
2SAMUEL 2: 1 After this, David inquired of the LORD, saying, "Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?" The LORD said to him, "Go up." David said, "Where shall I go up?" He said, "To Hebron."

David, by the direction of God, goes up to Hebron, and is there anointed king over the house of Judah, 2Sam 2:1-4. He congratulates the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead on their kindness in rescuing the bodies of Saul and his sons from the Philistines, 2Sam 2:5-7. Abner anoints Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, king over Gilead, the Ashurites, Jezreel, Ephraim, Benjamin, and all Israel; over whom he reigned two years, 2Sam 2:8-10. David reigns over Judah, in Hebron, seven years and six months, 2Sam 2:11. Account of a battle between Abner, captain of the Israelites, and Joab, captain of the men of Judah; in which the former are routed with the loss of three hundred and sixty men: but Asahel, the brother of Joab, is killed by Abner, vv. 12-32.

Verse 1

David inquired of the Lord - By means of Abiathar the priest; for he did not know whether the different tribes were willing to receive him, though he was fully persuaded that God had appointed him king over Israel.

Unto Hebron - The metropolis of the tribe of Judah, one of the richest regions in Judea. The mountains of Hebron were famed for fruits, herbage, and honey; and many parts were well adapted for vines, olives, and different kinds of grain, abounding in springs of excellent water, as the most accurate travelers have asserted.

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

2SAMUEL 2: 3 David brought up his men who were with him, every man with his household. They lived in the cities of Hebron.

2SAMUEL 2: 4 The men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah. They told David, saying, "The men of Jabesh Gilead were those who buried Saul."

Verse 4

Anointed David king - He was anointed before by Samuel, by which he acquired *jus ad regnum*, a right To the kingdom; by the present anointing he had *jus in regno*, authority Over the kingdom. The other parts of the kingdom were, as yet, attached to the family of Saul.

2SAMUEL 2: 5 David sent messengers to the men of Jabesh Gilead, and said to them, "Blessed are you by the LORD, that you have shown this kindness to your lord, even to Saul, and have buried him."

Verse 5

David sent messengers unto - Jabesh-gilead - This was a generous and noble act, highly indicative of the grandeur of David's mind. He respected Saul as his once legitimate sovereign; he loved Jonathan as his most intimate friend. The former had greatly injured him, and sought his destruction; but even this did not cancel his respect for him, as the anointed of God, and as the king of Israel. This brings to my remembrance that fine speech of Saurin, when speaking of the banishment of the Protestants from France by the revocation of the edict of Nantes. He thus at the Hague apostrophizes Louis XIV., their persecutor: Et toi, prince redoutable, que j'honorai jadis comme mon roi, et que je respecte encore comme le fleau do Seigneur. "And thou, O formidable prince, whom I once honored as my king, and whom I still reverence as the scourge of the Lord!"

2SAMUEL 2: 6 Now may the LORD show loving kindness and truth to you. I also will reward you for this kindness, because you have done this thing.

2SAMUEL 2: 7 Now therefore let your hands be strong, and be valiant; for Saul your lord is dead, and also the house of Judah have anointed me king over them."

Verse 7

Now let your hands be strengthened - David certainly wished to attach the men of Jabesh to his interest; he saw that they were generous and valiant, and must be of great service to him whose part they espoused; and he was no doubt afraid that they would attach themselves to the house of Saul, in consideration of the eminent services Saul had rendered them in rescuing them from Nahash, king of the Ammonites.

2SAMUEL 2: 8 Now Abner the son of Ner, captain of Saul's army, had taken Ishbosheth the son of Saul, and brought him over to Mahanaim;

Verse 8

Abner the son of Ner - This man had long been one of the chief captains of Saul's army, and commander-in-chief on several occasions; he was probably envious of David's power, by whom he had often been out-generalled in the field.

2SAMUEL 2: 9 and he made him king over Gilead, and over the Ashurites, and over Jezreel, and over Ephraim, and over Benjamin, and over all Israel.

Verse 9

Made him king over Gilead - These were places beyond Jordan; for as the Philistines had lately routed the Israelites, they were no doubt in possession of some of the principal towns, and were now enjoying the fruits of their victory. Abner was therefore afraid to bring the new king to any place where he was likely to meet with much resistance, till he had got his army well recruited.

Who the Ashurites were is not generally agreed; probably men of the tribe of Ashur.

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

Verse 10

Ish-bosheth - reigned two years - It is well observed that Ish-bosheth reigned all the time that David reigned in Hebron, which was seven years and six months. Perhaps the meaning of the writer is this: Ish-bosheth reigned two years before any but the tribe of Judah had attached themselves to the interest of David. Some think that Abner in effect reigned the last five years of Ish-bosheth, who had only the name of king after the first two years. Or the text may be understood thus: When Ish-bosheth had reigned two years over Israel, he was forty years of age. Houbigant, dissatisfied with all the common modes of solution, proposes to read ששית שנה shishshith shanah, six years, for the שתיים שנים shetayim shanim, two years, of the text, which he contends is a solecism; for in pure Hebrew the words would be שנים שנה as they are everywhere read in the first book; and שנה is the reading of eleven of Kennicott's MSS., and nine of De Rossi's; but the number two is acknowledged by all the ancient versions, and by all the MSS. yet collated. The critical reader may examine Houbigant on the place. After all, probably the expedition mentioned in the succeeding verses is that to which the writer refers, and from which he dates. Ish-bosheth had reigned two years without any rupture with David or his men, till under the direction of Abner, captain of his host, the Israelites passed over Jordan, from Mahanaim to Gibeon, and being opposed by Joab, captain of David's host, that battle took place which is described in the following verses.

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

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

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

2SAMUEL 2: 14 Abner said to Joab, "Please let the young men arise and play before us!" Joab said, "Let them arise!"

Verse 14

Let the young men - play before us - This was diabolical play, where each man thrust his sword into the body of the other, so that the twenty-four (twelve on each side) fell down dead together! But this was the signal for that sanguinary skirmish which immediately took place.

2SAMUEL 2: 15 Then they arose and went over by number: twelve for Benjamin, and for Ishbosheth the son of Saul, and twelve of the servants of David.

2SAMUEL 2: 16 They each caught his opponent by the head, and thrust his sword in his fellow's side; so they fell down together: therefore that place was called Helkath Hazzurim, which is in Gibeon.

Verse 16

Caught every one his fellow by the head - Probably by the beard, if these persons were not too young to have one, or by the hair of the head. Alexander ordered all the Macedonians to shave their beards; and being asked by Parmenio why they should do so, answered, "Dost thou not know that in battle there is no better hold than the beard?"

Helkath-hazzurim - "The portion of the mighty;" or, "The inheritance of those who were slain," according to the Targum.

2SAMUEL 2: 17 The battle was very severe that day: and Abner was beaten, and the men of Israel, before the servants of David.

2SAMUEL 2: 18 The three sons of Zeruah were there, Joab, and Abishai, and Asahel: and Asahel was as light of foot as a wild gazelle.

Verse 18

Asahel was as light of foot as a wild roe - To be swift of foot was deemed a great accomplishment in the heroes of antiquity; ποδας ωκυς Αχιλλεως, the swift-footed Achilles, is an epithet which Homer gives to that hero no less than thirty times in the course of the Ilias. It has a qualification also among the Roman soldiers; they were taught both to run swiftly, and to swim well.

2SAMUEL 2: 19 Asahel pursued after Abner; and in going he didn't turn to the right hand nor to the left from following Abner.

2SAMUEL 2: 20 Then Abner looked behind him, and said, "Is it you, Asahel?" He answered, "It is I."

2SAMUEL 2: 21 Abner said to him, "Turn aside to your right hand or to your left, and grab one of the young men, and take his armour." But Asahel would not turn aside from following him.

Verse 21

Take thee his armor - It seems Asahel wished to get the armor of Abner as a trophy; this also was greatly coveted by ancient heroes. Abner wished to spare him, for fear of exciting Joab's enmity; but as Asahel was obstinate in the pursuit, and was swifter of foot than Abner, the latter saw that he must either kill or be killed, and therefore he turned his spear and ran it through the body of Asahel. This turning about that he might pierce him is what we translate "the hinder end of his spear." This slaying of Asahel cost Abner his life, as we shall find in the next chapter.

2SAMUEL 2: 22 Abner said again to Asahel, "Turn aside from following me. Why should I strike you to the ground? How then should I hold up my face to Joab your brother?"

2SAMUEL 2: 23 However he refused to turn aside. Therefore Abner with the back end of the spear struck him in the body, so that the spear came out behind him; and he fell down there, and died in the same place. As many as came to the place where Asahel fell down and died stood still.

2SAMUEL 2: 24 But Joab and Abishai pursued after Abner: and the sun went down when they had come to the hill of Ammah, that lies before Giah by the way of the wilderness of Gibeon.

2SAMUEL 2: 25 The children of Benjamin gathered themselves together after Abner, and became one band, and stood on the top of a hill.

2SAMUEL 2: 26 Then Abner called to Joab, and said, "Shall the sword devour forever? Don't you know that it will be bitterness in the latter end? How long shall it be then, before you ask the people to return from following their brothers?"

2SAMUEL 2: 27 Joab said, "As God lives, if you had not spoken, surely then in the morning the people would have gone away, and not each followed his brother."

Verse 27

And Joab said - The meaning of this verse appears to be this: If Abner had not provoked the battle, (see 2Sam 2:14), Joab would not have attacked the Israelites that day; as his orders were probably to act on the defensive. Therefore the blame fell upon Israel.

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

2SAMUEL 2: 29 Abner and his men went all that night through the Arabah; and they passed over the Jordan, and went through all Bithron, and came to Mahanaim.

Verse 29

They came to Mahanaim - So they returned to the place whence they set out. See 2Sam 2:12. This was the commencement of the civil wars between Israel and Judah, and properly the commencement of the division of the two kingdoms, through which both nations were deluged with blood.

2SAMUEL 2: 30 Joab returned from following Abner: and when he had gathered all the people together, there lacked of David's servants nineteen men and Asahel.

2SAMUEL 2: 31 But the servants of David had struck of Benjamin, and of Abner's men, so that three hundred sixty men died.

2SAMUEL 2: 32 They took up Asahel, and buried him in the tomb of his father, which was in Bethlehem. Joab and his men went all night, and the day broke on them at Hebron.
