

# THE “HOUSE OF DAVID” TRIUMPHS

II Samuel 2:8 - 5:10

Narrator	David
Abner	Ba-anah
Ishbosheth	Rekhab
Asahel	An elder
Joab	Messenger

NARRATOR: After the death of Saul, Abner, the commander of Saul’s army, took Ishbosheth, one of Saul’s remaining sons, and declared him king over Israel. Abner knew very well that Samuel had anointed David to be the next king, but Abner had become powerful under Saul and saw this as an opportunity to hold on to his power. Abner had little respect for Ishbosheth and had chosen him because he was weak and easily controlled. For all practical purposes, Abner was king. The commander of David’s army was his cousin, Joab. Joab had two brothers: Asahel and Abishai.

One day, Abner and some of his troops went to Gibeon and were met by Joab and some of his troops. The troops sat and waited while Abner and Joab talked together. Abner and Joab undoubtedly knew each other. Joab and his brothers had probably fought alongside Abner in Saul’s army before Saul had turned against David. Each of them wanted to be the commander of the army of Israel.

ABNER: Well, Joab, your troops are looking pretty good today, but I still think my men could beat yours any day.

JOAB: Ha! You underestimate my men. They are the best fighters in all of Israel. David trains his men well. Your men don’t stand a chance against them.

ABNER: You want to make a bet about that? I’ll wager my men could beat your men easily. In fact, I dare you to send out twelve of your men against twelve of my men.

JOAB: Fine, it’s a deal. You send out twelve and I’ll send out twelve.

NARRATOR: So twelve soldiers were chosen from each side and they were paired up, one on one, to fight. The end result of this challenge was that each man grabbed his opponent by the head and thrust him through with his sword, so both fell down together. How horrible! Was this Abner and Joab’s idea of entertainment, or was it a serious fight? We don’t know the answer. What we do know is that immediately after the men fell, fighting broke out between the rest of the troops. The battle became very fierce, but the hand of the Lord was against Abner and the forces of Saul. Joab and his men were victorious. At the end of the battle, Abner ran away. He kept running and running.

Now Asahel, Joab’s brother, was a very fast runner. He knew that he was able to keep running long enough and fast enough to catch Abner. So he started chasing him. Abner looked over his shoulder and saw Asahel chasing him.

ABNER: Is that you, Asahel?

ASAHEL: Yes, it’s me, Asahel!

ABNER: Turn back, Asahel! Stop chasing me! I’m warning you-- stop chasing me!

ASAHEL: No, I won’t let you get away!

ABNER: I am warning you again. If you don’t stop chasing me I will have to try to kill you. I don’t want to do that. Your brother, Joab, will be very angry at me if I kill you, and I don’t want that. Stop chasing me!

ASAHEL: No! I will not let you get away!

NARRATOR: Despite Abner's warnings, Asahel would not stop. So Abner felt he had no choice but to kill Asahel. Abner struck Asahel with the blunt end of his spear so hard that it went through his stomach and came out his back. Needless to say, Asahel died. When Joab and Abishai found out what happened, they went after Abner. Abner's men rallied around him to protect him and they all ran to the top of a hill. Abner yelled to Joab from the top of the hill.

ABNER: Must the sword keep on devouring? You know this is not going to end well. More men will die if you keep chasing me. It's not like we are Philistines. We are brethren, after all. Stop chasing me!

JOAB: Truly, if you had not spoken to me, I would have kept chasing you until morning. However, I will now call off the attack.

NARRATOR: Joab blew the horns to signal his men to retreat and that was the end of this particular battle. Abner's side lost a total of 360 men while Joab's side only lost 20. Asahel was considered a hero and was buried in Bethlehem. Joab and Abishai did not forget what Abner had done. They would get their revenge eventually.

More battles occurred between the house of Saul (under Ishbosheth and Abner) and the house of David (under Joab). Over time, David's forces became stronger and stronger. Abner could see the prophecy being fulfilled. God was obviously on David's side. One day Abner had a fight with Ishbosheth.

ISHBOSHETH: Abner, I heard a rumor that you are going to take one of my father's widows and make her your own wife. You know this is not allowed. The king's wives are not allowed to remarry.

ABNER: What? Who cares about your silly rules?! Rizpah loves me and I love her. What's wrong with that?

ISHBOSHETH: I will not allow it!

ABNER: Oh yeah? We'll see about that. I don't have to listen to you. You are nothing without me! You are only king because I made you king. It was my choice. I can do as I please!

NARRATOR: Abner became very angry at Ishbosheth.

ABNER: I have kept showing loyalty to your father's household these seven years since his death. I have fought many battles to keep you in power. But if you are going to challenge me about trivial things like which women I want to marry, I will no longer prop you up. I quit! God has doomed your father's family, anyway. Everyone knows God told Samuel that David would be the next king. I think it's time I switched sides.

NARRATOR: So Abner sent a messenger to David, saying:

MESSENGER: To whom but you does this land belong? If you will make a covenant with me and promise not to kill me, I will see to it that you are crowned king over all of Israel.

NARRATOR: David sent a reply and said:

MESSENGER: Yes, I will make a covenant with you. I will promise not to kill you. However, I will not meet with you in person unless you bring along with you Saul's daughter, Michal (*mee-KAHL*), who is my wife. Saul gave her to me as a reward for killing 100 Philistines. I want her back.

NARRATOR: Abner told Ishbosheth that Michal must be returned to David. Ishbosheth had no choice but to submit to David's demand. He told Michal she had to leave the man she was married to now, and go back to David. David had to do this because any sons Michal might have would be legitimate heirs to the throne of Saul. Someone could take one of her sons and declare him to be the rightful king, just as Abner had done with Ishbosheth. David had to make sure that there was no one in Israel who could potentially threaten his kingship.

This accomplished, Abner gathered the elders of Israel together and spoke to them:

ABNER: For a long time now, some of you have been wanting to make David king. He led our armies against the Philistines and had great success. We can see that God is with him. I have decided to switch sides and no longer support the house of Saul. I am in favor of making David king. We all know the prophecy about him being the next king. Let's go ahead and do it!

NARRATOR: The elders agreed so Abner went to see David. David prepared a feast for Abner and treated him as an honored guest, not as an enemy. Joab was not at this meeting. He was out town.

ABNER: I promise to you that I will bring all of Israel under your rule. I know this is God's will.

DAVID: I accept your proposal. I will make a covenant with you. Go in peace.

NARRATOR: So Abner went back to gather Israel together. Just after he left, Joab came back to town. When he was told that Abner had been there and that David had treated him as a guest and make a peace treaty with him, he was furious.

JOAB: David, what have you done?! Don't you know how sly Abner is? I'll bet he was lying to you. He probably came to spy on you. He's probably planning an attack right now!

DAVID: No, he came in peace and offered friendship.

JOAB: Don't trust him! He'll betray you!

DAVID: No, I have decided to make peace with him and trust him.

NARRATOR: Joab left David and decided to take matters into his own hands. He was still angry at Abner for killing Asahel. This seemed like the perfect time to get his revenge.

JOAB: Men, we are going after Abner! However, I want to trick him. Let's pretend we are coming in peace. That will let me get close to him. Then I'll kill him.

NARRATOR: Joab's plan worked. He approached Abner and at first pretended to be friendly. He said he wanted to speak to him privately. After drawing Abner aside, he pulled out his sword and struck Abner down. Then he fled. When David heard what Joab had done, he was angry at Joab. This was not a good start to David's new kingship. David spoke out against this evil deed.

DAVID: What Joab did was not by my command! This was his idea, and his alone. I am not guilty of the blood of Abner. The guilt is upon the head of Joab. May curses from God fall upon Joab and his family as payment for this wicked deed!

NARRATOR: Then David gave Abner a huge funeral and told everyone in Israel to mourn for Abner.

DAVID: A prince-- a great man-- has fallen this day in Israel. Everyone lament for him!

NARRATOR: David would not eat or drink anything during the whole day of the funeral. When the people saw how sad David was about Abner, they knew that he had not told Joab to do what he did. The people could see that David wanted peace between Saul's family and his family. This made everyone like David even more.

When Ishbosheth heard that Abner was dead, he was terrified. He knew he could never rule on his own, without Abner. Everyone knew this. Two men decided to take matters into their own hands and get rid of Ishbosheth. Their names were Ba-anah and Rekhab. They arrived at the house of Ishbosheth in the middle of the day when it was very hot and most people were taking a mid-afternoon rest. Ishbosheth was lying on his bed taking a nap.

BA-ANAH: How are we going to get into the house? You know there are always people guarding the house.

REKHAB: Look! We are in luck! That doorkeeper over there has fallen asleep. The heat was too much for her. If we are really quiet, perhaps we can sneak in without waking her up.

NARRATOR: Their plan worked. They got into the house without waking the doorkeeper. They went right into Ishbosheth's bedroom and killed him as he slept. They thought they were doing David a favor by getting rid of Ishbosheth. To show David what they had done, they put Ishbosheth's head into a bag and took it with them. Then they went to David.

BA-ANAH: My lord the king, we have rid you of your last enemy. Here is the head of Ishbosheth!

REKHAB: There is no one left to challenge your claim to throne. Long live king David!

DAVID: As surely as the Lord lives, when someone came and told me about the death of Saul, he thought he was bringing good news. I killed him. How much more deserving of death are two cowards who kill a man as he is lying on his bed in his own house!

NARRATOR: David ordered these men to be killed and their bodies to be publicly displayed so that everyone could see what would happen to people who did things David did not approve of.

With the last of Saul's family gone, there was no reason not to have an official ceremony crowning David king of Israel. All the people came together at Hebron.

AN ELDER: For many years, you have led our armies against the Philistines. We know that the Lord gave a prophecy about you, saying, "You shall be the shepherd over my people Israel." So let us now anoint you again, and make you our king.

NARRATOR: Now that David was king over all of Israel, and not just the tribe of Judah, he decided to move his capital from Hebron, which was in Judah, to a town on the border of Israel and Judah. He did not want to favor any particular town, so he chose a neutral town that did not belong to any Israelites. He chose the town of Jebus, the home of the Jebusites. It was a well-fortified city with high walls. The Jebusites laughed when they saw David coming.

JEBUSITE: You'll never get in here! You're so weak even our blind and lame beggars could beat you!

DAVID: We'll see about that. Men, crawl through their underground water shaft and enter the city! Then we'll see who is as weak as the blind and lame!

NARRATOR: The water shaft trick worked and David's forces took over the city. The name of the city was changed from Jebus to Jerusalem. God was with David and blessed everything that he did.