2 Samuel - Commentaries by James M. Freeman

Manners and Customs of the Bible, 272. The Sistrum

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2 Samuel 6:5. David and all the house of Israel played before the Lord on all manner of instruments made of fir wood, even on... cornets.

This is the only place where the word menaanim appears. The instrument it represents bore no resemblance to a cornet or to any other wind instrument. Gesenius describes it as “a musical instrument or rattle, which gave a tinkling sound on being shaken.” He supposes it to have been the ancient sistrum. Other authorities agree with this interpretation, though some discard it. The sistrum was used in the worship of the ancient Egyptians. It was “generally from eight to sixteen or eighteen inches in length, and entirely of bronze or brass. It was sometimes inlaid with silvergilt, or otherwise ornamented, and, being held upright, was shaken, the rings moving to and fro upon the brass” (Kitto).

The other instruments named in this verse are described in other places.

Manners and Customs of the Bible, 268. Recess in Gateway

2 Samuel 3:27. Joab took him aside in the gate to speak with him quietly.

The expression “ in the gate,” is literally in the midst of the gate, and probably refers to some dark corner in the vaulted gateway where two persons might retire and converse unseen. To some such recess Joab invited Abner, avowedly for conversation, but really to kill him.

Manners and Customs of the Bible, 282. Double Gates

2 Samuel 18:24. David sat between the two gates: and the watchman went up to the roof over the gate.

At the gateways of walled cities special care was taken to increase the strength of the wall and the power of resistance, since the most formidable attacks of the enemy would probably be made there. The ordinary thickness of wall not being sufficient it was here widened, or, more properly, doubled. Considerable space was included between the outer and the inner wall, and to each of these walls there was a gate. It was in the room thus made that “David sat between the two gates.”

Manners and Customs of the Bible, 276. Animals Petted

2 Samuel 12:3. It grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter.

There is a beautiful touch of nature about this; for though uttered in a parable the words are in truthful accordance with Eastern manners.

Bochart says that anciently not only lambs, but other animals, were by many persons allowed to eat with them at their tables, and to lie with them in their beds. The Arabs of today keep pet lambs as we keep lap-dogs.

Manners and Customs of the Bible, 274. Spring, the Season for War

2 Samuel 11:1. It came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth.

“After the year was expired” is literally “at the return of the year,” that is, in the spring. This was the time of the year for the commencement or renewal of military movements, the season for severe storms being over.