

# 2 Samuel 2 Commentary

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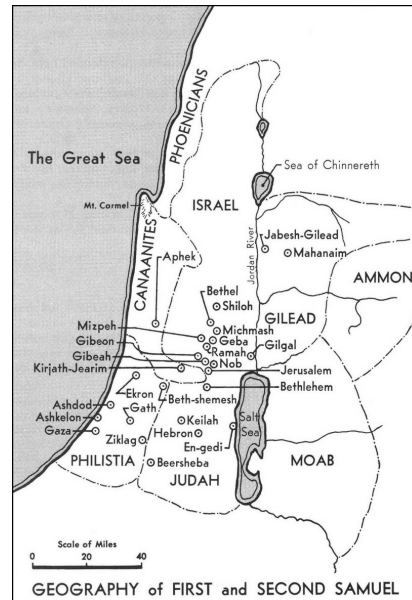
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Chart from recommended resource [Jensen's Survey of the OT](#) - used by permission  
[2 Samuel Chart](#) from Charles Swindoll

TIMELINE OF THE BOOKS OF SAMUEL, KINGS & CHRONICLES									
1107	1011				971	931	853	722	586
1 Samuel	2 Samuel				1 Kings	1 Kings	2 Kings		
31	1-4	5-10	11-20	21-24	1-11	12-22	1-17	18-25	

1Chr 10		1 Chr 11-19	1 Chr 20-29	2 Chronicles 1-9	2 Chronicles 10-20	2 Chronicles 21-36
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**Legend:** B.C. dates at top of timeline are approximate. Note that 931BC marks the division of the Kingdom into Southern Tribes (Judah and Benjamin) and Ten Northern Tribes. To avoid confusion be aware that **after the division** of the Kingdom in 931BC, the Southern Kingdom is most often designated in Scripture as "**Judah**" and the Northern Kingdom as "**Israel**." Finally, note that 1 Chronicles 1-9 is not identified on the timeline because these chapters are records of genealogy.



Map of David's Kingdom-[ESV Global](#)

Map of Cities in 2 Samuel

**2 Samuel 2:1** Then it came about afterwards that David inquired of the LORD, saying, "Shall I go up to one of the cities of Judah?" And the LORD said to him, "Go up." So David said, "Where shall I go up?" And He said, "To Hebron."

BGT 2 Samuel 2:1 καὶ γένητο μετὰ ταῦτα καὶ πηρὴν ἤσεν Δαυὶδ τὸ κυρτῶν ἐλάβει εἰς μὲν τὰ πλεῶνα τοῦ Ἰουδα καὶ εἰς τὸν κριόεντα πρὸς τὸν βῆθλῆμα καὶ εἰς τὸν Δαυὶδ ποταμὸν καὶ εἰς τὸν Χεβρών

LXE 2 Samuel 2:1 And it came to pass after this that David enquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go up into one of the cities of Judah? and the Lord said to him, Go up. And David said, Whither shall I go up? and he said, To Chebron.

KJV 2 Samuel 2:1 And it came to pass after this, that David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah? And the LORD said unto him, Go up. And David said, Whither shall I go up? And he said, Unto Hebron.

NET 2 Samuel 2:1 Afterward David inquired of the LORD, "Should I go up to one of the cities of Judah?" The LORD told him, "Go up." David asked, "Where should I go?" The LORD replied, "To Hebron."

CSB 2 Samuel 2:1 Some time later, David inquired of the LORD: "Should I go to one of the towns of Judah?" The LORD answered him, "Go." Then David asked, "Where should I go?" "To Hebron," the LORD replied.

ESV 2 Samuel 2:1 After this David inquired of the LORD, "Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?" And the LORD said to him, "Go up." David said, "To which shall I go up?" And he said, "To Hebron."

NIV 2 Samuel 2:1 In the course of time, David inquired of the LORD. "Shall I go up to one of the towns of Judah?" he asked. The LORD said, "Go up." David asked, "Where shall I go?" "To Hebron," the LORD answered.

NLT 2 Samuel 2:1 After this, David asked the LORD, "Should I move back to one of the towns of Judah?" "Yes," the LORD replied. Then David asked, "Which town should I go to?" "To Hebron," the LORD answered.

- inquired: 2Sa 5:19,23 Nu 27:21 Jdg 1:1 1Sa 23:2,4,9-12 1Sa 30:7,8 Ps 25:4-5 Ps 27:4 Ps 143:8 Pr 3:5-6 Eze 36:37

- **Hebron:** 2Sa 2:11 5:1-3 15:7 Ge 32:2 Nu 13:22 Jos 14:14,15 1Sa 30:31 1Ki 2:11 1Ch 29:7

### Related Passages:

Psalms 25:4-5 Make me know Your ways, O LORD; Teach me Your paths. 5 Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For You are the God of my salvation; For You **I wait** all the day.

Psalms 27:4 One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the LORD And to meditate in His temple.

Psalms 143:8 Let me hear Your lovingkindness in the morning; For I trust in You; Teach me the way in which I should walk; For to You I lift up my soul.

Proverbs 3:5-6 (DAVID PRACTICES THIS PROVERB IN 2Sa 2:1) Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding. 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight.

## DAVID ASKS THE LORD TWO QUESTIONS

**Then it came about afterwards** - After what? Presumably after he received the Amalekite's report of the deaths of Saul and Jonathan's and defeat of Israel by the Philistines. After all, he is still in Philistine territory, for a Philistine king had given him Ziklag. This time phrase can also be translated **In the course of time** (or CSB = "Some time later") which points out that David was not in any hurry but willing to wait patiently for the Lord to bring about his purpose in David's life. One can see how David is able to pen words like Psalm 27:14+ "Wait for the LORD; Be strong and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for the LORD." David could have taken the throne by force - he had the LORD'S promise that he would be king and he had mighty men. And yet what do we see with David? He waits on the LORD. He inquires of the LORD.

**THOUGHT** - What a lesson from David. We may know the LORD'S will in a particular situation and we know that in our strength we could even potentially achieve His will. But from David, we learn that waiting may be what the LORD is calling us to do so that in His time, by His power and for His glory He might bring about the accomplishment of His will. It is difficult for us "doers" to sit still and hear words like "Cease striving and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." (Ps 46:10+). And yet waiting may be the most "productive" thing we can do, for Isaiah writes "Yet **those who wait for the LORD** Will gain new strength (EXCHANGE THEIR "STRENGTH" FOR HIS STRENGTH!); They will mount up with wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary.." (Isaiah 40:31+). Take a moment and play this oldie but goodie "[Wait on the Lord](#)" (Bonus track, a bit repetitive, but with a beat - **I Waited; one more**).

**Paul Jorden** says, "David had already waited for several years to be king of the whole nation, in addition to the 10-12 years before he became king of Judah. Our lives are so often affected by other people. We can do one of two things: either recognize that God is in control or take matters into our own hands. If you find yourself in a position of waiting for God to bring you to the time and place of his choosing, I hope you can know the confidence that David seemed to have. God will guide you, and you will gain strength in waiting upon him." Saul, the former king of Israel, is now dead. David is king of Judah but not yet king of the whole nation. Ish-Bosheth, one of Saul's surviving sons, is a puppet king in Saul's place. Joab was David's number one general. Abner was Saul's number one general. What it all meant was that after Saul's death the nation was divided along north-south lines. The people in the north followed Ish-Bosheth and Abner. The people in the south followed David and Joab. Thus the stage was set for a civil war.

**Don Anderson** - I wonder if David wrote Psalm 37+ during these years of waiting. Three times in the psalm he says, "Fret not thyself." I don't know anything more needed by Christians today than to trust in God, that chooses to do good, cultivate faithfulness, commit one's way to God, rest in him, wait patiently for him, cease from anger, and forsake wrath. Psalm 37:23+ "The steps of a man are established by the Lord, and he delights in his way."

**Warren Wiersbe** points out that starting in chapter 2 we "begin those "political intrigues" that plagued David throughout all his life. Even though David sought the mind of God, he could not escape the plots and plans of others; and because he was indebted to these men, it was difficult for him to oppose them. David's march to the throne was a difficult one." (Borrow [Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament](#))

**That David inquired of the LORD** - When David had left Israel and settled in the land of the Philistines, he had not **inquired of the Lord**. But now he does so. See times in First Samuel David **inquired of the LORD** - 1Sa 23:2-4+, 1Sa 23:9-12+ 1Sa 30:7,8+. This is a good sign in David's heart. The king of Israel is dead, the Philistines are occupying the heartland of Israel, so it is a good time (it's

always a good time) to seek the wisdom from Jehovah! Josephus, *Antiq.* 7.1.2, says he **inquired** of the prophet not by the sacred lots (which he clearly did in 1Sa 23:9+) and I tend to agree because it reads like a conversation between David and the LORD, not just a "Yes" or "No" answer. 1Sa 28:6+ gives three ways God spoke - "by dreams or by Urim or by prophets."

**Guzik** - Certainly, this was a key to success in David's life. With rare exceptions, he constantly **inquired of the LORD**. David wanted more than God's blessing on *his* plans; he wanted to be right in the middle of *God's* plan.

**Saying, "Shall I go up to one of the cities of Judah?" And the LORD said to him, "Go up." So David said, "Where shall I go up?" And He said, "To Hebron."** - David's two part question receives two clear answers. How did he speak to the LORD? The text does not say, but the fact that his second question called for something other than a yes or no, suggests that he did not use the ephod with Urim and Thummim, but we cannot be dogmatic. **See maps above** for the central location of **Hebron**, about 25 miles N of Ziklag, west of Dead Sea and 20 miles SSW of Jerusalem, the highest elevation of any town in Judah. "Abraham had located there long before (Ge 13:18), and later Hebron had been given to Caleb (Jos 14:13, 14; Jdg 1:20) when Israel occupied the land after the wilderness wanderings." (MacArthur)

**Hebron** means "association," "alliance" or "communion" in contrast to Ziklag which means "winding" and in the context of David's life story is the place that speaks of exertion of self will! Hebron was a priests' city, one of the cities of refuge established when Joshua conquered the land. It was a fitting place for David to be crowned. It was the oldest city in the land; and Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, the first four great men of the nation Israel, are buried here.

**Anderson** - David was not in any hurry. He made no fast move at this time. The circumstances seemed to be right for him, but David was learning to be careful of circumstances. Circumstances are a consideration in making a decision but they shouldn't be the first. Maybe they should be the last. He asked if he should go up to any of the cities of Judah. This was his own tribe, and it was by far the friendliest. They knew how cruelly Saul had hunted him down.

Recall that David had sent parts of the spoil from his battle with the Amalekites to the elders of the area (1Sa 30:26–31)

**Guzik** - It isn't as simple a question as we might think. David didn't want to appear opportunistic, as if he *only* came back to Israel because Saul was dead. While not being *overly* concerned with appearances before man, he was not *unconcerned* with appearances either. God was faithful to answer when David inquired. Since David had just come out of a period of spiritual decline, God could have put him on "probation" and refused to speak to him for a while. Instead, the LORD spoke to David and gave him guidance. Some 15 to 20 years before this, David was anointed king over Israel ([1 Samuel 16:12-13](#)). As the promise seemed almost fulfilled, David didn't rush in blindly and seize it. Instead, he carefully sought the LORD. David knew the promise was from God, so he knew God could fulfill it without any manipulation from him.

**Walton on Hebron** - This twelve-acre site, occupied about 1200 B.C., was very attractive because there are more than two dozen springs in the area. About the time of David the fortifications of the city were improved and expanded. It served as David's capital for seven years and enjoyed its greatest prominence during this period. (see page 323 [IVP Background Commentary-OT](#))

**Life Application Study Bible** ([borrow](#)) - Although David knew he would become king (1 Samuel 16:13; 23:17; 24:20), and although the time seemed right now that Saul was dead, David still asked God if he should move back to Judah, the home territory of his tribe. Before moving ahead with what seems obvious, first bring the matter to God, who alone knows the best timing. David made Hebron his capital because (1) it was the largest city in Judah at that time; (2) it was secure against attack; (3) it was located near the center of Judah's territory, an ideal location for a capital city; (4) many key trade routes converged at Hebron, making it difficult for supply lines to be cut off in wartime.

**Matthew Henry** - Verses 1-7. After the death of Saul, many went to David at Ziklag, 1 Chronicles 12:22, but he trusted in God who promised him the kingdom, to give it in his own time and manner. Yet assurance of hope in God's promise, will quicken pious endeavours. If I be chosen to the crown of life, it does not follow, Then I will do nothing; but, Then I will do all that God directs me. This good use David made of his election, and so will all whom God has chosen. In all our journeys and removes, it is comfortable to see God going before us; and we may do so, if by faith and prayer we set Him before us. God, according to the promise, directed David's path. David rose gradually: thus the kingdom of the Messiah, the Son of David, is set up by degrees; he is Lord of all, but we see not yet all things put under him.

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## 2 Samuel 2:1-11 Waiting for God's Time - Theodore Epp

Second Samuel 2 opens with these words: "And it came to pass after this, that David inquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah? And the LORD said unto him, Go up. And David said, Whither shall I go up? And he said, Unto Hebron" (v. 1).

David found, as we will too, that we never lose anything by believing God and then patiently waiting on Him. But we will surely suffer

if we take things into our own hands and rush blindly ahead.

The word "Hebron" means "alliance" or "communion" in contrast to Ziklag, which refers to self-will. Being allied with God and being in communion with Him, David was in a place to be led in the will of God.

David's reign began by reigning first over Judah. It was not necessary for David to take the throne; God saw that he received it. God moved him back to Hebron, and his own tribe anointed him king.

Seven and a half years went by, however, before the whole kingdom was put under his hand. David still had to wait, but it was God's time he was waiting for, not people's.

"There is a time there for every purpose and for every work" (Eccles. 3:17).

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### Henry Blackaby - God's Directions

David inquired of the LORD, saying, "Shall I pursue this band? Shall I overtake them?" And He said to him, "Pursue, for you will surely overtake them, and you will surely rescue all." 1 Samuel 30:8 (NASB)

Then it came about afterwards that David inquired of the LORD, saying, "Shall I go up to one of the cities of Judah?" And the LORD said to him, "Go up." So David said, "Where shall I go up?" And He said, "To Hebron." 2 Samuel 2:1 (NASB)

David lived in dangerous times. One small mistake could cost him his life. So, whenever he needed to know what to do, he asked God. He didn't just ask in generalities; **his questions were always specific. God's answers were equally direct.**

There is a theory that God does not have a specific plan for our lives. This teaching suggests that God does not guide his people daily. Rather, he gives us a brain and leaves us to make our own choices. The problem with this approach is that it totally ignores what the Bible teaches. From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible shows that God has always given clear instructions to his people. When David needed a specific battle plan, God did not say, "David, you're a soldier. What do you think?" When David wasn't sure where to go next, God didn't say, "David, you know this area like the back of your hand. Just do what makes sense to you." No, God told him exactly what to do. David obeyed, and he experienced success.

**Don't assume that God isn't interested in the everyday decisions of your life. Yes, he gave you a brain. He also gave you the Holy Spirit, the church, and his written Word. All of these are ways he communicates with you. He is vitally interested in the details of your life. Never hesitate to seek his direction in any decision.** (Borrow [The experience : a devotional and journal : day by day with God](#))

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### SCRIPTURES ON HEBRON

Genesis 13:18 Then Abram moved his tent and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are in **Hebron**, and there he built an altar to the LORD.

Genesis 23:2; 17-20 ( Sarah died in Kiriath-arba (that is, **Hebron**) in the land of Canaan; and Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her. (23:17-20) So Ephron's field, which was in Machpelah, which faced Mamre, the field and cave which was in it, and all the trees which were in the field, that were within all the confines of its border, were deeded over 18 to Abraham for a possession in the presence of the sons of Heth, before all who went in at the gate of his city. 19 After this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field at Machpelah facing Mamre (that is, **Hebron**) in the land of Canaan. 20 So the field and the cave that is in it, were deeded over to Abraham for a burial site by the sons of Heth.

Genesis 35:27 Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre of Kiriath-arba (that is, **Hebron**), where Abraham and Isaac had sojourned.

Joshua 14:13 So Joshua blessed him and gave **Hebron** to Caleb the son of Jephunneh for an inheritance.

Joshua 21:8-13 Now the sons of Israel gave by lot to the Levites these cities with their pasture lands, as the LORD had commanded through Moses. 9 They gave these cities which are here mentioned by name from the tribe of the sons of Judah and from the tribe of the sons of Simeon; 10 and they were for the sons of Aaron, one of the families of the Kohathites, of the sons of Levi, for the lot was theirs first. 11 Thus they gave them Kiriath-arba, Arba being the father of Anak (that is, **Hebron**), in the hill country of Judah, with its surrounding pasture lands. 12 But the fields of the city and its villages they gave to Caleb the son of Jephunneh as his possession. 13 So to the sons of Aaron the priest they gave **Hebron**, the city of refuge for the manslayer, with its pasture lands, and Libnah with its pasture lands,

**2 Samuel 2:2 So David went up there, and his two wives also, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess and Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite.**

- 1Sa 25:42,43 30:5 Lu 22:28,29

### DAVID OBEYS AND MOVES ON TO HEBRON

**So** - This means therefore or for this reason and in context speaks of David's unhesitating obedience to the Word of the LORD.

**THOUGHT** - This is a great pattern for all God's children to imitate! Hebrews 6:11-12+ says "we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope (CLEARLY THIS IS NOT "HOPE SO" BUT "HOPE SURE" = THUS GIVING "FULL ASSURANCE") until the end (WHAT TIME? OF YOUR LIFE OR THE END OF THIS PRESENT AGE.), so that (PURPOSE OF FULL ASSURANCE OF HOPE) you will not be sluggish, but (WHAT IS THE CONTRAST WITH SLUGGISH SAINTS?) imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises." In sum, may God's Spirit grant each of us the desire and power (cf Php 2:13NLT+) to imitate men like David, so that we might fully, experientially inherit the precious and magnificent promises (2Pe 1:4+) and every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ (Eph 1:3+). Amen and amen.

**David went up there, and his two wives also, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess and Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite**- David has packed his bags and is moving out to his new home in Hebron. **Ahinoam the Jezreelitess** was the mother of David's first son, Amnon (2 Sa 3:2).

**2 Samuel 2:3 And David brought up his men who were with him, each with his household; and they lived in the cities of Hebron.**

- **his men:** 1Sa 22:2 27:2,3 30:1,9,10 1Ch 12:1-7
- **the cities:** Jos 21:11,12

### DAVID'S MEN FOLLOW FOLLOW IM TO HEBRON

**And David brought up his men who were with him, each with his household; and they lived in the cities of Hebron** - David's men don't question his lead, but willingly follow him to their new home. David is clearly showing that he is becoming a leader of men, a good quality for any king to possess!

**Wiersbe** reminds us that "While David was living in Ziklag, volunteers had come to him from the tribes of Benjamin, Gad, and Manasseh (1 Chron. 12:1-22), so he not only had a large and experienced army but also a representation from some of the other tribes. Before long, David would win the allegiance of all the nation of Israel." (Borrow [Be Restored](#))

**2 Samuel 2:4 Then the men of Judah came and there anointed David king over the house of Judah. And they told David, saying, "It was the men of Jabesh-gilead who buried Saul."**

- **the men of Judah:** 2Sa 2:11 19:11,42 Ge 49:8-10
- **anointed:** 2Sa 2:7 5:3,5,17 1Sa 16:13 1Ch 11:3
- **the men of Jabesh gilead:** 1Sa 31:11-13

#### Related Passages:

1 Samuel 31:11-13+ Now when the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul (1Sa 31:8-10+), 12 all the valiant men rose and walked all night, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth-shan, and they came to Jabesh and burned them there. 13 They took their



bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days.

Judges 9:6+ All the men of Shechem and all Beth-millo assembled together, and they went and **made Abimelech king**, by the oak of the pillar which was in Shechem.

## **DAVID ANOINTED KING BY JUDAH**

**Then - Then** is a time phrase which marks progression in the narrative and the next significant event in the life of David.

**Guzik** - This shows that David did not seize the throne. The elders of Judah approached him. David knew that it was better to let God lift him up through others than it was to strive to advance himself. We should strive to advance God's Kingdom and leave the advancement of self in His hands.

**The men of Judah came and there anointed David king over the house of Judah** - Did you see the key point? David did not make himself king! The **men of Judah** anointed him! David had waited on the LORD and obeyed the LORD and was blessed by the LORD, Who clearly stirred the **men of Judah** to anoint David, even as He had stirred Samuel to anoint David in 1Sa 16:1, 3, 7, 12, 13+. Judah is centrally located and is a large tribe, but David is not yet to be king of the entire united nation. This is the second of three royal anointings (1) by Samuel (at Bethlehem), (2) by Judah at Hebron and (3) by all Israel at Hebron.

**Walton** has an interesting note on the possible dynamics involved in anointing David king at Hebron - In a previous attempt at kingship the process was initiated on the tribal level (see Jdg 9:6+). Since the Philistines had most likely overrun the central part of the land as a result of the battle at Gilboa (1Sa 31:1-2ff+), only a few of the tribes may have had the freedom to participate in designating a new king. It must also be remembered that tribal autonomy had a long history among the Israelites, and a citystate form of government had characterized the previous Canaanite residents of the region. Finally, with three of Saul's sons having been killed along with him, there was no clear information concerning succession to the throne, even if the tribal leaders were content with Saul's line and the Philistines would have allowed it. All of this makes the procedure of a tribe designating a king very logical. (see page 323 [IVP Background Commentary-OT](#))

**And they told David, saying, "It was the men of Jabesh-gilead who buried Saul** - David receives the report of the **men of Jabesh-Gilead** who honored King Saul after he was be-headed.

Ecclesiastes 3:11 "He makes all things beautiful in his time."

Lamentations 3:25,26 "The Lord is good to **those who wait for him**, to the person who **seeks** him. It is good that **he waits silently** for the salvation of the Lord."

Habakkuk 2:3 "For the vision is yet for the appointed time. It hastens toward the goal, and it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it, for it will certainly come. It will not delay."

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### **F B Meyer - Our Daily Homily - 2 Samuel 2:4 The men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king.**

Thus was David anointed a second time. Hitherto he had been the leader of a troop; now he became king of his own tribe: and his kingdom clustered around the ancient city of Hebron.

Typically, we learn that our blessed Lord will be acknowledged King of His own people, the Jews, before He is accepted by the world at large. Now, His kingdom is in mystery-it is in the Adullam stage. Men are gathering to Him from all quarters; but as yet the world does not recognize it in their political calculations. But ere long the Jews will recognize Him as King, and then we may begin to expect His enthronement over the populations of the globe. When they repent and are converted, times of repenting will come to all the world.

Experimentally we are taught, that as each new department of our life unfolds, we should give Christ a fresh coronation. The attitude which we took up years ago, of complete consecration, must be applied perpetually to each fresh development of experience. Each new step should be characterized by a definite waiting on God, that there may be a fresh endowment of power, a recharging of the spirit with His might. Was He King in the cave, then be sure to acknowledge Him as such, now that you are called from obscurity into the glare of noon. Whenever God says, by the circumstances of your life, Go up; always kneel at the feet of Jesus, saying, "Lord, in the very little I found my joy and strength in serving Thee only; and now, amid the greater responsibility and publicity of my life, I desire to be Thy earnest, simple-minded, whole-hearted follower."

Have you anointed Jesus as your King? Do not fail. Remember how near of kin He is.

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**2 Samuel 2:5 David sent messengers to the men of Jabesh-gilead, and said to them, "May you be blessed of the LORD because you have shown this kindness to Saul your lord, and have buried him.**

- **Blessed:** Ru 1:8 2:20 3:10 1Sa 23:21 24:19 25:32,33 Ps 115:15

### **DAVID'S GENEROSITY SIGN OF RESPECT FOR SAUL**

**David sent messengers to the men of Jabesh-gilead, and said to them, "May you be blessed of the LORD because you have shown this kindness to Saul your lord, and have buried him** - This seems to be David's first official act as King over Judah. What is interesting is Jabesh-Gilead on the west side of the Jordan would be in territory over which Ish-bosheth would rule. But that makes no difference to King David, for his heart is to bless them for their valor, courage and kindness in showing honor to King Saul's headless body. Obviously Jabesh-gilead supported Saul but Saul is dead and David wants them to support him, not Saul's son. It is notable that some 25 years later David would rebury the remains of Saul and sons in the land of their native tribe of Benjamin (2Sa 21:12–14)

**TSK Note** - This was a generous and noble act, highly indicative of the grandeur of David's mind. He respected Saul, though he had been greatly injured by him, as the anointed king of Israel, and once his legitimate sovereign; and he loved Jonathan as his most intimate friend.

**2 Samuel 2:6 "Now may the LORD show lovingkindness and truth to you; and I also will show this goodness to you, because you have done this thing.**

BGT 2 Samuel 2:6 κα ν ν ποι σαι κ ριος μεθ μ ν λεος κα λ θειαν κα γε γ ποι σω μεθ μ ν τ γαθ τα τα τι ποι σατε τ μα το το

LXE 2 Samuel 2:6 And now may the Lord deal in mercy and truth towards you: and I also will requite towards you this good deed, because ye have done this.

KJV 2 Samuel 2:6 And now the LORD shew kindness and truth unto you: and I also will requite you this kindness, because ye have done this thing.

NET 2 Samuel 2:6 Now may the LORD show you true kindness! I also will reward you, because you have done this deed.

CSB 2 Samuel 2:6 Now, may the LORD show kindness and faithfulness to you, and I will also show the same goodness to you because you have done this deed.

ESV 2 Samuel 2:6 Now may the LORD show steadfast love and faithfulness to you. And I will do good to you because you have done this thing.

NIV 2 Samuel 2:6 May the LORD now show you kindness and faithfulness, and I too will show you the same favor because you have done this.

NLT 2 Samuel 2:6 May the LORD be loyal to you in return and reward you with his unfailing love! And I, too, will reward you for what you have done.

- **Now may the LORD:** 2Sa 15:20 Ps 57:3 Pr 14:22 Mt 5:7 2Ti 1:16-18
- **I also:** 2Sa 9:3,7 10:2 Mt 5:44 10:16 Philemon 1:18,19

### **DAVID'S PRAYER FOR JABESH-GILEAD**

**Now may the LORD show lovingkindness** (NLT = "unfailing love") **and truth to you** - ESV = "steadfast love and faithfulness" First David beseeches Yahweh to bless the men of Jabesh-Gilead with His incomparable gifts of His **lovingkindness and truth**.



**And I also will show this goodness to you, because you have done this thing - NET** - "I also will reward you, because you have done this deed."

**2 Samuel 2:7 "Now therefore, let your hands be strong and be valiant; for Saul your lord is dead, and also the house of Judah has anointed me king over them."**

- **let your:** 2Sa 10:12 Ge 15:1 1Sa 4:9 31:7,12 1Co 16:13 Eph 6:10

### **DAVID'S INVITATION TO MEN OF JABESH-GILEAD**

**Now therefore, let your hands be strong and be valiant; for Saul your lord is dead, and also the house of Judah has anointed me king over them** - What is David doing? Clearly this exhortation is a tacit invitation to Jabesh-gilead to ally with the house of Judah. David's appeal for their support was ignored. As **Ryrie** says this was "a shrewd play by David, since the people lived to the N of Ish-bosheth's capital, Mahanaim (2Sa 2:8; cf. Ge 32:1-2)."

**Gehrke** points out, "David, however, has much more extensive ambitions. That is clear from the message he sends to the men of Jabesh Gilead, a message that not only congratulates them on their respectful burial of the late king, but also most diplomatically adds a postscript about his own having been anointed king over Judah. This rather broad hint means 'I'm available also for you, if you wish.'"

**Walton** - The town of Jabesh Gilead in Transjordan would have still been free of Philistine control. It represented one of the strategic constituencies of Saul because of the deliverance that he had provided them (1 Sam 11). If the leaders of this pro-Saul enclave could be persuaded to acknowledge David, they would serve as bellwether for many of the other Transjordan cities and perhaps others from the northern regions. David suggests to them that they have repaid Saul in providing him proper burial—he is gone and there is no loyalty still due him or his family. David is just as willing to provide for their defense as Saul had been.(see page 324 [IVP Background Commentary-OT](#))

**2 Samuel 2:8 But Abner the son of Ner, commander of Saul's army, had taken Ish-bosheth the son of Saul and brought him over to Mahanaim.**

- **Abner:** 1Sa 14:50 17:55 26:14
- **Ishbosheth:** 2Sa 3:7,8 4:5,6 1Ch 8:33 9:39, Esh-baal
- **Mahanaim:** 2Sa 17:26,27 Ge 32:2

### **ABNER REFUSES TO CROWN DAVID KING!**

**But** - This is a strategic term of contrast, which would mark a refusal to accept David's leadership and lead to civil war, a war that could have been avoided if Abner had acquiesced to the LORD'S will that David be the king. While it is somewhat conjectural, Abner may have held a grudge (Wiersbe says "Abner had no special love for David!") against David because David had publicly humiliated (or at least chastised) him before Saul and all the soldiers in 1Sa 26:14-16+. Also the fact that Abner was Saul's nephew might contribute to his desire to see Saul's line continue in power. Finally Abner apparently knew that David already had a commander, so he had to wonder what would be his role if he went with David.

**Anderson** - Saul's dynasty is not to be replaced without a fight. So seven years of bloody civil war take place with rebellions, rival factions, assassinations, suspense and intrigue occur before the opposition is quelled and David rules as king over a united kingdom. His kingdom is set up by degrees.

**Wiersbe** points out that "Most of what Abner did during those seven and a half years (OF DAVID'S REIGN) wasn't for the glory of God or the strengthening of Israel, but for his own self-interest. He was taking care of number one." (Borrow [Be Restored](#))

Why was **Ish-bosheth** not killed? Clearly he did not go to war and one consideration is that Saul knew from Samuel's prophecy that

he and his sons would die in battle (1Sa 28:19). He could keep one son out of the battle to ensure his line would continue in the monarchy. Note that Ish-bosheth was called Esh-Baal in 1Ch 8:33 which means "man of the Lord." However since "baal" was used for the Canaanite deity, his name was changed. Similarly Jonathan's lame son, Mephibosheth, was originally called "Merib-Baal" (meanings include "Contend with baal," "quarreller of Baal" and was an epithet of Gideon) (1Ch 8:34).

**Abner** (means "father of light") **the son of Ner, commander of Saul's army, had taken Ish-bosheth ("man of shame") the son of Saul and brought him over to Mahanaim** - Note that Abner's father was **Ner**, his brother was Kish, and Saul his first cousin (1Sa 14:50) and he had been the commander of Saul's army (1Sa 14:50). **Abner** brought David to Saul after David killed Goliath (1Sa 17:55–58) and with Saul pursued David for ten years (1Sa 26:5ff). **Abner** was not showing loyalty to Saul as much as he was using this weak king as a front for his own ambitions (1Sa 3:11; 4:1). For location of **Mahanaim** see map above which shows the location on the eastern plain east of the Jordan River on the Jabbok River (border between Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh, cf. Josh. 13:26,30), near the city of Penuel. In this location East of the Jordan, it was a Levitical city of refuge and would be relatively safe from Philistine incursions and far enough away from David in Hebron. **Mahanaim** served in effect as the capital of "all Israel." Later David would flee to this same area when he ran from his son Absalom (cf. 2Sa 17:24).

**Guzik** - David once challenged Abner when David had the opportunity to kill Saul but did not. David pointed out that Abner failed to protect his king. (**ED**: read 1Sa 26:15-16NLT+ where David taunted Abner in front of Saul and the army).

First use of **Abner** in 2 Samuel - all 53 uses of Abner - 1Sa 14:50; 1Sa 14:51; 1Sa 17:55; 1Sa 17:57; 1Sa 20:25; 1Sa 26:5; 1Sa 26:7; 1Sa 26:14; 1Sa 26:15; 2Sa 2:8; 2Sa 2:12; 2Sa 2:14; 2Sa 2:17; 2Sa 2:19; 2Sa 2:20; 2Sa 2:21; 2Sa 2:22; 2Sa 2:23; 2Sa 2:24; 2Sa 2:25; 2Sa 2:26; 2Sa 2:29; 2Sa 2:30; 2Sa 2:31; 2Sa 3:6; 2Sa 3:7; 2Sa 3:8; 2Sa 3:9; 2Sa 3:11; 2Sa 3:12; 2Sa 3:16; 2Sa 3:17; 2Sa 3:19; 2Sa 3:20; 2Sa 3:21; 2Sa 3:22; 2Sa 3:23; 2Sa 3:24; 2Sa 3:25; 2Sa 3:26; 2Sa 3:27; 2Sa 3:28; 2Sa 3:30; 2Sa 3:31; 2Sa 3:32; 2Sa 3:33; 2Sa 3:37; 2Sa 4:1; 2Sa 4:12; 1Ki 2:5; 1Ki 2:32; 1Ch 26:28; 1Ch 27:21

**MacArthur** adds on **Mahanaim** - This was the same city where Jacob saw the angels while on his way to Penuel (Ge 32:2). It was appointed to be a Levitical city from the territory of Gad (Jos 21:28; 1Ch 6:80). It later became the haven for David while fleeing from Absalom (17:24, 27; 19:32; 1Ki 2:8), because likely it was well fortified (cf. 18:24).

**Believer's Study Bible** - Abner's attempt to enthrone Ishbosheth (Esh-Baal 1Ch 8:33; 9:39), the only surviving son of Saul, as king was an exercise in futility. Ishbosheth obviously had little leadership ability. Abner must have taken nearly five years finally to place Ishbosheth on the throne, for a reign of only about two years. This explanation parallels the reign of David in Hebron of seven and one-half years (v. 11).

**NET Note** - The name **Ish-bosheth** means in Hebrew "man of shame." It presupposes an earlier form such as Ish-baal ("man of the Lord"), with the word "baal" being used of Israel's God. But because the Canaanite storm god was named "Baal," that part of the name was later replaced with the word "shame."

The NRSV and NJB have **Ishbaal** instead of **Ishbosheth**. **Utley** explains that "Originally *"ba'al"* was used of YHWH. But later, it must have been embarrassing for a king of YHWH's covenant people to be named "man of *Baal*" (the male Canaanite fertility god, cf. 1Sam. 14:50; 1 Chr. 8:33; 9:39). So later Jewish editors, as they often did, altered the name to "man of shame" (Bosheth). Also note how Jonathan's son, Merib-baal (cf. 1 Chr. 8:33-34) was changed to Mephibosheth (cf. 2Sa 9:6). The UBS Text Project, p. 220, gives "Ishbaal" a "B" rating (some doubt). The name change would have been done by later scribes.

**Matthew Henry** - Verses 8-17. The nation in general refused David. By this the Lord trained up his servant for future honour and usefulness; and the tendency of true godliness was shown in his behaviour while passing through various difficulties. David was herein a type of Christ, whom Israel would not submit to, though anointed of the Father to be a Prince and a Saviour to them. Abner meant, Let the young men fight before us, when he said, Let them play before us: fools thus make a mock at sin. But he is unworthy the name of a man, that can thus trifle with human blood.

**2 Samuel 2:9 He made him king over Gilead, over the Ashurites, over Jezreel, over Ephraim, and over Benjamin, even over all Israel.**

- **Gilead**: Nu 32:1-42 Jos 13:8-11 Ps 108:8
- **Ashurites**: Ge 30:13 Nu 1:40
- **Jezreel**: Jos 19:18

**ABNER MAKES**

## ISHBOSHETH KING

**He made him king over Gilead** - Abner is openly defying God's will, as he was undoubtedly aware of that David was to be the next king. Gilead was on the eastern bank of Jordan, northeast of the Dead Sea. The Philistines controlled most of the area west of the Jordan. David's appeal to the men of Jabesh-Gilead was undercut by Abner's promotion of Ishbosheth as their king.

**Wiersbe** makes an interesting observation and application - Abner had personal interest in the household of Saul since he was Saul's cousin (1 Sam. 14:50). It was to his advantage to see Ishbosheth reign, but **he was deliberately rebelling against God's Word when he crowned him**. God had made it very clear that David alone was to rule Israel. Perhaps Christians today are like the Jews of that day: we permit our King to reign over only a part of our lives, and the result is conflict and sorrow. (**ED: WOE!**) (Borrow [Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament](#))

Whenever we fail to submit to God's will,  
we cause division and bring destruction (James 3:13-4:1+).  
--Warren Wiersbe

**Over the Ashurites, over Jezreel, over Ephraim, and over Benjamin, even over all Israel** - So Abner was able to get all of Israel to submit to Ishbosheth as king, making David king over only Judah.

**NET Note** - The [Masoretic Text](#) here reads "the Ashurite," but this is problematic if it is taken to mean "the Assyrian." Ish-bosheth's kingdom obviously was not of such proportions as to extend to Assyria. The Syriac Peshitta renders the word as "the Geshurite," while the Targum has "of the house of Ashur." We should probably emend the Hebrew text to read "the Geshurite." The Geshurites lived in the northeastern part of the land of Palestine.

**Walton** - Abner had been Saul's commander in chief and was his cousin. Rather than take the throne for himself, he procured it for one of Saul's surviving sons, Ish-Bosheth. He appears to have retained the support of a number of the northern tribes. Though Ish-Bosheth was king, the text gives the impression that Abner was in control. It was not that unusual for a military strongman to sponsor a weak heir to the throne. (see page 324 [IVP Background Commentary-OT](#))

**2 Samuel 2:10** Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, was forty years old when he became king over Israel, and he was king for two years. The house of Judah, however, followed David.

- **two years:** Sa 2:10

## ISHBOSHETH REIGNS FOR TWO YEARS

**Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, was forty years old when he became king over Israel, and he was king for two years**- The time of 2 years is difficult to correlate with David's 7.5 years. What happened to for 5.5 years to Ish-bosheth? Most writers feel that it took him 5.5 years to actually establish his reign which then lasted only 2 years.

**Ryrie** for example says "The difference in lengths of reigns (Ish-bosheth, two years; David, 7 1/2 years) may be because Ish-bosheth did not take the throne immediately, but required five years to recover the northern territory from the Philistines.

**The house of Judah, however, followed David** - David was from the tribe of Judah and they remained loyal to him.

**Guzik** - We shouldn't forget that David was also a son of Saul by marriage. David married Michal, the daughter of Saul (1 Samuel 18:17-30).

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**Norman Geisler** - [go to page 154 in When Critics Ask](#)- 2 SAMUEL 2:10—How could Ishbosheth have reigned only two years when 2 Samuel 5:5 says David reigned for seven and one half years?

**PROBLEM:** After the death of Saul, his son Ishbosheth reigned over Israel. According to 2 Samuel 2:10, Ishbosheth reigned for two years. While Ishbosheth reigned in Israel, Judah followed after David (2 Sam. 2:10). After Ishbosheth was killed, the people of Israel came to David to crown him king of all Israel. However, according to 2 Samuel 5:5, David reigned in Hebron for seven and one-half years. How could David have reigned over Judah for seven and one-half years when Ishbosheth reigned over Israel for only two years?

**SOLUTION:** Although Ishbosheth was eventually crowned king of Israel, this did not take place until five years after the death of

Saul. The Philistines had been a major obstacle in uniting the ten tribes of Israel and establishing Israel under the reign of Ishbosheth. Once the armies of Israel under Abner's direction had sufficiently driven back the Philistines, Abner set up Ishbosheth as king over Israel. During the entire period of Abner's conflicts with the Philistines, and during the two years of Ishbosheth's reign, David reigned as king of Judah

**2 Samuel 2:11 The time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months.**

- **time:** 2Sa 5:4-5 1Ki 2:11 1Ch 3:4 29:27

#### **Related Passage:**

2 Samuel 5:4-5+ David was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned forty years. 5 At Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three years over all Israel and Judah.

### **DAVID REIGNS IN HEBRON FOR 7.5 YEARS**

**The time** (Literally - "number of days") **that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months** - As noted from 2Sa 5:4 David is now 30 years old. He had been fleeing for his life for some 10 years (or longer), so finally can experience a degree of peace and rest.

**William MacDonald** points out that "David had never asserted his right to the throne. Neither did he do so now. Rather, he chose to leave the matter in the hands of the Lord. If Jehovah had anointed him as king, Jehovah would subdue his enemies and bring him into the possession of his kingdom. The Lord Jesus similarly awaits the Father's timing to reign over the entire globe. His dominion is recognized only by a minority of mankind now, but there is an appointed day in which every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Phil. 2:10, 11).

**Guzik** - David refused to force his reign on his subjects – and neither will the Son of David. Like David, Jesus will battle against pretenders to the throne, but He will not force His reign on mankind – yet.

**Anderson** - David had to wait 7 1/2 years before the whole kingdom is to be put under his hand. David still has to wait. But it is God's time he is waiting for, not man's.

**2 Samuel 2:12 Now Abner the son of Ner, went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon with the servants of Ish-bosheth the son of Saul.**

- **Mahanaim:** 2Sa 17:14 Ge 32:2
- **Gibeon:** Jos 9:3 10:2,4,12 18:25

### **BEGINNING OF CIVIL WAR**

**Now Abner the son of Ner, went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon with the servants of Ish-bosheth the son of Saul-** Gibeon is north of Hebron about 23 miles. When Abner made Ish-Bosheth king over "all Israel," he knew that in effect he was declaring war on David and here we see him moving into position for battle. On the map above note that Gibeon is about 6 miles NNW of Jerusalem. In 2Sa 2:12-17 we read about the civil war between Israel led by Abner under King Ish-bosheth and Judah led by Joab under King David. The word **Ish-Bosheth** means 'man of shame.' In 1 Chron. 8:33 this man is called 'Esh-Baal.' This word EshBaal would mean man of Baal. Baal is the name for a false god. One would hardly expect that the Israelites would put a man on the throne who had a name of Esh-Baal. Abner may have changed his name to Ish-Bosheth when he put him on the throne.

**2 Samuel 2:13 And Joab the son of Zeruiah and the servants of David went out and met them by the pool of Gibeon; and**

they sat down, one on the one side of the pool and the other on the other side of the pool.

- **Joab:** 2Sa 2:18 8:16 20:23 1Ki 1:7 2:28-35 1Ch 2:16
- **pool:** Jer 41:12

[Site of Ancient Pool of Gibeon](#)

[Steps Down into Pool](#)

## ABNER CHALLENGES DAVID'S MEN TO A FACE-OFF

**And Joab the son of Zeruiah** - This is Joab's first appearance in the David narrative and he becomes a major player for his name appears 116 times from 2Sa 2:13 to 1Ki 11:21. **Zeruiah** was David's sister (1Ch 2:16), so Abishai and Joab (and their brother Asahel who appears in 2Sa 2:18) were David's nephews, as well as trusted military leaders. Joab was commander David's army serving as a valiant, capable, and unscrupulous warrior devoted to the King (cf (2Sa 10:7–14; 11:1; 12:26; 1 Ki 11:15–16). **Vannoy** adds that "At times David was unable to control him (2Sa 3:39; 18:5, 14; 1Ki 2:5–6), and he was eventually executed for his wanton assassinations and his part in the conspiracy to place Adonijah rather than Solomon on David's throne (1 Ki 2:28–34)." (NIV Study Bible)

**Alexander Whyte** points out, "**Joab**, the son of David's sister was a man of the very foremost ability. Had it not been for David, Joab would have climbed up into the throne of Israel. As it was, he stood on the steps of the throne and faced the king all his days. Notwithstanding their family relationship, David and Joab were much of an age, and that no doubt helps to account for a good deal that went on between the uncle and the nephew. Joab was a stern, haughty, imperious, revengeful man. His only virtue was a certain proud, patronizing loyalty to his king."

**And the servants of David went out and met them by the pool of Gibeon; and they sat down, one on the one side of the pool and the other on the other side of the pool** - The Pool of Gibeon was located in Saul's home territory of Benjamin.

[Believer's Study Bible](#) - Archaeologists discovered a huge pit at el-Jib, ancient Gibeon, probably dating from David's time. It is about 37 feet across and 35 feet deep, with steps leading down to a water chamber 82 feet below the surface.

[Wikipedia - Pool of Gibeon](#) - The **Pool of Gibeon** is a site in [Gibeon](#) mentioned a number of times in the Hebrew Bible. Archeological evidence locates the historical site of the pool in the village of [Jib](#), in the [West Bank Palestinian territories](#)....The remains of Gibeon were excavated in the late 1950s and early 1960s by a team of archaeologists led by University of Pennsylvania archaeologist [James B. Pritchard](#). The pool itself was unearthed in 1957.<sup>[2]</sup> **The Pool of Gibeon**, "one of the ancient world's remarkable engineering achievements", was dug 88 ft (27 m) into limestone until it met the [water table](#). A spiral staircase along the walls allowed access to the water, according to the archaeologists that excavated the site.<sup>[3]</sup>

**2 Samuel 2:14 Then Abner said to Joab, "Now let the young men arise and hold a contest before us." And Joab said, "Let them arise."**

BGT 2 Samuel 2:14 κα ε πεν Αβεννερ πρ ς Ιωαβ ναστ τωσαν δ τ παιδ ρια κα παιξ τωσαν ν πιον μ ν κα ε πεν Ιωαβ ναστ τωσαν

LXE 2 Samuel 2:14 And Abenner said to Joab, Let now the young men arise, and play before us. And Joab said, Let them arise.

KJV 2 Samuel 2:14 And Abner said to Joab, Let the young men now arise, and play before us. And Joab said, Let them arise.

NET 2 Samuel 2:14 Abner said to Joab, "Let the soldiers get up and fight before us." Joab said, "So be it!"

CSB 2 Samuel 2:14 Then Abner said to Joab, "Let's have the young men get up and compete in front of us." "Let them get up," Joab replied.

ESV 2 Samuel 2:14 And Abner said to Joab, "Let the young men arise and compete before us." And Joab said, "Let them arise."

NIV 2 Samuel 2:14 Then Abner said to Joab, "Let's have some of the young men get up and fight hand to hand in front of us." "All right, let them do it," Joab said.

NLT 2 Samuel 2:14 Then Abner suggested to Joab, "Let's have a few of our warriors fight hand to hand here in front of us." "All right," Joab agreed.

- **hold a contest:** 2Sa 2:17,26,27 Pr 10:23 17:14 20:18 25:8 26:18,19

## **ABNER PROPOSES A CONTEST BETWEEN 12 MEN ON EACH SIDE**

**Then Abner said to Joab, "Now let the young men arise and hold a contest ([sachaq](#)) before us."** - NLT = "Let's have a few of our warriors fight hand to hand here in front of us." Abner throws down a challenge similar to the challenge of the Philistines to the nation Israel in 1 Samuel 17:8,9 as occurred between David and Goliath (1Sa 17) and was hopefully a way to avoid bloodshed from an all-out war. The KJV is somewhat misleading translating it as "play," but in the context Abner is speaking euphemistically, is calling for representative combat as when David fought Goliath, each serving as representatives of their nation. In the same way Abner calls for a similar contest of arms, presumably to prevent more widespread bloodshed that would result from an all out war between Abner's army and Joab's army.

**NET Note on hold a contest** - Heb "play." What is in view here is a gladiatorial contest in which representative groups of soldiers engage in mortal combat before the watching armies. Cf. NAB "perform for us"; NASB "hold (have NRSV) a contest before us"; NLT "put on an exhibition of hand-to-hand combat."

**Editorial Note** - Some writers do not interpret it this way based on the KJV which says "play before us," and think it was more a contest for entertainment that got out of control. It is interesting that the Septuagint translate the Hebrew verb ([sachaq](#)) with the verb paizo which means to amuse oneself, to engage in some activity for the sake of amusement, and is in the [aorist imperative](#) Abner giving it as a command.

**And Joab said, "Let them arise."** - Joab agrees to Abner's proposal.

**Henry Morris** - This challenge to have a dozen young men from each side "play" (hold a contest) (a euphemism for engaging in mortal combat) was an occasional means of determining the winner in an imminent battle, similar to the contest between David and Goliath. In this case, however, all the initial combatants killed each other, and the battle spread with deadly intensity between the two factions of the children of Israel.

**Believer's Study Bible** - The attempt to avert civil war by settling the issue with 12 valiant men from each side was a failure. The word "compete" is a poor euphemism for mortal combat. Even after this combat was finished, the larger fight continued.

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**Hold a contest** ([07832](#))([sachaq](#)) means to laugh. Qal - laugh, mock; piel - play, rejoice, revel, celebrate, dance, engage in a military contest; hiphil - scorn. TWOT says "It may mean to perform combat (II Sam 2:14; KB, p. 918), to play tambourines and dance (I Sam 18:6-7), or to celebrate (II Sam 6:5, 21, NASB) the restoration of the ark."

**Gilbrant** - The Hebrew verb sâchaq means "to laugh," "to amuse," "to mock," "to rejoice" or "to struggle." A cognate form is found only in the Ethiopic term sahaqa, meaning "to laugh." The root of sâchaq conveys the general idea of laughter, especially in the Qal, whether in joy or amazement, and can connote either positive or negative uses. In a positive sense, Job smiled in spite of his terrible plight (Job 29:24); the wife of noble character can "rejoice in time to come" (Prov. 31:25); the opposite of weeping is identified as laughing (Ecc. 3:4). Sâchaq has a negative usage as well. For example, young men laughed mockingly at Job's misfortune (Job 30:1) in contrast to the respect he had been honored with previously (see Job 29:7-11). Also, the destruction of Jerusalem was laughed at by her neighbors (Lam. 1:7), and the Chaldeans "shall deride every strong hold" (Hab. 1:10) of their weaker enemies. Metaphorically, the wild donkey scornfully laughed at cities (Job 39:7), the ostrich laughed at the horse and its rider whom she could easily outrun (v. 18), the brave warhorse laughed in the face of fear (v. 22) and the sea monster Leviathan laughed at man's feeble weapons (41:29). Further, obstinate sinners were laughed at by God (Pss. 2:4; 37:13; 59:8), by Wisdom (Prov. 1:26) and by righteous men (Ps. 52:6). Samson was forced to serve as a joker by amusing and entertaining the Philistine crowd (Judg. 16:27).

References to sâchaq in the Piel stem connote the idea of "to be merry," in addition "to laugh." For example, the Philistines "made sport" of Samson by forcing him to entertain them, possibly with feats of strength (Judg. 16:25). Jeremiah prophesied of singing and rejoicing at the time when Israel would be restored (Jer. 30:19; 31:4). The prophet disliked the company of revelers (Jer. 15:17). Sâchaq illustrates the merriment of children (Zech. 8:5), wild animals playing in the mountains (Job 40:20) and the Leviathan frolicking in the sea (Ps.



104:26).

The women of Israel danced and sang for Saul and David because of their military prowess (1 Sam. 18:7), and David danced before God in thanksgiving, raising the disdain of Saul's daughter Michal (1 Chr. 15:29; cf. 2 Sam. 6:5, 21). Elsewhere, men from the armies of Saul and David conducted a contest of martial sport, an idea originating from Abner and Joab, the generals of each army (2 Sam. 2:14). The twelve-on-twelve competition proved indecisive, resulting in fierce battle that day. The one instance of *sāchaq* in the Hiphil stem involves the people's ridicule and scorn of Hezekiah's couriers, who delivered the king's message encouraging everyone to celebrate the Passover in their homes once again (2 Chr. 30:10). ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

**Sachaq - 36v - amuse(1), amusing(1), celebrate(2), celebrating(3), hold a contest(1), joking(1), laugh(6), laughed them to scorn(1), laughs(6), merry-makers(2), mock(1), mocked(1), play(2), played(1), playing(1), rejoicing(2), scorns(1), smiled(1), smiles(1), sport(1).** Jdg. 16:25; Jdg. 16:27; 1 Sam. 18:7; 2 Sam. 2:14; 2 Sam. 6:5; 2 Sam. 6:21; 1 Chr. 13:8; 1 Chr. 15:29; 2 Chr. 30:10; Job 5:22; Job 29:24; Job 30:1; Job 39:7; Job 39:18; Job 39:22; Job 40:20; Job 41:5; Job 41:29; Ps. 2:4; Ps. 37:13; Ps. 52:6; Ps. 59:8; Ps. 104:26; Prov. 1:26; Prov. 8:30; Prov. 8:31; Prov. 26:19; Prov. 29:9; Prov. 31:25; Eccl. 3:4; Jer. 15:17; Jer. 30:19; Jer. 31:4; Lam. 1:7; Hab. 1:10; Zech. 8:5

**2 Samuel 2:15 So they arose and went over by count, twelve for Benjamin and Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, and twelve of the servants of David.**

## TWELVE ON TWELVE

**So they arose and went over by count, twelve for Benjamin and Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, and twelve of the servants of David** - To the winner go the spoils. Recall that Saul (and thus Ish-bosheth) was from the tribe of Benjamin and it appears at this time, Ish-bosheth may have been supported only by his only tribesmen.

**2 Samuel 2:16 Each one of them seized his opponent by the head and thrust his sword in his opponent's side; so they fell down together. Therefore that place was called Helkath-hazzurim, which is in Gibeon.**

BGT 2 Samuel 2:16 κα κρησαν καστος τ χειρ τ ν κεφαλ ν το πλησον ατο κα μ χαιρα ατο ες πλευρ ν το πλησον ατο κα π ππουσιν κατ τ ατ κα κλητ νομα το τ που κε νου μερς τ ν πιβω λων σιν ν Γαβαων

LXE 2 Samuel 2:16 And they seized every one the head of his neighbour with his hand, and his sword was thrust into the side of his neighbour, and they fall down together: and the name of that place was called The portion of the treacherous ones, which is in Gabaon.

KJV 2 Samuel 2:16 And they caught every one his fellow by the head, and thrust his sword in his fellow's side; so they fell down together: wherefore that place was called Helkathhazzurim, which is in Gibeon.

NET 2 Samuel 2:16 As they grappled with one another, each one stabbed his opponent with his sword and they fell dead together. So that place is called the Field of Flints; it is in Gibeon.

CSB 2 Samuel 2:16 Then each man grabbed his opponent by the head and thrust his sword into his opponent's side so that they all died together. So this place, which is in Gibeon, is named Field of Blades.

ESV 2 Samuel 2:16 And each caught his opponent by the head and thrust his sword in his opponent's side, so they fell down together. Therefore that place was called Helkath-hazzurim, which is at Gibeon.

NIV 2 Samuel 2:16 Then each man grabbed his opponent by the head and thrust his dagger into his opponent's side, and they fell down together. So that place in Gibeon was called Helkath Hazzurim.

NLT 2 Samuel 2:16 Each one grabbed his opponent by the hair and thrust his sword into the other's side so that all of them died. So this place at Gibeon has been known ever since as the Field of Swords.

NRS 2 Samuel 2:16 Each grasped his opponent by the head, and thrust his sword in his opponent's side; so they fell down together. Therefore that place was called Helkath-hazzurim, which is at Gibeon.

NJB 2 Samuel 2:16 Each caught his opponent by the head and drove his sword into his side; and thus they all fell together. Hence the place was called the Field of Sides; it is at Gibeon.

## ALL 24 FELL AT GIBEON

**Each one of them seized his opponent by the head and thrust his sword in his opponent's side; so they fell down together** - **Hebrew** literally = "and they grabbed each one the head of his neighbor with his sword in the side of his neighbor and they fell together." There was no winner because all 24 champions died, so nothing was accomplished (except 24 dead soldiers) and the civil war continued..

**Utley on by the head** - This is an idiom for grabbing the hair so as to control a person's movement. Obviously these young soldiers on both sides were trained in the same fighting tactics.

**Therefore that place was called Helkath-hazzurim, which is in Gibeon**- The meaning is not certain but may mean something like " the field of strong men," but see NET Note below.

**NET Note** - The meaning of the name "Helkath Hazzurim" (so NIV; KJV, NASB, NRSV similar) is not clear. BHK relates the name to the Hebrew term for "side," and this is reflected in NAB "the Field of the Sides"; the Greek OT revocalizes the Hebrew to mean something like "Field of Adversaries." Cf. also TEV, NLT "Field of Swords"; CEV "Field of Daggers."

**TSK Note on by the head:** Probably by the beard or hair of the head. Plutarch, in his Apophthegms, informs us, that all things being ready for a battle, Alexander's captains asked him whether he had any thing else to command them. "Nothing," said he, "but that the Macedonians shave their beards." Parmenio wondering what he meant, "Dost thou not know," said he, "that in fight, there is no better hold than the beard?"

**2 Samuel 2:17 That day the battle was very severe, and Abner and the men of Israel were beaten before the servants of David.**

BGT 2 Samuel 2:17 κα γ νετο π λεμος σκληρ ς στε λ αν ν τ μ ρ κε ν κα πταισεν Αβεννηρ κα νδρες Ισραηλ ν πιον πα δων Δαιιδ

LXE 2 Samuel 2:17 And the battle was very severe on that day; and Abenner and the men of Israel were worsted before the servants of David.

KJV 2 Samuel 2:17 And there was a very sore battle that day; and Abner was beaten, and the men of Israel, before the servants of David.

NET 2 Samuel 2:17 Now the battle was very severe that day; Abner and the men of Israel were overcome by David's soldiers.

CSB 2 Samuel 2:17 The battle that day was extremely fierce, and Abner and the men of Israel were defeated by David's soldiers.

ESV 2 Samuel 2:17 And the battle was very fierce that day. And Abner and the men of Israel were beaten before the servants of David.

NIV 2 Samuel 2:17 The battle that day was very fierce, and Abner and the men of Israel were defeated by David's men.

NLT 2 Samuel 2:17 A fierce battle followed that day, and Abner and the men of Israel were defeated by the forces of David.

- **Abner:** 2Sa 3:1

## ABNER'S MEN BEATEN BY JOAB'S TROOPS

**That day the battle was very severe** - Because the contest was a draw, a general fight ensued. The fact that 12 comrades were killed on each side surely ignited the passions and resulted in all out severe conflict. David's men had never lost a battle yet. And as

they went to fight, they had a winning streak on the line. In this situation they once again claimed the victory and defeated Abner and the men of Israel.

**And Abner and the men of Israel were beaten before the servants of David**- Because the 12 on 12 plan to avoid all out war failed (with all 24 dying), what followed was all out war between Abner and the army of David. We should not be surprised at this outcome, for God had said David would be the next king of Israel. Unfortunately war in the divided nation would continue (cf 2Sa 3:1+ = "there was a long war between the house of David and the house of Saul") until David was crowned king over all Israel in 2 Samuel 5:1-5. Abner fled the scene to return to Mahanaim, his home base on the east side of the Jordan.

**2 Samuel 2:18 Now the three sons of Zeruiah were there, Joab and Abishai and Asahel; and Asahel was as swift-footed as one of the gazelles which is in the field.**

BGT 2 Samuel 2:18 κα γνοντο κε τρε ς υ ο Σαρουιας Ιωαβ κα Αβεσσα κα Ασαηλ κα Ασαηλ κο φος το ς ποσ ν α το σε μ α δορκ ς ν γρ

LXE 2 Samuel 2:18 And there were there the three sons of Saruia, Joab, and Abessa, and Asael: and Asael was swift in his feet as a roe in the field.

KJV 2 Samuel 2:18 And there were three sons of Zeruiah there, Joab, and Abishai, and Asahel: and Asahel was as light of foot as a wild roe.

NET 2 Samuel 2:18 The three sons of Zeruiah were there— Joab, Abishai, and Asahel. (Now Asahel was as quick on his feet as one of the gazelles in the field.)

CSB 2 Samuel 2:18 The three sons of Zeruiah were there: Joab, Abishai, and Asahel. Asahel was a fast runner, like one of the wild gazelles.

ESV 2 Samuel 2:18 And the three sons of Zeruiah were there, Joab, Abishai, and Asahel. Now Asahel was as swift of foot as a wild gazelle.

NIV 2 Samuel 2:18 The three sons of Zeruiah were there: Joab, Abishai and Asahel. Now Asahel was as fleet-footed as a wild gazelle.

NLT 2 Samuel 2:18 Joab, Abishai, and Asahel-- the three sons of Zeruiah-- were among David's forces that day. Asahel could run like a gazelle,

- **three sons of Zeruiah:** 1Ch 2:15,16 11:26
- **swift-footed:** 2Sa 1:23 1Ch 12:8 Ps 147:10,11 Ec 9:11 Am 2:14
- **as one of the gazelles:** Ps 18:33 Song 2:17 8:14 Hab 3:19

#### Related Passage:

1 Chronicles 2:16 and their sisters were Zeruiah and Abigail. And the three sons of Zeruiah were Abshai, Joab and Asahel.

**Now the three sons of Zeruiah were there, Joab and Abishai and Asahel; and Asahel was as swift-footed as one of the gazelles which is in the field** - Recall that **Abishai** was with David in the camp of Saul when David had opportunity to kill Saul and it was Abishai who was willing to spear Saul, but David would not allow (1Sa 26:6–9). Asahel was the marathoner in David's time. Asahel will appear in the following passages as a "**swift footed**" fool, a detail which probably accounts for his demise!

**Abishai** was Joab's brother and was high officer in David's army-Commander of "the Thirty"

**Zeruiah** - Personal name meaning, "perfumed with mastix" or "bleed." Mother of three of David's generals, Joab, Abishai, and Asahel (2 Samuel 2:18 ). According to 1 Chronicles 2:16 , Zeruiah was David's (half) sister. According to 2 Samuel 17:25 , her sister, Abigail, was the (grand)daughter of Nahash rather than of Jesse, David's father. Kinship with David accounts for the positions of trust enjoyed by Zeruiah's sons.

**2 Samuel 2:19 Asahel pursued Abner and did not turn to the right or to the left from following Abner.**

BGT 2 Samuel 2:19 κα κατεδωξεν Ασαηλ πσω Αβεννηρ κα ο κ ξ κλινεν το πορε εσθαι ες δεξι ο δε ριστερ κατ πισθεν Αβεννηρ

LXE 2 Samuel 2:19 And Asael followed after Abenner, and turned not to go to the right hand or to the left from following Abenner.

KJV 2 Samuel 2:19 And Asahel pursued after Abner; and in going he turned not to the right hand nor to the left from following Abner.

NET 2 Samuel 2:19 Asahel chased Abner, without turning to the right or to the left as he followed Abner.

CSB 2 Samuel 2:19 He chased Abner and did not turn to the right or the left in his pursuit of him.

ESV 2 Samuel 2:19 And Asahel pursued Abner, and as he went, he turned neither to the right hand nor to the left from following Abner.

NIV 2 Samuel 2:19 He chased Abner, turning neither to the right nor to the left as he pursued him.

NLT 2 Samuel 2:19 and he began chasing Abner. He pursued him relentlessly, not stopping for anything.

- **did not turn:** 2Sa 2:21 Jos 1:7 23:6 2Ki 22:2 Pr 4:27

## **ASAHEL PURSUES ABNER**

**Asahel pursued Abner and did not turn to the right or to the left from following Abner-** Asahel the "swift footed one" and one of David's mighty warriors, "one of the thirty" (2Sa 23:24; see also 1Ch 11:26; 27:7), pursued Abner because if he could kill Abner, this would throw his forces into disarray.

Asahel's pursuit of Ahab recalls a modern saying of '**Cutting the head off a snake** means to render an entity useless by halting at its source the flow of information guiding that entity. Assassinating a rebel leader or arresting and confining a dangerous gang leader are good-enough examples of cutting the head off of a metaphorical snake.'

**2 Samuel 2:20 Then Abner looked behind him and said, "Is that you, Asahel?" And he answered, "It is I."**

BGT 2 Samuel 2:20 κα π βλεψεν Αβεννηρ ες τ πσω ατο κα ε πεν ε σ ε α τ ς Ασαηλ κα ε πεν γ ε μι

LXE 2 Samuel 2:20 And Abenner looked behind him, and said, Art thou Asael himself? and he said, I am.

KJV 2 Samuel 2:20 Then Abner looked behind him, and said, Art thou Asahel? And he answered, I am.

NET 2 Samuel 2:20 Then Abner turned and asked, "Is that you, Asahel?" He replied, "Yes it is!"

CSB 2 Samuel 2:20 Abner glanced back and said, "Is that you, Asahel?" "Yes it is," Asahel replied.

ESV 2 Samuel 2:20 Then Abner looked behind him and said, "Is it you, Asahel?" And he answered, "It is I."

NIV 2 Samuel 2:20 Abner looked behind him and asked, "Is that you, Asahel?" "It is," he answered.

NLT 2 Samuel 2:20 When Abner looked back and saw him coming, he called out, "Is that you, Asahel?" "Yes, it is," he replied.

**Then Abner looked behind him and said, "Is that you, Asahel?" And he answered, "It is I."**Asahel was Joab's younger brother.

**2 Samuel 2:21 So Abner said to him, "Turn to your right or to your left, and take hold of one of the young men for yourself, and take for yourself his spoil." But Asahel was not willing to turn aside from following him.**

BGT 2 Samuel 2:21 κα ε πεν α τ Αβεννηρ κκλινον σ ε ς τ δεξι ε ς τ ριστερ κα κ ταχε σαυτ ν τ ν παιδαρ ων κα λαβ σεαυτ τ ν πανοπλ αν ατο κα ο κ θ λησεν Ασαηλ κκλ ναι κ τ ν πισθεν ατο

LXE 2 Samuel 2:21 And Abenner said to him, Turn thou to the right hand or to the left, and lay hold for thyself

on one of the young men, and take to thyself his armour: but Asahel would not turn back from following him.

KJV 2 Samuel 2:21 And Abner said to him, Turn thee aside to thy right hand or to thy left, and lay thee hold on one of the young men, and take thee his armour. But Asahel would not turn aside from following of him.

NET 2 Samuel 2:21 Abner said to him, "Turn aside to your right or to your left. Capture one of the soldiers and take his equipment for yourself!" But Asahel was not willing to turn aside from following him.

CSB 2 Samuel 2:21 Abner said to him, "Turn to your right or left, seize one of the young soldiers, and take whatever you can get from him." But Asahel would not stop chasing him.

ESV 2 Samuel 2:21 Abner said to him, "Turn aside to your right hand or to your left, and seize one of the young men and take his spoil." But Asahel would not turn aside from following him.

NIV 2 Samuel 2:21 Then Abner said to him, "Turn aside to the right or to the left; take on one of the young men and strip him of his weapons." But Asahel would not stop chasing him.

NLT 2 Samuel 2:21 "Go fight someone else!" Abner warned. "Take on one of the younger men, and strip him of his weapons." But Asahel kept right on chasing Abner.

- **spoil**, Jdg 14:19

## STRIP THE YOUNG MEN FOR SPOIL

**So Abner said to him, "Turn to your right or to your left, and take hold of one of the young men for yourself, and take for yourself his spoil** (chalitsah; Lxx - [panoplia](#) = full armor) - **NLT** - "Take on one of the younger men, and strip him of his weapons." Abner is trying to dissuade Asahel from attacking him in an attempt to retrieve Abner's armor.

**Wiersbe** - Abner told him to turn aside and take what he wanted from one of the dead enemy soldiers. Then he warned Asahel that if he killed him, this would create a "blood feud" that could cause trouble for years to come. Abner knew Joab and had no desire to begin a possible lifelong family conflict. It was bad enough that Joab and Abner were rival generals. When Asahel refused to give up the chase, the clever Abner killed him by using one of the oldest tricks of the battlefield: he stopped suddenly and allowed Asahel to propel himself right into the end of spear. The butt end of a spear was often sharpened so the spear could be thrust into the ground and be ready for action (1 Sam. 26:7) (Borrow [Be Restored](#))

**MacArthur** - To gain the armor or spoil of the enemy general, Abner, who was fleeing the defeat, would be to possess the greatest trophy. Asahel was ambitious to get it, while Abner kept warning him and suggested he take the spoil of some other soldier for his trophy, since he was not able to defeat Abner.

**But Asahel was not willing to turn aside from following him** - This is more like stubbornness than persistence and it would result in his death.

**Walton** - The plunder from personal combat was the possessions of the slain. The rank or status of a warrior would be reflected in clothing, armor or the quality of the weapons. These would become trophies and status symbols for the victor. Asahel is unwilling to settle for any soldier's gear—he wants the commander's. (see page 325 [IVP Background Commentary-OT](#))

**Life Application Study Bible** ([borrow](#)) - Asahel refused to turn from his self-imposed duty. Persistence is a good trait if it is for a worthy cause. But if the goal is only personal honor or gain, persistence may be no more than stubbornness. Asahel's stubbornness not only cost him his life, but it also spurred unfortunate disunity in David's army for years to come (2Sa 3:26, 27; 1Ki 2:28-35). Before you decide to pursue a goal, make sure it is worthy of your devotion.

**Warren Wiersbe** - Three murders will occur before David becomes king of all the people: Asahel's (chap. 2), Abner's (chap. 3) and Ishbosheth's (chap. 4). All of that blood would not have been shed if the leaders had only submitted to God's chosen king instead of seeking their own advantage. Joab and Asahel were related to David (1Ch 2:16), so there were both family and national considerations. Had everybody put the glory of God and the good of the nation first, tragedies would have been avoided.. (Borrow [With the Word](#))

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**Spoil** ([02488](#))(chalitsah) means what is stripped off a person. Gilbrant adds that "This is derived from the verb chālats, "to draw off," "to gird for fighting" or "to despoil." It is attested in Middle Hebrew and Talmudic, with the sense of "to draw off." In its OT contexts, the noun refers to equipment or outer clothing which is taken from slain soldiers as booty. The first context is the aftermath of Samson's riddle being revealed to the men of Timnah, as Samson satisfied the terms of the wager by killing and stripping a number

of Philistines (Jdg. 14). The second OT appearance of the word is in the account of Abner's (the military leader of Ish-Bosheth's short-lived rule) attempt to get Asahel, the brother of Joab (David's military leader) to quit pursuing him (2Sa 2:21). He pleaded with him to turn aside, so he could kill and strip warriors. Instead, Abner killed Asahel, setting in motion his own death at the hand of the societal mechanism of blood vengeance (2Sa 3:6ff). The action implied by chālītsāh curiously incorporates the two prime nuances of its verbal root, as one strips off the girding of someone prepared for war.

## 2 Samuel 2:22 Abner repeated again to Asahel, "Turn aside from following me. Why should I strike you to the ground? How then could I lift up my face to your brother Joab?"

BGT 2 Samuel 2:22 κα προσθετο τι Αβεννηρ λγων τ Ασαηλ πστηθι π μο να μ πατ ξω σε ε ς τ ν γ ν κα π ς ρ τ πρ σωπ ν μου πρ ς Ιωαβ κα πο σιν τα τα π στρεφε πρ ς Ιωαβ τ ν δελφ ν σου

LXE 2 Samuel 2:22 And Abenner said yet again to Asael, Stand aloof from me, lest I smite thee to the ground? and how should I lift up my face to Joab?

KJV 2 Samuel 2:22 And Abner said again to Asahel, Turn thee aside from following me: wherefore should I smite thee to the ground? how then should I hold up my face to Joab thy brother?

NET 2 Samuel 2:22 So Abner spoke again to Asahel, "Turn aside from following me! I do not want to strike you to the ground. How then could I show my face in the presence of Joab your brother?"

CSB 2 Samuel 2:22 Once again, Abner warned Asahel, "Stop chasing me. Why should I strike you to the ground? How could I ever look your brother Joab in the face?"

ESV 2 Samuel 2:22 And Abner said again to Asahel, "Turn aside from following me. Why should I strike you to the ground? How then could I lift up my face to your brother Joab?"

NIV 2 Samuel 2:22 Again Abner warned Asahel, "Stop chasing me! Why should I strike you down? How could I look your brother Joab in the face?"

NLT 2 Samuel 2:22 Again Abner shouted to him, "Get away from here! I don't want to kill you. How could I ever face your brother Joab again?"

- **Why should I strike you:** 2Ki 14:10-12 Pr 29:1 Ec 6:10
- **How then could:** 2Sa 3:27

### ABNER TRIES TO REASON WITH ASAHIEL

**Abner repeated again to Asahel, "Turn aside from following me. Why should I strike you to the ground? How then could I lift up my face to your brother Joab** - Abner wisely understood that if Asahel kept pursuing and he had to kill him, it would incite a "blood feud" with his surviving brother Joab seeking vengeance.

## 2 Samuel 2:23 However, he refused to turn aside; therefore Abner struck him in the belly with the butt end of the spear, so that the spear came out at his back. And he fell there and died on the spot. And it came about that all who came to the place where Asahel had fallen and died, stood still.

BGT 2 Samuel 2:23 κα ο κ βο λετο το ποστ ναι κα τ πτει α τ ν Αβεννηρ ν τ π σω το δ ρατος π τ ν ψ αν κα διεξ λθεν τ δ ρυ κ τ ν π σω α το κα π πτει κε κα ποθν σκει ποκ τω α το κα γ νετο π ς ρ χ μενος ως το τ που ο πεσεν κε Ασαηλ κα π θανεν κα φ στατο

LXE 2 Samuel 2:23 And what does this mean? return to Joab thy brother? But he would not stand aloof; and Abenner smites him with the hinder end of the spear on the loins, and the spear went out behind him, and he falls there and dies on the spot: and it came to pass that every one that came to the place where Asael fell and died, stood still.

KJV 2 Samuel 2:23 Howbeit he refused to turn aside: wherefore Abner with the hinder end of the spear smote him under the fifth rib, that the spear came out behind him; and he fell down there, and died in the same place: and it came to pass, that as many as came to the place where Asahel fell down and died stood still.



NET 2 Samuel 2:23 But Asahel refused to turn aside. So Abner struck him in the abdomen with the back end of his spear. The spear came out his back; Asahel collapsed on the spot and died there right before Abner. Everyone who now comes to the place where Asahel fell dead pauses in respect.

CSB 2 Samuel 2:23 But Asahel refused to turn away, so Abner hit him in the stomach with the end of his spear. The spear went through his body, and he fell and died right there. When all who came to the place where Asahel had fallen and died, they stopped,

ESV 2 Samuel 2:23 But he refused to turn aside. Therefore Abner struck him in the stomach with the butt of his spear, so that the spear came out at his back. And he fell there and died where he was. And all who came to the place where Asahel had fallen and died, stood still.

NIV 2 Samuel 2:23 But Asahel refused to give up the pursuit; so Abner thrust the butt of his spear into Asahel's stomach, and the spear came out through his back. He fell there and died on the spot. And every man stopped when he came to the place where Asahel had fallen and died.

NLT 2 Samuel 2:23 But Asahel refused to turn back, so Abner thrust the butt end of his spear through Asahel's stomach, and the spear came out through his back. He stumbled to the ground and died there. And everyone who came by that spot stopped and stood still when they saw Asahel lying there.

- the fifth rib: 2Sa 3:27 4:6 5:6 20:10
- stood still: 2Sa 20:12,13

## WHEN STUBBORNNESS RESULT IN YOUR DEATH!

**However, he refused to turn aside; therefore Abner struck him in the belly with the butt end of the spear, so that the spear came out at his back** The butt end of the spear clearly was not blunt but pointed (as shown in the statue retrieved from that time) and this was so that spears might be stuck in the ground (1Sa 26:7).

[Anderson](#) suggests "Being a skinny runner, Abner just stopped quickly and the butt end of his spear went right through Asahel's stomach."

**Walton on butt end of the spear** - Spears often were made with a metal casing on the butt end that was not honed to a point but was tapered down to a sharp edge. This could be used as a goad or to stick the spear in the ground. Many of these metal ends have been found in excavations and are portrayed on wall paintings (see page 325 [IVP Background Commentary-OT](#))

**NIV Study Bible** - Stabbing an enemy in the stomach was the method of execution noted also in 3:27; 4:6 (cf. Jdg 3:21).

**And he fell there and died on the spot. And it came about that all who came to the place where Asahel had fallen and died, stood still** - Abner's killing of Joab's younger brother, Asahel caused a blood-feud that would threaten David's plan to unite kingdoms of Judah and Israel (cf. 2 Sa 3). Asahel's son Zebadiah succeeded his father as commander of his division according to 1Ch 27:7.

**2 Samuel 2:24 But Joab and Abishai pursued Abner, and when the sun was going down, they came to the hill of Ammah, which is in front of Giah by the way of the wilderness of Gibeon.**

BGT 2 Samuel 2:24 κα̅ κατεδ̅ ω̅ξεν̅ Ιωαβ̅ κα̅ Α̅βεσσα̅ π̅σω̅ Α̅βεννηρ̅ κα̅ λ̅ιος̅ δ̅υνεν̅ κα̅ α̅το̅ ε̅σ̅λθον̅ ως̅ το̅ βουνο̅ Α̅μμα̅ν̅ σ̅τιν̅ π̅ προσ̅ που̅ γαι̅ δ̅ ν̅ ρημον̅ Γα̅βαων̅

LXE 2 Samuel 2:24 And Joab and Abessa pursued after Abenner, and the sun went down: and they went as far as the hill of Amman, which is in the front of Gai, by the desert way of Gabaon.

KJV 2 Samuel 2:24 Joab also and Abishai pursued after Abner: and the sun went down when they were come to the hill of Ammah, that lieth before Giah by the way of the wilderness of Gibeon.

NET 2 Samuel 2:24 So Joab and Abishai chased Abner. At sunset they came to the hill of Ammah near Giah on the way to the wilderness of Gibeon.

CSB 2 Samuel 2:24 but Joab and Abishai pursued Abner. By sunset, they had gone as far as the hill of Ammah, which is opposite Giah on the way to the wilderness of Gibeon.

ESV 2 Samuel 2:24 But Joab and Abishai pursued Abner. And as the sun was going down they came to the hill of Ammah, which lies before Giah on the way to the wilderness of Gibeon.

NIV 2 Samuel 2:24 But Joab and Abishai pursued Abner, and as the sun was setting, they came to the hill of Ammah, near Giah on the way to the wasteland of Gibeon.

NLT 2 Samuel 2:24 When Joab and Abishai found out what had happened, they set out after Abner. The sun was just going down as they arrived at the hill of Ammah near Giah, along the road to the wilderness of Gibeon.

## THE BROTHERS OF ASAHIEL PURSUE ABNER

**But Joab and Abishai pursued Abner** - Their anguish turned to bitterness and anger and a strong desire to be the "blood avengers" of their brother's death. And so Asahiel's brothers pursue Abner seeking revenge. The "[Hatfield and McCoy](#)" "blood feud" had begun and would continue for years.

**And when the sun was going down, they came to the hill of Ammah, which is in front of Giah by the way of the wilderness of Gibeon** - This location cannot be identified with any degree of certainty.

**2 Samuel 2:25 The sons of Benjamin gathered together behind Abner and became one band, and they stood on the top of a certain hill.**

BGT 2 Samuel 2:25 κα συναθρο ζονται υ ο Βενιαμιν ο π σω Αβεννηρ κα γεν θησαν ε ς συν ντησιν μ αν κα στησαν π κεφαλ ν βουνο ν ς

LXE 2 Samuel 2:25 And the children of Benjamin who followed Abenner gather themselves together, and they formed themselves into one body, and stood on the top of a hill.

KJV 2 Samuel 2:25 And the children of Benjamin gathered themselves together after Abner, and became one troop, and stood on the top of an hill.

NET 2 Samuel 2:25 The Benjaminites formed their ranks behind Abner and were like a single army, standing at the top of a certain hill.

CSB 2 Samuel 2:25 The Benjaminites rallied to Abner; they formed a single unit and took their stand on top of a hill.

ESV 2 Samuel 2:25 And the people of Benjamin gathered themselves together behind Abner and became one group and took their stand on the top of a hill.

NIV 2 Samuel 2:25 Then the men of Benjamin rallied behind Abner. They formed themselves into a group and took their stand on top of a hill.

NLT 2 Samuel 2:25 Abner's troops from the tribe of Benjamin regrouped there at the top of the hill to take a stand.

## SONS OF BENJAMIN RESCUE ABNER

**The sons of Benjamin gathered together behind Abner and became one band, and they stood on the top of a certain hill-**  
The sons of Benjamin came to Abner's rescue from the pursuit of Joab and Abishai.

**Matthew Henry** - Verses 25-32. Abner appeals to Joab concerning the miserable consequences of a civil war. Those who make light of such unnatural contests, will find that they are bitterness to all concerned. How easy it is for men to use reason, when it makes for them, who would not use it, if it made against them! See how the issue of things alter men's minds! The same thing which looked pleasant in the morning, at night looked dismal. Those who are most forward to enter into contention, will repent before they have done with it, and had better leave it off before it be meddled with, as Solomon advises. This is true of every sin, oh that men

would consider it in time, that it will be bitterness in the latter end! Asahel's funeral is here mentioned. Distinctions are made between the dust of some and that of others; but in the resurrection no difference will be made, but between the godly and ungodly, which will remain for ever.

**2 Samuel 2:26 Then Abner called to Joab and said, "Shall the sword devour forever? Do you not know that it will be bitter in the end? How long will you refrain from telling the people to turn back from following their brothers?"**

BGT 2 Samuel 2:26 κα κ λεσεν Αβεννηρ Ιωαβ κα ε πεν μ ε ς ν κος καταφ γεται ομφα α ο κ ο δας τι πικρ  
στα ε ς τ σχατα κα ως π τε ο μ ε π ς τ λα ναστρ φειν π πισθεν τ ν δελφ ν μ ν

LXE 2 Samuel 2:26 And Abenner called Joab, and said, Shall the sword devour perpetually? knowest thou not that it will be bitter at last? How long then wilt thou refuse to tell the people to turn from following our brethren?

KJV 2 Samuel 2:26 Then Abner called to Joab, and said, Shall the sword devour for ever? knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end? how long shall it be then, ere thou bid the people return from following their brethren?

NET 2 Samuel 2:26 Then Abner called out to Joab, "Must the sword devour forever? Don't you realize that this will turn bitter in the end? When will you tell the people to turn aside from pursuing their brothers?"

CSB 2 Samuel 2:26 Then Abner called out to Joab: "Must the sword devour forever? Don't you realize this will only end in bitterness? How long before you tell the troops to stop pursuing their brothers?"

ESV 2 Samuel 2:26 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?"

NIV 2 Samuel 2:26 Abner called out to Joab, "Must the sword devour forever? Don't you realize that this will end in bitterness? How long before you order your men to stop pursuing their brothers?"

NLT 2 Samuel 2:26 Abner shouted down to Joab, "Must we always be killing each other? Don't you realize that bitterness is the only result? When will you call off your men from chasing their Israelite brothers?"

- **Shall:** 2Sa 2:14 Ac 7:26
- **sword:** 2Sa 11:25 Isa 1:20 Jer 2:30 12:12 46:10,14 Ho 11:6
- **it will be:** 2Sa 2:16 Pr 17:14
- **how long:** Job 18:2 19:2 Ps 4:2 Jer 4:21

## ABNER PROPOSES TRUCE

**Then Abner called to Joab and said, "Shall the sword devour forever? Do you not know that it will be bitter in the end? How long will you refrain from telling the people to turn back from following their brothers - NLT = "When will you call off your men from chasing their Israelite brothers?"** Abner warns Joab of the pending destruction of the Israeli tribes. A truce was needed to avoid the awful consequences of a bitter civil war!

Abner has three questions: 1. "Must the sword devour forever?" 2. "Don't you realize that this will end in bitterness?" 3. "How long before you order your men to stop pursuing their brothers?"

**MacArthur** points out that "As Abner had earlier proposed that the hostilities begin, he now proposed that they cease."

**2 Samuel 2:27 Joab said, "As God lives, if you had not spoken, surely then the people would have gone away in the morning, each from following his brother."**

BGT 2 Samuel 2:27 κα ε πεν Ιωαβ ζ κ ριος τι ε μ λ λησας δι τι τ τε κ πρωθεν ν βη λα ς καστος  
κατ πισθεν το δελφο α το

LXE 2 Samuel 2:27 And Joab said, As the Lord lives, if thou hadst not spoken, even from the morning the people had gone up every one from following his brother.

KJV 2 Samuel 2:27 And Joab said, As God liveth, unless thou hadst spoken, surely then in the morning the people had gone up every one from following his brother.

NET 2 Samuel 2:27 Joab replied, "As surely as God lives, if you had not said this, it would have been morning before the people would have abandoned pursuit of their brothers!"

CSB 2 Samuel 2:27 "As God lives," Joab replied, "if you had not spoken up, the troops wouldn't have stopped pursuing their brothers until morning."

ESV 2 Samuel 2:27 And Joab said, "As God lives, if you had not spoken, surely the men would not have given up the pursuit of their brothers until the morning."

NIV 2 Samuel 2:27 Joab answered, "As surely as God lives, if you had not spoken, the men would have continued the pursuit of their brothers until morning. "

NLT 2 Samuel 2:27 Then Joab said, "God only knows what would have happened if you hadn't spoken, for we would have chased you all night if necessary."

- **As God:** 1Sa 25:26 Job 27:2
- **unless:** 2Sa 2:14 Pr 15:1 17:14 20:18 25:8 Isa 47:7 Lu 14:31,32

## JOAB INVOKES AN OATH FORMULA

**Joab said, "As God lives** - Which of course He does (live). This is an "oath formula."

**if you had not spoken, surely then the people would have gone away in the morning, each from following his brother** - NLT = "Then Joab said, "God only knows what would have happened if you hadn't spoken, for we would have chased you all night if necessary." The point is that if Abner had not issued a challenge (2Sa 2:14), the conflict would have been avoided altogether.

**TSK Note** - This was spoken in allusion to the proposal of Abner, (2Sa 2:14,) which led to the slaughter of twelve young men of each party, and thus provoked the battle. It is probable, that Joab had orders simply to act on the defensive, and would not have attacked the Israelites that day unless compelled; therefore the blame lay upon Abner and Israel.

**2 Samuel 2:28 So Joab blew the trumpet; and all the people halted and pursued Israel no longer, nor did they continue to fight anymore.**

BGT 2 Samuel 2:28 κα σ λπισεν Ιωαβ τ σ λπιγγι κα π στησαν π ς λα ς κα ο κατεδ ωξαν π σω το Ισραηλ κα ο προσ θεντο τι το πολεμε ν

LXE 2 Samuel 2:28 And Joab sounded the trumpet, and all the people departed, and did not pursue after Israel, and did not fight any longer.

KJV 2 Samuel 2:28 So Joab blew a trumpet, and all the people stood still, and pursued after Israel no more, neither fought they any more.

NET 2 Samuel 2:28 Then Joab blew the ram's horn and all the people stopped in their tracks. They stopped chasing Israel and ceased fighting.

CSB 2 Samuel 2:28 Then Joab blew the ram's horn, and all the troops stopped; they no longer pursued Israel or continued to fight.

ESV 2 Samuel 2:28 So Joab blew the trumpet, and all the men stopped and pursued Israel no more, nor did they fight anymore.

NIV 2 Samuel 2:28 So Joab blew the trumpet, and all the men came to a halt; they no longer pursued Israel, nor did they fight anymore.

NLT 2 Samuel 2:28 So Joab blew the ram's horn, and his men stopped chasing the troops of Israel.

### Related Passages:

2 Samuel 18:16 Then **Joab blew the trumpet**, and the people returned from pursuing Israel, for Joab

restrained the people.

2 Samuel 20:1 Now a worthless fellow happened to be there whose name was Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjamite; and he blew the trumpet and said, "We have no portion in David, Nor do we have inheritance in the son of Jesse; Every man to his tents, O Israel!"

2 Samuel 20:22) Then the woman wisely came to all the people. And they cut off the head of Sheba the son of Bichri and threw it to Joab. So he blew the trumpet, and they were dispersed from the city, each to his tent. Joab also returned to the king at Jerusalem.



## TRUMPET SIGNALS TROOPS TO STOP

**So Joab blew the trumpet; and all the people halted and pursued Israel no longer, nor did they continue to fight anymore-**  
The trumpet called for the end of fighting.

**2 Samuel 2:29 Abner and his men then went through the Arabah all that night; so they crossed the Jordan, walked all morning, and came to Mahanaim.**

BGT 2 Samuel 2:29 κα Αβεννηρ κα ο νδρες α το π λθον ες δυσμ ς λην τ ν ν κτα κε νην κα δι βαιναν τ ν  
lorδ νην κα πορε θησαν λην τ ν παρατε νουσαν κα ρχονται ε ς τ ν παρεμβολ ν

LXE 2 Samuel 2:29 And Abenner and his men departed at evening, and went all that night, and crossed over Jordan, and went along the whole adjacent country, and they come to the camp.

KJV 2 Samuel 2:29 And Abner and his men walked all that night through the plain, and passed over Jordan, and went through all Bithron, and they came to Mahanaim.

NET 2 Samuel 2:29 Abner and his men went through the Arabah all that night. They crossed the Jordan River and went through the whole region of Bitron and came to Mahanaim.

CSB 2 Samuel 2:29 So Abner and his men marched through the Arabah all that night. They crossed the Jordan, marched all morning, and arrived at Mahanaim.

ESV 2 Samuel 2:29 And Abner and his men went all that night through the Arabah. They crossed the Jordan, and marching the whole morning, they came to Mahanaim.

NIV 2 Samuel 2:29 All that night Abner and his men marched through the Arabah. They crossed the Jordan, continued through the whole Bithron and came to Mahanaim.

NLT 2 Samuel 2:29 All that night Abner and his men retreated through the Jordan Valley. They crossed the Jordan River, traveling all through the morning, and didn't stop until they arrived at Mahanaim.

- **Bithron:** Song 2:17
- **Mahanaim:** 2Sa 2:12

## ABNER RETURNS HOME TO MAHANAIM

**Abner and his men then went through the Arabah all that night; so they crossed the Jordan, walked all morning, and came to Mahanaim.** The Arabah ([Jordan Rift Valley](#)) was the central valley from Mount Hermon to the Sea of Galilee to the southern end of the Dead Sea and extending down to the Gulf of Aqaba. Mahanaim was "home base" and would eventually be the city from which Ish-bosheth would reign.

**NET Note** - Heb "and they went, all the **Bitron**." The meaning of the Hebrew word "Bitron," which is used only here in the OT, is disputed. The translation above follows BDB 144 s.v. בִּיתְרוֹן in taking the word to be a proper name of an area east of the Jordan. A different understanding was advocated by W. R. Arnold, who took the word to refer to the forenoon or morning; a number of modern scholars and translations have adopted this view (cf. NAB, NASB, NRSV, CEV, NLT). See W. R. Arnold, "The Meaning of בִּיתְרוֹן," *AJSL* 28 (1911–1912): 274–83. In this case one could translate "and they traveled all morning long."

**Walton on Arabah ([Jordan Rift Valley](#))** - The Arabah refers to the Jordan rift valley. Abner would have descended into it through the Micmash pass (see 1Sa 10:5) toward the ford at Adam (see Josh 2:7). **Bithron** may not even be a place name, and if it is, it remains unidentified. (see page 325 [IVP Background Commentary-OT](#))

**2 Samuel 2:30 Then Joab returned from following Abner; when he had gathered all the people together, nineteen of David's servants besides Asahel were missing.**

BGT 2 Samuel 2:30 καὶ Ἰωάβ ἐστρέψεν πίσθεν πρὸς τὸ Ἀβεννηρ καὶ συνθροίσεν πάντα τὸ λαὸν καὶ πῆσαν τὸ παρὰ δὲ Δαυὶδ νεακὰ δεκά νῦν καὶ Ἀσαήλ

LXE 2 Samuel 2:30 And Joab returned from following Abenner, and he assembled all the people, and there were missing of the people of David, nineteen men, and Asael.

KJV 2 Samuel 2:30 And Joab returned from following Abner: and when he had gathered all the people together, there lacked of David's servants nineteen men and Asahel.

NET 2 Samuel 2:30 Now Joab returned from chasing Abner and assembled all the people. Nineteen of David's soldiers were missing, in addition to Asahel.

CSB 2 Samuel 2:30 When Joab had turned back from pursuing Abner, he gathered all the troops. In addition to Asahel, 19 of David's soldiers were missing,

ESV 2 Samuel 2:30 Joab returned from the pursuit of Abner. And when he had gathered all the people together, there were missing from David's servants nineteen men besides Asahel.

NIV 2 Samuel 2:30 Then Joab returned from pursuing Abner and assembled all his men. Besides Asahel, nineteen of David's men were found missing.

NLT 2 Samuel 2:30 Meanwhile, Joab and his men also returned home. When Joab counted his casualties, he discovered that only 19 men were missing in addition to Asahel.

## JOAB'S LOSSES

**Then Joab returned from following Abner; when he had gathered all the people together, nineteen of David's servants besides Asahel were missing** - As noted below, David's losses of men was much lower than Abner's losses and are clearly evidence of the LORD'S favor on David's men. Note the 19 would include the 12 slain at the Pool of Gibeon.

**2 Samuel 2:31 But the servants of David had struck down many of Benjamin and Abner's men, so that three hundred and sixty men died.**

BGT 2 Samuel 2:31 καὶ ὁ παρὰ δὲ Δαυὶδ πτόξευεν τὸν υἱὸν Βενιαμὶν τὸν νῦν Ἀβεννηρ τριακοσούσιν ἑξήκοντα ἄνδρας παρὰ αὐτόν

LXE 2 Samuel 2:31 And the servants of David smote of the children of Benjamin, of the men of Abenner, three hundred and sixty men belonging to him.

KJV 2 Samuel 2:31 But the servants of David had smitten of Benjamin, and of Abner's men, so that three hundred and threescore men died.



NET 2 Samuel 2:31 But David's soldiers had slaughtered the Benjaminites and Abner's men— in all, 360 men had died!

CSB 2 Samuel 2:31 but they had killed 360 of the Benjaminites and Abner's men.

ESV 2 Samuel 2:31 But the servants of David had struck down of Benjamin 360 of Abner's men.

NIV 2 Samuel 2:31 But David's men had killed three hundred and sixty Benjaminites who were with Abner.

NLT 2 Samuel 2:31 But 360 of Abner's men had been killed, all from the tribe of Benjamin.

- three hundred: The slain of Israel, though greatly exceeding those of Judah, were not great. This might be owing to the directions given by David, to be as lenient as possible; but the death of Asahel seems to have stopped the pursuers, and greatly favoured the escape of the vanquished. 2Sa 3:1 1Ki 20:11

## ABNER'S LOSSES

**But the servants of David had struck down many of Benjamin and Abner's men, so that three hundred and sixty men died-** Joab's victory over Abner was overwhelmingly one sided.

**Walton** - Iron Age burial practices featured multiple burials in cave tombs. The body was laid out on its back with personal objects arranged around it. (see page 325 [IVP Background Commentary-OT](#))

**2 Samuel 2:32 And they took up Asahel and buried him in his father's tomb which was in Bethlehem. Then Joab and his men went all night until the day dawned at Hebron.**

BGT 2 Samuel 2:32 κα α ρουσι ν τ ν Α σαη λ κα θ ππουσι ν α τ ν ν τ τ φ το πατρ ς α το ν Β αιθ λεε μ κα πορε θη Ι ω α β κα ο ν δρες ο μετ α το λην τ ν ν κτα κα δι φαυσε ν α το ς ν Χε βρων

LXE 2 Samuel 2:32 And they take up Asael, and bury him in the tomb of his father in Bethleem. And Joab and the men with him went all the night, and the morning rose upon them in Chebron.

KJV 2 Samuel 2:32 And they took up Asahel, and buried him in the sepulchre of his father, which was in Bethlehem. And Joab and his men went all night, and they came to Hebron at break of day.

NET 2 Samuel 2:32 They took Asahel's body and buried him in his father's tomb at Bethlehem. Joab and his men then traveled all that night and reached Hebron by dawn.

CSB 2 Samuel 2:32 Afterward, they carried Asahel to his father's tomb in Bethlehem and buried him. Then Joab and his men marched all night and reached Hebron at dawn.

ESV 2 Samuel 2:32 And they took up Asahel and buried him in the tomb of his father, which was at Bethlehem. And Joab and his men marched all night, and the day broke upon them at Hebron.

NIV 2 Samuel 2:32 They took Asahel and buried him in his father's tomb at Bethlehem. Then Joab and his men marched all night and arrived at Hebron by daybreak.

NLT 2 Samuel 2:32 Joab and his men took Asahel's body to Bethlehem and buried him there in his father's tomb. Then they traveled all night and reached Hebron at daybreak.

■ **buried:** 1Sa 17:58 1Ch 2:13-16 2Ch 16:14 21:1

■ **went:** 2Sa 5:1 Pr 22:29

## ASHAHEL BURIED AT BETHLEHEM ON ARMY'S RETURN TO HEBRON

**And they took up Asahel and buried him in his father's tomb which was in Bethlehem** - Families were buried together in family tombs.

**Winter** points out, "The loss of Asahel was a very severe loss. He was not only the king's nephew but he was the brother of Joab who became David's captain. Joab never quite forgot the fact that Abner killed Asahel. From that day forth he was determined to kill Abner. He really had no right to be the avenger of blood since Asahel died in battle and Abner slew him reluctantly."

**Then Joab and his men went all night until the day dawned at Hebron** - Joab and his men, after burying Asahel, marched all night and arrived at Hebron by daybreak. One wonders why they traveled all night? The text does not say. They had a 23-mile trip back home. This is just a beginning of a long civil conflict before David comes to the throne.