

Exegetical Notes – 2 Samuel 20:1-13

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2 Samuel 20:1-13

Verses 1-2

¹ ***Now a troublemaker named Sheba son of Bikri, a Benjamite, happened to be there. He sounded the trumpet and shouted,***

“We have no share in David,

no part in Jesse’s son!

Every man to his tent, Israel!”

² ***So all the men of Israel deserted David to follow Sheba son of Bikri. But the men of Judah stayed by their king all the way from the Jordan to Jerusalem.***

- See 2 Samuel 19: 40-43. As David crossed the Jordan River to return to Israel as her king, there were signs of division among the people. Among the people was Sheba, the son of Bikri, who was from the tribe of Benjamin. Remember that King Saul had been from the tribe of Benjamin. This is an old issue. Saul and his family had been removed from dynastic succession by the act of God because Saul had failed to follow God. David, from the tribe of Judah, had been anointed by God’s will as the new king of Israel. But the change had never been fully accepted by Israel. Sheba was one who did not accept the change as the will of God.
- Sheba declared that he and those with him rejected the will of God and would not support David’s claim to Israel’s throne.
- As a result, all those present from all of Israel’s tribes, but the tribe of Judah, withdrew their support from David. They broke fellowship with David and went home. They would not accompany David into Jerusalem. They refused to acknowledge David’s claim to the throne. The kingdom was divided.
- Those who refused to follow David declared their allegiance to Sheba. Only the tribe of Judah was loyal to David.

Verse 3

³ ***When David returned to his palace in Jerusalem, he took the ten concubines he had left to take care of the palace and put them in a house under guard. He***

provided for them but had no sexual relations with them. They were kept in confinement till the day of their death, living as widows.

- As part of his rebellion and to show that he was Israel's king, Absalom, David's son, had slept with the ten concubines David had left behind to care for the palace when he fled from Absalom. Absalom had done this publicly as an act of rebellion against his father (see 2 Samuel 15:16 and 16:21-22).
- David did not take these women back into his harem when he returned to Jerusalem. He set them apart and provided for them, but he did not regard them as his concubines anymore. They lived as widows until they died.

Verses 4-5

⁴ Then the king said to Amasa, "Summon the men of Judah to come to me within three days, and be here yourself." ⁵ But when Amasa went to summon Judah, he took longer than the time the king had set for him.

- Amasa had been the chief general of Absalom's army. Because Joab, who had been David's chief general, had not followed the king's instruction to treat Absalom gently but had killed Absalom, David removed Joab from his position and, in an attempt to unite the kingdom, had given Joab's position to Amasa (See 2 Samuel 19:13).
- David ordered Amasa to summon the men of the tribes of Judah to come to him within three days. But Amasa took longer than three days to do as he was commanded. He was, therefore, not fully obedient to the king's command. His slowness to respond could have been disastrous.

Verses 6-7

⁶ David said to Abishai, "Now Sheba son of Bikri will do us more harm than Absalom did. Take your master's men and pursue him, or he will find fortified cities and escape from us." ⁷ So Joab's men and the Kerethites and Pelethites and all the mighty warriors went out under the command of Abishai. They marched out from Jerusalem to pursue Sheba son of Bikri.

- Because of Amasa's failure, David turned to Abishai, Joab's brother, who had been a general loyal to David during the rebellion, to pursue Sheba.
- It is important to note that the men Abishai led in pursuit of Sheba were referred to as "Joab's men."

Verses 8-10

⁸ While they were at the great rock in Gibeon, Amasa came to meet them. Joab was wearing his military tunic, and strapped over it at his waist was a belt with a dagger in its sheath. As he stepped forward, it dropped out of its sheath. ⁹ Joab said to Amasa, "How are you, my brother?" Then Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him. ¹⁰ Amasa was not on his guard against the dagger in Joab's hand, and Joab plunged it into his belly, and his intestines spilled out on the ground. Without being stabbed again, Amasa died. Then Joab and his brother Abishai pursued Sheba son of Bikri.

- Though Joab was not in charge of the troops that were pursuing Sheba, he was with them and he was dressed as the commander of the army.
- Amasa came to join the army at Gibeon.
- Joab stepped forward to greet Amasa and the dagger at his belt fell out of its sheath. As Joab drew near Amasa, he held the dagger in his hand but Amasa was unaware of it.
- Joab grabbed Amasa's beard and kissed him in welcome. As he kissed Amasa, Joab pushed the dagger into Amasa's belly and cut him open. Amasa died.
- Then Joab, now acting as chief general, and his brother, Abishai, set out to capture Sheba.

Verses 11-13

¹¹ One of Joab's men stood beside Amasa and said, "Whoever favors Joab, and whoever is for David, let him follow Joab!" ¹² Amasa lay wallowing in his blood in the middle of the road, and the man saw that all the troops came to a halt there. When he realized that everyone who came up to Amasa stopped, he dragged him from the road into a field and threw a garment over him. ¹³ After Amasa had been removed from the road, everyone went on with Joab to pursue Sheba son of Bikri.

- A soldier called on the army to abandon Amasa and to follow Joab.
- Amasa lay on the ground in his own blood. As the troops passed, the gruesome sight was catching their attention, so Amasa's body was drug off the road and covered up. He was not given an honorable burial. Once the gruesome sight was removed from the road, the troops followed Joab.

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