
I. BATTLE OF MT. GILBOA

A. Israel's loss

1. The Death of Saul & his sons (1 Sam 31.1-6, 1 Chr 10.1-6)

- a. As the Philistine's attacked, Saul's troops were slaughtered
- b. Saul's three sons were killed
- c. Saul was badly wounded by the Philistine archers
 - 1). He asked his armor bearer to slay him to avoid being used for sport by the Philistines
 - 2). When the armor bearer wouldn't kill him, Saul fell on his sword and then so did his armor bearer
- d. Now the prophecy from Samuel was fulfilled

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2. (1 Chr 10.13-14) God is affirmed as Saul's executioner

a. Two reasons are given for why God took Saul down

1). Saul did not keep God's word

- a.) Failed to follow God's command to completely wipe out the Amalekites
- b.) Took over Samuel's priestly role of offering a sacrifice when Samuel didn't show up as Saul thought he should

- 2). He sought advice of a medium instead of God when he saw the Philistine battle coming

- b. So God turned the kingdom over to David
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B. The Brave Gileadites

1. The war's aftermath (1 Sam 31.7-10, 1 Chr 10.7-10)

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- a. The people in the villages of Jezreel, and some points east of the Jordan, fled
 - 1). The Philistines then occupied these sites for a time
 - b. The Philistine army searched Mt. Gilboa for weapons and valuables among the slain
 - 1). They discovered Saul's body
 - a.) The cut off his head, and put it in the house of their main god, Dagon
 - b.) They nailed his body to the wall of Beth-shan, near the Jordan
 - c.) They sent his weapons around Philistia in celebration to show he was dead
 - The weapons were then put in the temple of Ashtaroth > goddess of sex and war
2. The rescue (1 Sam 31.11-13, 1 Chr 10.11-12)
- a. The men of Jabesh-gilead heard about Saul's body
 - b. They went to Beth-shan and retrieved his body, and those of Saul's sons from the battle field
 - 1). They buried them under the tamarisk (or oak) tree near their city
 - 2). They then mourned for the dead for seven days
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II. DAVID BECOMES KING

A. Reaction to Saul and Jonathan's demise

1. Report of the battle (2 Sam 1.1-10)

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- a. A man struggled into David's camp at Ziklag
 - 1). His clothes were torn
 - 2). He had dust on his head > expressing woe by heaping dust on head
 - b. He told David about the battle at Mt. Gilboa
 - 1). He said he was an Amalekite that came from the battle
 - 2). The Israelites were sorely defeated
 - 3). Saul and Jonathan were dead
 - c. David asked how he could be certain of Saul & Jonathan's deaths
 - 1). The man indicated that he had been on Mt. Gilboa when he saw Saul mortally wounded and being pursued by Philistines
 - 2). Saul asked him to kill him so that the Philistines wouldn't have him to torment and abuse
 - 3). The man said he complied, and brought Saul's crown and bracelet to confirm Saul's death
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2. David's reaction (2 Sam 1.11-16)

a. David and his men went into instant ritual of mourning

- 1). They rent their clothes
- 2). They mourned and wept into the evening
 - a.) The Amalekite might have wondered at this, given how it was known that David had been pursued by Saul

b. At evening, David summoned the Amalekite to him

- 1). David asked him why he thought he had the authority to slay the Lord's anointed
 - a.) Remember that David had refused to do this when he had the opportunities
- 2). He then told one of his young men to kill the Amalekite because he had confessed his guilt

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3. David's elegy for Saul and Jonathan

a. David's lament was given in the form of poetry (2 Sam 1.17-18)

- 1). Called it the "song of the bow"
 - a.) Contains the often quoted phrase "How have the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle!..."

2). He commanded that it be put in the book *Jashar*

- a.) An extra-biblical work in poetic form
- b.) Heb for "one who [or that which] is straight, honest, just, righteous, upright"
 - Appears to be an Israelite book recording deeds of valor
- c.) Mentioned in Joshua 10.13 & Septuagint version of 1 Ki 8 as a mention of a "book of song" at the end of the prayer

b. David describes Saul and Jonathan as mighty royalty (19-22)

- 1). He describes them as the mighty and beauty of Israel
- 2). He was anguished by the thought that the Philistines would be celebrating their deaths
- 3). Saul and David had fought valiantly, their weapons didn't lie unused
- 4). He wished Mt. Gilboa to remain barren as their testimony

c. David lauds the relationship between Saul and Jonathan (23-24)

- 1). They were together, not even separated by death
- 2). He described them as "swifter than eagles" and "stronger than lions."
- 3). He called the Israelite women to weep over Saul because of the prosperity which he brought to them

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- d. He concludes with special reference to Jonathan (25-27)
- 1). He had considered Jonathan a special man and a brother
 - 2). Jonathan brought him more satisfaction than any woman in his life

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4. David's reaction should be a lesson in a believer's living
- a. He was hounded and misunderstood by Saul, yet he mourned over his loss
 - b. David understood ...
 - 1). God's appointed leadership, and respect for it
 - 2). The frailty of every human under worldly pressures
 - 3). The need for forgiveness

B. David acts to become king

1. (2 Sam 2.1-4a) Note in vs 1 that David first inquired of the Lord what he should do

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- a. God answered that he should go to Judah
- b. Further, He told him to go to Hebron
 - 1). The geographical and political center of the Judah region
- c. All of his men and their families moved with him to the cities surrounding Hebron
- d. The tribal leaders of Judah came to anoint him king
- e. David's kindness shown (2 Sam 2.4b-7)
 - 1). He lauded the men of Jabesh-gilead for retrieving Saul's body and giving it a proper burial
 - a.) He asked for God's blessings on them
 - b.) He also promised to treat them with reciprocal kindness for their brave and kind act

III. DAVID'S REIGN CHALLENGED

A. David's situation at this point

1. There were still a number of Saul's supporters to challenge David

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- a. Their most likely replacement for Saul, Jonathan, had died with him
- b. Saul's only remaining son was Ish-bosheth
 - 1). Mephibosheth was Saul's son by a concubine
 - 2). Saul's uncle and army general, Abner, tried to rally support for him

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FAMILY TREE

- a.) Earlier Scripture said Abner was Saul's uncle, but he was the son of Ner, who WAS Saul's uncle
- b.) Several solutions have been suggested, but the most likely is that Ner and Abiel (Saul's grandfather) were two names for the same man (Like Jacob/Israel)

B. Opposition forms

1. Abner's scheming (2 Sam 2.8-11)

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a. Abner took Ish-bosheth to Mahanaim and made him king

- 1). Abner's base of operations beyond the Jordan
- 2). They established this as the capital of Israel

b. Ish-bosheth became king over all of Israel

- 1). Ruled all of the tribes other than Judah, where David ruled
 - 2). Apparently this took five years, and then Ish-bosheth ruled for two years, while David reigned for seven and one-half years
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2. Civil war begins

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a. The meeting at Gibeon (2.12-17)

- 1). Abner decides to advance into Judah territory (as a challenge ?)
- 2). Joab, David's nephew, leads the Judah forces to challenge the intrusion
- 3). The two forces met in Gibeon, where a strange arrangement takes place
 - a.) They decide that 12 soldiers from each side would stage a mini battle for entertainment of the troops
 - b.) The 24 soldiers are so skilled that they end up wounding each other by sword
 - Helkath-hazzurim > "the field of sword edges"

- 4). Abner's forces were then defeated in a fierce battle that followed

b. A loss with later consequences (2.18-23)

1). Joab's youngest brother, Asahel, was very fast

- a.) He decided to pursue Abner and kill him

2). Abner knew that Joab would never forgive him if he killed Asahel

- a.) He tried to deter him by pointing spoils of the young Israeli soldiers that he could have after battle
- b.) He then warned him that Joab would not forgive him if he killed him

3). Asahel did not heed Abner's advice

- a.) Abner stopped abruptly as he ran up behind him
- b.) Abner thrust the butt of his spear back into Asahel
- c.) The combined force was enough to penetrate Asahel and kill him

- 4). All of those who came on this spot in the period after paused to pay tribute to the bravery of Asahel



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- c. A halt to the pursuit (2.24-29)
- 1). Joab and his remaining brother pursued the Israelites and Abner as they fled toward Mahanaim
 - 2). Abner rallied his men and mounted a defensive position on top of a hill
 - 3). Abner then called to Joab
 - a.) He cautioned Joab to consider the further losses to all "brothers" if Joab tried to take them
 - b.) Joab decided to take his men and go home
 - 4). Abner led his men back to Mahanaim
 - a.) They reached the Arabah (Jordan Valley) and followed it to their crossing point on the Jordan

- d. A count of the losses (2.30-32)
- 1). The Judahites had lost 19 men plus Asahel
 - 2). The Israelites lost 360 men
 - 3). Joab and his men buried Asahel in his father's tomb in Bethlehem
 - a.) They then marched all night to return to Hebron

C. David's strengthening (2 Sam 3.1-5)

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- . Apparently there were more clashes between Israel and Judah
. But Judah strengthened, and Israel weakened
. During this 7-1/2 years, David's family grew
- a. David took three more wives [handout]
- 1). This is in direct violation of Deut 17.15-17
 - 2). Many scholars believe that David's lust led to the many later problems of his family
 - a.) Amnon violated his half-sister Tamar
 - b.) Absalom rebelled against David, tried to take the crown
 - c.) Adonijah tried to take the kingdom from Solomon
- b. Six sons were born to his family

D. A twist of events within the opposition

1. David's succession to throne was aided by a series of unexpected events on the opposition's side

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2. Abner is accused (2 Sam 3.6-11)

- a. (vs 6) "Abner was making himself strong in the house of Saul"

- 1). Abner was beginning to set himself up as the next king, either in spite of, or after, Ish-bosheth, who was weak as a leader

- b. (vs 7) Abner was sleeping with Saul's concubine

- 1). This is a common practice to make a run for the crown, although usually with one of the king's wives
- 2). Ish-bosheth sees what is going on, and objects, likely on the basis of undermining his kingship

- c. Abner replies with anger

- 1). He had been supporting Saul's family against David
- 2). But with this accusation, he said he should really assure that David will become king over all of Israel and Judah
- 3). This causes Ish-bosheth to fear Abner - a rift was formed

3. Abner negotiates with David

- a. (vs 12-14) Abner sends an offer to David at Hebron

- 1). If David will make a covenant with him, he will assure that all of Israel will join David
- 2). David answers that he will greet Abner, but he must bring his 1st wife, Michal, with him
 - a.) When Saul was fighting with David, he took Michal and gave her in marriage to Palti
 - 2 Esdras says he was a captain of the people
 - b.) Michal is Saul's daughter, so his claim to Saul's throne will be strengthened among Saul's supporters if their marriage is re-established
- 3). David also makes his claim official by demanding Ish-bosheth (Saul's son) return his wife

- b. (vs 15-16) Ish-bosheth returns Michal to David

- 1). Not much choice, given that Abner was negotiating directly with David
- 2). Michal's current husband, Paltiel (aka Palti) followed her weeping all the way
 - a.) At Bahurim, he was ordered by Abner to turn back, which he did
 - About 1.5 miles NE of Jerusalem

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- c. (vs 17-19) Abner then persuaded the tribes to support David
 - 1). 1st, he convinced the elders of the tribes of Israel
 - a.) He reminded them that they had preferred David to Saul
 - b.) He also reminded them that the Lord had appointed David to free them from the Philistines
 - c.) They agreed to accept David as king
 - 2). Next, he made his plea to the tribe of Benjamin
 - a.) This is Saul's tribe
 - b.) He needed their support, as well
- d. (vs 20-21) The negotiations succeed
 - 1). Abner comes to meet David at Hebron with a 20-man honor guard
 - 2). David throws a big feast for all, and negotiations are held
 - 3). Abner declares that he will return to gather all of the other tribes under David in a united kingdom

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4. An even stranger twist

- a. (vs 22-27) Joab's revenge
 - 1). Joab was gone raiding while Abner had been negotiating with David
 - 2). When he returned, he was infuriated that David met with him and let him depart in peace
 - a.) He had returned as a successful general, but found that he had been ignored in a monumental deal
 - b.) Instead, Joab remembered that Abner had killed his brother Asahel
 - c.) Joab scolded David over the possibility that Abner really wanted to spy into David's camp to see what his status was
 - He treats David like he is the servant and Joab is the master
 - There is no statement about David's reaction to this
 - 3). Without David knowing, Joab sent Abner a messenger asking that he return
 - a.) When Abner returned, Joab took him aside and killed him
- b. (vs 28-30) David's reaction
 - 1). On finding out, David proclaimed his house and kingdom did not order this murder
 - 2). He then pronounced a "Curse" on Joab's house, wishing them sickness, poverty, weakness and hunger forever

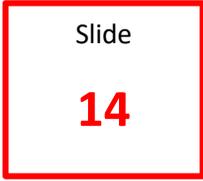
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- c. (vs 31-34) The mourning proclamation
- 1). King David issued a proclamation that all his followers, including Joab, should mourn Abner
 - 2). David marched behind the bier bearing Abner's body to burial in Hebron
 - a.) He lamented Abner's death
 - He didn't die in battle or executed as a criminal
 - He was treacherously murdered
- d. (vs 35-39) David's sadness over Abner's death
- 1). He refused to eat for the remainder of the day
 - 2). The people were pleased to see his reaction, believing he had nothing to do with it
 - 3). David called Abner a prince, and mourned his loss to the kingdom
 - 4). He knew that Joab and his brother should taste justice, but he stated them as "too difficult to handle"
 - a.) Remember how Joab scolded David when he learned of the deal with Abner
 - b.) Also, Zeruah was David's half sister
 - c.) Instead, he turned them over to the Lord for punishment
 - d.) But could David have prevented this event ?
 - Could he have better informed Joab of the value of the arrangement with Joab for the kingdom's sake ?
 - Could he have consulted Joab before concluding the deal ?
 - Could he have soothed Joab's grief over Abner's killing of Asahel as an "almost" accident that Abner tried to prevent

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5. Ish-Bosheth's murder

- a. (2 Sam 4.1-4) The players described
- 1). Ishbosheth's army commanders
 - a.) Baanah & Rechab
 - b.) sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, part of Benjamin
 - 2). Mephibosheth
 - a.) Jonathan's lame son, not Saul's son of same name
 - b.) He is twelve at this time
- b. (4.5-7) The plot
- 1). Baanah & Rechab determined to assassinate Ishbosheth
 - a.) They entered the royal quarters to get wheat, maybe for troops
 - b.) Ishbosheth was taking an afternoon siesta in the heat
 - c.) The two killed and beheaded him
 - 2). They then fled south toward Hebron down the Jordan Valley (Arabah)



- c. (4.8-12) Their reward
- 1). Baanah & Rechab presented Ishbosheth's head to David
- a.) They expected reward for ridding David of his enemy
- 2). David's reply
- a.) He had "rewarded" the killer of Saul with death for killing the Lord's anointed
- b.) He now "rewarded" Baanah & Rechab with death for killing an innocent man
- He commanded the young men to kill them
 - He then commanded that their hands and feet be cut off and their bodies hung up by the public pool
 - .. A sign that they had raised their hands against royalty
- 3). David then buried the head of Ishbosheth with Abner in Hebron

These notes were originally written as I composed this study for our Faculty & Staff Bible Study at the local university. It is important to note that they follow the narrative in *Old Testament Survey Series: The Books of History* by James E. Smith (1995, College Press Publishing Company) very closely. It is the best summary I found, so it is the foundation for the study. In many cases, I used Dr. Smith's words directly, sometimes paraphrased them for clarity, sometimes enlarged on them with other resources. Since I didn't expect to publish the notes, I did not cite them at the time. It is now difficult to distinguish quotes from Dr. Smith, material from other resources, or what thoughts the Spirit gave me. Suffice to say that, if it is insightful to your spiritual growth, give all the glory to the Spirit, some credit to Dr. Smith, and none to me. I'm just the Spirit-led editor and teacher.

Bob Kostrubanic, November 5, 2021