

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

2 Samuel 2:1–7

Judah Anoints David King at Hebron

2:1 It happened after this that David inquired of Yahweh, saying, “Shall I go up into one of the cities of Judah?” And Yahweh said to him, “Go up.” David asked, “Where shall I go up?” And he said, “To Hebron.”

2 So David went up there along with his two wives, Ahinoam from Jezreel and Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite.

3 Also, David brought up his men who *were* with him, each with his household, and they settled in the towns of Hebron.

4a Then the men of Judah came, and they anointed David there as king over the house of Judah,

David Reaches Out to Saul’s Supporters

4b and they told David, “The men of Jabesh-Gilead buried Saul.”

5 So David sent messengers to the men of Jabesh-Gilead and said to them, “May you be blessed by Yahweh because you did this loyal love with your lord, with Saul, and you buried him.

6 Now may Yahweh show loyal love and faithfulness with you. I will also show the good with you that you have done in this matter.

7 So then, let your hands be strong and be valiant, for your lord Saul *is* dead, and the house of Judah has anointed me as king over them.”

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

2 Samuel 3:2–5

1 Chronicles 3:1–4a

2 And sons *were* born to David in Hebron; his firstborn *was* Amnon by Ahinoam from Jezreel.

3 His second *was* Kileab by Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite;

the third *was* Absalom the son of Maacah, *who was* the daughter of Talmi the king of Geshur.

4 The fourth *was* Adonijah the son of Haggith;

the fifth *was* Shephatiah the son of Abital.

5 The sixth *was* Ithream by Eglah the wife of David.

These *were* born to David in Hebron.

1 These were the sons of David who were born to him in Hebron: the firstborn, Amnon, by Ahinoam the Jezreelite; the second, Daniel, by Abigail the Carmelite;

2 the third, Absalom, the son of Maacah the daughter of Talmi, king of Geshur;

the fourth, Adonijah, the son of Haggith;

3 the fifth, Shephatiah, by Abital;

the sixth, Ithream, by his wife Eglah.

4 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, the 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, over Benjamin, and over Israel, all of it.

10 Ish-Bosheth the son of Saul *was* forty years old when he became king over Israel and he reigned two years; however, the house of Judah followed David.

11 The number of days that David was king over Hebron, over the house of Judah, *was* seven years and six months.

Conflict Erupts at Gibeon

12 Abner the son of Ner and the servants of Ish-Bosheth the son of Saul went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon.

13 Then Joab the son of Zeruiah and the servants of David went out, and they met at the pool of Gibeon. The one group sat on one side of the pool, and the other sat on the other side.

14 Abner said to Joab, “Let the young men come up and fight in our presence.” And Joab said, “Let them come up.”

15 So they came forward and passed by in number: twelve for Benjamin and for Ish-Bosheth the son of Saul, and twelve from the servants of David.

16 Then each seized his opponent by the head and *each thrust* his sword in the side of his opponent, so they fell together. So they called the name of that place Helkath Hazzurim, which *is* in Gibeon.

17 Then the battle became increasingly fierce on that day, and Abner and the men of Israel *were* defeated before the servants of David.

Abner Kills Joab’s Brother Asahel

18 The three sons of Zeruiah were there, Joab and Abishai and Asahel. Now Asahel *was* swift with his feet as one of the gazelles which *is* in the open field.

19 So Asahel pursued Abner, and he did not turn aside to the right or to the left from going after Abner.

20 Abner turned around and said, “*Are* you this Asahel?” And he said, “Yes.”

21 Abner said to him, “Turn aside to your right or to your left; seize for yourself one of the young men, and take his belongings for yourself.” But Asahel *was* not willing to turn aside from him.

22 So Abner said to Asahel once again, “For your own sake, turn aside from following me. Why should I strike you down to the ground? How could I show my face to Joab your brother?”

23 But he refused to turn away, so Abner struck him in the stomach with the butt of the spear, and the spear went out of his back. He fell there and he died on the spot. Then all who came to the place where Asahel fell and died *just* stood there.

24 So Joab and Abishai pursued Abner when the sun went down. And they came to the hill *country* of Ammah, which *is* before Giah on the way to the wilderness of Gibeon.

Abner Appeals to Joab to End the Battle

25 The descendants of Benjamin rallied after Abner, and they became as one fighting group and stood on the top of a certain hill.

26 Then Abner called to Joab and said, “Will *the* sword devour forever? Do you not know that *there* will be bitterness in the end? How long will you not tell the people to turn away from pursuing their brothers?”

27 Joab said, “As God lives, for if you had not spoken, the people would surely have gone up in the morning, each *one of them* from following after his brother.”

28 Then Joab blew on the trumpet and all the people stopped, and they no longer pursued after Israel, and they did not fight with them again.

29 Then Abner and his men went through the Arabah all that night, and they crossed over the Jordan. They went all the forenoon and came to Mahanaim.

30 After Joab returned from *pursuing* Abner, he gathered all the people; nineteen of the servants of David *were* missing *along* with Asahel.

31 The servants of David had killed some of the Benjaminites among the men of Abner; three hundred and sixty men had died.

32 Then they picked up Asahel and buried him in the grave of his father, which *was* at Bethlehem. Joab and his men went all that night *arriving* in Hebron at first light.

Conflict Between Ish-bosheth and Abner

3:1 The battle *was* prolonged between the house of Saul and the house of David, but David *was* growing stronger and stronger while the house of Saul *was* becoming weaker and weaker.

6 As the war between the house of Saul and the house of David *was continuing*, Abner was strengthening himself in the house of Saul.

7 Saul had had a concubine, and her name *was* Rizpah the daughter of Aiah. Then *Ish-Bosheth* said to Abner, “Why did you have sex with my father’s concubine?”

8 Abner became very angry at the words of Ish-Bosheth, and he said, “Am I the head of a dog which *is* for Judah today? Do I not continue to show loyal love with the house of Saul your father, to his brothers, and to his friends? I have not let you fall into the hands of David, yet you have accused me of sin with this woman today.

9 Thus may God punish Abner, if I do not accomplish what Yahweh has sworn to David;

10 *specifically*, to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul and to establish the throne of David over Israel and over Judah from Dan to Beersheba!”

11 And *Ish-Bosheth* was no longer able to answer Abner because he feared him.

Abner Offers to Hand the Throne of Israel Over to David

12 Abner sent messengers to David where he was, saying, “To whom does the land *belong*? Make your covenant with me! Look, my hand *is* with you to bring all of Israel over to you!”

13 He said, “Good. I will make a covenant with you. I am asking only one thing from you: You shall not see my face unless you bring Michal the daughter of Saul when you come to see me.”

14 Then David sent messengers to Ish-Bosheth the son of Saul, saying, “Give *me* my wife Michal whom I betrothed to myself for a hundred foreskins of *the* Philistines.”

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

16 But her husband went with her, weeping all along after her as far as Bahurim. Then Abner said to him, “Go *and* return.” So he returned.

17 The word of Abner came to the elders of Israel, saying, “For quite some time you were seeking David as king over you.

18 So then, bring it about, because Yahweh had said to David, “Through the hand of David my servant *I am about* to save my people Israel from the hand of *the* Philistines and from the hand of all their enemies.”

19 Abner also spoke privately to Benjamin. Abner also went to speak to David in Hebron, all that *was* good in the eyes of Israel and in the eyes of all the house of Benjamin.

20 Then Abner came to David in Hebron and with him *were* twenty men. David had prepared a feast for Abner and for the men who *were* with him.

21 And Abner said to David, “Let me get up and go and gather all of Israel to my lord the king, that they may make a covenant with you so you can reign over all which your soul desires.” So David dismissed Abner, and he left in peace.

Joab Murders Abner

22 And look, the servants of David and Joab came from the raid, and they brought much plunder with them. But Abner was not with David at Hebron, for he had dismissed him, and he had gone in peace.

23 When Joab and all the army that *was* with him came, they told Joab, “Abner the son of Ner came to the king, and he sent him away, and he left in peace.”

24 Then Joab came to the king and said, “What have you done? Abner came here to you? Why have you dismissed him that he actually went away?”

25 You know that Abner the son of Ner came to deceive you. He came to learn about your going out and coming *in* and to know all which you *are* doing.”

26 Then Joab went out from David, and he sent messengers after Abner, and they brought him back from Bor Hasirah, but David did not know *it*.

27 When Abner returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside to the middle of the gate to speak with him in private. Then he struck him in the stomach there and he died, for he had shed the blood of Asahel his brother.

David Proves His Innocence Concerning Abner’s Death

28 When David heard this afterwards, he said: “I and my kingdom *are* innocent before Yahweh forever *for* the blood of Abner the son of Ner.

29 May *the blood* come down on the head of Joab and all the house of his father. May the house of Joab never lack *one with* a bodily discharge or *one with* leprosy or *one who* grasps the distaff or *one who* falls by the sword or *one who is* lacking food.”

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

31 David said to Joab and to all the people who *were* with him, “Tear your clothing and put on sackcloth and mourn before Abner.” Now King David *was* following after the bier.

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

33 The king sang a lament for Abner and said, “Should Abner have died the death of a fool?”

34 Your hands *were* not tied and your feet *were* not in contact with bronze fetters. You have fallen as one who falls before sons of wickedness.” Then all the people wept over him again.

35 Then all the people came to give David food. Still on that day, David swore, “May God punish me if I taste food or anything before the sun goes down.”

36 All the people noticed, and it *was* good in their eyes, as everything that the king did *was* good in the eyes of all the people.

37 Then all the people and all of Israel realized on that day that the king had not desired to kill Abner the son of Ner.

38 Then the king said to his servants, “Did you not realize that a prince and a great man has fallen today in Israel?”

39 I *am* weak today even though anointed king, and these men, the sons of Zeruiah, *are* crueller than I *am*. May Yahweh pay them back for doing wickedness according to their *own* wickedness.”

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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.