

# CHAPTER 3

## INTRODUCTION TO SECOND SAMUEL 3

This chapter begins with the continuation of the war between the house of Saul and the house of David, (<sup><ORF></sup>2 Samuel 3:1); and gives an account of the wives of David, and his sons by them, (<sup><ORF></sup>2 Samuel 3:2-5); of a quarrel between Ishbosheth and Abner, (<sup><ORF></sup>2 Samuel 3:6-11); and of Abner's proposal to make a league with David; but David would not see his face unless Michal his wife was returned to him, who was accordingly, (<sup><ORF></sup>2 Samuel 3:12-16); and of the interest Abner made with the elders of Israel in favour of David, which he reported to him, and promised to make more, (<sup><ORF></sup>2 Samuel 3:17-21); but Joab returning from a pursuit, and with great spoil, just as Abner departed, and hearing of it, chided David for letting him go, and privately sent for him back, and treacherously murdered him, (<sup><ORF></sup>2 Samuel 3:22-27); from which murder David cleared himself and his kingdom, and for it made dreadful imprecations on Joab and his family, (<sup><ORF></sup>2 Samuel 3:28-30); and buried Abner with great lamentation, expressing much concern for his death, and the high opinion he had of him, (<sup><ORF></sup>2 Samuel 3:31-39).

**Ver. 1.** *Now there was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David,* etc.] The recent battle, though so much in favour of David, did not, put an end to the war between him and Ishbosheth, which lasted five years longer; for it was when Ishbosheth had reigned two years that that battle was fought, and he reigned five years longer; for not till his death, and when David had reigned above seven years in Hebron, was he made king over all Israel; and during this time peace was not made, but the war carried on; though perhaps not in pitched battles, of which we no more read, but in skirmishes:

*but David waxed stronger and stronger;* he having the advantage in all such skirmishes, and persons continually coming over to his side from the several tribes:

*and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker:* being always worsted whenever they skirmished with David's men, and by continual revolts from

them. This is reckoned an emblem of the kingdoms of Christ and antichrist, the one increasing more and more, as it has and will do, and the other decreasing, and before long will be consumed; and of the two parties in a regenerate man, grace and indwelling sin, the one as to its exercise growing stronger and stronger, and the other as to its influence on the outward conversation weaker and weaker.

**Ver. 2.** *And unto David were sons born in Hebron*, etc.] He was married before he came there, had wives in his state of exile, but had no children by them there, at least no sons; if any, only daughters:

*and his firstborn was Amnon, of Ahinoam the Jezreelitess*; who being mentioned first, and her son his firstborn, seems to have been his wife before he took Abigail; he had not much comfort of this firstborn son of his; (see <sup><1301></sup>2 Samuel 13:1-39).

**Ver. 3.** *And the second, Chileab, of Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite*, etc.] That is: who had been the wife of Nabal. This son's name is called Daniel, (<sup><1300></sup>1 Chronicles 3:1); and was the first name he had, and which his father gave him, because as if he should say, "God hath judged me", and pleaded the cause of his reproach from Nabal, (<sup><0253></sup>1 Samuel 25:39); but why he should be called Chileab is not easy to say; the name is commonly thought to signify "like unto his father", or "all father": had all the features of his father, and was exceedingly like him; the Jews have a fabulous story concerning this <sup>f49</sup>, not worth relating:

*and the third, Absalom the son of Maacah, the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur*; in (<sup><0208></sup>1 Samuel 27:8) we read of David's invading the land of the Geshurites; and the Jews say <sup>f50</sup> that he then took the daughter of this king captive, and she being a beautiful woman married her, after made a proselyte according to the law in (<sup><0210></sup>Deuteronomy 21:10-23); but it should be observed that David slew all the women of that country, and left not any alive; and besides that lay to the south of Judah, whereas this Geshur, of which Talmai was king, was a part of Syria, (<sup><1018></sup>2 Samuel 15:8); and lay to the north of the land of Israel; and with this king David hereby entered into an alliance, to strengthen his interest against Ishbosheth in those parts; of the trouble he met with from Absalom, (see <sup><1018></sup>2 Samuel 13:1-18:33), etc. contrary to the expectations he had raised when he gave him the name of Absalom, or Leabsalom, as in (<sup><1300></sup>1 Chronicles 3:2); that is, one given "for his father's peace".

**Ver. 4.** *And the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith*, etc.] The same that usurped the throne before his father's death, to anticipate Solomon, and died by his order, (<sup><1006></sup>1 Kings 1:5 2:25);

*and the fifth, Shephatiah the son of Abital*; of whom we read nowhere else.

**Ver. 5.** *And the sixth, Ithream, by Eglah David's wife*, etc.] Who also is not spoken of in any other place; only, in a like chronological account as the former, it is remarked that the mother of this only is called David's wife; the reason of which is supposed to be, either because she was a person of no note, and had nothing else to distinguish her; but the same may be said of the two foregoing; or because she was his beloved wife, his heifer, as her name signifies; hence the Jews <sup>f51</sup> take her to be Michal his first wife, whom he greatly loved, and who, though she had no children after her contempt of David for playing before the ark, unto the day of her death, yet might have before: but it should be observed, that as yet she was not returned to David in Hebron; and when she was returned, did not seem to continue there long enough to have a son there; and besides, being his first wife, would not be reckoned last; but still more foreign is another notion of the Jews <sup>f52</sup>, that she was Saul's widow, who though she might not be married to another might be married to a king, as David was; and this they suppose receives some confirmation from (<sup><1028></sup>2 Samuel 12:8); but after all it may be this phrase "David's wife", as some have observed, by a figure the rhetoricians call "zeugma", or "hypozeugma", is to be joined to everyone of the women before mentioned, (<sup><1032></sup>2 Samuel 3:2-5), who were his wives, and so called to distinguish them from his concubines, by whom he had sons also. Polygamy, or plurality of wives, which David gave into, is no favourable part of his character.

**Ver. 6.** *And it came to pass, while there was war between the house of Saul and the house of David*, etc.] As long as that continued, as it did until the following quarrel happened between Ishbosheth and Abner:

*that Abner made himself strong for the house of Saul*; or was strongly in the interest of that house, and used his utmost endeavours to support and confirm it.

**Ver. 7.** *And Saul had a concubine, whose name [was] Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah*, etc.] By whom he had two sons, (<sup><1038></sup>2 Samuel 21:8). Josephus <sup>f53</sup> calls her father's name Sibathus:

*and [Ishbosheth] said to Abner*; though the word “Ishbosheth” is not in the text, it is rightly supplied; for no other can be supposed to speak:

*wherefore hast thou gone in unto my father’s concubine?* and defiled her; though perhaps it was not so much the act of uncleanness that so much offended him, or the dishonour reflected on him and his family thereby, as it discovered an ambitious view in Abner to get the kingdom into his own hands, to which this was the leading step; (see <sup><1022></sup>1 Kings 2:22). Whether Abner was really guilty of this sin or no is not easy to determine; though, by his not absolutely denying it, it looks as if it was not merely a jealousy of Ishbosheth, or a false report made unto him; though, especially if he was not fully satisfied of it, it would have been his wisdom to have said nothing of it to him, since his continuance on the throne so much depended on him.

**Ver. 8.** *Then was Abner very wroth for the words of Ishbosheth*, etc.] If false he had a good deal of reason for it; and if true, he thought he deserved better at his hands, than to be reproved for and upbraided with what he might think was a very small fault, and might easily be connived at, and especially in one that had been so serviceable to him:

*and said, [am] I a dog’s head*; such a mean, vile, contemptible person with thee, as if no better than a dog, and as useless and as unserviceable as a dead dog, the head of a dog cut off; (see <sup><0244></sup>1 Samuel 24:14) (<sup><3098></sup>2 Samuel 9:8); or am I esteemed and to be treated as a head of dogs, a keeper of a pack of hounds, and not as a general of the armies of Israel? so Jarchi and others; but it seems rather to respect the filthy nature of a dog, that will couple with any; and so the sense is, am I such a filthy lustful creature that care not with whom I lie, no more, than a dog?

*which against Judah do show kindness to the house of Saul thy father, to his brethren, and to his friends*; who in opposition to the tribe of Judah, which alone abode by David, had shown respect to the family of Saul, and all his friends, by his close attachment to Ishbosheth:

*and have not delivered thee into the hand David*; when it was in his power to have done it many a tittle:

*that thou chargest me today with a fault concerning this woman?* he neither denies nor owns the charge, and yet, by his not denying it, tacitly owns it; though, by his way of speaking, he suggests as if it was no fault at all, at least a very trifling one, and such as ought not to have been

mentioned to him, considering the services he had done to Ishbosheth and his family.

**Ver. 9.** *So do God to Abner, and more also,* etc.] He wishes the worst of evils to himself, such as he cared not to name; but left them to be supposed what he meant as utter ruin and destruction of himself, soul and body:

*except as the Lord hath sworn to David, even so I do to him;* meaning if he did not do that David, which God had sworn should be done, namely, what follows, the translation of the kingdom to him; by which it appears that Abner knew of the promise and oath of God respecting this matter; and therefore acted against his conscience, in setting up Ishbosheth on the throne; which he knew would not prosper, and that he was fighting against God; which shows what a hardened wicked creature he was, and how far ambition, and being thought to be of consequence, will carry a man.

**Ver. 10.** *To translate the kingdom from the house of Saul,* etc.] Which was what the Lord had sworn to do, (<sup>4952</sup>1 Samuel 15:28,29); and which Abner now threatens to do, insolently taking that to himself which belonged to the Lord, and as if he could not do it without him:

*and to set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah;* over the one as well as over the other; for it was set over Judah already:

*from Dan even unto Beersheba;* which were the utmost borders of the land of Israel, from north to south, and so includes the whole.

**Ver. 11.** *And he could not answer Abner a word again,* etc.] That is, he would not, he durst not; otherwise, if it was fact he charged him with, he could have insisted on the truth of it, and aggravated the crime and scandal of it; and observed it to him, that the kindness he had shown him was no excuse for it; but such things, though he would, he durst not say:

*because he feared him;* he had the army at his command, and could dethrone him when he pleased; and it has been the fate of greater men than Ishbosheth to be awed by their generals, and even David himself; (see <sup>4039</sup>2 Samuel 3:39).

**Ver. 12.** *And Abner sent messengers to David on his behalf,* etc.] On his own account, and not on the account of Ishbosheth, or the people of Israel; but to obtain terms for himself, or in his own name, as representing him

and standing in his stead; or secretly, as Kimchi explains it, unknown to Ishbosheth, or the people of Israel. The Targum is,

“out of his place;”

he sent them from the place where he was, from Mahanaim:

*saying, whose [is] the land?* the land of Israel, is it not thine, David? verily it is; to whom does it belong but unto thee, to whom the Lord has given it? not to any of Saul’s posterity: this he ordered the messengers to say in the first place, in order to ingratiate himself to David, and gain his messengers an audience. The Targum is,

“I swear by him that made the earth;”

so Jarchi says, it is an oath by him whose the earth is, even by the living God, whose is the earth, and the fulness thereof:

*saying [also], make thy league with me;* he desired to enter into a covenant of friendship with him, that everything that had passed might be forgiven and forgotten:

*and, behold, my hand [shall be] with thee, to bring about all Israel unto thee:* he promises on his part to do his utmost to bring all Israel under his government and to obedience to him.

**Ver. 13.** *And he said, well, I will make a league with thee,* etc.] He accepted of the offer, he was ready and willing to enter into a covenant of friendship with him, and forgive all past offences:

*but one thing I require of thee;* as the condition of this covenant:

*that is, thou shall not see my face;* be admitted into my presence, or have any mark of my favour and respect:

*except thou first bring Michal, Saul’s daughter, when thou comest to see my face;* he insisted on it that Michal, Saul’s daughter, and his wife, should be brought along with him, and presented to him; this was the preliminary to the league and covenant; if this was not complied with, the proposal would not be attended to. This shows the great affection David retained for his first wife, though he had had six since, (see <sup><1000></sup>2 Samuel 3:2-5), and though she had lived with another man, (<sup><10254></sup>1 Samuel 25:44); as also his great regard to the honour of Saul’s family, that one of them might share

with him in the grandeur of the kingdom; though this also might be a piece of policy in him, to gain the friends of Saul's family to him.

**Ver. 14.** *And David sent messengers to Ishbosheth, Saul's son,* etc.] When Abner's messengers returned to him, and acquainted him with the condition of David's entering into a league with him, it is highly probable that Abner sent them or others to David, to let him know that he could not do this of himself; that it was advisable for him to write to Ishbosheth, whose sister she was, and demand her of him; and that then he would use his interest with Ishbosheth to grant it, and this method David took:

*saying, deliver [me] my wife Michal, which I espoused to me for an hundred foreskins of the Philistines;* two arguments he made use of to enforce his demand; one is, that it was his wife he required, to whom he had a right, and no other man; and the other is, that he had purchased her at a great expense, at the risk of his life, in slaying an hundred Philistines, whose foreskins he paid in for her at the instance of Saul; he mentions but one hundred, though he gave two hundred as her dowry, no more being required than one hundred; (see <sup><0985></sup>1 Samuel 18:25,27). Josephus very wrongly says six hundred <sup>f54</sup>; the Syriac and Arabic have here two hundred.

**Ver. 15.** *And Ishbosheth sent and took her from [her] husband,* etc.] Her second husband, to whom Saul had given her, (<sup><0254></sup>1 Samuel 25:44);

*[even] from Phaltiel the son of Laish;* he is called Phalti in (<sup><0254></sup>1 Samuel 25:44).

**Ver. 16.** *And her husband went with her along weeping behind her,* etc.] Because of his great affection to her, unwilling to part with her, but forced to it at the command of the king her brother:

*to Bahurim;* a city in the tribe of Benjamin, (<sup><0196></sup>2 Samuel 19:16); perhaps the same with Almon, (<sup><0218></sup>Joshua 21:18); these two words being of the same signification; and the Targum has it hero Almuth; so Alemeth in (<sup><0360></sup>1 Chronicles 6:60). It seems to be the same Josephus <sup>f55</sup> calls Bachures, and says it was not far from Jerusalem. Bunting <sup>f56</sup> says it was something more than a mile towards the northeast, and at this time is a fair castle strongly fortified, standing in a high place, and in the valley near it, at the stone Bohan, (<sup><0156></sup>Joshua 15:6); (see <sup><0078></sup>2 Samuel 17:18);

*then said Abner to him, go, return, and he returned;* by which it appears that Abner came with her to introduce her to David, without whom he was

not to see his face; and he did not choose her husband should go with her any further, and was at his orders obliged to go back, who otherwise would have gladly accompanied her further still, through his great affection for her.

**Ver. 17.** *And Abner had communication with the elders of Israel*, etc.] Had a conference with the chiefs of the several tribes about the affairs of the kingdom:

*saying, ye sought for David in time past [to be] king over you*; that is, at the death of Saul, and not before; for it was pretty generally known throughout the kingdom that David was anointed by Samuel and Saul himself had declared that he knew the kingdom would come to him; so that upon his death it was the general expectation and desire of the people that the government would devolve upon him, as it doubtless would, if Abner had not set up one of Saul's house, and persuaded the Israelites to own him their king.

**Ver. 18.** *Now then do [it]*, etc.] Make him your king, and I shall no longer oppose it as I have done:

*for the Lord hath spoken of David*; concerning his being king, and the saviour of his people Israel:

*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*; and which, though where recorded in so many words, yet was the sense of the promise of making him king, and the design of his unction; and besides they might have been spoken to Samuel, though not written; and which he might report, and so might pass from one to another to be generally known.

**Ver. 19.** *And Abner also spake in the ears of Benjamin*, etc.] Of the inhabitants of the tribe of Benjamin, of which tribe he was, and among whom he had the greatest influence; and with whom it was necessary to take some pains, because of their attachment to the family of Saul, which was of that tribe; and being near to that of Judah, might give David a good deal of trouble, if they were not won over to him:

*and Abner went also to speak in the ears of David in Hebron*; having sounded the elders of Israel, and won their thoughts about the change of government, and found them well disposed to David, and had prevailed



upon them to consent to make him king, and had gained the tribe of Benjamin on his side, went and reported to David the success he had:

*all that seemed good to Israel, and that seemed good to the whole house of Benjamin*; how agreeable it was to the elders of Israel, and particularly to the tribe of Benjamin, to have David king over them.

**Ver. 20.** *So Abner came to David to Hebron, and twenty men with him,* etc.] Before he went privately to him, and conferred with him, but now, having gained so many of the Israelites in favour of David, he appeared more publicly and brought perhaps some of the principal of the nation with him, to join in the league and covenant to be made:

*and David made Abner and the men that [were] with him a feast*; not only in honour to them, as great personages, especially Abner, and as expressive of reconciliation; but as a token of the covenant they were entering into, and for the confirmation of it; it being usual to have feasts when covenants were made; (see <sup>1028</sup>Genesis 26:28,30).

**Ver. 21.** *And Abner said to David, I will arise and go,* etc.] Into the several parts of the land of Israel:

*and will gather all Israel unto my lord the king*; the princes of the several tribes, and the elders of the people, their heads and principal men:

*that they may make a league with thee*; come into the league and covenant now made with Abner, and those with him:

*and that thou mayest reign over all that thine heart desireth*: which he supposed reached to all the people of the house of Israel and of Judah, though David had not expressed any eager and impatient desire of government, but waited the Lord's time to be put into the possession of the whole kingdom of Israel:

*and David sent Abner away, and he went in peace*; with inward satisfaction of mind, pleased that things were so well settled and adjusted to the content of all parties, and with outward satiety of body, no insults or attempts being made upon him by any of David's men; which perhaps would not have been the case if Joab had been at court, as may be concluded from what follows.

**Ver. 22.** *And, behold, the servants of David and Joab came from [pursuing] a troop,* etc.] A troop of robbers, that made an incursion into

the land, taking the advantage of a civil war between Israel and Judah; such as the Edomites, Amalekites, and especially the Philistines; which Joab hearing of went out in pursuit of them, and overtook them:

*and brought in a great spoil with them*; which they took from them:

*but Abner [was] not with David in Hebron*: when Joab and his army entered the city with their booty:

*for he had sent him away, and he was gone in peace*; he had just dismissed him, and he was gone off safely.

**Ver. 23.** *When Joab and all the host that [was] with him were come*, etc.]

To Hebron, or rather to David's court; for their coming to the city is before mentioned; this must be understood not of the whole army, of all the common soldiers, but of the chief officers, who with Joab came to court, to wait upon David, and report their success:

*they told Joab, saying, Abner the son, of Ner came to the king*; some of the courtiers informed him of it, who knew it would not be very agreeable to him:

*and he hath sent him away, and he is gone in peace*: instead of seizing him, and laying him in a prison as his enemy, he has let him go with all the marks of friendship and good will.

**Ver. 24.** *Then Joab came to the king*, etc.] To the apartment where he was; perhaps he was told the above at his first entering into the king's palace, by some in waiting, before he came to the king, which filled him with wrath, so that he came to him in a passion:

*and said to him, what hast thou done?* which was very insolent in a subject to say to his prince:

*behold, Abner came unto thee*; I have been credibly informed of it, and am assured it is a fact which cannot be denied; he represents it as if he had done a wrong thing to admit him to come to him; but perhaps the great fault was that he had let him go:

*why [is] it [that] thou hast sent him away, and he is quite gone?* or "going, [is] gone"<sup>f57</sup>; is clean gone off, when he ought to have been laid hold on as a traitor, and put in irons.

**Ver. 25.** *Thou knowest Abner the son of Ner*, etc.] Thou canst not be ignorant what a cunning deceitful man he is, nor of his designs; or dost thou not know? art thou ignorant? so read the Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Arabic versions, with an interrogation:

*that he came to deceive thee*: with false hopes, or to lead into wrong measures with an intention to involve and ruin him:

*and to know thy going out, and coming in*; the affairs of his court, the secrets of his government, to observe his conduct and behaviour, and all his actions, and improve them against him:

*and to know all that thou doest*; he suggests that he came not as a friend, but as a spy, and therefore ought to have been taken up, and detained, and not dismissed. This Joab said to set David against him, fearing, if he should be received into favour, he would be a rival of his; and besides his breast was full of revenge against him for the death of his brother.

**Ver. 26.** *And when Joab was come out from David*, etc.] Which perhaps he did at once, as soon as ever he had spoken his mind, and flew out of the room in a great passion, not waiting for the king's answer, since we read of none returned; though it may be the king disdained to give him one, or cared not to confer with him while in his passion, until it subsided; or chose not to provoke him more, for it is plain he had great power over him; which generals of armies at this time very much assumed, (see <sup>4089</sup>2 Samuel 3:39);

*he sent messengers after Abner*; in the name of the king, as Abarbinel rightly supposes, and so Josephus <sup>f58</sup>; for otherwise it can hardly be thought he would have returned on a message from Joab only, who he knew bore him ill will:

*which brought him again from the well of Sirah*; which might have its name from the thorns and briars that grew about it. Josephus <sup>f59</sup> calls it Besira, and says it was twenty furlongs or two and an half miles from Hebron:

*but David [knew] it not*; that Joab had sent messengers in his name after Abner to fetch him back; it was not done by his order, with his consent or knowledge; this is observed, to clear David from any concern in the death of Abner, as follows.

**Ver. 27.** *And when Abner was returned to Hebron*, etc.] Alone, and not the twenty men with him; not to David's court, but just to the city, to the gate of it:

*Joab took him aside in the gate*: where he was waiting for him, and met him; this was a public place, where people were continually passing and repassing, and where courts of judicature used to be held; wherefore Abner might think himself safe here with Joab, and have no suspicion at all of his design, and shows how fearless Joab was of God or men:

*to speak with him quietly*; peaceably, in a friendly manner, as all his gestures towards him showed; so that Abner made no difficulty of turning aside with him, supposing he had something to communicate to him from the king, which he had forgot:

*and smote him under the fifth [rib], that he died*; in the same place that Abner had smote his brother, of which (see <sup>4123</sup>2 Samuel 2:23); and this he did:

*for the blood of Asahel his brother*; for Abner's shedding his brother's blood; but this was not the only reason, and perhaps not the chief; but, as Josephus <sup>f60</sup> observes, because he was fearful if Abner was received into the friendship of the king, he would be preferred unto him, and take his place as general of the army, as being an older and more experienced officer; so Procopius Gazaeus, and Theodoret.

**Ver. 28.** *And afterward, when David heard [it]*, etc.] That Joab had sent to fetch Abner back, and that he had stabbed him in the gate of the city, and he was dead; it was some time after it was done that the news of it was brought to David; this circumstance is observed, the more to clear the king from any concern in this affair:

*he said*; in a public manner, in open court, before all his princes; he called God to witness, and, as Josephus <sup>f61</sup> says, stretching out his right hand to God, he cried aloud:

*I and my kingdom [are] guiltless before the Lord for ever from the blood of Abner the son of Ner*; he was sensible it would be known that Abner had been with him, and that Joab his general had killed him; and therefore it might be suspected that he had an hand in it, and that it was done by his order, with his privy council; and therefore, to purge him and them from it, he made this public declaration, that neither he nor his council knew

anything of it; and that it was not done with their knowledge and consent, and by their order, but through the resentment of a single person; and therefore hoped that no man would impute the shedding of this blood unto them, or that God would punish them for it; and he was the rather led to make this public declaration, because he knew that the death of Abner in this way would be resented by the friends of Saul's family, and be an obstruction to the union of the two kingdoms, which it was known Abner was endeavouring to bring about.

**Ver. 29.** *Let it rest on the head of Joab*, etc.] That is, the blood of Abner, who was the shedder of it; let the guilt of it be charged to him, and let punishment for it be inflicted on him:

*and on all his father's house*; on Abishai his brother, and other relations that might be privy to the death of Abner, and advising to it, and ready to assist in it if necessary:

*and let there not fail from the house of Joab*; let there be always in his family, and of his seed, one or other of the persons described as follows:

*one that hath an issue*; a gonorrhoea, which was reckoned infamous, and very impure, according to the Jewish law, and rendered persons unfit for society; (see <sup>CRIBI</sup>Leviticus 15:1-33);

*or that is a leper*; whose disease was very loathsome and infectious, and shut him out of the company of men; (see <sup>CRIBI</sup>Leviticus 13:1-59);

*or that leaneth on a staff*; being blind, as Aquila renders the word; or through weakness of body, not being able to walk without one; or through some disease of the feet, as the Jewish writers generally understand it; and R. Isaiah interprets it of the gout particularly: the word for "staff" is rendered "spindle", (<sup>CRIBI</sup>Proverbs 31:19); and to this sense it is rendered here in, the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Arabic versions; and then the meaning is, let his posterity, or some of them, be so poor, that they shall be obliged to get their livelihood in so mean a way as by spinning; or let them be of such an effeminate disposition, as be more fit to handle the spindle, and do the, work of women, than to use the sword:

*or that falleth on the sword*; not by it honourably in the field of battle, but cowardly destroying themselves with it:

*or that lacketh bread*; and is obliged to beg it: all which David might say, not by a spirit of prophecy, but in a passion; and to show with what horror he resented the action, and how detestable it was to him, and how far it was for him to have any concern in it: but though it was a very wicked action in Joab to murder Abner in this manner, and for the reasons he did; yet it was a just vengeance from the Lord on Abner for fighting against God, and acting against the dictates of his own conscience; for his rebellion against David, and perfidy to Ishbosheth, and for having been the cause of much bloodshed in Israel.

**Ver. 30.** *So Joab and Abishai his brother slew Abner*, etc.] For though it was only Joab that gave him the thrust of which he died, Abishai was in the secret, and was consenting and advising to his death, and so an accessory to it; and might be present, ready to assist in it, if occasion required; and so Josephus <sup>f62</sup> expressly says, that Abishai his brother was with him when he drew his sword, and smote him:

*because he had slain their brother Asahel at Gibeon in the battle*: which was no just reason at all; his blood was shed in war, this in peace, in cold blood, and under the guise of friendship; that was shed with reluctance, and after fair warning, and in defence of himself; but this wilfully in Joab, unawares to Abner, and in great deceit and hypocrisy; (see <sup><1K15></sup>1 Kings 2:5).

**Ver. 31.** *And David said to Joab, and to all the people that [were] with him*, etc.] To his whole court, Joab being present: for he did not flee, nor was he laid hold on in order to be brought to justice; which shows how great his power was, and that he was too hard for David, as in (<sup><1S3></sup>2 Samuel 3:39); however this he did, he enjoined his whole court, and Joab also, to express public mourning on this account:

*rend your clothes and gird you with sackcloth*; which were expressions of mourning used on various occasions, and on account of the dead, and which with the Heathens were carried to a greater excess, even to the tearing of their flesh,

*and mourn before Abner*; before his corpse, as carried to the grave, when it was usual to make great lamentations: (see <sup><1A15></sup>Acts 8:2);

*and King David [himself] followed the bier*; or “bed” <sup>f63</sup> on which his body was laid, and carried to the grave. On these the rich and noble among the Greeks and Romans were carried, and those of the meaner sort on biers <sup>f64</sup>;

and so with the Jews; (see Gill on “<sup>f64</sup> Luke 7:14”); some of which were gilded with gold, and were made of ivory, and had ivory feet <sup>f65</sup>; that of Herod’s was all of gold, inlaid with precious stones, and the body covered with purple, and followed by his sons and kindred, the soldiers going before armed, and their leaders following <sup>f66</sup>; the bier or bed with the Romans was sometimes carried by six persons, sometimes by eight or more <sup>f67</sup>. It was not usual for kings, as the Jews say <sup>f68</sup>, to attend a funeral, to go out of the doors of their palace after their own dead, and much less others; but David did this to satisfy the people, and to root out of their mind all suspicion of his having any hand in Abner’s death; and to show that he was not slain by his will, and with his consent.

**Ver. 32.** *And they buried Abner in Hebron*, etc.] According to the Jewish account of places of burial <sup>f69</sup>, he was buried in the midst of the city, though burying places were generally without; and so Fuller <sup>f70</sup> places this in his map; whether the cave of Machpelah, which was near Hebron, was now used for a burying place, is not certain:

*and the king lifted up his voice and wept at the grave of Abner*; made a great outcry, a loud lamentation, so as to be heard by all the people; and which no doubt was real and hearty, and not done merely with political views:

*and all the people wept*; through concern for the death of Abner, especially on account of the manner in which it was, and in imitation of the king, and being affected with his tears and cries.

**Ver. 33.** *And the king lamented over Abner*, etc.] Delivered an elegy or funeral oration, which he had composed on this occasion, as Josephus <sup>f71</sup> suggests: for he had cried and wept before, but now he expressed something as follows:

*and said, died Abner as a fool dieth?* the meaning of the interrogation is, he did not; the Targum is

“did Abner die as wicked men die?”

no, he did not; he did not die for any wickedness he had been guilty of; he did not die as a malefactor, whose crime has been charged and proved in open court, and sentence of condemnation pronounced on him righteously for it; but he died without anything being laid to his charge, and much less proved, and without judge or jury; he was murdered in a clandestine,

insidious, and deceitful manner; so the word “fool” is often taken in Scripture for a wicked man, especially in the book of Proverbs; the Septuagint version leaves the word untranslated,

“died Abner according to the death of Nabal?”

no; but it could hardly be thought that David would mention the name of any particular person on such an occasion.

**Ver. 34.** *Thy hands [were] not bound, nor thy feet put into fetters,* etc.] As malefactors are when they are taken up for any crime, and especially when proved upon them, and condemned for it, and brought forth to be executed. This was not his case, and had he been aware of the design against him, as his hands and feet were at liberty, he might have defended himself; or if he found he had too many to deal with, might have made use of his feet and fled:

*as a man falleth before wicked men, [so] fellest thou;* as a man being before bloodthirsty and deceitful men, falls before them, through treachery and deceit, privately and unawares, so fell Abner before Joab and Abishai; this David said in the presence of Joab, and before all the people, to declare the plain fact how it was, to express his detestation of it, and to show he had no hand in it; and Joab must be an hardened creature to stand at the grave of Abner, and hear all this, and not be affected with it:

*and all the people wept again over him;* over Abner, being laid in his grave; they had wept before, but hearing this funeral oration delivered by the king in such moving language, and in such a mournful tone, it drew tears afresh from them.

**Ver. 35.** *And when all the people came to cause David to eat meat while it was yet day,* etc.] The custom was to bury in the daytime, and after the funeral was over to provide and send in food to the relations of the deceased, and come and eat with them; as was also the usage with the Greeks and Romans <sup>f72</sup>; (see Gill on “<sup>24165</sup>Jeremiah 16:5, 7”) and kings themselves used to attend those feasts; for the Jews say <sup>f73</sup>,

“when they cause him (the king) to eat, all the people sit upon the ground, and he sits upon the bed;”

but in this case David refused to eat with them:



*David sware, saying, so do God to me, and more also*; may the greatest evils, and such as I care not to mention, befall me; and even more and worse than I can think of and express:

*if I taste bread, or ought else, till the sun be down*; perhaps the funeral was in the morning, as funerals with the Jews generally now are; for otherwise if it was now towards evening, his abstinence from food till that time would not have seemed so much, nor required much notice, and still less an oath.

**Ver. 36.** *And all the people took notice [of it]*, etc.] Not only of his oath, that he would not eat food till evening, but of his whole conduct at the funeral of Abner; the sorrow he expressed for his death, and the oration he made on account of it, in which he pretty severely reflected on his murderer:

*and it pleased them*; that he showed such a concern for his death, and that it was a clear case he had no hand in it:

*as whatsoever the king did pleased all the people*; what he did at this time, burying Abner with so much pomp and ceremony; and indeed he had so much the hearts of the people, and such a share in their affections, and they had such an high opinion of him, that all that he did in public and private affairs they reckoned well done; they were highly approved of by them, such an interest had he in them.

**Ver. 37.** *For all the people and all Israel understood that day*, etc.] Not the people of Judah only, but of Israel also, to whom the knowledge of these things came; they knew and were satisfied by his conduct and behaviour, by his words and actions:

*that it was not of the king to slay Abner the son of Ner*; it was not by the counsel or advice of the king, as the Targum; it was without his knowledge and consent, was contrary to his mind and will; that he had no manner of concern in it, and that if it had been in his power he would have prevented it.

**Ver. 38.** *And the king said unto his servants*, etc.] His courtiers, giving a reason why he mourned as he did; or “had said”<sup>f74</sup>, and so is a reason why the people concluded, and were fully satisfied, he had no hand in his death; but the first is best, because what follows was said not to the people at the grave, but to his servants at court:

*know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?* a “prince”, being of the royal family, his father was Saul’s uncle, and he his own cousin; a “great” man, being general of the army, a very valiant and skilful commander, a man of great wisdom and parts. David says nothing of his grace and virtue, only of his grandeur, his high birth and civil excellencies; he praises him in what he was commendable, and proceeds no further; and this was sufficient to show there was just cause of mourning on civil accounts; and this they might easily know and perceive, that the fall or death of such a man, which had that day happened in Israel, was a public loss, and matter of lamentation; and the rather as he was employing all his excellent talents in civil affairs, and all his interest in the people of Israel, to unite them to Judah, and bring them under the government of David.

**Ver. 39.** *And I [am] this day weak, though anointed king,* etc.] Which seems to be given as a reason, or for an excuse why he did not inflict just punishment upon the murderer, according to the law of God, because he was “weak”; not in body or mind, but with respect to the kingdom, that was like a tender branch, or in its infant state; and great care and caution were to be used that it was not overturned: he was a king by unction, not by birth; a son of the late king was yet up against him, and was possessed of the far greater part of the kingdom; he was indeed anointed by Samuel to be king over all Israel; but as yet he was not put into the possession of the kingdom he was anointed to; he was anointed and made king over Judah, and invested with the office of king there, and settled in it; and yet his power was not very great there, for as follows:

*and these men, the sons of Zeruiah, [be] too hard for me;* his sister’s sons, Joab and Abishai, they were a check upon him; he could not do what he would, their influence was so great, both in the court and in the camp; the one was general of the army, and the other a considerable officer in it, and both variant men, and very respectable among the people, for their achievements in war, and the success they had; so that they were very much out of the reach of David to bring them to justice, without shaking his kingdom; and therefore in point of prudence he thought it best to connive at this fact until he was more established in the kingdom. Whatever may be said for this conduct, it is certain he was too dilatory, and which did not sit easy upon his mind, and therefore gave it in charge to Solomon before his death not to suffer Joab to go to his grave in peace, (~~1~~ 1 Kings 2:5,6,31-34). Some take these words, “weak” and “hard”, in a different

sense, that David was weak or “tender”<sup>f75</sup>, as it may be rendered, tenderhearted, of a merciful disposition, and therefore spared Abner when he was in his hands, though he had done him so much harm, who was the Lord’s anointed; but these men, his sister’s sons, were of cruel tempers, more unmerciful than he, and therefore slew him; but the first sense seems best:

*the Lord shall reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness*; which may be considered either as an imprecation of evil on Joab, or a prediction, that sooner or later righteous judgment would be rendered to him by the Lord; with whom he leaves it to take vengeance on him, satisfying himself with this for the present, that though it was not in his power to do it, the Lord would in his own time and way: but after all that can be said in favour of David, he seems to have been too much in fear of men, and too distrustful of the power and promise of God to establish him in his kingdom, and was too negligent of public justice; which had it been exercised, might have prevented other sins, as the murder of Ishbosheth, to which the authors of it might be encouraged by this lenity.