

11. David's Reign Begins (2 Samuel 1–4)

4 David Establishes His Kingdom (2 Sam 1–9)

4.1 David's Hears About the Deaths of Saul and Jonathan (2 Sam 1)

4.1.1 An Amalekite reports Saul and Jonathan's death to David (2 Sam 1:1-10)

- **Was the Amalekite lying?** Since, the Amalekite presents evidence that proves at least part of his story, he is probably being somewhat truthful, even if opportunistic. Whatever the case, David takes him at his word which does not end well for the Amalekite.

*The LORD had already given previous instructions on the destruction of the Amalekites: 1Sam 15:18–19; Exod 17:15–16; Deut 25:17–19

4.1.2 David mourns Saul and kills the Amalekite (2 Sam 1:11-16)

4.1.3 David laments Saul and Jonathan (2 Sam 1:17-27)

- 1:18 - **The Book of Jashar** - The title means, “The Book of the Upright” and is also mentioned in Joshua 10:13 but no longer exists.
- The Lament by David is some of the finest Hebrew poetry in the OT.
- 1:26 - “surpassing the love of women”
“[In these ancient cultures] A man's wife was his partner in procreation and parenting, but not necessarily his best friend, confidant, or social peer. For David, Jonathan was the peer, friend, and confidant that no wife could ever have been in that society; and his untimely death left a gaping hole in David's soul.” [Robert D. Bergen, 1, 2 Samuel, 293]

4.2 David Is Made King over Judah (2 Sam 2–4)

- The section is the high-point and turning point in the narrative of David. Although he begins well, David will soon spiral down because of His sin. Nevertheless, he fulfills major Torah prophecies regarding 1) the rise of the tribe of **Judah** over Israel (cf. Gen 49:10), 2) the capture of **Jerusalem** where the LORD put his Name for his dwelling (Deut 12:5), 3) the acquisition of territories **promised to Abraham** (Gen 12:7; 15:18–21; 17:8), and 4) the **destruction of Moab, Edom, and Amalek** (Num 24:17–21).

4.2.1 **David is anointed as King in Hebron (2 Sam 2:1-4a)**

- 2:1 - **Hebron** - Was the largest city of refuge in Judah (*a city where someone falsely accused of murder could flee*) and also set apart for the priesthood (see Joshua 21:13).
- 2:4 - **Judah** - Here David is recognized by his kin as King, but not yet all Israel as the following narrative will show.

4.2.2 **David honors the people of Jabesh-gilead who buried Saul (2 Sam 2:4b-7)**

4.2.3 **Abner makes Ish-bosheth King (2 Sam 2:8-11)**

- 2:8 - **Ish-bosheth** - this name means “man of shame.” In 1 Chronicles 8:33; 9:39 he is named “Esh-Baal” which means “Fire of Baal” or “Man of baal.”

“The element (ba’al), which forms the second part of his name, is not a reference to the storm-god Hadd worshiped by the Canaanites and more often than not referred to by the title (not “name”) “ba’al,” which means “lord.” Rather, this is also a title of Yahweh, Israel’s God.

In early Israel one could use this noun (ba’al) (“lord”) of Yahweh without fear. But after the worship of the Canaanite god Hadd/Ba’al made such inroads in the northern kingdom of Israel during the reign of Ahab, God made it known through his prophets (Hos 2:16) that he preferred now to be known by other synonyms, such as the nouns [“my husband”] and [“my lord”], and that his worshipers should no longer use the detested word (ba’al) of him. Because of this revulsion to the divine epithet (ba’al), later scribes of the Hebrew Bible replaced it in names such as Ish-ba’al and Mephi-ba’al with the word (bosheth), which means “shame.”

[Harry A. Hoffner Jr., 1 & 2 Samuel, 170]

- **The Reign of Ish-bosheth:** In the two years of his reign, he is only mentioned doing three things 1) wrongly accusing Abner of misconduct, 2) giving his sister, Michal, back to David, and 3) lying on his bed. In short, he is presented as weak and incompetent.
- 2:11 - David in Hebron 7 years 6 months - this apparently the time it took to consolidate the Kingdom and gain control of Jerusalem.

4.2.4 **Joab battles with Abner (2 Sam 2:12-17)**

- 2:14-16 - Like David and Goliath earlier, the men engage in ritual combat which leads to an impasse with all 24 men killed. This leads to a full-on battle between the opposing forces.

4.2.5 **Asahel is killed by Abner (2 Sam 2:18-23)**

- 2:18 - **Zeruiah** was David's sister and so **Joab, Abishai** and **Asahel** are his nephews.

4.2.6 **Joab and Abner bring an end to the fighting (2 Sam 2:24-32)**

- 2:26 - Abner reasons with Joab: *If we continue, when will the killing stop?*
- 2:30 - According to the numbers, Joab's forces dealt a severe blow to Abner's. If 12 of Joab's men were killed during the initial "contest" at the pool, this means that only 7 of his men were lost in the other battle whereas 360 of Abners were lost - a decisive victory.

4.2.7 **David's family grows (2 Sam 3:1-5)**

- 3:1ff - the list of **David's wives** shows that he was consolidating his power through marriage given that they were from different territories.

The list of sons gives the line of succession to the throne: Amnon, Kileab, Absalom, Adonijah, Shephatiah, and Ithream

4.2.8 **Ish-bosheth dishonors Abner (2 Sam 3:6-11)**

- 3:6-7 - Abner's "strengthening himself" in the house of Saul indicates that he may have had other motives in establishing Ish-bosheth. This seems to be the motivation for Ish-bosheth's accusation that Abner had gone in to one of the royal concubines - an act of betrayal and subtle claim to the throne. Like his father before him, Ish-bosheth is either paranoid or misreads the situation, or both.
- 3:8-10 - **Abner's reaction** implies that the accusation is not true and that he has been accused of betrayal of the house of Saul. Here, Abner's allegiance shifts to David as he apparently *knows* that the LORD has given the kingdom to David!?!?

4.2.9 **Abner makes peace and an alliance with David (2 Sam 3:12-21)**

- 3:12 - "make a covenant" - "cut a covenant"
- 3:13 - **Michal** - by requesting his first wife be returned to him, David is reestablishing his right as part of Saul's own family and his rule. Although The Torah prohibited men taking back wives they had divorced, (see Deut 24:1-4) David had never divorced Michal; she had been taken from him.

- 3:17-18 - the **Elders of Israel** - by conferring with these tribal leaders (part of the same group who had demanded a king earlier, see 1 Sam 8:4-5), Abner is helping David become King over all Israel.
- 3:19-21- Abner also brings Benjamin over to David's side and vows to bring all the rest of Israel over as well.

4.2.10 **Joab objects to the alliance with Abner and kills him for the sake of Asahel (2 Sam 3:22-30)**

- 3:27 - Joab kills Abner in Hebron a city of refuge in which The Torah forbids vengeful violence (see Num 35:24–25). The Torah did allow for surviving family members to take vengeance upon a murderer if malice or premeditation could be proven (see Num 35:20–21). Since Abner was fleeing from Asahel, neither motivation could be proven in his case. Joab has transgressed the Torah.
- 3:29 - **David's curse** of Joab's family is simply a recall of some of the curses the LORD imposes for violating Torah.

4.2.11 **David mourns the death of Abner (2 Sam 3:31-39)**

- In these verses, David is referred to as "**The King**" for the first time.
- 3:36 - Instead of Abner's death bringing disaster to David's unification plans, His honoring of Abner was pleasing to "all the people." David shows that instead of acting rashly and foolishly, he is able to discern and act graciously, unlike Saul before him.

4.2.12 **Rechab and Baanah kill Ish-bosheth and then David kills them (2 Sam 4:1-12)**

- 4:4 - **Mephibosheth** (also Merib-Baal, see 1 Chr 8:34; 9:40) Although the death of Ish-bosheth is the main focus of this chapter, the sideline about Mephibosheth shows that Saul's family was not completely destroyed.
- 4:10-11 - Like the Amalekite who had reported Saul's death to David thinking he would be rewarded, these two murderers incur the wrath of David in line with the teaching of The Torah on executing wicked men (see Gen 9:6; Exod 21:12; Lev 24:17; Num 35:31).