

2 Samuel 3 Commentary

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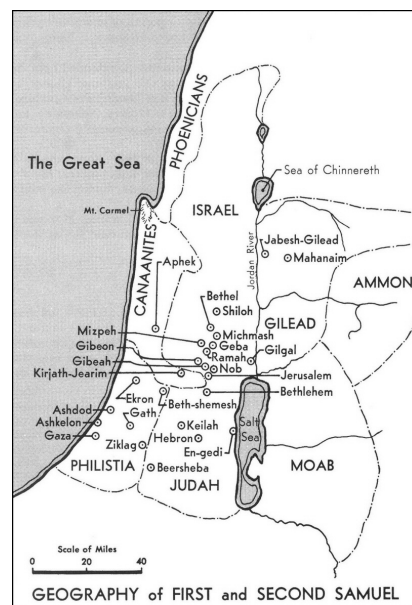
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Chart from recommended resource [Jensen's Survey of the OT](#) - used by permission
[2 Samuel Chart](#) from Charles Swindoll

**TIMELINE OF THE BOOKS OF
SAMUEL, KINGS & CHRONICLES**

1107	1011				971	931	853	722	586
1 Samuel	2 Samuel				1 Kings	1 Kings	2 Kings		
31	1-4	5-10	11-20	21-24	1-11	12-22	1-17	18-25	
1Chr 10		1 Chr 11-19		1 Chr 20-29	2 Chronicles 1-9	2 Chronicles 10-20	2 Chronicles 21-36		

Legend: B.C. dates at top of timeline are approximate. Note that 931BC marks the division of the Kingdom into Southern Tribes (Judah and Benjamin) and Ten Northern Tribes. To avoid confusion be aware that **after the division** of the Kingdom in 931BC, the Southern Kingdom is most often designated in Scripture as "**Judah**" and the Northern Kingdom as "**Israel**." Finally, note that 1 Chronicles 1-9 is not identified on the timeline because these chapters are records of genealogy.



Map of David's Kingdom-ESV Global

Map of Cities in 2 Samuel

2 Samuel 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.

- **long war:** 1Ki 14:30 15:16,32
- **between:** Ge 3:15 Ps 45:3-5 Mt 10:35,36 Ga 5:17 Eph 6:12
- **David grew stronger:** 2Sa 2:17 Es 6:13 Job 8:7 17:9 Ps 84:7 Pr 4:18,19 Da 2:34,35,44,45 Rev 6:2

DAVID GREW STRONGER BUT HOUSE OF SAUL WEAKER

Now there was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David - The attempt to avoid a long war using 12 fighters from each side took place at the pool of Gibeon but unfortunately all 12 from both sides were slain. The result was all out warfare between the house of Saul and the house of David. Undoubtedly Abner's murder of Asahel contributed to this **long war** because his brother Joab was commander of David's army.

And David grew steadily stronger, but the house of Saul grew weaker continually - Since God's will was that David be the next king, clearly He enabled David to grow stronger and the house of Saul to grow weak. We have just seen Joab defeat Abner by a ratio of 18:1 clear evidence that David was growing stronger. (See 2Sa 2:30-31).

Guzik - The increasing strength of David and increasing weakness of Saul's house did not begin when Saul died. It began when God first chose David and withdrew His Spirit from Saul (1 Samuel 16:13-14).

Warren Wiersbe - Trusting in the Lord, David went "from strength to strength" (Ps. 84:7+). He was God's anointed and knew that God would fulfill His promise and make him king over all Israel. When you walk by faith, you can wait on Him. (Borrow [With the](#)

[Word\)](#)

ESV Study Bible - Chapters 3–4 describe the slow steps of the process whereby David grew stronger and stronger (2Sa 3:1) and thus became king over all Israel. A major concern of the author is to show that David was not guilty of involvement in the death of Abner or Ish-bosheth.

Alan Redpath points out, “In the light of these memories that I have brought before you, I would recommend immediate action. Now then, do! Hesitate no longer. As of old, when Elijah faced the prophets of Baal, the question was, How long will you halt between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him. But if Baal, then follow him. Don’t remain in the absurd and dangerous position of believing what is right but failing to put your belief into action. You can be right in your knowledge but wrong in your heart and go to hell. I want to make the issue crystal clear. There can be no possible doubt according to the Word of God. Either Jesus must be King or He cannot be your Savior. David had to be king over all of Israel or he never could have delivered them from the Philistines. It was absolutely essential that if David were to secure his right to the crown and lead them to victory, civil war had to stop.” (See pdf [The Making of a Man of God Life of David](#))

Progress and maturity in the Christian life is an experience of the Spirit of God moving from RESIDENT TO PRESIDENT. It is our moving into the land of rest and peace and allowing the Spirit of God to provide the power and the grace and the victory over our own nature

Life Application Study Bible ([borrow](#)) - This war occurred because Israel and Judah had lost sight of God's vision and purpose: to settle the land (Genesis 12:7), to drive out the Canaanites (Deuteronomy 7:1-4), and to obey God's laws (Deuteronomy 8:1). Instead of uniting to accomplish these goals, they fought each other. When you face conflict, step back from the hostilities and consider whether you and your enemy have common goals that are bigger than your differences. Appeal to those interests as you work for a settlement.

Alan Redpath - “In the lives of many Christian people today there is raging, literally, a civil war. The flesh – the kingdom of Saul, struggles with the spirit – the kingdom of David, and the conflict is bitter. We do everything we possibly can to hold up the tottering kingdom of self, so that it might exist just a bit longer. If only we could preserve some rights; if only we could have at least part of our own way; if only we could keep this or that at any cost! We feel we must bolster up this kingdom of self, that we cannot let ourselves be crucified with Christ.” (See pdf [The Making of a Man of God Life of David](#))

THOUGHT - While the civil war raged in Israel, David became stronger and the family of Saul became weaker. But the kingdom was still divided. The **self life** is the losing side. As long as it has any place in our lives, we will face nothing but defeats, heartaches, losses, and troubles. The longer we hold out, the more danger there is of **hardening our hearts** against Him. It happened to Saul. Each of us needs to stop and really think and examine our own lives and put Christ in His rightful place where He is undisputed king. Then we can say, ‘It is no longer I, but Christ.’ (Gal 2:20+) ([Don Anderson](#))

Matthew Henry - Verses 1-6. The length of this war tried the faith and patience of David, and made his settlement at last the more welcome. The contest between grace and corruption in the hearts of believers, may fitly be compared to this warfare. There is a long war between them, the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh (Gal 5:17); but as the work of holiness is carried on, corruption, like the house of Saul, grows weaker and weaker; while grace, like the house of David, grows stronger and stronger. (ED: compare progressive sanctification)

F B Meyer - Our Daily Homily - 2 Samuel 3:1 David warred stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul warred weaker.

The war between the flesh and the Spirit is long, but the end is sure. As the Baptist said of Jesus, so must the flesh say of the Spirit, He must increase; I must decrease. Sometimes, in the long strain of the war, our spirit dies down. Will the bugle never cease to ring out its alarm? Will the assaults never come to an end? When shall we be able to lay aside sword and breastplate, and to enter the land of rest? Oh to be able to say with the Apostle, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith”!

Yet take heart. The assaults diminish in frequency and strength in proportion as they are faithfully resisted. Each time you resist success fully you will find it easier to resist. The strength of the vanquished foe enters the vanquisher.

Moreover, ultimate victory is secured. “Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:4–5). It makes a great difference to the soldier, when he belongs to an All-Victorious Legion, and serves under a Captain that never lost a fight. And there can be no doubt as to the issue in your heart or mine. “He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet.”

At any moment we may look for the sudden collapse of a great portion of the confederacy of evil, which has so long menaced us; as when Abner suddenly came to Hebron to give in his adhesion to David. What a huge piece of cliff fell that day into the sea! Expect

the sudden collapse of evils which have long troubled you.

2 Samuel 3:1,7-18 Now Then Do It - Theodore Epp

David's waiting on the Lord indeed paid off. At the end of seven and a half years, God began to arrange events so that David was finally crowned king of all Israel.

Abner, who was general of the armies of Israel, had put Ish-bosheth on the throne of Saul to reign over 11 tribes. However, when Ish-bosheth quarreled with him concerning one of Saul's concubines, Abner retaliated by scheming to turn the kingdom over to David.

A very practical admonition comes from a statement made by Abner that we can apply to our own hearts. Abner went to the people of Israel and said that they had sought for David in the past to be their king, and he added, "Now then do it" (2 Sam. 3:18).

Make Christ king in your life. He is God's appointed King as David was appointed and then anointed for the kingship of Israel.

Remember, the name "Christ" means the "anointed of God," and as such He has been appointed and anointed to be king in our lives. So make Him king today.

The work of redemption that Christ did for us is a finished work. The work of the Holy Spirit, on the other hand, which is forming Christ in us, is progressive. Have we ever progressed beyond Calvary?

"Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection" (Heb. 6:1).

Here is Ray Pritchard's summary of 2 Samuel 2-3- [Why God Makes It Hard When It Ought to be Easy](#)

Why is life so hard? It's a question everyone has struggled with at one time or another:

1. A young couple moves from Indiana to Florida to go to seminary. From the moment they get here, things fall apart. They can't pay their bills, he can barely stay in school, she works full-time just to pay the bills, and the kids haven't had new clothes in over a year. They came because they felt God's call on their lives. What happened? Did they make a mistake?
2. Another couple is married for almost twenty-five years when he suddenly, strangely comes down with a virus. The doctors treat it but he gets worse, not better. In two weeks he is dead. Life for her will never be the same. Deep in her heart, in the middle of a sleepless night, she wonders, Why did God let this happen?
3. It started with forgetfulness that soon led to periods of incoherence. Eventually she could not take care of herself, so her husband hired a live-in housekeeper. Although she was only in her early sixties, the doctor confirmed the diagnosis: Alzheimer's disease. For over three years she was confined in a special unit of a nursing home. For months on end she sat motionless in a chair, her hands clenched, her legs permanently crossed. With tears her husband prayed over and over for her to be released from the ravages of an incurable disease, but she lingered for years, trapped inside her own body, recognizing nothing around her. What higher purpose is being served?
4. A young church with a bright future calls a promising young pastor. After impressive early growth, the church splits and then falls apart. No one can understand it because there were so many good people with so much willing spirit. The future was almost unlimited. Now the pastor is gone and the church is a shadow of its former self. How could this have happened?

Sometimes you find the best truth in the strangest places.

One of the great proofs of the Bible's supernatural origin is that it speaks to every part of the human condition. Not only is there something for everyone in the Bible, but there is something meaningful for every situation we face in life. We would expect nothing less from a book that claims to be the very Word of God. If the message of the Bible comes directly from God, then it ought to speak to us at the precise point of our spiritual need.

Why does God make it hard when it ought to be easy? In order to answer that question, let's take a safari to an often-overlooked portion of the Bible-2 Samuel 2-3. These chapters tell the story of David's long struggle to become king over all Israel. There are two facts that will help you understand this story. The first is that during this period Saul was dead and had been dead for some time. The second is that David had been anointed king over Judah and was living in the city of Hebron. Everything that happens in this story flows from those two facts.

Not only is there something for everyone in the Bible, but there is something meaningful for every situation we face in life.

David's Rising Star The fact that Saul was dead meant that the throne of Israel was now vacant. Saul had forfeited his right to that throne through disobedience and rebellion. He had died in disgrace, committing suicide on the slopes of Mount Gilboa in a battle with the Philistines. Some of his supporters had rescued his body and given it a decent burial in Jabesh. And that brings up the point that Saul did have his followers. Lots of them, in fact. After all, he was the only king Israel had ever known, and even though he came to a bad end, there were thousands who mourned his death. But for good or ill, Saul was dead, the throne was vacant, and, since nature abhors a vacuum something was bound to happen.

The fact that David was king in Judah meant that he was still marking time in Hebron. He was God's choice to rule the nation after the death of Saul. And you would think, from a purely human point of view, that this was his big chance. At the age of thirty, David seemed fully prepared to take over. But it didn't work that way. Nothing in life is ever that easy.

Seven years would pass before David became king of the whole nation. 2 Samuel 2-3 tell us what happened during those seven years of turmoil and confusion. In order to understand these two chapters, there are five people you need to keep straight in your mind: All of us are being tested continually. That, too, is part of God's plan.

- Saul, the former king of Israel, is now dead.
- David is king of Judah but not yet king of the whole nation.
- Ish-Bosheth, one of Saul's surviving sons, is a puppet king in Saul's place.
- Joab was David's number one general.
- Abner was Saul's number one general.

What it all meant was that after Saul's death the nation was divided along north-south lines. The people in the north followed Ish-Bosheth and Abner. The people in the south followed David and Joab. Thus the stage was set for a civil war. Second Samuel 3:1 puts it this way: "The war between the house of Saul and the house of David lasted a long time." As I read this passage, one question comes to mind: Why did David have to fight for what God had already promised him? Why this civil war if David was really God's man to be king? Was there sin in his life? Was he out of God's will? The answer to both questions is no. Then why didn't God do what he had promised without all this fighting?

The story from David's life in 2 Samuel 2-3 provides a framework for answering that question. Why did David have to fight for what God had already promised him? These two chapters—which are basically about a civil war in Israel—suggest two answers.

1. That the rightness of his cause could be slowly revealed (2 Sa 2:11-3:5).

The key is the word **slowly**. David was thirty when he became king in Hebron. He was thirty-seven when he finally ruled the whole nation. What was God doing during that seven-year period? He was demonstrating to the people of Israel that David was indeed his man. We see this fact in two ways.

Strange as it may seem to us, David needed those seven years in Hebron to be fully prepared to be king over the whole nation.

A. In the victories his soldiers won in battle (2 Sa 2:12-3:1).

Abner son of Ner, together with the men of Ish-Bosheth son of Saul, left Mahanaim and went to Gibeon. Joab son of Zeruiah and David's men went out and met them at the pool of Gibeon. One group sat down on one side of the pool and one group on the other side. Then Abner said to Joab, "Let's have some of the young men get up and fight hand to hand in front of us." "All right, let them do it," Joab said. So they stood up and were counted off—twelve men for Benjamin and Ish-Bosheth son of Saul, and twelve for David. Then each man grabbed his opponent by the head and thrust his dagger into his opponent's side, and they fell down together. (2 Samuel 2:12-16).

This is like one of those wrestling spectacles where twelve men get in the ring at once. Only here it's twenty-four men, and they all end up killing each other. It's a tie. So they just go ahead and have a regular battle, and 2 Sa 2:17 says, "The battle that day was very fierce, and Abner and the men of Israel were defeated by David's men." If you want the body count, just drop down to 2Sa 2:30: "Then Joab" (remember, he's on David's side) "returned from pursuing Abner and assembled all his men. Besides Asahel" (that's Joab's brother, who was killed by Abner) "nineteen of David's men were found missing. But David's men had killed three hundred and sixty Benjamites who were with Abner." That's like winning a football game 360 to 20. It's a kill ratio of 18 to 1 in David's favor. The whole point is that God was demonstrating that David was his man by giving him overwhelming victory on the battlefield.

B. In the birth of his six sons at Hebron (2 Sa 3:2-5).

Notice what the last part of 2Sa 3:1 says. "David grew stronger and stronger, while the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker." We've already seen how that was true on the battlefield. But look what comes next. 2Sa 3:2-5 are a list of six sons who were born to David by six different women while he was in Hebron. The sons are Amnon, Kileab, Absalom, Adonijah, Shephatiah, and Ithrean. Among the wives, the one we know best is Abigail, the widow of Nabal. At first glance you may wonder why this list of sons is placed here. It appears to be out of place, but it isn't. In the ancient world one way a king demonstrated his power and greatness was by having many sons by many women. That's what this passage is stressing. That is, David was not only growing stronger on the battlefield, he was also growing stronger in the bedroom. That's hard for us to accept, but there it is.

But this is polygamy, you say. Yes, and it was never God's highest and best plan for mankind. But God permitted it in the Old Testament. David indulged himself this way, and he is still called "a man after God's heart." But-and this is a big but-one of the sons mentioned here is Absalom, who was to bring him nothing but heartache and shame. Thus David was sowing the seeds that would later bring forth bitter fruit. For the moment, though, these sons were a sign of God's blessing.

And that's the first answer to the question, Why did David have to fight for what God had promised? Because in the fighting and in the waiting God was writing his will in the sky for all Israel to see. It was as plain as day. Only the blind could miss it. David was God's man-on the battlefield and in the bedroom.

2. That the purity of his motives might be openly revealed (2 Sa 3:6-39).

If the first reason had to do with external things, this one has to do with David's heart. It was important that the people of Israel knew that David was not only God's man, but that he was the right kind of man. That is, they had to be convinced that God's choice ought to be their choice as well. God did that by arranging the circumstances so that the purity of David's motives might be openly revealed. This also happened in two ways.

A. In his willingness to welcome Abner to his side.

I've already mentioned that Abner was Saul's number one general. After Saul's death, he becomes the most powerful man in Israel. He is the one who put up Ish-Bosheth as a kind of puppet king. But make no mistake, Abner was the power behind the throne. Second Samuel 3:6-21 tells us how Abner came over to David's side. It happened because Ish-Bosheth accused him of sleeping with Rizpah, one of Saul's concubines. In the ancient world, women were a symbol of political power, and the more women a man had, the more power he had. Thus a king might have many wives and many concubines, and all of them together would make up his harem. Rizpah was part of Saul's harem. After he died, the harem more or less passed on to Ish-Bosheth.

When Ish-Bosheth accused Abner of sleeping with Rizpah, he was essentially accusing him of trying to pull a bedroom coup d'état. Abner was so upset that he decided to leave Ish-Bosheth and join David. It is here that you see something of David's heart. After some negotiation, he welcomed Abner into his camp. If you read the story of David's life, you will find that he had many character flaws. But one of his great strengths was that he knew how to forgive the past and turn enemies into friends. In welcoming Abner, David's heart was openly revealed for all to see.

B. In his grief at Abner's untimely death.

This was the final episode of the civil war. David had won on the battlefield and the opposing general had come over to his side. But before peace could be declared, Abner was assassinated. It happened because Joab was jealous of Abner and did not trust him. Remember, they had just been fighting each other. And in that battle, Abner had been forced to kill Joab's brother Asahel in self-defense. So the assassination was partly revenge and partly jealousy.

Joab set up a trap to catch Abner alone at the well of Sirah. 2 Samuel 3:27 picks up the story.

Now when Abner returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside into the gateway, as though to speak with him privately. And there, to avenge the blood of his brother Asahel, Joab stabbed him in the stomach, and he died.

What would David do? If he sided with Joab, the people of Israel would think he set the whole thing up. If that happened, they would never trust him as king. His reaction was critical. It took place in five parts.

First, he pronounced a curse on Joab and his house (2 Sa 3:28-29).

Second, he declared a period of public mourning (2 Sa 3:31-32).

Third, he composed a lament for Abner (2 Sa 3:33-34).

Fourth, he entered a personal fast (2 Sa 3:35).

Fifth, he spoke of his personal anguish (2 Sa 3:38-39).

The way a man responds in a time of crisis tells a great deal about his character.

Notice how the people responded to David's grief. "All the people took note and were pleased; indeed, everything the king did pleased them. So on that day all the people and all Israel knew that the king had no part in the murder of Abner son of Ner" (2

Samuel 3:36-37). This may seem small to you, but I assure you it was big to the people of Israel. The way a man responds in a time of crisis tells a great deal about his character. In this case, David's grief revealed the purity of his motives. He was not trying to take the throne by devious means.

Let me summarize what we learn about David's life from this story. God had a purpose in making David fight for what he had promised. Through the years of struggle and controversy the rightness of his cause was slowly revealed. Through the events involving Abner, the purity of his motives was openly revealed. By the end of it all, two things were clear:

1. David was God's man to be king.
2. David was the right man to be king.

Strange as it may seem to us, David needed those seven years in Hebron to be fully prepared to be king over the whole nation. And the people of Israel and Judah needed the time to get to know David's character. If they were going to trust him as king, they had to know what he was like. If we stand back and look at the situation, we can say with confidence, "It had to happen this way," even though with all the intrigue and infighting and all the killing, it didn't make much sense at the time. In fact, it looks like the usual political machinations that take place whenever a king dies or a senator needs to be replaced. Suddenly life becomes very messy, alliances are made, broken, remade and broken again. Rumors spread, people talk, emails fly, threats and promises commingle as first one person and then another angles for the top spot. And somehow through all of it God works to accomplish his will.

Believing in Advance

I remind you again of the words of Philip Yancey. "Faith is believing in advance what will only make sense in reverse." That's my favorite definition of faith because it seems to be universally true. Right now-today!-lots of things don't make any sense. Probably all of us have a secret list of things we would change if only we could. But faith, true God-honoring faith, looks at the perplexities of life and says, "I can't see any reason for this, but I believe that one day I will look back and say 'The Lord knew all along exactly what he was doing.'"

Faith is believing in advance what will only make sense in reverse.

How does all this apply to us? I submit that David's life is a pattern of how God deals with his children. It helps us understand why God makes it hard when it ought to be easy. Why do seminary students struggle? Why do godly men get passed over for promotions? Why do some people reel from one catastrophe to another? Why do some women struggle for years to overcome the memories of their past? Why do some couples spend all their lives almost-but-not-quite making it? Why do so many people have to wait so long for something really good to happen in their lives? And why do some churches seem to take three steps forward and two steps back?

The episodes in David's life we have just discussed demonstrate four steps God is taking when he makes it hard when it ought to be easy. It is God's plan to

1. Vindicate us slowly.
2. Bless us openly.
3. Surprise us occasionally.
4. Test us continually.

Those four things taken together explain much of what happens to us. Some of you right now are in the vindication process. You are in the middle of a hard and difficult time, but it is God's intention to ultimately display the rightness of your cause. It's just not happening very fast. Some of you are being blessed openly, and that's a wonderful thing. Enjoy it, because it won't last forever. Some of you are being surprised by God with an unusual and unexpected circumstance. That is part of God's serendipity. And all of us are being tested continually. That, too, is part of God's plan.

God doesn't work according to our timetable.

One other point needs to be mentioned. God doesn't work according to our timetable. We think, "Lord, I'm ready to move on. Let's go." And God says, "Not so fast. I have a bigger plan in mind." A few days ago we received a note offering us a helpful insight:

I've thought a lot about what I wish and hope for, with my friends, and you know what....my thoughts are a bit different this year. I wish for you both, some positive (enough to praise him) some negative (not too much, but hopefully you'll be able to praise him) and enough of life in between to know that you are in the middle of God's plan for your lives! Just to know that, is enough to keep on going.

That strikes me as an entirely biblical way to think about the future. God sends hard times because we need them in order to grow. That, I suppose, is the final reason God makes it hard when it ought to be easy. He is developing character in us, and to do that

adversity is essential. That is why life isn't easy, why nothing works the way it's supposed to, why we struggle so hard to get ahead. God's agenda and timetable are often quite different from ours.

In all of this we have the example of Jesus Christ, who "learned obedience from what he suffered" (Hebrews 5:8). If he had to learn obedience, how much more do we? If adversity was essential for the Son of God, how much more for us? Do not despair. The road is hard and the journey long because God made it that way. But there is a crown and a throne at the end for those who persevere. ([Why God Makes It Hard When It Ought to be Easy](#))

2 Samuel 3:2 Sons were born to David at Hebron: his firstborn was Amnon, by Ahinoam the Jezreelitess;

- **sons born:** 1Ch 3:1-4
- **Amnon:** 2Sa 13:1-29 Ge 49:3,4
- **Ahinoam:** 1Sa 25:43

Click to Enlarge David's Family Tree
Source: [Bibletales.online](#)

DAVID'S FIRSTBORN AT HEBRON - AMNON

Sons were born to David at Hebron: his firstborn was [Amnon](#), by Ahinoam the Jezreelitess - We will encounter Amnon taking center stage (along with Absalom) in 2 Samuel 13-18, when he raped his half-sister Tamar and was killed on order of his half-brother Absalom, events that took place during the declining period of David's kingdom. ([see diagram above](#))

Ray Pritchard points out why David's sons would be mentioned in this context - At first glance you may wonder why this list of sons is placed here. It appears to be out of place, but it isn't. In the ancient world one way a king demonstrated his power and greatness was by having many sons by many women. That's what this passage is stressing. That is, David was not only growing stronger on the battlefield, he was also growing stronger in the bedroom. That's hard for us to accept, but there it is. ([Why God Makes It Hard When It Ought to be Easy](#))

Life Application Study Bible ([borrow](#)) - Polygamy was a socially acceptable practice for kings at this time, although God specifically warned against it (Deuteronomy 17:14-17). Sadly, the numerous sons born to David's wives caused him great trouble. Rape (2Sa 13:14), murder (2Sa 13:28), rebellion (2Sa 15:13), and greed (1Ki 1:5, 6) all resulted from the jealous rivalries among the half brothers. Solomon, one of David's sons and his successor to the throne, also took many wives who eventually turned him away from God (1Ki 11:3, 4) (ED: And split the kingdom - 1Ki 11:11-14).

David Guzik - During David's seven-year reign in Hebron, his six different wives gave birth to six sons. This shows that David went against God's commandment that Israel's king should not multiply wives to himself.. David was *wrong* to have more than one wife. His many wives went against God's command to kings (Deuteronomy 17:17) and against God's heart for marriage (Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:4-6). David's polygamy was *common*. Adding many wives was one way great men and especially kings expressed their power and status.i. David was *troubled* because of his many wives. Some wonder why the Bible doesn't expressly condemn David's polygamy here, but as is often the case, the Scripture simply states the fact and later records how David reaped the penalty for this sort of sin in regard to his family. We must say that God used and blessed David *despite* his many wives. Yet his family life and these sons were obviously not blessed.

Ryrie - Although David's six marriages helped forge alliances with other states, the law forbade this (Dt 17:17). Amnon's miserable end is described in 2Sa 13, Absalom's history in 2Sa 13-18, Adonijah's rebellion in 1Ki 1.

Henry Morris - During his seven-year occupation with this civil war, David had six sons born in Hebron of six different wives. This was an unhealthy home situation at best, and it is sadly significant that at least three of these sons (Amnon, Absalom, Adonijah) later brought great grief to David and his family.

Believer's Study Bible - (vv. 2-5) Polygamy, while common, was never successful, since it violated the divine ordinance (Gen. 2:24). Six of David's wives, together with their sons, are enumerated (vv. 2-5), and Michal is not included. The intrigue and hostility of the children in David's family was partially, and perhaps largely, due to David's polygamous state (cf. Gen. 29; 30).

This sin contributed to David's insensitivity to God's moral standard and contributed to the big problem that we are going to encounter in a few chapters.

Pink points out, “Here was David’s besetting sin to which he yielded so freely. Little wonder that his son Solomon followed in his footsteps.

2 Samuel 3:3 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;

- **Chileab:** 1Ch 3:1, Daniel
- **Abigail:** 2Sa 2:2 1Sa 25:3,42
- **Absalom:** 2Sa 13:20-28 14:24-33 15:1-18 17:1-14 18:9-18,33
- **Talmai:** 2Sa 13:37,38
- **Geshur:** De 3:14 Jos 13:13 1Sa 27:8

Related Passages:

1 Chronicles 3:1-9 (DAVID’S CHILDREN) 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. 4 Six were born to him in Hebron, and there he reigned seven years and six months. And in Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three years. 5 These were born to him in Jerusalem: **Shimea, Shobab, Nathan and Solomon**, four, by Bathshua the daughter of Ammiel; 6 and **Ibhar, Elishama, Eliphelet, 7 Nogah, Nepheg and Japhia, 8 Elishama, Eliada and Eliphelet**, nine. 9 All these were the sons of David, besides the **sons of the concubines**; and Tamar was their sister. (19 SONS LISTED IN THESE PASSAGES)

DAVID’S SECOND AND THIRD SONS

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 - Since Chileab (Daniel in 1Ch 3:1) is not mentioned as a possible successor in 1 Kings 1 it is assumed that he died at a relatively young age. **Absalom** murdered his half-brother Amnon for raping his sister Tamar and then proceeded to lead a civil war against his own father, David, even stooping to the point of attempting to murder David.

2 Samuel 3:4 and the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith; and the fifth, Shephatiah the son of Abital;

- **Adonijah:** 1Ki 1:5-18, 2:13-25

DAVID’S FOURTH AND FIFTH SONS

and the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith; and the fifth, Shephatiah (“The Lord Judges”) **the son of Abital** - Adonijah will take center stage in 1 Kings 1-2 (1Ki 1:5-18, 1Ki 2:13-25) in the struggle with Solomon regarding who would succeed David as king. When Amnon (2Sa 13:28–29) and Absalom (2Sa 18:15) were killed, it seems that Adonijah was the eldest surviving son of David, so he would be in line for succession to the throne.

Guzik - Adonijah tried to seize the throne from David and David’s appointed successor – then he tried to take one of David’s concubines and was executed for his arrogance.

2 Samuel 3:5 and the sixth, Ithream, by David’s wife Eglah. These were born to David at Hebron.

DAVID’S SIXTH

SON

and the sixth, Ithream, by David's wife Eglah. These were born to David at Hebron

MacArthur - Eglah is called "David's wife." This may be because she is the last of the list and serves to draw emphasis to David's polygamy. The inclusion of these sons indicates all who would have been in contention for the throne. More children were born to David when he moved to Jerusalem (2Sa 5:14).

2 Samuel 3:6 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.

BGT 2 Samuel 3:6 καὶ γένοιτο τὸ πλεῖον τῶν υἱῶν τοῦ Σαουλ καὶ τῶν υἱῶν τοῦ Δαυὶδ καὶ Ἀβεννὴρ ἐκρατεῖ τὸν οἶκον τοῦ Σαουλ

LXE 2 Samuel 3:6 And it came to pass while there was war between the house of Saul and the house of David, that Abenner was governing the house of Saul.

KJV 2 Samuel 3:6 And it came to pass, while there was war between the house of Saul and the house of David, that Abner made himself strong for the house of Saul.

NET 2 Samuel 3:6 As the war continued between the house of Saul and the house of David, Abner was becoming more influential in the house of Saul.

CSB 2 Samuel 3:6 During the war between the house of Saul and the house of David, Abner kept acquiring more power in the house of Saul.

ESV 2 Samuel 3:6 While there was war between the house of Saul and the house of David, Abner was making himself strong in the house of Saul.

NIV 2 Samuel 3:6 During the war between the house of Saul and the house of David, Abner had been strengthening his own position in the house of Saul.

NLT 2 Samuel 3:6 As the war between the house of Saul and the house of David went on, Abner became a powerful leader among those loyal to Saul.

- **Abner:** 2Sa 2:8,9 2Ki 10:23 2Ch 25:8 Pr 21:30 Isa 8:9,10 Joe 3:9-13 Mt 12:30

ABNER BECOMES MORE INFLUENTIAL

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 - NET = "becoming more influential." The idea seems to be that Abner was "strengthening his own position in the house of Saul." (NIV) While David was growing stronger in the LORD (2Sa 3:1), Abner was growing stronger in his political influence.

NET Note on Abner was making himself strong - Heb "was strengthening himself." The statement may have a negative sense here, perhaps suggesting that Abner was overstepping the bounds of political propriety in a self-serving way.

2 Samuel 3:7 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?"

- **Rizpah:** 2Sa 21:8-11
- **gone in:** 2Sa 12:8 16:21,22 1Ki 2:17,21,22

Related Passages:

2 Samuel 21:8-11 So the king took the two sons of **Rizpah** the daughter of Aiah, Armoni and Mephibosheth (**NOT THE SAME SON BORN TO JONATHAN AND DESCRIBED IN 2Sa 4:4**) whom she had borne to Saul, and the five sons of Merab the daughter of Saul, whom she had borne to Adriel the son of Barzillai the

Meholathite. 9 Then he gave them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they hanged them in the mountain before the LORD, so that the seven of them fell together; and they were put to death in the first days of harvest at the beginning of barley harvest. 10 And Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth and spread it for herself on the rock, from the beginning of harvest until it rained on them from the sky; and she allowed neither the birds of the sky to rest on them by day nor the beasts of the field by night. 11 When it was told David what Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, the concubine of Saul, had done,

2 Samuel 16:20-22 Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, "Give your advice. What shall we do?" 21 Ahithophel said to Absalom, "**Go in to your father's concubines, whom he has left to keep the house; then all Israel will hear that you have made yourself odious to your father.** The hands of all who are with you will also be strengthened." 22 So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the roof, and Absalom went in to his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel.

1 Kings 2:22-23 King Solomon answered and said to his mother, "And why are you asking Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? Ask for him also the kingdom—for he is my older brother—even for him, for Abiathar the priest, and for Joab the son of Zeruiah!" 23 Then King Solomon swore by the LORD, saying, "May God do so to me and more also, if Adonijah has not spoken this word against his own life.

ABNER & SAUL'S CONCUBINE RIZPAH

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 - Abner is accused of sexual relations with Saul's concubine (but has no proof Abner had truly had relations with Rizpah) and likely had political ramifications for to sleep with any of the king's wives or concubines was to make a claim to the throne, and it was considered treason.

Baldwin - "To take the wife or concubine of the late monarch was to appropriate his property and to make a bid for the throne."

Life Application Study Bible ([borrow](#)) - Ishbosheth may have been right to speak out against Abner's behavior, but he didn't have the moral strength to maintain his authority (2Sa 3:11). Lack of moral backbone became the root of Israel's troubles over the next four centuries. **Only 4 of the next 40 kings of Israel were called "good."** It takes courage and strength to stand firm in your convictions and to confront wrongdoing in the face of opposition. When you believe something is wrong, do not let yourself be talked out of your position. Firmly attack the wrong and uphold the right.

NET Note - This accusation against Abner is a very serious one, since an act of sexual infringement on the king's harem would probably have been understood as a blatant declaration of aspirations to kingship. As such it was not merely a matter of ethical impropriety but an act of grave political significance as well.

Ryrie concubine. A slave woman who was the legal chattel of her master and often served to raise him an heir. By the time of the kings, the possession of concubines appears to have been a royal prerogative. Having intercourse with a king's concubine was a treasonous act, for it was in essence making a claim to the throne (cf. 16:20-21).

TSK Note - This action of Abner's seems a most evident proof that he intended to seize on the government; and it was so understood by Ish-bosheth

Walton - Concubines are women without dowry who include among their duties providing children to the family. In the royal household they may represent minor political alliances. Since a concubine has been a sexual partner, a son who used his father's concubine was not only viewed as incestuous but was seen as attempting to usurp the authority of the family patriarch. In a similar way a successor to the throne at times sought to expropriate the authority of his predecessor by taking over his concubines. Israel was a tribal society in transition to a monarchy. The network of support for a king would have been found in the powerful clans and families. Acquiring concubines and wives would therefore be the mechanism for building up the backing of each local area. Support might also be found in wealthy merchants, military leaders or even in priestly families. 3:8. dog's head. This expression is not used anywhere else in the Old Testament. See comment on 1 Samuel 24:14 for information concerning self-deprecation using dog metaphors. (see page 325 [IVP Background Commentary-OT](#))

2 Samuel 3:8 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

BGT 2 Samuel 3:8 κα θυμ θη σφ δρα Αβεννηρ περ το λ γου Μεμφιβοσθε κα επεν Αβεννηρ πρ ς α τ ν μ κεφαλ κυν ς γ ε μι πο ησα λεος σ μερον μετ το ο κου Σαουλ το πατρ ς σου κα περ δελφ ν κα γνωρ μων κα ο κ η τομ λησα ε ς τ ν ο κον Δαυιδ κα πιζητε ς π μ π ρ δικ ας γυναικ ς σ μερον

LXE 2 Samuel 3:8 And Abenner was very angry with Jebosthe for this saying; and Abenner said to him, Am I a dog's head? I have this day wrought kindness with the house of Saul thy father, and with his brethren and friends, and have not gone over to the house of David, and dost thou this day seek a charge against me concerning injury to a woman?

KJV 2 Samuel 3:8 Then was Abner very wroth for the words of Ishbosheth, and said, Am I a dog's head, which against Judah do shew kindness this day unto the house of Saul thy father, to his brethren, and to his friends, and have not delivered thee into the hand of David, that thou chargest me to day with a fault concerning this woman?

NET 2 Samuel 3:8 These words of Ish-bosheth really angered Abner and he said, "Am I the head of a dog that belongs to Judah? This very day I am demonstrating loyalty to the house of Saul your father and to his relatives and his friends! I have not betrayed you into the hand of David. Yet you have accused me of sinning with this woman today!

CSB 2 Samuel 3:8 Abner was very angry about Ish-bosheth's accusation. "Am I a dog's head who belongs to Judah?" he asked. "All this time I've been loyal to the house of your father Saul, to his brothers, and to his friends and haven't handed you over to David, but now you accuse me of wrongdoing with this woman!

ESV 2 Samuel 3:8 Then Abner was very angry over the words of Ish-bosheth and said, "Am I a dog's head of Judah? To this day I keep showing steadfast love to the house of Saul your father, to his brothers, and to his friends, and have not given you into the hand of David. And yet you charge me today with a fault concerning a woman.

NIV 2 Samuel 3:8 Abner was very angry because of what Ish-Bosheth said and he answered, "Am I a dog's head--on Judah's side? This very day I am loyal to the house of your father Saul and to his family and friends. I haven't handed you over to David. Yet now you accuse me of an offense involving this woman!

NLT 2 Samuel 3:8 Abner was furious. "Am I some Judean dog to be kicked around like this?" he shouted. "After all I have done for your father, Saul, and his family and friends by not handing you over to David, is this my reward-- that you find fault with me about this woman?

- **Abner:** Ps 76:10 Mk 6:18,19
- **Am I a dog's head:** 2Sa 9:8 16:9 De 23:18 1Sa 24:14,15 2Ki 8:13
- **do show:** 2Sa 3:9,18 5:2 1Sa 15:28 Ps 2:1-4 Isa 37:23 Ac 9:4,5

Related Passage:

1 Samuel 17:43 The Philistine said to David, "**Am I a dog**, that you come to me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods.

ANGRY ABNER ASKS AM I A DOG'S HEAD?

Then Abner was very angry over the words of Ish-bosheth and said, "Am I a dog's head that belongs to Judah?"If Abner had actually been falsely accused, it would also explain why he was so angry! This expression is not used anywhere else in the Old Testament but means something like "Am I a contemptible traitor?" Clearly this speaks of despising and even ridiculing someone for the Hebrews consider dogs and wild, unclean, scavenging beasts. (cf. Ex. 22:31; 1Sa 17:43; 24:14; 2Sa 9:8; 16:9; 1Ki 14:11; 16:4; 21:19; 2Ki 8:13; 9:35-37; Ps. 22:16).

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 - CSB = "All this time I've been loyal to the house of your father Saul, to his brothers, and to his friends and haven't handed you over to David, but now you accuse me of wrongdoing with this woman!" Abner's point is that Ish-bosheth would not be in power were it not for his support!

TSK Note - Am I a dog's head was a proverbial expression among the Hebrews to denote whatever was deemed worthless and

contemptible.

2 Samuel 3:9 "May God do so to Abner, and more also, if as the LORD has sworn to David, I do not accomplish this for him,

BGT 2 Samuel 3:9 τ δε ποισαι θες τ Αβεννηρ κα τ δε προσθε η ατ τι καθ ς μοσεν κ ριος τ Δαυιδ τι οτως ποι σω ατ ν τ μ ρ τ α τ

LXE 2 Samuel 3:9 God do thus and more also to Abenner, if as the Lord swore to David, so do I not to him this day;

KJV 2 Samuel 3:9 So do God to Abner, and more also, except, as the LORD hath sworn to David, even so I do to him;

NET 2 Samuel 3:9 God will severely judge Abner if I do not do for David exactly what the LORD has promised him,

CSB 2 Samuel 3:9 May God punish Abner and do so severely if I don't do for David what the LORD swore to him:

ESV 2 Samuel 3:9 God do so to Abner and more also, if I do not accomplish for David what the LORD has sworn to him,

NIV 2 Samuel 3:9 May God deal with Abner, be it ever so severely, if I do not do for David what the LORD promised him on oath

NLT 2 Samuel 3:9 May God strike me and even kill me if I don't do everything I can to help David get what the LORD has promised him!

- **May God do so:** 2Sa 3:35 19:13 Ru 1:17 1Sa 3:17 14:44 25:22 1Ki 19:2
- **as the Lord:** 1Sa 15:28 16:1-13 28:17 1Ch 12:23 Ps 89:3,4,19,20,35-37

Related Passages:

1 Samuel 24:20 (KING SAUL TO DAVID) "Now, behold, I know that you will surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in your hand.

ABNER SWITCHES SIDES TO DAVID

May God do so to Abner, and more also, if as the LORD has sworn to David, I do not accomplish this for him- NLT - "May God strike me and even kill me if I don't do everything I can to help **David** get what the LORD has promised." Abner invokes a self-induced curse formula (cf. Ru 1:17; 1Sa 14:44; 1Ki 2:23; 19:2). Abner apparently knew that **David** was to be Saul's successor thus his setting up Ish-bosheth was presumptive sin!

[Guzik](#) - Abner is a good example of those of us who *know* things to be true, but we don't *live* as if they are true.

ESV Study Bible- As Saul's general, Abner must have known about Saul's recognition of David as his successor (1Sa 24:20). People in general also seem to have had knowledge about a promise of God to David (2 Sam. 3:18; see also 1 Sam. 24:4; 25:30).

Walton on may God do so to Abner - This formula is common in curses in Samuel and Kings and is usually found in the mouth of royal figures. An exception is Ruth's use of this same formula in Ruth 1:17. The formula is also known from Alalakh and Mari. Abner has not specified what it is that God will do. Since this oath is sometimes associated with rituals in which animals are mutilated, it is assumed that the speaker calls down similar mutilation on himself. (see page 325 [IVP Background Commentary-OT](#))

2 Samuel 3:10 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."

BGT 2 Samuel 3:10 περιελε ν τ ν βασιλε αν π το ο κου Σαουλ κα το ναστσαι τ ν θρ νον Δαυιδ π Ισραηλ

κα π τ ν Ιουδαν π Δαν ως Βηρσαβε

LXE 2 Samuel 3:10 to take away the kingdom from the house of Saul, and to raise up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah from Dan to Bersabee.

KJV 2 Samuel 3:10 To translate the kingdom from the house of Saul, and to set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan even to Beersheba.

NET 2 Samuel 3:10 namely, to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul and to establish the throne of David over Israel and over Judah all the way from Dan to Beer Sheba!"

CSB 2 Samuel 3:10 to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul and establish the throne of David over Israel and Judah from Dan to Beer-sheba."

ESV 2 Samuel 3:10 to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul and set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan to Beersheba."

NIV 2 Samuel 3:10 and transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul and establish David's throne over Israel and Judah from Dan to Beersheba."

NLT 2 Samuel 3:10 I'm going to take Saul's kingdom and give it to David. I will establish the throne of David over Israel as well as Judah, all the way from Dan in the north to Beersheba in the south."

- **from Dan:** 2Sa 17:11 24:2 Jdg 20:1 1Ki 4:25

Dan = North <-> Beersheba = South

ABNER'S COMMITMENT FOR DAVID TO BE KING

to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul and to establish the throne of David over Israel and over Judah- Abner commits to a shift of power from Saul to David.

Winter raises the question, "Why had Abner dared to fight against God's purpose? Abner evidently knew that God had sworn to David that he would be the next king. He expressed this when he said that he would translate the kingdom from the house of Saul and set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah from Dan even to Beersheba. Abner had been motivated by personal and selfish reasons. These reasons often caused people to resist God's will for their lives and for the lives of others. Ish-Bosheth was not able to resist Abner because Abner was stronger than the king himself. He also may have known that this was God's will and that it was foolhardy for him to attempt to thwart God's purposes."

Walton - Abner most likely held the reins of power in the provisional government for which Ish-Bosheth was the figurehead. If the military was loyal to Abner, his defection would leave Ish-Bosheth virtually unprotected. Abner would probably likewise succeed in bringing with him the allegiance of most of the northern tribes that had remained faithful to Saul's family. (see page 325 [IVP Background Commentary-OT](#))

from Dan even to Beersheba - Abner commits that David will rule from north (Dan) to south (Beersheba), using this descriptive idiom for all the Promised Land (cf. Jdg 20:1; 1Sa 3:20; 2Sa 17:11; 1Ki 4:25).

2 Samuel 3:11 And he could no longer answer Abner a word, because he was afraid of him.

BGT 2 Samuel 3:11 κα ο κ δυν σθη τι Μεμφιβοσθε ποκριθ ναι τ Αβεννηρ μα π το φοβε σθαι α τ ν

LXE 2 Samuel 3:11 And Jebosthe could not any longer answer Abenner a word, because he feared him.

KJV 2 Samuel 3:11 And he could not answer Abner a word again, because he feared him.

NET 2 Samuel 3:11 Ish-bosheth was unable to answer Abner with even a single word because he was afraid of him.

CSB 2 Samuel 3:11 Ish-bosheth could not answer Abner because he was afraid of him.

ESV 2 Samuel 3:11 And Ish-bosheth could not answer Abner another word, because he feared him.

NIV 2 Samuel 3:11 Ish-Bosheth did not dare to say another word to Abner, because he was afraid of him.

NLT 2 Samuel 3:11 Ishbosheth didn't dare say another word because he was afraid of what Abner might do.

- 2Sa 3:39

ISH-BOSHETH'S WEAK LEADERSHIP

And he (Ishbosheth) **could no longer answer Abner a word, because he was afraid of him** - NLT = "Ishbosheth didn't dare say another word because he was afraid of what Abner might do." Clearly Ish-bosheth was weak and functioned more like a [titular](#) leader with Abner "calling the shots."

2 Samuel 3:12 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."

BGT 2 Samuel 3:12 κα π στειλεν Αβεννηρ γγ λους πρ ς Δαυιδ ε ς Θαϊλαμ ο ν παραχρ μα λ γων δι θου
διαθ κην σου μετ μο κα δο χε ρ μου μετ σο το πιστρ ψαι πρ ς σ π ντα τ ν ο κον Ισραηλ

LXE 2 Samuel 3:12 And Abenner sent messengers to David to Thaelam where he was, immediately, saying, Make thy covenant with me, and, behold, my hand is with thee to bring back to thee all the house of Israel.

KJV 2 Samuel 3:12 And Abner sent messengers to David on his behalf, saying, Whose is the land? saying also, Make thy league with me, and, behold, my hand shall be with thee, to bring about all Israel unto thee.

NET 2 Samuel 3:12 Then Abner sent messengers to David saying, "To whom does the land belong? Make an agreement with me, and I will do whatever I can to cause all Israel to turn to you."

CSB 2 Samuel 3:12 Abner sent messengers as his representatives to say to David, "Whose land is it? Make your covenant with me, and you can be certain I am on your side to hand all Israel over to you."

ESV 2 Samuel 3:12 And Abner sent messengers to David on his behalf, saying, "To whom does the land belong? Make your covenant with me, and behold, my hand shall be with you to bring over all Israel to you."

NIV 2 Samuel 3:12 Then Abner sent messengers on his behalf to say to David, "Whose land is it? Make an agreement with me, and I will help you bring all Israel over to you."

NLT 2 Samuel 3:12 Then Abner sent messengers to David, saying, "Doesn't the entire land belong to you? Make a solemn pact with me, and I will help turn over all of Israel to you."

- Whose: 2Sa 19:6 20:1-13
- Make: Ps 62:9 Lu 16:5-8
- my hand: 2Sa 3:21,27 5:1-3 19:14,41-43 20:1,2 1Ch 11:1-3 12:38-40 Mt 21:8-10

ABNER'S PROMISE TO DAVID

Then Abner sent messengers to David in his place, saying, "Whose is the land?" - NLT - "Doesn't the entire land belong to you?" This is rhetorical. Of course ultimately the land belonged to God, but Abner is insinuating David should rule over all Israel.

It was originally deeded to Abram - Genesis 12:7 "And the Lord appeared to Abram and said, 'To your descendants I will give this land.' So he built an altar there to the Lord who had appeared to him." Just as there is civil strife and disorder in the land of Israel today, they are still trying to answer the age-old question, "Whose land is it?" As the Arabs and Jews fight over this sacred tract that was deeded originally to Abram and his descendants.

[Uteley](#) on Whose is the land? - TEV "Who is going to rule this land" NJB, LXX —omits phrase— REB "Who is to control the land" The MT has "to whom the land?" This cryptic phrase is left out in both LXX and NJB. It seems to assert that Ish-bosheth is not the God-ordained leader.

Make your covenant with me - Abner calls for a solemn, binding agreement with David.

And behold, my hand shall be with you to bring all Israel over to you - Abner says he would help bring all of Israel under

David's rule.

Believer's Study Bible - Abner's anger with Ishbosheth was the occasion for the delivering of the entire kingdom to David. Political intrigue became a hazard for the king, as David demanded that Abner first of all deliver his promised wife Michal. Her presence would make his claim to the northern tribes more credible, since she was Saul's daughter. Verse 16 seems to reflect genuine affection on the part of Paltiel for Michal. Nevertheless, she was taken from him, and he was helpless in the matter.

Make [a covenant], cut off, destroy) (03772) **karath** literally means to cut, to cut off or to sever an object from its source or cut into parts and implies a violent action. For example, Zipporah "cut off her son's foreskin." (Ex 4:25) or the Jews "cut down a branch with a single cluster of grapes." (Nu 13:2-24, cf Dt 19:5, 20:19-20, Jdg 9:48-49, 1Sa 5:4, 17:51, 24:4-5, 11, 31:9, 2Sa 10:4, 2Sa 20:22) In another literal use as punishment to Israel for breaking the Mosaic covenant (cf Dt 29:25, 31:16), God says He will "cut down (karath) your incense altars" (Lev 26:30, cf Jdg 6:25-26, cf 1Sa 28:9). A sacrificial animal was not to be offered if it was "cut" (karath) (Lev 22:24). Karath means "chewed" (cutting food with teeth) in Nu 11:33.

Covenant (01285) **berit/berith/beriyth** means covenant, treaty, compact, agreement between two parties (first use in God's covenant with Noah - Ge 6:18, 9:9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17). As discussed more below **beriyth** describes a compact made by passing between pieces of flesh. Covenant is a solemn, binding arrangement between two parties and entails a variety of responsibilities, benefits and penalties depending on the specific covenant which is being studied. OT covenants were made between God and man (eg, God with Noah - Ge 6:18, with Abram - Ge 15:18) or between men (Abraham and Abimelech - Ge 21:27, Isaac and Abimelech - Ge 26:28, Jacob and Laban - Ge 31:44) (For summary of covenants see - [Covenant in the Bible](#)). **Covenant** can be summarized as follows (1) Between two parties (sometimes equal, other times superior to inferior) -- (a) **nations** -- (peace) treaty, alliance of friendship (b) **individuals** -- a pledge or agreement with mutual obligations to each other (c) **monarch and subjects** (2Sa 3:21, 5:3, 1Chr 11:3) -- a constitution (d) **God and man** -- Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, New Covenants. **TWOT** (online) adds that "Apart from blood ties the covenant was the way people of the ancient world formed wider relationships with each other. The accounts of the relationship between David and Jonathan are the only unequivocal mention of a compact between two individuals in the Old Testament (1Sa 18:3; 20:8; 23:18). It is spoken of as "a covenant of the Lord" because the Lord witnessed the transaction and protected the legal order."

2 Samuel 3:13 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."

BGT 2 Samuel 3:13 κα ε πεν Δαυιδ γ καλ ς διαθ σομαι πρ ς σ διαθ κην πλ ν λ γον να γ ατο μαι παρ σο λ γων ο κ ψει τ πρ σωπ ν μου ν μ γ γ ς τ ν Μελχολ θυγατ ρα Σαουλ παραγινομ νου σου δε ν τ πρ σωπ ν μου

LXE 2 Samuel 3:13 And David said, With a good will I will make with thee a covenant: only I demand one condition of thee, saying, Thou shalt not see my face, unless thou bring Melchol the daughter of Saul, when thou comest to see my face.

KJV 2 Samuel 3:13 And he said, Well; I will make a league with thee: but one thing I require of thee, that is, Thou shalt not see my face, except thou first bring Michal Saul's daughter, when thou comest to see my face.

NET 2 Samuel 3:13 So David said, "Good! I will make an agreement with you. I ask only one thing from you. You will not see my face unless you bring Saul's daughter Michal when you come to visit me."

CSB 2 Samuel 3:13 David replied, "Good, I will make a covenant with you. However, there's one thing I require of you: Do not appear before me unless you bring Saul's daughter Michal here when you come to see me."

ESV 2 Samuel 3:13 And he said, "Good; I will make a covenant with you. But one thing I require of you; that is, you shall not see my face unless you first bring Michal, Saul's daughter, when you come to see my face."

NIV 2 Samuel 3:13 "Good," said David. "I will make an agreement with you. But I demand one thing of you: Do not come into my presence unless you bring Michal daughter of Saul when you come to see me."

NLT 2 Samuel 3:13 "All right," David replied, "but I will not negotiate with you unless you bring back my wife Michal, Saul's daughter, when you come."

- **shall:** Ge 43:3 44:23,26
- **Michal:** 2Sa 3:20-23 1Sa 18:20-28 19:11-17 1Ch 15:29

DAVID AGREES WITH ABNER BUT ADDS ONE REQUIREMENT

He said, "Good! I will ("cut" - [karath](#)) a covenant ([beriyth](#)) 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 - David required Michal probably both out of affection for her, and to strengthen his claim to Saul's throne. David was publicly shamed by Saul when he gave his wife to another man (cf. 1Sa 25:44).

Walton - Michal, the daughter of Saul, would have represented a certain amount of legitimization for David as he was attempting to lay hold of Saul's kingdom. Ancient law (evidenced in Hammurabi, Eshnunna and the Middle Assyrian Laws) provides that a man who has been driven from his home by force may lay claim to his wife when he returns. He would retain this right even if she has remarried (often necessary for support) and had children. (see page 325 [IVP Background Commentary-OT](#))

Winter points out, "David was shamed by Saul's giving his wife Michal to another man. The prohibition of a man marrying a woman who had once before been married to him and latter given to another man does not prevail in this instance because the marriage was not terminated by mutual consent (Deut. 24:1-4). Saul had simply taken David's wife and had given her to another man. The second man did not have any right to her, and she was still legitimately and rightfully David's wife."

Vos points out, "Before David was willing to receive Abner in person to negotiate with him, he demanded the return of Saul's daughter Michal who had been given to Paltiel. It may be argued that David's love for her had prompted the request, but far more was at stake. On political ground, she was important to him: 1. To show that he harbored no ill will toward the fallen king. 2. To demonstrate that as son-in-law he was Saul's legitimate successor. 3. To win to himself by this means whatever lingering affection there was for Saul 4. To enlist the support of the Benjamites. (Borrow [1, 2 Samuel : Bible study commentary](#))

TSK Note - As Michal was not divorced, but violently separated from David, he had a legal right to demand her, and was justified in receiving her again. It is probable, also, that her marriage with Phaltiel was a force upon her inclinations; and whatever affections he might have for her, it was highly criminal for him to take another man's wife.

2 Samuel 3:14 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."

BGT 2 Samuel 3:14 καὶ ἔαπεμψεν Δαυὶδ πρὸς Μεμφιβοσθε υἱοῦ Σαουλ γυναικα μου τὴν Μελχολὴν λαβόντα κατὰ κροβυσταὶς ἑκατόντων

LXE 2 Samuel 3:14 And David sent messengers to Jebosthe the son of Saul, saying, Restore me my wife Melchol, whom I took for a hundred foreskins of the Philistines.

KJV 2 Samuel 3:14 And David sent messengers to Ishbosheth Saul's son, saying, Deliver me my wife Michal, which I espoused to me for an hundred foreskins of the Philistines.

NET 2 Samuel 3:14 David sent messengers to Ish-bosheth son of Saul with this demand: "Give me my wife Michal whom I acquired for a hundred Philistine foreskins."

CSB 2 Samuel 3:14 Then David sent messengers to say to Ish-bosheth son of Saul, "Give me back my wife, Michal. I was engaged to her for the price of 100 Philistine foreskins."

ESV 2 Samuel 3:14 Then David sent messengers to Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, saying, "Give me my wife Michal, for whom I paid the bridal price of a hundred foreskins of the Philistines."

NIV 2 Samuel 3:14 Then David sent messengers to Ish-Bosheth son of Saul, demanding, "Give me my wife Michal, whom I betrothed to myself for the price of a hundred Philistine foreskins."

NLT 2 Samuel 3:14 David then sent this message to Ishbosheth, Saul's son: "Give me back my wife Michal, for I bought her with the lives of 100 Philistines."

- **Ishbosheth:** 2Sa 2:10
- **hundred:** 1Sa 18:25-27

Related Passages:

1 Samuel 18:25-27+ Saul then said, "Thus you shall say to David, 'The king does not desire any dowry except a **hundred foreskins of the Philistines**, to take vengeance on the king's enemies.'" Now Saul planned to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines. 26 When his servants told David these words, it pleased David to become the king's son-in-law. Before the days had expired 27 David rose up and went, he and his men, and struck down two hundred men among the Philistines. Then David brought their foreskins, and they gave them in full number to the king, that he might become the king's son-in-law. So Saul gave him Michal his daughter for a wife.

DAVID DEMANDS HIS WIFE MICHAL

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** - Clearly David still sees Michal as his wife as he had never divorced her even though her father Saul had given her to another man (1Sa 25:44), . David had exceeded Saul's conditions showing himself to be a significant military ally and worthy to receive Michal as his wife but now he wanted her back.

2 Samuel 3:15 Ish-bosheth sent and took her from her husband, from Paltiel the son of Laish.

- **Paltiel:** 1Sa 25:44, Palti

ISH-BOSHETH AGREES TO RETURN MICHAL

Ish-bosheth sent and took her from her husband, from Paltiel (Palti in 1Sa 24:44) **the son of Laish** - It is somewhat surprising that Ish-bosheth conceded to David's request, but it would be a nice "olive branch" to extend to David without costing him anything.

2 Samuel 3:16 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.

- **weeping:** , Pr 9:17,18
- **Bahurim:** 2Sa 16:5 17:18 19:16 1Ki 2:8

MICHAL'S HUSBAND FOLLOWS BUT IS TOLD TO CEASE AND DESIST!

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 - Michal's husband does not hesitate to obey Abner's commands.

MacArthur on **Bahurim** - Located just E of Jerusalem, it became the final location where Paltiel (cf. 1Sa 25:44) would see Michal. This was also the town of Shimei, the man who cursed David during his flight from Jerusalem before Absalom (16:5). David's soldiers also found refuge in a well at Bahurim while being pursued by Absalom's men (17:18).

2 Samuel 3:17 Now Abner had consultation with the elders of Israel, saying, "In times past you were seeking for David to be king over you.

BGT 2 Samuel 3:17 κα ε πεν Αβεννηρ πρ ς το ς πρεσβυτους Ισραηλ λγων χθ ς κα τρ την ζητε τε τ ν
Δαυιδ βασιλε ειν φ μ ν

LXE 2 Samuel 3:17 And Abenner spoke to the elders of Israel, saying, In former days ye sought David to reign over you;

KJV 2 Samuel 3:17 And Abner had communication with the elders of Israel, saying, Ye sought for David in times past to be king over you:

NET 2 Samuel 3:17 Abner advised the elders of Israel, "Previously you were wanting David to be your king.

CSB 2 Samuel 3:17 Abner conferred with the elders of Israel: "In the past you wanted David to be king over you.

ESV 2 Samuel 3:17 And Abner conferred with the elders of Israel, saying, "For some time past you have been seeking David as king over you.

NIV 2 Samuel 3:17 Abner conferred with the elders of Israel and said, "For some time you have wanted to make David your king.

NLT 2 Samuel 3:17 Meanwhile, Abner had consulted with the elders of Israel. "For some time now," he told them, "you have wanted to make David your king.

- in times past: 2Sa 3:17

ABNER NEGOTIATES WITH ISRAEL FOR DAVID

Now Abner had consultation with the elders of Israel, saying, "In times past you were seeking for David to be king over you - NET - "Abner advised the elders of Israel, "Previously you were wanting David to be your king"

James Smith - Handfuls of Purpose - A CALL TO DECISION 2 SAMUEL 3:17

1. Whom they sought. "They sought David."
2. When they sought him. "In times past."
3. Why they sought him. "To be king over them."
4. "Now then, do it." David is within your reach, and offered to you.

2 Samuel 3:18 "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.'"

BGT 2 Samuel 3:18 κα ν ν ποι σατε τι κ ριος λ λησεν περ Δαυιδ λ γων ν χειρ το δο λου μου Δαυιδ σ σω τ ν Ισραηλ κ χειρ ς λλοφ λων κα κ χειρ ς π ντων τ ν χθρ ν α τ ν

LXE 2 Samuel 3:18 and now perform it: for the Lord has spoken concerning David, saying, By the hand of my servant David I will save Israel out of the hand of all their enemies.

KJV 2 Samuel 3:18 Now then do it: for the LORD hath spoken of David, saying, By the hand of my servant David I will save my people Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all their enemies.

NET 2 Samuel 3:18 Act now! For the LORD has said to David, 'By the hand of my servant David I will save my people Israel from the Philistines and from all their enemies.'"

CSB 2 Samuel 3:18 Now take action, because the LORD has spoken concerning David: 'Through My servant David I will save My people Israel from the power of the Philistines and the power of all Israel's enemies.'"

ESV 2 Samuel 3:18 Now then bring it about, for the LORD has promised 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.'"

NIV 2 Samuel 3:18 Now do it! For the LORD promised David, 'By my servant David I will rescue my people Israel from the hand of the Philistines and from the hand of all their enemies.' "

NLT 2 Samuel 3:18 Now is the time! For the LORD has said, 'I have chosen David to save my people Israel from the hands of the Philistines and from all their other enemies.'"

- for the Lord: 2Sa 3:9 1Sa 13:14 15:28 16:1,12,13 Joh 12:42,43
- By the hand: Ps 89:3-4, Ps 89:19-23 Ps 132:17-18

Related Passage:

Psalms 89:19-23 Once You spoke in vision to Your godly ones, And said, "I have given help to one who is mighty; I have exalted one chosen from the people. 20 "I have found David My servant; With My holy oil I have anointed him, 21 With whom My hand will be established; My arm also will strengthen him. 22 "The enemy will not deceive him, Nor the son of wickedness afflict him. 23 "But I shall crush his adversaries before him, And strike those who hate him.

JUST DO IT!

Now then, do it! - There is no reason to hold back.

For - Abner explains why the elders of Israel need to make David king. Notice that it was Abner, not David, who suggests and manages the transference of the kingdom. He consults with the elders all over Israel to persuade them to make David king, then he goes to Hebron with twenty men to make the deal complete.

The LORD has spoken of David, saying, 'By the hand of My servant ([ebed](#); Lxx - [doulos](#)) David I will save ([yasha](#); Lxx - [sozo](#)) My people Israel from the hand of the Philistines and from the hand of all their enemies - Abner was Scripturally correct with this reasoning. The implication of course is that Abner knew it was wrong to make Ish-bosheth king of Israel as he had previously done. Once again we see God's sovereignty ("I will save") and Man's responsibility ("hand of My servant") (See "[Paradoxical Principle of 100% Dependent and 100% Responsible](#)")

From **the hand** (hand [yad](#) - see topic "[hand](#)") speaks of power) **of all their enemies** would make this a prophecy, one which is yet to be fulfilled in the Time of Jacob's Trouble (Great Tribulation) at the end of which "all Israel (that believes in Messiah) will be saved." (Ro 11:26+, cf Zech 12:10+, "one-third" saved = Zech 13:8-9+).

MacArthur - David is called "the Lord's servant" more than 30 times in the OT. Abner's words to the elders of Israel clearly recognized David as the servant of the Lord, thus having the right to the throne according to God's sovereign will.

Save (deliver, help) ([03467](#)) [yasha'](#) (See also [yeshua](#) from which we get our word "Jesus") is an important Hebrew verb which means to help, to save, to deliver. The root in Arabic is "make wide" which underscores the main thought of [yasha'](#) as to bring to a place of safety or broad pasture in contrast to a narrow strait which symbolizes distress or danger. **TWOT** adds that the concept of "wide" "connotes freedom from distress and the ability to pursue one's own objectives. To move from distress to safety requires deliverance. Generally the deliverance must come from somewhere outside the party oppressed. In the OT the kinds of distress, both national and individual, include enemies, natural catastrophies, such as plague or famine, and sickness. The one who brings deliverance is known as the "savior."

Servant ([05650](#)) ['ebed](#) from ['abad](#) = work in any sense) means a slave or bondservant. Slavery in Israel amounted to indentured servitude. A fellow Israelite could not be held indefinitely against his will. In fact, his time of service was limited to 6 yr (Ex 21:2). The master could be punished if evil intent against the slave was proven (Ex 21:14) or if the slave died (Ex 21:20). These types of servants held a position of honor (Ge 24:2ff; 41:12, 15:2).

D L Moody - I REMEMBER hearing of a man in one of the hospitals who received a bouquet of flowers from the Flower Mission. He looked at the beautiful bouquet and said: "Well, if I had known that a bunch of flowers could do a fellow so much good, I would have sent some myself when I was well." If people only knew how they might cheer some lonely heart and lift up some drooping spirit, or speak some word that shall be lasting in its effects for all coming time, they would be up and about it.

SPECIAL TOPIC: MY SERVANT

This was a title of respect and calling (BDB 713).

1. It was used in a collective sense
 1. the Patriarchs as a group - Deut. 9:27
 2. the prophets - 2 Kgs. 9:7; 17:13; Ezra 9:11; Jer. 7:25; 26:5; 29:19; 35:15; 44:4
 3. Israel - Ps. 105:6; 136:22; Isa. 41:8-9; 42:18-19; 44:1,2,21; 45:4; 48:20; 49:3; Jer. 30:10; 46:27,28
 4. the Septuagint adds a phrase to Isa. 42:1, which makes it refer to national Israel ("Jacob is my servant, I will help him; Israel is my chosen")
2. It was used in an individual sense
 1. Abraham - Gen. 26:24; Ps. 105:6
 2. Job - Job 1:8; 2:3; 42:7, 8

3. Isaac - Gen. 24:14
4. Jacob - 1 Chr. 16:13; Ps. 105:6; Ezek. 28:25
5. Moses - Exod. 14:31; Num. 12:7-8; Deut. 34:5; Jos. 1:1-2,7,13,15
6. Joshua - Jos. 24:29; Jdg. 2:8
7. Caleb - Num 14:24
8. David - Ezek. 37:25
9. Zerubbabel - Hag. 2:23
10. Solomon - 1 Kgs. 3:8
11. Isaiah - Isa. 20:3; 44:26
12. Jesus - Matt. 12:15-21 quotes Isa. 42:1-4

This is a honorific title used of the Messiah in the "Servant Songs" of Isaiah (cf. Isa. 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12). Some have seen all of these as referring to Israel (cf. Isa. 41:8-9; 42:19; 43:10; 44:21), but Isa. 52:13-53:12 refers to an individual, ideal Israelite (note Isa. 53:8). The servant cannot die for the sins of the servant! Notice Matt. 27:38,59. God is in control of history, men, nations, and even Satan; all may be used to accomplish His redemptive purposes! He used Christ (cf. Isa. 53:10).

The footnote of the *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 545, is very helpful as it outlines the different usages of the title "My Servant."

1. a servant of God as a prophet, cf. Num. 12:7-8; Neh. 1:7; Dan. 9:11
 - a. Moses
 - b. Daniel, cf. Dan. 9:17
2. a servant of God as a military leader (i.e., Joshua), cf. Jos. 24:29; Jdgs. 2:8
3. a servant of God as King (i.e., David), cf. 2 Sam. 7:5,8; Psalm 18; 36; Ezek. 34:24; 37:24
4. a servant of God as administrator
 - a. Nehemiah, cf. Neh. 1:6
 - b. Zerubbabel, cf. Hag. 2:23
5. all Israel (or Jacob), cf. Isa. 41:8,9; 42:1,19; 43:10; 44:1,21; 49:3; Ezek. 28:25; 37:25
6. the remnant of Israel, cf. Isa. 41:8-10
7. a godly individual, cf. Job 1:8; 2:3; 42:8
8. unbelieving rulers who serve YHWH's purposes
 - a. Cyrus, Isa. 44:28; 45:1
 - b. Nebuchadnezzar, Jer. 25:9; 27:6; 43:10

2 Samuel 3:19 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.

BGT 2 Samuel 3:19 καὶ ἠλθεν Ἀβεννηρ ν το ς σ ν Βενιαμιν καὶ πορεθη Ἀβεννηρ το λαλσαι ε ς τ τα το Δαυιδ ε ς Χεβρων π ντα σα ρεσεν ν φθαλμο ς Ισραηλ κα ν φθαλμο ς παντ ς ο κου Βενιαμιν

LXE 2 Samuel 3:19 And Abenner spoke in the ears of Benjamin: and Abenner went to speak in the ears of David at Chebron, all that seemed good in the eyes of Israel and in the eyes of the house of Benjamin.

KJV 2 Samuel 3:19 And Abner also spake in the ears of Benjamin: and Abner went also to speak in the ears of David in Hebron all that seemed good to Israel, and that seemed good to the whole house of Benjamin.

NET 2 Samuel 3:19 Then Abner spoke privately with the Benjaminites. Abner also went to Hebron to inform David privately of all that Israel and the entire house of Benjamin had agreed to.

CSB 2 Samuel 3:19 Abner also informed the Benjaminites and went to Hebron to inform David about all that was agreed on by Israel and the whole house of Benjamin.

ESV 2 Samuel 3:19 Abner also spoke to Benjamin. And then Abner went to tell David at Hebron all that Israel and the whole house of Benjamin thought good to do.

NIV 2 Samuel 3:19 Abner also spoke to the Benjamites in person. Then he went to Hebron to tell David everything that Israel and the whole house of Benjamin wanted to do.

NLT 2 Samuel 3:19 Abner also spoke with the men of Benjamin. Then he went to Hebron to tell David that all the people of Israel and Benjamin had agreed to support him.

- **Benjamin:** 1Sa 10:20,21 1Ch 12:29 Ps 68:27

ABNER'S NEGOTIATIONS WITH TRIBE OF BENJAMIN

Abner also spoke in the hearing of Benjamin(Saul's tribe); **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** - NIV = "Then he went to Hebron to tell David everything that Israel and the whole house of Benjamin wanted to do." The Benjamites are singled out here because this is Saul's tribe, and they are the ones who need to be supportive of this proposal of Abner to make David king over Israel. The negotiations have been completed, Abner then went to Hebron to report to David everything that Israel and the whole house of Benjamin wanted to do.

Walton - Abner's diplomacy. Abner is now functioning as an agent for David's kingdom. He is not only planning his own defection but intends to bring the northern tribes with him. Tribal decisions were made by the elders who are called together. It is strategic for him to speak to the Benjaminites personally and individually, both because he is a prominent leader in the tribe of Benjamin, and, even more importantly, because Saul was from the tribe of Benjamin, so they would be the most loyal to Saul's descendants. (see page 326 [IVP Background Commentary-OT](#))

2 Samuel 3:20 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.

- **David:** Ge 26:30 31:54 Es 1:3

DAVID MEETS WITH ABNER IN HEBRON

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 - Although the text does not say it, Abner also has Michal with him, or has had her sent on ahead to David. Clearly David sees Abner's visit as a positive event and so welcomes him with a feast. Meals were often used as part of the symbolism of sealing a covenant agreement.

Walton - It was typical of important transactions that they be sealed with a feast shared between the parties to celebrate the legal arrangements that have been concluded. The twenty men with Abner may be important representatives of the powerful factions in Israel as well as a small military entourage of high ranking officers. (see page 326 [IVP Background Commentary-OT](#))

[Don Anderson](#) quips on Michal's return to David - It would be difficult to comprehend the emotions involved in this situation as David and Michal see each other once again. I am sure David would have said, "I've missed you, Michal." And she probably would have responded, "I'll bet you have with all these other women running around the place." They had been apart for 10-12 years and were childhood sweethearts.

Freeman on Covenant Traditions - To demonstrate that what each partner had was now available to the other partner whenever needed, they would then **exchange** some article of **clothing** (Ed: see [Covenant: The Exchange of Robes](#)). After that they would exchange weapons of some type to demonstrate that each would come to the other's aid whenever they were being attacked by an enemy and needed help (Ed: [Covenant: The Exchange of Armor and Belts](#)). An enemy of one was now the enemy of the other. Thus Christ said to Saul, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" when Saul was actually persecuting Christians (Acts 9:4-see [explanatory note](#)). At the end of all they did, they would then have a meal together to demonstrate their friendship ... , and take into themselves what the other had provided, for it was customary for each to provide something for the covenant meal. The covenant meal was the final binding and demonstration of the newly made covenant. (Ed comment: Compare our tradition of

the husband and wife feeding each other wedding cake after becoming one flesh [Ge 2:24] in the marriage covenant! See [Covenant As It Relates to Marriage](#)) It was a **covenant meal** that the Lord and His disciples ate together in the upper room. It started as an Old Testament Passover meal, and was changed by the Lord into a New Testament covenant meal: And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. (Luke 22:19, 20) ([Freeman, J. M., & Chadwick, H. J. - The New Manners and Customs of the Bible](#)). (Bolding added)

2 Samuel 3:21 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.

BGT 2 Samuel 3:21 κα ε πεν Αβεννηρ πρ ς Δαυιδ ναστ σομαι δ κα πορε σομαι κα συναθρο σω πρ ς κ ρι ν μου τ ν βασιλ α π ντα Ισραηλ κα διαθ σομαι μετ σο διαθ κην κα βασιλε σεις π π σιν ο ς πιθυμε ψυχ σου κα π στειλεν Δαυιδ τ ν Αβεννηρ κα πορε θη ν ε ρ ν

LXE 2 Samuel 3:21 And Abenner said to David, I will arise now, and go, and gather to my lord the king all Israel; and I will make with him a covenant, and thou shalt reign over all whom thy soul desires. And David sent away Abenner, and he departed in peace.

KJV 2 Samuel 3:21 And Abner said unto David, I will arise and go, and will gather all Israel unto my lord the king, that they may make a league with thee, and that thou mayest reign over all that thine heart desireth. And David sent Abner away; and he went in peace.

NET 2 Samuel 3:21 Abner said to David, "Let me leave so that I may go and gather all Israel to my lord the king so that they may make an agreement with you. Then you will rule over all that you desire." So David sent Abner away, and he left in peace.

CSB 2 Samuel 3:21 Abner said to David, "Let me now go and I will gather all Israel to my lord the king. They will make a covenant with you, and you will rule over all you desire." So David dismissed Abner, and he went in peace.

ESV 2 Samuel 3:21 And Abner said to David, "I will arise and go and will gather all Israel to my lord the king, that they may make a covenant with you, and that you may reign over all that your heart desires." So David sent Abner away, and he went in peace.

NIV 2 Samuel 3:21 Then Abner said to David, "Let me go at once and assemble all Israel for my lord the king, so that they may make a compact with you, and that you may rule over all that your heart desires." So David sent Abner away, and he went in peace.

NLT 2 Samuel 3:21 Then Abner said to David, "Let me go and call an assembly of all Israel to support my lord the king. They will make a covenant with you to make you their king, and you will rule over everything your heart desires." So David sent Abner safely on his way.

- **gather:** 2Sa 3:10,12 2:9 Php 2:21
- **that you may be king :** 1Ki 11:37 Ps 20:4

DAVID ACCEPTS ABNER'S OFFER TO GATHER ALL ISRAEL

Abner said to David, "Let me arise and go and gather all Israel to my lord the king, that they may ("cut" - [karath](#)) a covenant ([beriyth](#)) with you, and that you may be king over all that your soul desires." - Abner's proposal to David is now very concise. His desire is to assemble all Israel and that they make a compact with David, and that David may rule over all that his heart desires. Abner shows his commitment to a united Israel under David with three verbs - arise, go, gather.

MacArthur - This covenant moved beyond the personal agreement made between Abner and David and was operative on the national level, uniting both N and S.

So David sent Abner away, and he went in peace - David's conscience is clean as he sends Abner in **peace** (repeated in 2Sa 3:22). This fact emphasizes he had no part in the murder of Abner by Joab and Abishai. In other words David clearly sought peace with Abner.

Psalm 37:3-9 "Trust in the Lord and do good. Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness. Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust also in Him, and He will do it. And He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noonday. Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. Fret not yourself because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who carries out wicked schemes. Cease from anger and forsake wrath. Fret not yourself; it leads only to evil doing. For evil doers will be cut off, but those who wait for the Lord, they will inherit the land."

2 Samuel 3:22 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.

JOAB RETURNS TO HEBRON FROM RAID

And behold, the servants of David and Joab came from a raid and brought much spoil with them- Why would he say "**behold**" here? I think it is because the "persona non grata" Abner has just departed. It is like Abner leaves the stage and "behold" Joab enters the stage and there is "bad blood" between these two. So the drama is about to "heat up" quickly. On one hand **much spoil** would have filled them with joy, but that emotion would soon be changed to anger.

Walton - Most armies, whether made up of mercenaries, conscripts or professional members of a standing army, considered plunder to be part of the pay of being a soldier (much like a waitress would consider tips). Some raids were carried out with military objectives in mind (expansion, control of trade routes, etc.), but others would be intended to pester an enemy and, at the same time, provide extra pay for the soldiers. Since David had little means to finance an administration or military, plunder was probably the sole source of compensation for the army. (see page 326 [IVP Background Commentary-OT](#))

but Abner was not with David in Hebron, for he had sent him away, and he had gone in peace ([shalom](#); Lxx - [eirene](#)) - Joab returns but Abner (recall they have a blood feud) has already been dismissed by David.

Peace ([07965](#)) [shalom](#) from **salam/salem/shalam** = to be safe, sound, healthy, perfect, complete [1Ki 7:51, Neh 6:18]) signifies a sense of well-being and harmony both within and without - Completeness, wholeness, peace, health, welfare, safety, soundness, tranquility, prosperity, fullness, rest, harmony; the absence of agitation or discord, a state of calm without anxiety or stress. The root meaning of **shalom** is to be whole or sound and this leads to translations that speak of completeness, wholeness, well-being, welfare and peace. **Shalom** also includes the idea of vigour and vitality in all dimensions of life. In short, **shalom** speaks of holistic ("holy") health for our souls and spirits.

2 Samuel 3:23 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."

JOAB HEARS REPORT OF ABNER'S MEETING

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 ([shalom](#); Lxx - [eirene](#)) - Note the repetition of the word **peace**! Abner had left David in peace, but Joab will soon "disturb" the peace!

2 Samuel 3:24 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?"

- **What have you done** 2Sa 3:8,39 19:5-7 Nu 23:11 Joh 18:35

JOAB QUESTIONS DAVID'S DECISION

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 - Joab was angry that David let Abner go without arresting or killing him. He is a bit "hot under the collar" for he is not thinking of David's welfare but his own selfish interest. He knew there could be only one commander over David's forces and he wanted to keep that position.

TSK Note - Joab and his brother Abishai, David's nephews, had been very faithful and highly useful to him in his distresses; and, from gratitude and natural affection, he had inadvertently permitted them to assume almost as much ascendancy over him as Abner had over the pusillanimous Ishbosheth

2 Samuel 3:25 "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."

- **that he came:** 2Sa 3:27 2Ki 18:32 Joh 7:12,47 Ro 2:1
- **and to learn:** 2Sa 10:3 Ge 42:9,12,16 Nu 27:17 De 28:6 1Sa 29:4-6 Ps 121:8 Isa 37:28

JOAB ATTEMPTS TO DISSUADE DAVID

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 - Without any apparent evidence Joab accuses Abner of seeking to deceive and spy on David.

Anderson - Joab puts a completely wrong interpretation upon Abner's act. So many times we make wrong judgments of people simply because we do not have all the facts that determine the situation.

MacArthur - It is ironic that Joab accused Abner of deception in spying on David in v. 25 when in v. 26 he deceived David by not telling him of his request to have Abner returned to Hebron. Joab used this deception to slay Abner out of personal vengeance for the death of his brother Asahel (v. 27; see 2 Sa 2:19–23).

NET Note on **your going out and coming in** - The expression is a merism. It specifically mentions the polar extremities of the actions but includes all activity in between the extremities as well, thus encompassing the entirety of one's activities.

2 Samuel 3:26 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.

- **he sent:** Pr 26:23-26 27:4-6

JOAB TAKES THE INITIATIVE AGAINST ABNER

When Joab came out from David, he sent messengers after Abner, and they brought him back from the well of Sirah- Joab basically usurps the king's authority. The **well of Sirah** was about 2 miles north of Hebron. Josephus, *Antiq.* 7.1.5, says the well was about a half mile north of Hebron.

but David did not know it - David was ignorant of Joab's wicked plan for revenge on Abner. Joab who had accused Abner of deception, was himself deceiving.

2 Samuel 3:27 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.

BGT 2 Samuel 3:27 καὶ π στρεψεν Αβεννηρ ες Χεβρων καὶ ἔ κλινεν α τ ν Ιωαβ κ πλαγ ων τ ς π λης λαλ σαι
πρ ς α τ ν νεδρε ων κα π ταξεν α τ ν κε π τ ν ψ αν κα π θανεν ν τ α ματι Ασαηλ το δελφο Ιωαβ

LXE 2 Samuel 3:27 And he brought back Abenner to Chebron, and Joab caused him to turn aside from the gate to speak to him, laying wait for him: and he smote him there in the loins, and he died for the blood of Asael the brother of Joab.

KJV 2 Samuel 3:27 And when Abner was returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate to speak with him quietly, and smote him there under the fifth rib, that he died, for the blood of Asahel his brother.

NET 2 Samuel 3:27 When Abner returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside at the gate as if to speak privately with him. Joab then stabbed him in the abdomen and killed him, avenging the shed blood of his brother Asahel.

CSB 2 Samuel 3:27 When Abner returned to Hebron, Joab pulled him aside to the middle of the gateway, as if to speak to him privately, and there Joab stabbed him in the stomach. So Abner died in revenge for the death of Asahel, Joab's brother.

ESV 2 Samuel 3:27 And when Abner returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside into the midst of the gate to speak with him privately, and there he struck him in the stomach, so that he died, for the blood of Asahel his brother.

NIV 2 Samuel 3:27 Now when Abner returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside into the gateway, as though to speak with him privately. And there, to avenge the blood of his brother Asahel, Joab stabbed him in the stomach, and he died.

NLT 2 Samuel 3:27 When Abner arrived back at Hebron, Joab took him aside at the gateway as if to speak with him privately. But then he stabbed Abner in the stomach and killed him in revenge for killing his brother Asahel.

- **took him:** 2Sa 20:9,10 De 27:24 1Ki 2:5,32
- **privately** Jer 41:2,6,7
- **for the blood:** 2Sa 2:19-23

Related Passages:

2 Samuel 2:23 However, he (ASAHEL) 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.



Map to help visualize cities of refuge - UNDERLINED
Zondervan Atlas of the Bible: C. Rasmussen (recommended resource - do not reproduce)
CLICK TO ENLARGE

JOAB KILLS ABNER IN HEBRON A CITY OF REFUGE

So when Abner returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside into the middle of the gate to speak with him privately- "City gates were elaborate structures." (ESVSB) Joab hides his true intentions.

HEBRON WAS A CITY OF REFUGE - Joshua 20:1-3+ Then the LORD spoke to Joshua, saying, 2 "Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'Designate the cities of refuge, of which I spoke to you through Moses, 3 that the manslayer who kills any person unintentionally, without premeditation (ABNER KILLED ASAHIEL IN SELF DEFENSE), may flee there, and they shall become your refuge from the avenger of blood (JOAB WAS THE BLOOD AVENGER)....7 So they set apart Kedesh in Galilee in the hill country of Naphtali and Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and **Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron)** in the hill country of Judah.

Adrian Rogers comments - Abner died right at the doorway of the city of refuge, right in the place of safety. All he would have had to do was just step right inside the gate, and he would have been absolutely safe. This is the reason that David lamented; this is the reason that David wept, and he said, "Abner was a great man; but **he died like a fool**. He died right outside the gate of the city of refuge. And, that's an interesting thing to me, because I believe that I've met many of the brothers of Abner today—many men who are so wise, many men who are so capable, many men who are so great. David said, in verse 38, that he was a great man and a prince. I've seen these men—intellectual men. I've seen men who can cook up a business deal. I've seen men who can build apartment complexes. I've seen men who can perform surgery. I have seen men who can draw buildings. I have seen men who can make speeches. I've seen men who can lead people. I've seen men who can lead in Boy Scouts. And, I've seen men who can lead in the Kiwanis—men who are wise men, men who are good men, men who are great men, but they die like a fool, because they die without the Lord Jesus Christ. They're successful in every other realm, but they **die like a fool**, because they die without Christ. (See Luke 12:17-20+ "God said to him, '**You fool!** This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?'"")

and there he struck him in the belly so that he died on account of the blood of Asahel his brother- **CSB** - "So Abner died in revenge for the death of Asahel, Joab's brother." Just as Abner had struck Asahel in the stomach, Joab now returned the favor to Abner. Keep in mind that Abner was being attacked when he struck Asahel (2Sa 2:18–23) and thus his action would seem to be in self-defense. On the other hand, Joab murdered Abner to avenge the death of Asahel who was actually the aggressor! Note also that Hebron was a city of refuge and theoretically Abner should have been protected from harm. Some might argue that Abner was not actually WITHIN the city but only in the gate and therefore not legally protected and if that is the case that makes Joab's murder all the more sinister because it implies he knew the rule.

Life Application Study Bible ([borrow](#)) - Joab took revenge for the death of his brother instead of leaving justice to God. But that revenge backfired on him (1 Kings 2:31-34). God will repay those who deserve it (Romans 12:19). Refuse to rejoice when your enemies suffer, and don't try to get revenge. Seeking revenge will ruin your own peace of mind and increase the chances of further retaliation. Abner killed Joab's brother Asahel in self-defense. Joab then killed Abner to avenge his brother's death and also to save his position of military leadership. People who killed in self-defense were supposed to be safe in cities of refuge (Numbers 35:22-25). Joab showed his disrespect for God's laws by killing Abner out of revenge in Hebron, a city of refuge (Joshua 20:7) (SEE UNDERLINED CITIES ABOVE = CITIES OF REFUGE).

Spurgeon "We may even deceive ourselves into the belief that we are honoring our Lord and Master when we are, all the while, bringing disgrace upon his name."

TSK Note - Joab was afraid that Abner, after rendering such essential service to David, would be made the general of the army; and therefore, under pretence of avenging the death of his brother, he treacherously assassinated the unsuspecting and too-confiding Abner: and such was the power of this cool-blooded and nefarious murderer, that the king dared not bring him to justice for his crime. But, while Joab's conduct cannot be too severely reprobated, the justice of God is apparent in Abner's punishment; who, from ambition, had pertinaciously, against his conscience, opposed the declared will of God; and was induced by base resentment to desert Ish-bosheth, and offer his services to David: see ver. 6-10; 4:6.

2 Samuel 3:28 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.

- **are innocent:** Ge 9:6 Ex 21:12 Nu 35:33 De 21:1-9 Mt 27:24

- **blood:** Ge 4:10

DAVID DECLARES SELF INNOCENT OF ABNER'S BLOOD

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 - David He washes his hands from the guilt of Abner's blood and declares his hands and conscience are clean.

Warren Wiersbe - David's way of life was reconciliation; he was a peacemaker. But Abner and Joab lived by retaliation: "All who take the sword will perish by the sword" (Matt. 26:52). Abner had murdered Asahel, and his sin had found him out. But Joab's deed was wicked, and David dissociated himself from it. Imagine Joab avenging his brother's blood at Hebron, a city of refuge! (Borrow [With the Word](#))

Spurgeon has an interesting comment on David's actions - He had not, however, the manly courage to summon Joab to the bar as a murderer. David was afraid of him; the man had all the army at his back: and instead of being, as in his youthful days, fearless of man, David became for awhile a time-server, and permitted the guilty to escape.

2 Samuel 3:29 "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."

BGT 2 Samuel 3:29 καταντησ τωσαν π κεφαλ ν Ιωαβ κα π π ντα τ ν ο κον το πατρ ς α το κα μ κ λ ποι κ το ο κου Ιωαβ γονορρυ ς κα λεπρ ς κα κρατ ν σκυτ λης κα π πτων ν ομφα κα λασσο μενος ρτοις

LXE 2 Samuel 3:29 Let it fall upon the head of Joab, and upon all the house of his father; and let there not be wanting of the house of Joab one that has an issue, or a leper, or that leans on a staff, or that falls by the sword, or that wants bread.

KJV 2 Samuel 3:29 Let it rest on the head of Joab, and on all his father's house; and let there not fail from the house of Joab one that hath an issue, or that is a leper, or that leaneth on a staff, or that falleth on the sword, or that lacketh bread.

NET 2 Samuel 3:29 May his blood whirl over the head of Joab and the entire house of his father! May the males of Joab's house never cease to have someone with a running sore or a skin disease or one who works at the spindle or one who falls by the sword or one who lacks food!"

CSB 2 Samuel 3:29 May it hang over Joab's head and his father's whole house, and may the house of Joab never be without someone who has a discharge or a skin disease, or a man who can only work a spindle, or someone who falls by the sword or starves."

ESV 2 Samuel 3:29 May it fall upon the head of Joab and upon all his father's house, and may the house of Joab never be without one who has a discharge or who is leprous or who holds a spindle or who falls by the sword or who lacks bread!"

NIV 2 Samuel 3:29 May his blood fall upon the head of Joab and upon all his father's house! May Joab's house never be without someone who has a running sore or leprosy or who leans on a crutch or who falls by the sword or who lacks food."

NLT 2 Samuel 3:29 Joab and his family are the guilty ones. May the family of Joab be cursed in every generation with a man who has open sores or leprosy or who walks on crutches or dies by the sword or begs for food!"

- **May it fall on the head:** 2Sa 1:16 Jdg 9:24,56,57 1Ki 2:31-34 Ac 28:4 Rev 16:6
- **may there not fail from the house of Joab:** 1Sa 2:32-36 2Ki 5:27 Ps 109:8-19
- **has a discharge:** Lev 13:44-46 2Ki 5:1

DAVID'S CURSE BUT NO CORRECTION FOR JOAB

May it fall on the head of Joab and on all his father's house - Heb "and may they whirl over." **NET** = "May his blood whirl over the head of Joab and the entire house of his father!" David shows his disgust with Joab's actions by uttering a strong curse on him and

his family. Joab's action was particularly detestable (and perhaps even illegal) for Hebron was a [city of refuge](#) (Josh 21:13) where a blood avenger could not slay a prospective murderer without a fair trial (Nu 35:22-25). It is notable that David does not punish Joab for murdering Abner, most likely because Joab was an important element of his army. Is there a touch of compromise (or "[situational ethics](#)") here with David?

Think about what David has just done to his commander in chief! Clearly the severity of David's curse on Joab marks a rift between the two men at the very beginning of David's reign. To be sure they held to the same political goals, the debacle of Abner's murder would only be the first of many where David and Joab butted heads on how to run the kingdom

Life Application Study Bible ([borrow](#)) - David was saying that Joab's descendants would be unclean, unhealthy, and in want. Why did David say such harsh words about Joab? David was upset over Abner's death for several reasons. (1) He was grieved over the loss of a skilled military officer. (2) He wanted to place the guilt of Abner's murder on Joab, not himself. (3) He was on the verge of becoming king over the entire nation, and utilizing Abner was the key to winning over the northern tribes. Abner's death could have revived the civil war. (4) Joab violated David's agreement to protect Abner. Joab's murderous act ruined David's plans, and David was especially angry that his own commander had committed the crime.

Walton - The curse pronounced by David is wide-ranging. The first category refers to the most serious and humiliating forms of physical disease (for more details on these see comments on Lev 13). The second is the most obscure. The word the NIV translates "crutch" has been now identified from Ugaritic and Akkadian as the word for "spindle" or "distaff." The phrase used here was the common description of a woman involved in menial tasks. A Hittite oath of a soldier, if broken, would result in the loss of manhood. The oath describes this penalty in terms of the violator holding the spindle and mirror. This second curse then threatens Joab's house with decreased virility. The third curse speaks of violent death and the fourth of suffering want or famine.(see page 326 [IVP Background Commentary-OT](#))

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 (spindle), or who falls by the sword, or who lacks bread - "May the family of Joab be cursed in every generation with a man who has open sores or leprosy or who walks on crutches or dies by the sword or begs for food!"

BSB David's curse speaks of an offspring that "leans on a staff." To take hold of a "staff" seems to refer to a cripple, though some think it possibly indicates an effeminate male.

NET Note on takes hold of a distaff (or spindle) - The expression used here is difficult. The translation "one who works at the spindle" follows a suggestion of S. R. Driver that the expression pejoratively describes an effeminate man who, rather than being a mighty warrior, is occupied with tasks that are normally fulfilled by women (S. R. Driver, Notes on the Hebrew Text and the Topography of the Books of Samuel, 250–51; cf. NAB "one unmanly"; TEV "fit only to do a woman's work"; CEV "cowards"). But P. K. McCarter, following an alleged Phoenician usage of the noun to refer to "crutches," adopts a different view. He translates the phrase "clings to a crutch," seeing here a further description of physical lameness (II Samuel [AB], 118). Such an idea fits the present context well and is followed by NIV, NCV, and NLT, although the evidence for this meaning is questionable. According to DNWSI 2:915–16, the noun consistently refers to a spindle in Phoenician, as it does in Ugaritic (see UT 468).

2 Samuel 3:30 So Joab and Abishai his brother killed Abner because he had put their brother Asahel to death in the battle at Gibeon.

BGT 2 Samuel 3:30 Ιωαβ δ κα Αβεσσα δελφ ς α το διεπαρετηρο ντο τ ν Αβεννηρ νθ ν θαν τωσεν τ ν Ασαηλ τ ν δελφ ν α τ ν ν Γαβαων ν τ πολ μ

LXE 2 Samuel 3:30 For Joab and Abessa his brother laid wait continually for Abenner, because he slew Asael their brother at Gabaon in the battle.

KJV 2 Samuel 3:30 So Joab and Abishai his brother slew Abner, because he had slain their brother Asahel at Gibeon in the battle.

NET 2 Samuel 3:30 So Joab and his brother Abishai killed Abner, because he had killed their brother Asahel in Gibeon during the battle.

CSB 2 Samuel 3:30 Joab and his brother Abishai killed Abner because he had put their brother Asahel to death in the battle at Gibeon.

ESV 2 Samuel 3:30 So Joab and Abishai his brother killed Abner, because he had put their brother Asahel to death in the battle at Gibeon.

NIV 2 Samuel 3:30 (Joab and his brother Abishai murdered Abner because he had killed their brother Asahel in the battle at Gibeon.)

NLT 2 Samuel 3:30 So Joab and his brother Abishai killed Abner because Abner had killed their brother Asahel at the battle of Gibeon.

NRS 2 Samuel 3:30 So Joab and his brother Abishai murdered Abner because he had killed their brother Asahel in the battle at Gibeon.

NJB 2 Samuel 3:30 (Joab and his brother Abishai had murdered Abner because he killed their brother Asahel at the battle of Gibeon.)

NAB 2 Samuel 3:30 (Joab and his brother Abishai had lain in wait for Abner because he killed their brother

- **killed Abner:** Pr 28:17 Ac 28:4
- **because:** 2Sa 2:19-23

MOTIVE FOR ABNER'S MURDER

So Joab and Abishai his brother killed Abner - Note here we learn that **Abishai** was also involved in the murder of Abner.

because he had put their brother Asahel to death in the battle at Gibeon- Clearly this murder was to avenge the murder of their brother Asahel.

2 Samuel 3:31 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.

BGT 2 Samuel 3:31 κα ε πεν Δαυιδ πρ ς Ιωαβ κα πρ ς π ντα τ ν λα ν τ ν μετ α το διαρρ ξατε τ μ πια μ ν κα περιζ σασθε σ κκου ς κα κ πτεσθε μπροσθεν Αβεννηρ κα βασιλε ς Δαυιδ πορε ετο π σω τ ς κλ νη ς

LXE 2 Samuel 3:31 And David said to Joab and to all the people with him, Rend your garments, and gird yourselves with sackcloth, and lament before Abenner. And king David followed the bier.

KJV 2 Samuel 3:31 And David said to Joab, and to all the people that were with him, Rend your clothes, and gird you with sackcloth, and mourn before Abner. And king David himself followed the bier.

NET 2 Samuel 3:31 David instructed Joab and all the people who were with him, "Tear your clothes! Put on sackcloth! Lament before Abner!" Now King David followed behind the funeral bier.

CSB 2 Samuel 3:31 David then ordered Joab and all the people who were with him, "Tear your clothes, put on sackcloth, and mourn over Abner." And King David walked behind the funeral procession.

ESV 2 Samuel 3:31 Then David said to Joab and to all the people who were with him, "Tear your clothes and put on sackcloth and mourn before Abner." And King David followed the bier.

NIV 2 Samuel 3:31 Then David said to Joab and all the people with him, "Tear your clothes and put on sackcloth and walk in mourning in front of Abner." King David himself walked behind the bier.

NLT 2 Samuel 3:31 Then David said to Joab and all those who were with him, "Tear your clothes and put on burlap. Mourn for Abner." And King David himself walked behind the procession to the grave.

- **Tear:** 2Sa 1:2,11 Ge 37:29,34 Jos 7:6 Jdg 11:35 2Ki 19:1
- **bier:** Heb. bed, Lu 7:14

DAVID COMMANDS JOAB TO MOURN FOR ABNER

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 - It is surprising that Abner's funeral is the only funeral described in detail in the Old Testament. In addition to the curse David uttered on Joab's family, he was gives 3 commands calling for Joab to mourn publicly for Abner but one can hardly believe they were sincere mourners! While there might be some degree of public humiliation

for Joab (and Abishai), this was relatively "soft" punishment by David. This in fact is evidence that David is human and willing to compromise for the "greater good!" Joab is the commander of his army and so one wonders if David holds back somewhat because of his important position? Note that David **walked behind the bier** and in so doing was leading the mourning procession.

Life Application Study Bible ([borrow](#)) - David ordered Joab to mourn, possibly because few people were aware that Joab had committed the crime and because David did not want any further trouble. If this is true, David was thinking more about strengthening his kingdom than about justice.

TSK Note - David, intending no doubt to punish Joab, and to lessen his authority with the people, commanded him to take upon him the office of chief mourner; but, as his revenge was gratified, his rival removed, and no heavier punishment inflicted, it is probable his hardened mind would feel but little objection to the ceremony.

2 Samuel 3:32 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.

BGT 2 Samuel 3:32 καὶ θάψουσιν τὸν Ἀβεννηρ ἐν Χεβρων καὶ ῥέξῃ βασιλεὺς τὴν φωνὴν αὐτοῦ καὶ κλαύσεν πρὸς τὸ τοῦ ᾧ αὐτοῦ καὶ κλαύσεν πρὸς λαὸς πρὸς Ἀβεννηρ

LXE 2 Samuel 3:32 And they bury Abenner in Chebron: and the king lifted up his voice, and wept at his tomb, and all the people wept for Abenner.

KJV 2 Samuel 3:32 And they buried Abner in Hebron: and the king lifted up his voice, and wept at the grave of Abner; and all the people wept.

NET 2 Samuel 3:32 So they buried Abner in Hebron. The king cried loudly over Abner's grave and all the people wept too.

CSB 2 Samuel 3:32 When they buried Abner in Hebron, the king wept aloud at Abner's tomb. All the people wept,

ESV 2 Samuel 3:32 They buried Abner at Hebron. And the king lifted up his voice and wept at the grave of Abner, and all the people wept.

NIV 2 Samuel 3:32 They buried Abner in Hebron, and the king wept aloud at Abner's tomb. All the people wept also.

NLT 2 Samuel 3:32 They buried Abner in Hebron, and the king and all the people wept at his graveside.

- **lifted:** 2Sa 1:12 18:33 1Sa 30:4 Job 31:28 Pr 24:17 Lu 19:41,42

DAVID WEEPS FOR ABNER

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- Undoubtedly David genuinely wept (like he did in 2Sa 1:12) at the injustice committed against Abner. David, after all, was a man after God's own heart. There is no notation of Joab weeping (unless one might include him in **all the people**).

SPECIAL TOPIC: BURIAL PRACTICES

I. Mesopotamia

A. Proper burial was very important to a happy afterlife, which was often viewed as an extension of this life (see [SPECIAL TOPIC: WHERE ARE THE DEAD?](#)).

B. An example of a Mesopotamian curse is, "May the earth not receive your corpses."

II. Old Testament

A. Proper burial was very important (cf. Eccl. 6:3).

B. It was done very quickly (cf. Sarah in Genesis 23 and Rachel in Gen. 35:19 and notice Deut. 21:23).

C. Improper burial was a sign of rejection and sin.

1. Deuteronomy 28:26

2. Isaiah 14:20

3. Jeremiah 8:2; 22:19

D. Burial was done, if possible, in family vaults in the home area (i.e., "slept with his fathers").

E. There was no embalming, as in Egypt. Mankind came from dust and must return to dust (e.g., Gen. 3:19; Ps. 103:14; 104:29). Also note [SPECIAL TOPIC: CREMATION](#)

F. In rabbinical Judaism it was difficult to balance a proper respect and handling of the body with the concept of ceremonial defilement connected to dead bodies.

III. New Testament

A. Burial quickly followed death, usually within twenty-four hours. The Jews often watched the grave for three days, believing that the soul could return to the body within that timeframe (cf. John 11:39).

B. Burial involved cleaning and wrapping of the body with spices (cf. John 11:44; 19:39-40).

C. There were no distinctive Jewish or Christian burial procedures (or items placed in the grave) in first century Palestine.

[SPECIAL TOPIC: GRIEVING RITES.](#)

The Israelites expressed sorrow for the death of a loved one and for personal repentance, as well as corporate crimes, in several ways: These were outward signs of inner feelings.

1. tear outer robe, Gen. 37:29,34; 44:13; Jdgs. 11:35; 2 Sam. 1:11; 3:31; 1 Kgs. 21:27; Job 1:20
2. put on sackcloth, Gen. 37:34; 2 Sam. 3:31; 1 Kgs. 21:27; Jer. 48:37
3. take off shoes, 2 Sam. 15:30; Isa. 20:3
4. put hands on head, 2 Sam. 13:19; Jer. 2:37
5. put dust on head, Jos. 7:6; 1 Sam. 4:12; Neh. 9:1
6. sit on the ground, Lam. 2:10; Ezek. 26:16 (lie on the ground, 2 Sam. 12:16); Isa. 47:1
7. beat the breast, 1 Sam. 25:1; 2 Sam. 11:26; Nah. 2:7
8. mourn, 1 Sam. 25:1; 2 Sam. 11:26
9. cut the body, Deut. 14:1; Jer. 16:6; 48:37
10. fast, 2 Sam. 1:12; 12:16,21; 1 Kgs. 21:27; 1 Chr. 10:12; Neh. 1:4
11. chant a lament, 2 Sam. 1:17; 3:31; 2 Chr. 35:25
12. baldness (hair pulled out or shaved), Jer. 48:37
13. cut beards short, Jer. 48:37
14. cover head or face, 2 Sam. 15:30; 19:4

2 Samuel 3:33 The king chanted a lament for Abner and said, "Should Abner die as a fool dies?"

BGT 2 Samuel 3:33 κα ἡ βασιλεὺς πένθη ὑπὲρ τοῦ Αβεννὴ καὶ εἶπεν ὡς ἔστιν ὁ θάνατος τοῦ Ναβάλ· ποθάνει καὶ ὁ Αβεννὴ

LXE 2 Samuel 3:33 And the king mourned over Abenner, and said, Shall Abenner die according to the death of Nabal?

KJV 2 Samuel 3:33 And the king lamented over Abner, and said, Died Abner as a fool dieth?

NET 2 Samuel 3:33 The king chanted the following lament for Abner: "Should Abner have died like a fool?"

CSB 2 Samuel 3:33 and the king sang a lament for Abner: Should Abner die as a fool dies?

ESV 2 Samuel 3:33 And the king lamented for Abner, saying, "Should Abner die as a fool dies?"

NIV 2 Samuel 3:33 The king sang this lament for Abner: "Should Abner have died as the lawless die?"

NLT 2 Samuel 3:33 Then the king sang this funeral song for Abner: "Should Abner have died as fools die?"

- **Should Abner die:** 2Sa 13:12,13,28,29 Pr 18:7 Ec 2:15,16 Jer 17:11 Lu 12:19,20

DAVID'S LAMENT

The king chanted a lament for Abner and said, "Should Abner die as a fool dies- NIV = "Should Abner have died as the lawless die?" The meaning is only because of treachery could such an ignoble death, befitting a fool, be the fate of so great a warrior.

J. Vernon McGee offers another thought on why David says **as a fool dies** - "Abner was in Hebron, and Hebron was one of the cities of refuge where a murderer was safe. In that city Joab could not have touched him, but Joab quietly took Abner aside and said to him, "Come out here, I want to talk with you. You are the captain on one side, and I am the captain on the other side. It would be nice if we could get together." So Abner stepped outside the city of refuge, and Joab killed him. That is why David said Abner died as a fool dies. He was a fool to leave Hebron."

TSK Note - That is, as a bad man, as the word frequently signifies in Scripture.

2 Samuel 3:34 "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.

BGT 2 Samuel 3:34 α χε ρ ς σου ο κ δ θησαν ο π δες σου ο κ ν π δαις ο προσ γαγεν ς Ναβαλ ν πιον υ ν δικ ας πεσας κα συν χθη π ς λα ς το κλασαι α τ ν

LXE 2 Samuel 3:34 Thy hands were not bound, and thy feet were not put in fetters: one brought thee not near as Nabal; thou didst fall before children of iniquity.

KJV 2 Samuel 3:34 Thy hands were not bound, nor thy feet put into fetters: as a man falleth before wicked men, so fellest thou. And all the people wept again over him.

NET 2 Samuel 3:34 Your hands were not bound, and your feet were not put into irons. You fell the way one falls before criminals." All the people wept over him again.

CSB 2 Samuel 3:34 Your hands were not bound, your feet not placed in bronze shackles. You fell like one who falls victim to criminals. And all the people wept over him even more.

ESV 2 Samuel 3:34 Your hands were not bound; your feet were not fettered; as one falls before the wicked you have fallen." And all the people wept again over him.

NIV 2 Samuel 3:34 Your hands were not bound, your feet were not fettered. You fell as one falls before wicked men." And all the people wept over him again.

NLT 2 Samuel 3:34 Your hands were not bound; your feet were not chained. No, you were murdered-- the victim of a wicked plot." All the people wept again for Abner.

- **hands:** Jdg 16:21 Ps 107:10,11
- **wicked:** Heb. children of iniquity, Job 24:14 Ho 6:9
- **wept:** 2Sa 1:12

DAVID'S LAMENT FOR ABNER CONTINUES

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 - David laments that Abner was fooled out of his life, killed by surprise and treachery.

Utley - This poetic lament clearly accuses Joab of a wicked, selfish act! Abner was tricked and suddenly attacked. It was an ambush by a supposed covenant representative.

TSK Note - The hand of malefactors were usually secured with cords, and their feet with fetters; a custom to which David affectingly alludes in his lamentation over the dust of Abner. Thy hands, O Abner, were not bound, as found to be a malefactor, nor thy feet put in fetters; thou was treated with honour by him whose business it was to judge thee, and thy attachment to the house of Saul was esteemed rather generous than culpable: as the best of men may fall, so thou fellest by the sword of treachery, not of

justice.

2 Samuel 3:35 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."

BGT 2 Samuel 3:35 κα λθεν π ς λα ς περιδειπν σαι τ ν Δαυιδ ρτοις τι ο σης μ ρας κα μοσεν Δαυιδ λ γων τ δε ποι σαι μοι θε ς κα τ δε προσθε η τι ν μ δ λιος ο μ γε σωμαι ρτου π παντ ς τινος

LXE 2 Samuel 3:35 And all the people assembled to weep for him. And all the people came to cause David to eat bread while it was yet day: and David swore, saying, God do so to me, and more also, if I eat bread or any thing else before the sun goes down.

KJV 2 Samuel 3:35 And when all the people came to cause David to eat meat while it was yet day, David sware, saying, So do God to me, and more also, if I taste bread, or ought else, till the sun be down.

NET 2 Samuel 3:35 Then all the people came and encouraged David to eat food while it was still day. But David took an oath saying, "God will punish me severely if I taste bread or anything whatsoever before the sun sets!"

CSB 2 Samuel 3:35 Then they came to urge David to eat bread while it was still day, but David took an oath: "May God punish me and do so severely if I taste bread or anything else before sunset!"

ESV 2 Samuel 3:35 Then all the people came to persuade David to eat bread while it was yet day. But David swore, saying, "God do so to me and more also, if I taste bread or anything else till the sun goes down!"

NIV 2 Samuel 3:35 Then they all came and urged David to eat something while it was still day; but David took an oath, saying, "May God deal with me, be it ever so severely, if I taste bread or anything else before the sun sets!"

NLT 2 Samuel 3:35 David had refused to eat anything on the day of the funeral, and now everyone begged him to eat. But David had made a vow, saying, "May God strike me and even kill me if I eat anything before sundown."

- cause: 2Sa 12:17 Jer 16:7 Eze 24:17,22
- **do so:** 2Sa 3:9 Ru 1:17
- **before the:** 2Sa 1:12 Jdg 20:26

DAVID MOURNS WITH A FAST

Then all the people came to persuade David to eat bread while it was still day -Usually the day of a funeral was a day of an elaborate meal but David refused to eat because he was fasting as a sign of mourning to show the people that he had no duplicity in Abner's death. ([Uitley](#))

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-
David is fasting and refuses food calling down a curse upon himself if he were to eat.

2 Samuel 3:36 Now all the people took note of it, and it pleased them, just as everything the king did pleased all the people.

BGT 2 Samuel 3:36 κα γνω π ς λα ς κα ρεσεν ν πιον α τ ν π ντα σα πο ησεν βασιλε ς ν πιον το λαο

LXE 2 Samuel 3:36 And all the people took notice, and all things that the king did before the people were pleasing in their sight.

KJV 2 Samuel 3:36 And all the people took notice of it, and it pleased them: as whatsoever the king did pleased all the people.

NET 2 Samuel 3:36 All the people noticed this and it pleased them. In fact, everything the king did pleased all

the people.

CSB 2 Samuel 3:36 All the people took note of this, and it pleased them. In fact, everything the king did pleased them.

ESV 2 Samuel 3:36 And all the people took notice of it, and it pleased them, as everything that the king did pleased all the people.

NIV 2 Samuel 3:36 All the people took note and were pleased; indeed, everything the king did pleased them.

NLT 2 Samuel 3:36 This pleased the people very much. In fact, everything the king did pleased them!

- as: 2Sa 15:6,13 Ps 62:9 Mk 7:37 15:11-13

DAVID'S REACTION AND ACTIONS PLEASE THE PEOPLE

Now all the people took note of it, and it pleased them, just as everything the king did pleased all the people - Literally "was good in their eyes." David's public actions in this situation were very satisfying to the people. Clearly this was a glorious time for David, reminding one of the [story of King Arthur and Camelot](#) in its golden day. As the diagram above demonstrates, the "value of David's stock" was rising during these early, formative years (prior to the debacle with Bathsheba and Uriah).

Utley - In this chapter, after Abner's murder David does several things to show Israel that he had no part in Abner's murder. (1) cursed Joab (2) made Joab a public participant of Abner's funeral (3) David publicly and intensely mourned Abner's death (a) wrote a lament (b) refused to eat at the funeral meal (4) David praised Abner (1Sa 3:38-39) The result was that Israel did not hold David responsible for Abner's death (vv. 36-37). Still it took years for the reality of a united monarchy to come to pass.

2 Samuel 3:37 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.

BGT 2 Samuel 3:37 κα γνω πς λας κα πς Ισραηλ ν τ μ ρ κε ν τι ο κ γ νετο παρ το βασιλ ως θανατσαι τ υ Αβεννηρ υ ν Νηρ

LXE 2 Samuel 3:37 So all the people and all Israel perceived in that day, that it was not of the king to slay Abenner the son of Ner.

KJV 2 Samuel 3:37 For all the people and all Israel understood that day that it was not of the king to slay Abner the son of Ner.

NET 2 Samuel 3:37 All the people and all Israel realized on that day that the killing of Abner son of Ner was not done at the king's instigation.

CSB 2 Samuel 3:37 On that day all the troops and all Israel were convinced that the king had no part in the killing of Abner son of Ner.

ESV 2 Samuel 3:37 So all the people and all Israel understood that day that it had not been the king's will to put to death Abner the son of Ner.

NIV 2 Samuel 3:37 So on that day all the people and all Israel knew that the king had no part in the murder of Abner son of Ner.

NLT 2 Samuel 3:37 So everyone in Judah and all Israel understood that David was not responsible for Abner's murder.

DAVID IS CLEARLY VINDICATED

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 - Since Joab was David's commander it would have been only natural for the people to think that Joab was acting on David's

orders. But David's response of genuine mourning left no doubt that there was no blame on David. David is vindicated before the eyes of the people because of his conduct in this situation. Note that **all Israel understood** that David's had no part in Abner's murder, a fact that would be important to assure the future unity of his kingdom

ESV Study Bible - David's graciousness and respect for Abner, in contrast to Joab's vengeance, display the qualities of a godly king, prefiguring the graciousness of Christ.

2 Samuel 3:38 Then the king said to his servants, "Do you not know that a prince and a great man has fallen this day in Israel?"

BGT 2 Samuel 3:38 κα ε πεν βασιλε ς πρ ς το ς πα δας α το ο κ ο δατε τι γο μενος μ γας π πτωκεν ν τ μ ρ τατ ν τ Ισραηλ

LXE 2 Samuel 3:38 And the king said to his servants, Know ye not that a great prince is this day fallen in Israel?

KJV 2 Samuel 3:38 And the king said unto his servants, Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?

NET 2 Samuel 3:38 Then the king said to his servants, "Do you not realize that a great leader has fallen this day in Israel?"

CSB 2 Samuel 3:38 Then the king said to his soldiers, "You must know that a great leader has fallen in Israel today.

ESV 2 Samuel 3:38 And the king said to his servants, "Do you not know that a prince and a great man has fallen this day in Israel?"

NIV 2 Samuel 3:38 Then the king said to his men, "Do you not realize that a prince and a great man has fallen in Israel this day?"

NLT 2 Samuel 3:38 Then King David said to his officials, "Don't you realize that a great commander has fallen today in Israel?"

- **a prince:** 2Sa 3:12 2:8 1Sa 14:50,51 Job 32:9

KING DAVID'S KIND WORDS CONTINUE

Then the king said to his servants, "Do you not know that a prince and a great man has fallen this day in Israel?" - David asks this rhetorical question, expecting an affirmative reply. David three times in his lament in chapter 1 said, "How the mighty have fallen!" And now, "a great man has fallen in Israel this day."

Utley - As often happens at funerals, hyperbolic language is used to accentuate the qualities of the dead. This description does not reflect Abner's character! David is using the opportunity to again affirm that he had no part in Abner's murder!

2 Samuel 3:39 "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."

BGT 2 Samuel 3:39 κα τι γ ε μι σ μερον συγγεν ς κα καθεσταμ νος π βασιλ ως ο δ νδρες ο τοι υ ο Σαρουιας σκληρ τερο μο ε σιν νταποδ κ ριος τ ποιο ντι πονηρ κατ τ ν κακ αν α το

LXE 2 Samuel 3:39 And that I am this day a mere kinsman of his, and as it were a subject; but these men the sons of Saruia are too hard for me: the Lord reward the evil-doer according to his wickedness.

KJV 2 Samuel 3:39 And I am this day weak, though anointed king; and these men the sons of Zeruiah be too hard for me: the LORD shall reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness.

NET 2 Samuel 3:39 Today I am weak, even though I am anointed as king. These men, the sons of Zeruiah, are too much for me to bear! May the LORD punish appropriately the one who has done this evil thing!"

CSB 2 Samuel 3:39 As for me, even though I am the anointed king, I have little power today. These men, the sons of Zeruiah, are too fierce for me. May the LORD repay the evildoer according to his evil!"

ESV 2 Samuel 3:39 And I was gentle today, though anointed king. These men, the sons of Zeruiah, are more severe than I. The LORD repay the evildoer according to his wickedness!"

NIV 2 Samuel 3:39 And today, though I am the anointed king, I am weak, and these sons of Zeruiah are too strong for me. May the LORD repay the evildoer according to his evil deeds!"

NLT 2 Samuel 3:39 And even though I am the anointed king, these two sons of Zeruiah-- Joab and Abishai-- are too strong for me to control. So may the LORD repay these evil men for their evil deeds."

- **I am:** Ex 21:12 2Ch 19:6,7 Ps 75:10 101:8 Pr 20:8 25:5
- **weak:** Heb. tender, 1Ch 22:5 Isa 7:4 Ro 13:4
- **the sons:** 1Ch 2:15,16
- **too difficult:** 2Sa 19:6,7,13
- **the Lord:** 1Ki 2:5,6,33,34 Psalm of David = Ps 7:16 Ps 28:4 Ps 62:12 2Ti 4:14

DAVID LEAVES JUSTICE IN THE HANDS OF THE LORD

I am weak today, though anointed king; and these men the sons of Zeruiah (David's sister) **are too difficult for me**- What David is saying is that Joab and Abishai are too strong willed for him to control. The implication is that even he as the anointed king cannot handle them!

Warren Wiersbe - David was strong, yet he was weak (v. 39)! When we are weak in ourselves, the Lord can be strong through us (2Co 12:7-10+). We cannot control circumstances and people, but we can control what we say and do. (Borrow [With the Word](#))

Spurgeon - David had not, however, the manly courage to summon Joab to the bar as a murderer. David was afraid of him; the man had all the army at his back; and instead of being, as in his youthful days, fearless of man, David became for a while a time-server, and permitted the guilty to escape.....We may be anointed, and yet weak. Every believer is an anointed king..... But in our souls, our anointing time comes in that hour when, being called by grace and washed from sin, we begin to reign over sin, self, the world, death and hell, by virtue of our union with Christ.....The Christian is then to-day, in many more senses than I can now stay to enumerate, an anointed king; and yet it is quite possible that he may be groaning out, "I am weak;" for weakness and Divine Anointing may stand together. You may be the object of God's grandest purposes; and yet in yourself, you may be the meanest (*Wanting dignity; low in rank*) of men. God may yet intend to accomplish by you the greatest marvels, and it may be needful that, as a prelude to these wonders, you who are God's anointed should be compelled to feel very deeply your utter weakness.....You are never more mistaken than when you think yourselves strong. You are never nearer the truth than when you have the very lowest views of your self. When you are stripped, and emptied, and poured from vessel to vessel, it is then that you are where you ought to be; when you can say "I can do nothing apart from Him," and yet can feel that you can do everything with him: then you are on the point of safety, you are on the eve of triumph and honour. God is with you, and will greatly bless you so long as you know where your great strength lieth. (Read full sermon [Man's Weakness and God's Anointing](#)).

MacArthur on **weak...difficult** - David had not yet solidified his power enough to exact his own judgment without jeopardizing his command. He was still "**weak**" and needed time to consolidate his authority. Once that was accomplished, he no longer needed to fear the strength of Joab and Abishai, who were Zeruiah's sons (2Sa 2:18).

May the LORD repay the evildoer according to his evil- While he does not state their name, clearly David is praying an "[imprecatory](#)" prayer against Joab and Abishai. This must have been especially difficult for him as (1) they were close relatives and (2) Abishai was the one who had been brave enough to go with him to retrieve Saul's spear.

[Anderson](#) - David has fasted in honor of Abner and is satisfied to leave the judgment of Joab to God. However, if David had punished Joab, a lot of murders could have been avoided in the future.

[Utley](#) - David had the same problem at court that Ish-bosheth had in relation to a right hand man who was impulsive and powerful. David decided to leave Joab's punishment to YHWH. The punishment was specifically given to Solomon at David's death (cf. 1Ki 2:5-6,28-34).

Life Application Study Bible ([borrow](#)) - Joab and Abishai were the two sons of Zeruiah David mentioned. David had an especially hard time controlling Joab because, although he was intensely loyal, he was strong willed, preferring to do things his own way. In exchange for his loyalty, however, David was willing to give him the flexibility he craved. Joab's murder of Abner is an example of his

fierce independence. While David opposed the murder, he allowed it to remain unpunished because (1) to punish Joab could cause the troops to rebel; (2) Joab was David's nephew, and any harsh treatment could cause family problems; (3) Joab was from the tribe of Judah, and David didn't want rebellion from his own tribe; (4) to get rid of Joab would mean losing a skilled and competent commander who had been invaluable in strengthening his army.

Spurgeon - 2 Samuel 3:39 - David had been an adventurer in the cave, so long that he had grown used to it, and you never find him saying when he hid himself in Engedi, "I am this day weak." No; after the first season of bitterness I believe he came to love Adullam's dreary shelter; and the bleak mountains were dear to him. Now he has come into a new place, nations are at his feet, men bow before him. It is a new position, and he says "I am this day weak, though anointed king." Whenever you make a change in life; whenever God calls you to another set of duties, you will surely find out what perhaps you do not now believe—that you are weak, though anointed king. Here, too, David had come into new temptations. The arrows had been shot at him before, from one direction alone, now the storm ceases on one side, and begins on the other. If men knew that the storm would always come to one side of the house they would repair and strengthen it, and then they would not fear the blast; but if suddenly it whirled round and took the other corner, how would they be prepared for that? Take care, Christian men and women, how you change your position; for often it is a change for the worse. The arrows may not fly on the right, but they will meet you on the left, and perhaps that may be your weakest side, and there you will be smitten in the tenderest part. David had now no more the temptations which beset a venturer, but those which cluster thick around the throne; for where there is the honey of royalty, there will surely be the wasps of temptations. High places and God's praise do seldom agree; a full cup is not easily carried without spilling, and he that stands on a pinnacle needs a clear head and much grace.

Weak (tender refined, weak, inexperienced)([07390](#)) **rak** is an adjective meaning gentle, tender, weak, indecisive. "This adjective is used in the sense of the tenderness or softness of few years (Gen. 18:7), of soft words (Job 40:27), and in the sense of weakness (Gen. 29:17).

Rak - 15x/15v - frail(1), gentle(1), inexperienced(2), refined(2), soft(2), tender(3), tender one(1), timid*(1), weak(2). Gen. 18:7; Gen. 29:17; Gen. 33:13; Deut. 28:54; Deut. 28:56; 2 Sam. 3:39; 1 Chr. 22:5; 1 Chr. 29:1; 2 Chr. 13:7; Job 41:3; Prov. 4:3; Prov. 15:1; Prov. 25:15; Isa. 47:1; Ezek. 17:22

John Butler - Sermon Starters - JUDGMENT FOR EVIL 2 Samuel 3:39

"I am this day weak, though anointed king; and these men the sons of Zeruiah be too hard for me; the LORD will reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness" (2 Samuel 3:39).

The comments of this text were made by King David after Abner was murdered by Joab, the son of Zeruiah. Zeruiah was David's sister (1 Chronicles 2:16), She had three sons, they were Asahel (who was killed by Abner in battle—2 Samuel 2:23), Abishai (who encouraged David to assassinate Saul—1 Samuel 26:8), and Joab, a cruel man, who was David's army captain (1 Chronicles 11:6).

FIRST—THE CAPITULATION IN JUDGMENT

"I am this day weak though anointed king."

David had his hands tied by family relationship and could not (better, would not) punish Joab for murdering Abner. Family connections played politics in David's case and though he was king, he was not able to bring justice for the murder of Abner. David let his family relationship override his responsibility. It was a shameful deed, but is often done by most of us.

SECOND—THE CULPRITS FOR JUDGMENT

"These men the sons of Zeruiah be too hard for me."

David lamented the fact that his nephews were too cruel of heart for his liking. They were men of war and knew no mercy. Murder and assassination meant nothing to them. Men can become so hardened to evil that they are not bothered by it. This explains much of abortion.

THIRD—THE CERTAINTY OF JUDGMENT

"The LORD will reward the doer of evil."

The word "reward" is not perceived today in a negative sense as it is used here. Here it refers, in an ironic way, to God's judgment. God will bring upon the guilty the due punishment ("reward") for their evil doing. Men may be unwilling to bring judgment upon men for their evil, but God is not unwilling, and He will judge. It seems sometimes that wicked men get away with their evil. But no one succeeds in getting away with evil.

God will sooner or later catch up with them and strike them down in holy judgment upon their evil ways. The wicked men may be able to beat the courts of men, but they will never beat the courts of God. Evil will be punished, you can count on that. It is absolutely certain.

FOURTH—HIS CHARACTER OF JUDGMENT

“According to his wickedness.”

God’s judgment is just. He judges according to the facts. He is not like many of the courts of our land and their judgments. He will not suppress evidence or enter into plea bargaining. God judges evil men “according to his wickedness.” A good example of God’s equity in judgement is in the case of Sodom. The cry of Sodom’s sin was very great so God sent some special agents to investigate Sodom to see “whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it” (Genesis 18:21). The devastating judgment of Sodom was not done without investigation into the facts. God’s judgment may be severe but it is always just.