

In this sermon, we examine David's transition from a shepherd boy to a king, focusing on his first experiences of kingship as depicted in 2 Samuel 2.

DAVID'S SEEKS AND OBEYS GOD'S WILL (2 SAMUEL 2:1-3)

After grieving Saul and Jonathan's loss, David, contemplating his anointing and Israel's leadership shift, seeks the Lord's guidance. The inquiry, likely through the priestly Urim and Thummim, questions if he should relocate to Judah. God, affirmatively responding, directs him to Hebron.

Hebron is a historically and geographically significant city. It's one of the world's oldest cities, where Abraham lived and buried his wife, Sarah. It was a Levitical city, a designated dwelling place for the Levite priests.

Strategically located in Judah's central part given by Joshua, Hebron was well-fortified and a politically and militarily strategic choice. This significance likely influenced God's direction to David. Later, Abasalom will use Hebron to start his coup against his father.

DAVID CROWNED KING (2 SAMUEL 2:4)

The tribe of Judah first anointed David as king. Despite being David's tribe, this decision wasn't universally accepted by all tribes of Israel. This was just the beginning of David's journey to becoming the recognized king.

David was 30 at his anointing by Judah, the second of three anointings in his life. The first was by prophet Samuel, marking God's chosen future king. The second, by his tribe, Judah, and the third by Israel's elders, establishing him as the king of all Israel. The verse ends mentioning the burial of Saul by "the men of Jabesh-Gilead", a detail further explored in subsequent verses.

DAVID'S MESSAGE TO THE MEN OF JABESH-GILEAD (2 SAMUEL 2:5-7)

Jabesh-gilead, an ancient city east of the Jordan River, was home to the Gad tribe. Known for their bravery, the inhabitants famously retrieved the bodies of Saul and his sons from Beit Shean after their defeat at Mount Gilboa. Despite the bodies being desecrated by the Philistines, the men of Jabesh-Gilead risked their lives to ensure a proper burial (1 Samuel 31:8-13).

David, as newly anointed king of Judah, commended the men's courage and respect for Saul. This act demonstrated a key Jewish principle, "Kavod HaMet," which upholds the dignity of every human in life and death.

THE COMPETING KINGDOMS (2 SAMUEL 2:8-11)

As David becomes Judah's king, Israel splits into two monarchies for seven years, with Ishbosheth, Saul's son, ruling the other part. Abner, Saul's army commander, is a key influence during this time, leading to Ishbosheth's kingship.

Ishbosheth, Saul's youngest son and a lesser-known figure, rules Israel for two years under Abner's strong influence until his assassination.

Genesis 35:11 prophesies two future kings from Jacob's yet-to-be-born son, Benjamin. These kings are Saul and his son, Ishbosheth, highlighting the

interconnectedness of biblical narratives. Saul's son is listed as "Eshbaal" in 1 Chronicles, meaning "man of Baal," a generic term for "god". By the time of Samuel's writing, 'baal' was exchanged with 'bosheth' in biblical names to disassociate from Canaanite deities and enforce monotheism.

Abner, not Ishbosheth, is the true wielder of power, manipulating the situation behind the scenes despite Ishbosheth's kingship.

THE BATTLE OF GIBEON (2 SAMUEL 2:12-17)

Abner, commander of Saul's army, becomes pivotal in Israel's power dynamics after Saul's death, controlling Ishbosheth's reign, whom he installs as king. Joab, David's nephew and army commander, is a loyal warrior impacting Israel's future.

The scene in verses 12-17 unfolds in Gibeon, six miles northwest of Jerusalem. Abner proposes a symbolic military challenge, akin to a jousting match. David's men accept, swiftly defeating Abner's men, earning the location the name "Helkathhazzurim" or "the field of strong men."

Abner's men depart humiliated, highlighting David's men's strength and solidifying David as the rightful king.

IT'S NOT OVER UNTIL... (2 SAMUEL 2:18-32)

In 2 Samuel 2:18-32, we see the introduction of three sons of Zeruiah who are with David - Joab, Abishai, and Asahel. Asahel, noted for his swiftness and speed, pursues Abner, the commander of Saul's army. Despite Abner's warnings, Asahel continues his pursuit, resulting in Abner fatally striking him in self defense. This event incites a bitter feud between Joab and Abner, which plays out in later chapters.

Following Asahel's death, an intense battle ensues between David's men and Abner's forces, resulting in a heavy loss for Abner's side. Abner and his men are forced to retreat. Joab ceases pursuit of Abner out of respect for the setting sun, a traditional signal to end hostilities for the day. Asahel's body is retrieved and buried, and the men with David return to Hebron.

The events of this section demonstrate the escalating tensions between David's and Saul's factions, and the conflicts that arise as they vie for control over Israel.

CONCLUSION

This chapter marks the beginning of the intense drama between Abner and Joab, two formidable figures in the saga of Israel's history. Both men, in time, will become part of David's kingdom. However, their paths take dramatic and violent turns. Abner will be murdered, and in a surprising twist, David will honor him posthumously. Joab, on the other hand, will face a grim fate as David, on his death bed, gives specific and horrific instructions regarding him. These developments lay the groundwork for a complex narrative of power, betrayal, and conflict in the chapters to follow.