

II Samuel Lesson 03

II Samuel Chapter 3

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Memory verses for this week: *Psa 48:14 For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.*

Overview of II Samuel 3: In this next chapter of II Samuel, there is record of the lingering war between the house of David and the house of Saul. Record is made of David's immediate family at Hebron. Also, the incident of Abner defecting to David is recorded. This is followed by the sordid account of Joab's murder of Abner.

I. War Between House of David and House of Saul

2 Sam 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.

As time passed, David's political and military fortunes strengthened whilst those of the remnants of Saul's forces diminished. The sacred writer notes briefly, "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."

II. David's Family in Hebron (Detailed in I Chronicles 3:1-4)

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

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

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

2 Sam 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.

While David lived in Hebron, he evidently took additional wives and began to raise a large family. Six different sons are mentioned by his six separate wives. David already had married Ahinoam and Abigail. After settling in Hebron he also married Maacah, Haggith, Abital, and Eglah.

David's first-born son Amnon would later become infamous in his crime against his sister. It is of interest that his fourth born son was Adonijah who would later seek to succeed his father's throne. Absalom later would attempt to take the throne by going against his father. The rest of his wives and sons mentioned remained in relative obscurity.

In verse 3, the mention of "Talmi king of Geshur" likely refers to a region of Syria according to II Samuel 15:8.

2 Sam 15:8 For thy servant vowed a vow while I abode at Geshur in Syria, saying, If the LORD shall bring me again indeed to Jerusalem, then I will serve the LORD.

2 Sam 15:9 And the king said unto him, Go in peace. So he arose, and went to Hebron.

It may be that David married Maacah not only for his personal interest in her, but to strengthen political and military alliances in that direction. The kingdoms of David and Solomon had its greatest influence to the northeast which is toward Syria.

The focus now returns to the lingering war between the house of David and that of Saul. Though Ishbosheth was the supposed king of the eleven tribes of Israel, the real power behind his tenuous throne was Abner. Though additional battles between David and Abner are not recorded, a period of a 'cold war' certainly existed.

III. Abner Deserts to David

2 Sam 3:7 And Saul had a concubine, whose name was Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah: and Ishbosheth said to Abner, Wherefore hast thou gone in unto my father's concubine?

2 Sam 3:8 Then was Abner very wroth for the words of Ishbosheth, 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 to day with a fault concerning this woman?

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

2 Sam 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.

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

The ascendancy to power wielded by Abner quickly turned to arrogance of power. Abner took an interest in a young woman who had formerly been a

concubine of Saul and began an affair with her. Ishbosheth, Saul's son, was shocked. His outrage was not so much over the immoral nature of Abner's affair but rather his lack of respect for his deceased father, King Saul, in carrying on with one of his concubines.

A concubine in Old Testament to Israel was sort of a second class wife. Such a woman was viewed as belonging to the man with which she was involved but without the full status of marriage. Although Ishbosheth was upset by the affair, Abner was enraged that he had been called on it. He was utterly insulted by Ishbosheth finding fault. He claimed that he had been treated like a dead dog and one with its head cut off at that.

Abner reminded Ishbosheth that it was only by his help that the weak king had not been defeated by David. In light of that, Abner defiantly demanded why Ishbosheth would interfere in his love affair. There likely was a mixture of carnal anger, and embarrassment for being called for his actions. Therefore, Abner defiantly warned (V-9), "So do God to Abner, and more also, except, as the LORD hath sworn to David, even so I do to him."

The thought is that as far as Abner was concerned, David ought to be king even as God had earlier sworn to him. There was no doubt about it, Abner made his sentiments clear in verse 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."

The interests of Abner were that the rule of Israel be passed (i.e., translated) from the feeble dynasty of Saul to David. David should be made king over all of Israel from Dan in the far north to Beersheba in the far south. The weak character of Ishbosheth's reign is noted in verse 11 "And he could not answer Abner a word again, because he feared him." The days of Ishbosheth as king of Israel were numbered. He could do nothing against his traitorous general.

IV. Abner Sends Messengers to David

2 Sam 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.

2 Sam 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.

2 Sam 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.

Abner, the disloyal general, therefore sent messengers to David. They were to the effect that if David would make a pact of amnesty to him, he would deliver the

outstanding eleven tribes to David, making him king thereof. It is quite evident that David did not immediately embrace Abner's offer. He may have been suspicious, and therefore ordered a significant condition. David therefore sent word back to Abner, "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." The word translated as **well** (*bwj towb*) most basically means 'good.' The idea is "Fine, I will make an agreement with you."

Before David would have any further contact with Abner, he demanded his first wife Michal be returned to him. 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. A point of interest is that David directed his demand to Ishbosheth though the contact had been made by Abner.

David already had six wives. Michal, his first, would make seven. Clearly, polygamy was an accepted social custom of the day. Furthermore, David intended to remove her from the man with whom she had been living, thus breaking up that marriage. It may be that David held that only he was her lawful husband. In any event, David wanted her back. It is noteworthy that Saul had only required one-hundred Philistine foreskins from David. He in fact had delivered two hundred, (I Samuel 18:25-27). However, here he merely indicated what had been required to obtain Michal as wife.

2 Sam 3:15 And Ishbosheth sent, and took her from her husband, even from Phaltiel the son of Laish.

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

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

2 Sam 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.

2 Sam 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.

Upon receiving the demand from David, Ishbosheth sent, and took her from her husband. This truly is one of the personal tragedies of the Old Testament. Phaltiel was victimized in this ordeal. He accordingly was broken hearted. Bahurim was a town of the tribe of Benjamin on the road between Jericho and Jerusalem. Michal, Abner, and party evidently were coming from Gilead which is east of the Jordan River which was the seat of Ishbosheth. Abner wasted no time in starting negotiations to make David king over all Israel. Emissaries from Abner were sent to the various leaders of the nation.

Apparently upon Saul's death, there had been a groundswell of support for David to be king over the entire nation. That did not come to pass inasmuch as Abner at that time threw his support to Ishbosheth, Saul's son. Times had changed and it was apparent that greater Israel was aware that Samuel had anointed David to be the next king of the entire nation. There is no specific record of the statement made by Abner regarding David delivering Israel from the Philistines. However, that clearly was the popular perception across the land. Abner therefore urged the leaders of the nation to unite behind David.

Furthermore, the old general was careful to build consensus of all parties involved (with the exception of Ishbosheth). He conferred with the leaders of the tribe of Benjamin because that was the tribe of Saul and Ishbosheth. He wanted them to come on board with the gathering momentum of making David king. Abner thus brought word to David for his consideration of his careful negotiations including that to which Benjamin would agree.

Matthew Henry made these comments on II Samuel.

Many, like Abner, are not above committing base crimes, who are too proud to bear reproof, or even the suspicion of being guilty. While men go on in sin, and apparently without concern, they are often conscious that they are fighting against God. Many mean to serve their own purposes; and will betray those who trust them, when they can get any advantage. Yet the Lord serves his own designs, even by those who are thus actuated by revenge, ambition, or lust; but as they intend not to honour him, in the end they will be thrown aside with contempt.

There was real generosity both to Michal and to the memory of Saul, in David's receiving the former, remembering probably how once he owed his life to her affection, and knowing that she was separated from him partly by her father's authority. Let no man set his heart on that which he is not entitled to. If any disagreement has separated husband and wife, as they expect the blessing of God, let them be reconciled, and live together in love.

2 Sam 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.

2 Sam 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.

2 Sam 3:22 And, behold, the servants of David and Joab came from pursuing a troop, and brought in a great spoil with them: but Abner was not with David in Hebron; for he had sent him away, and he was gone in peace.

2 Sam 3:23 When Joab and all the host that was with him were come, they told Joab, saying, Abner the son of Ner came to the king, and he hath sent him away, and he is gone in peace.

Record of that historic conference is thus noted. **“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.”** It is clear that David was gracious and hospitable to the delegation. Abner got right down to business. He said to 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.”

Abner offered to David the crown of the entire nation. The fact that twenty men were with Abner gave David indication of the consensus of the rest of the tribes. Moreover, those twenty men witnessed the good will of David toward both Abner and them. That would prove crucial in the events soon to follow.

Abner and his party thus departed in peace. No final resolution of the matter had been reached, but all seemed happy with its prospect of peace. It is clear that Israel at large had little confidence in Ishbosheth. No details are provided as to how Ishbosheth would be deposed as king. Events soon to happen would resolve that problem. During these negotiations, Joab, David’s lieutenant general had been away.

Evidently, Joab had been sent by David on a mission to pursue after a band of marauding Philistines. Though unstated, they likely may have been Philistines or perhaps Amalekites. Returning in victory, Joab learned of Abner’s visit in his absence. There was no love lost by Joab on Abner. If you recall, it was Abner who had personally killed Joab’s younger brother Asahel in the battle of Gibeon. Joab never forgave Abner for that.

V. Joab Comes to the King

2 Sam 3:24 Then Joab came to the king, and said, What hast thou done? behold, Abner came unto thee; why is it that thou hast sent him away, and he is quite gone?

2 Sam 3:25 Thou knowest Abner the son of Ner, that he came to deceive thee, and to know thy going out and thy coming in, and to know all that thou doest.

2 Sam 3:26 And when Joab was come out from David, he sent messengers after Abner, which brought him again from the well of Sirah: but David knew it not.

Upon learning of Abner’s visit, Joab was enraged. He promptly marched in to David and demanded an explanation. Then Joab came to the king, and said, What hast thou done? behold, Abner came unto thee; why *is* it *that* thou hast sent him away, and he is quite gone? Joab was astounded that David had received his enemy. He thus warned David, (v25), “Thou knowest Abner the son of Ner, that he came to deceive thee, and to know thy going out and thy coming in, and to know all that thou doest.” As far as Joab was concerned, Abner had come to gather intelligence of David’s situation. In his mind, Abner had only come to deceive David to lure him to defeat.

Verse 26 show that without the knowledge or consent of David, when Joab was come out from David, he sent messengers after Abner, which brought him again from the well of Sirah: but David knew *it* not. Though otherwise not described, the well of Sirah apparently was on the road going north out of Hebron. Abner had apparently stopped there for the night. Word was thus sent to Abner to return to Hebron.

VI. Joab's Murder of Abner

2 Sam 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.

Abner was murdered by Joab in revenge for killing Asahel.

2 Sam 3:28 And afterward when David heard it, he said, I and my kingdom are guiltless before the LORD for ever from the blood of Abner the son of Ner:

2 Sam 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.

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

2 Sam 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.

2 Sam 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.

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

2 Sam 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.

2 Sam 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.

Upon hearing of Joab's deed, David was greatly displeased. David wanted it made clear that he had nothing to do with Abner's death. Furthermore, he assigned the guilt thereof to Joab's family. David thus issued a curse against his former friend. As far as David was concerned, he invoked the descendants of Joab to not fail to have disease (i.e., **an issue**), be lepers, be crippled, be suicidal, or impoverished. Further detail of the crime is noted. It is clear that Abishai, Joab's brother, assisted him in murdering Abner. Their motive was revenge for what Abner had done to their brother.

David clearly was grieved over what had happened. He made quite public his mourning for Abner's untimely decease. David thus declared a time of official mourning for Abner. He, himself, led in public grief over his demise. Abner was thus buried at Hebron. David further eloquently eulogized him.(V-33) " And the king lamented over Abner, and said, Died Abner as a fool dieth?" The answer to that rhetorical question was apparent. Abner did not so die (V-34) " Thy hands *were* not bound, nor thy feet put into fetters: as a man falleth before wicked men, so fellest thou."

He was not bound as a criminal. Rather, before wicked men he was killed. Once again, David showed his utter displeasure for what Joab and Abishai had done. After David's remarks at the grave side, all the people wept again over him. After the funeral, (v35) David fasted in grief over what had happened throughout the day of Abner's funeral. He invoked an oath of death against himself if he ate that day.

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

2 Sam 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.

2 Sam 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?

2 Sam 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.

There is no indication that David was anything less than utterly sincere in his public mourning. However, it bode well for him. Citizens took note of his innocence in this sordid affair. The righteous character of David was apparent to the people of Israel. As David would years later utter, "He that ruleth over men *must be just*, ruling in the fear of God" (II Samuel 23:3). He had openly demonstrated his just character for all to see.

David therefore lamented to his confidants, "Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?" The young king would only praise the fallen general Abner. The wisdom of David is thus further manifested. He also despaired over the folly of his own subordinates. It may be that David did not think he had the political strength to bring Joab and Abishai to justice.

Furthermore, they were his nephews. As genuine war heroes, Joab and Abishai were for the moment untouchable by David. However, he committed the matter into God's hands to mete out justice. Evil pursues sinners and will overtake them at the last in one way or another as so illustrated here in the lives of Abner and Joab.

*Psa 34:13 Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.
Psa 34:14 Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.
Psa 34:15 The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.
Psa 34:16 The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.*

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed.