

David Anointed King of Judah (c. 1010 – c. 1003 BC)

2 Samuel 2:1–7

Judah Anoints David King at Hebron

1 Then it came about afterwards that David inquired of the LORD, saying, “Shall I go up to one of the cities of Judah?” And the LORD said to him, “Go up.” So David said, “Where shall I go up?” And He said, “To Hebron.”

2 So David went up there, and his two wives also, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess and Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite.

3 And David brought up his men who *were* with him, each with his household; and they lived in the cities of Hebron.

4a Then the men of Judah came and there anointed David king over the house of Judah.

David Reaches Out to Saul’s Supporters

4b And they told David, saying, “It was the men of Jabesh-gilead who buried Saul.”

5 David sent messengers to the men of Jabesh-gilead, and said to them, “May you be blessed of the LORD because you have shown this kindness to Saul your lord, and have buried him.

6 Now may the LORD show lovingkindness and truth to you; and I also will show this goodness to you, because you have done this thing.

7 Now therefore, let your hands be strong and be valiant; for Saul your lord is dead, and also the house of Judah has anointed me king over them.”

David’s Sons Born at Hebron (c. 1010 – c. 1003 BC)

2 Samuel 3:2–5

2 Sons were born to David at Hebron: his firstborn was Amnon, by Ahinoam the Jezreelitess; 3 and his second, Chileab, by Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite; and the third, Absalom the son of Maacah, the daughter of Talmai, king of Geshur; 4 and the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith; and the fifth, Shephatiah the son of Abital; 5 and the sixth, Ithream, by David’s wife Eglah. These were born to David at Hebron.

1 Chronicles 3:1–4a

1 Now these were the sons of David who were born to him in Hebron: the firstborn *was* Amnon, by Ahinoam the Jezreelitess; the second *was* Daniel, by Abigail the Carmelitess; 2 the third *was* Absalom the son of Maacah, the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur; the fourth *was* Adonijah the son of Haggith; 3 the fifth *was* Shephatiah, by Abital; the sixth *was* Ithream, by his wife Eglah. 4a Six were born to him in Hebron,

Civil War (c. 1004 – c. 1003 BC)

2 Samuel 2:8–32; 3:1, 6–39

Abner Makes Saul’s Son Ish-bosheth (Abner’s Nephew) King Over Israel

2:8 But Abner the son of Ner, commander of Saul’s army, had taken Ish-bosheth the son of Saul and brought him over to Mahanaim.

9 He made him king over Gilead, over the Ashurites, over Jezreel, over Ephraim, and over Benjamin, even over all Israel.

10 Ish-bosheth, Saul’s son, was forty years old when he became king over Israel, and he was king for two years. The house of Judah, however, followed David.

11 The time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months.

Conflict Erupts at Gibeon

12 Now Abner the son of Ner, went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon with the servants of Ish-bosheth the son of Saul.

13 And Joab the son of Zeruiah and the servants of David went out and met them by the pool of Gibeon; and they sat down, one on the one side of the pool and the other on the other side of the pool.

14 Then Abner said to Joab, "Now let the young men arise and hold a contest before us." And Joab said, "Let them arise."

15 So they arose and went over by count, twelve for Benjamin and Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, and twelve of the servants of David.

16 Each one of them seized his opponent by the head and *thrust* his sword in his opponent's side; so they fell down together. Therefore that place was called Helkath-hazzurim, which is in Gibeon.

17 That day the battle was very severe, and Abner and the men of Israel were beaten before the servants of David.

Abner Kills Joab's Brother Asahel

18 Now the three sons of Zeruiah were there, Joab and Abishai and Asahel; and Asahel *was as* swift-footed as one of the gazelles which is in the field.

19 Asahel pursued Abner and did not turn to the right or to the left from following Abner.

20 Then Abner looked behind him and said, "Is that you, Asahel?" And he answered, "It is I."

21 So Abner said to him, "Turn to your right or to your left, and take hold of one of the young men for yourself, and take for yourself his spoil." But Asahel was not willing to turn aside from following him.

22 Abner repeated again to Asahel, "Turn aside from following me. Why should I strike you to the ground? How then could I lift up my face to your brother Joab?"

23 However, he refused to turn aside; therefore Abner struck him in the belly with the butt end of the spear, so that the spear came out at his back. And he fell there and died on the spot. And it came about that all who came to the place where Asahel had fallen and died, stood still.

24 But Joab and Abishai pursued Abner, and when the sun was going down, they came to the hill of Ammah, which is in front of Giah by the way of the wilderness of Gibeon.

Abner Appeals to Joab to End the Battle

25 The sons of Benjamin gathered together behind Abner and became one band, and they stood on the top of a certain hill.

26 Then Abner called to Joab and said, "Shall the sword devour forever? Do you not know that it will be bitter in the end? How long will you refrain from telling the people to turn back from following their brothers?"

27 Joab said, "As God lives, if you had not spoken, surely then the people would have gone away in the morning, each from following his brother."

28 So Joab blew the trumpet; and all the people halted and pursued Israel no longer, nor did they continue to fight anymore.

29 Abner and his men then went through the Arabah all that night; so they crossed the Jordan, walked all morning, and came to Mahanaim.

30 Then Joab returned from following Abner; when he had gathered all the people together, nineteen of David's servants besides Asahel were missing.

31 But the servants of David had struck down many of Benjamin and Abner's men, *so that* three hundred and sixty men died.

32 And they took up Asahel and buried him in his father's tomb which was in Bethlehem. Then Joab and his men went all night until the day dawned at Hebron.

Conflict Between Ish-bosheth and Abner

3:1 Now there was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David; and David grew steadily stronger, but the house of Saul grew weaker continually.

6 It came about while there was war between the house of Saul and the house of David that Abner was making himself strong in the house of Saul.

7 Now Saul had a concubine whose name was Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah; and Ish-bosheth said to Abner, "Why have you gone in to my father's concubine?"

8 Then Abner was very angry over the words of Ish-bosheth and said, "Am I a dog's head that belongs to Judah? Today I show kindness to the house of Saul your father, to his brothers and to his friends, and have not delivered you into the hands of David; and yet today you charge me with a guilt concerning the woman.

9 May God do so to Abner, and more also, if as the LORD has sworn to David, I do not accomplish this for him,

10 to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul and to establish the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan even to Beersheba."

11 And he could no longer answer Abner a word, because he was afraid of him.

Abner Offers to Hand the Throne of Israel Over to David

12 Then Abner sent messengers to David in his place, saying, "Whose is the land? Make your covenant with me, and behold, my hand shall be with you to bring all Israel over to you."

13 He said, "Good! I will make a covenant with you, but I demand one thing of you, namely, you shall not see my face unless you first bring Michal, Saul's daughter, when you come to see me."

14 So David sent messengers to Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, saying, "Give me my wife Michal, to whom I was betrothed for a hundred foreskins of the Philistines."

15 Ish-bosheth sent and took her from *her* husband, from Paltiel the son of Laish.

16 But her husband went with her, weeping as he went, and followed her as far as Bahurim. Then Abner said to him, "Go, return." So he returned.

17 Now Abner had consultation with the elders of Israel, saying, "In times past you were seeking for David to be king over you.

18 Now then, do *it*! For the LORD has spoken of David, saying, 'By the hand of My servant David I will save My people Israel from the hand of the Philistines and from the hand of all their enemies.'"

19 Abner also spoke in the hearing of Benjamin; and in addition Abner went to speak in the hearing of David in Hebron all that seemed good to Israel and to the whole house of Benjamin.

20 Then Abner and twenty men with him came to David at Hebron. And David made a feast for Abner and the men who were with him.

21 Abner said to David, "Let me arise and go and gather all Israel to my lord the king, that they may make a covenant with you, and that you may be king over all that your soul desires." So David sent Abner away, and he went in peace.

Joab Murders Abner

22 And behold, the servants of David and Joab came from a raid and brought much spoil with them; but Abner was not with David in Hebron, for he had sent him away, and he had gone in peace.

23 When Joab and all the army that was with him arrived, they told Joab, saying, "Abner the son of Ner came to the king, and he has sent him away, and he has gone in peace."

24 Then Joab came to the king and said, "What have you done? Behold, Abner came to you; why then have you sent him away and he is already gone?"

25 You know Abner the son of Ner, that he came to deceive you and to learn of your going out and coming in and to find out all that you are doing."

26 When Joab came out from David, he sent messengers after Abner, and they brought him back from the well of Sirah; but David did not know *it*.

27 So when Abner returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside into the middle of the gate to speak with him privately, and there he struck him in the belly so that he died on account of the blood of Asahel his brother.

David Proves His Innocence Concerning Abner's Death

28 Afterward when David heard it, he said, "I and my kingdom are innocent before the LORD forever of the blood of Abner the son of Ner.

29 May it fall on the head of Joab and on all his father's house; and may there not fail from the house of Joab one who has a discharge, or who is a leper, or who takes hold of a distaff, or who falls by the sword, or who lacks bread."

30 So Joab and Abishai his brother killed Abner because he had put their brother Asahel to death in the battle at Gibeon.

31 Then David said to Joab and to all the people who were with him, "Tear your clothes and gird on sackcloth and lament before Abner." And King David walked behind the bier.

32 Thus they buried Abner in Hebron; and the king lifted up his voice and wept at the grave of Abner, and all the people wept.

33 The king chanted a *lament* for Abner and said,

"Should Abner die as a fool dies?

34 "Your hands were not bound, nor your feet put in fetters;
As one falls before the wicked, you have fallen."

And all the people wept again over him.

35 Then all the people came to persuade David to eat bread while it was still day; but David vowed, saying, "May God do so to me, and more also, if I taste bread or anything else before the sun goes down."

36 Now all the people took note *of it*, and it pleased them, just as everything the king did pleased all the people.

37 So all the people and all Israel understood that day that it had not been *the will* of the king to put Abner the son of Ner to death.

38 Then the king said to his servants, "Do you not know that a prince and a great man has fallen this day in Israel?"

39 I am weak today, though anointed king; and these men the sons of Zeruiah are too difficult for me. May the LORD repay the evildoer according to his evil."

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Chronological Notes

- 1) "At the age of forty Ish-Bosheth would have been qualified to have fought in the fateful battle against the Philistines on Mount Gilboa with his father and three brothers (cf. 1 Sam 31; Num 1:36). Perhaps he had been purposely exempted, however, in order to assure a direct heir to the throne in case of a battlefield catastrophe like the one that actually occurred. Ish-Bosheth laid claim to Israel's throne 'two years' before he was murdered. These two years may correspond to the sixth and seventh years of David's reign at Hebron. Two textual reasons support this contention: first, David was said to have ruled over only the house of Judah while he lived in Hebron (v. 11; 5:4); and second, 5:1–9 suggests that David moved his capital city to Jerusalem almost immediately after being anointed as king over all Israel. If the tribes of Israel apart from Judah were in fact without a king for more than five years, this would suggest that the Philistines controlled the region completely enough during that time to prevent the rise of any Israelite to the throne. In this scenario Abner, as the leading military figure in the northern tribes, would have

functioned as the de facto head of state. Yet instead of installing himself as king, he—nobly—put a direct descendant of Saul on the throne when he sensed Israel’s situation had sufficiently improved. Ish-Bosheth’s kingship was not recognized in the territory of Judah because they ‘followed David.’ After all, David was one of their own and had made the southern Judahite town of Hebron his capital city. In fact, Hebron remained David’s royal city for ‘seven years and six months’ (v. 11), apparently the amount of time it took for David to gain undisputed control of all Israel as well as to conquer Jerusalem.”¹

¹ Robert D. Bergen, “1, 2 Samuel,” *New American Commentary*, 300.