

## 2 Samuel Chapter 20

**2 Samuel 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."**

For the phrase “Man of Belial” (see 2 Sam. 16:7 and the notes on Judges 19:22; 1 Sam. 2:12; 25:18-35).

“Sheba”: though nothing is known of this man, he must have been a person of considerable power and influence to raise so sudden and extensive a sedition. He belonged to Saul’s tribe, where adherents of Saul’s dynasty were still many, and he could see the disgust of the 10 tribes for Judah’s presumption in the restoration. He sought to overturn David’s authority in Israel.

“No part ... inheritance”: Sheba’s declarations that the northern tribes had no part in David’s realm were similar to words later used (in 1 Kings 12:16), when Israel seceded from the united kingdom under Jeroboam.

This is a continuation of chapter 19. We see that not everyone is happy about David's return to Jerusalem. This should have been a peaceful time for all of them with David king of all twelve tribes, but it was not. The Israelites and Judah were quarreling. Sheba is a radical, who blows the trumpet which indicates war generally, and tells the people to go to their tents. He uses the trumpet to stop this meeting. This is another rebellion trying to break forth. Just when David thought he had won the peace, it seems like more war is about to break out. Sheba is really a trouble-maker.

**2 Samuel 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."**

“Israel went up from after David”: Once the 10 tribes withdrew, Judah was left alone to escort the king to Jerusalem. It seems that the disloyalty of the north continued as long as Sheba lived (see the note on 19:40-43).

Judah stays with David, but the ten tribes of Israel are listening to this radical Sheba. He seems to be a man with some authority.

**2 Samuel 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."**

“His concubines”: When David returned to Jerusalem, he confined his concubines to a life of abstinence because of their sexual relations with Absalom (16:21-22).

These “concubines” are the ones David had left behind in Jerusalem, who Absalom had taken as his own (15:16; 16:22).

David had left these 10 Concubines to care for the house, when he went into exile. Absalom had come into the house, and went in to the concubines. This would make them unclean for David. They were kept like widows, until the death of David and then they were free. They were widows because of what happened to them even before David was dead.

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

“Amasa”: Amasa was Absalom’s general (see note on 17:25), whom David promised would be commander of his army after Absalom’s death (see note on 19:13). Amasa was installed publicly because David thought it would be seen favorably by the 10 tribes. He was told to assemble an army in 3 days to end the insurrection started by Sheba, but could not in such a brief time.

We remember that David had taken the command away from Joab, because of what he had done to Absalom. In other matters, Joab had been a good commander. He was a strong leader. This is Amasa's first command. Joab possibly could have gathered these people in three days, but there were a lot of them who would not follow Amasa.

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

To gather them together out of their several tribes and bring them to Jerusalem.

"But he tarried longer than the set time which he had appointed him": More than the three days; whether this was owing to the remissness of Amasa, or the unwillingness of the people to serve under him, who had been Absalom's general in the late rebellion, or not having time sufficient allowed him, is not certain.

**2 Samuel 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."**

“Abishai” (see note on 2:18). When Amasa failed to follow David’s orders, David did not reinstate Joab, his former general who had Absalom killed against David’s orders (see 18:5-15), but appointed Joab’s brother Abishai as commander of his forces.

“Thy lord’s servants”: Called “Joab’s men” (in verse 7). Abishai was to take the army of Joab to pursue the tribal leader. Joab went also, determined to take vengeance on his rival Amasa.

Sheba was a great danger to David. David's fear was that another uprising was being formed. The men that were to go with Abishai are the ones who had been in the army of Joab.

**2 Samuel 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."**

“The Cherethites and the Pelethites” (see note on 1 Sam. 30:14).

“Mighty men”: Those men are listed (in 23:8-39).

Under the command of Abishai, Joab's men went after Sheba before he could get an uprising started. Included in these men were the men who were with Joab when Absalom was killed. These men were loyal to Joab and it was he that they truly followed.

**2 Samuel 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."**

“Gibeon” (see note on 2:12).

“Amasa went before them”: Having collected some forces, he marched rapidly and came first to Gibeon, thus assuming the role of commander. It is possible that Joab purposely let the sword fall from its sheath as he approached Amasa, in order that stooping as if to pick up the accidentally fallen weapon, he might salute the new general with his sword already in hand, without generating any suspicion of his intent. He used this ploy to gain the position to stab the new commander, whom he considered as usurping his post.

This was the garment that Joab usually wore into battle. It was probably too big for Amasa in several ways. He was not the powerful leader that Joab had proven to be. He had the sword of authority, which had also been Joab's. It appears it was loose in its sheath and fell out.

**2 Samuel 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."**

“My brother ... by the beard”: Joab, present with his men, seized Amasa by his beard with his right hand apparently to give the kiss of greeting. Instead, with his left hand, he thrust his sword into Amasa's stomach (3:27).

**2 Samuel 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."**

In his left hand, for with his right hand he took him by the beard; he might see the sword drop out of the scabbard, and Joab take it up, which he supposed he did in order to put it into its sheath again. Having no suspicion of his wicked design, and therefore not at all upon his guard to prevent it.

"So he smote him therewith in the fifth rib": In the same place where Abner smote Asahel, and Joab smote Abner (see 2 Sam. 2:23 and 2 Sam. 3:27). He must strike him, as some observe, on the left side, because he was embracing him; and the stroke must be deadly, because he struck him in the pericardium, which surrounds the heart round with water, to refrigerate it. For the lower part of the heart reaches to the fifth rib (see John 19:34).

"And shed out his bowels to the ground": Which fell out through the incision made by the sword.

"And struck him not again": He gave him such a home thrust, there was no need to repeat it as he dispatched him at once.

"And he died": And thus, though he was pardoned by David, and promoted to honor by him, yet the providence of God would not suffer him to go unpunished for joining with Absalom in an unnatural rebellion against his uncle.

"So Joab and Abishai his brother pursued after Sheba the son of Bichri": For Amasa being slain, Joab without any ceremony reassumed his post as general, and, with his brother Abishai under him, made all the haste they could in pursuit of the rebel.

(See the note on 19:13-14). "Joab" again took his revenge (see the note on 18:14-15).

It seemed that Joab was with them, even though the command had been taken away from him. He did not like seeing Amasa in his robe of authority, nor with his sword and sheath. As he moved close to Amasa appearing to give him greeting, he took him by the beard in the one hand, and drove a sword through his heart with the other hand. Now Joab takes his place as commander of this army and pursues after Sheba with Abishai.

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

"One of Joab's men": Joab was reinstated as commander of David's army by his troops. It is a striking illustration of Joab's influence over the army that he could murder the commander whom David had chosen, a killing right before their eyes, and they would follow him unanimously as their leader in pursuit of Sheba.

The brutal stabbing of Amasa was a stun to the men who had followed him. Joab is now in command, and some are afraid to follow him. The man stands up and asks everyone on the side of David to come with Joab. Some of the men probably fear a like fate from Joab that he gave to Amasa.

**2 Samuel 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."**

By which it seems, that though the wound was mortal, and of which he died, that as yet there was life in him, and through the pain he was in, and the pangs of death on him, he rolled himself about in his own blood in the high road, where the fact was committed.

"And when the man saw that all the people stood still": Gazing at the shocking sight, and could not be prevailed upon to go on.

"He removed Amasa out of the highway into the field": Which was adjoining to it.

"And cast a cloth upon him": So that the body might not be seen.

"When he saw that everyone that came by him stood still": And so retarded the people in their march, to prevent which he took the above method, and it was a very prudent one.

It appears that Amasa did not die immediately, but wallowed in the gushing blood from his body. He was in the middle of the road and the men would have had to stop and walk over him to pass by to Joab. The men would not do that and stood still. The man of Joab removed Amasa from the road into the field near the road, and covered his body with a cloth so those passing by could not see his body gushing forth blood.

**2 Samuel 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."**

Into the field, and covered over with a cloth, that he could not be seen.

"All the people went on after Joab": Made no stop at all, knowing nothing of the matter, or what had happened.

"To pursue after Sheba the son of Bichri": These were the troops that Amasa had been assembling, which followed one another after him; for Joab and Abishai, with their men, were at Gibeon first.

As soon as his body was removed from the road, the men followed Joab after Sheba.

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

"Abel, and to Beth-maachah": I.e., Abel Beth-maachah. About 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee, 4 miles west of the city of Dan.

The "he", in the verse above, is speaking of Sheba on the run from Joab and his men. It appears that, he went from tribe to tribe, trying to get an army together to fight against David. No one would side in with Sheba. Beth-maachah is a fortress in the land of Naphtali. It seemed there was no place for him to hide, so he stopped at this fort.

**2 Samuel 20:15 "And they came and besieged him in Abel of Beth-maachah, 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."**

That is, Joab and Abishai, with the forces under them, who pursued him hither.

"And they cast up a bank against the city": It seems to be a bank of earth thrown up, for the better working of such engines to more advantage against the city, by throwing from thence darts into the city, or stones against the walls of it, to batter it down. Such banks were used in sieges, as that Caesar's soldiers raised in twenty five days, which was three hundred thirty feet broad, and eighty feet high; Kimchi interprets this of filling up the ditches round about the city with dust and earth, and so making it level, whereby they could come the more easily to the walls and batter them, or scale them, and take the city by storm.

"And it stood in the trench": The army under Joab stood where the trench round the city had been, now filled up.

"And all the people that were with Joab battered the wall to throw it down": With their engines, or whatever battering instruments they had; so, often, as Hesiod says, a whole city suffers for one bad man.

Joab comes and surrounds the city. This bank is probably a bank of dirt to fight safely behind. A battering ram was, many times, used to tear a gate down to get inside of the fort. This is what Joab and his men are doing here.

Verses 16-19: This woman (probably a prominent judge in the city), was making an appeal based on the laws of warfare (in Deut. 20:10), that required the assaulting army to offer peace before making war. She pleaded for Joab to ask the city if they wanted peace and thus avert war (verse 18).

This unnamed wise woman broke the social code of the day that said women should be silent, and she saved her village. As with Queen Esther, sometimes a few well-timed words can avert disaster.

Again a "woman" has delivered a "city" from destruction (Judges 9:50-55; 1 Sam. 25:18-35).

**2 Samuel 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."**

A woman of great understanding, who could also speak well. Many such there were in Israel, as appears by the woman of Tekoah, by Abigail, and the mother of Lemuel. It seems none of all the men of Abel offered to treat with Joab: no, not when they were reduced to extremity; but one wise woman saved the city. Souls know no difference of sex: many a manly heart is lodged in a

female breast. Nor is the treasure of wisdom the less valuable for being lodged in the weaker vessel.

This woman was probably on top of the wall crying out to Joab. She is called wise, because of the decision she has made to do something, before the whole city is destroyed. She does not speak to just anyone who has no authority, but speaks to the acting commander of the troops.

**2 Samuel 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."**

As he did, upon the information of his men, that a woman on the wall had something to say to him.

"The woman said, art thou Joab?" She was willing to be satisfied that he was really the general, before she would impart her mind to him.

"And he answered, I am he": The very person you ask after.

"And she said unto him, hear the words of thine handmaid": Though a woman, it is safe to hear what I have to say.

"And he answered, I do hear": I am ready to hear, and shall patiently and attentively hear whatever may be spoken; which was giving her leave and encouragement to proceed.

Joab is a very wise leader and hears what this woman has to say. If she has a solution to this problem without great loss of life on both sides, he wants to hear it.

**2 Samuel 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]."**

This was an old proverb. Abel, like Teman, and some other places, was once famous for the wisdom of its inhabitants (1 Kings 4:30-31). The wise woman was herself a remnant of this traditional wisdom.

**2 Samuel 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 mother in Israel": This is a reference to a specially honored city or a recognized capital of the region.

"The inheritance of the Lord": This refers to the land of Israel (see 1 Sam. 10:1).

She is saying that the Law of Moses was to seek peace with a land, before you went to war with them. She is saying that she and her city are willing to negotiate peace. They do not want to be in

a war with their very own people. Joab has assumed that they were friends of Sheba just because he ran into their city. They had not even been informed of what is going on. She is speaking not only for herself, but for her city. She wants Joab to give them a chance to prove their loyalty.

Verses 20-21: The ruthless general was a patriot at heart, who on taking the leader of the insurrection, was ready to end further bloodshed. The woman eagerly responded with the promise of Sheba's head.

**2 Samuel 20:20 "And Joab answered and said, Far be it, far be it from me, that I should swallow up or destroy."**

He repeats these words, to show how detestable it was to him to do what she suggested.

"That I should swallow up or destroy": Any in a violent and unrighteous manner, and especially a city of which she had given such a character for its greatness and worth, and for the peacefulness and fidelity of its inhabitants.

I like the answer Joab gives her here. He is not out to destroy Abel, he just wants to stop Sheba. It is not Joab's intentions to destroy innocent people.

**2 Samuel 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."**

"The city": A large, partially forested plateau that extended into the tribal territory of Benjamin from the north.

The city will punish Sheba themselves for bringing this problem down on them. To prove they are not in the camp of Sheba, they will be-head Sheba and throw his head over the wall.

**2 Samuel 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."**

"David could not get rid of Joab, though he hated him. He had to ignore the murder of Amasa and recognize Joab as army commander.

This woman's wisdom had saved her city. They cut off Sheba's head and threw it out to Joab. This stopped the siege of Abel. Joab blows the trumpet for the men to reassemble and stop the siege. They had been victorious under the leadership of Joab. Joab has re-established himself as commander of David's army. He now goes back to Jerusalem victorious.



Verses 23-26: Compare a similar list (in 8:15-18).

**2 Samuel 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:"**

Joab had regained his position, which he retained until he participated in Adonijah's rebellion (1 Kings 1:7; 2:28-35).

This is a summary of the positions that remained in David's reign. David left Joab as commander of all his forces after this incident. Benaiah was son of Jehoiada, the chief priest. He was over the body-guards of the Cherethites and Pelethites.

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

"Adoram": Rendered "Adoniram" (in 1 Kings 4:6, 28). He was in charge of the "forced labor," a term used to describe the hard labor imposed on subjugated peoples (Exodus 1:11; Joshua 16:10; Judges 1:28). Adoram oversaw the forced labor on such projects as the building of highways, temples and houses.

All that is known of Adoram is what is here. There were many who paid tribute in those days, so this is a trusted position. There is very little known of Jehoshaphat either. The position of recorder was one of much importance.

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

"Sheva": He replaced Seraiah (8:17) as David's secretary.

Sheva is the same as Seraiah. The scribe was the keeper of the public documents. We are already familiar with Zadok, who was high priest and Abiathar, as priest.

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

"Ira": He was David's royal adviser.

Ira was a priest minister, who worked closely with David. The saddest thing about this lesson is the attitude of David about every bad thing that happens. He connects everything with the sin that he committed to get Bath-sheba for him to wife.

## **2 Samuel Chapter 20 Questions**

1. Who blew the trumpet, and gathered men against David?

2. This should have been a \_\_\_\_\_ time for David.
3. Who were quarreling?
4. Who came to king David?
5. What happened to the ten concubines that had been left behind to watch the house, when Absalom was chasing David?
6. They lived like \_\_\_\_\_ unto the day of their death.
7. Who did David send to assemble the men of Judah?
8. How many days did he have to do it in?
9. Why had David taken the command away from Joab?
10. Who did David send after Sheba?
11. Why were they to pursue Sheba?
12. Whose men did he take to pursue him?
13. What was Amasa wearing, that belonged to Joab?
14. What did Joab do to regain command?
15. Why would the men not come to Joab?
16. Where did they put the bleeding Amasa?
17. When did the men follow Joab?
18. Who is the "he" in verse 14?
19. What is Abel-beth-maacah?
20. What did the men with Joab do to this place?
21. How was this attack stopped?
22. Who cried out to speak to Joab?
23. Did Joab listen?
24. What did they do from the city, to stop the attack of Joab?
25. How did Joab signal the men to stop the fighting?
26. When Joab returned to Jerusalem, he became \_\_\_\_\_ of the armies, again.

27. Who was over the tribute?
28. Sheva the scribe, was actually over what?
29. Who was high priest?
30. What did Ira do?
31. What is so sad in all of this?