

2 Samuel Chapter 3

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

“Long war”: The conflict between Ish-bosheth and David did not end in quick victory. There was a gradual transfer of power from the house of Saul to the house of David (verse 10), that lasted at least through the two year reign of Ish-bosheth and maybe longer.

Even after David was anointed king, he did not pursue conflict with his opponents; he fought only when confronted, willing to wait on God to make this kingdom, which was his in precept, become his in practicality (1 Chron. 3:1-4).

This is speaking of a period of several years. There just seemed as if there was too much revenge to take for past happenings.

Verses 2-5 (see 1 Chronicles 3:1-4).

Verses 2-5: David had already become a polygamist (compare 1 Sam. 25:43). Here the total number of wives becomes six, but only the childbearing wives are listed. Therefore Michal, Saul's daughter, is not listed. “David” had not yet recovered her from Phaltiel, to whom Saul had given her in the days of David's flight from Saul (compare 1 Sam. 25:44 with 2 Sam. 3:13-16). Although practiced in Israel, polygamy was neither sanctioned nor honored (compare Gen. 2:24).

2 Samuel 3:2 "And unto David were sons born in Hebron: and his firstborn was Amnon, of Ahinoam the Jezreelitess;"

“Amnon” He raped and defiled his half-sister Tamar and later, by the command of Absalom, was killed for his crime (13:1-39).

David was like many of the kings who had several wives. It seemed that, the prosperity that went with being king caused them to marry several times. Sometimes, they were marriages of state to help their political position. In the case of Ahinoam, this was not true. She was actually the third wife of David. "Amnon" means faithful.

2 Samuel 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;"

“Chileab”: He apparently died before he was able to enter into position to contend for the throne, for nothing more is said about him. This child was born to David by the wife whom David had taken upon the death of Nabal (see 1 Sam. 25:3).

“Absalom”: Literally “My Divine Father Is Peace” or “Divine Father of Peace.” Absalom was the son of Maacah who was a Geshurite princess from a region in Syria, not Israel. David may have married her as part of a diplomatic agreement made with Talmai, the Geshurite king, to give David an ally north of Ish-bosheth. Later Absalom, in fear of his life, fled to Geshur (13:37-38).

The name "Chileab" means protected by the father, or quite like the father. Abigail had married David after the death of her husband. In (1 Chronicles chapter 3 verse 1), he is called Daniel. This son, perhaps, did not live very long, because he is not mentioned as the eldest son, after the deaths of Amnon and Absalom.

Geshur was a small Armenian town in the northeast of Bashan. Absalom was the only son of Maacah. It appears, she was from a very prominent family, since her father was a king. Absalom is best known for killing his brother Amnon for raping their sister Tamar. In later years, he tried to take over his father's kingdom.

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

“Adonijah”: He was a prominent figure in the contention for David’s throne at the end of his reign (1 Kings 1 and 2), but was assassinated, allowing the throne to be given to Solomon (1 Kings 2:25). Haggith was probably married to David after his accession to the throne.

“Shephatiah ... Abital”: Shephatiah means “The Lord Judges.” Abital means “My Divine Father is Dew” or “My Divine Father of Dew.”

Adonijah becomes the eldest son of David, after the death of the first three. "Adonijah" means Jehovah is my LORD. Adonijah is eventually put to death by Solomon. There is nothing more known of Haggith, except the fact that she was the wife of David, and the mother of Adonijah. The fifth son of David's, Shephatiah, has a name that means Jehovah judges. About the only thing we know of Abital, the wife of David, was that she was born in Hebron and bore this son to David.

2 Samuel 3:5 "And the sixth, Ithream, by Eglah David's wife. These were born to David in Hebron."

“Eglah”: 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.

“Born to David”: More children were born to David when he moved to Jerusalem (5:14).

David was in Hebron about seven and one-half years. These children, listed above, all were born during that time. All of these were born about 1,000 B.C. Nothing else is known of this son, but what is here. Some believe that Eglah, Ithream's mother, is the same as Michal.

Verses 3:6 – 5:16: David assumed the kingdom of all Israel by a similar progression of events as those which led to his assuming the throne of Judah. In both cases, a man comes seeking David's favor (Amalekite, 1:1-13; Abner, 3:6-21). Both of these men are executed for their deeds (Amalekite, 1:14-16; Abner, 3:22-32). In both cases, this is followed by a lament of David (1:17-27; 3:33-39). Close to the middle of both accounts is a brief look at the anointing of David as king (over Judah, 2:1-7; over Israel, 5:1-5). After this, David and his men are successful in defeating their enemies (2:8-3:1; 5:6-12). Each section concludes with a list of the children born to David (Hebron, 3:2-5; Jerusalem, 5:13-16).

Verses 6-7: Taking a former king's "concubine" was considered a power move for the throne. Abner usurped Ish-bosheth's authority ("strengthening his hold"), so Ish-bosheth made a false accusation against him.

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."

"Abner made himself strong": Abner was the military leader of the country and the one who had put Ish-bosheth on the throne and whose power held him there. As time passed, Abner began to make his own move to take the throne.

In the last lesson, it was Abner who tried to call off the war between him and the followers of David. Perhaps, that was for a selfish reason, because we read here that they continued to fight off and on for the entire rule of Ish-bosheth.

Verses 7-10: The charge was a serious one. To take the king's "concubine" was to make a claim on the throne itself (1 Kings 2:19-25). The reference to a "dog's head" (probably a euphemism), implies vileness, in this case, a traitor. For the dog as a symbol of contempt (see the note on 1 Sam. 24:14). The "Lord" would use this incident to bring the loyalties of "Abner" and his forces to the side of "David" (verses 12-21).

2 Samuel 3:7 "And Saul had a concubine, whose name [was] Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah: and [Ish-bosheth] said to Abner, Wherefore hast thou gone in unto my father's concubine?"

"Rizpah": By taking Rizpah, the concubine of Saul, Abner made a clear statement to the people that he would take the place of Saul as king over Israel. Going in to the king's concubine was a statement of power and rightful claim to the throne (compare 16:21-22; in regard to Absalom). Ish-bosheth reacted strongly against Abner, so Abner resented his reaction as an indignity and, compelled by revenge, determined to transfer all the weight of his influence and power to David's side (verses 9-10).

Abner was the strength of Saul's army. He really had made Abner more powerful, than he would have been without him. What makes the statement above ridiculous is the fact that Saul is dead. As long as Saul was alive, she was his, but when he died she is free to marry anyone she wishes. In the case of a king, sometimes she would be taken by the next king, when her husband died. This is the only error, we could, possibly, see in this. The Levitical law does not give the woman to the next king. This would make this a fleshly custom, and not a law.

Verses 8-21: Fueled by his “anger” at being unjustly accused by “Ish-bosheth, Abner” admitted that David had been chosen by God to be Saul’s successor, and from that point on, he worked toward that aim. What motivated him to accept David’s leadership after he had fought against it is unknown. Perhaps he realized that David was a much better leader than Ish-bosheth, or perhaps Abner wanted to secure a position with the conquering king.

2 Samuel 3:8 "Then was Abner very wroth for the words of Ish-bosheth, and said, [Am] I a dog's head, which against Judah do show 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 today with a fault concerning this woman?"

“Dog’s head”: This was another way to ask, “Am I a contemptible traitor allied with Judah?” This was a common expression to show disdain (1 Sam. 17:43). Abner used this opportunity to condemn Ish-bosheth by reminding him that he would not have been in power had Abner himself not placed him there.

Abner was very wroth, because Ish-bosheth was trying to defame him. Abner, possibly, thought that the king was going to demote him. Abner is asking the king, if he had betrayed him to Judah? He does not understand why the king is trying to make him look bad, before the people. He is explaining to the king, that he could have turned him over to the armies of David, if he had not been loyal. He says, that Ish-bosheth is just trying to find some little something wrong, to demote him.

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;"

“As the Lord hath sworn to David”: Abner seemed to demonstrate the knowledge that David was to be the next king of Israel as God had sworn to David (1 Sam. 13:14-15; 15:28; 24:20).

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 Beer-sheba."

“Translate the kingdom”: Part of Saul’s kingdom had already been transferred to David, namely Judah; however, Abner vowed to complete the process by helping David obtain the rest of the kingdom.

“Dan even to Beer-sheba”: This was an expression meaning the whole country (Judges 20:1), i.e., from Dan in the north to Beer-sheba in the south.

We see from this, that Abner knew all along that the LORD had anointed David king by Samuel. Suddenly, he is saying that David will be king over all the people. It is inevitable, because the LORD anointed him as king. He is speaking prophetically, that David will be king of both Israel and Judah. It is not if David will be king of them all, but when.

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

That is, he would not, he dared 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 dared 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 Ish-bosheth to be awed by their generals, and even David himself (see 2 Sam. 3:39).

Ish-bosheth was not a strong person in the beginning. Even though what he said was treason, he did not arrest Abner, for fear Abner would kill him. Ish-bosheth had no idea, whether the men would be faithful to him or not, if he went against their military leader, Abner. He just did and said nothing.

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."

“Whose is the land”: Though Abner’s language (verses 9-10), implied the conviction that in supporting Ish-bosheth he had been going against God’s purpose of conferring the sovereignty of the kingdom on David, this acknowledgment was not justification of his motives. He selfishly wanted to be on the winning side and to be honored as the one who brought all the people under David’s rule.

Abner, it seems, was not afraid of Ish-bosheth. He did not even regard that Ish-bosheth was king. He sent word to David, that he could give him possession of the land, if David would go into an agreement with him. "Whose is the land" is a sarcastic remark that he can hand over the land of Ish-bosheth to David.

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."

“Michal Saul’s daughter”: David requested Michal for two reasons. One, it would right the wrong Saul had committed toward David by having given Michal, who was David’s wife and who loved him (1 Sam. 18:20, 28), to another man (1 Sam. 25:44). Two, it would serve to

strengthen David's claim to the throne of all Israel by inclining some of Saul's house to be favorable to his cause.

Saul had given David Michal to wife in his youth. She was David's first wife. When Saul turned on David, and David had to go in exile to save his life, Saul gave her to another man. It appears, from this, that David wanted her back. David not only wants her for his wife, but wants the recognition of Saul's daughter being his wife. The only way that David will make an agreement with Abner is, if Abner brings David's wife back to him.

2 Samuel 3:14 "And David sent messengers to Ish-bosheth Saul's son, saying, Deliver [me] my wife Michal, which I espoused to me for a hundred foreskins of the Philistines."

"A hundred foreskins of the Philistines": David reminded Ish-bosheth that he had not only paid the dowry to Saul for his daughter, 100 foreskins of the Philistines, but had delivered double the asking price (1 Sam. 18:25-27). Thus, Michal rightfully belonged to David.

David had bought the right to be Michal's husband by killing the Philistines, and carrying their foreskins to Saul. Saul had no right to give David's wife to another. She was David's, not Saul's, to do with such as this.

2 Samuel 3:15 "And Ish-bosheth sent, and took her from [her] husband, [even] from Phaltiel the son of Laish."

Her second husband, to whom Saul had given her (1 Sam. 25:44).

"Even from Phaltiel the son of Laish": He is called Phalti (in 1 Sam. 25:44).

"Phaltiel" means deliverance of God. This is first strange, that it would be Ish-bosheth that would do this instead of Abner. It is also very unusual for a woman, who is living with her husband, to be taken from him for another. This is really what happened in the beginning with Michal and David, so perhaps, that is why this happens here.

2 Samuel 3:16 "And her husband went with her along weeping behind her to Bahurim. Then said Abner unto him, Go, return. And he returned."

"Bahurim" Located just east of Jerusalem, it became the final location where Phaltiel (compare 1 Sam. 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 (19:16).

They had lived together for a number of years, so it would be understandable that this would grieve her husband. He must understand, however, that it grieved David, when she had been taken from him earlier. Abner refuses to let him go with Michal, and sends him home.

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:"

“Elders of Israel”: These men were the recognized leaders of the people serving as Ish-bosheth’s advisers who would have been consulted when important decisions needed to be made (19:7).

It seemed that, many of the elders had felt they should have David for king. They had to go along with Abner taking Michal back to David, as well. They had wanted David to be king all along.

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."

“My servant David”: David is called “the Lord’s servant” more than 30 times in the Old Testament. 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.

It appears Abner knew all along that David was the choice of the LORD for king. He knew that the LORD had told David, he would save his people from the Philistines. The Philistines were their enemies, as well as David's enemies. Abner had suffered defeat at the hands of the Philistines. He had also suffered defeat at the hands of Joab, David's military leader. Abner has lost his leadership qualities.

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."

“Benjamin”: Abner gave special attention to the tribe of Benjamin, for they were Saul’s and Ish-bosheth’s kinsmen (see 1 Sam. 9:1-2).

It appears that, the house of Benjamin wanted to follow David. They were in mutual consent, that the agreement with David would be a very good thing. Abner had extra strength to carry to the bargaining table, because the house of Benjamin was behind him.

2 Samuel 3:20 "So Abner came to David to Hebron, and twenty men with him. And David made Abner and the men that [were] with him a feast."

These were doubtless representative men, selected by Abner from Israel and Benjamin to accompany him and confirm his report. The feast which David made for them is not to be understood of mere conviviality, but of a solemn sacrificial feast, such as was customary in ancient times in connection with important negotiations (see Gen. 26:30; 31:54; 1 Kings 3:15).

Many times, agreements were made over a big feast of celebration. These 20 men that came to this feast were possibly, the elders spoken of earlier. They were men of influence who also, wanted to make agreement with David. The group brought Michal back to David. This was their part of the bargain, to get David to sit down and talk to them. There would be details to work out for David to become king of all Israel.

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."

“Covenant with you”: This covenant moved beyond the personal agreement made between Abner and David and was operative on the national level, uniting both north and south.

“In peace”: The repetition of this phrase (in verses 22-23), serves to emphasize the fact that David sought to ensure peace with Abner. This also accentuates the fact that David was not involved in Abner’s death (verses 26-30).

The tribes would be gathered together and unanimously make David their king. Abner had been their true leader, and he would tell them he thought this would be a good thing to do. David allowed Abner to leave peacefully, to go and tell the others of the plans.

2 Samuel Chapter 3 Questions

1. During the wars between the house of Saul and the house of David, what happened?
2. Who was the firstborn son of David?
3. Who was the mother of the son?
4. Who was David's son by Abigail?
5. Who was Abigail, before she married David?
6. What does "Chileab" mean?
7. What name is Chileab called in the book of (1 Chronicles 3:1)?
8. Who was Absalom the son of?
9. What is Absalom best known for?
10. When does Adonijah become the eldest son of David?
11. What does "Adonijah" mean?
12. How many years did David reign from Hebron?
13. Who was strong in the house of Saul?
14. Who ruled at that time?
15. What was the name of Saul's concubine, who Abner went in to?

16. If there is no law about taking a dead man's wife or concubine, then this is a _____.
17. In verses 9 and 10, what is Abner saying about David?
18. Why did Ish-bosheth not arrest Abner for saying, David would be king?
19. What sarcastic remark did Abner make in verse 12?
20. How did David answer Abner's offer to an agreement?
21. Why did David want Michal?
22. What was the condition David placed upon the possibility of an agreement?
23. Who did David send a message to, to release his wife to him?
24. Who was her husband at this time?
25. What is unusual about all of this?
26. How did her husband act at them taking Michal?
27. Who had Abner communicated with?
28. What had Abner known from the beginning?
29. Who came with Abner to Hebron to meet with David?
30. Who will Abner go back to, to get them to agree to the proposal he and David had made?
31. How did David let Abner leave?