
2SAMUEL 3: 1 Now there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David: and David grew stronger and stronger, but the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker.

Account of the children born to David in Hebron, 2Sam 3:1-5. Abner being accused by Ish-bosheth of familiarities with Rizpah, Saul's concubine, he is enraged; offers his services to David; goes to Hebron, and makes a league with him, vv. 6-22. Joab, through enmity to Abner, pretends to David that he came as a spy, and should not be permitted to return, 2Sam 3:23-25. He follows Abner, and treacherously slays him, 2Sam 3:26, 2Sam 3:27. David hearing of it is greatly incensed against Joab, and pronounces a curse upon him and upon his family, 2Sam 3:28, 2Sam 3:29. He commands a general mourning for Abner, and himself follows the bier weeping, 2Sam 3:30-32. David's lamentation over Abner, 2Sam 3:33, 2Sam 3:34. The people solicit David to take meat; but he fasts the whole day, and complains to them of the insolence and intrigues of Joab and his brothers: the people are pleased with his conduct, 2Sam 3:35-39.

Verse 1

There was long war - Frequent battles and skirmishes took place between the followers of David and the followers of Ish-bosheth, after the two years mentioned above, to the end of the fifth year, in which Ish-bosheth was slain by Rechab and Baanah.

2SAMUEL 3: 2 To David were sons born in Hebron: and his firstborn was Amnon, of Ahinoam the Jezreelitess;

2SAMUEL 3: 3 and his second, Chileab, of Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite; and the third, Absalom the son of Maacah the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur;

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

2SAMUEL 3: 5 and the sixth, Ithream, of Eglah, David's wife. These were born to David in Hebron.

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

Verse 6

Abner made himself strong - This strengthening of himself, and going in to the late king's concubine, were most evident proofs that he wished to seize upon the government. See 1Kgs 2:21, 1Kgs 2:22; 1Kgs 12:8; 1Kgs 16:21.

2SAMUEL 3: 7 Now Saul had a concubine, whose name was Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah: and Ishbosheth said to Abner, "Why have you gone in to my father's concubine?"

2SAMUEL 3: 8 Then was Abner very angry for the words of Ishbosheth, and said, "Am I a dog's head that belongs to Judah? Today I show kindness to the house of Saul your father, to his brothers, and

to his friends, and have not delivered you into the hand of David; and yet you charge me this day with a fault concerning this woman!

Verse 8

Am I a dog's head - Dost thou treat a man with indignity who has been the only prop of thy tottering kingdom, and the only person who could make head against the house of David?

2SAMUEL 3: 9 God do so to Abner, and more also, if, as the LORD has sworn to David, I don't do even so to him;

Verse 9

Except, as the Lord hath sworn to David - And why did he not do this before, when he knew that God had given the kingdom to David? Was he not now, according to his own concession, fighting against God?

2SAMUEL 3: 10 to transfer 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."

2SAMUEL 3: 11 He could not answer Abner another word, because he feared him.

Verse 11

He could not answer Abner a word - Miserable is the lot of a king who is governed by the general of his army, who may strip him of his power and dignity whenever he pleases! Witness the fate of poor Charles I. of England and Louis XVI. of France. Military men, above all others, should never be intrusted with any civil power, and should be great only in the field.

2SAMUEL 3: 12 Abner sent messengers to David on his behalf, saying, "Whose is the land?" and saying, "Make your alliance with me, and behold, my hand shall be with you, to bring all Israel around to you."

2SAMUEL 3: 13 He said, "Good; I will make a treaty 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."

Verse 13

Except thou first bring Michal - David had already six wives at Hebron; and none of them could have such pretensions to legitimacy as Michal, who had been taken away from him and married to Phaltiel. However distressing it was to take her from a husband who loved her most tenderly, (see 2Sam 3:16), yet prudence and policy required that he should strengthen his own interest in the

kingdom as much as possible; and that he should not leave a princess in the possession of a man who might, in her right, have made pretensions to the throne. Besides, she was his own lawful wife, and he had a right to demand her when he pleased.

2SAMUEL 3: 14 David sent messengers to Ishbosheth, Saul's son, saying, "Deliver me my wife Michal, whom I pledged to be married to me for one hundred foreskins of the Philistines."

Verse 14

Deliver me my wife - It is supposed that he meant to screen Abner; and to prevent that violence which he might have used in carrying off Michal.

2SAMUEL 3: 15 Ishbosheth sent, and took her from her husband, even from Paltiel the son of Laish.

2SAMUEL 3: 16 Her husband went with her, weeping as he went, and followed her to Bahurim. Then Abner said to him, "Go! Return!" and he returned.

Verse 16

Weeping behind her - If genuine affection did not still subsist between David and Michal, it was a pity to have taken her from Phaltiel, who had her to wife from the conjoint authority of her father and her king.

Nevertheless David had a legal right to her, as she had never been divorced, for she was taken from him by the hand of violence.

2SAMUEL 3: 17 Abner had communication with the elders of Israel, saying, "In times past, you sought for David to be king over you.

2SAMUEL 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 out of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all their enemies.'"

Verse 18

The Lord hath spoken of David - Where is this spoken? Such a promise is not extant. Perhaps it means no more than, "Thus, it may be presumed, God hath determined."

2SAMUEL 3: 19 Abner also spoke 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 to the whole house of Benjamin.

2SAMUEL 3: 20 So Abner came to David to Hebron, and twenty men with him. David made Abner and the men who were with him a feast.

2SAMUEL 3: 21 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 soul desires." David sent Abner away; and he went in peace.

Verse 21

He went in peace - David dismissed him in good faith, having no sinister design in reference to him.

2SAMUEL 3: 22 Behold, the servants of David and Joab came from a foray, and brought in a great plunder with them: but Abner was not with David in Hebron; for he had sent him away, and he was gone in peace.

2SAMUEL 3: 23 When Joab and all the army who was with him had come, they told Joab, saying, Abner the son of Ner came to the king, and he has sent him away, and he is gone in peace.

2SAMUEL 3: 24 Then Joab came to the king, and said, "What have you done? Behold, Abner came to you. Why is it that you have sent him away, and he is quite gone?"

2SAMUEL 3: 25 You know Abner the son of Ner, that he came to deceive you, and to know your going out and your coming in, and to know all that you do."

2SAMUEL 3: 26 When Joab had come out from David, he sent messengers after Abner, and they brought him back from the well of Sirah; but David didn't know it.

2SAMUEL 3: 27 When Abner was returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside into the midst of the gate to speak with him quietly, and struck him there in the body, so that he died, for the blood of Asahel his brother.

Verse 27

And smote him there - Joab feared that, after having rendered such essential services to David, Abner would be made captain of the host: he therefore determined to prevent it by murdering the man, under pretense of avenging the death of his brother Asahel.

The murder, however, was one of the most unprovoked and wicked: and such was the power and influence of this nefarious general, that the king dared not to bring him to justice for his crime. In the same way he murdered Amasa, a little time afterwards. See 2Sam 20:10. Joab was a cool-blooded, finished murderer. "Treason and murder ever keep together, like two yoke-devils."

2SAMUEL 3: 28 Afterward, when David heard it, he said, "I and my kingdom are guiltless before the LORD forever of the blood of Abner the son of Ner.

2SAMUEL 3: 29 Let it fall on the head of Joab, and on all his father's house. Let there not fail from the house of Joab one who has an issue, or who is a leper, or who leans on a staff, or who falls by the sword, or who lacks bread."

Verse 29

Let it rest on the head - All these verbs may be rendered in the future tense: it will rest on the head of Joab, etc. This was a prophetic declaration, which sufficiently showed the displeasure of God against this execrable man.

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

2SAMUEL 3: 31 David said to Joab, and to all the people who were with him, Tear your clothes, and clothe yourselves with sackcloth, and mourn before Abner. King David followed the bier.

Verse 31

David said to Joab - He commanded him to take on him the part of a principal mourner.

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

2SAMUEL 3: 33 The king lamented for Abner, and said, "Should Abner die as a fool dies?"

Verse 33

The king lamented over Abner - This lamentation, though short, is very pathetic. It is a high strain of poetry; but the measure cannot be easily ascertained. Our own translation may be measured thus: -

Died Abner as a fool dieth?

Thy hands were not bound,

Nor thy feet put into fetters.

As a man falleth before the wicked.

So hast thou fallen!

Or thus: -

Shall Abner die a death like to a villain's?

Thy hands not bound,

Nor were the fetters to thy feet applied.

Like as one falls before the sons of guilt,

So hast thou fallen!

He was not taken away by the hand of justice, nor in battle, nor by accident: he died the death of a culprit by falling into the hands of a villain.

This song was a heavy reproof to Joab; and must have galled him extremely, being sung by all the people.

2SAMUEL 3: 34 Your hands were not bound, nor your feet put into fetters. As a man falls before the children of iniquity, so you fell." All the people wept again over him.

2SAMUEL 3: 35 All the people came to cause 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, until the sun goes down."

2SAMUEL 3: 36 All the people took notice of it, and it pleased them; as whatever the king did pleased all the people.

Verse 36

The people took notice - They saw that the king's grief was sincere, and that he had no part nor device in the murder of Abner: see 2Sam 3:37.

2SAMUEL 3: 37 So all the people and all Israel understood that day that it was not of the king to kill Abner the son of Ner.

2SAMUEL 3: 38 The king said to his servants, "Don't you know that there a prince and a great man has fallen this day in Israel?"

2SAMUEL 3: 39 I am this day weak, though anointed king; and these men the sons of Zeruiah are too hard for me. May the LORD reward the evildoer according to his wickedness."

Verse 39

I am this day weak - Had Abner lived, all the tribes of Israel would have been brought under my government.

Though anointed king - I have little else than the title: first, having only one tribe under my government; and secondly, the sons of Zeruiah, Joab and his brethren, having usurped all the power, and reduced me to the shadow of royalty.

The Lord shall reward the doer of evil - That is, Joab, whom he appears afraid to name.

We talk much of ancient manners, their simplicity and ingenuousness; and say that the former days were better than these. But who says this who is a judge of the times? In those days of celebrated simplicity, etc., there were not so many crimes as at present I grant: but what they wanted in number they made up in degree: deceit, cruelty, rapine, murder, and wrong of almost every kind, then flourished. We are refined in our vices; they were gross and barbarous in theirs: they had neither so many ways nor so many means of sinning; but the sum of their moral turpitude was greater than ours. We have a sort of decency and good breeding, which lay a certain restraint on our passions, they were boorish and beastly, and their bad passions were ever in full play. Civilization

prevents barbarity and atrocity; mental cultivation induces decency of manners: those primitive times were generally without these. Who that knows them would wish such ages to return?