

2Samuel 20:1 ¶ And there happened to be there a man of Belial, whose name was Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjamite: and he blew a trumpet, and said, We have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: every man to his tents, O Israel.

2Samuel 20:2 So every man of Israel went up from after David, and followed Sheba the son of Bichri: but the men of Judah clave unto their king, from Jordan even to Jerusalem.

The narrative continues from the previous chapter.

Among the Israelites that were affronted by the men of Judah was Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjamite, a very wicked, ungodly man (from the Hebrew for *Belial*). He blew a trumpet and called for the men of Israel to reject David, the son of Jesse, as their king and go home. The angry men of Israel followed Sheba, but the men of Judah stayed with David all the way from the Jordan River to Jerusalem.

2Samuel 20:3 And 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 ward, and fed them, but went not in unto them. So they were shut up unto the day of their death, living in widowhood.

When David got to his palace, he made arrangements for the ten concubines he had left behind to be given a separate housing area, protected and their needs provided. He never again slept with them; they lived as widows for the rest of their lives. I'm sure this was because of Absalom's public act of taking them as his own.

2Samuel 20:4 ¶ Then said the king to Amasa, Assemble me the men of Judah within three days, and be thou here present.

2Samuel 20:5 So Amasa went to assemble *the men of* Judah: but he tarried longer than the set time which he had appointed him.

The king instructed Amasa to assemble his troops and appear before him within three days. Amasa gathered the troops together as instructed, but he did not do it in the appointed time. I am sure David was beginning to regret the fact that he had appointed Amasa as his commander.

2Samuel 20:6 And David said to Abishai, Now shall Sheba the son of Bichri do us more harm than *did* Absalom: take thou thy lord's servants, and pursue after him, lest he get him fenced cities, and escape us.

2Samuel 20:7 And 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.

Because time was of the essence, David commanded Abishai to take David's servants and go after Sheba because it was possible that he could cause them more trouble than Absalom had. He urged him to catch him before he could get within fenced cities and escape capture.

Abishai headed out of Jerusalem in pursuit of Sheba leading his troops that included Joab's men, the Cherethites, the Pelethites and all David's mighty men.

2Samuel 20:8 When they *were* at the great stone which *is* in Gibeon, Amasa went before them. And Joab's garment that he had put on was girded unto him, and upon it a girdle *with* a sword fastened upon his loins in the sheath thereof; and as he went forth it fell out.

2Samuel 20:9 And Joab said to Amasa, *Art* thou in health, my brother? And Joab took Amasa by the beard with the right hand to kiss him.

2Samuel 20:10 But Amasa took no heed to the sword that *was* in Joab's hand: so he smote him therewith in the fifth *rib*, and shed out his bowels to the ground, and struck him not again; and he died. So Joab and Abishai his brother pursued after Sheba the son of Bichri.

When Abishai and his army reached the great stone at Gibeon (obviously a well known place about 5 miles from Jerusalem according to Josephus), Amasa showed up to meet them. Joab approached him dressed for battle and equipped with a sheathed sword that fell out as he went toward Amasa.

JFB adds this insight: "According to JOSEPHUS, he let it drop on purpose as he was accosting Amasa, that stooping, as it were accidentally, to pick it up, he might salute the new general with the naked sword in his hand, without exciting any suspicion of his design."

Joab pretended to be greeting his cousin with affection, grabbing his beard with his right hand and pretending to pull him forward to kiss him. (This sounds like a strange greeting but was evidently a common one.) Amasa did not notice the sword in his hand. Joab struck Amasa with a fatal wound in the fifth rib (in the abdomen) so hard that his insides gushed out. So much for love between the cousins!

Joab and Abishai then continued their pursuit of Sheba.

2Samuel 20:11 And one of Joab's men stood by him, and said, He that favoureth Joab, and he that *is* for David, *let him go* after Joab.

2Samuel 20:12 And Amasa wallowed in blood in the midst of the highway. And when the man saw that all the people stood still, he removed Amasa out of the highway into the field, and cast a cloth upon him, when he saw that every one that came by him stood still.

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.

One of Joab's right hand men called for those loyal to Joab and David to follow Joab. It seems that Joab effectively resumed his command of the army with no remonstrance from Abishai.

The sight of Amasa suffering the throes of death in a pool of blood in the middle of the road caused the troops to stop dead in their tracks. Joab's man moved

Amasa out of the road into the field and covered him with a cloth so that he could cause no further distraction. After that, the troops continued to pursue Sheba.

2Samuel 20:14 ¶ And he went through all the tribes of Israel unto Abel, and to Bethmaachah, and all the Berites: and they were gathered together, and went also after him.

2Samuel 20:15 And they came and besieged him in Abel of Bethmaachah, and they cast up a bank against the city, and it stood in the trench: and all the people that *were* with Joab battered the wall, to throw it down.

It seems that Sheba gathered followers as he passed through the cities of Israel. Joab and his troops finally caught up with Sheba at Abel of Bethmaachah. They established a battle ramp against the city wall from a trench beside the wall. From the ramp, the men of Judah began to batter the wall to tear it down.

2Samuel 20:16 Then cried a wise woman out of the city, Hear, hear; say, I pray you, unto Joab, Come near hither, that I may speak with thee.

2Samuel 20:17 And when he was come near unto her, the woman said, *Art thou Joab?* And he answered, *I am he.* Then she said unto him, Hear the words of thine handmaid. And he answered, I do hear.

2Samuel 20:18 Then she spake, saying, They were wont to speak in old time, saying, They shall surely ask *counsel* at Abel: and so they ended *the matter.*

2Samuel 20:19 *I am one of them that are peaceable and faithful in Israel: thou seekest to destroy a city and a mother in Israel: why wilt thou swallow up the inheritance of the LORD?*

A wise woman that lived in the city called out and requested to talk to Joab. (I assume from the top of the wall.) First, she wanted affirmation that he was commander Joab, and he gave it. She reminded Joab that in the past Abel had the reputation of being a place to go and receive wisdom to settle disagreements; it was known as a city that promoted peace. The implication—You should consider what I am about to say accordingly.

She declared that she was but one of the many that were peaceable and faithful in Israel. The she asked Joab why he was attempting to destroy a city and mother in Israel—both of which belonged to the LORD.

The IVP Commentary provides a historical note: “Phoenician, Ugaritic and Old Babylonian word parallels to *‘em*, ‘mother,’ are kin terms related to clan groups. It is therefore likely that the wise woman’s argument is related to the extermination of one of Israel’s clans, not a ‘founding city.’”

2Samuel 20:20 And Joab answered and said, 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 mount Ephraim, Sheba the son of Bichri by name, hath lifted up his hand against the king, *even* against David: deliver him only, and I will depart from the city. And the woman said unto Joab, Behold, his head shall be thrown to thee over the wall.

2Samuel 20:22 Then the woman went unto all the people in her wisdom. And they cut off the head of Sheba the son of Bichri, and cast *it* out to Joab. And he blew a trumpet, and they retired from the city, every man to his tent. And Joab returned to Jerusalem unto the king.

Joab assured the woman that such was not his intent. His purpose was to capture a man of mount Ephraim, Sheba the son of Bichri by name, because he was promoting insurrection against King David. He told her that if she would get the people to turn Sheba over to Joab, he and his troops would leave.

The woman told Joab that his head would be thrown over the wall.

The woman then returned to the city to inform the people of her discussion with Joab. They cut off the head of Sheba and threw it over the wall to Joab. He immediately blew the trumpet signaling that they had gained their objective and could now return home. Joab then returned to Jerusalem to report to the king.

Guzk made a good observation: “Sheba probably thought he was safe within the walls of that city, but no one is safe when they run against God’s will. There isn’t a wall high enough or strong enough to protect against God and His will.”

2Samuel 20:23 ¶ Now Joab *was* over all the host of Israel: and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada *was* over the Cherethites and over the Pelethites:

2Samuel 20:24 And Adoram *was* over the tribute: and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud *was* recorder:

2Samuel 20:25 And Sheva *was* scribe: and Zadok and Abiathar *were* the priests:

2Samuel 20:26 And Ira also the Jairite was a chief ruler about David.

The chapter closes with a listing of some of the leaders of Israel that served under David—similar to our president’s cabinet.

- Joab retained his position as commander of the army. It seems he suffered no consequences for murder and insubordination once again.
- Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was captain over the Cherethites and Pelethites, the foreign mercenaries that comprised David’s bodyguards.
- Adoram was supervisor over forced laborers and/or taxes (both are possible from the Hebrew for *tribute*).
- Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was historian.
- Sheva was David’s secretary.
- Zadok and Abiathar were the chief priests.
- Ira the Jairite was David’s personal advisor and/or priest (both are possible from the Hebrew).