

# Making Promises

## Part 6: The Kingdom

### Review

- The eighty-year period of the reigns of David and Solomon is in many respects the golden age of Israel's long history. Up to this point, even in the best years of Saul, Israel hardly warranted the name "kingdom" or even "state" there had not emerged a significant recognition of fundamental political unity.
- The rise of the monarchy under Saul did little to heal the ever-widening breach between Judah and the northern tribes. As an example of this division, when Saul issued a call to arms to deliver Jabesh Gilead from Ammon, three hundred thousand men came from Israel and thirty thousand from Judah. A similar problem happened against Amalek.
- Having made Ish-bosheth king over the northern tribes, Abner takes an aggressive position in the fight against David and the southern tribe of Judah. In the end Abner lost more men than David in the conflicts between the two.

### David and Abner

- Though it appears at first that Abner wishes to make peace with David (**2 Sam. 2:26**), we are informed of a **seven-year period of conflict** in which David reigned from Hebron, he had continued to grow **stronger** while Saul's dynasty had grown **weaker** (**2 Sam. 3:1**).
  - Evidence of David's increasing power is the multiplication of **wives** and **children**, a practice common to ancient Near Eastern kings, though obviously not sanctioned by biblical law (**2 Sam. 3:2-5**).
  - Of special interest is **Maacah**, for she is identified as the daughter of **Talmi, king of Geshur**. This suggests that some of David's marriages had **political overtones** and were contracted in order to cement international relationships.
  - The Geshur mentioned here is most probably the kingdom east of the **Sea of Kinnereth**. An alliance with this principality would provide a buffer between Israel and the rising Aramaean states to the north.
- Abner had made every effort to seize control of the **throne of Saul**—as his appropriation of Saul's concubine attests—and yet had failed. In the Near East the man who took over the **harem** of the deceased king thereby asserted his claim to succession to the throne (**2 Sam. 3:6-11; 16:21-22; 1 Kings 2:13-25**).

- After accusation, Abner abandons his allegiance with Ish-bosheth. Abner was not driven to this by **theology** but by **politics**, not seeking to expand David's kingship because he felt the authority of **Yahweh's promise** but likely sought his own advantage. Abner was to swing his support to David, thereby assuring himself of a powerful spot in David's regime.
- Abner first of all sent a **delegation to David** to offer his proposal for unification—a covenant that would guarantee peaceful transfer of power from the Saulide to the Davidic dynasty (**2 Sam. 3:12-16**).
  - David enthusiastically accepted the arrangement but demanded as a **sign** of Abner's **good faith** that his first wife, Michal, the daughter of Saul, be restored to him. This would symbolize the unification of the **two royal families**.
  - Abner persuaded the **Israelite elders**, particularly those from **Benjamin**, of the wisdom of placing themselves under David. His appeal was not, however, theological but purely pragmatic: David would be able to **deliver** Israel from their **enemies** (**2 Sam. 3:17-21**).
  - Abner was intercepted by **Joab**, who ruthlessly murdered him, ostensibly as an act of revenge for the death of his own brother Asahel. More likely, Joab saw **the covenant** with Abner as a threat to his own **position as military leader** (**2 Sam. 3:22-30**).
- David now faced a problem that could **undermine** all the effort he had expended on plans for reunification of the kingdom. Clearly, the elders of Israel would interpret the assassination of Abner as a plot of David to **remove** the last obstacle to a seizure of power.
  - To forestall this perception, David proclaimed a **public mourning** and buried Abner at Hebron with full state honor. So sincere was David's **lament** that all Israel and Judah accepted it at face value and exonerated him of any personal complicity (**2 Sam. 3:36-39**).
- The feeling soon spread throughout Israel that desperate measures now had to be taken lest the **fragile agreement** hammered out between David and Abner be aborted. Two assassins therefore went to Mahanaim and killed Ish-Bosheth while he took his **afternoon nap** (**2 Sam. 4:1-12**).
  - With his head as evidence, they ran to David at Hebron and triumphantly announced that **the way** at last was **cleared** for David to sit on Saul's throne.
  - David **executed** the murderers and **hung** their bodies publicly in Hebron; he then buried Ish-Bosheth's head in Abner's grave. Thus he hoped to make clear that divine election and not overzealous personal ambition had brought him at last to the throne of Saul and all Israel.

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<b>2 Samuel 2:26</b>	Then Abner called to Joab, "Shall the sword devour forever? Do you not know that the end will be bitter? How long will it be before you tell your people to turn from the pursuit of their brothers?"
<b>2 Samuel 3:1</b>	There was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David. And David grew stronger and stronger, while the house of Saul became weaker and weaker.
<b>2 Samuel 3:2-5</b>	2 And sons were born to David at Hebron: his firstborn was Amnon, of Ahinoam of Jezreel; 3 and his second, Chileab, of Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel; and the third, Absalom the son of Maacah the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur; 4 and the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith; and the fifth, Shephatiah the son of Abital; 5 and the sixth, Ithream, of Eglah, David's wife. These were born to David in Hebron.
<b>2 Samuel 3:6-11</b>	6 While there was war between the house of Saul and the house of David, Abner was making himself strong in the house of Saul. 7 Now Saul had a concubine whose name was Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah. And Ish-bosheth said to Abner, "Why have you gone in to my father's concubine?" 8 Then Abner was very angry over the words of Ish-bosheth and said, "Am I a dog's head of Judah? To this day I keep showing steadfast love to the house of Saul your father, to his brothers, and to his friends, and have not given you into the hand of David. And yet you charge me today with a fault concerning a woman. 9 God do so to Abner and more also, if I do not accomplish for David what the Lord has sworn to him, 10 to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul and set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan to Beersheba." 11 And Ish-bosheth could not answer Abner another word, because he feared him.
<b>2 Samuel 16:21-22</b>	21 Ahithophel said to Absalom, "Go in to your father's concubines, whom he has left to keep the house, and all Israel will hear that you have made yourself a stench to your father, and the hands of all who are with you will be strengthened." 22 So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the roof. And Absalom went in to his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel.
<b>1 Kings 2:13-25</b>	13 Then Adonijah the son of Haggith came to Bathsheba the mother of Solomon. And she said, "Do you come peacefully?" He said, "Peacefully." 14 Then he said, "I have something to say to you." She said, "Speak." 15 He said, "You know that the kingdom was mine, and that all Israel fully expected me to reign. However, the kingdom has turned about and become my brother's, for it was his from the Lord. 16 And now I have one request to make of you; do not refuse me." She said to him, "Speak." 17 And he said, "Please ask King Solomon—he will not refuse you—to give me Abishag the Shunammite as my wife." 18 Bathsheba said, "Very well; I will speak for you to the king." 19 So Bathsheba went to King Solomon to speak to him on behalf of Adonijah. And the king rose to meet her and bowed down to her. Then he sat on his throne and had a seat brought for the king's mother, and she sat on his right. 20 Then she said, "I have one small request to make of you; do not refuse me." And the king said to her, "Make your request, my mother, for I will not refuse you." 21 She said, "Let Abishag the Shunammite be given to Adonijah your brother as his wife." 22 King Solomon answered his mother, "And why do you ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? Ask for him the kingdom also, for he is my older brother, and on his side are Abiathar the priest and Joab the son of Zeruiah." 23 Then King Solomon swore by the Lord, saying, "God do so to me and more also if this word does not cost Adonijah his life! 24 Now therefore as the Lord lives, who has established me and placed me on the throne of David my father, and who has made me a house, as he promised, Adonijah shall be put to death today." 25 So King Solomon sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and he struck him down, and he died.
<b>2 Samuel 3:12-16</b>	12 And Abner sent messengers to David on his behalf, saying, "To whom does the land belong? Make your covenant with me, and behold, my hand shall be with you to bring over all Israel to you." 13 And he said, "Good; I will make a covenant with you. But one thing I require of you; that is, you shall not see my face unless you first bring Michal, Saul's daughter, when you come to see my face." 14 Then David sent messengers to Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, saying, "Give me my wife Michal, for whom I paid the bridal price of a hundred foreskins of the Philistines." 15 And Ish-bosheth sent and took her from her husband Paltiel the son of Laish. 16 But her husband went with her, weeping after her all the way to Bahurim. Then Abner said to him, "Go, return." And he returned.

<p><b>2 Samuel 3:17-21</b></p>	<p>17 And Abner conferred with the elders of Israel, saying, "For some time past you have been seeking David as king over you. 18 Now then bring it about, for the Lord has promised David, saying, 'By the hand of my servant David I will save my people Israel from the hand of the Philistines, and from the hand of all their enemies.' " 19 Abner also spoke to Benjamin. And then Abner went to tell David at Hebron all that Israel and the whole house of Benjamin thought good to do. 20 When Abner came with twenty men to David at Hebron, David made a feast for Abner and the men who were with him. 21 And Abner said to David, "I will arise and go and will gather all Israel to my lord the king, that they may make a covenant with you, and that you may reign over all that your heart desires." So David sent Abner away, and he went in peace.</p>
<p><b>2 Samuel 3:22-30</b></p>	<p>22 Just then the servants of David arrived with Joab from a raid, bringing much spoil with them. But Abner was not with David at Hebron, for he had sent him away, and he had gone in peace. 23 When Joab and all the army that was with him came, it was told Joab, "Abner the son of Ner came to the king, and he has let him go, and he has gone in peace." 24 Then Joab went to the king and said, "What have you done? Behold, Abner came to you. Why is it that you have sent him away, so that he is gone? 25 You know that Abner the son of Ner came to deceive you and to know your going out and your coming in, and to know all that you are doing." 26 When Joab came out from David's presence, he sent messengers after Abner, and they brought him back from the cistern of Sirah. But David did not know about it. 27 And when Abner returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside into the midst of the gate to speak with him privately, and there he struck him in the stomach, so that he died, for the blood of Asahel his brother. 28 Afterward, when David heard of it, he said, "I and my kingdom are forever guiltless before the Lord for the blood of Abner the son of Ner. 29 May it fall upon the head of Joab and upon all his father's house, and may the house of Joab never be without one who has a discharge or who is leprous or who holds a spindle or who falls by the sword or who lacks bread!" 30 So Joab and Abishai his brother killed Abner, because he had put their brother Asahel to death in the battle at Gibeon.</p>
<p><b>2 Samuel 3:36-39</b></p>	<p>36 And all the people took notice of it, and it pleased them, as everything that the king did pleased all the people. 37 So all the people and all Israel understood that day that it had not been the king's will to put to death Abner the son of Ner. 38 And the king said to his servants, "Do you not know that a prince and a great man has fallen this day in Israel? 39 And I was gentle today, though anointed king. These men, the sons of Zeruiah, are more severe than I. The Lord repay the evildoer according to his wickedness!"</p>
<p><b>2 Samuel 4:1-12</b></p>	<p>1 When Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, heard that Abner had died at Hebron, his courage failed, and all Israel was dismayed. 2 Now Saul's son had two men who were captains of raiding bands; the name of the one was Baanah, and the name of the other Rechab, sons of Rimmon a man of Benjamin from Beeroth (for Beeroth also is counted part of Benjamin; 3 the Beerothites fled to Gittaim and have been sojourners there to this day). 4 Jonathan, the son of Saul, had a son who was crippled in his feet. He was five years old when the news about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel, and his nurse took him up and fled, and as she fled in her haste, he fell and became lame. And his name was Mephibosheth. 5 Now the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, Rechab and Baanah, set out, and about the heat of the day they came to the house of Ish-bosheth as he was taking his noonday rest. 6 And they came into the midst of the house as if to get wheat, and they stabbed him in the stomach. Then Rechab and Baanah his brother escaped. 7 When they came into the house, as he lay on his bed in his bedroom, they struck him and put him to death and beheaded him. They took his head and went by the way of the Arabah all night, 8 and brought the head of Ish-bosheth to David at Hebron. And they said to the king, "Here is the head of Ish-bosheth, the son of Saul, your enemy, who sought your life. The Lord has avenged my lord the king this day on Saul and on his offspring." 9 But David answered Rechab and Baanah his brother, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, "As the Lord lives, who has redeemed my life out of every adversity, 10 when one told me, 'Behold, Saul is dead,' and thought he was bringing good news, I seized him and killed him at Ziklag, which was the reward I gave him for his news. 11 How much more, when wicked men have killed a righteous man in his own house on his bed, shall I not now require his blood at your hand and destroy you from the earth?" 12 And David commanded his young men, and they killed them and cut off their hands and feet and hanged them beside the pool at Hebron. But they took the head of Ish-bosheth and buried it in the tomb of Abner at Hebron.</p>