

Second Samuel

Lesson 9 Part 2

Benaiah: The Lion Chaser Who Forfeited a Life Career

3. David's Officers (8:15-18)

Our primary Scripture comes from 2 Samuel 8:15-18. Here, the compiler, long after the reign of David, gives a summary of David's faithful officers in his kingdom. Verse 15. *"So David reigned over all Israel; and David administered justice and righteousness for all his people. ¹⁶ Joab the son of Zeruiah was over the army, and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder. ¹⁷ Zadok the son of Ahitub and Abimelech the son of Abiathar were priests, and Seraiah was secretary. ¹⁸ Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and David's sons were chief ministers."*

The matching passage in the Chronicles says, *"So David reigned over all Israel and did what was just and right for all his people. ¹⁵ Joab son of Zeruiah was commander of the army. Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was the royal historian. ¹⁶ Zadok son of Ahitub and Abimelech son of Abiathar were the priests. Seraiah was the court secretary. ¹⁷ Benaiah son of Jehoiada was captain of the king's bodyguard. And David's sons served as the king's chief assistants."*

As we have seen in all the Old Testament books thus far, the Hebrew style of writing would introduce characters before their stories were told for two reasons. First, to tell us where they fall in the social or governmental structure, or second, to introduce them into the storyline before their story is told. Looking at our list of officers during David's reign, let's look at each for a moment.

a) Joab, the son of Zeruiah

We first met Joab in 1 Samuel 26:6 when he is mentioned with his brother, Abishai. They were the sons of Zeruiah. Zeruiah was the half-sister of David, having the same mother but different fathers. Thus, Joab is David's nephew.

We come again to Joab during David's first two years as king of Judah in 2 Samuel 2 – 3 when he took the lead to fight against Abner, the commander of Ishbosheth's army. Then in David's seventh year as king, we met Joab when David challenged his men to climb through the sewer gutter to open the gates of the Jebusite city of Zion to allow David to capture the city for his new capital. David promised that the first to breach the city would become the commander of his army. Joab was the first. As commander, Joab was faithful to David; however, he also overstepped his authority by ignoring David's orders at times. Blood was on Joab's hands for his transgression against the king's orders. Sin must have its payday. For his sin, David asked the new king Solomon to kill Joab. Joab ran to the tent where the Ark was kept and held onto the horns of the Altar, thinking he would be safe. Solomon sent Benaiah to kill Joab. Benaiah killed him (1 Kings 2:28-31). *Joab: The Commander Who Forfeited His Military Career.*

b) Jehoshaphat, the son of Ahilud

We now come to Jehoshaphat, the son of Ahilud. This man was not the famous Jehoshaphat, the great king of the Southern Kingdom. All we know about this Jehoshaphat is that he was the recorder of the royal history of David's daily actions. He continued in the same position under Solomon and had a brother named Baana, who became one of Solomon's twelve deputies (1 Kings 4:3 & 12). Nothing else is known.

c) Zadok, the son of Ahitub

As for Zadok, the son of Ahitub, we know much. When Eli, the high priest died on the day the Ark was captured by the Philistines in the twenty-seventh year of King Saul's reign, Eli's line of the high priesthood switched to that of Zadok. Zadok was still the High Priest to anoint Solomon as king under the order of David (1 Kings 1:45).

d) Ahimelech, the son of Abiathar

There are two men named Ahimelech in David's storyline. When Eli died, his great-grandson, Ahimelech was a priest serving at Nob (1 Samuel 22). David was on the run from Saul and arrived in Nob, where he lied to Ahimelech about his reason for asking Ahimelech for help. Saul heard about Ahimelech's help and had Ahimelech and all the priests from Nob killed. Eighty – five priests were killed by Saul. However, one son of Ahimelech escaped, Abiathar. At David's invitation, Abiathar joined David on the run and became David's personal priest. During the reign of King David, Abiathar continued to serve as David's personal priest in his palace. But Abiathar's son was named Ahimelech, after his grandfather. This young Ahimelech also became a personal priest to David.

The Line of Eli

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Eli
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Phinehas
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Ahitub
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Ahimelech
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Abiathar
|
Ahimelech

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The sad part of this story is that Abiathar made a fatal mistake. He took Adonijah, David's son, and anointed him as king of Israel in the valley without David's permission. 1 Kings 2:27 tells us that Solomon dismissed Abiathar from being a priest for what he did to support Adonijah. Notice that the compiler did not include Abiathar in the list of David's faithful officers. Why? He was not faithful to David in the end. However, David exalted the young Ahimelech, and his descendants, to serve as helpers in Israel's worship even to the days of Jesus (1 Chronicles 24). *Ahimelech: The Faithful Priest in David's Service*.

e) Seraiah

The compiler tells us that Seraiah was David's court secretary. We know nothing about this Seraiah except for being David's court secretary. A court secretary was in charge of all of David's official correspondence.

f) Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada

The compiler now introduces us to Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada, the Captain of the King's bodyguards made up of the Cherethites and the Pelethites. We have already mentioned Benaiah with the stories of Joab. But here, we are formally introduced to Benaiah and his role in David's administration for the first time.

Most teachers move through the text too fast and ignore a very important part of Benaiah's name. In the Hebrew culture, the names of all men were always associated with the name of their fathers. Thus, Benaiah was the son of Jehoiada. Who was Jehoiada? Thankfully, the Scripture identifies Jehoiada. According to 1 Chronicles 27:5, Benaiah was the son of Jehoiada, the chief priest. In the order of authority in the Levitical service as priests, there was one High Priest over all the priests. His service was at the Tabernacle, where the Ark of the Covenant was kept. The home of the High Priest, as well as the Ark, was in Jerusalem at this time. However, in the forty-eight Levitical cities in the rest of the Promised Land, four in each tribal area, priests were assigned to each city for service. As we mentioned in the story of Ahimelech, eighty-six priests served with him in Nob, of which Saul killed eighty-five. Each city had a "chief priest" administering the duties of the priest serving in that city. "Chief priests had the authority to present the offerings to the LORD in each city. To have this authority, the chief priest had to be a descendant of the line of Aaron. If you will remember, the LORD divided the descendants of Levi into groups and gave them all different duties, as found in the book of Exodus. Those duties have not changed. Our Benaiah was the son of Jehoiada, a chief priest. As the chief priest, it meant that Benaiah was a descendant of Aaron and because his father was the chief priest, he would have been in line to be the chief priest one day if the position became available during his life. However, Benaiah was not serving in the Levitical line of the priesthood. Instead, he was the commander of David's bodyguards. Why was this Levite named Benaiah not entering the training as a priest at age twenty-five or serving as a priest when he became thirty? Why was he serving as David's bodyguard with the "*Cherethites and the Pelethites*?" These two clans were Philistine. David

was not guarded by the Israelites but by the Philistines. These Philistines were hired mercenaries. As such, they would have been the highest-paid men in David's service. The work and service of a mercenary went to the highest bidder. It was not based on loyalty. It was based on money. Their paycheck depended on David's security. If David died, the paycheck ended. In addition, their paycheck had to be more than any other person was willing to pay. Benaiah was the commander of these mercenaries. It meant Benaiah had to be a fierce man himself.

But why was Benaiah not serving in the priestly line? The answer will come in 2 Samuel, chapter 23. Benaiah became the bodyguard of David while still in his late teens or early twenties after David became king, yet while David was still living in Hebron, before David's seventh year as King of Israel. In chapter 23, we read, "*Then Benaiah the son of Jeboiada, the son of a valiant man of Kabzeel, who had done mighty deeds, killed the two sons of Ariel of Moab. He also went down and killed a lion in the middle of a pit on a snowy day.*"²¹ *He killed an Egyptian, an impressive man. Now the Egyptian had a spear in his hand, but he went down to him with a club and snatched the spear from the Egyptian's hand and killed him with his own spear.*"²² *These things Benaiah the son of Jeboiada did, and had a name as well as the three mighty men.*" (23:20-22) You might say, "What is wrong with that?" Let's answer that question after we look closer at this passage.

In verse 20, we learn that Benaiah was born in "*Kabzeel*." According to Joshua 15:21, *Kabzeel* was a village in the tribal area of Judah at the extreme southern border next to Edom. That meant that Benaiah's father must have been assigned to the Levitical city nearest his home in Eshtemoa. We must remember that priests lived on donated land in donated homes that they never owned. However, they had to work the land as if it was theirs to provide for their families. In addition, the priests were assigned specific weeks to serve in the Levitical cities. They were "on call" in their hometowns for special events and medical needs, such as inspecting the sick who were camped outside each village until healed. They would then go to their assigned Levitical city to serve at their assigned week during the year. A lottery was also in place to serve at the Tabernacle in Jerusalem. It was a great honor to be selected to serve in Jerusalem for a week, as Zechariah did when he heard the news that Elizabeth would have a son who would be named "John the Baptist."

In verse 20, we also learn that Benaiah was a "*valiant man*" for his "*mighty deeds*." Benaiah had killed "*the two sons of Ariel of Moab*." The word "*Ariel*" is another one of those Hebrew words that should have been translated for what the word means instead of using an English pronunciation of the Hebrew. If you spoke Hebrew in David's day, the word "*Ariel*" told you that the two Moabites were "*lion-like*" or "*as fierce as a lion*." The expression was common in the day to mean the two Moabites were "*great warriors*."

In verse 20, we also learn that Benaiah killed an actual lion on a snowy day. No doubt the real lion was a greater opponent than the two men of Moab.

In verse 21, we learn that Benaiah also killed an "*impressive*" Egyptian with his own spear. In 1 Chronicles 11:23 we find out that this Egyptian man was five cubits tall or seven and a half feet tall. He was a giant in his physical stature.

Now back to our question. "What is wrong with Benaiah's great deeds?" So, we come to the reason I have titled this lesson, "*Benaiah: The Lion Chaser Who Forfeited a Life Career*." What was the problem?

Benaiah had broken the law and sinned when he killed the lion in the snow. Few people open the book of Leviticus to learn the law that guided Israel's people and its priests. The original name of the Book of Leviticus was "*the book of the Kohaths*."

All of the descendants of Levi became priests, but the Kohaths became the lead line of priests with the most important duties. Moses and Aaron were Kohaths, and the line of Aaron became the line of the High Priests.

The High Priest was responsible to oversee all the Levites and all the people. In "*the book of the Kohaths*," the LORD gave the laws to guide the priests and the people. I like to think about this book as the

The Sons of Levi

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Gershon - Kohath - Merari

“Drivers Training Manual for All Jewish Life.” The LORD ordered it to be read to everyone every seventh year so no one would have an excuse about knowing the law of the LORD.

When we tie all the information about Benaiah with the law of the book of Leviticus, we learn how silly choices in our youth years have consequences that can forever rob us of the option to obtain what we could become in our adult lives. It’s a powerful and eye-opening story about the tragedy of breaking God’s clear and recorded law. “God will let you do as you please in your youth years but being a youth does not excuse you from the lifetime consequences of breaking God’s law.” What lions are you chasing that God will not approve? You do not want to be a Lion Chaser like Benaiah! You do not want your deeds to be against God’s laws.

Benaiah was without excuse. In Leviticus 11:27, we find that *“... whatever walks on its paws, among all the creatures that walk on all fours, are unclean to you...”* According to Leviticus 11:1-2, the whole list of animal laws law was not just for the priest, it was for all the people. You may remember that *“dogs,”* as well as all animals with *“paws”* were spoken of in derogatory terms in the Scripture. In 1 Samuel 17:43, Goliath asked, *“Am I a dog?”* In 2 Samuel 3:8, Abner asked, *“Am I a dog’s head?”* In 1 Samuel 17:37, David told Goliath that the LORD had delivered him from the *“paws of the lion”* and the *“paws of the bear.”* In the Law, it was a sin to touch anything with *“paws.”* Touching a lion or a bear had a remedy, but touching a dead Moabite or Egyptian did not. Benaiah had forfeited his lifelong career by his silly breaking of the law in his early years by killing the men.

Speaking to the priest in Leviticus 21, the LORD is clear. *“Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them: ‘No one shall defile himself for a dead person among his people,² except for his relatives who are nearest to him, his mother and his father and his son and his daughter and his brother,³ also for his virgin sister, who is near to him because she has had no husband; for her he may defile himself.’”* (Leviticus 21:1-3) The LORD would allow a descendant to touch the dead bodies of his nearest relatives to bury them, but no one else. If a daughter was married, it was the duty of her family to bury her, not her priestly father or brothers. But if she was not married, her priestly father or brothers could bury her. However, when a descendant of the line of Aaron touched a near family member to bury at death, that priest would be defiled. He would be defied for seven days and was required to make a special offering to the LORD. But if he touched any other dead, there was no remedy.

Benaiah was of the line of Aaron. In his early years, before the time to enter the priesthood training at the age of twenty-five, it was well known that Benaiah had disqualified himself from ever serving as high priest by killing the two sons of Moab and the Egyptian. He had forever forfeited his right to serve anywhere in the priestly line as a lifetime career. For whatever reason Benaiah used to kill the three men, he forever altered his future by his actions. It was a sin, a breaking of the LORD’s law that could not be remedied. He knew the law. No doubt he had heard it read at least three times in his life before he killed these “lion-like” men. Be that as it may, growing older, with a family, he had to have a job, so he became a warrior instead.

g) David’s Sons

Finally, in David’s administration, we learn that David’s sons became his chief or assistants. We cannot be sure how many sons David had at the end of his kingship. We suspect that seventeen were still alive, those whom we know their names. But for his sons by the concubines, whom we do not know their names, we are unsure.