

THE CASE "ABIATHAR"
Life under flawed leadership
Banská Bystrica, 9. March 2014

- Texts

1 Samuel 22: 20-23 One son of Ahimelech son of Ahitub alone escaped. His name was Abiathar, and he fled away to join David. When Abiathar told David that Saul had slaughtered the priests of Yahweh, ²² David said to Abiathar, 'I knew, that day when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would be sure to inform Saul. *I am responsible for the death of all your kinsmen.* ²³ Stay with me, do not be afraid, for he who seeks your life seeks mine; you will be safe with me.'

1 Samuel 23:6-9 When Abiathar son of Ahimelech took refuge with David, he went down to Keilah *with the ephod in his hand.* ⁷ When word was brought to Saul that David had gone to Keilah he said, 'God has delivered him into my power: he has trapped himself by going into a town with gates and bars.' ⁸ Saul called all the people to arms, to go down to Keilah and besiege David and his men. ⁹ David, however, was aware that Saul was plotting evil against him, and said to Abiathar the priest, *'Bring the ephod.'*

1 Samuel 30:7-8 To the priest Abiathar son of Ahimelech, David said, 'Bring me the ephod.' Abiathar brought the ephod to David. ⁸ David then consulted Yahweh, 'Shall I go in pursuit of these raiders? Will I overtake them?' The answer was, 'Go in pursuit; you will certainly overtake them and rescue the captives.'

2 Samuel 8:17 Zadok and Abiathar son of Ahimelech, son of Ahitub, were priests;

1 Chronicles 15:11-15 David then sent for the priests Zadok and Abiathar, and the Levites Uriel, Asaiah, Joel, Shemaiah, Eliel and Amminadab. ¹² To them he said, 'You are the heads of the levitical families. Sanctify yourselves, you and your kinsmen, so that you can move the ark of Yahweh, God of Israel, to the place which I have prepared for it. ¹³ *Because you were not there the first time, Yahweh our God broke out at us because we did not handle it properly.*' ¹⁴ So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves, to move the ark of Yahweh, God of Israel, ¹⁵ and the Levites carried the ark of God with the shafts on their shoulders, as Moses had ordered in accordance with the word of Yahweh.

2 Samuel 6:8 David was angry because of the LORD's outburst against Uzzah, so he named that place an Outburst Against Uzzah, as it is today.

2 Samuel 15:24-29 Zadok was there too, and all the Levites with him, carrying the ark of God. They set the ark of God down beside Abiathar until everyone had finished marching out of the town. ²⁵ The king then said to Zadok, 'Take the ark of God back into the city. Should I win Yahweh's favour, he will bring me back and allow me to see it and its tent once more. ²⁶ But should he say, "You displease me," here I am: let him treat me as he sees fit.' ²⁷ The king said to Zadok the priest, 'Look, you and Abiathar go back quietly into the city, with your two sons, your own son Ahimaaz and Jonathan son of Abiathar. ²⁸ You see, I shall wait in the passes of the desert plain until word comes from you bringing me news.' ²⁹ *So Zadok and Abiathar took the ark of God back to Jerusalem and stayed there.*

2 Samuel 17:15-16 Hushai then told the priests Zadok and Abiathar, 'Ahithophel gave such and such advice to Absalom and the elders of Israel, but I advised so and so. ¹⁶ Send with all speed to David and say, "Do not camp in the desert passes tonight, but get through them as fast as you can, or the king and his whole army may be annihilated."'

2 Samuel 19:12 King David then sent word to the priests Zadok and Abiathar, 'Say to the elders of Judah, "Why should you be the last to bring the king home?"'

SOLOMON'S INTHRONISATION

1 Kings 1:5-13 Now Adonijah son of Haggith was growing pretentious and saying, 'I shall be king!' Accordingly, he procured a chariot and team with fifty guards to run ahead of him. ⁶ *Never*

once in his life had his father crossed him by saying, 'Why are you behaving like that?' He was very handsome too; his mother had given birth to him after Absalom. ⁷ He conferred with Joab son of Zeruiah and with the priest Abiathar, who both rallied to Adonijah's cause; ⁸ but neither Zadok the priest, nor Benaiah son of Jehoiada, nor the prophet Nathan, nor Shimei and Rei, nor David's champions, supported Adonijah. ⁹ One day when Adonijah was sacrificing sheep, oxen and fattened calves at the Sliding Stone which is beside the Fuller's Spring, he invited all his brothers, the royal princes, and all the men of Judah in the king's service; ¹⁰ but he did not invite the prophet Nathan, or Benaiah, or the champions, or his brother Solomon. ¹¹ Nathan then said to Bathsheba, Solomon's mother, 'Have you not heard that, unknown to our lord David, Adonijah son of Haggith has become king? ¹² Well, this is my advice to you if you want to save your own life and the life of your son Solomon. ¹³ Go straight in to King David and say, "My lord king, did you not make your servant this promise on oath: Your son Solomon is to be king after me; he is the one who is to sit on my throne? How is it, then, that Adonijah is king?"

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1 Kings 2:26-27 s for Abiathar the priest, the king said to him, 'Go to Anathoth to your estate. You deserve to die, but I am not going to put you to death now, since you carried the ark of Yahweh in the presence of my father David and shared all my father's hardships.' ²⁷ Solomon deprived Abiathar of the priesthood of Yahweh, thus fulfilling the prophecy which Yahweh had uttered against the House of Eli at Shiloh.

CONTENTS

0. INTRODUCTION:

- 0.1. EXEGETICAL REMARKS
- 0.2. THE PROBLEM OF LEADERSHIP IN THE CHURCH

1. DAVID'S LYING → ABIATHAR'S TRAGEDY

- 1.1. THE LEADER IN HIS PERSONAL LIFE
- 1.2. ABIATHAR TAKES SIDES WITH GOD'S ANOINTED
- 1.3. SELFLESSNESS, FAITH

2. DAVID' HEEDLESSNESS → THE DEATH OF UZZAH

- 2.1. THE LEADER IN HIS WORSHIP
- 2.2. ABIATHAR CARRIES THE ARCH OF THE COVENANT
- 2.3. DUTY ABOVE PERSONAL OFFENCE

3. DAVID'S ADULTERY → NATIONAL POLITICAL CRISIS

- 3.1. THE LEADER IN HIS OFFICIAL RESPONSIBILITIES (WORK)
- 3.2. ABIATHAR SERVES UNDERCOVER IN JERUSALEM
- 3.3. FAITHFULNESS UNTO DEATH

4. THE COUP OF ADONIJAH

- 4.1. THE LEADER AND QUESTIONABLE DECISIONS
- 4.2. ABIATHAR REFUSES SOLOMON AS A KING
- 4.3. FINAL BREAKING OF FAITH

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

0. INTRODUCTION:

0.1. EXEGETICAL REMARKS

- a need for a psychological exegesis in this story of Abiathar, the high priest
- we must be careful in criticising David to understand this story

- we are trying to think into different situations of Abiathar's life

0.2. THE PROBLEM OF LEADERSHIP IN THE CHURCH

- Christians: leaders – or followers? (modern tendency to see everyone as a “leader”)
- We should be followers of Jesus – what about our attitude to the people in leadership?
- Excuses for unfaithful service – our leaders are “less than perfect”

1. DAVID'S LYING → ABIATHAR'S TRAGEDY

1.1. THE LEADER IN HIS PERSONAL LIFE

- David's behaviour in *personal danger* – persecution (did not consider others, just his own safety?)
- David asked for the *holy bread* – was it OK?
- Abiathar nevertheless joined David → Samuel's authority, Abiathar recognized David as God's chosen one
- risked Saul's displeasure
- lived in difficult circumstances of an outlaw with David – moving in caves, towns, wilderness etc.

1.2. ABIATHAR TAKES SIDES WITH GOD'S ANOINTED

- takes ephod
- helps to escape and finely be victorious

1.3. SELFLESSNESS, FAITH

- forget personal grievances – serve the Lord! (despite the fact that the anointed one has been the reason for the death of his father Ahimelech)

2. DAVID' HEEDLESSNESS → THE DEATH OF UZZAH

2.1. THE LEADER IN HIS WORSHIP

- David's conduct in *religious matters* – worship (did not consult priests – Abiathar, and Levites?)
- David did not do his “homework” to remind himself how the ark of the LORD was supposed to be transported (the Levites were supposed to carry it)
- David was “angry” (2Sam 6)
- David asked Levites as his “second” option – did they know it would not be all well? Could Abiathar have known that what David was going to do was wrong?

2.2. ABIATHAR CARRIES THE ARCH OF THE COVENANT

- despite being “forgotten” at first (only after Uzza's death was he summoned by David – 1 Chron 15)
- overcomes professional “slighting”

2.3. DUTY ABOVE PERSONAL OFFENCE

- forget careerism; recognition; praise – do your job in the Kingdom!

3. DAVID'S ADULTERY → NATIONAL POLITICAL CRISIS

3.1. THE LEADER IN HIS OFFICIAL RESPONSIBILITIES (WORK)

- **2 Samuel 12:10** for this, your household will never be free of the sword, since you showed contempt for me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite, to make her your wife.” – Abshalom's revolt
- David's (ab)use of *political power* – public office (lust above responsibility)
- David sent Abiathar with the ark to Jerusalem to take care of his interests

3.2. ABIATHAR SERVES UNDERCOVER IN JERUSALEM

- risks life under Abshalom – pretends that the arch belongs under Abshalom
- involves his son Jonathan in the “secret service” (2 Sam 17:17)

3.3. FAITHFULNESS UNTO DEATH

- Help your leader survive! – if God is with him, you are better off with him, too!

4. THE COUP OF ADONIJAH

4.1. THE LEADER AND QUESTIONABLE DECISIONS

- David’s *avoidance of troublesome matters* – family relationships (indecisiveness)
- **2 Samuel 3:2-5** The sons born to David at Hebron were: his first-born Amnon, by Ahinoam of Jezreel; ³ his second Chileab, by Abigail widow of Nabal of Carmel; the third Absalom son of Maacah, daughter of Talmai king of Geshur; ⁴ the fourth Adonijah son of Haggith; the fifth Shephatiah son of Abital; ⁵ the sixth Ithream, by David's wife, Eglah. These were born to David at Hebron.
- Solomon – son of an “illegitimate” wife (not really – Bathsheba’s husband had died), yet the chosen one
- wrong reasoning – old age weakness? accumulated grievances?

4.2. ABIATHAR REFUSES SOLOMON FOR KING

- why? – David's adultery? Solomon's "illegitimacy"? what we know for sure is that at the end of his life Abiathar made a wrong decision

God said: **2 Samuel 12:24-25** Then David comforted *his wife Bathsheba*; he went and slept with her. She gave birth to a son and named him **Solomon**. **HE LORD LOVED HIM**, ²⁵ and He sent *a message* through Nathan the prophet, who named him *Jedidiah* (Beloved of the LORD), because of the LORD.

1Chr 17:11-15 "When your days are fulfilled that you must go *to be* with your fathers, that I will set up *one of* your ¹descendants after you, who will be of your sons; and I will establish his kingdom. ¹² "He shall build for Me a house, and I will establish his throne forever. ¹³ **"I will be his father and he shall be My son;** and I will not take My lovingkindness away from him, as I took it from him who was before you. ¹⁴ "But I will settle him in My house and in My kingdom forever, and his throne shall be established forever." ¹⁵ According to all these words and according to all this vision, so Nathan spoke to David.

4.3. THE FINAL BREAKING OF FAITH

- Beware of the old age! – Weak body may mean weak mind!
- Beware of legalism! – Do not judge!
- Carefully follow the word of God! (prophecies)

Matthew 23:2-3 The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. = it’s very difficult, we need the guidance of the Holy Spirit, humility and self-examination!

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

- Follow leadership according to the will of God – not the leader's performance.
- Observe God's hand in the life and the work of the leader – overlook the weaknesses.
- Beware of trusting your former fidelity – each new decision needs new grace from God.
- A whole life of faithful ministry does not guarantee a good end – pray for your old age.