

Exegetical Notes – 2 Samuel 2:8-32
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2 Samuel 2:8-32

Verses 8-9

⁸ Meanwhile, Abner son of Ner, the commander of Saul's army, had taken Ish-Bosheth son of Saul and brought him over to Mahanaim. ⁹ He made him king over Gilead, Ashuri and Jezreel, and also over Ephraim, Benjamin and all Israel.

- While David was being crowned king of Judah, Abner, the commander of Saul's army brought Saul's surviving son, to Mahanaim and crowned him king of ALL Israel. Ish-Bosheth is the apparent heir to Saul's throne and by right of succession should have been Israel's king.

Verses 10-11

¹⁰ Ish-Bosheth son of Saul was forty years old when he became king over Israel, and he reigned two years. The tribe of Judah, however, remained loyal to David. ¹¹ The length of time David was king in Hebron over Judah was seven years and six months.

- Ish-Bosheth reigned as Israel's king for only two years.
- David reigned as king of Judah seven and one half years.
- It apparently took Abner 5 years to secure Ish-Bosheth's place as king of all Israel.

Verses 12-16

¹² Abner son of Ner, together with the men of Ish-Bosheth son of Saul, left Mahanaim and went to Gibeon. ¹³ Joab son of Zeruiah and David's men went out and met them at the pool of Gibeon. One group sat down on one side of the pool and one group on the other side.

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.

¹⁵ So they stood up and were counted off—twelve men for Benjamin and Ish-Bosheth son of Saul, and twelve for David. 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.

- The followers of David and the followers of Ish-Bosheth met at the pool of Gibeon. Apparently, the purpose of this meeting was to engage in battle to determine who would be Israel's king.
- Abner, Ish-Bosheth's general, suggested that instead of the two armies engaging in full battle that there be a "battle of champions." Each side would choose 12 "champions." The 24 would fight. The war would be decided by the outcome of the fight. The last man standing would win the war. Whoever the last man belonged to would become king. Joab, the commander of David's army, agreed.
- However, the result of the battle was inconclusive. All twenty-four men died without one being the "last man standing."

Verse 17

¹⁷ The battle that day was very fierce, and Abner and the Israelites were defeated by David's men.

- Since there was no clear winner in the battle of champions, the armies engaged in full battle. David's army was victorious.

Verses 18-23

¹⁸ The three sons of Zeruiah were there: Joab, Abishai and Asahel. Now Asahel was as fleet-footed as a wild gazelle. ¹⁹ He chased Abner, turning neither to the right nor to the left as he pursued him. ²⁰ Abner looked behind him and asked, "Is that you, Asahel?"

"It is," he answered.

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.

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

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.

- Joab, the chief commander of David's army, and his brothers, Abishai and Ashael served with him in David's army.

- Ashael was a runner. As the battle ensued he gave chase to Abner, the chief commander of Ish-Bosheth's army. His intention was to kill Abner.
- Abner recognized who was chasing him. All of these men had, at one time, served together under king Saul. He pleaded with Ashael to stop chasing him, but Ashael would not give up.
- So Abner thrust his sword backward. The handle end of Abner's sword went through Ashael's body and killed him.
- The death of Ashael signaled the end of the battle. When David's men came to the place where he had died they stopped chasing the army of Ish-Bosheth.

Verses 24-29

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

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 fellow Israelites?"

²⁷ Joab answered, "As surely as God lives, if you had not spoken, the men would have continued pursuing them until morning."

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

²⁹ All that night Abner and his men marched through the Arabah. They crossed the Jordan, continued through the morning hours and came to Mahanaim.

- But Joab and Abishai and the soldiers with them continued to chase after Abner and his defeated army. They cornered Abner at the hill of Ammah.
- Abner's army formed up to defend themselves one last time.
- Abner realized that he had lost and called out to Joab for peace.
- Realizing that the men of Israel were fighting their brothers from the tribe of Judah, Joab ordered the trumpet to sound ending the battle.
- The battle had been a decisive victory for David.
- Abner and his army retreated to Mahanaim.

Verses 30-32

³⁰ Then Joab stopped pursuing Abner and assembled the whole army. Besides Asahel, nineteen of David's men were found missing. ³¹ But David's men had

killed three hundred and sixty Benjamites who were with Abner.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.

- The battle had clearly gone in David's favor. Only 19 of David's men were unaccounted for. However, the tribe of Benjamin alone, Saul's tribe, who fought with Abner and Ish-Bosheth lost 360 men in the battle.
- Joab's army returned to David at Hebron.

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