creative act reminiscent of “Let there be light and there was light” [Gen 1.3]. This verse is interesting in that there is a unity between the words let there be (*yehy*) and light (*or*). Lamp or *ner* often carries over this creative or vivifying aspect of light and can refer to a person: “You shall no more go out with us to battle, lest you quench the lamp of Israel” [2 Sam 21.17, referring to King David].

Vs. 30: First it should be noted that yes/for (*ky-*) also introduces vss. 27 & 28 and suggests resolve with regards to faith in God, not dissimilar to the word amen. Once endowed with divine luminosity, the psalmist is emboldened to face his enemies as we see here; *veka* or by you (more specifically, ‘in you’) carries over the psalmist as having received that *nagah* of vs. 28.

The psalmist applies his divine illumination not just to someone hostile but to a multitude of antagonists or troop, *gedod* being derived from the verbal root *gadad*, to cut into, words descriptive of the ripping action proper to an assault force. This penetrating force can be crushed (*ratsats*), namely, shown the same violence with which it brought against the psalmist; *ratsats* implies oppressing, that is, not just a simple assault on the troop but a sustained action against it.

After crushing the troop sent against the psalmist, he escapes over a wall, *shur* being derived from the verbal root meaning to go round, to journey, suggesting a fortified bulwark. The verb *shur* also means to behold in the sense that from this bulwark the psalmist looks out over the victory he has accomplished with divine help. An instance of *shur*: “Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a spring; his branches run over the wall” [Gen 49.22].

Also the leaping of vs. 30 or *dalag* can refer to an assault on a fortified place after having crushed the troop sent against the psalmist. “The voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes, leaping upon the mountains, bounding over the hills” [Sg 2.8]. Here *dalag* in conjunction with the bridegroom’s voice implies that his voice echoes throughout the valleys of the mountains. Such *dalag* is described in Is 35.6: “Then shall the lame man leap like a hart.” Note the similarity of two animals noted for their ability to leap, stag (cf Sg 2.9) and hart.

Vs. 31: God’s way or *derek* is perfect, *tamym*: note the singular as opposed to plural “ways,” reminiscent of Jn 14.6: “I am the way, the truth and the life,” a statement also in the singular along with truth and life. The aspect of walking normally associated with way may apply to these other two features of Jesus Christ.

The second feature of God in vs. 30, more specifically YHWH, is his promise or in Hebrew, word (*imrah*). Such is the dual feature of *imrah* as something uttered which is reliable. “Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him” [Prov 30.5]. This verse brings out another aspect of the divine *imrah* as proven true or *tseruphah* whose verbal root means to refine which is also in vs. 30.

The third feature belonging to God is a shield or *magen* as in vs. 2 for all those who take refuge in him. This taking of refuge or *chasah* implies trust; from an associated verb *chush*, to make haste. Thus the act of taking shelter or hiding suggests swiftness in its accomplishment.

Vs. 32: The asking of these two questions is more a boast with respect to God as perfect, true and a shield (of vs. 30); i.e., nothing can compare with their divine qualities. The two questions are uttered only once the psalmist has taken refuge in him, that is, from the protective side of this divine shield. “But” or *balhaey* (without; the prefix *m-* is used here) stresses God/Lord or ‘*eloah*/YHWH as true being compared to which nothing exists.

The second boast about God as *tsur*. As noted with regard to vs. 2, *tsur* derives from a verb meaning to besiege, and its use in vs. 31 implies a fortified place (the question reveals this as well). Moses was located on such a *tsur* to behold God: “Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand upon the rock; and while my glory passes by I will put you in cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by” [Ex 33.21-2]. Although God and rock are not synonymous, the reality is the same. Note the Exodus passage reads “cleft of the rock,” a more precise location; the Hebrew reads *neqarah*, from the root *naqar*, to bore (Is 2.21 is the only other reference). The psalmist calls the divinity “our God,” alluding to the collective nation of Israel.

Vs. 33: To gird or ‘*azar* denotes clothing as well as protection; also signifies preparation as in “Gird now your loins like a man” [Job 30.18]. When such ‘*azar* comes with divine strength (*chayl*; other meanings are army, wealth) as in this verse, a type of splendor is implied, almost of the flashy variety. “And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light” [Mt 17.2].

The Hebrew reads for safe *tamym* as seen in vss. 23 & 30 is in the sense being perfection, complete. Here it is related to *derek* as in vs. 30 where God’s way is *tamym*; it is though the perfection of divine *derek* were transferred to that of the psalmist’s. The direction of such a *derek* needs not demonstration except in conjunction with Jn 14.6 used above as Christ being such a *derek*, truth and life.

Vs. 34: To make like or *shawah* was first encountered in Ps 16.8: “I keep the Lord always before me.” The alternate meaning of this verb is to fear: “You make me to melt and frighten me” [Job 30.22]. Such act of making similar connotes a definite setting or place; i.e., permanence. Note that God works with the psalmist’s feet; these are the principle means by which a person treads a way (*derek*; cf the previous verse). “I will run in the way of your commandments” [Ps 119.32], that is, run like a hind or ‘*ayalah*. The verbal root implies strength more than swiftness, although this is certainly included. “I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or the

hinds of the field, that you stir not up nor awaken love until it please” [Sg 2.7; cf 3.5]. Note that the strength of this animal is used in reference to the bridegroom being asleep.

Heights or *bamah* is the goal of the hind, more precisely where God secures the psalmist, *hamad*. This verb also means to stand in the sense of remaining in a given position and implies that such standing makes one conspicuous. “God, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like hinds’ feet, he makes me tread upon my high places” [Hab 3.19]. *Bamah* also means a fortress, so to *hamad* in such a place makes one stand out much as a castle does on a hilltop.

Vs. 35: This training or *lamad* evidently takes place on the heights of vs. 33; this verb implies a chastisement as well as preparation for battle. *Lamad* is frequently used in reference to the chief object of study for Jews, the Torah with its various statutes as in Ps 119. Note that the Syriac translation of the New Testament has a word for Christ’s disciples which is derived from this verb and implies that they have been taught not only by him but by the Torah. The object of *lamad* in vs. 34 is for war or *milchamah*, more specifically, it refers to the psalmist’s hands which implies skill with a bow and or sword. Only his hands can be trained in this fashion after his feet became like those of a hind in vs. 33.

Bending a bow is a skill in which the psalmist receives his divine *lamad*. Such a bow is made of bronze implying one of great strength as the following clearly shows: “Because I know that you are obstinate, and your neck is an iron sinew and your forehead brass” [Is 48.4]. The Hebrew reads for bend, *nachat* or more precisely, to break, to go down, indicating that the psalmist snaps this bow of bronze in pieces.

Vs. 36: This bestowal of protective armor is reminiscent of Eph 6.14-17: “Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breast plate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace.” *Magen* is associated with *yeshah* or salvation.

Note use of right hand as opposed to the left, this hand being considered the better of the two. *Sahad* for support more specifically applies to encouragement as in Gen 18.5: “Refresh your heart.” Such *sahad* may be considered a more specific action of that *lamad* spoken of in vs. 34.

Hanewah more specifically means gentleness as from the verb *hanah* (cf vs. 27). Introduction of this quality contrasts with the apparently militaristic flavor of this

psalm. There is a contrast between *hanah* and *ravah*, to be great, in the sense that the former can apply to humility (a derivative of *hanah*) and the latter to fame, but note that it is “your [divine] gentleness.”

Vs. 37: *Rachav* or to be wide is like the Latin *amplus* which embraces the notion of height and depth; the noun suggests this by often being translated as breadth as with regard to the description of the divine temple in Exodus 25-37. *Rachav* also applies to God’s commandment: “Your commandment is exceedingly broad” [Ps 119.96]. With this latter verse in mind, it is not difficult to see that such *rachav* is the place on which the psalmist may tread or set my steps, *tsahady*. This word refers to a slow, solemn pace as well as an ascending motion.

Note the difference between *tsahady* and *qarsol*, more precisely, ankle, little joint. This and 2 Sam 22.37 are the only uses of the word. *Mahad* or to slip suggests a tottering motion, that is, in contrast to the stability of *rachav* just mentioned.

Vs. 38: The sure footing which God bestowed upon the psalmist is intended for his pursuit of enemies, *radaph*. The psalmist can liken his unswerving intent the Egyptians who chased the Israelites right into the sea but without their malicious objective: “And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt and he pursued the people of Israel while they went forth defiantly” [Ex 14.8]. *Radaph* can be used in the positive sense of following righteousness: “Hearken to me, you who pursue deliverance, you who seek the Lord” [Is 52.1]. Not only did the psalmist *radaph* his enemies, he overtook them, *nasag* in the sense of attaining his goal, their destruction. Again, referring to the Egyptians’ pursuit, “and overtook them encamped at the sea” [Ex 14.9]. This verse illustrates that *nasag* does not mean actualization of a goal but close proximity to it, a necessary stage before final accomplishment.

The determination not to *shuv* (to turn back) suggests forward, unstoppable motion. *Kalah* or to consume, refers to a final consummation of the task at hand, reflective of that *tamym* of vs. 32 (‘and made my way safe’). “Thus shall my anger spend itself, and I will vent my fury upon them and satisfy myself; and they shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken in my jealousy, when I spend my fury upon them” [Ezk 5.13]. This verse reveals the psalmist’s intent, not for destruction but for knowledge of the Lord.

Vs. 39: This verse begins with the verb *kalah* or to consume as in the previous verse and is missing in the Ps 18 excerpt. More often than not *machats* is used (to thrust) to

convey a sense of wounding: “I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand” [Dt 32.39]. Not being able to rise implies that this wounding is permanent, no longer a threat to the psalmist. Falling at one’s feet is a symbol of subjection as in war which is abiding, but as the earlier words of this verse suggest, death to such enemies is not especially implied.

Vs. 40: Compare with vs. 32 (‘The God who girded me with strength’) where the same word for to gird is used (‘azar’); the same applies to with strength, only here such *chyal* is more specific, for battle, *lamilchamah* (note *l-* prefixed, in the sense of ‘in the direction of, to’) as in vs. 34, “He trains my hands for war.” For another reference with ‘azar: “The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble gird on strength” [1 Sam 2.4]. Here as in vs. 39 *chyal* or strength is used similar to a garment or piece of armor.

Karah is the verb to sink and more specifically means to bend, to bow: “To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear” [Is 45.23]. And, “at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth” [Phil 2.10]. This action does not necessarily imply destruction as we have seen in vs. 38; it is more an acknowledgment of divine sovereignty, of creation’s eventual *hupotage*. *Qamay* for my assailants derives from the verb to rise (*qum*) and represents the movement opposite to *karah* and which is the inevitable outcome of this upward motion of attack.

Vs. 41: *Haraph* is the verbal root for neck, *horeph*; it often signifies rebellion or a rebellious attitude: “I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff necked people” [Ex 32.9]. While the image in vs. 40 is one of flight before the psalmist, we may refer it to a complaint of Jeremiah: “Yet they did not listen to me or incline their ear but stiffened their neck” [Jer 7.26]. Perhaps it is because of this latter hardness of heart that the psalmist has to resort to destruction, *tsamath*.

Vs. 42: This verse begins with the verb *shahah* or to look in the sense of looking around and is not in Ps 18. This cry or *shuah* for help or *moshyah* goes unheeded; note the play on words here. Note that the cry is a general one, whereas the second part of this verse has them crying to the Lord. An even more ominous silence greets them because their *shuah* is direction to YHWH who gives no answer or *hanah*.

Vs. 43: *Shachaq* or to beat is the verbal root for cloud which is composed of fine droplets of moisture: “By his knowledge the deeps broke forth, and the clouds drop down the dew” [Prov 3.20]. Before the wind or the *ruach* intimates the Holy Spirit

before which such enemies are destroyed. The noun for “out” is *chuts* and signifies banishment which may or may not be permanent and was the worst fate that could befall anyone: “You shall put out both male and female, putting them outside the camp, that they may not defile the camp” [Num 5.3]. Streets definitely refers to a town (Jerusalem) as opposed to the transitory nature of Israel’s time in the desert. Nevertheless, the concept of banishment remains the same.

Vs. 44: *Palat* is the verb for to deliver in this context, and with its connotation of sleekness, this type of deliverance suggests a covert escape. The deliverance here is from strife or *ryv* with the people which can mean verbal as well as physical. The singular people (as opposed to plural nations which follow) suggests Israel.

The setting of the psalmist as head (*r’osh*) is in reference to the plural nations, *goym*, traditional word for Gentiles. *R’osh* suggests the source or beginning of something. Note the identity of nations and disciples, the latter term being derived from the verb *lamad* (cf vs.34 above).

Vs. 45: The verb *shamah* is one and the same for hear and obey. Note that the text does not say that such people (the nations and people of vs. 43) heard the psalmist directly. Foreigners form another category of people distinct from Israel and is derived from the verbal root *nakar*, to estrange, to alienate, to know. This last definition seems to come from the fact that one looks at...knows...that which is different or new. Such people approach cringing, *kachash* which also implies to lie, to deceive.

Vs. 46: *Nakar* (cf previous verse) is the verbal root for foreigners. Since this verse follows the one before it with these people who approached cringing, here they clearly have lost heart or *naval* which fundamentally means to be foolish and from which is derived the proper name Nabal: “Let not my lord [David] regard this ill-natured fellow, Nabal; for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name” [1 Sam 25.25]. The alternate meaning of *nabal* is to fade, lose strength, which is applicable to vs. 45.

As for coming out trembling or *charag* (only use in the Old Testament), it’s a sign of surrender, especially when coupled with fastnesses, *misgereth* (from the root *sagar*, to shut up, to enclose). Most often it is used as a border in the sense of an ornamentation: “And he [Bezalel] made around it [table for inside the ark] a frame a handbreadth wide and made a molding of gold around the frame” [Ex 37.12].

Vs. 47: The expression “the Lord lives” is both one of joy and triumph at the psalmist’s victory over his enemies as just described. Not only does he live but does so as a rock, *tsur*. This word is discussed in vs. 31 with reference to Moses’ vision on Mt. Sinai. *Rum* or exalted applies to not just to salvation but to the God of this salvation, *yeshah*.

Vs. 48: The verbal root of vengeance is *naqam* which conveys the sense of breathing heavily (cf the kindred *nacham*). “Therefore thus says the Lord: ‘Behold, I will plead your cause and take vengeance for you” [Jer 51.36]. This divine form of vengeance is equivalent to zeal: “Zeal for your house will consume me” [Jn 2.17, quoting Ps 69.9] and is more specific in that it requires greater discipline to execute than simply taking out vengeance. The end result for such *naqam* is subjection of people. The Hebrew has the word *davar* (to speak), suggesting that verbal utterances are more effective than military or political actions.

Vs. 49: The verb *palat* is used for this first of two instances of deliverance (cf vs. 43). Note the different use of two verbs pertaining to the notion of rising, exalt (*rum*) and adversaries (verbal root is *qamah*). The former is a more specific exultation, that is, rising above anything else to which it may be compared, whereas the latter is a simple ascending motion. No matter how high these adversaries *qumah*, the psalmist can *rum* yet higher.

Natsal or to deliver (cf vs. 17; *natsal* connotes a pulling out) in reference to violence or *chamas*, literally as “man of violence.”

Vs. 50: *Yadah* is the verb used for extol which fundamentally means to cast, to throw (usually upwards); the idea is that one’s hand is raised to point out something. The locale for such *yadah* is among the nations, more specifically in (b-) *goyim*, a fact early Christians saw as consistent with the apostolic task of the New Testament.

As for singing praises, note the emphasis upon the divine name or *shem* as opposed to God himself; such a name refers to that most fundamental of divine revelations, Ex 3.14, “I am who am.” In addition to this, God identifies himself with “the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” Thus we have a two-fold revelation of God: supreme unknowability and as a being who interacts in space and time.

Vs. 51: Triumphs or *yeshuhoth* (connotes deliverance) refers to King David. Also note the noun *meshyach*, a common appellation for Jesus Christ who is the object of divine love, *chesed*.

Not only is David mention but his descendants. *Zarah* is the verbal root for descendants and from which comes seed often used in reference to continued divine blessings in the future: “To your descendants I will give this land” [Gen 12.7].

1) *davar*, *shyrah*, *natsal*, 2) *selah*, *metsudah*, *palat*, 3) *tsur*, *chasah*, *magen*, *qeren*, *yeshah*, *misgav*, *manus*, *yashah* (twice), *chamas*, 4) *halal*, *qara'*, *qara*, *yashah*, 5) 'aphaph, *mishbar*, *nachal*, *belyahal*, *bahat*, 6) *chevel*, *Sheol*, *savav*, *moqesh*, *qadam*, 7) *tsar*, *qara'*, *heykal*, *shuah*, 8) *gahash*, *rahash*, *mosadoth*, *metsudah*, *ragaz*, *gahash*, *charah*, 9) *charah*, *hashan*, 'aph, *peh*, 10) *shamayim*, *natah*, *yarad*, *haraphel*, 11) *rakav*, *huph*, *da'ah*, *kanphy*, *ruach*, 12) *cheshek*, *tsaphah*, *seter*, *sukah*, *hav*, *maym*, 13) *nogah*, *gachaley*-*'esh*, 14) *raham*, *Helyon*, *chets*, 15) *chets*, *puts*, *baraq*, *ravah*, *hamam*, 16) 'aphyq, *ra'ah*, *galah*, *mosadoth*, *gahar*, *nashamah*, *ruach*, 'aph, 17) *shalach*, *laqach*, *mashah*, 18) *natsal*, *shaqaph*, *haz*, 'amats, 19) *qadam*, 'eyd, *mishhen*, *mateh*, 20) *chalats*, *chaphats*, 21) *gamal*, *tsadaqah*, *bara'*, *bor*, *yashav*, 22) *derek*, *shamar*, *rashah*, 23) *mishpat*, *negedy*, *chuqah*, *meny*, 24) *tamym*, *shamar*, 25) *shuv*, *tsadaqah*, 26) *chesed*, *tamym*, 27) *bor*, *haqash*, *patal*, 28) *yashah*, *hany*, *henyaym*, *shaphal*, 29) 'or, *yehy*, 30) *nagah*, *gedod*, *ratsats*, *shur*, *dalag*, 31) *derek*, *tamym*, 'imrah, *tseruphah*, *magen*, *chasah*, 32) *tsur*, *neqarah*, 33) 'azar, *chayl*, *tamym*, *derek*, 34) *shawah*, 'ayalah, *bamah*, *hamad*, 35) *lamad*, *milchamah*, *nachat*, 36) *magen*, *yeshah*, *sahad*, *hanewah*, *hanah*, *ravah*, 37) *rachav*, *tsahady*, *qarsol*, *mahad*, 38) *radaph*, *nasag*, *shuv*, *kalah*, 39) *kalah*, *machats*, 40) 'azar, *chyal*, *milchamah*, *karah*, *qum*, 41) *horeph*, *tsamath*, 42) *shahah*, *shuah*, *hanah*, 43) *shachaq*, *ruach*, *chuts*, 44) *palat*, *ryv*, *r'osh*, 45) *shamah*, *nakar*, *kachash*, 46) *nakar*, *nabal*, *charag*, *misgereth*, 47) *tsur*, *yeshah*, 48) *naqam*, *davar*, 49) *palat*, *rum*, *qumah*, *natsal*, *chamas*, 50) *yadah*, *goym*, *shem*, 51) *yeshuhoth*, *meshyach*, *chesed*, *zarah*

Chapter Twenty-Three

The conjunctive *v-* introducing this chapter is translated as “now,” indicative that as soon as David had completed his prayer (as in Psalm Eighteen), we have his last *davar* (cf. 22.48), the former flowing into the other as one and the same. Vs. 1 isn't uttered by David but is a kind of introduction to such *davar* presented as an oracle or the participle *na'am* which originally means to utter, to murmur (cf. 2.30 but not

noted there). In fact, this introductory verse calls David “son of Jesse” so as not to forget his roots. Then it proceeds to bestow upon him three titles;

1) The oracle or *na'am* of one who was raised on high, *qum* (cf. 22.40) and the preposition *hal*, also as upon, this upon-ness suggestive of being *hal* Israel.

2) Anointed or *meshyach* (cf. 22.51) with regard to the God of Jacob.

3) Sweet psalmist of Israel or literally “the favorite of the songs of Israel.” The adjective is *nahym* also as agreeable (cf. 1.23) which modifies the noun *zamyir* which also means psalm as well as branch. “Let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise” [Ps 95.2]!

In vs. 2 David himself begins to speak and does so through vs. 7. He begins with a rather bold claim, namely, that the Spirit (*Ruach*) of the Lord *davar* (cf. 22.43 and 48) literally “in me.” Furthermore his words are upon his tongue, the noun *milah*, not *davar*, which is found more often in poetic utterances as here. “Yet their voice goes out through all the earth and their words to the end of the world” [Ps 19.4]. In the verse at hand, such poetic utterances are not given voice; they are present on the tongue of David waiting for them to go forth. Not necessarily is the *Ruach davar* through him part of such utterances; more specifically, it can be for David, not others.

Vs. 3 has two types of speaking relative to David by God with two divine titles: the more prosaic ‘*amar* which means to bring to light and *davar* (cf. vs. 2) or to speak as to give utterance. The former pertains to the God (‘*Elohey*) of Israel and the latter to the Rock of Israel, *Tsur* (cf. 22.47). Thus: ‘*amar* -> ‘*Elohey* and *davar* -> *Tsur*.

Both ‘*amar* and *davar* work hand-in-hand through David which now tell about ruling or *mashal* literally “in men.” “For dominion belongs to the Lord, and he rules over the nations” [Ps 22.28]. The latter is not unlike the former, literally “in the nations.” *Mashal* also pertains to being done in the fear of the God, *yirah*. “Serve the Lord with fear” [Ps 2.11].

Vs. 4 in its entirety is a continuation of the previous verse. One aspect of the *mashal* of vs. 3 is David dawning on his subjects similar to the morning light, *zarach* being the verb. “When the sun rises, they (young lions) get them away and lie down in their dens” [Ps 104.22]. Rain is used in a similar way.

After so describing his rule, in vs. 5 asks a rhetorical question comparing his house with God, the **RSV** “stand” not in the Hebrew. These words have a certain irony, even arrogance, in light of the oft-mentioned prophecy of Nathan (note use of

'house'): "Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house" [12.10]. Nevertheless, David remains confident of an everlasting covenant (*beryth*, cf. 5.3) made with God. It isn't mentioned under this name but implied by reason of Chapter Seven when the Lord gave David rest from his enemies and in turn David promised to build the Lord a house. The verse at hand adds that through this covenant the Lord ordered it secure in all aspects, *harak* and *shamar* (22.24). For the former, cf. J1 2.5: "A strong people set in battle array."

Vs. 5 continues with a second rhetorical question where David manifests his confidence before the Lord. While this may be viewed again in light of Nathan's prophecy, it reveals his self-assurance and thus has a direct affect on all under him as a ruler. David is confident that the Lord will continue to prosper his help and desire. The verb is *tsamach* fundamentally means to spring forth and is found in 10.5 but not noted there along with the two nouns *yeshah* and *chephets*. The former is found in 22.47 and the latter as in Ps 1.2: "But his delight is in the law of the Lord."

Vs. 6 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as "but" as David shifts gears to speak of godless men, literally "one who is worthless" or *belyahal* (cf. 22.5) destined to be cast away like thorns. The **RSV** has a footnote saying that this verse as well as the one after it (7) are corrupt so it's exact meaning is uncertain. And so with vs. 7 the oracle of David comes to an end.

From vs. 7 through the rest of this chapter is an extended list of warriors or *gibor* (cf. 17.8) who had assisted David in his various wars with the Philistines. While it may seem irrelevant nowadays, it must have been very important at the time because such men had been instrumental in securing David's rule. To omit them would be a grave offense and even invite a rebellion.

1) *davar*, *na'am*, *qum*, *meshyach*, *nahym*, *zamyar*, 2) *Ruach*, *davar* (verb), *milah*, 3) *davar* (verb), *'Elohey*, *tsur*, *mashal*, *yirah*, 4) *zarach*, 5) *beryth*, *harak*, *shamar*, *tsamach*, *yeshah*, *chephets*, 6) *belyahal*, 8) *gibor*

Chapter Twenty-Four

A footnote in the **RSV** says that "this passage, along with 21.1-14, belongs before chapter 9."

The final chapter of Second Samuel begins with the familiar conjunctive *v-* translated as “again” with the verb *yasaph* (cf. 6.1), fundamentally as to increase. Here it applies to the Lord’s anger kindled against Israel, ‘*aph* and *charah* both as in 22.9. Note two uses of prepositions: *l-* (to) prefaced to the verb and *b-* (in) prefaced to the noun, both re-enforcing divine displeasure toward Israel. A footnote in the NIV says that reference to this conjunctive “may have been the famine of 21.1.” As for the cause of such ‘*aph*, it isn’t stated. However, being applied to the nation as a whole and not David could mean Israel’s support for Absalom’s rebellion. Now they were paying the price. The verb *suth* as to incite or to provoke applies to David literally “in them” or Israel. “Satan stood up against Israel and incited David to number Israel” [1Chron 21.1].

The source of such divine anger was the taking of a census, the verb *shut* fundamentally as to run to and fro, also in vs. 8 and famously applied to Satan: “‘Whence have you come?’ Satan answered the Lord, ‘From going to and fro on the earth and from walking up and down on it’” [Job 1.7]. At first it seems strange for the Lord to incite King David to be hostile to such a thing as a census, but behind the idea seems to be that such number of Israel is strictly a divine prerogative.

And in vs. 2 so David delegates Joab to pass through all the tribes of Israel to number the people, *paqad* (cf. 18.1) also as to muster. Joab complies and adds the wish that the Lord add (‘*asaph*, cf. vs. 1) to the people a hundred times more but questions as to why he delights (*chaphets*, cf. 15.26) in such a thing or *davar* (cf. 23.1). Nevertheless, David’s *davar* prevailed, *chazaq* (cf. 13.28). The whole census taking took over nine months.

Despite the hard work of census taking, when done, David puts Joab to death or literally his heart (*lev*, cf. 19.14) does it, perhaps out of awareness of having usurped divine privilege. Immediately afterwards (the conjunctive *v-*) David repents directly to the Lord for having sinned as he calls it (*chata’*, cf. 12.13) as well as having acted foolishly, *sakal* (cf. 15.31). In both instances the adverb *me’od* (cf. 13.36) is used which implies excessiveness.

In vs. 11 the prophet Gad makes his appearance for the first time and again in vs. 18. The text doesn’t say whether or not he was associated with Nathan, but most likely there was some connection. To Gad came the *davar* (cf. vs. 3) of the Lord for David when he arose from sleep, indicating it was the first thing that had greeted him. Actually Gad is called a seer or *chozeh* (cf. 1Chron 29.25), fundamentally as one who sees. His *davar* came with three choices for David to make: three years of famine,

three months of being pursued by his enemies (presumably the Philistines) and three days of pestilence.

David is to consider and decide, *yadah* and *ra'ah* (22.50 and 22.16) or to know and to see. Because he was in such distress (*tsar*, cf. 22.7), he opted for the pestilence or *dever* (cf. 1Chron 21.12) mentioned in vs. 13 whose verbal root obviously is *davar*. The reason for this choice? David knew that the Lord was merciful or the plural noun *rachamym* (cf. 1Chron 21.13) derived from a verbal root from which comes the noun womb. David puts this in terms of falling into God's hands which contain this *rachamym* as opposed to man who lacks it.

Vs. 15 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as "so" when the Lord sends the *dever*, the verb *natan* or to give being used along with the preposition *b-*, literally as "in Israel." He does so at an appointed time *heth* and *mohed* (cf. 20.5), literally as "time of appointment." After a huge number of people fell, an angel or messenger (*mal'ak*, cf. 19.27) was on the verge of destroying (*shachat*, cf. 11.1) Jerusalem at which moment the Lord repented or changed his mind of the evil he was doing through the angel. *Nacham* (cf. 13.39) is the verb, also as to comfort, and *rahah* (cf. 17.14) or evil is the noun. And so the Lord told the angel to stay his hand or *raphah* (cf. 4.1) which literally was extended "in the people."

It so happened that when the angel/messenger got to the threshing floor of Araunah, David was nearby and saw the destruction being inflicted literally "in the people." It was too much for him and exclaimed that he had sinned (*chata'*, cf. vs. 10), not the people, and begged that the destruction be wrought upon both him and his father's house. This, of course, would be in accord with Nathan's prophecy.

In vs. 18 which begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as "and" the Lord came to David "that day." This can intimate the angel/messenger continued his destruction for some time while the Lord bade David to erect an altar on Araunah's threshing floor, literally "ascend set up." We can be sure that David dropped everything, rushed over to that place and feverishly threw together an altar, no small task. Araunah saw David coming and asked why he was rushing over to him, unaware of the larger picture. Note that David said he wanted to purchase the threshing floor to build an altar, not confiscate Araunah's property, this despite the urgency of the situation.

Without missing a beat, Araunah concurred, even offering some animals for sacrifice wishing that the Lord will accept David's efforts, *ratsah* also as to please or to take

pleasure. “Bless, O Lord, his substance, and accept the work of his hands” [Dt 33.11]. Despite the angel/messenger still wrecking havoc nearby which means that David and Araunah heard screams of people, the king persists in offering a price for the threshing flood. This must have confused, even bothered Araunah, for the urgency of the situation seemed to preclude any haggling which could be settled at a later time.

And so David made haste to erect the altar, possibly with Araunah’s help. As a result, the Lord heeded David’s supplication (*hatar*, cf. 21.14) thereby averting the plague or *mageph* also as slaughter in 18.7 but not noted there. Note the two words ‘*erets* (cf. 15.23) and Israel. The first is associated with David’s supplication and the second with regard to the plague being averted. Thus the book of Second Samuel comes to a dramatic, sudden end which sets the stage for First Kings.

1) yasaph, ‘aph, charah, suth, shut, 2) paqad, 3) ‘asaph, chaphets, davar, chazaq, 10) lev, chata’, sakal, me’od, 11) davar, 13) yadah, ra’ah, dever, 14) tsar, rachamym, 15) dever, mohed, 16) mal’ak, shachat, nacham, rahah, raphah, 17) chata’, 23) ratsah, 25) hatar, mageph, ‘erets

+