

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

Baasha, king of Israel, begins to build Ramah, to prevent his subjects from having any intercourse with the Jews, 2 Chronicles 16:1. Asa hires Ben-hadad, king of Syria, against him; and obliges him to leave off building Ramah, 2 Chronicles 16:2-5. Asa and his men carry the stones and timbers of Ramah away, and build therewith Geba and Mizpah, 2 Chronicles 16:6. Asa is reproved by Hanani, the seer, for his union with the king of Syria: he is offended with the seer, and puts him in prison, 2 Chronicles 16:7-10. Of his acts, 2 Chronicles 16:11. He is diseased in his feet, and seeks to physicians and not to God, and dies, 2 Chronicles 16:12, 2 Chronicles 16:13. His sumptuous funeral, 2 Chronicles 16:14.

Verse 1

The six and thirtieth year - After the division of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah; according to Usher. This opinion is followed in our margin; see the note on 1 Kings 15:16, where this subject is farther considered. Concerning Baasha's building of Ramah, see the note on 1 Kings 15:17.

Verse 3

There is a league - Let there be a treaty, offensive and defensive, between me and thee: see on 1 Kings 15:22 (note).

Verse 6

Took all Judah - See on 1 Kings 15:22 (note).

Verse 7

Escaped out of thine hand - It is difficult to know what is here intended. Perhaps the Divine providence had intended to give Asa a grand victory over the Syrians, who had always been the inveterate enemies of the Jews; but by this unnecessary and very improper alliance between Asa and Ben-hadad, this purpose of the Divine providence was prevented, and thus the Syrians escaped out of his hands.

Verse 9

Therefore - thou shalt have wars - And so he had with Israel during the rest of his reign, 1 Kings 15:32.

Verse 10

Asa was wroth with the seer - Instead of humbling himself, and deprecating the displeasure of the Lord, he persecuted his messenger: and having thus laid his impious hands upon the prophet, he appears to have got his heart hardened through the deceitfulness of sin; and then he began to oppress the people, either by unjust imprisonments, or excessive taxations.

Verse 12

Diseased in his feet - He had a strong and long fit of the gout; this is most likely.

He sought not to the Lord - "He did not seek discipline from the face of the Lord, but from the physicians." - Targum.

Are we not taught by this to make prayer and supplication to the Lord in our afflictions, with the expectation that he will heal us when he finds us duly humbled, i.e., when the end is answered for which he sends the affliction?

Verse 14

And laid him in the bed - It is very likely that the body of Asa was burnt; that the bed spoken of here was a funeral pyre, on which much spices and odoriferous woods had been placed; and then they set fire to the whole and consumed the body with the aromatics. Some think the body was not burned, but the aromatics only, in honor of the king.

How the ancients treated the bodies of the illustrious dead we learn from Virgil, in the funeral rites paid to Misenus.

Nec minus interea Misenum in littore Teucris

Flebant, et cineri ingrato suprema ferebant.

Principio pinguem taedis et robore secto

Ingentem struxere pyram: cui frondibus atris

Intexunt latera, et ferales ante cupressas

Constituunt, decorantque super fulgentibus armis, etc.

Aen. vi. 214.

Meanwhile the Trojan troops, with weeping eyes,
To dead Misenus pay their obsequies.
First from the ground a lofty pile they rear
Of pitch trees, oaks, and pines, and unctuous fir.
The fabric's front with cypress twigs they strew,
And stick the sides with boughs of baleful yew.
The topmost part his glittering arms adorn:
Warm waters, then, in brazen caldrons borne
Are poured to wash his body joint by joint,
And fragrant oils the stiffen'd limbs anoint.
With groans and cries Misenus they deplore:
Then on a bier, with purple cover'd o'er,
The breathless body thus bewail'd they lay,
And fire the pile (their faces turn'd away).
Such reverend rites their fathers used to pay.
Pure oil and incense on the fire they throw,
And fat of victims which their friends bestow.
These gifts the greedy flames to dust devour,
Then on the living coals red wine they pour.
And last the relics by themselves dispose,
Which in a brazen urn the priests enclose.
Old Corineus compass'd thrice the crew,
And dipp'd an olive branch in holy dew;
Which thrice he sprinkled round, and thrice aloud
Invoked the dead, and then dismiss'd the crowd.â€•
Dryden.

All these rites are of Asiatic extraction. Virgil borrows almost every circumstance from Homer; (see Iliad, xxiii., ver. 164, etc.); and we well know that Homer ever describes Asiatic manners. Sometimes, especially in war, several captives were sacrificed to the manes of the departed hero. So, in the place above, the mean-souled, ferocious demon, Achilles, is represented sacrificing twelve Trojan captives to the ghost of his friend Patroclus. Urns containing the ashes and half-calcined bones of the dead occur frequently in barrows or tumuli in this country; most of them, no doubt, the work of the Romans. But all ancient nations, in funeral matters, have nearly the same rites.