
2SAMUEL 20: 1 There happened to be there a base fellow, whose name was Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjamite: and he blew the trumpet, and said, "We have no portion in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse. Every man to his tents, Israel!"

Sheba raises an insurrection, and gains a party in Israel, 2Sam 20:1, 2Sam 20:2. David shuts up the ten concubines who were defiled by Absalom, 2Sam 20:3. Amasa is sent to assemble the men of Judah, 2Sam 20:4, 2Sam 20:5. And in the mean time Abishai is sent to pursue Sheba, 2Sam 20:6, 2Sam 20:7. Joab treacherously murders Amasa, 2Sam 20:8-12. Joab and the army continue the pursuit of Sheba, 2Sam 20:13, 2Sam 20:14. He is besieged in Abel; and, by the counsels of a wise woman, the people of Abel cut off his head, and throw it over the wall to Joab; who blows the trumpet of peace, and he and his men return to Jerusalem, 2Sam 20:15-22. Account of David's civil and military officers, 2Sam 20:23-26.

Verse 1

Sheba, the son of Bichri - As this man was a Benjamite, he probably belonged to the family of Saul; and he seems to have had considerable influence in Israel to raise such an insurrection: but we know nothing farther of him than what is related in this place.

We have no part in David - We of Israel, we of the ten tribes, are under no obligation to the house of David. Leave him, and let every man fall into the ranks under his own leader.

2SAMUEL 20: 2 So all the men of Israel went up from following David, and followed Sheba the son of Bichri; but the men of Judah joined with their king, from the Jordan even to Jerusalem.

2SAMUEL 20: 3 David came to his house at Jerusalem; and the king took the ten women his concubines, whom he had left to keep the house, and put them in custody, and provided them with sustenance, but didn't go in to them. So they were shut up to the day of their death, living in widowhood.

Verse 3

The ten women - He could not well divorce them; he could not punish them, as they were not in the transgression; he could no more be familiar with them, because they had been defiled by his son; and to have married them to other men might have been dangerous to the state: therefore he shut them up and fed them - made them quite comfortable, and they continued as widows to their death.

2SAMUEL 20: 4 Then the king said to Amasa, "Call me the men of Judah together within three days, and be here present."

Verse 4

Then said the king to Amasa - Thus he invests him with the command of the army, and sends him to collect the men of Judah, and to come back to receive his orders in relation to Sheba, in three days. It appears that Amasa found more difficulty in collecting his country-men than was at first supposed; and this detaining him beyond the three days, David, fearing that Sheba's rebellion would get head, sent Abishai, who it appears was accompanied by Joab, to pursue after Sheba.

Amasa, it seems, got up with them at Gibeon, 2Sam 20:8, where he was treacherously murdered by the execrable Joab.

2SAMUEL 20: 5 So Amasa went to call the men of Judah together; but he stayed longer than the set time which he had appointed him.

2SAMUEL 20: 6 David said to Abishai, "Now Sheba the son of Bichri will do us more harm than Absalom did. Take your lord's servants, and pursue after him, lest he get himself fortified cities, and escape out of our sight."

2SAMUEL 20: 7 There went out after him Joab's men, and the Cherethites and the Pelethites, and all the mighty men; and they went out of Jerusalem, to pursue after Sheba the son of Bichri.

2SAMUEL 20: 8 When they were at the great stone which is in Gibeon, Amasa came to meet them. Joab was clothed in his apparel of war that he had put on, and on it was a sash with a sword fastened on his waist in its sheath; and as he went along it fell out.

Verse 8

Joab's garment - It appears that this was not a military garment; and that Joab had no arms but a short sword, which he had concealed in his girdle; and this sword, or knife, was so loose in its sheath that it could be easily drawn out. It is thought farther, that Joab, in passing to Amasa, stumbled, (for so some of the versions, and able critics, understand the words it fell out). and that the sword fell down when he stumbled; that he took it up with his left hand as if he had no bad intention; and then, taking Amasa by the beard with his right hand, pretending to kiss him, he, with his sword in his left hand, ripped up his bowels. This seems to be the meaning of this very obscure verse. It is worthy of remark that in the Eastern country it is the beard, not the man, which is usually kissed.

2SAMUEL 20: 9 Joab said to Amasa, "Is it well with you, my brother?" Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him.

2SAMUEL 20: 10 But Amasa took no heed to the sword that was in Joab's hand. So he struck him with it in the body, and shed out his bowels to the ground, and didn't strike him again; and he died. Joab and Abishai his brother pursued after Sheba the son of Bichri.

Verse 10

In the fifth rib - I believe שֵׁמֶן chomesh, which we render here and elsewhere the fifth rib, means any part of the abdominal region. The Septuagint translate it τὴν ψοᾶν, the groin; the Targum, the right side of the thigh, i.e., (the phrase of the Targumist being interpreted), the privy parts. That it

means some part of the abdominal region, is evident from what follows, And shed out his bowels to the ground. It appears from this that, in plain English, he ripped up his belly.

2SAMUEL 20: 11 There stood by him one of Joab's young men, and said, "He who favours Joab, and he who is for David, let him follow Joab!"

Verse 11

He that favoureth Joab - As if he had said, There is now no other commander besides Joab; and Joab is steadily attached to David: let those therefore who are loyal follow Joab.

2SAMUEL 20: 12 Amasa lay wallowing in his blood in the midst of the highway. When the man saw that all the people stood still, he carried Amasa out of the highway into the field, and cast a garment over him, when he saw that everyone who came by him stood still.

Verse 12

Amasa wallowed in blood - It is very likely that Amasa did not immediately die; I have known instances of persons living several hours after their bowels had been shed out.

2SAMUEL 20: 13 When he was removed out of the highway, all the people went on after Joab, to pursue after Sheba the son of Bichri.

2SAMUEL 20: 14 He went through all the tribes of Israel to Abel, and to Beth Maacah, and all the Berites: and they were gathered together, and went also after him.

Verse 14

Unto Abel - This is supposed to have been the capital of the district called Abilene in St. Luke's Gospel, Luk 3:1.

Beth-maacah - Is supposed to have been in the northern part of the Holy Land, on the confines of Syria, and probably in the tribe of Naphtali.

2SAMUEL 20: 15 They came and besieged him in Abel of Beth Maacah, and they cast up a mound against the city, and it stood against the rampart; and all the people who were with Joab battered the wall, to throw it down.

Verse 15

They cast up a bank against the city - The word סוללה solelah, which we render bank, means, most probably, a battering engine of some kind, or a tower overlooking the walls, on which archers and

slingers could stand and annoy the inhabitants, while others of the besiegers could proceed to sap the walls. That it cannot be a bank that stood in the trench, is evident from the circumstance thus expressed.

2SAMUEL 20: 16 Then a wise woman cried out of the city, "Hear, hear! Please say to Joab, 'Come near here, that I may speak with you.'"

Verse 16

A wise woman - She was probably governess.

2SAMUEL 20: 17 He came near to her; and the woman said, "Are you Joab?" He answered, "I am." Then she said to him, "Hear the words of your handmaid." He answered, "I do hear."

2SAMUEL 20: 18 Then she spoke, saying, "They were used to say in old times, 'They shall surely ask counsel at Abel;' and so they settled it."

Verse 18

They shall surely ask counsel at Abel - This is a proverb, but from what it originated we know not; nor can we exactly say what it means: much must be supplied to bring it to speak sense. Abel was probably famed for the wisdom of its inhabitants; and parties who had disputes appealed to their judgment, which appears to have been in such high reputation as to be final by consent of all parties. To this the wise woman refers, and intimates to Joab that he should have proceeded in this way before he began to storm the city, and destroy the peaceable inhabitants.

2SAMUEL 20: 19 I am among those who are peaceable and faithful in Israel. You seek to destroy a city and a mother in Israel. Why will you swallow up the inheritance of the LORD?"

Verse 19

I - peaceable and faithful in Israel - I am for peace, not contention of any kind; I am faithful - I adhere to David, and neither seek nor shall sanction any rebellion or anarchy in the land. Why then dost thou proceed in such a violent manner? Perhaps the woman speaks here in the name and on behalf of the city: "I am a peaceable city, and am faithful to the king."

A mother in Israel - That is, a chief city of a district; for it is very likely that the woman speaks of the city, not of herself.

2SAMUEL 20: 20 Joab answered, "Far be it, far be it from me, that I should swallow up or destroy.

2SAMUEL 20: 21 The matter is not so. But a man of the hill country of Ephraim, Sheba the son of Bichri by name, has lifted up his hand against the king, even against David. Deliver him only, and I

will depart from the city." The woman said to Joab, "Behold, his head shall be thrown to you over the wall."

Verse 21

His head shall be thrown to thee - Thus it appears she had great sway in the counsels of the city; and that the punishment of a state rebel was then, what it is now in this kingdom, beheading.

2SAMUEL 20: 22 Then the woman went to all the people in her wisdom. They cut off the head of Sheba the son of Bichri, and threw it out to Joab. He blew the trumpet, and they were dispersed from the city, every man to his tent. Joab returned to Jerusalem to the king.

2SAMUEL 20: 23 Now Joab was over all the army of Israel; and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites and over the Pelethites;

Verse 23

Joab was over all the host - He had murdered Amasa, and seized on the supreme command: and such was his power at present, and the service which he had rendered to the state by quelling the rebellion of Sheba, that David was obliged to continue him; and dared not to call him to account for his murders without endangering the safety of the state by a civil war.

Benaiah - over the Cherethites - Benaiah was over the archers and slingers.

See the notes on 2Sam 8:18.

2SAMUEL 20: 24 and Adoram was over the men subject to forced labour; and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was the recorder;

Verse 24

Adoram was over the tribute - Probably the chief receiver of the taxes; or Chancellor of the Exchequer, as we term it.

Jehoshaphat - recorder - The registrar of public events.

2SAMUEL 20: 25 and Sheva was scribe; and Zadok and Abiathar were priests;

Verse 25

Shevah was scribe - The king's secretary.

2SAMUEL 20: 26 and also Ira the Jairite was chief minister to David.

Verse 26

Ira - was a chief ruler about David - The Hebrew is כהן לדוד cohen ledavid, a priest to David; and so the Vulgate, Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic. The Chaldee has רב rab, a prince, or chief. He was probably a sort of domestic chaplain to the king. We know that the kings of Judah had their seers, which is nearly the same: Gad was David's seer, 2Sam 24:11, and Jeduthun was the seer of King Josiah, 2Chr 35:16.

The conclusion of this chapter is very similar to the conclusion of 2Sam 8:16-18 (note), where see the notes.