

17.33 Absalom's End (2 Samuel 16:15–23; 17:1–29; 18:1–33)

✓ “Check” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows

Brackets [. . .] indicate a remark to the teacher that should not be read aloud, or they show answers to questions.

Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional materials.

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach: Vocabulary words are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

- *Mahanaim*: a place where, years before, Jacob had met with angels on his way back home to Canaan. Here, too, Ishbosheth, Saul’s son, ruled after Saul died.
- *oak trees*: strong trees; some translations use the word *terebinth*
- *javelins*: light spears that are thrown; translated *darts* in the KJV
- *Cushite*: a black person from eastern Africa

Scripture: (ESV)

2 Samuel 16:15 Now Absalom and all the people, the men of Israel, came to Jerusalem, and Ahithophel with him. 16 And when Hushai the Archite, David’s friend, came to Absalom, Hushai said to Absalom, “Long live the king! Long live the king!” 17 And Absalom said to Hushai, “Is this your loyalty to your friend? Why did you not go with your friend?” 18 And Hushai said to Absalom, “No, for whom the Lord and this people and all the men of Israel have chosen, his I will be, and with him I will remain. 19 And again, whom should I serve? Should it not be his son? As I have served your father, so I will serve you.”

20 Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, “Give your counsel. What shall we do?” 21 Ahithophel said to Absalom, “Go in to your father’s concubines, whom he has left to keep the house, and all Israel will hear that you have made yourself a stench to your father, and the hands of all who are with you will be strengthened.” 22 So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the roof. And Absalom went in to his father’s concubines in the sight of all Israel. 23 Now in those days the counsel that Ahithophel gave was as if one consulted the word of God; so was all the counsel of Ahithophel esteemed, both by David and by Absalom.

17:1 Moreover, Ahithophel said to Absalom, “Let me choose twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue David tonight. 2 I will come upon him while he is weary and discouraged and throw him into a panic, and all the people who are with him will flee. I will strike down only the king, 3 and I will bring all the people back to you as a bride comes home to her husband. You seek the life of only one man, and all the people will be at peace.” 4 And the advice seemed right in the eyes of Absalom and all the elders of Israel.

5 Then Absalom said, “Call Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear what he has to say.” 6 And when Hushai came to Absalom, Absalom said to him, “Thus has Ahithophel spoken; shall we do as he says? If not, you speak.” 7 Then Hushai said to Absalom, “This time the counsel that Ahithophel has given is not good.” 8 Hushai said, “You know that your father and his men are mighty men, and that they are enraged, like a bear robbed of her cubs in the field. Besides, your father is expert in war; he will not spend the night with the people. 9 Behold, even now he has hidden himself in one of the pits or in some other place. And as soon as some of the people fall at the first attack, whoever hears it will say, ‘There has been a slaughter among the people who follow Absalom.’ 10 Then even the valiant man, whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will utterly melt with fear, for all Israel knows that your father is a mighty man, and that those who are with him are valiant men. 11 But my counsel is that all Israel be gathered to you, from Dan to Beersheba, as the sand by the sea for multitude, and that you go to battle in person. 12 So we shall come upon him in some place where he is to be found, and we shall light upon him as the dew falls on the ground, and of him and all the men with him not one will be left. 13 If he withdraws into a city, then all Israel will bring ropes to that city, and we shall drag it into

the valley, until not even a pebble is to be found there.” 14 And Absalom and all the men of Israel said, “The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel.” For the Lord had ordained to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, so that the Lord might bring harm upon Absalom.

15 Then Hushai said to Zadok and Abiathar the priests, “Thus and so did Ahithophel counsel Absalom and the elders of Israel, and thus and so have I counseled. 16 Now therefore send quickly and tell David, ‘Do not stay tonight at the fords of the wilderness, but by all means pass over, lest the king and all the people who are with him be swallowed up.’” 17 Now Jonathan and Ahimaaz were waiting at En-rogel. A female servant was to go and tell them, and they were to go and tell King David, for they were not to be seen entering the city. 18 But a young man saw them and told Absalom. So both of them went away quickly and came to the house of a man at Bahurim, who had a well in his courtyard. And they went down into it. 19 And the woman took and spread a covering over the well’s mouth and scattered grain on it, and nothing was known of it. 20 When Absalom’s servants came to the woman at the house, they said, “Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan?” And the woman said to them, “They have gone over the brook of water.” And when they had sought and could not find them, they returned to Jerusalem.

21 After they had gone, the men came up out of the well, and went and told King David. They said to David, “Arise, and go quickly over the water, for thus and so has Ahithophel counseled against you.” 22 Then David arose, and all the people who were with him, and they crossed the Jordan. By daybreak not one was left who had not crossed the Jordan.

23 When Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his donkey and went off home to his own city. He set his house in order and hanged himself, and he died and was buried in the tomb of his father.

24 Then David came to Mahanaim. And Absalom crossed the Jordan with all the men of Israel. 25 Now Absalom had set Amasa over the army instead of Joab. Amasa was the son of a man named Ithra the Ishmaelite, who had married Abigail the daughter of Nahash, sister of Zeruiah, Joab’s mother. 26 And Israel and Absalom encamped in the land of Gilead.

27 When David came to Mahanaim, Shobi the son of Nahash from Rabbah of the Ammonites, and Machir the son of Ammiel from Lo-debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite from Rogelim, 28 brought beds, basins, and earthen vessels, wheat, barley, flour, parched grain, beans and lentils, 29 honey and curds and sheep and cheese from the herd, for David and the people with him to eat, for they said, “The people are hungry and weary and thirsty in the wilderness.”

18:1 Then David mustered the men who were with him and set over them commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds. 2 And David sent out the army, one third under the command of Joab, one third under the command of Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Joab’s brother, and one third under the command of Ittai the Gittite. And the king said to the men, “I myself will also go out with you.” 3 But the men said, “You shall not go out. For if we flee, they will not care about us. If half of us die, they will not care about us. But you are worth ten thousand of us. Therefore it is better that you send us help from the city.” 4 The king said to them, “Whatever seems best to you I will do.” So the king stood at the side of the gate, while all the army marched out by hundreds and by thousands. 5 And the king ordered Joab and Abishai and Ittai, “Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom.” And all the people heard when the king gave orders to all the commanders about Absalom.

6 So the army went out into the field against Israel, and the battle was fought in the forest of Ephraim. 7 And the men of Israel were defeated there by the servants of David, and the loss there was great on that day, twenty thousand men. 8 The battle spread over the face of all the country, and the forest devoured more people that day than the sword.

9 And Absalom happened to meet the servants of David. Absalom was riding on his mule, and the mule went under the thick branches of a great oak, and his head caught fast in the oak, and he was suspended between heaven and earth, while the mule that was under him went on. 10 And a certain man saw it and told Joab, “Behold, I saw Absalom hanging in an oak.” 11 Joab said to the man who told him, “What, you saw him! Why then did you not strike him there to the ground? I would have been glad to give you ten pieces of silver and a

belt.” 12 But the man said to Joab, “Even if I felt in my hand the weight of a thousand pieces of silver, I would not reach out my hand against the king’s son, for in our hearing the king commanded you and Abishai and Ittai, ‘For my sake protect the young man Absalom.’” 13 On the other hand, if I had dealt treacherously against his life (and there is nothing hidden from the king), then you yourself would have stood aloof.” 14 Joab said, “I will not waste time like this with you.” And he took three javelins in his hand and thrust them into the heart of Absalom while he was still alive in the oak. 15 And ten young men, Joab’s armor-bearers, surrounded Absalom and struck him and killed him.

16 Then Joab blew the trumpet, and the troops came back from pursuing Israel, for Joab restrained them. 17 And they took Absalom and threw him into a great pit in the forest and raised over him a very great heap of stones. And all Israel fled every one to his own home. 18 Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and set up for himself the pillar that is in the King’s Valley, for he said, “I have no son to keep my name in remembrance.” He called the pillar after his own name, and it is called Absalom’s monument to this day.

19 Then Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said, “Let me run and carry news to the king that the Lord has delivered him from the hand of his enemies.” 20 And Joab said to him, “You are not to carry news today. You may carry news another day, but today you shall carry no news, because the king’s son is dead.” 21 Then Joab said to the Cushite, “Go, tell the king what you have seen.” The Cushite bowed before Joab, and ran. 22 Then Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said again to Joab, “Come what may, let me also run after the Cushite.” And Joab said, “Why will you run, my son, seeing that you will have no reward for the news?” 23 “Come what may,” he said, “I will run.” So he said to him, “Run.” Then Ahimaaz ran by the way of the plain, and outran the Cushite.

24 Now David was sitting between the two gates, and the watchman went up to the roof of the gate by the wall, and when he lifted up his eyes and looked, he saw a man running alone. 25 The watchman called out and told the king. And the king said, “If he is alone, there is news in his mouth.” And he drew nearer and nearer. 26 The watchman saw another man running. And the watchman called to the gate and said, “See, another man running alone!” The king said, “He also brings news.” 27 The watchman said, “I think the running of the first is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok.” And the king said, “He is a good man and comes with good news.”

28 Then Ahimaaz cried out to the king, “All is well.” And he bowed before the king with his face to the earth and said, “Blessed be the Lord your God, who has delivered up the men who raised their hand against my lord the king.” 29 And the king said, “Is it well with the young man Absalom?” Ahimaaz answered, “When Joab sent the king’s servant, your servant, I saw a great commotion, but I do not know what it was.” 30 And the king said, “Turn aside and stand here.” So he turned aside and stood still.

31 And behold, the Cushite came, and the Cushite said, “Good news for my lord the king! For the Lord has delivered you this day from the hand of all who rose up against you.” 32 The king said to the Cushite, “Is it well with the young man Absalom?” And the Cushite answered, “May the enemies of my lord the king and all who rise up against you for evil be like that young man.” 33 And the king was deeply moved and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept. And as he went, he said, “O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!”

Introduction/Review:

“The Lord was with David wherever he went,” helping him to be a strong king. ✓ But David was weak in his personal life and sinned terribly. Now David was paying the consequences for his sin. The prophet Nathan had said, “The sword shall not depart from your house”; in other words, within David’s own family would be killing and hatred. Sure enough, Absalom, David’s third son, killed Amnon, David’s oldest son. Then Absalom wanted to become king and to slay even his own father.

David got out of Jerusalem, taking several thousand people with him and camping on the western side of the Jordan River. Those who went were mostly soldiers. David sent some people back to Jerusalem. For example, he urged the priests to stay in Jerusalem so that they could, through their sons, send David updates. Also, Hushai, an old adviser to David, was to defeat the advice of Ahithophel, David’s friend-turned-enemy.

Story:

Advice to Absalom

While David and company were moving away from Jerusalem, Absalom arrived in that city with his men and that very wise adviser, Ahithophel, the man who *had* been David's friend but now served Absalom.

Soon afterwards, David's true friend, Hushai, met Absalom, pretending to be Absalom's friend. "Long live the king! Long live the king!" Hushai called to Absalom.

"Is that how you treat your friend?" Absalom replied. "Why didn't you go with your friend?"

"I'll be loyal to the king whom God and the people chose," replied Hushai. "As I served your father, I will serve you." [Teacher, note the double meaning of Hushai's words, "whom God and the people chose."]

In order to become king, Absalom knew he needed wisdom to do the right thing. So he asked for counsel from Ahithophel, whose advice to David had always been considered almost like the advice of God Himself. "This is what you need to do," advised Ahithophel. "Let me take 12,000 soldiers tonight. I will find David, who is weary, and slay him—only him. I will bring back all the rest of the people."

"Good idea!" agreed Absalom and all the elders of Israel.

Remember, David had prayed, "Lord, defeat the advice of Ahithophel." Well, God was about to answer David's prayer. Even though everyone thought Ahithophel's advice was good, Absalom, because God wanted him to, asked Hushai what advice he would give.

"Ahithophel's advice is not good at this time for these three reasons: (1) David and his men are mighty soldiers, and they are as mad as a bear whose cubs have been taken from her. (2) David probably is not with the people but hidden somewhere, perhaps to make a surprise attack on you. (3) If David's men were to win this first battle, your soldiers, Absalom, would be shamed, would lose courage, and would desert you. I advise you to do three things: (1) Gather an army out of all Israel, not just 12,000 men. (2) Then, you yourself, Absalom, should lead the armies. (3) Rather than slaying only David, you should wipe out all of David's men."

"That's an even better idea than Ahithophel's!" exclaimed Absalom and all the elders of Israel, for, the Bible states, "The Lord had determined to frustrate the good advice of Ahithophel." Hushai's advice would benefit David because it would give him time to get away and to get ready to fight Absalom.

Warning to David

Immediately after this meeting, Hushai told Zadok and Abiathar, the priests, what had happened. "Tell your sons to tell David that he'd better get across the Jordan and as far away from here as possible. Tell him, 'Don't even spend a night where you are. Cross over Jordan immediately, or you will all be swallowed up.'"

Those priests sent this message to their sons, Ahimaaz and Jonathan, who were hiding until they got word. But getting the information to David wasn't so easy, for a young man who spied for Absalom saw them and told Absalom. Absalom then sent men to stop and catch the priests' sons, Ahimaaz and Jonathan.

Ahimaaz and Jonathan came to a man's yard where there was a well. The two climbed down into that well to hide, and the man's wife covered the opening with a cloth and put grain on it to make it look as if she were drying the grain. When Absalom's men came, they couldn't find the two priests' sons and went back to Jerusalem.

Then Ahimaaz and Jonathan ran to David and warned, "Get over Jordan tonight! Don't waste any time." So David and all who were with him crossed the river. Everyone made it across before daylight. They continued to walk all the way to Mahanaim [locate].

Supplies for David

Now three special friends brought David and his people supplies—bedding, bowls, pottery— and lots of

food—wheat, barley, flour, roasted grain, beans, lentils, honey, and cheese. Although this is an impressive list of supplied needs, the list of friends is equally impressive.

First is Shobi. This man was a prince from Ammon, the country Israel had fought and conquered after Shobi's older brother, King Hanun, shamed David's messengers by shaving off their beards and cutting off their robes. It appears, then, that Shobi appreciated David as his father Nahash had done.

The second friend was named Machir, and he had been the helper to Mephisbosheth, Jonathan's lame son, before David brought Mephisbosheth to Jerusalem to eat with him at his table.

The third of the three friends was Barzillai ["Bar ZILL eye"], an old, feeble, but wealthy man.

Advice from David

David organized his army and announced, "I will march out with you."

"No, no!" the soldiers cried. "You must not go out. Absalom has so many more men than we. If we have to run from him, they won't care about us. Even if half of us die, they won't care, but you are worth 10,000 of us."

"Okay, I'll stay," said David, "and I will do what I can from the city. Now, please deal gently with the young man, Absalom, for my sake." All the soldiers heard these words of David.

Can you imagine the love David still had for his traitor son—even though Absalom was trying to kill him.

Death for Absalom

✓It didn't take long for Absalom to get organized. In a short time, he and his armies crossed the Jordan and marched toward Mahanaim. In the forest of Ephraim the battle took place. Who would win?

David's men won. In fact, 20,000 of Absalom's men died. More died from accidents in the trees (perhaps the trees themselves, or wild animals, or pits in the forest) than died by the sword. *God* fought for David.

What about Absalom himself? He was riding his mule in battle, and "as the mule went under the thick branches of a large oak tree, Absalom's head ✓(perhaps his thick hair) got caught in the tree." His mule kept on going, but Absalom was left hanging in midair. [Teacher, you may wish to show a picture of a low-hanging tree found below and discuss the dangers of fighting in such a place.]

A man saw Absalom, still alive, hanging in a tree, and told Joab. Joab scolded, "Why didn't you kill him? I would have given you ten shekels of silver and a belt."

"I wouldn't take 10,000 shekels from you because I heard the king say to protect Absalom." This man was obedient and loyal.

Joab wasn't obedient and loyal. He took three javelins (or darts) and finished off Absalom. Ten soldiers with Joab also took part in the killing of Absalom. The battle was over. Absalom's body was cast into a deep pit, and a big pile of stones was placed over this grave.

You can imagine David's men were glad that the enemy was gone. But when a messenger told David that Absalom was dead, David wailed pitifully, "O my son Absalom! My son, my son, Absalom! If only I had died instead of you! O Absalom, my son, my son!"

Lessons from This Lesson:

- We see Jesus:

David loved his son Absalom, who hardly seemed worth loving. Isn't this a picture of Christ's love for sinners? Even as He was being crucified, he prayed, "Father, forgive them."

Activities:

- Play dough: bed, grain, cheese, tree
- Snack: wheat, barley, flour, roasted grain, beans, lentils, honey, cheese (the food brought to David) or any part of this list
- Review questions: (Game: Print on card stock or on plain paper the pictures of terebinth trees found below. If printed on plain paper, back with paper towel. Cut apart. For each correct answer, a student may place a tree in a pocket chart or on a flannel board.)
 1. How did God answer David's prayer to defeat the counsel of Ahithophel? [Absalom and his men rejected Ahithophel's advice and took the advice of Hushai instead.]
 2. What message did Hushai and the two priests send to David via the sons of the priests? [To get over the Jordan River as soon as they could.]
 3. Where did the sons of the priests hide from Absalom's men? [In a well.]
 4. What did David's men answer when David said he would lead the battle? ["No!" because Absalom didn't care about any of the men but only David.]
 5. Which army, Absalom's or David's, was winning the battle? [David's.]
 6. What killed more soldiers than swords did? [The forest—pits, animals, branches, *etc.*]
 7. What happened to Absalom in the forest? [His mule went under the thick branches of a great oak, and his head caught in the tree.]
 8. How did Absalom actually die? [Joab threw three javelins at his heart. Ten men with Joab also took part in the killing.]
 9. What was David's reaction when he learned Absalom was dead? [He cried, "O my son Absalom! My son, my son, Absalom! If only I had died instead of you! O Absalom, my son, my son!"]

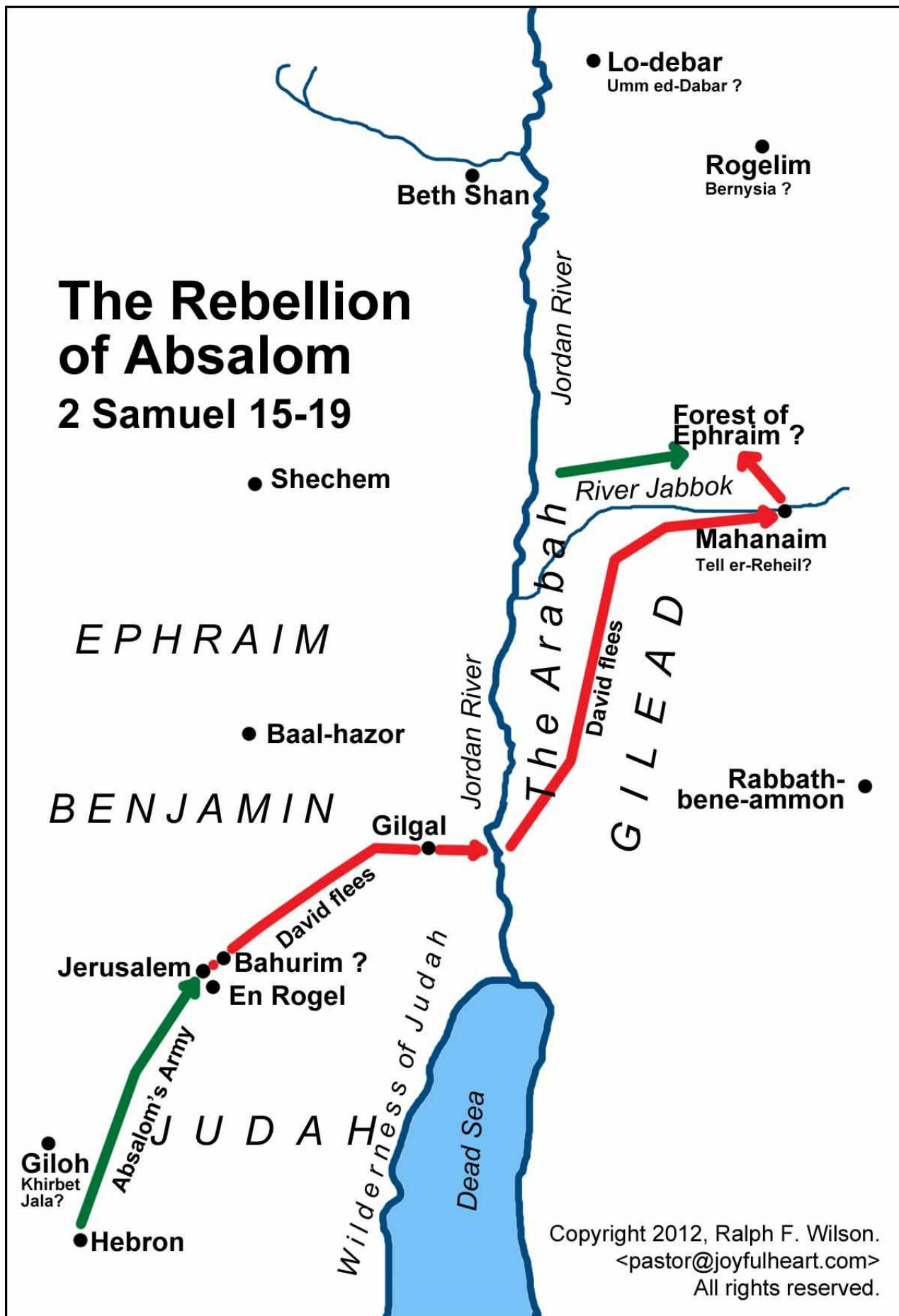
Memory Verse[s]: I heartily recommend the song and visual at [Psalm 139 - NKJV \(thywordcreations.com\)](https://thywordcreations.com/psalm-139-nkjv).

- Psalm 139:1 O Lord, You have searched me and known me. 2 You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. 3 You comprehend my path and my lying down, And are acquainted with all my ways. 4 For there is not a word on my tongue, But behold, O Lord, You know it altogether. 5 You have hedged me behind and before, And laid Your hand upon me. 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is high, I cannot attain it.
 7 Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? 8 If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. 9 If I take the wings of the morning, And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, 10 Even there Your hand shall lead me, And Your right hand shall hold me. 11 If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall on me," Even the night shall be light about me; 12 Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, But the night shines as the day; The darkness and the light are both alike to You.
 13 For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. 14 I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well. 15 My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. 16 Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them.
 17 How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! 18 If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand; When I awake, I am still with You. . . .
 23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; 24 And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.

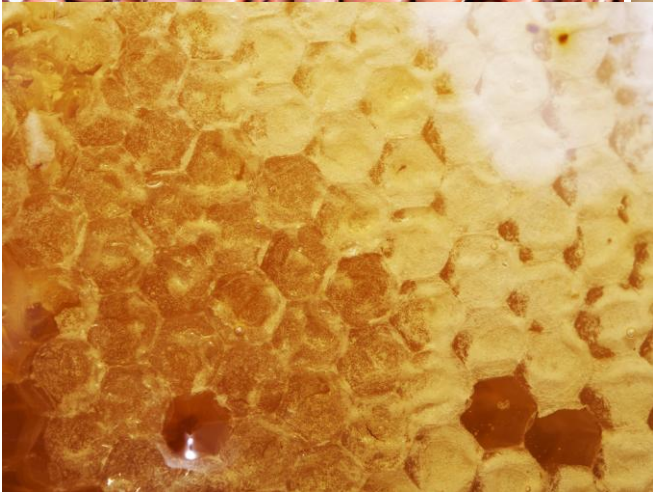
Handwork:

- Cut out round paper heads. Use crimped paper, yarn, *etc.*, to make Absalom's long hair. (Idea from [Absalom's Rebellion Free Sunday School Lesson \(sundayschoolsources.com\)](https://sundayschoolsources.com/absalom-s-rebellion-free-sunday-school-lesson).)

Mahanaim
oak/terebinth
javelin
Cushite

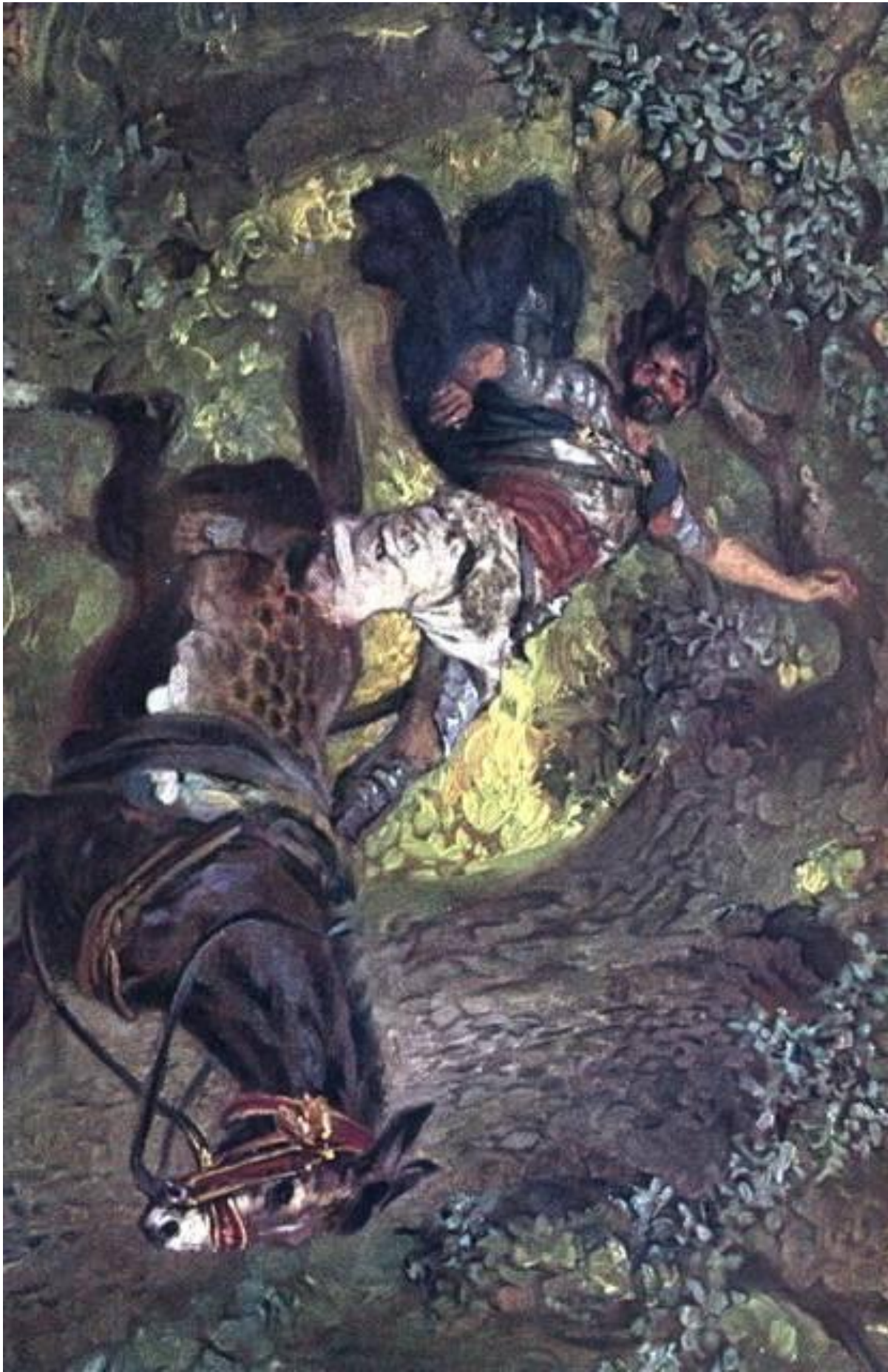


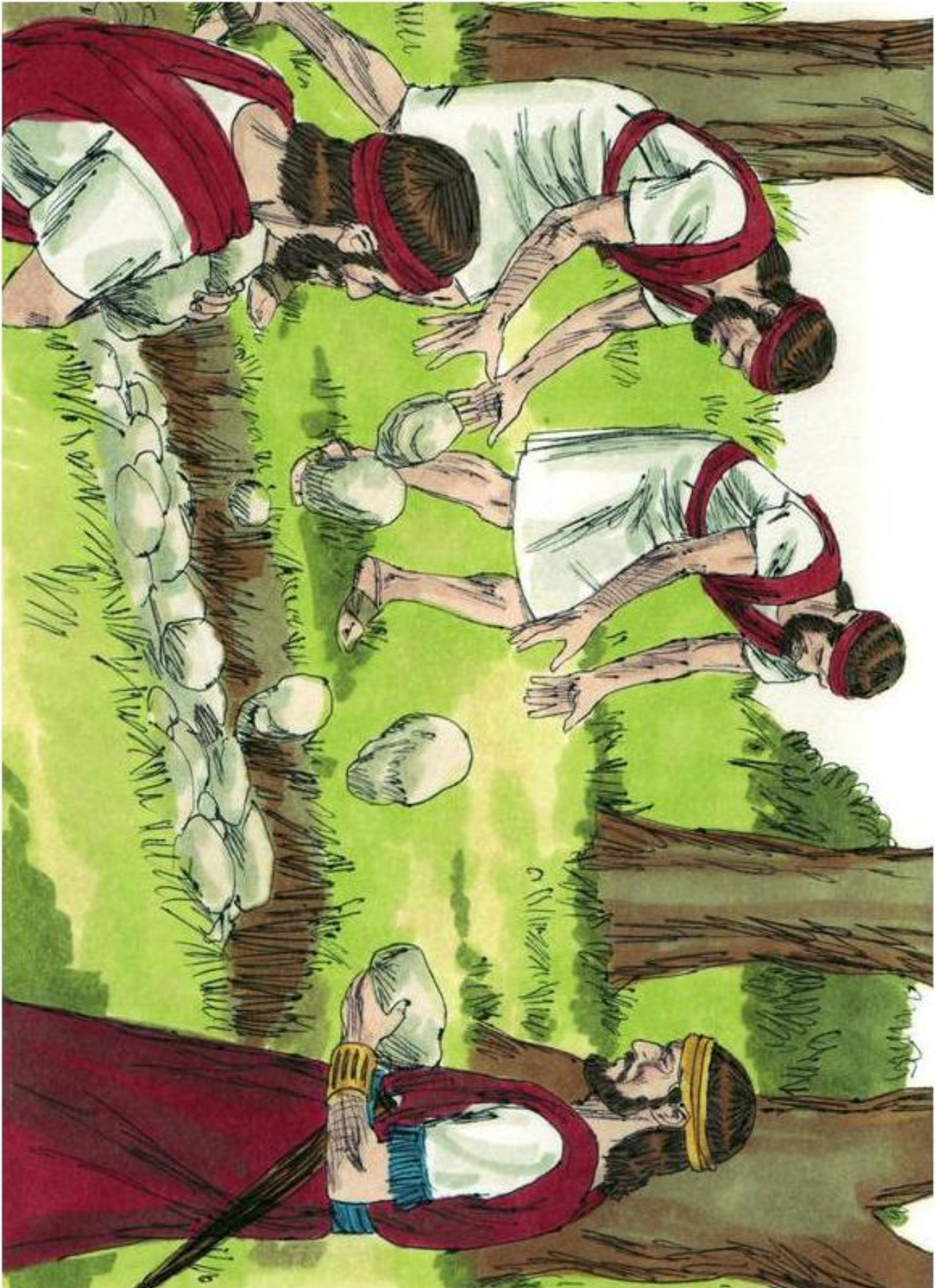
wheat, barley, beans, lentils, honey, cheese

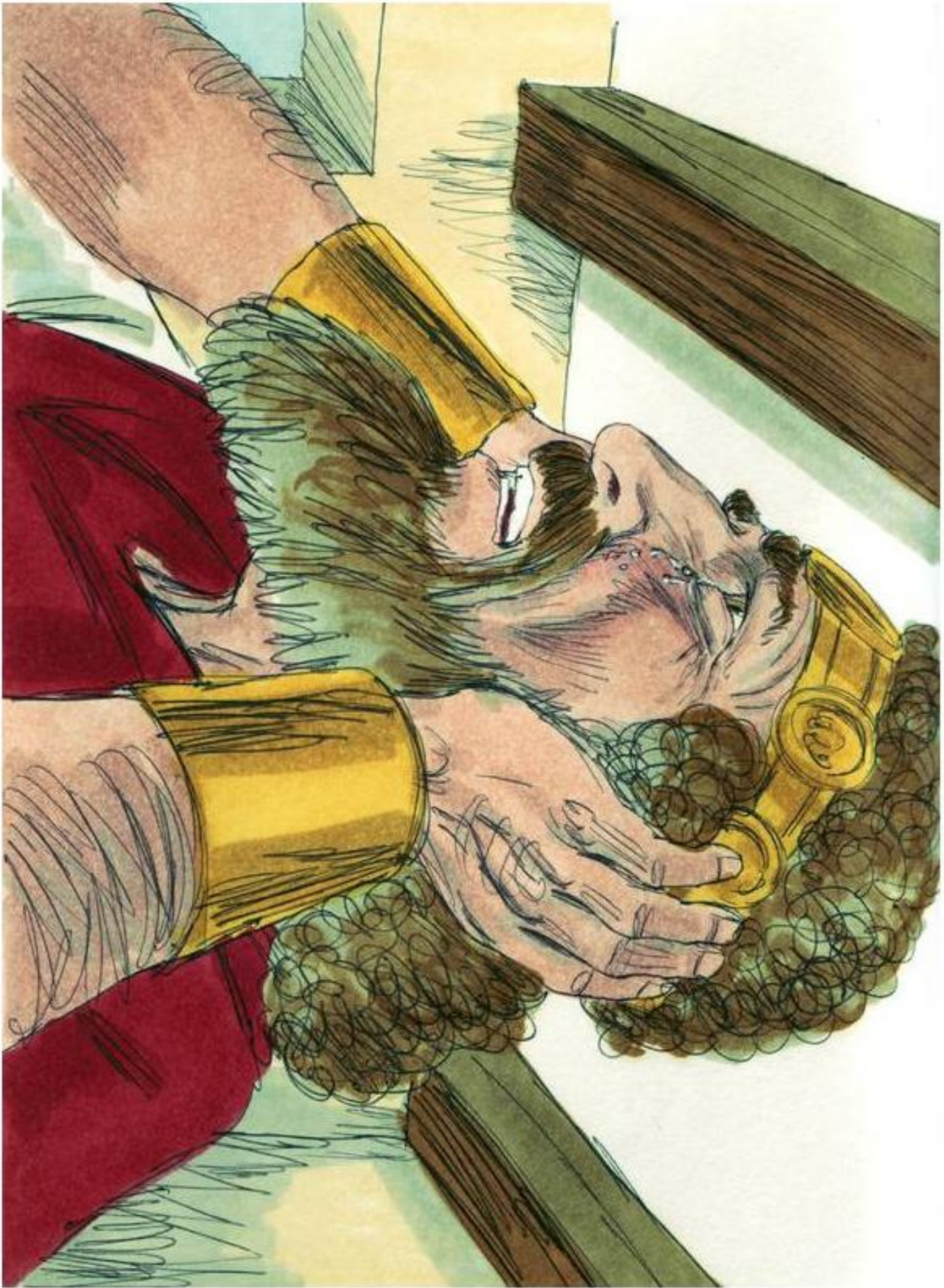




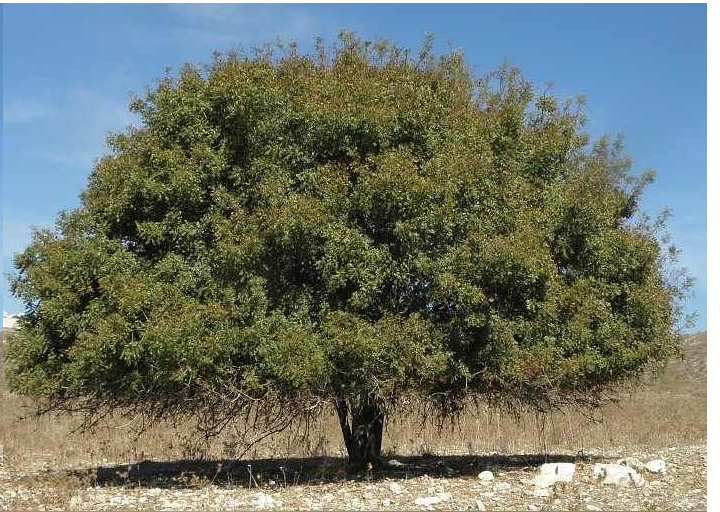
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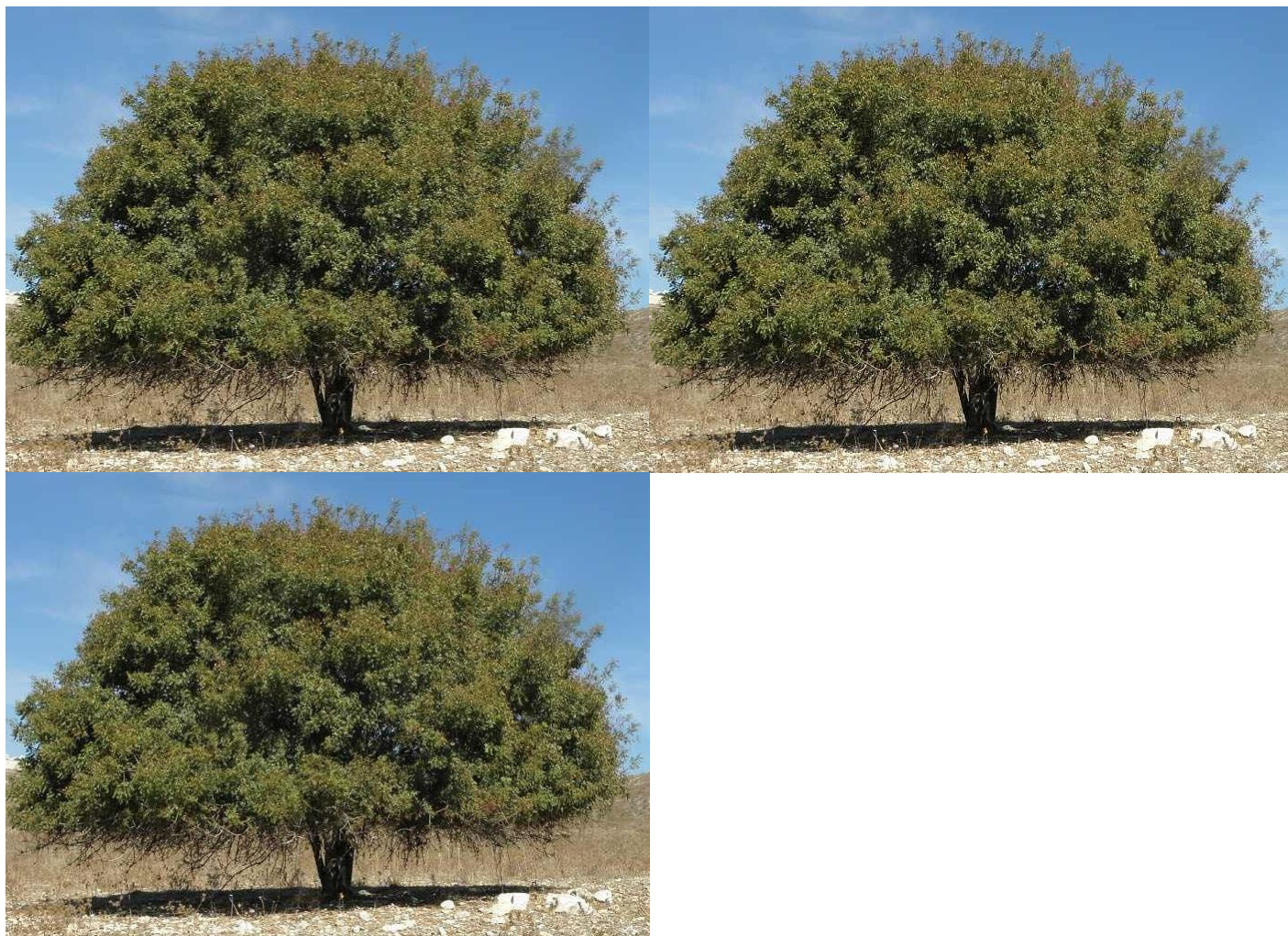












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