

## 17.32 Absalom's Rebellion (2 Samuel 14:25, 26; 15:1–37; 16:1–14; Psalms 63; 3)

✓ “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.
- Nine rolls of pennies (\$4.50 worth) to show three pounds, the weight of Absalom's hair each year
- (optional) For a different visual aid idea, magnetic board visuals, see [Davids Son Absalom MBV 2 Sam 15-17 SEC.pdf - Google Drive](#).

**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.

- *Hebron*: the town where Absalom was born; the royal city where David ruled seven years; a city only twenty miles south of Jerusalem
- *treason*: the crime of betraying one's country, especially by attempting to kill the sovereign or overthrow the government
- *Mephibosheth*: Jonathan's lame son who ate every day with David

### Scripture: (ESV)

2 Samuel 14:25 Now in all Israel there was no one so much to be praised for his handsome appearance as Absalom. From the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him. 26 And when he cut the hair of his head (for at the end of every year he used to cut it; when it was heavy on him, he cut it), he weighed the hair of his head, two hundred shekels by the king's weight. 27 There were born to Absalom three sons, and one daughter whose name was Tamar. She was a beautiful woman.

15:1 After this Absalom got himself a chariot and horses, and fifty men to run before him. 2 And Absalom used to rise early and stand beside the way of the gate. And when any man had a dispute to come before the king for judgment, Absalom would call to him and say, “From what city are you?” And when he said, “Your servant is of such and such a tribe in Israel,” 3 Absalom would say to him, “See, your claims are good and right, but there is no man designated by the king to hear you.” 4 Then Absalom would say, “Oh that I were judge in the land! Then every man with a dispute or cause might come to me, and I would give him justice.” 5 And whenever a man came near to pay homage to him, he would put out his hand and take hold of him and kiss him. 6 Thus Absalom did to all of Israel who came to the king for judgment. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.

7 And at the end of four years Absalom said to the king, “Please let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed to the Lord, in Hebron. 8 For your servant vowed a vow while I lived at Geshur in Aram, saying, ‘If the Lord will indeed bring me back to Jerusalem, then I will offer worship to the Lord.’” 9 The king said to him, “Go in peace.” So he arose and went to Hebron. 10 But Absalom sent secret messengers throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, “As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then say, ‘Absalom is king at Hebron!’” 11 With Absalom went two hundred men from Jerusalem who were invited guests, and they went in their innocence and knew nothing. 12 And while Absalom was offering the sacrifices, he sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor, from his city Giloh. And the conspiracy grew strong, and the people with Absalom kept increasing.

13 And a messenger came to David, saying, “The hearts of the men of Israel have gone after Absalom.” 14 Then David said to all his servants who were with him at Jerusalem, “Arise, and let us flee, or else there will be no escape for us from Absalom. Go quickly, lest he overtake us quickly and bring down ruin on us and strike the

city with the edge of the sword.” 15 And the king’s servants said to the king, “Behold, your servants are ready to do whatever my lord the king decides.” 16 So the king went out, and all his household after him. And the king left ten concubines to keep the house. 17 And the king went out, and all the people after him. And they halted at the last house.

18 And all his servants passed by him, and all the Cherethites, and all the Pelethites, and all the six hundred Gittites who had followed him from Gath, passed on before the king. 19 Then the king said to Ittai the Gittite, “Why do you also go with us? Go back and stay with the king, for you are a foreigner and also an exile from your home. 20 You came only yesterday, and shall I today make you wander about with us, since I go I know not where? Go back and take your brothers with you, and may the Lord show steadfast love and faithfulness to you.” 21 But Ittai answered the king, “As the Lord lives, and as my lord the king lives, wherever my lord the king shall be, whether for death or for life, there also will your servant be.” 22 And David said to Ittai, “Go then, pass on.” So Ittai the Gittite passed on with all his men and all the little ones who were with him. 23 And all the land wept aloud as all the people passed by, and the king crossed the brook Kidron, and all the people passed on toward the wilderness.

24 And Abiathar came up, and behold, Zadok came also with all the Levites, bearing the ark of the covenant of God. And they set down the ark of God until the people had all passed out of the city. 25 Then the king said to Zadok, “Carry the ark of God back into the city. If I find favor in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me back and let me see both it and his dwelling place. 26 But if he says, ‘I have no pleasure in you,’ behold, here I am, let him do to me what seems good to him.” 27 The king also said to Zadok the priest, “Are you not a seer? Go back to the city in peace, with your two sons, Ahimaaz your son, and Jonathan the son of Abiathar. 28 See, I will wait at the fords of the wilderness until word comes from you to inform me.” 29 So Zadok and Abiathar carried the ark of God back to Jerusalem, and they remained there.

30 But David went up the ascent of the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went, barefoot and with his head covered. And all the people who were with him covered their heads, and they went up, weeping as they went. 31 And it was told David, “Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom.” And David said, “O Lord, please turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.”

32 While David was coming to the summit, where God was worshiped, behold, Hushai the Archite came to meet him with his coat torn and dirt on his head. 33 David said to him, “If you go on with me, you will be a burden to me. 34 But if you return to the city and say to Absalom, ‘I will be your servant, O king; as I have been your father’s servant in time past, so now I will be your servant,’ then you will defeat for me the counsel of Ahithophel. 35 Are not Zadok and Abiathar the priests with you there? So whatever you hear from the king’s house, tell it to Zadok and Abiathar the priests. 36 Behold, their two sons are with them there, Ahimaaz, Zadok’s son, and Jonathan, Abiathar’s son, and by them you shall send to me everything you hear.” 37 So Hushai, David’s friend, came into the city, just as Absalom was entering Jerusalem.

16:1 When David had passed a little beyond the summit, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him, with a couple of donkeys saddled, bearing two hundred loaves of bread, a hundred bunches of raisins, a hundred of summer fruits, and a skin of wine. 2 And the king said to Ziba, “Why have you brought these?” Ziba answered, “The donkeys are for the king’s household to ride on, the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat, and the wine for those who faint in the wilderness to drink.” 3 And the king said, “And where is your master’s son?” Ziba said to the king, “Behold, he remains in Jerusalem, for he said, ‘Today the house of Israel will give me back the kingdom of my father.’” 4 Then the king said to Ziba, “Behold, all that belonged to Mephibosheth is now yours.” And Ziba said, “I pay homage; let me ever find favor in your sight, my lord the king.”

5 When King David came to Bahurim, there came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera, and as he came he cursed continually. 6 And he threw stones at David and at all the servants of King David, and all the people and all the mighty men were on his right hand and on his left. 7 And Shimei said as he cursed, “Get out, get out, you man of blood, you worthless man! 8 The Lord has avenged on you all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned, and the Lord has given the kingdom into the hand of your son Absalom. See, your evil is on you, for you are a man of blood.”

9 Then Abishai the son of Zeruiah said to the king, “Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over and take off his head.” 10 But the king said, “What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah? If he is cursing because the Lord has said to him, ‘Curse David,’ who then shall say, ‘Why have you done so?’” 11 And David said to Abishai and to all his servants, “Behold, my own son seeks my life; how much more now may this Benjaminite! Leave him alone, and let him curse, for the Lord has told him to. 12 It may be that the Lord will look on the wrong done to me, and that the Lord will repay me with good for his cursing today.” 13 So David and his men went on the road, while Shimei went along on the hillside opposite him and cursed as he went and threw stones at him and flung dust. 14 And the king, and all the people who were with him, arrived weary at the Jordan. And there he refreshed himself.

A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah. 63:1 O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. 2 So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. 3 Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. 4 So I will bless you as long as I live; in your name I will lift up my hands

5 My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food, and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips, 6 when I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night; 7 for you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I will sing for joy. 8 My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me.

9 But those who seek to destroy my life shall go down into the depths of the earth; 10 they shall be given over to the power of the sword; they shall be a portion for jackals. 11 But the king shall rejoice in God; all who swear by him shall exult, for the mouths of liars will be stopped.

A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son. 3:1 O Lord, how many are my foes! Many are rising against me; 2 many are saying of my soul, there is no salvation for him in God. Selah

3 But you, O Lord, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head. 4 I cried aloud to the Lord, and he answered me from his holy hill. Selah

5 I lay down and slept; I woke again, for the Lord sustained me. 6 I will not be afraid of many thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around.

7 Arise, O Lord! Save me, O my God! For you strike all my enemies on the cheek; you break the teeth of the wicked.

8 Salvation belongs to the Lord; your blessing be on your people! Selah 7 Oh, that salvation for Israel would come out of Zion! When the Lord restores the fortunes of his people, let Jacob rejoice, let Israel be glad.

### **Introduction/Review:**

David’s oldest son, Amnon, was likely to be the next king. However, Absalom, David’s third son, slew Amnon. For three years Absalom stayed near his heathen grandfather in Geshur before returning to Jerusalem, where he lived two years before finding forgiveness from David. Actually, Absalom should have faced terrible punishment, but ✓David seemed to overlook the sins of his sons.

### **Story:**

#### ***Absalom’s intentions***

Now that Absalom was back in Jerusalem, he set himself up to become Israel’s next king. David wasn’t old enough or sick enough to die; so we can see by Absalom’s actions that ✓he intended to take the kingdom away from his father David. How disrespectful he was of his father! Which commandment was he breaking? [#5: Honor your father and your mother.]

This is what Absalom did: (1) He proclaimed himself a prince by getting horses and chariots and fifty men to run before him.

Imagine the scene. Here we are in the streets of Jerusalem. “What’s that noise I hear? Sounds like a crowd coming. Watch out! Here come fifty men running and shouting, ‘Make way for the king’s son, Prince

Absalom!’ Hey! Look at those horses and chariots thundering through, and, there—. Did you catch a glimpse of him? Oh, I did! He is sooo handsome. There goes Absalom. Did you see that thick hair? I hear he weighs his hair every year, and it weighs three pounds! My hair wouldn’t weigh three pounds in a lifetime! [Teacher, have students hold the nine rolls of pennies, weighing three pounds.] Of course, I don’t put gold dust in my hair to make it shine as this royal prince does. But have you *ever* seen anyone so good-looking as Absalom is? He doesn’t even have a mole or a pimple—not even one blemish!. What a handsome prince!”

Thus, we see the first thing Absalom did was to make himself known to the people.

(2) The second thing Absalom did to make himself popular with the people was to get up early and to stand by the gate of the city (or possibly of the king’s house). People who had a quarrel with someone else and wanted the king to judge the matter would come here. Absalom would call to these people [Teacher, beckon with the hand], “What city are you from?”

The man might say, “I’m from Issachar” or “Naphtali” or another tribe of Israel.

Then Absalom would say, “You have an important need, but, sorry to say, no one is appointed to be a judge for your case. Oh, how I would like to be made judge so that people could come to me for justice. I would do a good job.”

Then, when a man would bow before handsome Prince Absalom, Absalom would put out his hand and hug the man, showing himself to be very warm and friendly.

The people thought Absalom to be not only handsome but also a great, wonderful man—better than David.

### ***Absalom’s treason***

✓For about four years<sup>1</sup> this deception went on. Finally, when Absalom thought he had turned the loyalty of enough people, he came to David to ask a favor: “When I was with my grandfather in Geshur of Syria, I vowed to God that if I could get back to Jerusalem, I would serve the Lord in Hebron. Please let me go pay my vow and do as I promised.” (✓I think Absalom’s vow was, “When I get back to Jerusalem, I vow to take the throne from my father.”)

David granted Absalom’s petition to go to Hebron, and Absalom invited two hundred men from Jerusalem to go to go with him. ✓Perhaps these men were admirers of Absalom, but they didn’t know what was about to happen. The Bible states they “went in their innocence and knew nothing.”

Absalom also sent messengers throughout Israel, proclaiming, “When you hear the trumpet, then you shall say, ‘Absalom reigns in Hebron!’” More and more people were siding with Absalom against David.

### ***David’s escape***

Finally, a messenger came to tell David, “The people of Israel are loyal to Absalom.”

David wasted no time. “Let’s get out of here,” he said to his family and servants. “Hurry up, or we won’t escape from Absalom. He will bring evil upon us and smite Jerusalem with the sword.”

David’s servant answered, “We will do whatever you say.”

So David and several people left the city. Who were these people?

### ***David’s friends***

First, the 600 men (Gittites) who had come to him from Gath of Philistia while he was hiding from Saul.

Second, his personal bodyguards.

Third, Ittai, a foreigner and chief of the 600 Gittites came even though David urged him to go back. “No,” said Ittai, “Wherever you live or die, I will be there.”

Fourth, the high priest, Abiathar, and the priest in charge of the ark, Zadok, came with the ark. But David

sent them back. Notice David trusted in God no matter what happened to him. He said to these priests, “If God shows me favor, I will see the ark in the city again. If God does not show favor, let Him do to me whatever He wishes. But this you can do for me: I’ll go into the wilderness. You can send your sons to me when you have news so that I will know what’s happening.” So Zadok and Abiathar took the ark back to Jerusalem, and David, weeping and barefooted to express his great sadness, went up the Mount of Olives.

As David climbed the Mount of Olives, a messenger told him that his chief adviser and good friend, Ahithophel, had gone to help Absalom. ✓This man was possibly Bathsheba’s grandfather. If so, we might understand why he was no longer loyal to David, especially if he knew what David had done in Bathsheba’s and Uriah’s case. However, when David heard that Ahithophel was helping Absalom, David was truly saddened. Immediately, he prayed, “O Lord, please make Ahithophel’s advice to be foolish.” Later, David wrote about Ahithophel in psalms that expressed his great grief in losing this friend (Psalm 41:9; 55:12–16).

As soon as David had worshiped and prayed at the top of the Mount of Olives that Ahithophel’s advice be made foolish, the fifth man came to accompany David. He was another old adviser. He came to David with his coat ripped and dirt on his head. David said, “Hushai,” for that was the old man’s name, “if you go with me, you will be a burden. Go back to Jerusalem and pretend to be Absalom’s friend. Say to him, ‘As I was servant to your father, so will I be servant to you, O King.’ In that way,” said David, “you might be able to frustrate Ahithophel’s advice. Also, you can tell Zadok and Abiathar what is happening, and their sons will let me know.” So Hushai went back to the city, arriving just as Absalom did.

David traveled on just over the top of the hill. There, the sixth man, Ziba, Mephibosheth’s servant, met him with two donkeys loaded with food—200 loaves of bread, 100 bunches of raisin, 100 summer fruits (figs), and a skin of wine.

“What is all this?” David asked.

“The donkeys are for you to ride, the bread and fruit are for eating, and the wine is for medicine for those who get sick,” answered Ziba.

“Where is your master, Mephibosheth?” asked David.

“He stayed in Jerusalem,” replied Ziba. “He said, ‘Today I will get my father’s kingdom.’”

✓Was Mephibosheth really so disloyal after all David had done for him? It would be hard to believe, but after all, his close friend, Ahithophel, had betrayed him. In haste David said to Ziba, “Everything I gave to Mephibosheth you may now have!”

### ***Shimei’s cursings***

All these who met David on the way were friends. But one man, a man named Shimei, a relative of King Saul and a man who hated David, also met him. Oh, he didn’t get too close—just close enough to throw stones and dust and to shout insults at David. [Teacher, pantomime throwing stones.] “Get out of here, you bloody man, you man of the devil. This is what you get for taking the kingdom away from Saul! Get out of here!”

Was Shimei telling the truth? Had David taken the kingdom away from Saul? No!

“Oooo!” said Abishai, David’s nephew. “How dare that dead dog curse the king?! Let me go over there, and I will take off his head!”

“No,” said David. “God is letting him curse. If my own son is seeking my life, how much more this Benjamite. Maybe the Lord will give me good for the cursing I receive today.” What a godly response!

So the king continued on his way as Shimei cursed. Exhausted, David’s people got to the plain of the wilderness near the Jordan River, and there they rested.

This is a sad place in our story to leave David. Will he be okay? Will Absalom become king? We will find out in our next lesson. Things looked pretty hopeless for David. But even in the midst of all this trouble, he

trusted God and later wrote psalms telling God his troubles and trusting God to care for him.

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<sup>1</sup>The KJV says *forty*, which could be the reckoning since David's anointing, according to John Gill

### Lessons from This Lesson:

- We see Jesus:  
David went up the Mount of Olives. This is the same route Jesus Christ, our Saviour, took when He prayed the night before He was crucified.

### Activities:

- Play dough: donkeys; loaves of bread
- Snack: bread, raisins, figs (summer fruit), grape juice—what Ziba brought to David
- Sing “Obedience” by Mike and Ruth Greene, found in *Praises I* songbook, published by Majesty Music.
- Play “Simon Says” game using “Mother says” or “Father says.”
- Review questions: (Game: Have a container of nine small stones. A correct answer allows a student to move a stone to an empty container.)
  1. Which of David's sons was praised for his good looks, including no blemish and heavy hair? [Absalom.]
  2. Give two examples of how Absalom turned the hearts of Israel to himself. [Chariots and horses; fifty men who ran before him; standing at the gate for judgment; saying he wished he could be the judge; hugging people.]
  3. What did Absalom do when David permitted him to go to Hebron to pay his vow? [Gathered people from Jerusalem; announced everywhere that Israel should go to make him king.]
  4. What did David do when he learned of Absalom's treason? [Got out of Jerusalem.]
  5. Why did David say the priests should stay in Jerusalem? Hint: this answer has to do with their sons. [The sons would give David information about what was going on.]
  6. Multiple choice: Which advisor turned against David? Ahithophel or Hushai? [Ahithophel.]
  7. What did Ziba say about Mephibosheth? [He expected to gain the kingdom since David was gone.]
  8. What did Shimei, a relative of Saul, do as David escaped? [Threw stones and cursed him.]
  9. What did David say when Abishai asked to slay Shimei? [“My own son seeks my life; how much more now may this Benjamite! Let him curse, for the Lord has told him to.”]

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

- 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:**

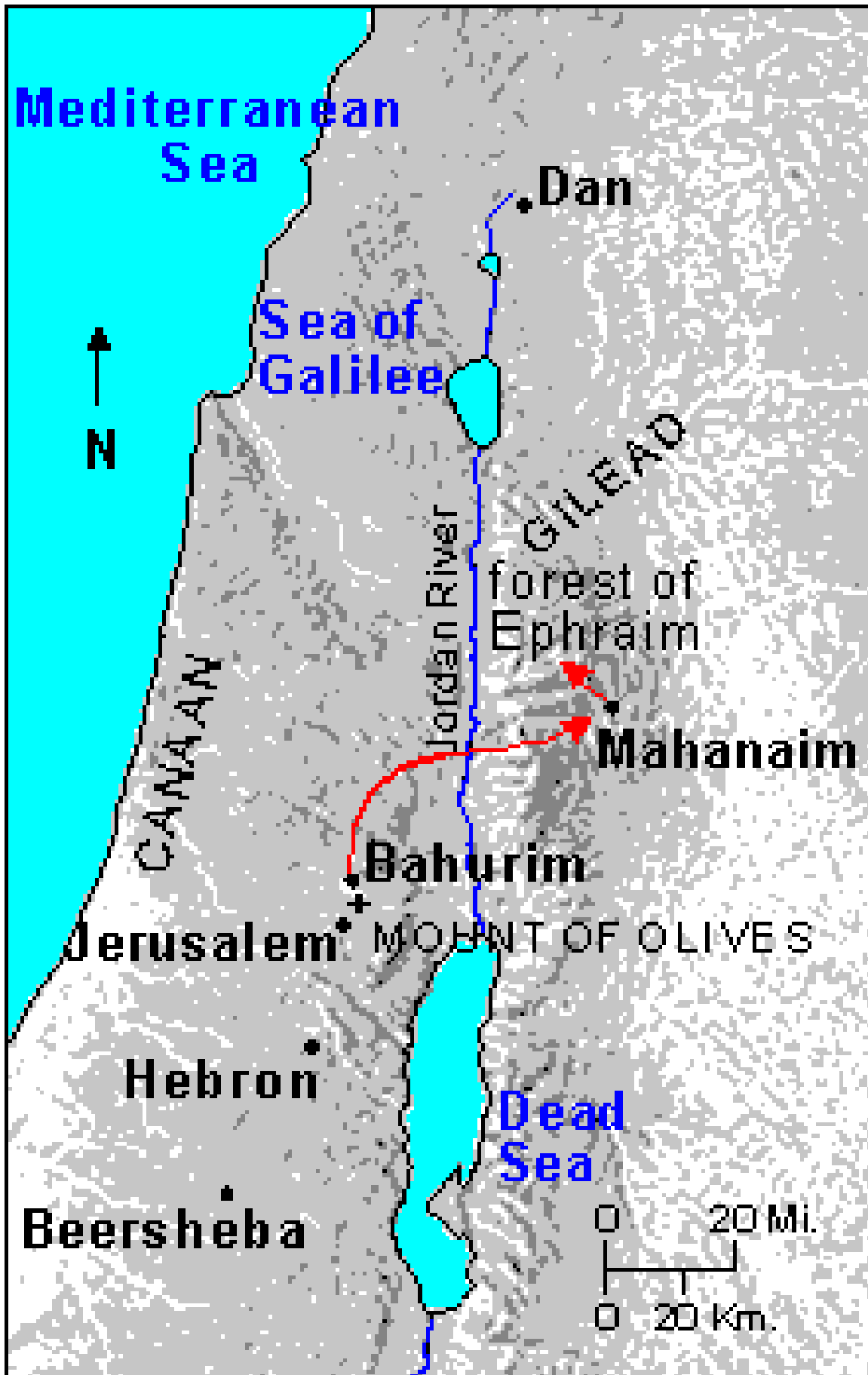
- For older students, a word search may be found here: [Absalom\\_415859.png \(1121×870\) \(wordmint.com\)](#)
- Print the picture found at [002-jn-david-shimei.jpg \(1024×768\) \(freebibleimages.org\)](#). If students are to color the picture, print it in black and white. Glue a tiny piece of stone on the stone in the picture.

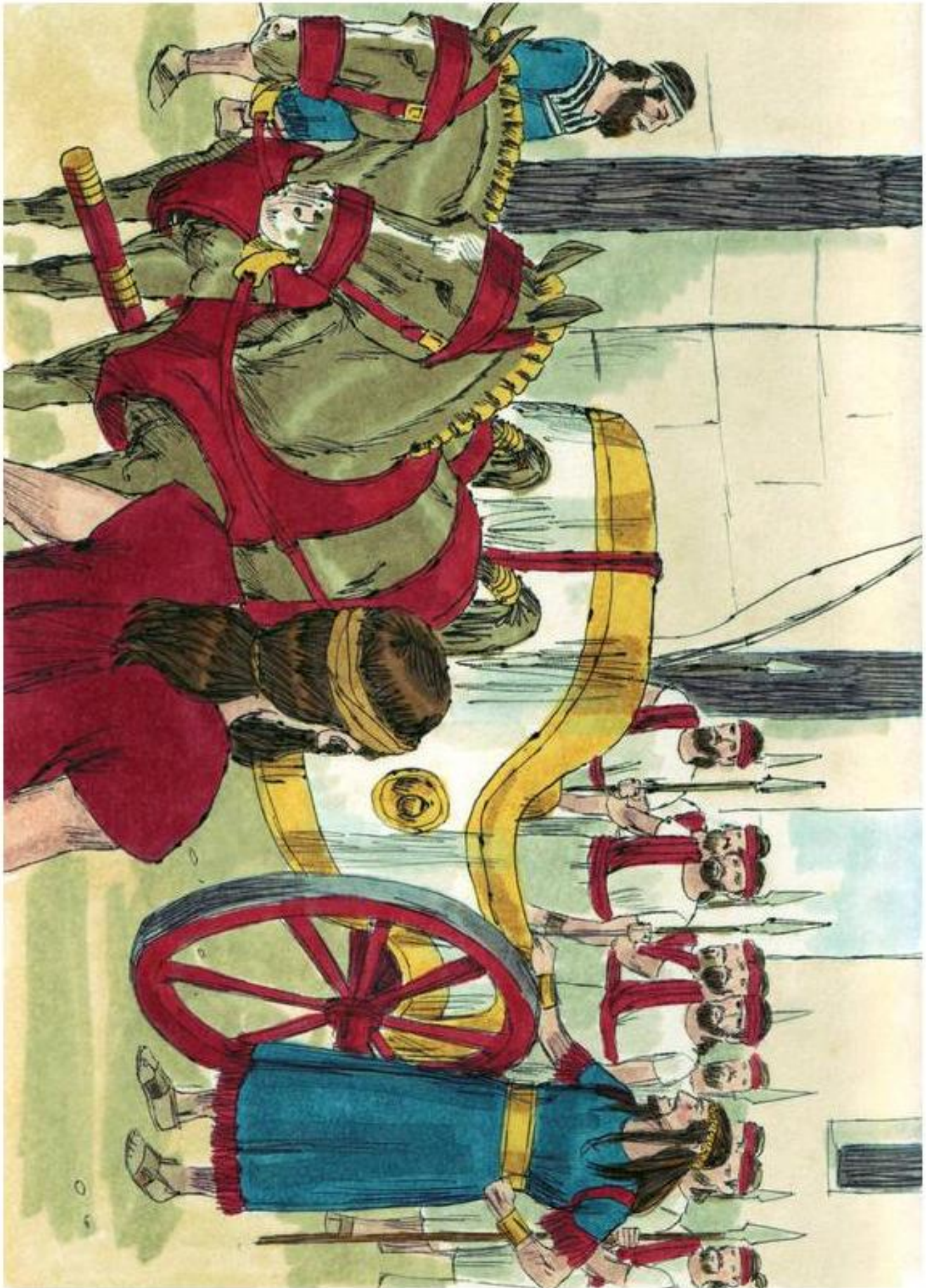
**Hebron**

**treason**

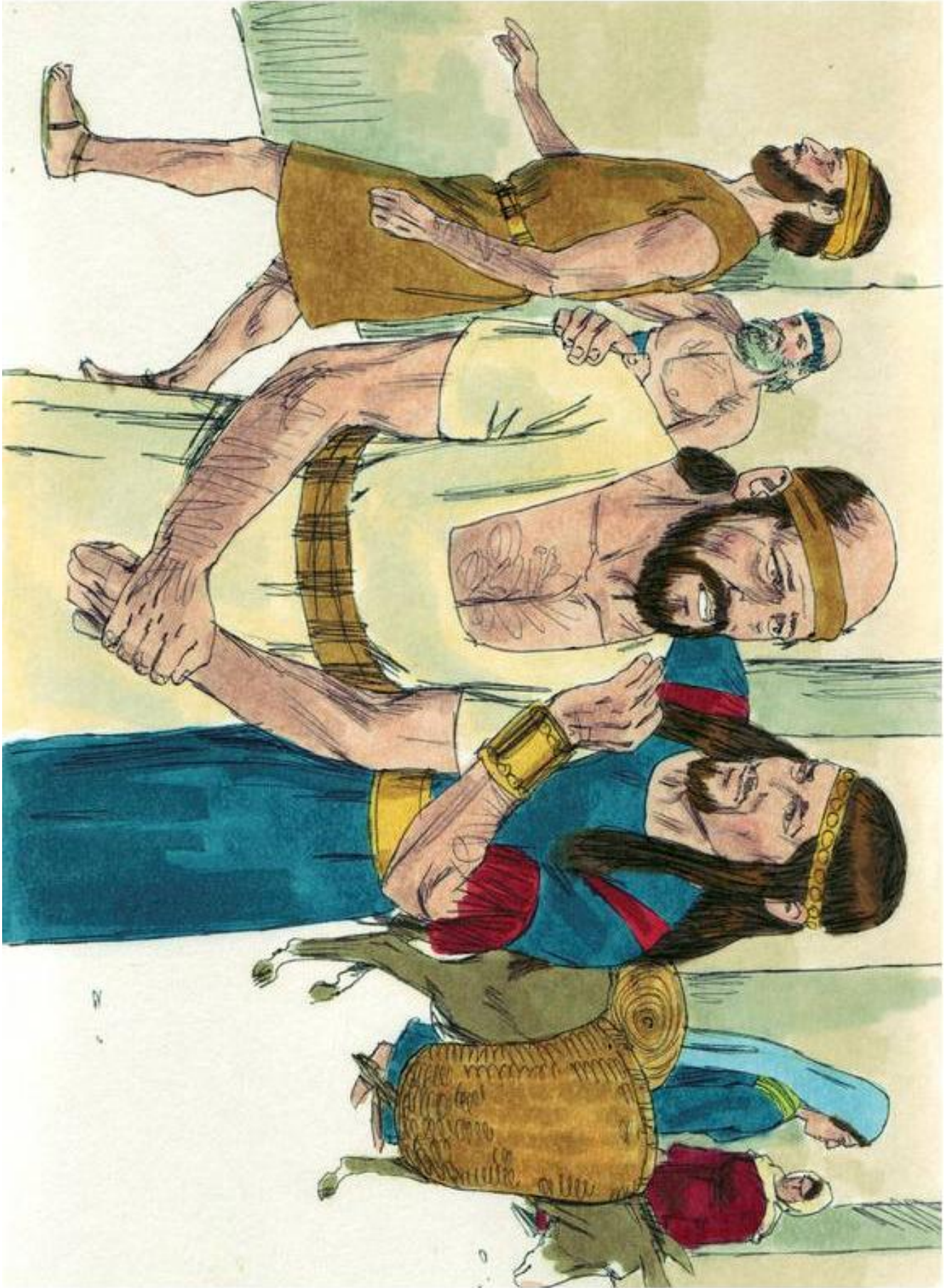
**Mephibosheth**







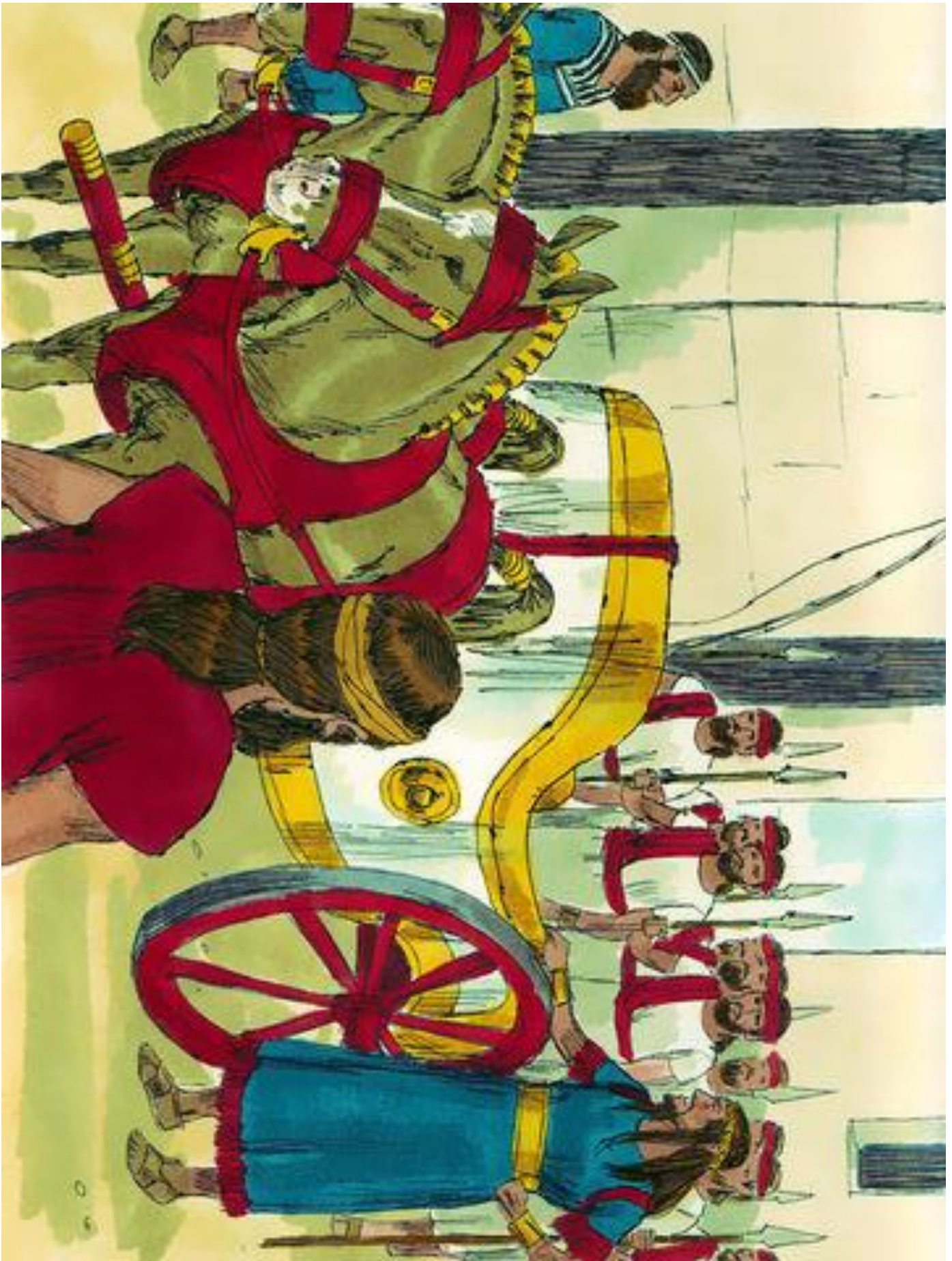
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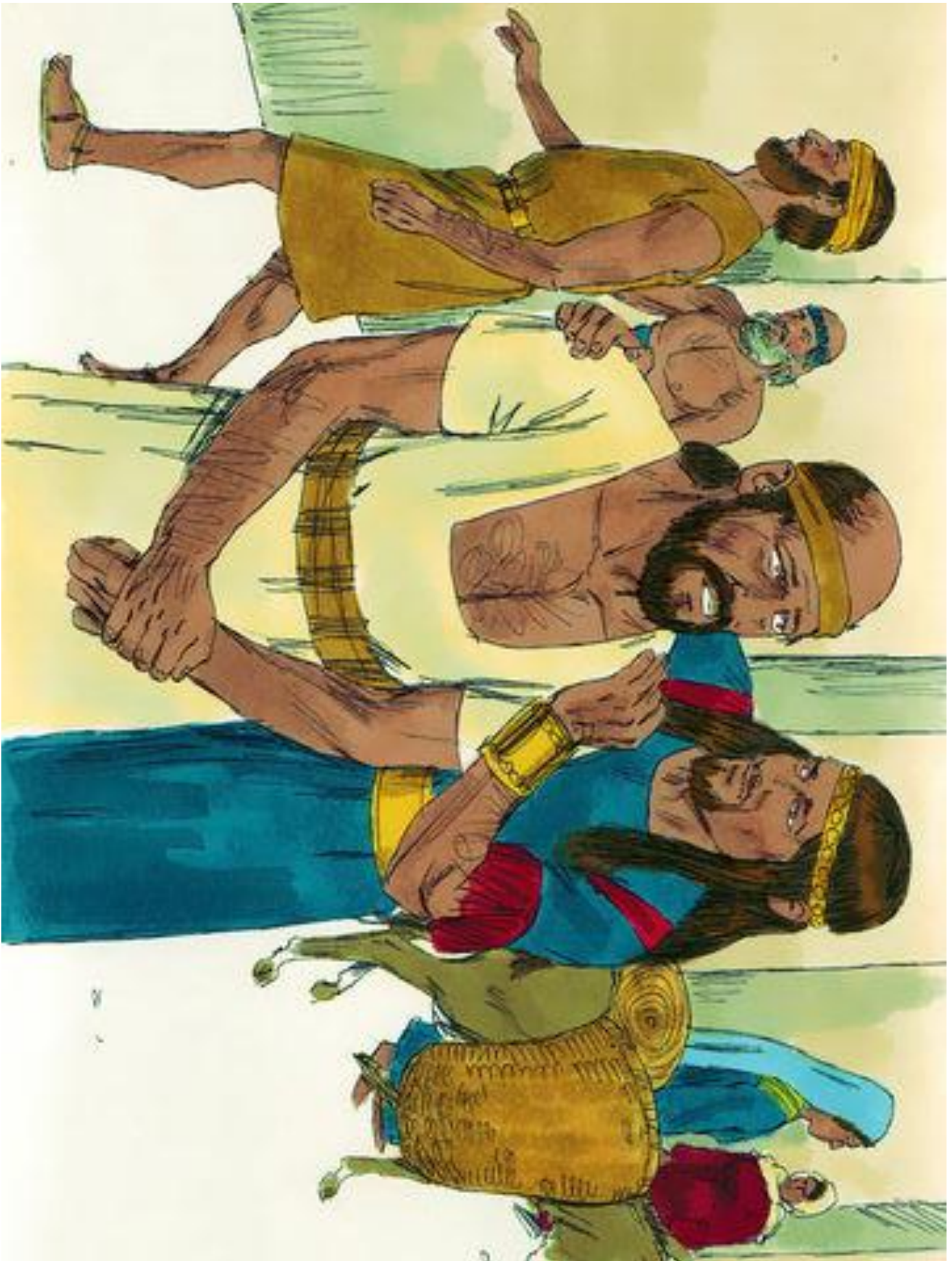
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# Those Who Met David

1. **600 Gittites** who had come to him from Gath of Philistia
2. His personal **bodyguards**
3. **Ittai**, chief of the 600 Gittites
4. **The priests Abiathar and Zadok.** David sent them back.
5. **Hushai**, David's old adviser. David sent him back to pretend to be Absalom's friend.
6. **Ziba**, Mephibosheth's servant, with two donkeys loaded with food—200 loaves of bread, 100 bunches of raisins, 100 summer fruits (figs), and a skin of wine
7. **Shimei**, a relative of King Saul and a man who hated David



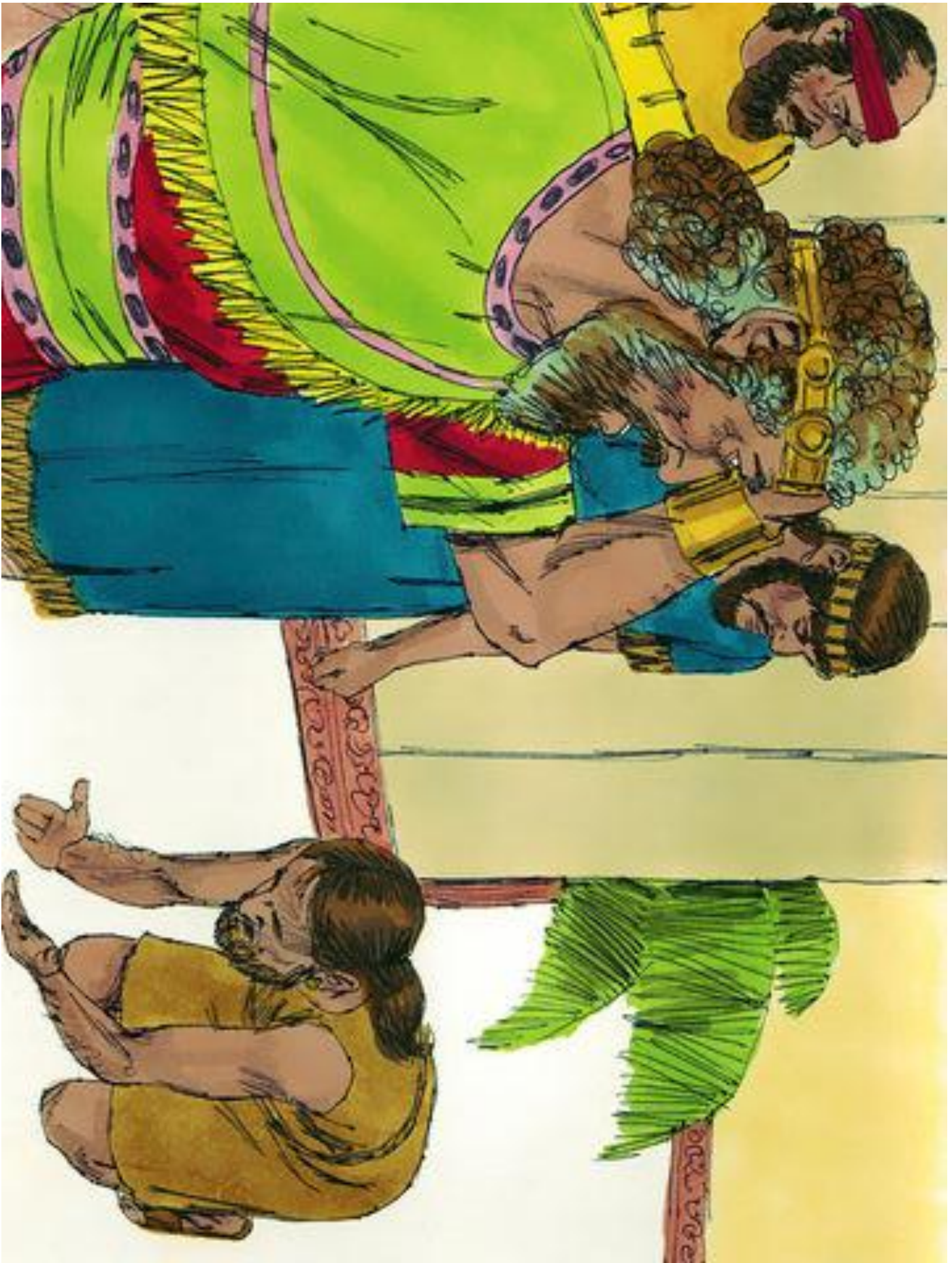
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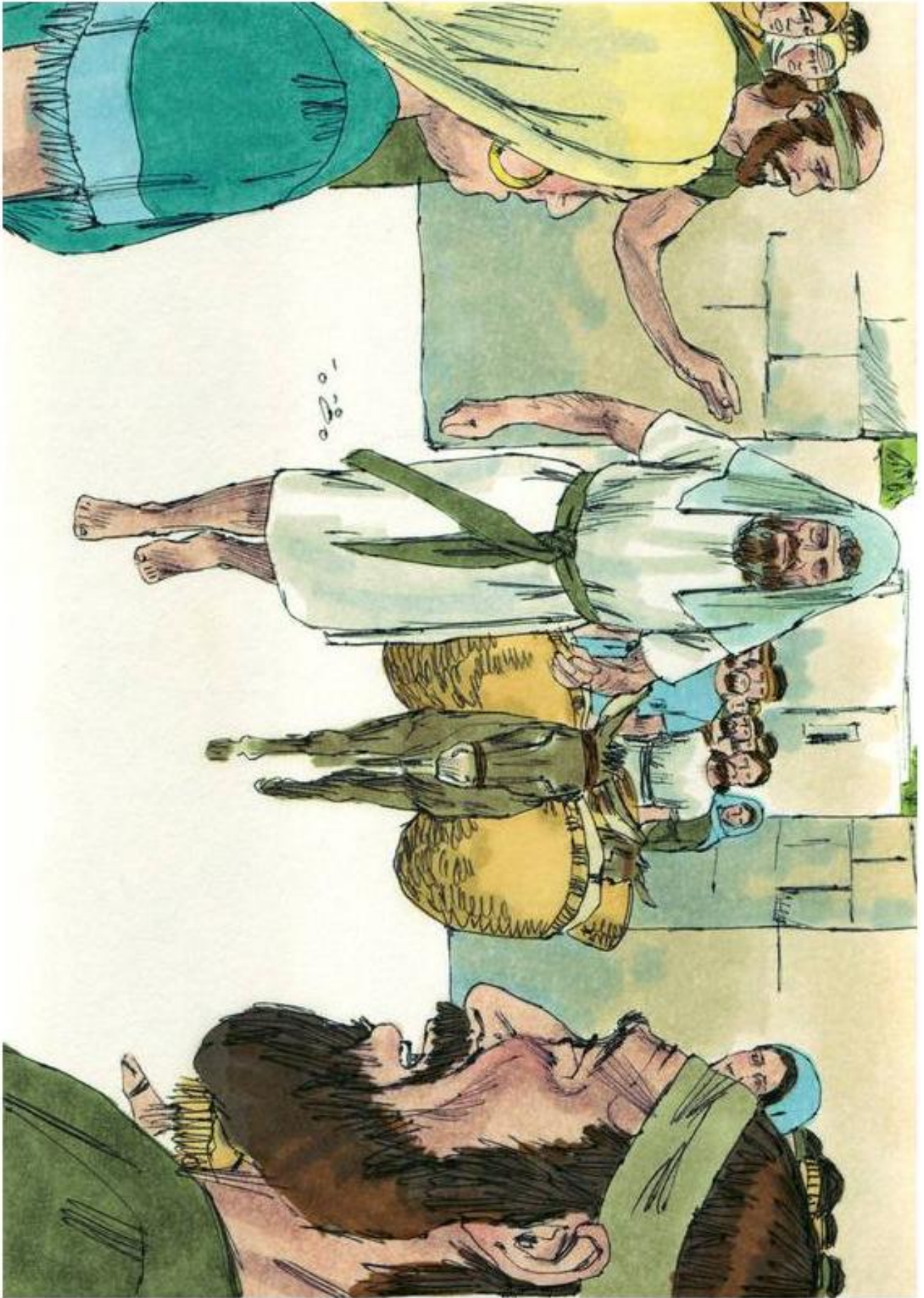


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David said, “It may be that the Lord will look on the wrong done to me, and that the Lord will repay me with good for [Shimei’s] cursing today” (2 Samuel 16:12).

