

2 Samuel 20

Verses 1 - 2

Now a worthless man happened to be there whose name was Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjaminite; and he blew the trumpet and said,

**“We have no share in David,
Nor do we have an inheritance in the son of Jesse;
Every man to his tents, Israel!”**

² So all the men of Israel withdrew from following David *and* followed Sheba the son of Bichri; but the men of Judah remained loyal to their king, from the Jordan even to Jerusalem.

Now a worthless man happened to be there whose name was Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjaminite; and he blew the trumpet and said,

Different blasts on the trumpet were used to denote different things. Here the trumpet was blown to raise an army.

**“We have no share in David,
Nor do we have an inheritance in the son of Jesse;**

The division expressed between Israel and Judah in the last chapter was alive and well.

² So all the men of Israel withdrew from following David *and* followed Sheba the son of Bichri;

The North had accepted David as king in chapter 5 but after David committed adultery with Bathsheba and killed her husband Uriah in chapter 11, the Lord told David that the sword would never leave his house.

See 2 Samuel 12:10

¹⁰ Now then, the sword shall never leave your house, because you have despised Me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.’

But the men of Judah remained loyal to their king, from the Jordan even to Jerusalem.

David's homecoming celebration was limited due to this new rebellion.

Verse 3

³ Then David came to his house in Jerusalem, and the king took the ten women, the concubines whom he had left behind to take care of the house, and put them in custody and provided them with food, but did not have relations with them. So they were locked up until the day of their death, living as widows.

It would have been unseemly for King David to have relations with his concubines because all of Jerusalem knew that Absalom had publically disgraced them.

Verses 4 - 10

⁴ Now the king said to Amasa, “Summon the men of Judah for me *within* three days, and be present here yourself.” ⁵ So Amasa went to summon *the men of* Judah, but he was delayed longer than the set time which he had designated for him. ⁶ And David said to Abishai, “Now Sheba the son of Bichri will do us more harm than Absalom; take your lord’s servants and pursue him, so that he does not find for himself fortified cities and escape from our sight.” ⁷ So Joab’s men went out after him, along with the Cherethites, the Pelethites, and all the warriors; and they left Jerusalem to pursue Sheba the son of Bichri. ⁸ When they were at the large stone which is in Gibeon, Amasa came to meet them. Now Joab was dressed in his military attire, and over it *he had* a belt with a sword in its sheath strapped on at his waist; and as he went forward, it fell out. ⁹ And Joab said to Amasa, “Is it going well for you, my brother?” And Joab took hold of Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him. ¹⁰ But Amasa was not on guard against the sword which was in Joab’s hand, so he struck him in the belly with it and spilled out his intestines on the ground, and did not *strike* him again, and he died. Then Joab and his brother Abishai pursued Sheba the son of Bichri.

⁴ Now the king said to Amasa, “Summon the men of Judah for me *within* three days, and be present here yourself.”

The situation required haste on the part of Amasa because David didn’t want Sheba to have enough time to amass an army.

⁵ So Amasa went to summon *the men of Judah*, but he was delayed longer than the set time which he had designated for him.

We are not told why he was delayed but his inability to rally the men of Judah in a timely manner provided Joab with an opportunity to be the commander of the army once again.

⁶ And David said to Abishai, “Now Sheba the son of Bichri will do us more harm than Absalom; take your lord’s servants and pursue him, so that he does not find for himself fortified cities and escape from our sight.”

David could not wait for Amasa to show up, so he put Abishai (Joab’s brother) in charge of his servants to pursue Sheba.

⁷ So Joab’s men went out after him, along with the Cherethites, the Pelethites, and all the warriors; and they left Jerusalem to pursue Sheba the son of Bichri.

Those who were sent out included Abishai, Joab, the 600 mighty men, and David's personal bodyguards - the Cherethites and the Pelethites.

⁸ When they were at the large stone which is in Gibeon, Amasa came to meet them. Now Joab was dressed in his military attire, and over it *he had* a belt with a sword in its sheath strapped on at his waist; and as he went forward, it fell out. ⁹ And Joab said to Amasa, “Is it going well for you, my brother?” And Joab took hold of Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him. ¹⁰ But Amasa was not on guard against the sword which was in Joab’s hand, so he struck him in the belly with it and spilled out his intestines on the ground, and did not strike him again, and he died. Then Joab and his brother Abishai pursued Sheba the son of Bichri.

Joab may have tricked Amasa by letting his sword fall from his belt and then pretended to greet Amasa as a brother. However, he drew out a hidden sword and thrust it into his abdomen.

David was well aware of Joab’s cunning and must have known that something like this would happen when he sent Abishai out in place of Amasa. He knew Joab had no qualms about killing Amasa or any other person that stood in his way, even if that person was the appointed commander of the army.

Verses 11 - 13

¹¹ Now one of Joab's young men stood by him and said, "Whoever favors Joab and whoever is for David, follow Joab!" ¹² But Amasa was wallowing in *his own* blood in the middle of the road. And when the man saw that all the people stood still, he removed Amasa from the road to the field and threw a garment over him when he saw that everyone who came by him stood still. ¹³ As soon as he was removed from the road, all the men went on after Joab to pursue Sheba the son of Bichri.

And when the man saw that all the people stood still, he removed Amasa from the road to the field and threw a garment over him when he saw that everyone who came by him stood still.

It was only natural that those who came by and saw the dead body of Amasa on the road would stand still as a sign of respect. He had only been the leader of David's army for a brief period of time, but he deserved the reverence that was demonstrated here.

¹³ As soon as he was removed from the road, all the men went on after Joab to pursue Sheba the son of Bichri.

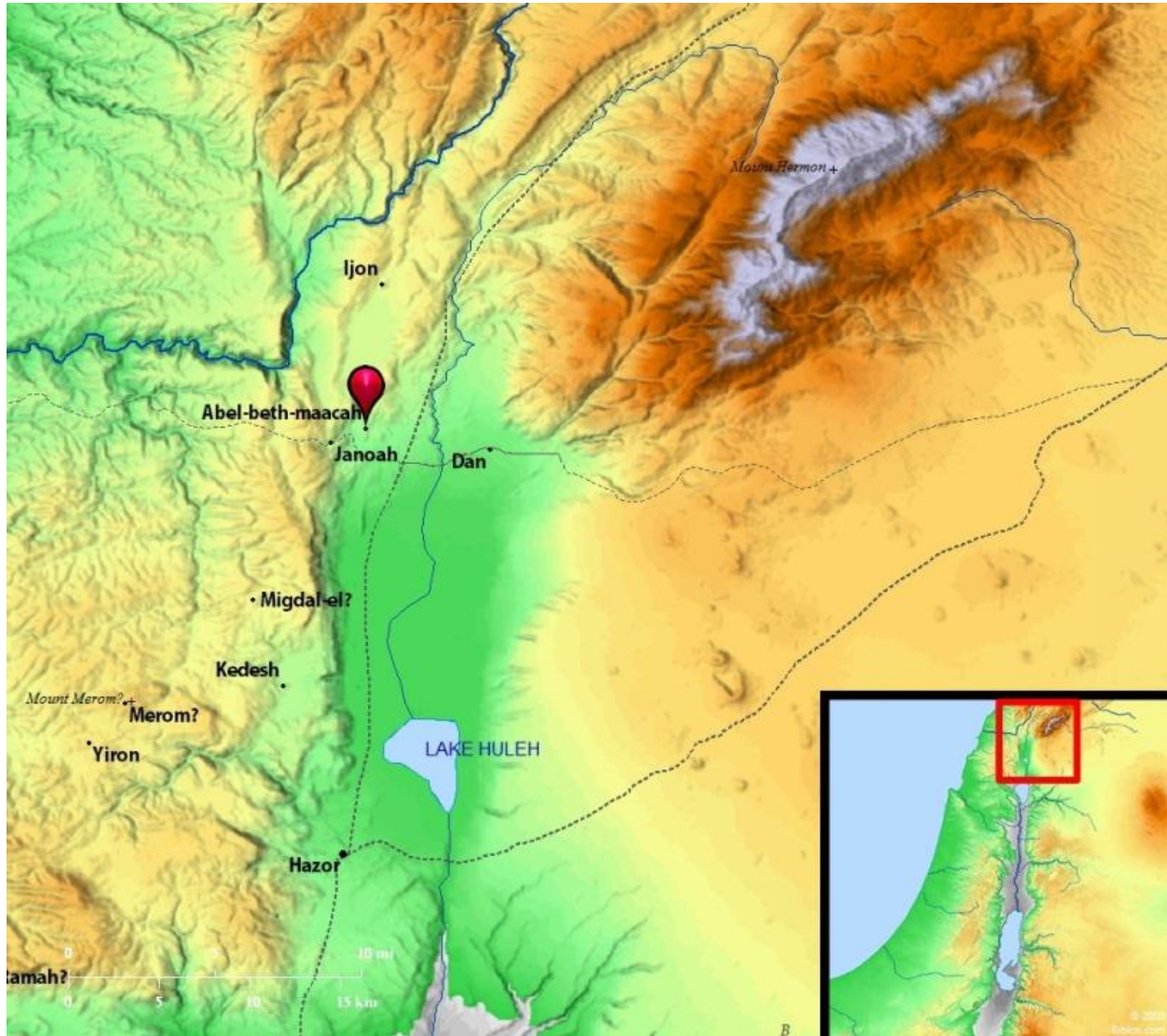
Joab assumed control of the army that he had led for many years and it was important for the men of David to pursue Sheba as quickly as possible.

Verses 14 - 18

¹⁴ Now he went on through all the tribes of Israel to Abel, that is, Beth-maacah, and all the Berites; and they assembled and went after him as well. ¹⁵ And they came and besieged him in Abel Beth-maacah, and they built up an assault ramp against the city, and it stood against the outer rampart; and all the people who were with Joab were wreaking destruction in order to topple the wall. ¹⁶ Then a wise woman called out from the city, "Listen, listen! Please tell Joab, 'Come here that I may speak with you.'" ¹⁷ So he approached her, and the woman said, "Are you Joab?" And he answered, "I am." Then she said to him, "Listen to the words of your slave." And he said, "I am listening." ¹⁸ Then she spoke, saying, "In the past they used to say, 'They will undoubtedly ask *advice* at Abel,' and that is how they ended a *dispute*.

14 Now he went on through all the tribes of Israel to Abel, that is, Beth-maacah, and all the Berites; and they assembled and went after him as well.

See map 2005



Joab pursued Sheba to a town called Abel that is west of Dan in the very northern part Israel.

15 And they came and besieged him in Abel Beth-maacah, and they built up an assault ramp against the city, and it stood against the outer rampart; and all the people who were with Joab were wreaking destruction in order to topple the wall.

This was the most effective way to take a well-fortified city.

¹⁶ Then a wise woman called out from the city, “Listen, listen! Please tell Joab, ‘Come here that I may speak with you. ¹⁸ Then she spoke, saying, “In the past they used to say, ‘They will undoubtedly ask advice at Abel,’ and that is how they ended a dispute.”

This wise woman was part of a community that was known for their wisdom, and as we will see she obviously had a lot of influence with the people.

Verses 19 - 22

¹⁹ **I am one of those who are ready for peace and faithful in Israel. You are trying to destroy a city, even a mother in Israel. Why would you swallow up the inheritance of the Lord?”** ²⁰ Joab replied, “Far be it, far be it from me that I would consume or destroy!” ²¹ Such is not the case. But a man from the hill country of Ephraim, Sheba the son of Bichri by name, has raised his hand against King David. Only turn him over, and I will depart from the city.” And the woman said to Joab, “Behold, his head will be thrown to you over the wall.” ²² Then the woman wisely came to all the people. And they cut off the head of Sheba the son of Bichri and threw it to Joab. So he blew the trumpet, and they were dispersed from the city, each to his tent. Joab also returned to the king at Jerusalem.

¹⁹ **I am one of those who are ready for peace and faithful in Israel. You are trying to destroy a city, even a mother in Israel. Why would you swallow up the inheritance of the Lord?”**

The wise woman blamed Joab for beginning a siege without consulting its inhabitants.

See Deuteronomy 20:10 - 11

¹⁰ **“When you approach a city to fight against it, you shall offer it terms of peace. ¹¹ And if it agrees to make peace with you and opens to you, then all the people who are found in it shall become your forced labor and serve you. ¹² However, if it does not make peace with you, but makes war against you, then you shall besiege it.**

However, in verses 20 and 21 Joab makes the point that this battle is against an insurrectionist. The command in Deut. 20 concerns warring against cities that are outside the border of Israel. We know this because in Deut. 20:11 it mentions the people being subjected to forced labor and Israelites were forbidden to enslave fellow Israelites.

²² Then the woman wisely came to all the people. And they cut off the head of Sheba the son of Bichri and threw it to Joab. So he blew the trumpet, and they were dispersed from the city, each to his tent. Joab also returned to the king at Jerusalem.

The woman advised the city to deliver up Sheba, and they followed her advice and Joab returned to Jerusalem with the victory.

Verses 23 - 26

²³ Now Joab was *in command* of the entire army of Israel, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites and the Pelethites; ²⁴ and Adoram was over the forced labor, and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was the secretary; ²⁵ and Sheva was scribe, and Zadok and Abiathar were priests; ²⁶ Ira the Jairite also was a priest to David.

Now that David was in control of all Israel once again, a list of David's chief officers is given.

Joab was once again in command of the army of Israel. However, David never forgave Joab for the murder of Abner, Absalom, and Amasa. And he left orders for Solomon to destroy Joab. As evil as Joab was, he was the sustaining force behind the throne of David and his skills in waring were necessary to David who had lost some of his appeal to the nation as a whole.

Adoram was in charge of the forced labor that became more notable in the latter years of David's reign. This use of forced labor was greatly increased by Solomon and it became the fuel for the rebellion against Rehoboam.