

2Samuel 2:1 ¶ And it came to pass after this, that David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah? And the LORD said unto him, Go up. And David said, Whither shall I go up? And he said, Unto Hebron. **2Samuel 2:2** So David went up thither, and his two wives also, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail Nabal's wife the Carmelite. **2Samuel 2:3** And his men that *were* with him did David bring up, every man with his household: and they dwelt in the cities of Hebron.

After learning of Saul's death, David still did not assume that it was his right to move instantly to take the kingdom even though he knew that was God's plan for him. Instead, he sought the LORD as to what he should do; he wanted things to happen according to God's will and timing. Reminder: Abiathar the priest was with him and in possession of the ephod of the high priest with the urim and thummim.

The LORD directed David to go to Judah to the city of Hebron. Commentators note that Hebron was centrally located in Judah, about twenty miles south of Jerusalem, and was a Levitical city. Hebron was also noted for having more than two dozen springs in the area.

So David took his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess and Abigail the Carmelite, the widow of Nabal, and left Ziklag to go to Hebron. He also took all of his men and their families. They all took up permanent residence in the cities of Hebron.

2Samuel 2:4 And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah. And they told David, saying, *That* the men of Jabeshgilead *were they* that buried Saul.

2Samuel 2:5 And David sent messengers unto the men of Jabeshgilead, and said unto them, Blessed *be ye* of the LORD, that ye have shewed this kindness unto your lord, *even* unto Saul, and have buried him.

2Samuel 2:6 And now the LORD shew kindness and truth unto you: and I also will requite you this kindness, because ye have done this thing.

2Samuel 2:7 Therefore now let your hands be strengthened, and be ye valiant: for your master Saul is dead, and also the house of Judah have anointed me king over them.

News must have spread throughout the region rather quickly that David was in Hebron. The men of Judah came together and anointed David as their king. They also told him that it was the men of Jabeshgilead that had taken it upon themselves to bury Saul. David sent messengers to the men of Jabeshgilead and pronounced the LORD's blessing upon them for showing such kindness to Saul and asking that God reward them with His faithfulness and love. David also promised to treat them with favor because of their kindness to Saul. David closed his message by asking them to continue to be strong and brave and informing them that the men of Judah had anointed him as their king. It was obvious that he hoped the men of Jabeshgilead would recognize him as their king as well.

2Samuel 2:8 ¶ But Abner the son of Ner, captain of Saul's host, took

Ishbosheth the son of Saul, and brought him over to Mahanaim; 2Samuel 2:9 And made him king over Gilead, and over the Ashurites, and over Jezreel, and over Ephraim, and over Benjamin, and over all Israel.

2Samuel 2:10 Ishbosheth Saul's son *was* forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and reigned two years. But the house of Judah followed David.

2Samuel 2:11 And the time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months.

Outside of Judah, in Israel, Abner, Saul's cousin and chief military commander, took matters into his own hands. He got Ishbosheth, the remaining son of Saul, and took him to Mahanaim and installed him as king over Gilead, Ashur, Jezreel, Ephraim, Benjamin and all the rest of Israel. It is noted that Ishbosheth was 40 years old and that he reigned two years as king over Israel while David was acknowledged king over Judah. In fact, David ruled as king in Hebron over Judah for 7 years and 6 months. During that time there was a civil war taking place that was instigated by the two military commanders of Israel and Judah.

2Samuel 2:12 And Abner the son of Ner, and the servants of Ishbosheth the son of Saul, went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon.

2Samuel 2:13 And Joab the son of Zeruiah, and the servants of David, went out, and met together by the pool of Gibeon: and they sat down, the one on the one side of the pool, and the other on the other side of the pool.

2Samuel 2:14 And Abner said to Joab, Let the young men now arise, and play before us. And Joab said, Let them arise.

At some point, maybe after the first two years of Ishbosheth's reign as mentioned in verse 10, Abner and the servants of King Ishbosheth went to Gibeon to meet Joab and the servants of King David. It reminds me of the two gangs in West Side Story that scheduled a rumble. They met at a particular pool in Gibeon and took up positions on opposite sides of the pool to designate the men that would represent the two sides.

Isn't it interesting—the kingdom is split, picturing the divide of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms before ever becoming a united kingdom under David.

2Samuel 2:15 Then there arose and went over by number twelve of Benjamin, which *pertained* to Ishbosheth the son of Saul, and twelve of the servants of David.

2Samuel 2:16 And they caught every one his fellow by the head, and *thrust* his sword in his fellow's side; so they fell down together: wherefore that place was called Helkathhazzurim, which *is* in Gibeon.

2Samuel 2:17 And there was a very sore battle that day; and Abner was beaten, and the men of Israel, before the servants of David.

Twelve men from each side were chosen to represent the opposing "armies." The opponents immediately grabbed each other by the hair of the head (Adam Clarke presumes it was by the beard.) and killed the other by thrusting his sword into his opponent's side. This caused an all out war to begin. David's men

emerged victorious over Abner's men.

I think the wording provides a clue to the real state of affairs. Notice it does not refer to the men of Israel as Ishbosheth's men. I believe further narrative will reveal that Ishbosheth was chosen as the figurehead and that Abner was the true power behind the throne of Israel.

2Samuel 2:18 ¶ And there were three sons of Zeruiah there, Joab, and Abishai, and Asahel: and Asahel *was as* light of foot as a wild roe.

2Samuel 2:19 And Asahel pursued after Abner; and in going he turned not to the right hand nor to the left from following Abner.

2Samuel 2:20 Then Abner looked behind him, and said, *Art* thou Asahel? And he answered, *I am*.

2Samuel 2:21 And Abner said to him, Turn thee aside to thy right hand or to thy left, and lay thee hold on one of the young men, and take thee his armour. But Asahel would not turn aside from following of him.

2Samuel 2:22 And Abner said again to Asahel, Turn thee aside from following me: wherefore should I smite thee to the ground? how then should I hold up my face to Joab thy brother?

2Samuel 2:23 Howbeit he refused to turn aside: wherefore Abner with the hinder end of the spear smote him under the fifth *rib*, that the spear came out behind him; and he fell down there, and died in the same place: and it came to pass, *that* as many as came to the place where Asahel fell down and died stood still.

Abner and his men eventually began to flee for their lives. Joab, David's nephew and chief military commander, and his two brothers took off after Abner.

*1 Chronicles 2:13–16 “And Jesse begat his firstborn Eliab, and Abinadab the second, and Shimma the third, Nethaneel the fourth, Raddai the fifth, Ozem the sixth, David the seventh: Whose sisters were Zeruiah, and Abigail. And **the sons of Zeruiah; Abishai, and Joab, and Asahel, three.**”*

It is noted that Asahel was recognized for being a very fast runner. He took the lead and pursued Abner with unswerving intent. Abner finally turned around and asked Asahel to confirm that he was indeed Asahel. When he confirmed that fact, Abner asked him to turn away and go after someone else, but Asahel refused. Abner then told Asahel that if he did not turn away from him, he would kill him; and he did not want to face Joab as his brother's killer. When Asahel refused again, Abner killed him with the butt of his spear—not even the blade. He was so strong that the spear went straight through Asahel and killed him. It is specified that Abner struck Asahel “under the fifth rib.” John Gill points out that this is where the gall(bladder) and liver are.

JFB provided an interesting insight: “To gain the general's armor was deemed the grandest trophy.” Abner seems to confirm that fact when he tells Asahel to “lay thee hold on one of the young men, and **take thee his armor.**” It seems that Asahel was intent on winning that trophy.

The IVP OT Commentary offers this description of the butt of a spear: “Spears often were made with a metal casing on the butt end that was not honed to a point but was tapered down to a sharp edge. This could be used as a goad or to stick the spear in the ground. Many of these metal ends have been found in excavations and are portrayed on wall paintings.”

2Samuel 2:24 Joab also and Abishai pursued after Abner: and the sun went down when they were come to the hill of Ammah, that *lieth* before Giah by the way of the wilderness of Gibeon.

2Samuel 2:25 ¶ And the children of Benjamin gathered themselves together after Abner, and became one troop, and stood on the top of an hill.

2Samuel 2:26 Then Abner called to Joab, and said, Shall the sword devour for ever? knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end? how long shall it be then, ere thou bid the people return from following their brethren?

Joab and Abishai evidently discovered their dead brother then continued their pursuit of Abner—this time with revenge on their minds. As the sun went down, they came to the hill of Ammah near the wilderness of Gibeon. The men of Benjamin had gathered together to take a stand with Abner on the top of a hill, always a position of advantage in battle.

I liked the NLT version of v26: “Abner shouted down to Joab, ‘Must we always solve our differences with swords? Don’t you realize the only thing we will gain is bitterness toward each other? When will you call off your men from chasing their Israelite brothers?’”

2Samuel 2:27 And Joab said, As God liveth, unless thou hadst spoken, surely then in the morning the people had gone up every one from following his brother.

2Samuel 2:28 So Joab blew a trumpet, and all the people stood still, and pursued after Israel no more, neither fought they any more.

It seems that this word from Abner caused Joab to think about what he was doing and realize that Asahel’s death was a result of war and that he was wrong to seek revenge. He was the commander of Judah’s military under King David and needed to act accordingly. He basically admitted to Abner that he was right. He admitted that if he had not spoken, he and his men would have continued chasing the men of Israel until morning if necessary.

Joab then blew a trumpet and signaled an end to the fighting.

2Samuel 2:29 And Abner and his men walked all that night through the plain, and passed over Jordan, and went through all Bithron, and they came to Mahanaim.

Abner and his men walked all that night, eventually crossing over Jordan and returning to Mahanaim.

2Samuel 2:30 And Joab returned from following Abner: and when he had

gathered all the people together, there lacked of David's servants nineteen men and Asahel.

2Samuel 2:31 But the servants of David had smitten of Benjamin, and of Abner's men, *so that* three hundred and threescore men died.

2Samuel 2:32 And they took up Asahel, and buried him in the sepulchre of his father, which *was in* Bethlehem. And Joab and his men went all night, and they came to Hebron at break of day.

Joab took an accounting of his men and learned that they had lost only Asahel and nineteen other men; however, they had killed 360 men of Abner's troops. They took Asahel and buried him in the tomb of his fathers in Bethlehem. Joab and his men then continued their journey through the night and returned to Hebron the next morning.