

# 2SAMUEL 2

## 2Samuel 2:1–32

These studies are designed for believers in Jesus Christ only. If you have exercised faith in Christ, then you are in the right place. If you have not, then you need to heed the words of our Lord, Who said, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son, so that every [one] believing [or, trusting] in Him shall not perish, but shall be have eternal life! For God did not send His Son into the world so that He should judge the world, but so that the world shall be saved through Him. The one believing [or, trusting] in Him is not judged, but the one not believing has already been judged, because he has not believed in the Name of the only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son of God.” (John 3:16–18). “I am the Way and the Truth and the Life! No one comes to the Father except through [or, by means of] Me!” (John 14:6).

Every study of the Word of God ought to be preceded by a naming of your sins to God. This restores you to fellowship with God (1John 1:8–10). If there are people around, you would name these sins silently. If there is no one around, then it does not matter if you name them silently or whether you speak aloud.

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	Mahanaim		

**Introduction:** This and the next chapter are easy to sum up in a couple of sentences. God sets up David as king over Judah (and, presumably, Simeon) in the capitol city Hebron. Abner (probably under Saul's direction) sets up Ishbosheth as king over northern and central Israel. A civil war will ensue.<sup>1</sup>

2Sam. 2 is fairly straightforward narrative, with a handful of minor difficulties in translation and interpretation. After it is clear that Saul is dead, David inquires of God as to where he should go and God guides him to go to Hebron to set up his headquarters to rule over Judah. Abner, Saul's cousin and the commander of Saul's army, is setting up Saul's son, Ishbosheth to rule from Mahanaim in eastern Israel. Since Israel had been one entity and now was split, it is inevitable that the armies of both sides should meet, which is what occurs here.

You may recall that David was outside of Israel and probably outside of God's geographical will. However, when he returned to Ziklag and found that his camp had been raided by Amalekites, David pulled himself together and turned toward God for guidance. In this chapter, David continues in that vein—he asks God for guidance, and God guides him to Hebron in Judah, where he is made king over Judah. You may wonder, *why isn't all Israel behind David at this time?* Israel has just been beaten down by the Philistine army, which served to split all Israel right down the middle; above the Philistine victory is northern Israel and below it is Judah. With the Philistines living in some of the cities in central Israel, there is no united Israel. 2Sam. 2:1–4a

After being proclaimed king, David is told about the men of Jabesh-Gilead and how they risked their lives in order to honor Saul, whose body had been hung on a wall in Bethshan, and David sends them greetings and encouragement. David's purpose here is to indicate to them that he sees this as heroic and he does not feel threatened that they supported their lord Saul. 2Sam. 2:4b–7

However, Abner took Saul's son Ishbosheth east of the Jordan (Saul's army was soundly defeated by the Philistines west of the Jordan), and he sets him up as king (probably at Saul's request the morning that he died). Abner then took his army and he met David's nephews and their army in Gibeon, which is in central Israel. We do not know the intervening events; we do not know where the Philistines are who are occupying this territory or the impact that these two mobile armies had on them. In this meeting between Abner and Joab (one of David's nephews), it will be clear the Abner always has the upper hand; his experience is always evident. He will call the shots in this meeting. However, the meeting will end in a civil war between the two armies, and Abner will flee with Asahel, another of David's nephews, close behind him. With Asahel gaining on Abner, Abner finally turns and deftly kills Asahel. Abner and Joab talk again, and Abner tells Joab that all that can be expected is more and more warfare between these civil factions. Joab, taken aback by the death of his brother, agrees to a temporary truce, and they return to their respective leaders. At the end of this chapter, we are told the body count. 2Sam. 2:12–32

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<sup>1</sup> Paraphrased from J. Vernon McGee; *I & II Samuel*; Thru the Bible Books; ©El Camino Press, 1976, La Verne, CA; p. 173.

Just so you are exposed to another perspective, let me offer Matthew Henry's summary of this chapter.

### Matthew Henry Summarizes 2Samuel 2

David had paid due respect to the memory of Saul his prince and Jonathan his friend, and what he did was as much his praise as theirs; he is now considering what is to be done next. Saul is dead, now therefore David arise.

- I. By direction from God he went up to Hebron, and was there anointed king ([2Sam. 2:1–4](#)).
- II. He returned thanks to the men of Jabesh–Gilead for burying Saul ([2Sam. 2:5–7](#)).
- III. Ishbosheth, the son of Saul, is set up in opposition to him ([2Sam. 2:8–11](#)).
- IV. A warm encounter happens between David's party and Ishbosheth's, in which,
  1. Twelve of each side engaged hand to hand and were all slain ([2Sam. 2:12–16](#)).
  2. Saul's party was beaten ([2Sam. 2:17](#)).
  3. Asahel, on David's side, was slain by Abner ([2Sam. 2:18–23](#)).
  4. Joab, at Abner's request, sounds a retreat, ([2Sam. 2:24–28](#)).
  5. Abner makes the best of his way ([2Sam. 2:29](#)), and the loss on both sides is computed ([2Sam. 2:30–32](#)). So that here we have an account of a civil war in Israel, which, in process of time, ended in the complete settlement of David on the throne.

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### David Rules Over Judah from Hebron

Slavishly literal:

And so he is after so, and so inquires David in Y<sup>e</sup>howah to say, “Should I go up into one of [the] cities of Judah?”

And so says Y<sup>e</sup>howah to him, “Go up.”

And so says David “Where do I go up?”

And so He says, “Hebron-ward.”

After these things, David inquired of Jehovah, “Should I go up into one of the cities of Judah?”

And Jehovah answered him, “Yes, you should go up.”

Then David asked, “To which city should I go?”

And Jehovah answered, “Go to Hebron.”

Here is how others have translated this verse:

**Ancient texts:**

Note: I compare the Hebrew text to English translations of the Latin, Syriac and Greek texts (using the Douay-Rheims translation; George Lamsa's translation, and Sir Lancelot Charles Lee Brenton's translation, respectively). When there are

Moderately literal:

And it is afterwards that David inquires of Y<sup>e</sup>howah, saying, “Should I go up into one of the cities of Judah?”

And Y<sup>e</sup>howah answers him, “Go up.”

And David then says, “Where should I go up?”

And He says, “To Hebron.”

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serious disparities between my translation and Brenton's, I look at the Greek text of the Septuagint (the LXX) to see if a substantive difference actually exists (and I reflect these changes in the English rendering of the Greek text). Now and again, I update these texts with non-substantive changes (e.g., *you* for *thou*, etc.).

Masoretic Text	And so he is after so, and so inquires David in Y <sup>e</sup> howah to say, "Should I go up into one of [the] cities of Judah?" And so says Y <sup>e</sup> howah to him, "Go up." And so says David "Where do I go up?" And so He says, "Hebron-ward."
Septuagint	And it came to pass after this that David inquired of the Lord, saying, "Shall I go up into one of the cities of Juda?" And the Lord said to him, "Go up." And David said, "Where shall I go up?" And He said, "To Chebron."

Significant differences: None.

#### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	Later, David asked the LORD, "Should I go back to one of the towns of Judah?" The LORD answered, "Yes." David asked, "Which town should I go to?" "Go to Hebron," the LORD replied.
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#### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God's Word™	After this, David asked the LORD, "Should I go to one of the cities of Judah?" "Go," the LORD answered him. "Where should I go?" David asked. "To Hebron," the LORD replied.
HCSB	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.

#### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

LTHB	And it happened after this, David asked of Jehovah, saying, Shall I go up to one of the cities of Judah? And Jehovah said to him, Go up. And David said, Where shall I go up? And He said, To Hebron.
Young's Updated LT	And it comes to pass afterwards, that David asks at Jehovah, saying, "Do I go up into one of the cities of Judah?" And Jehovah says unto him, "Go up." And David says, "Whither do I go up?" And He says, "To Hebron."

**The gist of this verse?** David asks of God if he should go up into Judah and to which city. God tells David to go up to Hebron.

### 2Samuel 2:1a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa or va (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, and then, then, and</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced <i>haw-YAW</i> ]	<i>to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #1961 BDB #224

## 2Samuel 2:1a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿachârêy (אַחַרְיָ) [pronounced ah-kuh- RAY]	<i>hinder parts; behind, after; following; after that, afterwards</i>	preposition; plural form	Strong's #310 BDB #29
kên (כֵּן) [pronounced kane]	<i>so, thus; upright, honest; rightly, well; [it is] so, such, so constituted;</i>	properly, an active participle; used primarily as an adverb	Strong's #3651 BDB #485

Together, ʿachar and kên mean *after so* (literally) or *afterward, afterwards*.

**Translation:** [And it is afterwards...](#) Recall that David is living in Philistine-controlled territory on the southwest border of Judah and Philistia. When Saul was pursuing David, David finally gave up staying in Judah and went up to Gath. The Philistine king of Gath gave David an area where he could stay (Ziklag), which was near southern Judah, but controlled by the Philistines. We have just witnessed David coming back into fellowship after his camp had been struck by the Amalekites (1Sam. 30:6). He and his men go after and they soundly defeat the Amalekites, recovering all of their personal possessions, their wives and children (1Sam. 30). At the same time, Saul was about to go into his last battle. In fact, simultaneous to David going after the Amalekites, Saul contacted a dead Samuel through a human medium, hoping to get a reprieve or some sort of guidance. Samuel did appear to Saul (if you don't know why God allowed this, you need to go back to 1Sam. 28 and find out); and told him that he was about to die in battle. Saul did die in battle and an Amalekite comes to tell David about it, claiming to have taken Saul's life, and hoping to be rewarded for doing so. David has this man executed, based upon his own testimony. Then David writes an ode to Saul and Jonathan, mourning their deaths. That takes us to where we begin this chapter. It is *after these things* that we find David calling upon God. Recall that Hebrews do not often think chronologically, so that when we have the words which we find here, we can assume that we are looking chronologically at a particular set of events.

## 2Samuel 2:1b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וּ) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
shâ'al (שָׁאַל) [pronounced shaw-AHL]	<i>to ask [petition, request, inquire]; to demand; to question, to interrogate; to ask [for a loan]; to consult; to salute</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #7592 BDB #981
Dâvid (דָּוִד); also Dâvîyd (דָּוִיִּד) [pronounced daw- VEED]	<i>beloved and is transliterated David</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #1732 BDB #187
b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]	<i>in, into, through; among, in the midst of; at, by, near, on, before, in the presence of, upon; with; to, unto, upon, up to; in respect to, on account of; by means of, about, concerning</i>	primarily a preposition of proximity; however, it has a multitude of functions	No Strong's # BDB #88

## 2Samuel 2:1b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i> ]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y<sup>e</sup>howah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>h</sup> ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
ʾâmar (אמר) [pronounced <i>aw-MAHR</i> ]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #559 BDB #55

**Translation:** ...that David inquires of Y<sup>e</sup>howah, saying,... You will recall that David had the means by which he could speak to Jehovah God. The last living priest, the very young man Abiathar, came to David, after Saul had slaughtered the priests at Nob. This man brought with him the Ephod of God, by which one could know the will of God. You will recall that, even though David had access to this Ephod, when he went into the Philistine-held territory, he did not consult with God. As we examined carefully during that time, it was clear that David was out of fellowship, and we covered that in points (1Sam. 27). However, David is now clearly back in fellowship, which means he wants to know what God wants him to do.

## 2Samuel 2:1c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
hă (ה) [pronounced <i>heh</i> ]	interrogative particle which acts almost like a piece of punctuation, like the upside-down question mark which begins a Spanish sentence. The verb <i>to be</i> may be implied.		Strong's #none BDB #209
ʿâlâh (עלה) [pronounced <i>ġaw-LAWH</i> ]	<i>to go up, to ascend, to come up, to rise, to climb</i>	1 <sup>st</sup> person singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #5927 BDB #748
b <sup>e</sup> (ב) [pronounced <i>b<sup>eh</sup></i> ]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
ʿechâd (אחד) [pronounced <i>eh-KHAWD</i> ]	<i>one, first, certain, only; but it can also mean a composite unity; possibly particular</i>	feminine singular numeral adjective construct	Strong's #259 BDB #25
ʿîyr (עיר) [pronounced <i>ġeer</i> ]	<i>encampment, city, town</i>	feminine plural construct	Strong's #5892 BDB #746
Y <sup>e</sup> hûwdâh (יהודה) [pronounced <i>Y<sup>e</sup>hoo-DAW</i> ]	possibly means <i>to praise, to be praised; and is transliterated Judah</i>	masculine proper noun/location	Strong's #3063 BDB #397

**Translation:** ...“Should I go up into one of the cities of Judah?” God has named David as the next king of Israel. David is now just outside of Judah, hiding in a Philistine-controlled territory. Now that Saul is dead, David needs to know what to do next. It seems reasonable that he should return to Judah, but he will inquire of God whether or not he should do this.

## 2Samuel 2:1d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
ʾamar (אָמַר) [pronounced <i>aw-MAHR</i> ]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i> ]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y<sup>e</sup>howah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l</i> ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition; with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
ʿalâh (עָלָה) [pronounced <i>gaw-LAWH</i> ]	<i>to go up, to ascend, to come up, to rise, to climb</i>	2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperative	Strong's #5927 BDB #748

**Translation:** *And Y<sup>e</sup>howah answers him, "Go up."* God makes it clear that David should go up into Judah, into one of the cities of Judah. This quotation is interesting—instead of having the simple *yes or no* response, which is how we might view the responses to David's questions, God tells David to, "Go up." Because of what has occurred previously, I would assume that David is asking questions of God using the ephod and the young priest, Abiathar. We do not have any recorded incident where God speaks to David in a dream; God never speaks directly to David, at least up until this point in time. So, although I cannot unequivocally rule out the idea that God is speaking to David in a dream, there is no evidence of that, apart from God's answers, which are very specific, rather than general *yes or no* answers. As we have discussed earlier, it is possible that there were ways to get a more detailed answer from the Ephod of God, although we have no idea as to how exactly that is done.

## 2Samuel 2:1e

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
ʾamar (אָמַר) [pronounced <i>aw-MAHR</i> ]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
Dâvid (דָּוִד); also Dâvîyd (דָּוִיִּד) [pronounced <i>daw-VEED</i> ]	<i>beloved and is transliterated David</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #1732 BDB #187
ʾân (אָן) [pronounced <i>awn</i> ]	<i>where, whither</i>	adverb with the hê local	Strong's #575 BDB #33
ʿalâh (עָלָה) [pronounced <i>gaw-LAWH</i> ]	<i>to go up, to ascend, to come up, to rise, to climb</i>	1 <sup>st</sup> person singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #5927 BDB #748

**Translation:** *And David then says, “Where should I go up?”* As discussed above, we are guessing that David is inquiring of God via the Ephod of God. This is based only upon what has occurred in the past; and based upon the fact that, at no time, has God spoken to David in a dream.

To me, this suggests that God somehow communicated information to Abiathar, more than simply *yes or no* from the ephod. There is no indication that David laid out before God a few dozen cities and asked God, *should I go to this city? Yes or no?* Although that is a possibility, that God says to David, “Go Up” and “Hebron” simply indicates that somehow, God is communicating a certain amount of limited information to David, and I would assume that would be through Abiathar, although he is not mentioned here.

## 2Samuel 2:1f

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
ʾamar (אָמַר) [pronounced aw-MAHR]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
Cheb <sup>o</sup> rôwn (חֶבְרוֹן) [pronounced khe <sup>b</sup> -ROHN]	<i>association, league, joined; transliterated Hebron</i>	proper noun; location; with the directional hê	Strong's #2275 BDB #289

**Translation:** *And He says, “To Hebron.”* In some manner which we cannot conclusively point to, God is able to clearly indicate to David just exactly where David should go—God tells David to go to Hebron. We covered the **Doctrine of Hebron** back in Joshua 14:15; however, let us briefly summarize it below.

Just in case you don't want to look up the doctrine, I have a brief summary of the **Doctrine of Hebron** below.

### A Brief Summary of the Doctrine of Hebron

Hebron means *association, league, joined*. McGee suggests that it means *fellowship, communion*; as Hebron was a place of fellowship with God.

Like many of the ancient cities which Israel captures, Hebron had a variety of names. It was previously known as Kiriath-arba (Gen. 23:2 35:27 Joshua 14:15 15:54 20:7 Judges 1:10 Neh. 11:25); *the oaks of Mamre* or simply *Mamre* (Gen. 13:18 14:13 18:1 23:17, 19 25:9 35:27 49:30 50:13); *the city of Arba* (Joshua 14:15 15:13 21:11) and *the city of Arbah* (Gen. 35:27).

Hebron is about 20 miles west from the midpoint of the Dead Sea in the hill country of Judah, 25 miles south-southwest of Jerusalem. Mamre is traditionally located 2 miles north of Hebron, making them so close as to be interchangeable.

Hebron has an elevation of approximately 2800 ft. It is situated in a valley between two ridges. Hebron is an area which would certainly be populated. It has several natural springs and wells and there are two large pools with cut stone walls within the city limits today. There are apple, plum, fig, pomegranate, apricot and nut trees; and grapes, melons and other produce are grown in the rich soil of the valley and terrace.<sup>2</sup>

Hebron is where most of the Patriarchs lived and where most of them were buried.

<sup>2</sup> This description was paraphrased from *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; ©1976; Vol. 3, pp. 107–108.



## A Brief Summary of the Doctrine of Hebron

We first hear about Hebron immediately after the separation of Abram and Lot somewhere in the early the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Lot settles in around Sodom, a particularly horrid city and God takes Abram up to a hill and has him look in all directions and tells him that this land would belong to his descendants forever. God tells Abram to walk through the land to get a feel for it (it is like you have just gotten your son this great Christmas gift and you want to show him how to play with it). **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 Jehovah** (Gen. 13:18). Abram and Sarai apparently lived there for awhile (Gen. 14:13).

It was here that God appeared to Abram and promised him a son through Sarai (Gen. 18:1ff). Several decades after the birth of Isaac, Sarah dies at the age of 127 and is buried in Hebron, also called Kiriath-arba (Gen. 23:2). Abraham is also buried there by Isaac at age 175 (Gen. 25:7–10).

Jacob also chose to live in Hebron (Gen. 37:1). Jacob later Jacob asked his sons to bury him with Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah and Leah (Gen. 49:29–33 50:13), which would have been Hebron.

In Joshua 9, the Gibeonites use deceit in order to attain an alliance with Joshua and then five kings allied themselves and attacked the Gibeonites. These five kings were from the hill country, one of them being the king of Hebron (Joshua 10:3, 5, 23). Joshua destroyed the armies of those kings and executed the kings as well (Joshua 10:22–26).

Joshua went through a half dozen cities and destroyed the people in the cities. One of the last ones was Hebron and he left no survivors (Joshua 10:36–39). They took no prisoners.

Hebron proper will actually go to the tribe of Aaron as a Levitical city and as a city of refuge. The surrounding area and villages will go the Caleb and his family (Joshua 21:11–13 1Chron. 5:55–56). In Joshua 14:12 and in great detail in Judges 1:10, we will discuss in more detail the chronological sequence involved.

The actual doctrine goes into much greater detail than we find here. I will cover the history of Hebron after the time of Joshua at another time.

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Most commentators have something to say about Hebron:

### The Commentators Remark about Hebron

Commentator	Quotation
<b>Barnes</b>	<i>Hebron was well suited for the temporary capital of David's kingdom, being situated in a strong position in the mountains of Judah, amidst David's friends, and withal having especially sacred associations.</i> <sup>3</sup>
<b>Clarke</b>	<i>[Hebron is] the metropolis of the tribe of Judah, one of the richest regions in Judea. The mountains of Hebron were famed for fruits, herbage, and honey; and many parts were well adapted for vines, olives, and different kinds of grain, abounding in springs of excellent water, as the most accurate travelers have asserted.</i> <sup>4</sup>
<b>Gill</b>	<i>Hebron [is a] a city of the priests, a city of refuge (Joshua 21:13), twenty miles from Jerusalem, or more, which is not directed to, because it was then chiefly in the hands of the Jebusites, and because, as Procopius Gazaeus says, Hebron was now the metropolis of Judah.</i> <sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, 2Chron. 2:1.

<sup>4</sup> Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, 2Sam. 2:1.

<sup>5</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, 2Sam. 2:1.

It is interesting that each of these commentators gives his own unique perspective of the city of Hebron.

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As you might speculate, that God tells David to go to Hebron is quite spiritually significant—of all the cities of Israel, this one, in David’s time, would be seen as the city of the greatest spiritual significance. We, of course, from our point of view in history, see Jerusalem as being the *holy city* (if there is such a thing); however, Jerusalem was just another city at this time, primarily occupied by Jebusites.

**And so goes up David and also two of his wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess and Abigail, wife of Nabal, the Carmelite;...**

2Samuel  
2:2

**Then David went up, along with his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess and Abigail, the wife of Nabal, the Carmelite;...**

**Then David went up to Hebron, taking with him his two wives—Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail, the widow of Nabal, from Carmel.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text

And so goes up David and also two of his wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess and Abigail, wife of Nabal, the Carmelite;...

Septuagint

And David went up there to Chebron, he and both his wives, Achinaam the Jezraelitess, and Abigaia the wife of Nabal the Carmelite;...

Significant differences:

Hebron is mentioned by name in the LXX, but not in the Hebrew. Context indicates that we are obviously speaking about going to Hebron.

#### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV

David went to Hebron with his two wives, Ahinoam and Abigail. Ahinoam was from Jezreel, and Abigail was the widow of Nabal from Carmel.

#### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God’s Word™

David went there with his two wives, Ahinoam from Jezreel and Abigail (who had been Nabal’s wife) from Carmel.

HCSB

So David went there with his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelite and Abigail, the widow of Nabal the Carmelite.

#### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

LTHB

And David went up there, and also his two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel, and Abigail the *former* wife of Nabal of Carmel.

Young’s Updated LT

And David goes up there, and also his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail wife of Nabal the Carmelite;...

**The gist of this verse?**

David goes up to Hebron, taking with him, his two wives.

## 2Samuel 2:2a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
ʿâlâh (עָלָה) [pronounced <i>gaw-LAWH</i> ]	<i>to go up, to ascend, to come up, to rise, to climb</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #5927 BDB #748
Dâvid (דָּוִד); also Dâvîyd (דָּוִיִּד) [pronounced <i>daw-VEED</i> ]	<i>beloved and is transliterated David</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #1732 BDB #187
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וְ) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
gam (גַּם) [pronounced <i>gahm</i> ]	<i>also, furthermore, in addition to, even, moreover</i>	adverb	Strong's #1571 BDB #168
Together, the wâw conjunction and the gam particle might mean <i>together with, along with, joined with, and, furthermore, and furthermore</i> .			
sh <sup>e</sup> nayim (שְׁנַיִם) [pronounced <i>sh<sup>e</sup>NAH-yim</i> ]	<i>two (the cardinal number); both, double, twice; second; (the ordinal number); [and with other numbers]: both</i>	masculine dual numeral construct	Strong's #8147 BDB #1040
nâshîym (נָשִׁים) [pronounced <i>naw-SHEEM</i> ]	<i>women, wives</i>	feminine plural noun; irregular plural of Strong's #802; with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #802 BDB #61

**Translation:** [Then David went up, along with his two wives,...](#) In the book of Chronicles, we are told that David will have two sons in Hebron by these two wives: [And these were the sons of David, who were born to him in Hebron. The first-born, Amnon, of Ahinoam of Jezreel. The second, Daniel, of Abigail of Carmel \(1Chron. 3:1\).](#)

We have discussed having multiple wives in Deut. 17:17 21:15 Judges 8:30 1Sam. 1:2. To summarize, just because men in the past have had multiple wives does not mean that God approves of polygamy or that polygamy is as valid a life choice as monogamy. God made Eve for Adam; God did not make Eve, Sally, Jessie, and Molly. Throughout Scripture, principles of marriage are applied to one man and one woman; and some categories of men, e.g., kings, are prohibited from having multiple wives. Furthermore, despite what we men might see as advantages in having more than one wife, is clearly outweighed by the disadvantages. You may recall the wives of Elkanah. First of all, he had a favorite wife. Because of this, his second favorite wife gave his favorite a hard time—she found the one area in which she excelled and the favorite did not, and she rubbed that in. That caused continual tension in the household and the favorite wife was generally unhappy. When Elkanah's favorite wife was unhappy, Elkanah was also unhappy. These circumstances did result to the birth of Samuel, but it was not the circumstances of having two wives which actually led to this birth—that was God's will based upon a prayer of Hannah's. As we will see later on in David's life, his having several wives did not cure him of having a roving eye; and he got himself in serious trouble over a woman, despite the fact that he had several wives.

## 2Samuel 2:2b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾĂchîynô'am (אָחִינֹאם) [pronounced <i>uh-khee-NOH-gam</i> ]	<i>my brother is delight</i> , and is transliterated <i>Ahinoam</i>	proper noun	Strong's #293 BDB #27
Yiz <sup>e</sup> r <sup>e</sup> êlîyth (יִזְרְעֵלִית) [pronounced <i>yiz<sup>e</sup>-r<sup>e</sup>-gay-LEETH</i> ]	<i>God will sow; that which God planted</i> ; it is transliterated <i>Jezreelitess</i>	gentilic adjective; feminine form; with the definite article	Strong's #3159 BDB #283

**Translation:** ...[Ahinoam the Jezreelitess](#)... We have Ahinoam named several times in Scripture, but with very little information. Jezreel will bear a son for David—Amnon—in Hebron (1Chron. 3:1). There are two cities named Jezreel: one up in Issachar and one in Judah (Joshua 15:56). Ahinoam would be from the one in Judah.

## 2Samuel 2:2c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וּ) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
ʾĂbîygayil (אֲבִיגַיִל) [pronounced <i>a<sup>b</sup>-vee-GAH-yil</i> ]	<i>my father is joy (or, joyous); or my father's joy</i> ; and is transliterated <i>Abigail</i>	feminine singular proper noun	Strong's #26 BDB #4
ʾîshshâh (אִשְׁשָׁה) [pronounced <i>eesh-SHAWH</i> ]	<i>woman, wife</i>	feminine singular construct	Strong's #802 BDB #61
Nâbâl (נָבַל) [pronounced <i>naw-BAWL</i> ]	<i>foolish, stupid; impious, wicked</i> ; and is transliterated <i>Nabal</i>	masculine singular proper noun	Strong's #5037 BDB #615
kar <sup>e</sup> m <sup>e</sup> lîy (כַּרְמֵלִית) [pronounced <i>kar<sup>e</sup>-m<sup>e</sup>-EE</i> ]	<i>garden, plantation</i> and is transliterated <i>Carmelite</i>	gentilic adjective; masculine form; with the definite article	Strong's #3761 BDB #502

**Translation:** ...[and Abigail, the wife of Nabal, the Carmelite](#);... Abigail is the wife we know a little about. David did some work for her husband, but he refused to settle accounts with David. David got extremely mad and was ready to kill Nabal; however, Abigail interceded, making sure that David got paid a reasonable amount, and apologizing profusely for her husband. When the husband finds out that this happened, and that he was nearly killed, he dies of heart failure (or some similar problem). Free of Nabal, Abigail marries David. We studied this back in 1Sam. 25.

Gill has an interesting take on this verse: *[David brought with him] his two wives also, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail, Nabal's wife, the Carmelite; who were beloved by him, and who had shared with him in his troubles, and which he took with him to partake of his honour and grandeur, wealth and riches; in which he was now a type of Christ. See Rom. 8:17.<sup>6</sup> In fact, it is Gill's interpretation here which lends great meaning to the verse before us. Henry adds, they endured tribulation along side*

<sup>6</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, 2Sam. 2:2.

of David and now would enjoy with him the fruits of the kingdom.<sup>7</sup> I must admit that, I find it amazing that even a verse as innocuous as this can be fraught with great meaning.

...and his men who [are] with him brought up David; and a man and his house. And so they dwell in cities of Hebron.

2Samuel  
2:3

...and David [also] brought up his men who [are] with him—each one and his household. Then they lived in the towns of Hebron.

David also brought with him his soldiers and their families. They took residence around the suburbs of Hebron.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text

...and his men who [are] with him brought up David; and a man and his house. And so they dwell in cities of Hebron.

Septuagint

...and the men that were with him, every one and his family; and they dwelt in the cities of Chebron.

Significant differences:

In the Hebrew, we repeat the phrase *and David brought up*; this is understood in the Greek. As usual, the actual impact to the context is minimal.

#### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV

David also had his men and their families come and live in the villages near Hebron.

#### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God's Word™

David took his men and their families with him, and they settled in the towns around Hebron.

#### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

LTHB

And David brought up his men of those who were with him, each man and his household. And they lived in the cities of Hebron..

Young's Updated LT

...and his men who are with him has David brought up—a man and his household—and they dwell in the cities of Hebron.

The gist of this verse?

Also the ex-patriots who were with David came with him to Hebron and they lived in Hebron.

### 2Samuel 2:3a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (י) [pronounced weh]	and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251

<sup>7</sup> Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, 2Sam. 2:2. I paraphrased his thoughts considerably.

## 2Samuel 2:3a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾānāsîym (אָנָשִׁים) [pronounced <i>uh-NĀW-seem</i> ]; also spelled ʾīyshîym (אִישִׁים) [pronounced <i>ee-SHEEM</i> ]	<i>men; inhabitants, citizens; companions; soldiers, followers</i>	masculine plural noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #376 BDB #35
ʾāsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>uh-SHER</i> ]	<i>that, which, when, who, whom</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
ʿîm (עִם) [pronounced <i>ġeem</i> ]	<i>with, at, by, near</i>	preposition of nearness and vicinity; with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #5973 BDB #767
ʿālāh (עָלָה) [pronounced <i>ġaw-LAWH</i> ]	<i>to cause to go up, to lead up, to take up, to bring up</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Hiphil perfect	Strong's #5927 BDB #748
Dâvid (דָּוִד); also Dâvîyd (דָּוִיִּד) [pronounced <i>daw-VEED</i> ]	<i>beloved and is transliterated David</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #1732 BDB #187

The Greek does not repeat *David brought up* in this verse.

**Translation:** ...and David [also] brought up his men who [are] with him... David was now safe from being attacked by Saul. He will not retire; he will not find a job and settle down. David will make Hebron his headquarters and he will operate out of Hebron as the king of Judah, as we will see in this chapter.

## 2Samuel 2:3b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾīysh (אִישׁ) [pronounced <i>eesh</i> ]	<i>a man, a husband; anyone; a certain one; each, each one, everyone</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #376 BDB #35
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וְ) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that, so that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
bayith (בַּיִת) [pronounced <i>BAH-yith</i> ]	<i>house, household, habitation as well as inward</i>	masculine singular noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #1004 BDB #108

**Translation:** ...—each one and his household. You will recall that the Amalekites had taken the wives and children of David and his army—and these wives and children were recovered. This tells us that, despite the fact that these men supported David and despite the fact that they were on the run much of the time, they still had wives and children who traveled with them.

## 2Samuel 2:3c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
yâshab (יָשַׁב) [pronounced <i>yaw-SHAH<sup>ps</sup>V</i> ]	<i>to remain, to stay; to dwell, to live, to inhabit; to sit</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #3427 BDB #442
b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b<sup>eh</sup></i> ]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
ġîyr (עִיר) [pronounced ġeer]	<i>encampment, city, town</i>	feminine plural construct	Strong's #5892 BDB #746
Cheb <sup>e</sup> rôwn (חֶבְרֹן) [pronounced <i>khe<sup>b</sup>-ROHN</i> ]	<i>association, league, joined; transliterated Hebron</i>	proper noun; location	Strong's #2275 BDB #289

**Translation:** **Then they lived in the towns of Hebron.** You will recall that David was living in a Philistine-controlled area. He was given permission to dwell there by Achish king of Gath. David stayed there because Saul would continually come after him. However, now that the threat of Saul was past, David takes his men and they move to **Hebron** in Judah. They make their semi-permanent headquarters in **Hebron** and David will operate out of this city.

This verse tells us that these men lived in the towns of Hebron. Prior to this, they apparently had camped together as a military unit, ready to move at a moment's notice. However, at this point, they essentially move into Hebron and into its outlying areas with the intent of staying there semi-permanently. This will be Judah's capital city for awhile.

Again, this is a verse which may seem innocuous at first, but it parallels the sentiment found in Titus 2:12: **If we suffer with Christ, we shall reign with him.** Or Luke 22:29–30: **"I bestow on you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one on Me, so that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom. And you will sit on thrones judging the 12 tribes of Israel."**

**And so come men of Judah and so they anoint there David to king over a house of Judah.**

2Samuel  
2:4

**Then men from Judah came and they anointed David there as [lit., to] king [or, to reign] over the house of Judah.**

**And so they make known to David, to say, "Men of Jabesh-gilead who buried Saul."**

**They also told David, saying, "[It was] the men of Jabesh-gilead who buried Saul."**

**Then elders from Judah came and anointed David to reign over Judah. They also told David that it was the men of Jabesh-gilead who retrieved Saul's body and buried him.**

I must admit to being conflicted with how to deal with this verse. The first half of it tells what happened to David after he came to Hebron—all of Judah recognized him as king over Judah. In the second half, we don't really have a completely new topic, as these elders also tell David about the men of Jabesh-Gilead. However, for a few verses, we will deal with David and the heroes of Jabesh. I almost split the verse into two parts, but then I would have to figure out, if I further exegete portions of each part of the verse, then how do I number them? So, doing

that seemed just a pain, unless I exegeted v. 4a as one whole, and v. 4b as one whole. Since I did not want to do that, I kept v. 4 together, but the New section heading will occur in the middle of v. 4.

Don't be confused—there is nothing wrong with the verse, there are no contradictions that I am trying to iron out, and there is nothing difficult about the actual exegesis. My only difficulty is, topically separating this chapter, which is, certainly, a man-made separation (which is also true about verse separation and the chapter divisions).

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text	And so come men of Judah and so they anoint there David to king over a house of Judah. And so they make known to David, to say, "Men of Jabesh-gilead who buried Saul."
Septuagint	And the men of Judea come, and anoint David there to reign over the house of Juda; and they reported to David, saying, The men of Jabis of the country of Galaad have buried Saul.

Significant differences: In the LXX, we have the verb reign; in the Hebrew, it is the noun *king*; which is almost identical to the verb *to reign*. There is the additional phrase *in the country of* which is found in the Greek. As usual, the differences are pretty insignificant.

#### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	The people of Judah met with David at Hebron and poured olive oil on his head to show that he was their new king. Then they told David, "The people from Jabesh in Gilead buried Saul."
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#### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

HCSB	Then the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah. They told David: "It was the men of Jabesh-gilead who buried Saul."
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#### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

LTHB	And the men of Judah came and anointed David king over the house of Judah there. And they told David, saying, <i>It was</i> the men of Jabesh-gilead who buried Saul.
Young's Updated LT	And the men of Judah come, and anoint there David for king over the house of Judah; and they declare to David, saying, "The men of Jabesh-Gilead are they who buried Saul."

**The gist of this verse?** Men from Judah come to David and anoint him as king over the house of Judah. They also tell him about what the men of Jabesh did on behalf of Saul.

### 2Samuel 2:4a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253



## 2Samuel 2:4a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
bôw' (בּוֹא) [pronounced boh]	<i>to come in, to come, to go in, to go, to enter</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #935 BDB #97
ʾānâsîym (אֲנָשִׁים) [pronounced uh-NAW-seem]; also spelled ʾîyshîym (אִישִׁים) [pronounced ee-SHEEM]	<i>men; inhabitants, citizens; companions; soldiers, followers</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #376 BDB #35
Y <sup>e</sup> hûwdâh (יְהוּדָה) [pronounced y <sup>e</sup> hoo-DAW]	possibly means <i>to praise, to be praised</i> ; and is transliterated <i>Judah</i>	masculine proper noun/location	Strong's #3063 BDB #397

**Translation:** [Then men from Judah came...](#) The Philistines had come and driven a wedge between northern and southern Israel. Judah was southern Israel, and Judah was where David was from. When David destroyed the Amalekites who invaded his camp, he sent much of their spoil to a dozen or so cities in Judah. Here we have a delegation of Judæan elders and officials who come to David in Hebron. They can speak for Judah (and, to some degree, for Simeon, which is in Judah).

## 2Samuel 2:4b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וּ) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
mâshach (מָשַׁח) [pronounced maw-SHAKH]	<i>to smear, to anoint</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #4886 BDB #602
shâm (שָׁמָּה) [pronounced shawm]	<i>there; at that time, then; therein, in that thing</i>	adverb	Strong's #8033 BDB #1027
ʾêth (אֶת) [pronounced ayth]	generally untranslated; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
Dâvid (דָּוִד); also Dâvîyd (דָּוִיִּד) [pronounced daw-VEED]	<i>beloved</i> and is transliterated <i>David</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #1732 BDB #187
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>e</sup> ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
melek <sup>e</sup> (מֶלֶךְ) [pronounced MĒH-lek]	<i>king, ruler, prince</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #4428 BDB #572

## 2Samuel 2:4b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿal (עַל) [pronounced <i>gahl</i> ]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
bayith (בַּיִת) [pronounced <i>BAH-yith</i> ]	<i>house, household, habitation as well as inward</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #1004 BDB #108
Y <sup>e</sup> hūwdâh (יְהוּדָה) [pronounced <i>y<sup>e</sup>hoo-DAW</i> ]	possibly means <i>to praise, to be praised</i> ; and is transliterated <i>Judah</i>	masculine proper noun/location	Strong's #3063 BDB #397

**Translation:** ...and they anointed David there as [lit., to] king [or, to reign] over the house of Judah. You will recall that David was anointed by Samuel king over Israel; however, that was a private ceremony. Word eventually got around, and Saul's continual attacks on David made it fairly clear that David was more than just an insurrectionist. Jonathan recognized that David would be king; Saul feared that David would replace him; so, throughout much of Israel, David becoming king must have been known, to some degree. By this second anointing, David actually becomes king, albeit, only over the house of Judah.

Because there is a Philistine wedge driven between northern and southern Israel, these men can only speak for the territory of Judah, which would include the territory of Simeon and possibly portions or all of Benjamin (it is in the general area of Benjamin where the Philistines drove a wedge between northern and southern Israel).

Some of these elders probably knew that rulership of Israel belonged in the hands of Judah, from Jacob's blessing hundreds of years previous: Gen. 49:10 reads: "The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until He comes to whom it belongs [or, until Shiloh comes]. The obedience of the peoples will be to Him." That Saul, from the tribe of Benjamin, had become king, was probably confusing to them. As long as Judah is an independent nation (or as long as United Israel is independent), a man from the tribe of Judah would rule. Jesus Christ, from the tribe of Judah, is Shiloh, and it is to Him the ruler's scepter belongs.

Throughout this chapter, there have been parallels between seemingly innocuous statements and things which will come to pass. So it is with the first half of v. 4: David had been anointed king over Israel by Samuel many years previous—perhaps as many as 10 or 20 years previous to our narrative. However, it is not until this time that David actually assumes authority over a portion of Israel (Judah). It is the same with our Lord Jesus Christ—He was anointed as the Christ of God, the Messiah of God; however, He did not assume His position of authority until after the cross, and at that point, He did not assume complete authority over all the earth—that will come with the Millennium (Heb. 2:7–8 reads: **You made Him for a little while lower than the angels; You have crowned Him with glory and honor, putting everything in subjection under His feet." Now in putting everything in subjection to Him, He left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to Him**). We have the same situation here: David is anointed king over Israel decades before he assumes that position; when he takes a position of authority, it is not complete and entire authority; and 7 years will pass (7 being a divine number representing perfection) until David takes control of all of Israel.

Matthew Henry makes a few comments about the tribe of Judah: *The tribe of Judah had often stood by itself more than any other of the tribes. In Saul's time it was numbered by itself as a distinct body (1Sam. 15:4) and those of this tribe had been accustomed to act separately. They did so now; yet*

they did it for themselves only; they did not pretend to anoint him king over all Israel (as Judges 9:22), but only over the house of Judah. The rest of the tribes might do as they pleased, but, as for them and their house, they would be ruled by him whom God had chosen.<sup>8</sup> These men chose not to presume that they spoke for all Israel; yet, at the same time, they were not willing to wait for the consensus of all the tribes. Recall the first chapter of Judges? After Joshua conquered the land, the tribes were then to conquer their individual territories. All of the tribes, save Judah and Simeon, seemed content to co-exist with Canaanites and Amalekites. Judges initiated the taking of their territory, asking Simeon to join them. This is how a tribe in a leadership role would act. Their anointing of David as king is a further act of leadership.

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### David honors the men of Jabesh-Gilead

This is something that I rarely do—make a sub-chapter division in the middle of a verse. However, even though this next portion of v. 4 is reasonably tied to what has come before, it still introduces a new subject: David showing respect to the men of Jabesh-Gilead for their retrieval of Saul's body.

2Samuel 2:4c			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
nâgad (נָגַד) [pronounced <i>naw-GAHD</i> ]	<i>to make conspicuous, to make known, to expound, to explain, to declare, to inform, to confess, to make it pitifully obvious that</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Hiphil imperfect	Strong's #5046 BDB #616
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l</i> ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
Dâvid (דָּוִד); also Dâvîyd (דָּוִיִּד) [pronounced <i>daw-VEED</i> ]	<i>beloved and is transliterated David</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #1732 BDB #187
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l</i> ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
ʾâmar (אָמַר) [pronounced <i>aw-MAHR</i> ]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #559 BDB #55
ʾănâsîym (אֲנָשִׁים) [pronounced <i>uh-NĀW-seem</i> ]; also spelled ʾîyshîym (אִישִׁים) [pronounced <i>ee-SHEEM</i> ]	<i>men; inhabitants, citizens; companions; soldiers, followers</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #376 BDB #35
Yâbêsh (יָבֵשׁ) [pronounced <i>yaw<sup>B</sup>-VEYSH</i> ]	<i>to be dry, dried up, withered; transliterated Jabesh</i>	cognate of verb (Strong's #3001); acts as a proper noun	Strong's #3003 BDB #386

<sup>8</sup> Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, 1Chron. 2:4.

## 2Samuel 2:4c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
Gal <sup>e</sup> êd (גִּלְעָד) [pronounced <i>gahl<sup>e</sup>-GAYD</i> ]	<i>witness-pile, hill of witness; and is transliterated Gilead</i>	proper noun; location	Strong's #1567 BDB #165
Although some exegetes treat this as one noun, <i>Jabesh-gilead</i> ; I think the idea is that this is the city <i>Jabesh</i> in <i>Gildean</i> (sort of like <i>Boston, Massachusetts</i> ).			
ʾăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>uh-SHER</i> ]	<i>that, which, when, who, whom</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
qâbar (קָבַר) [pronounced <i>kaw-BAHR</i> ]	<i>to bury, to heap up a mound</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person plural, Qal perfect	Strong's #6912 BDB #868
ʾêth (אֶת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]	generally untranslated; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
Shâʾûwl (שׂאוּל) [pronounced <i>shaw-OOL</i> ]	which is transliterated <i>Saul</i> ; it means <i>asked for</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #7586 BDB #982

**Translation:** They also told David, saying, “[It was] the men of Jabesh-gilead who buried Saul.” We do not get the entire conversation here. That is, these men did not show up, say, “Dave, you’re king now; oh, by the way the men from Jabesh-gilead buried Saul.” First of all, knowing of the riff between Saul and David, it is likely that no one initiated this conversation with David. Many probably figured that Saul was a topic which was off-limits. However, David had recently executed a man blamed for the death of Saul and, David’s first act as king, would be to honor Saul and to give him a proper burial, if this had not been done yet (recall that the Philistines had defeated Israel’s army, so it is reasonable for David to assume that Saul had not been properly buried or eulogized). So, as his first news conference as king,<sup>9</sup> David himself probably inquired what happened to Saul’s body and asked for more details. It is possible that David, at this time, finds out that the Amalekite who claimed to kill Saul actually did not kill him.<sup>10</sup>

In any case, it is certain David that is told about how Saul’s head was removed and taken to Philistia and how the Philistines hung up Saul’s body in Beth-shan as an insult to Saul. When Saul’s body was hung on the wall of Beth-shan, very likely a Philistine orator stood before it and read an historical accounting of Saul’s death, which account may have been posted as well. By the time that the news of the disposition of Saul’s body reached Jabesh Gilead, everyone in Beth-shan knew what had happened to Saul in battle.<sup>11</sup> By this time, men in Judah knew the details of Saul’s death; and David, living outside of Judah and having been given a bogus story about Saul’s death, would not have known all of the details or the actual historical account.

All that we are told is, the men of Jabesh-gilead, loyal to Saul, and grateful to Saul, went and retrieved his body, at great risk to themselves, and gave him a proper burial. In fact, actually, all we are told here is that these men buried Saul’s body (greater details of Saul’s death and the treatment of his body are found in 1Sam. 30 and in 1Chron. 10—which does have some additional information in it—which details are probably told to David at this time). David is given more details about the men of Jabesh Gilead and their bravery in retrieving Saul’s body.

<sup>9</sup> I.e., in his first or in a very early meeting between David and the elders of Judah.

<sup>10</sup> This is something that we do not know—how David found out the details of Saul’s death. Whether the Amalekite that David executed somehow knew what happened to Saul (which meant that he would have been a living witness to Saul’s death in the midst of the Philistine attack) or whether David found out the details from Philistines at the battle or whether this was revealed to David by God at a later time—we just do not know. This topic is discussed in detail in 1Sam. 30:16.

<sup>11</sup> This is logical speculation, by the way.

In fact, it is reasonable to suppose that the details were slow in coming in this conference, the men of Judah being probably reticent to discuss Saul with David. In the previous chapter, David eulogized Saul and Jonathan in an ode which he wrote; and at this point in time, David is looking to give Saul a royal burial, if that had not been done yet.

And so sends David messengers unto men of Jabesh-gilead; and so he says unto them, "Blessed [are] you to Y<sup>e</sup>howah whom you made the grace this with your adonai with Saul. And so you bury with him.

2Samuel  
2:5

So David then sent messengers to the men of Jabesh-gilead and he said to them, "You [are] blessed with reference to Y<sup>e</sup>howah because you made [or, *who made*] this grace with your lord—with Saul; and you buried him.

So David then sent messengers to the men of Jabesh-gilead and said to them, "You are blessed by Jehovah, because you have manufactured this grace with Saul, your lord, as you buried him.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

##### Masoretic Text

And so sends David messengers unto men of Jabesh-gilead; and so he says unto them, "Blessed [are] you to Y<sup>e</sup>howah whom you made the grace this with your adonai with Saul. And so you bury with him.

##### Septuagint

And David sent messengers to the rulers of Jabis of the country of Galaad, and David said to them, "Blessed are you of the Lord, because you have wrought this mercy toward your lord, even toward Saul the anointed of the Lord, and you have buried him and Jonathan his son.

Significant differences: The first difference is, we have the *men of Jabesh-gilead* in the Hebrew and the *rulers of Jabesh-gilead* in the Greek. We have the relative pronoun in the Hebrew; however, it can be translated *because*, as we find in the Greek. The Latin applies the relative pronoun to the men who showed grace to Saul, which is quite reasonable and in complete agreement with the Hebrew. This really requires some additional discussion, which we will give in the Hebrew exegesis.

In the Hebrew, we have the preposition *with*, which can be rendered that way 90% of the time. However, in this case, rendering it *toward* as we find in the Greek is not too much of a stretch (it may have to do with the verb which is used).

Saul is given the title *anointed of the Lord* in the Greek, but not in the Hebrew. Jonathan is mentioned in the Greek, but not in the Hebrew. As we would expect, the Latin is in agreement with the Hebrew with regards to the additional text (that is, we do not find this additional text in the Hebrew or in the Latin).

There are an abnormal number of significant differences between the Greek and Hebrew texts here; however, note that this has little or no effect upon the actual overall meaning of this verse in context; and it has absolutely no effect upon any major or minor doctrine.

#### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV David sent messengers to tell them: The LORD bless you! You were kind enough to bury Saul your ruler,...

#### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

## God's Word™

So David sent messengers to the people of Jabesh Gilead. He said to them, "May the LORD bless you because you showed kindness to your master Saul by burying him.

## HCSB

David sent messengers to the men of Jabesh-gilead and said to them, "The LORD bless you, because you have shown this special kindness to Saul your lord when you buried him.

## Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

## ESV

David sent messengers to the men of Jabesh-gilead and said to them, "May you be blessed by the LORD, because you showed this loyalty to Saul your lord and buried him.

## Young's Updated LT

And David sends messengers unto the men of Jabesh-Gilead, and says unto them, "Blessed are you of Jehovah, in that you have done this kindness with your lord, with Saul, that you bury him.

## The gist of this verse?

David sends a message to the men of Jabesh, blessing them in the name of Jehovah because of their kindness toward Saul and his family, and because they honorably buried him.

## 2Samuel 2:5a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
shâlach (שָׁלַח) [pronounced shaw-LAKH]	<i>to send, to send for [forth, away], to dismiss, to deploy, to put forth, to stretch out</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #7971 BDB #1018
Dâvid (דָּוִד); also Dâvîyd (דָּוִיִּד) [pronounced daw-VEED]	<i>beloved and is transliterated David</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #1732 BDB #187
mal <sup>e</sup> âk <sup>e</sup> (מַלְאָכִים) [pronounced mah <sup>e</sup> -AWK <sup>e</sup> ]	<i>messenger or angel; this word has been used for a prophet (Isa. 42:19) and priest (Mal. 2:7)</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #4397 BDB #521
ʿel (עַל) [pronounced e]	<i>unto; into, among, in; toward, to; against; concerning, regarding; besides, together with; as to</i>	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)	Strong's #413 BDB #39
ʾănâsîym (אֲנָשִׁים) [pronounced uh-NAW-seem]; also spelled ʾîyshîym (אִישִׁים) [pronounced ee-SHEEM]	<i>men; inhabitants, citizens; companions; soldiers, followers</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #376 BDB #35
Yâbêsh (יָבֵשׁ) [pronounced yaw <sup>B</sup> -VEYSH]	<i>to be dry, dried up, withered; transliterated Jabesh</i>	cognate of verb (Strong's #3001); acts as a proper noun	Strong's #3003 BDB #386

## 2Samuel 2:5a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
Gal <sup>e</sup> êd (גַּלְעָד) [pronounced <i>gahl<sup>e</sup>- GAYD</i> ]	<i>witness-pile, hill of witness</i> ; and is transliterated <i>Gilead</i>	proper noun; location	Strong's #1567 BDB #165

Although some exegetes treat this as one noun, *Jabesh-gilead*; I think the idea is that this is the city *Jabesh* in *Gildean* (sort of like *Boston, Massachusetts*).

**Translation:** *So David then sent messengers to the men of Jabesh-gilead...* People react different when it comes to their competition, whether present, past or future. I recently saw the 2006 state of the union speech by President George W. Bush wherein he made a humorous remark concerning himself and President Clinton. The cameras flashed immediately to Hilary Clinton, who could be seen as Bush's opposition in the Senate, and may be the next presidential candidate. She did not drop her guard for even a moment; she did not smile; she could not be seen appreciating or approving of anything which Bush said or did. David may be painted in opposition to Saul, and Saul saw David as his greatest threat. However, there were times when Saul acknowledged the truth—that David was a faithful servant and an honorable man. David could have ignored what was done to Saul—"That son of a bitch made my life miserable; I could not even carve out a place in southern Judah without Saul coming down with his whole damned army and threatening my life—and without provocation. He is a bastard, and whether his body rots in the ground or on some wall somewhere, I could give a flying frog." A lesser man might even charge into Jabesh-gilead and round up those who took Saul's body and kill them, as they might still be too loyal to Saul's regime. However, David is not only gracious toward these men, but he honors them.

Let me give you another illustration from this day and time. I have seen current President Bush make mention of the relief efforts and the giving to southeast Asia because of the deadly tsunami of a couple years back; he always speaks of his father and President Clinton graciously—Bush never speaks respectfully of his father without mentioning President Clinton and speaking respectfully of him as well. I have seen the current President Bush making overtures to Senator Edward Kennedy as well, speaking of his illustrious career and contributions to the United States. This is a gracious attitude. Even though these men—President Clinton and Senator Kennedy—may be perceived by some as Bush's enemies, and that Bush could take an adversarial position with them at every turn, he has chosen not to do so. Whatever your politics are, you should be able to recognize that Bush has been gracious to his political enemies and that this graciousness has rarely been returned. In the case of David, he does not even view Saul as his enemy, despite the fact that Saul had relentlessly pursued him year after year seeking his life. Insofar as I know, even in the current political climate, neither Republicans nor Democrats are seeking the lives of their opponents. However, to any impartial observer, all politics aside, it should be clear who is gracious and who is not.

**Application:** In your life, if you are a normal, growing believer, you will have a boat-load of detractors and enemies. It comes with the territory; it cannot be helped. You can choose how you deal with these enemies, but realize that Jesus Christ died for them just as He died for you. They might be lying sons-of-bitches, but you have an old sin nature as well. Jesus Christ forgave their sins, just as he has forgiven your sins. Whatever their personal opinion is of you is not an issue; whether they like you or hate you is not an issue—they are people for whom Jesus Christ died. You can choose to be ungracious to them and impolite, but realize that even the men who crucified Jesus and even the men who pulled out his hair and beard and beat His face to a bloody pulp—even those men He died for, and even those men, He prayed to God, **"Forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."** It is not your place to be indignant, retaliatory, underhanded, vengeful, or anything else of the sort—and I don't care how vicious your enemies are. Jesus Christ has forgiven them all; and if you cannot forgive them, then at very least, you can keep your mouth shut. You don't need to run them down or talk behind their backs. Realize that you are in a spiritual conflict; that your enemies may not realize that, or may not fully appreciate how they are involved in this conflict. If you have a little doctrine, then you know that this conflict is going on and you know that unseen forces are going to turn others against you. Do not take it personally. Do not

retaliate. Do not speak ill of your enemies. Do not become angry. Do not assault them with mental, verbal or physical sins.

**Application:** I don't want you to think that I am able to deal with all of my adversarial relationships perfectly. These things are a struggle for me too. In the same situation, I don't know if I would sit stone-faced like Hilary Clinton, taking every opportunity to run down my opponent; or whether I would be more gracious, as Bush has been. I know that in this area, at times, I have been a complete failure. However, what I do know, from the study of the Word of God, is that there is a right way and a wrong way to deal with your enemies. Retaliation, inordinate competition and mental attitude sins are not the ways to deal with those who are against you.

## 2Samuel 2:5b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
ʾamar (אָמַר) [pronounced aw-MAHR]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
ʾel (אֶל) [pronounced e/]	<i>unto; into, among, in; toward, to; against; concerning, regarding; besides, together with; as to</i>	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied); with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural suffix	Strong's #413 BDB #39
bârak <sup>e</sup> (בָּרַךְ) [pronounced baw-RAHK <sup>e</sup> ]	<i>blessed, blessed be [is], blessings to; happiness to [for], happiness [is]</i>	masculine plural, Qal passive participle	Strong's #1288 BDB #138
ʾattem (אַתֶּם) [pronounced aht-TEM]	<i>you all, you guys, you (often, the verb to be is implied)</i>	2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine plural, personal pronoun	Strong's #859 BDB #61
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l <sup>e</sup> )	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	directional/relational preposition with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510

The meanings of the lâmed preposition broken down into groups: ❶ *to, towards, unto*; it is used both to turn one's heart *toward* someone as well as to sin *against* someone; ❷ *to, even to*; in this sense, it can be used with a number to indicate the upper limit which a multitude might approach (*nearly*). ❸ Lâmed can be equivalent to the Greek preposition eis (εἰς), meaning *into*, as in transforming *into* something else, changing *into* something else (Gen. 2:7). This use of lâmed after the verb hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced haw-YAW] (Strong's #1961 BDB #224) is one thing *becoming* another (Gen. 2:7). ❹ Its fourth use is the mark of a dative, after verbs of giving, granting, delivering, pardoning, consulting, sending, etc. This type of dative is broken down into several categories, but one includes the translation *by*, which would be apropos here. ❺ *With regards to, as to*. Similar to the Greek preposition eis (εἰς) plus the dative. [Numbering from Gesenius]. ❻ *On account of, because, propter*, used of cause and reason (*propter* means *because*; Gesenius used it). ❼ *Concerning, about*, used of a person or thing made the object of discourse, after verbs of saying. ❽ *On behalf of anyone, for anyone*. ❾ As applied to a rule or standard, *according to, according as, as though, as if*. ❿ When associated with time, it refers to *the point of time at which* or *in which* anything is done; or it can refer to *the space of time during which* something is done (or occurs); *at the time of*.



## 2Samuel 2:5b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i> ]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y<sup>e</sup>howah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217

**Translation:** ...and he said to them, “You [are] blessed with reference to Y<sup>e</sup>howah... I would have expected to find that they are blessed *by Jehovah*; however, these men who retrieved Saul’s body are blessed with reference to Jehovah. Whatever the exact meaning, it is clear that these men are blessed because they showed respect to the person of Saul and the office of king. David is also making it clear that he harbors no resentment against them for being faithful to Saul, their lord.

## 2Samuel 2:5c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾāsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>uh-SHER</i> ]	<i>that, so that, in that; for that, since; which; when, at what time; who, whom; where, wherever; the fact that = how; because that, because; as, like as; yea, even, yea even; until that; then, so [in an apodosis]</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
ʿāsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced <i>gaw-SAWH</i> ]	<i>to do, to make, to construct, to fashion, to form, to prepare</i>	2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #6213 BDB #793
cheçed (חֶסֶד) [pronounced <i>KHEH-sed</i> ]	<i>grace, benevolence, mercy, kindness</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #2617 BDB #338
zeh (זֶה) [pronounced <i>zeh</i> ]	<i>here, this, this one; thus; possibly another</i>	masculine singular demonstrative adjective	Strong's #2088, 2090 (& 2063) BDB #260
ʿîm (עִם) [pronounced <i>geem</i> ]	<i>with, at, by, near; like; from</i>	preposition of nearness and vicinity	Strong's #5973 BDB #767
ʾādônâi (אֲדֹנָי) [pronounced <i>uh-doh-NAY</i> ]	<i>lord, master, owner, superior, sovereign; can refer to the trinity or to an intensification of the noun; transliterated <i>Adonai</i></i>	masculine plural noun with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine plural suffix	Strong's #113 BDB #10
ʿîm (עִם) [pronounced <i>geem</i> ]	<i>with, at, by, near; like; from</i>	preposition of nearness and vicinity	Strong's #5973 BDB #767
Shâʾûwl (שָׂאוּל) [pronounced <i>shaw-OOL</i> ]	which is transliterated <i>Saul</i> ; it means <i>asked for</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #7586 BDB #982

**Translation:** ...because you made [or, who made] this grace with your lord—with Saul;... This is a difficult portion of Scripture to translate. The relative pronoun can be used like an explanatory conjunction; therefore, it is legitimate to render this *because*. If translating this simply as a relative pronoun, then I would not expect the 2<sup>nd</sup>

person masculine plural verb, but the 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular (or plural) verb (however, for all I know, maybe the 2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine plural is reasonable here, even though it follows the relative pronoun, which actually has no number, gender or person. We may want to loosely render this: *...you who manufactured this grace to your lord—even to Saul;...* We have a repetition of the preposition, affixed to both Saul and to *your lord*; this allows for the rendering *even to Saul*.

Obviously, the entire town did not show up to retrieve Saul’s body, but certain men from Jabesh did. David is specifically addressing this message to those who were brave enough to risk their lives by going to Beth-shan. This message is to these men who are blessed by God. Perhaps this is the actual meaning of the Hebrew here.

2Samuel 2:5d			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong’s # BDB #253
qâbar (קָבַר) [pronounced kaw-BAHR]	<i>to bury, to heap up a mound</i>	2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong’s #6912 BDB #868
’êth (אֶת) [pronounced ayth]	untranslated mark of a direct object; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	affixed to a 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong’s #853 BDB #84
Owen lists this as the prepositional use instead.			
’êth (אֶת) [pronounced ayth]	<i>with, at, near, by, among, directly from</i>	preposition (which is identical to the sign of the direct object); with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong’s #854 BDB #85
The problem is the vowel point, which corresponds to the preposition, but not to the direct object. Again, the vowel points were added a long while after the original manuscript was penned.			
The Greek adds <i>and Jonathan his son</i> at this point.			

**Translation:** *...and you buried him.* The men of Jabesh-gildea showed great grace to Saul. They risked their lives in order to retrieve his body; and then they gave him a proper and formal burial (one would assume).

Clarke writes: *This was a generous and noble act, highly indicative of the grandeur of David’s mind. He respected Saul as his once legitimate sovereign; he loved Jonathan as his most intimate friend. The former had greatly injured him, and sought his destruction; but even this did not cancel his respect for him, as the anointed of God, and as the king of Israel.*<sup>12</sup>

I should add that burial of the dead, although not mandated in Scripture, is respectful. Not only did God say, “*You are dust, and to dust you will return*” (Gen. 3:19b), but God Himself buried Moses when Moses died (Deut. 34:5–6).

**And now [may] make Y<sup>e</sup>howah with you [all] grace and faithfulness and also I—I do with you the good the this who have done the word the this.** 2Samuel 2:6

**And now may Y<sup>e</sup>howah manufacture grace and faithfulness to [lit., with] you [all] and I will also manufacture this good [to those] who have done this thing [for Saul].**

<sup>12</sup> Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, 2Sam. 2:5.

**And now may Jehovah manufacture grace and faithfulness to you who have done this gracious thing for Saul and his family; furthermore, I will also do good toward you as well.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text	And now [may] make Y <sup>e</sup> howah with you [all] grace and faithfulness and also I—I do with you the good the this who have done the word the this.
Septuagint	And now may the Lord deal in mercy and truth towards you; and I also will requite towards you this good deed, because you have done this.

Significant differences: The only difference is the relative pronoun in the Hebrew is translated as an explanatory particle, which is legitimate, according to BDB.

#### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	...and I pray that the LORD will be kind and faithful to you. I will be your friend because of what you have done.
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#### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

HCSB	Now, may the LORD show special kindness and faithfulness to you, and I will also show the same goodness to you because you have done this deed.
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#### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

ESV	Now may the LORD show steadfast love and faithfulness to you. And I will do good to you because you have done this thing.
WEB	Now Yahweh show loving kindness and truth to you: and I also will reward you for this kindness, because you have done this thing.
Young's Updated LT	And, now, Jehovah does with you kindness and truth, and also, I do with you this good because you have done this thing.

**The gist of this verse?** David asks that Jehovah God show these men grace and faithfulness, and that he will treat them in grace as well, because they have done this thing (the retrieval of Saul's body).

### 2Samuel 2:6a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʿattâh (עַתָּה) [pronounced <i>gah-tawh</i> ]	<i>now, at this time, already</i>	adverb of time	Strong's #6258 BDB #773

When followed by an imperative or an interrogative, w<sup>e</sup> + the adverb ʿattâh mean *and so, thus, things being so, therefore, now therefore*. Sometimes, the concept of time is lost when this combination is used to incite another.

## 2Samuel 2:6a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿāsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced ġaw-SAWH]	<i>to do, to make, to construct, to fashion, to form, to prepare</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect; apocopated form	Strong's #6213 BDB #793
YHWH (יְהוָה) [pronunciation is possibly yhoh-WAH]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y<sup>e</sup>howah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
ʿîm (עִם) [pronounced ġeem]	<i>with, at, by, near; like; from</i>	preposition of nearness and vicinity; with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine plural suffix	Strong's #5973 BDB #767
cheçed (חֶסֶד) [pronounced KHEH-sed]	<i>grace, benevolence, mercy, kindness</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #2617 BDB #338
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʿēmeth (אֱמֶת) [pronounced EH-meth]	<i>firmness, faithfulness, truth, certainty, stability, perpetuity, fidelity, reliable, stable, dependable</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #571 BDB #54

**Translation:** *And now may Y<sup>e</sup>howah manufacture grace and faithfulness to [lit., with] you [all]...* The apocopated form means that David is asking for God to be gracious and faithful to these men. David recognizes that what these men did required bravery and self-sacrifice, and that their motives were noble; and he calls for God to give them grace and to be faithful to them for this act.

## 2Samuel 2:6b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that, so that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
gam (גַּם) [pronounced gahm]	<i>also, furthermore, in addition to, even, moreover</i>	adverb	Strong's #1571 BDB #168
Together, the wâw conjunction and the gam particle might mean <i>together with, along with, joined with, and, furthermore, and furthermore.</i>			
ʿânôkîy (אֲנִי) [pronounced awn-oh-KEE]	<i>I, me; (sometimes a verb is implied)</i>	1 <sup>st</sup> person singular personal pronoun	Strong's #595 BDB #59
ʿāsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced ġaw-SAWH]	<i>to do, to make, to construct, to fashion, to form, to prepare</i>	1 <sup>st</sup> person singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #6213 BDB #793

## 2Samuel 2:6b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿîm (עִם) [pronounced <i>geem</i> ]	<i>with, at, by, near; like; from</i>	preposition of nearness and vicinity; with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine plural suffix	Strong's #5973 BDB #767
ṭōwbâh (טוֹבָה) [pronounced <i>TOH<sup>b</sup>-vaw</i> ]	<i>welfare, benefit, good, good things</i>	feminine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #2896 BDB #375
zeh (זֶה) [pronounced <i>zeh</i> ]	<i>here, this, this one; thus; possibly another</i>	masculine singular demonstrative adjective with the definite article	Strong's #2088, 2090 (& 2063) BDB #260

**Translation:** ...and I will also manufacture this good... David is also going to be gracious and faithful towards those who have done this thing to Saul. God is asked to bless these men, and David said that he would as well.

David is making is clear to these men that, their loyalty and devotion to Saul is not perceived by him as a threat or as disloyalty to him in any way. Despots often gather up those they do not trust, those who supported their political rivals, and imprison or execute them. Even in modern history, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we have examples of mass executions, some to solidify political power, and others simply out of hate.

In most cases, these are simply reasonable estimates, and they take into consideration that some are killed not directly, but through intentional starvation or privation by the despot/government over them.

### Genocides and Political Killings of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

Political Leader (Country, Time Period)	Number Killed	Comments
Mao Ze-Dong (China, 1958-61 and 1966-69)	49,000,000	"The great leap forward" and "cultural revolution"
Jozef Stalin (USSR, 1934-39)	13,000,000	The "purges"
Adolf Hitler (Germany, 1939-1945)	12,000,000	Concentration camps and civilians in World War II.
Hideki Tojo (Japan, 1941-44)	5,000,000	Civilians in World War II
Pol Pot (Cambodia, 1975-79)	1,700,000	
Kim Il Sung (North Korea, 1948-94)	1,600,000	Purges and concentration camps.
Menghitsu (Ethiopia, 1975-78)	1,500,000	
Ismail Enver (Turkey, 1915)	1,200,000	Armenians
Yakubu Gowon (Biafra, 1967-1970)	1,000,000	
Leonid Brezhnev (Afghanistan, 1979-1982)	900,000	
Jean Kambanda (Rwanda, 1994)	800,000	
Suharto (East Timor, 1976-98)	600,000	

## Genocides and Political Killings of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

Political Leader (Country, Time Period)	Number Killed	Comments
Saddam Hussein (Iran 1980-1990 and Kurdistan 1987-88)	600,000	

*(Note: the crimes committed by right-wing dictators have always been easier to track down than the crimes against humanity committed by communist leaders, so the figures for communist leaders like Stalin and Mao increase almost yearly as new secret documents become available. To this day, the Chinese government has not yet disclosed how many people were executed by Mao's red guards during the Cultural Revolution and how many people were killed in Tibet during the Chinese invasion of 1950. We also don't know how many dissidents have been killed by order of Kim Il Sung in North Korea, although presumably many thousands).*

I list these deaths so that you can contrast what has happened during our *more enlightened* 20<sup>th</sup> century with what David did with those who supported the one man who could have been seen by him as his chief political rival.

This list was taken from and is continued on the website <http://www.scaruffi.com/politics/dictat.html> which was compiled by Piero Scaruffi (the note in the previous paragraph was taken verbatim from that web page. On that page is accompanying documentation and links to similar statistics.

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### 2Samuel 2:6c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾāsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced uh-SHER]	<i>that, so that, in that; for that, since; which; when, at what time; who, whom; where, wherever; the fact that = how; because that, because; as, like as; yea, even, yea even; until that; then, so [in an apodosis]</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
ʿāsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced gaw-SAWH]	<i>to do, to make, to construct, to fashion, to form, to prepare</i>	2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal perfect	Strong's #6213 BDB #793
dâbâr (דְּבַר) [pronounced daw <sup>b</sup> -VAWR]	<i>word, saying, doctrine, thing, matter, command</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #1697 BDB #182
zeh (זֶה) [pronounced zeh]	<i>here, this, this one; thus; possibly another</i>	masculine singular demonstrative adjective with the definite article	Strong's #2088, 2090 (& 2063) BDB #260

**Translation:**...[to those] who have done this thing [for Saul]. David is going to direct gracious treatment toward those who were brave enough to retrieve Saul's body. These men are seen as heroes and they are portrayed I this way. At no time is there even a hint that David views these men as potential enemies of his, even though another, less gracious person, would have portrayed them as such.

We like to think of ourselves as evolved, that, at one time, we were just monkeys swinging in the trees, and now we walk upright on the ground and are civilized.<sup>13</sup> However, between the time of David and the 20<sup>th</sup> century, some 3000 years have passed. We see how David deals with those who are potentially his political resistance and how political leaders of the 20<sup>th</sup> century dealt with their real and potential political enemies. In terms of mercy, there is no evolution of humanity; it really comes down to individual character. There is no evolutionary difference between David and, for instance, Pol Pot; however, there is a great difference in their character and integrity.

**And now are strong your hands and be to sons of strength for has died your adonai Saul and also me has anointed a house of Judah to king over them.”**

2Samuel  
2:7

**Therefore, [let] your hands be strong and be men of courage [lit., *sons of courage*] for your lord Saul has died. Furthermore, the house of Judah anointed me to [be] king over them.”**

**Therefore, let your hands be strong and remain men of courage, even though your lord Saul has died. Furthermore, the men of Judah anointed me as king over them.”**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### **Ancient texts:**

Latin Vulgate

Let your hands be strengthened, and be ye men of valour: for although your master Saul be dead, yet the house of Juda hath anointed me to be their king.

Masoretic Text

And now are strong your hands and be to sons of strength for has died your adonai Saul and also me has anointed a house of Judah to king over them.”

Septuagint

And now let your hands be made strong, and be mighty sons; for your master Saul is dead, and moreover the house of Juda have anointed me to be king over them.

Significant differences: None.

#### **Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:**

CEV

Saul is dead, but the tribe of Judah has made me their king. So be strong and have courage.

#### **Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):**

*God's Word*<sup>TM</sup>

Now, be strong and courageous. Because your master Saul is dead, the tribe of Judah has anointed me to be their king.”

#### **Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

MKJV

And now let your hands be strengthened, and be brave. For your master Saul is dead, and also the house of Judah has anointed me king over them.

Young's Updated LT

And now, are your hands strong, and be you for sons of valour, for your lord Saul is dead, and also—me have the house of Judah anointed for king over them.”

#### **The gist of this verse?**

David comforts the men of Jabesh-gilead and also tells them that the men of Judah have anointed him king over them.

<sup>13</sup> Yes, I realize that evolutionists do not believe that we are descended from monkeys.

## 2Samuel 2:7a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʿattâh (עַתָּה) [pronounced <i>ghah-tawh</i> ]	<i>now, at this time, already</i>	adverb of time	Strong's #6258 BDB #773
When followed by an imperative or an interrogative, w <sup>e</sup> + the adverb ʿattâh mean <i>and so, thus, things being so, therefore, now therefore</i> . Sometimes, the concept of time is lost when this combination is used to incite another.			
châzaq (חָזַק) [pronounced <i>khaw-ZAHK</i> ]	<i>to tie up, to bind; to hold fast, to adhere to, to be stuck to; to be strong, to be firm, to increase in prosperity, to strengthen</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person feminine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #2388 BDB #304
yâd (יָד) [pronounced <i>yawd</i> ]	generally translated <i>hand</i>	feminine singular noun with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine plural suffix	Strong's #3027 BDB #388

**Translation:** [Therefore, \[let\] your hands be strengthened...](#) I am not sure how to take this portion of v. 7. Do we understand this as David saying, “Your hands are strong” or “Let your hands be strong”? In any case, David is recognizing their courage and comforting them. Let me re-emphasize that, these men are potentially David’s enemies, as they have shown such devotion toward Saul; yet his message to them is one of praise; and here he asks that they be given even greater strength.

## 2Samuel 2:7b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that, so that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced <i>haw-YAW</i> ]	<i>to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass</i>	2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperative	Strong's #1961 BDB #224
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l</i> ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
bên (בְּנֵי) [pronounced <i>bane</i> ]	<i>son, descendant</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #1121 BDB #119
chayil (חַיִל) [pronounced <i>CHAH-yil</i> ]	<i>army, force; strength, courage, power, might; efficiency; and that which is gotten through strength—wealth, substance</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #2428 BDB #298

**Translation:** [...and be men of courage](#) [lit., *sons of courage*]... David encourages them to be strong. This is his way of comforting them. Obviously, some of the men of Jabesh-gilead are very strong, as they took down Saul’s



body from the wall in Beth-shan even though being found out would mean their lives. What David is asking for, is for these men to be strong, even though the army of Saul was defeated and Saul and his sons killed. Given these events, Israel could face a myriad of changes and difficulties in the near future. If what these men did became known to the Philistines, Jabesh Gilead could find itself under attack. David asks these men to face their future with the same strength and bravery that they have shown so far.

### 2Samuel 2:7c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced <i>kee</i> ]	<i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>	explanatory or temporal conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
mûwth (מוּת) [pronounced <i>mooth</i> ]	<i>to die; to perish, to be destroyed</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #4191 BDB #559
ʾădônâi (אֲדֹנָי) [pronounced <i>uh-doh-NAY</i> ]	<i>lord, master, owner, superior, sovereign; can refer to the trinity or to an intensification of the noun; transliterated Adonai</i>	masculine plural noun with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine plural suffix	Strong's #113 BDB #10
Shâʾûwl (שָׂאוּל) [pronounced <i>shaw-OOL</i> ]	which is transliterated <i>Saul</i> ; it means <i>asked for</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #7586 BDB #982

**Translation:** *...for your lord Saul has died.* This is David stating the obvious; these men know that Saul has died, as they were the ones who carried his body into Jabesh-gilead for a proper burial. The reason that David emphasizes this is, to make it clear that they are without a king. They are now sheep without a shepherd. David phrases this as, "Be strong, even though your master Saul is dead." As you may recall, Israel's primary reason for desiring a king was to be able to defend itself against hostile aggressions and outside invaders.

David also states this possibly hoping to gain their same loyalty; however, I don't see that as the primary reason for his saying that. Just because something can be politically advantageous or politically canny, does not mean that the person who did it had that in mind, or that was the primary consideration. If we have learned nothing about David, it is that he is patient and willing to wait on God before acting.

### 2Samuel 2:7d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wê (or vê) (וְ) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that, so that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
gam (גַּם) [pronounced <i>gahm</i> ]	<i>also, furthermore, in addition to, even, moreover</i>	adverb	Strong's #1571 BDB #168
Together, the wâw conjunction and the gam particle might mean <i>together with, along with, joined with, and, furthermore, and furthermore.</i>			
ʾêth (אֵת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]	untranslated mark of a direct object; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	affixed to a 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix	Strong's #853 BDB #84
mâshach (מָשַׁח) [pronounced <i>maw-SHAKH</i> ]	<i>to smear, to anoint</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #4886 BDB #602

## 2Samuel 2:7d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
bayith (בַּיִת) [pronounced BAH-yith]	house, household, habitation as well as inward	masculine singular construct	Strong's #1004 BDB #108
Y <sup>e</sup> hûwdâh (יְהוּדָה) [pronounced <i>y<sup>e</sup>hoo-DAW</i> ]	possibly means <i>to praise, to be praised</i> ; and is transliterated Judah	masculine proper noun/location	Strong's #3063 BDB #397
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l<sup>e</sup></i> )	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	directional/relational preposition with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510

The meanings of the lâmed preposition broken down into groups: ❶ *to, towards, unto*; it is used both to turn one's heart *toward* someone as well as to sin *against* someone; ❷ *to, even to*; in this sense, it can be used with a number to indicate the upper limit which a multitude might approach (*nearly*). ❸ Lâmed can be equivalent to the Greek preposition eis (εἰς), meaning *into*, as in transforming *into* something else, changing *into* something else (Gen. 2:7). This use of lâmed after the verb hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced *haw-YAW*] (Strong's #1961 BDB #224) is one thing *becoming* another (Gen. 2:7). ❹ Its fourth use is the mark of a dative, after verbs of giving, granting, delivering, pardoning, consulting, sending, etc. This type of dative is broken down into several categories, but one includes the translation *by*, which would be apropos here. ❺ *With regards to, as to*. Similar to the Greek preposition eis (εἰς) plus the dative. [Numbering from Gesenius]. ❻ *On account of, because, propter*, used of cause and reason (*propter* means *because*; Gesenius used it). ❼ *Concerning, about*, used of a person or thing made the object of discourse, after verbs of saying. ❽ *On behalf of anyone, for anyone*. ❾ As applied to a rule or standard, *according to, according as, as though, as if*. ❿ When associated with time, it refers to *the point of time at which or in which* anything is done; or it can refer to *the space of time during which* something is done (or occurs); *at the time of*.

melek <sup>e</sup> (מֶלֶךְ) [pronounced MEH-lek]	king, ruler, prince	masculine singular noun	Strong's #4428 BDB #572
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This time, this is a masculine singular noun in the Greek. The difference between the verb *to reign* (which is the lâmed preposition and the Qal infinitive construct of *to reign*) and what we find here *to king* is a matter of vowel points, and these vowel points were added a millennium or more after the text was written. Why the Masorites chose to render this as a noun as opposed to being a verb is a mystery to me. In terms of the overall meaning, there is none. However, the verb makes for a much smoother Hebrew.

Now, when this occurred in v. 4, given that the Greek was a verb and given that there is little difference between the noun and verb, I was ready to pronounce the word there a verb. However, in this verse, the Greek renders this as a noun and, apart from that, everything else is the same. That would suggest to us that this is a noun in the Hebrew in both cases.

Do not become concerned over this; the overall meaning is essentially the same.

ʿal (עַל) [pronounced <i>gahl</i> ]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of proximity with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural suffix	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
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**Translation:** Furthermore, the house of Judah anointed me to [be] king over them." David is speaking to the men of Jabesh-gilead, which is the other side of the Jordan river from the territory of Benjamin. David is looking, in part, to consolidate his power. This is not a power grab; David is not a man who desires great power, as we have seen him twice before refuse to kill Saul, even though Saul stood between him and the throne. David is a man

of doctrine and it is important for Israel to remain united under one man. Each of the 12 tribes has its own territory and they often operated independently (e.g., in the early period of the Judges, some of the tribes acted to take the land given them by God and some did not).

What David is doing here is extending the olive branch of peace. Their faithfulness to Saul and their loyalty to Saul is not seen by him as a negative. David functions as though Saul's continual pursuit of him never happened. He realizes that this might be on the minds of some who support Saul; but it is not on David's mind. David is trying to convey that he sees their support of Saul and the rescue of his body as a noble act. David is not threatened by this, but rather encouraged. Therefore, David is both comforting them in their loss and extending his hand to them as king over Judah. Note that David does not arrogantly tell them, "And I am your king as well, like it or not."

What is interesting is that David's primary focus in this message to them is commendation to them for their bravery and God's blessings to them. Any political aspirations David has (of, for instance, asking them to support him as king over the rest of Israel) are, at most, implied, but not outright stated and definitely not the focus or the objective of his message to them. Allow me to paraphrase his message: "God's blessings and my highest regards to you for your bravery and heroism. Be strong, even though your king has died in battle. I respectfully send this message to you as king of Judah." If David made any clear political overtures—e.g., "If you guys are interested, then I'll be your king as well"—they have not been recorded herein. If there are any implications to be read into this letter, it would just as likely be that, "If the Philistines ever take action against you, I will come to your rescue."

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Commentators make several points with regards to David sending this message to the men of Jabesh Gilead.

### Various Commentators on David's Message to the Men of Jabesh Gilead

Commentator	Observation/Additional Comments
<b>Adam Clarke</b>	David certainly wished to attach the men of Jabesh to his interest; he saw that they were generous and valiant, and must be of great service to him whose part they espoused; and he was no doubt afraid that they would attach themselves to the house of Saul, in consideration of the eminent services Saul had rendered them in rescuing them from Nahash, king of the Ammonites. <sup>14</sup> Although I agree that David recognized that these men were generous and valiant, I don't think he is crassly attempting to garner political strength here. When informed of Saul's death, before leaving Ziklag, he composes an ode to Saul and Jonathan. When living in Judah, David could have killed Saul twice, but he chose not to. David is not a man who is driven to have political power; power and authority were given to David by God and David accepts his lot in life; however, this power is not something that he craves.
<b>Robert Gordon</b>	Gordon calls this a <i>shrew attempt...to establish a bridgehead in Transjordan, which was to remain loyal to the house of Saul for some time yet</i> . <sup>15</sup> I think that, for some individuals, that is what this message would have been—simply an attempt to consolidate political power. However, you must always look back on David's relationship to Saul and the fact that David did nothing to remove Saul from his throne, although he could have killed Saul on two occasions. This, combined with the fact that David is in fellowship, indicate to me that David's greetings are sincere and they mean exactly what they say.

<sup>14</sup> Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, 2Sam. 2:7.

<sup>15</sup> Robert Gordon, *I & II Samuel A Commentary*; Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI; ©1986; p. 213.

## Various Commentators on David's Message to the Men of Jabesh Gilead

Commentator	Observation/Additional Comments
<b>Matthew Henry</b>	<p>The respectful message he sent to the men of Jabesh–Gilead, to return them thanks for their kindness to Saul. Still he studies to honour the memory of his predecessor, and thereby to show that he was far from aiming at the crown from any principle of ambition or enmity to Saul, but purely because he was called of God to it. It was told him that the men of Jabesh–Gilead buried Saul, perhaps by some that thought he would be displeased at them as over–officious. But he was far from that. 1. He commends them for it, 2Sam. 2:5. According as our obligations were to love and honour any while they lived, we ought to show respect to their remains (that is, their bodies, names, and families) when they are dead. <b>“Saul was your lord,”</b> says David, <b>“and therefore you did well to show him this kindness and do him this honour.”</b> 2. He prays to God to bless them for it, and to recompense it to them: Blessed are you, and blessed may you be of the Lord, who will deal kindly with those in a particular manner that dealt kindly with the dead, as it is in Ruth 1:8. Due respect and affection shown to the bodies, names, and families of those that are dead, in conscience towards God, is a piece of charity which shall in no wise lose its reward: The Lord show kindness and truth to you (2Sam. 2:6), that is, kindness according to the promise. What kindness God shows is in truth, what one may trust to. 3. He promises to make them amends for it: I also will requite you. He does not turn them over to God for a recompense that he may excuse himself from rewarding them. Good wishes are good things, and instances of gratitude, but they are too cheap to be rested in where there is an ability to do more. 4. He prudently takes this opportunity to gain them to his interest, 2Sam. 2:7. They had paid their last respects to Saul, and he would have them to be the last: <b>“The house of Judah have anointed me king, and it will be your wisdom to concur with them and in that to be valiant.”</b> We must not so dote on the dead, how much soever we have valued them, as to neglect or despise the blessings we have in those that survive, whom God has raised up to us in their stead.<sup>16</sup></p>
<b>Jamieson, Fausset and Brown</b>	<p>There can be no doubt that this message of thanks for their bold and dangerous enterprise in rescuing the bodies of Saul and his sons was an expression of David's personal and genuine feeling of satisfaction. At the same time, it was a stroke of sound and timely policy. In this view the announcement of his royal power in Judah, accompanied by the pledge of his protection of the men of Jabesh-gilead, should they be exposed to danger for their adventure at Beth-shan, would bear an important significance in all parts of the country and hold out an assurance that he would render them the same timely and energetic succor that Saul had done at the beginning of his reign.<sup>17</sup></p>
<b>Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge</b>	<p>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.<sup>18</sup></p>

I should add that, just because this was sound political policy, this does not mean that was David's primary objective for sending this message. David acted in grace and with respect, which is always sound policy, political or otherwise. We may try to impugn petty political motivation to David, but please recall that, on two occasions, David could have killed Saul, but he chose not to. For this reason, we know that David's motivation was not political gain.

<sup>16</sup> Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, 2Sam. 2:1–7.

<sup>17</sup> Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; from e-sword, 2Sam. 2:5–7.

<sup>18</sup> *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880, with introduction by R. A. Torrey; courtesy of E-sword, 2Sam. 2:5.

Allow me to present an analogous situation: I try to treat my mother with love and respect because I love her, because she put up with me as a child, and, of course, because she is my mother. I do not do any of this in order to obtain her adoration or approbation, or to somehow improve my inheritance share. Yes, people do act with evil motivations; however, this does not mean that everything which is done has an ulterior motive.

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## Ishbosheth Reigns over Northern and Eastern Israel

And Abner, son of Ner, a commander of an army which [is] to Saul had taken Ishbosheth, a son of Saul, and so he brings him over [to] Mahanaim.

2Samuel  
2:8

But Abner, the son of Ner, the commander of Saul's army, had taken Ishbosheth, Saul's son, and brought him over to Mahanaim.

However, Abner, the son of Ner, and the commander of Saul's army, took Ishbosheth, Saul's son, and brought him to Mahanaim.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

### Ancient texts:

Latin Vulgate	But Abner the son of Ner, general of Saul's army, took Isboseth the son of Saul, and led him about through the camp,...
Masoretic Text	And Abner, son of Ner, a commander of an army which [is] to Saul had taken Ishbosheth, a son of Saul, and so he brings him over [to] Mahanaim.
Septuagint	But Abenner, the son of Ner, the commander-in-chief of Saul's army, took Jebosthe son of Saul, and brought him up from the camp to Manaem...

Significant differences: The Greek adds the words *from the camp*. In the Latin, Abner is taking Ishbosheth *through* the camp.

### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	Abner the son of Ner had been the general of Saul's army. He took Saul's son Ishbosheth across the Jordan River to Mahanaim...
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### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

HCSB	Abner son of Ner, commander of Saul's army, took Saul's son Ish-bosheth and moved him to Mahanaim.
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### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

MKJV	But Abner the son of Ner, commander of Saul's army, took Ishbosheth the son of Saul, and brought him over to Mahanaim.
Young's Updated LT	And Abner, son of Ner, head of the army which Saul has, has taken Ish-Bosheth, son of Saul, and causes him to pass over to Mahanaim.

**The gist of this verse?** At Saul's death, Abner, the commander of Saul's army, attempts to set up Ishbosheth as king in Mahanaim (perhaps a capital of eastern Israel).

## 2Samuel 2:8a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʾĂb <sup>e</sup> nêr אֲבִנֵר (אָבְנֵר) [pronounced u <sup>b</sup> v <sup>e</sup> -NAYR]	<i>my father is Ner or my father is a lamp, and is transliterated Abner</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #74 BDB #4
bên (בֶּן) [pronounced <i>bane</i> ]	<i>son, descendant</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #1121 BDB #119
Nêr (נֵר) [pronounced <i>nair</i> ]	<i>lamp and is transliterated Ner</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #5369 BDB #633

**Translation:** [But Abner, the son of Ner...](#) We have run into Abner on several occasions thus far, but we are not quite ready for the **Doctrine of Abner** yet (which will probably be covered in 1Kings 2), as he will play a key role in the next few chapters.

However, it may be good to summarize what we know about Abner so far.

### Summarizing What We Know About Abner

1. Abner is Saul's uncle; however, they are probably very close in age (it is even possible that Abner is younger than Saul). This is a point at which commentators disagree, and both sides of the issue (whether Abner is Saul's uncle or cousin) are given back in 1Sam. 14:51.
2. In any case, Abner was the commander of Saul's army, making him the second most powerful man in Israel. 1Sam. 14:50 20:25
3. Although we are never made privy to any interaction between Abner and David, after David killed Goliath and after David became a part of Saul's army as one of Saul's generals, David and Abner must have developed some sort of relationship. We know that David had to have developed some respect for Abner, as will be made clear in 2Sam. 3.
4. David twice had the opportunity to kill Saul, but he chose not to. However, the second time, he gave Abner a hard time for not properly guarding his king. 1Sam. 26:7–16
5. As we have studied, many men from Saul's army went over to David; however, Abner never chose to do this. We are never told what Abner's thinking is, but we might suppose that he liked his position of power, and that he was perhaps a little pissed off at David for showing him up in 1Sam. 26.
6. In 2Sam. 2, we next find Abner and Saul's presumably youngest son, Ishbosheth, setting up a rulership east of the Jordan. The scenario here I think is that, Saul, knowing he would die in combat (as per 1Sam. 28), told Abner to take his son Ishbosheth (who was probably not in Saul's army, but in a safe place) and retreat to the east of the Jordan to set up a dynasty in the event of Saul's death. This would explain why Abner and Ishbosheth are both alive after Israel has been soundly defeated by the Philistine army. This will be discussed further down below under [Abner's Motivations](#).
7. Although a desire for power could have certainly played a part in Abner's choices, one must admire, if nothing else, his loyalty to Saul. A lesser man might have killed Ishbosheth and then tried to take power.

Since Abner will play a major part in what is to come, I will save the rest for later.

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## 2Samuel 2:8b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
sar (סַר) [pronounced sar]	<i>chieftain, chief, ruler, official, captain, prince, leader, commander</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #8269 BDB #978
tsâbâ' (צָבָא) [pronounced tsaw <sup>b</sup> -VAW]	<i>army, war, or warfare</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #6635 BDB #838
ʾăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced uh-SHER]	<i>that, which, when, who, whom</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l <sup>e</sup> )	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
Shâ'ûwl (שׂוֹאֵל) [pronounced shaw-OOL]	which is transliterated <i>Saul</i> ; it means <i>asked for</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #7586 BDB #982

**Translation:** ...the commander of Saul's army,... There are an interesting group of cronies who surrounded Saul. There are a large number of men who essentially went along with what Saul asked them to do. At some point in time, when Saul said, "Let's saddle up and go after David," his men would saddle up and go after David. When he went to Nob and said, "Kill the priests," although only one man stood up to do this, the rest of his men restrained the priests so that he could kill them. One might say they fell further and further into Saul's darkness, one step at a time.

**Application:** Sin is like this. You get your foot wet, and then you think you might want to go in wading; and soon you are swimming in it. Most people who smoke their first marijuana cigarette don't necessarily see themselves as drug addicts or as those who will become addicted to drugs. They might even know others who are pretty far gone, yet they do not see themselves as going down that road. However, in some cases, this is the beginning of a long spiral downward. Those who do not see themselves as alcoholics take that first drink, and, as time proceeds, they develop an addiction, one which eventually takes over their lives. Now, quite obviously, this does not occur in every case, or even in a majority of the cases (it would be an interesting study to see which drugs, when used for the first time, result in a 1% addiction rate; a 5% addiction rate, etc.). There is an interaction of the drug, the soul, the body and the age at which this activity is undertaken. A 12 year old who chooses to get drunk has a much greater chance of becoming an alcoholic than a 30 year old who decides to get drunk for the first time. The earlier, it appears, that a person becomes involved with some sins (generally those which invoke a pleasure response), the more likely that person will become addicted, to some degree, to that sin. A child who has just reached puberty who engages in homosexual activity—particularly when such activity is not seen as an aberration—is much more likely to continue with this activity than an older person, say a man of 30, who has felt some temptation in this respect, but previously avoided acting on this temptation as he sees homosexual activity as an aberration.

**Application:** You may think that when there is a political push by homosexual to establish unions which includes the unhindered ability to adopt children as men who are simply born this way, who, just like a heterosexual couple would desire a family; however, you would be wrong. Whether those in the movement itself have nefarious intentions is debatable; whether the creature behind these movements, Satan, has such intentions is certain. A young man raised by homosexual males is much more likely to engage in homosexual activity than a young man raised by a heterosexual couple; and there is the increased likelihood of homosexual abuse by one of the *parents* (although this is not by any means a certainty in a homosexual union, the chances of a child being sexually abused is much greater with a homosexual couple than with a heterosexual couple). Those who politically push this agenda may or may not be aware and may or may not have nefarious intentions. Don't misunderstand me—it is

very possible for a man who engages in homosexual activity to have a normal affection for an adopted or a natural son; and it is very possible that such a man may desire the chance to father a child inside of a homosexual union. However, this agenda is ultimately pushed by Satan.

**Application:** One of the approaches which Satan takes is to immerse a person so totally in a sin or in a pantheon of sins so that that person will resist believing in Jesus Christ because his sins have become a part of his lifestyle. This is apart from the fact that, Jesus Christ died for his sins and that he does not have to renounce or turn away from his sins in order to be saved. Salvation comes from simply believing in Jesus Christ. However, simply because what they do regularly is sinful, they will resist salvation. For this reason, Satan wants homosexuality to be seen as mandated by birth, rather than a complex interaction of one's old sin nature and one's environment. For this reason, Satan wants to start children as early as possible taking drugs and drinking—he wants this to become second nature to the child.

Obviously, I have gone far afield here—but, this was all started by the fact that there were men who followed Saul and went along with what Saul said—they did not necessarily subscribe to Saul's entire agenda from the beginning, but they became further and further immersed in Saul's evil. Saul himself progressed in his illness; that is, he was not suddenly a raving psycho. His illness was progressive. At various points in time, Saul could be reasoned with. At other points, he had lost his mind and his way. Finally, God took Saul out of this world.

Logically, we should examine who is this Ishbosheth and what do we know about him. However, Ishbosheth is found only here in this and the following 2 chapters. He has been mentioned in 1Chron. 8 under a different name (Eshbaal). The reason for the names being different is covered in 1Chron. 8:33, but the short explanation is that some writers found the word *Baal* to be repugnant, so they used the term *shame* instead (*bosheth*). This occurs several times in Scripture and here does not give us any more information about Ishbosheth (that is, 1Chron. 8:33 simply gives us his bloodline, but nothing else).

It is interesting that we meet Abner here. Abner acted as Saul's primary general (along with Jonathan) for some time. Whether Abner realized that David was inevitably going to rule over Israel is unknown (although this seemed to become a widely known fact). Abner may also have seen no possible way of becoming a part of David's army, as he had probably been involved in several search and destroy David missions. His thinking may be that, David views him as a national criminal, a threat, and that David will look to execute Abner.<sup>19</sup> Abner may be simply devoted to Saul and his family, and he sets up Saul's son Ishbosheth as king as a natural consequence to the death of Saul.

Abner will attempt to set up Ishbosheth as the king over Israel (at least over eastern Israel). We might want to speculate on Abner's motivations:

### Why Abner is Motivated to Set up Ishbosheth as King Over Israel

1. It is unclear whether Abner saw David's rulership of Israel as inevitable. Many people apparently knew that David was anointed as king over Israel by Samuel, and David was quite popular because of his military exploits. However, whether that translated in many minds to David being king over Israel is unknown.
2. Abner, because he stood by Saul as Saul's primary general, possibly assumed that there was no possible way that he could have a good relationship with David. In fact, he might even assume that his relationship with David is automatically adversarial.
3. Abner could have been so devoted to Saul (after all, they are related), that setting up a family member as king over Israel was a natural response to the death of Saul.
4. There is the possibility that Abner was unaware of David assuming the responsibility conferred upon him by Samuel, and that he was simply doing what he felt was in the best interest of Israel—setting up a king so that there is an uninterrupted dynasty to provide stability for Israel. One could argue that Abner purposely set this rulership up in the far east so as to test the waters and gather strength, given David

<sup>19</sup> If this was Abner's thinking, then it will change by 2Sam. 3



## Why Abner is Motivated to Set up Ishbosheth as King Over Israel

establishing headquarters in Hebron; one could also argue that, with the Philistine invasion and defeat of Israel, that going east would be prudent and be unrelated to what David is doing. What Abner is doing here is probably simultaneous to what David is doing.

5. Abner may have had a desire for power and he may have set up Ishbosheth as a man that he could rule through. Ishbosheth would be popular and have the support of those who supported Saul. Abner may have felt that his influence over Ishbosheth would give him great power to function behind the scenes.
6. As we have discussed earlier, Israel is divided—even at this time, there is the northern and southern kingdoms (as well as eastern Israel). The tribes saw themselves much as the early states in the United States saw themselves. Our early states for at least a century saw themselves as being individually sovereign within an overall union. As long as the federal government did not tread on their own personal peculiarities, they were happy. When state's rights became an issue, then they would rebel (as in the Civil War). Abner might have conceded the southern portion of Israel to David, at least temporarily; but he saw eastern and northern Israel as loyal to Saul.

Sometimes Scripture tells us outright what the motivation is of this or that person; and, at other times, we are left to guess. I personally find this an area of interest, although my speculation has no real doctrinal impact (unless there is a clear conclusion which comes from the speculation).

Some take a very dim view of Abner's motivation. Clarke says that Abner was jealous of David's power.<sup>20</sup> Gill calls Abner blind and obstinate, saying that his own personal ambition was his motivation.<sup>21</sup> Matthew Henry says that Abner was motivated by pride and ambition, seeing that the only way to maintain his position of honor was to set up Ishbosheth as king.<sup>22</sup> Henry further points out that Abner chose the city of Mahanaim because it would be far from David and out of his periphery of interest. However, I personally think that the occupation of the Philistine had just as much to do with that choice.

In any case, God made David king and Abner made Ishbosheth king.<sup>23</sup>

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### 2Samuel 2:8c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lâqach (לָקַח) [pronounced law- KAHKH]	<i>to take, to take away, to take in marriage; to seize</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #3947 BDB #542
ʿêth (אֶת) [pronounced ayth]	generally untranslated; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
ʾIysh-Bôsheth (אִישׁ־בֹּשֶׁת) [pronounced eesh-BOH-sheath]	<i>man of Baal; transliterated Ishbosheth</i>	masculine singular proper noun	Strong's #378 BDB #36

<sup>20</sup> Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, 2Sam. 2:8.

<sup>21</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, 2Sam. 2:8.

<sup>22</sup> Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, 2Sam. 2:8–17.

<sup>23</sup> A point made by Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, 2Sam. 2:8–17.

## 2Samuel 2:8c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
bên (בֶּן) [pronounced <i>bane</i> ]	<i>son, descendant</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #1121 BDB #119
Shâ`ûwl (שׂוּל) [pronounced <i>shaw-OOL</i> ]	which is transliterated <i>Saul</i> ; it means <i>asked for</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #7586 BDB #982

**Translation:** ...had taken Ishbosheth, Saul's son,... All of you have heard of David, and a few of you have heard of Ishbosheth. You may rightfully assume that Ishbosheth is going to be a footnote in the history of David. This apparently is Saul's youngest son, one probably not involved in the war against the Philistines, and who is also called Eshbaal in 1Chron. 8:33 9:39. Either because this boy was too young, or because Saul did not want him in the war, Ishbosheth is never named as one of Saul's generals. When Saul realized that he was going to die, he probably told Abner to leave, find his son, and move to a more remote city, with the intent of setting him up as king there. Very few others take this point of view. Many suggest that, as the battle went against Israel, that Abner escaped with Ishbosheth.<sup>24</sup>

When I first read through this, I thought that Ishbosheth was a youth, being guided by Abner. However, it turns out that Ishbosheth is 40 years old (2Sam. 2:10), which makes the wording of this verse a little strange. It sounds as though Abner is pulling all the strings, making all of the decisions, and that Ishbosheth is going along with it. Even though this was probably Saul's idea in the first place, one made prior to his death, the verbiage here seems to indicate that Abner is doing the leading, which does not say much for Ishbosheth as a king.

## 2Samuel 2:8d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
ʿâbar (עָבַר) [pronounced <i>gaw<sup>b</sup>-VAHR</i> ]	<i>to cause to pass over, to cause to pass through, to bring [over, to]; to transmit, to send over; to pass by sin, to remit, to forgive</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect; with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #5674 BDB #716
Machānayim (מַחֲנַיִם) [pronounced <i>mahkh-uh-AH-yim</i> ]	<i>two camps; transliterated Mahanaim</i>	proper singular noun; location	Strong's #4266 BDB #334

**Translation:** ...and brought him over to Mahanaim. At this point in time, it might be a good idea to take a look at the **Doctrine of the City of Mahanaim**.

Smith's Bible Dictionary covers this topic in short order (this is only a portion of the entire doctrine):

<sup>24</sup> For instance, Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; 2Sam. 2:8–9.

## Smith Summarizes the Doctrine of the City of Mahanaim

Mahana'im. A town on the east of the Jordan. The name signifies two hosts or two camps, and was given to it by Jacob, because he there met "the angels of God" (Gen. 32:1–2).

We next meet with it, in the records of the conquest (Joshua 13:26, 30). It was within the territory of Gad (Joshua 21:38–39), and therefore, on the south side of the torrent Jabbok (Jamieson, Fausset and Brown place it on the north bank<sup>25</sup>).

The town with its "suburbs" was allotted to the service of the Merarite Levites (Joshua 21:39 1Chron. 6:80).

Mahanaim had become in the time of the monarchy a place of mark (2Sam. 2:8, 12). Interestingly enough, David will take refuge there when driven out of the western part of his kingdom by his son Absalom (2Sam. 17:24 1Kings 2:8).

Mahanaim was the seat of one of Solomon's commissariat officers (1Kings 4:14), and it is alluded to in the song which bears his name (SOS. 6:13). There is a place called Mahneh among the villages of the part of Jordan, through its exact position is not certain.

You may want to note the contrast between this city and Hebron. Hebron is a city with a great spiritual history; Mahanaim does have some spiritual history but it is limited (actually, this would be true of any city east of the Jordan).

This summary was taken from Dr. William Smith, *Smith's Bible Dictionary*; 1894; from e-Sword, topic: Mahanaim. I did a small amount of editing.

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However, there is one point which is ignored by the sources I checked, and that is the issue of the meaning of the name of Mahanaim and the circumstances as to why it was given that name. From this doctrine: As Jacob was leaving his Uncle Laban's ranch in Padan Aram, taking with him Laban's two daughters as his wives, Jacob traveled along the Jabbok River, which is perpendicular to the Jordan River, intersecting it about midway between the seas. His eventual destination was the land of Canaan. Along this way, Jacob met with angels of God and called the place where he was, *the camp of God*; and he gave it the name *Mahanaim*, which means *two camps*. It is unclear whether the name refers to *two angels*, to the *two camps* that Jacob divided his company into, or to his *two wives*. Fausset suggests that Jacob divided his company into two camps and that there were two groups of angels, one guarding each camp.<sup>26</sup> One might suggest that the key to the name is a conflict between two things: the human and the divine; the visible and the invisible agencies involved in Jacob's life. There would always be that constant conflict between Jacob's two wives. There might even be a connection here with Jacob about to meet his twin brother Esau. In any case, throughout the Biblical history of this city, again and again, we see a conflict between two things, often one good and one evil.

There are several reasons why Mahanaim is chosen is the new capitol city.

### Why Mahanaim is Chosen as the New Capitol City

1. Mahanaim is a major city with a rich religious history. It would have been almost meaningless to try to set up a capitol city in a small town, or in a place dominated by any heathen group.
2. The Philistines had defeated Israel in central Israel, essentially dividing Israel in half (which is what the Philistines did). However, there are only so many Philistine soldiers and so many Philistine outposts which could be established and secured. Mahanaim was across the river in Transjordan, far enough

<sup>25</sup> Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; from e-sword, 2Sam. 2:8–17.

<sup>26</sup> Andrew Robert Fausset, *Fausset's Bible Dictionary*; from e-Sword, topic: Mahanaim.

## Why Mahanaim is Chosen as the New Capitol City

away from Philistine domination.

3. David was apparently a very popular hero overall, and particularly in Judah. Therefore, going south to establish a kingship would have put Ishbosheth in opposition to David, where David's popularity would probably win out.
4. Saul had a clear loyal following in Jabesh Gildead, which would have been nearby and potentially acted as a buffer city between the Philistines and Ishbosheth.
5. It is my contention that Saul set all of this in motion to begin with, and the city was very possibly his choice.

Although this is primarily conjecture, it is logical conjecture nonetheless.

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**And so he caused him to reign unto the Gilead and unto the Ashurite [*Asherite, Geshurite?*] and unto Jezreel and upon Ephraim and upon Benjamin and upon Israel, all him.** 2Samuel 2:9

**And Abner [lit., *he*] made him reign even to Gilead, to the Ashurite [or, *Asherite*; possibly *Geshurite*], and to Jezreel; and over Ephraim, Benjamin and all Israel.**

**And Abner made Ishbosheth king as far as Gilead, Asher and Jezreel; over Ephraim, Benjamin and all Israel.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

### Ancient texts:

Latin Vulgate	And made him king over Galaad, and over Gessuri, and over Jezrahel, and over Ephraim, and over Benjamin, and over all Israel.
Masoretic Text	And so he caused him to reign unto the Gilead and unto the Ashurite and unto Jezreel and upon Ephraim and upon Benjamin and upon Israel, all him.
Peshitta	And made him king over Gilead and over Geshur and over Jezreel and over Ephraim and over Benjamin and over all Israel.
Septuagint	...and made [Observe the active use of <i>ebasileusen</i> (ἐβασίλευσεν), common in the LXX] him king over the land of Galaad, and over Thasiri, and over Jezrael, and over Ephraim, and over Benjamin, and over all Israel.

Significant differences: Instead of *Ashurite*, as we find in the MT, we find *Geshur* in the Syriac and Latin; and enigmatic *Thasiri* in the Greek.

### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	...and made him king of Israel, including the areas of Gilead, Asher, Jezreel, Ephraim, and Benjamin.
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### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

<i>God's Word</i> <sup>TM</sup>	Abner made him king of Gilead, Asher, Jezreel, Ephraim, and Benjamin, that is, all Israel.
HCSB	He made him king over Gilead, Asher, Jezreel, Ephraim, Benjamin--over all Israel.

### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

ESV ...and he made him king over Gilead and the Ashurites and Jezreel and Ephraim and Benjamin and all Israel.  
 Young's Updated LT ...and causes him to reign over Gilead, and over the Ashurite, and over Jezreel, and over Ephraim, and over Benjamin, and over Israel—all of it.

Once and awhile there is a problem with the most literal of texts, and we have such a problem here. In almost every literal translation, it appears as though we have the same preposition (*over*) found 6 times. Even though a majority of the good translations do this (possibly all of them?), they are wrong, and they confuse the issue. We have 3 boundaries named and then 3 groups of people over whom Ishbosheth has authority.

**The gist of this verse?** Abner sets up Ishbosheth as the ruler of eastern and central Israel.

2Samuel 2:9a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced wah]	and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
mâlak <sup>e</sup> (מָלַךְ) [pronounced maw-LAHK <sup>e</sup> ]	to make king, to cause to reign, to cause to rule over	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect; with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #4427 BDB #573
ʿel (עַל) [pronounced el]	unto; into, among, in; toward, to, against; concerning, regarding; besides, together with; as to, in respect to; because of; according to	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied); expanded meanings given	Strong's #413 BDB #39

There are two basic sets of meanings for ʿel:

(1) ʿel acts as a preposition which signifies, in general, *to tend to anything, to verge to or towards any place*, whether it is reached and even entered or not, whether it be by motion or turning and direction of the body or of the mind, turning to anything in thought.<sup>27</sup> Under this general heading, we have nine uses: ❶ Of motion to a place, or *to, towards*. Under this heading, ʿel is also used as a particle of giving or selling. ❷ ʿEl is used for the *turning* or the *direction* to anything, and can be used of the mind as well as the body. ❸ The motion or turning can be hostile, and mean *against*. ❹ ʿEl is used when one reaches a terminus or a mark; *even to*. Under this heading, we have two additional applications (a) the use of ʿel in measure, e.g. *even to* the length of a cubit; (b) *even out of*, as being removed out of something like a thorn hedges which go around a field (Job 5:5). ❺ This preposition is used when the limit is entered into, and is rendered *in*. When it is used of a number or multitude into which one enters, it may be rendered *among*. ❻ ʿEl is used in adding or super-adding, and rendered *besides, together with, besides these*. ❼ ʿEl is used regarding anything, having respect or regard to anything, hence (a) *as to, in respect to, because of*; and (b) *concerning* (after verbs of speaking, narrating or telling). ❽ Metaphorically, ʿel can be used as expressive of rule or standard and be rendered *according to*. Finally, ❾ when ʿel is prefixed to prepositions which denote rest in a place, it give them the signification of motion or direction *to or towards* a place.

What is ignored in many translations is, we find this particular preposition 3 times, and then we find another preposition 3 times. They are not identical or interchangeable prepositions.

<sup>27</sup> Most of this is quoted or paraphrased from H. W. F. Gesenius, *Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament*; ©1979 by Baker Books; .p. 46–47.

## 2Samuel 2:9a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
Gil <sup>e</sup> ʿād (גִּלְעָד) [pronounced gil-GAWD].	transliterated <i>Gilead</i>	masculine proper noun with the definite article	Strong's #1568 BDB #166

**Translation:** **And Abner** [lit., *he*] **made him reign even to Gilead,...** Gilead is in the east. You will recall the several references to Jabesh-gilead; this is the city which Saul liberated and which owed Saul and his family for this. Gilead is the general territory where Jabesh-gilead is located. Generally speaking, this is the area which is east of the Jordan and falls between the two seas which connect the Jordan River.

The time frame here is not really discussed. Since we find this in 2Sam. 2, and since that is where we find David going into Hebron and becoming king over Judah, it is easy to assume that these are simultaneous events, both taking place during the same month, for instance. However, that does not appear to be the case, as when these two events are matched in time, David will have been king over Hebron for 7½ years (2Sam. 5:5), whereas Ishbosheth will reign in eastern and northern Israel for a period of 2 years (2Sam. 2:10). This means that it must have taken Abner and Ishbosheth about 5 years to set everything in motion. First of all, the Philistines controlled that general area, and would have made it difficult for any autonomy in Israel. Whereas, David lived in an area not immediately threatened by the Philistines; this is not the case for Abner and Ishbosheth. Although they are living in a city not yet conquered by the Philistines, the Philistines live nearby and probably exert a great deal of influence. Therefore, Ishbosheth's grab for power cannot be overt; messengers might have to be sent throughout Israel surreptitiously in order to garner support. This is a process which takes quite a lot more time than it does for David.

Now, if David was recording this history, then it would be logical that he would tell about the circumstances leading to his move to Hebron, and including that move; and then to mention what is happening in the east, which would have been roughly coterminous (these events occurring within a few years of one another).

## 2Samuel 2:9b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that, so that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʿel (עַל) [pronounced <i>e</i> ]	<i>unto; into, among, in; toward, to; against; concerning, regarding; besides, together with; as to</i>	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)	Strong's #413 BDB #39
See the sets of meanings for ʿel above.			
ʿĂshûwrîy (אֲשׁוּרִי) [pronounced <i>uhsh-oo-REE</i> ]	possibly <i>happy</i> ; transliterated <i>Ashurite</i>	gentilic singular adjective	Strong's #805 BDB #79
Possibly equivalent to Strong's #843 BDB #81 (Judges 1:32).			
There are two possible alternate readings here:			
G <sup>e</sup> shûwrîy (גִּשׁוּרִי) [pronounced <i>g<sup>e</sup>h-shoo-REE</i> ]	<i>bridges, land of bridges; is transliterated Geshurite</i>	gentilic adjective	Strong's #1651 BDB #177

## 2Samuel 2:9b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
The Arabic, Syriac, and Vulgate versions have the <i>Geshurites</i> here instead; or...			
ʾĂshêrîy (אֲשֵׁרִי) [pronounced <i>aw-shay-REE</i> ]	<i>happy</i> ; transliterated <i>Asherite</i>	gentilic adjective with the definite article	Strong's #843 BDB #81
This reading would indicate a scribal error.			

**Translation:** ...to the Ashurite [or, *Asherite*; possibly *Geshurite*],... We have problems here with the text. As mentioned above, we are one letter away from this reading *Asherite* instead (a tribe in the far northwest); and this could read *Geshurite* as well (which could be seen more as a territory over which Israel ruled). *Geshurite* is found in the Arabic, Syriac and Vulgate.

Given that there are 3 possible readings here, we may want to discuss each one. However, so that there is no confusion, the Hebrew text here does read *Ashurite*.

## Ashurite, Geshurite or Asherite?

Possible Reading	Commentary
<b>Ashurite</b>	The Ashurites are the Assyrians, who live in Assyria, which is essentially the place that Abraham left (this is now modern Iraq). Although there could possibly be a small contingent of Assyrians living in eastern Israel over whom Ishbosheth might rule, this does seem unlikely. However, this is the word that we find in the Hebrew. There are some Arabic sons of Abraham (see Gen. 25:1–3) who have this name. This could be the people that we are talking about as well, who just happen to have the same name as the Assyrians (which is not generally found as a gentilic adjective).
<b>Geshurite</b>	Geshur is a small principality of Syrian, northeast of Bashan. This does place us in the correct general area, and that Ishbosheth reigned over this area is a reasonable possibility. The Geshurites are a tribe of people which are not necessarily sympathetic to Israel, so, even though they are in a reasonable geographical area, these people tend to be listed as heathen that Israel had not quite yet expelled (Deut. 3:14 Joshua 13:13). Textually, this is the second most likely reading; but historically, it does not really seem to fit.
<b>Asherite</b>	There is more than a vowel point difference here, although not much more. It is very possible that these two gentilic adjectives are homonyms (or very nearly so), so that a scribe could legitimately say this word to himself, and write down <i>Ashurite</i> rather than <i>Asherite</i> . Asher is the tribe of Israel on the northern coast of the Mediterranean. They are far away enough from the war between the Philistines and the Israelites to remain unconquered. There is a fair amount of land in between where Ishbosheth is and the tribe of Asher; that does not mean that his rulership could not be recognized in Asher.

The latter two readings geographically fit. Furthermore, given the preposition *unto*, this is not a list of those over whom Ishbosheth reigned, but how far his kingdom extended. Therefore, saying that his reign extended as far as Asher, this makes perfect sense, as this takes us as far northwest as we can go.

Understanding Geshurite as not a people over whom Ishbosheth reigned, but that his kingdom extended up to the border of the Geshurites, is also a very reasonable understanding (however, we would have really expected to read *unto the border of the Geshurite*). The first 3 areas named are more like districts or areas, rather than over a specific people.

The primary argument against this reading *Geshurite* is this was a people that Israel had not conquered yet (see Joshua 13:13 2Sam. 3:3). However, this does not mean that Ishbosheth conquered this people; it simply means that this is how far his boundaries went. They went as far as the Geshurite but did not necessarily include the Geshurites.

A little further down, and we will see a [map of this general area](#), and look at the boundaries that way.

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### 2Samuel 2:9c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that, so that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʿel (עַל) [pronounced el]	<i>unto; into, among, in; toward, to; against; concerning, regarding; besides, together with; as to</i>	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)	Strong's #413 BDB #39
See the sets of meanings for ʿel above.			
Yiz <sup>e</sup> r <sup>e</sup> ʿêl (יִזְרְעֵל) [pronounced yiz <sup>e</sup> -r <sup>e</sup> -GAIL]	<i>God will sow; that which God planted; it is transliterated Jezreel</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #3157 BDB #283

**Translation:** ...and to Jezreel;... Jezreel is up in Issachar. The particular preposition used here indicates that his authority would extend as far as Jezreel. It is interesting that Jezreel is mentioned here. Recall that this is the general area of the battle between Saul's Israeli forces and the Philistines (1Sam. 29:1). We have earlier talked about a time frame. The Philistines conquered central Israel, that area in particular, and then began to live in the cities in that general area. This means that, Ishbosheth did not assume rule over that area a few months later—that would have been inconsistent with the history that we have so far. However, there are just so many Philistines to go around; and what happened in 5 years time is unknown to us. Did the Philistines withdraw? Did their occupation become more amicable? Did Ishbosheth gain some control over the Jews in this area surreptitiously? That Ishbosheth could claim any sort of control over this area a few months after the Philistine victory makes little or no sense. That he had some kind of control or authority 5 years later makes a lot more sense.

Jezreel is a the great plain which goes along the borders of Zebulun, Issachar, and Naphtali, and included these tribes. The territory over which Ishbosheth ruled included this area to some extent (recall that since the Philistines fought Israel here, that many of the cities would be under Philistine control at this time).

Unfortunately, many translations pretty much ignore the prepositions found in this verse, and they are viewed as interchangeable or equivalent. The first three prepositions are *unto* and probably refer to the boundaries of the territory over which Ishbosheth ruled. The next three prepositions indicate the tribes over which Ishbosheth ruled.



There are three possible options for the second proper noun in this list of three, so let's explore that further on a map:

### The Area over which Ishbosheth Ruled

The first option is the least likely—that Ishbosheth rules as far as Ashur (Assyria). This is far, far to the east and would include a huge expanse of land over which Israel has never had control.

The second possibility is that this is *Geshurite*. As you can see, if the border is Geshur (in the north), Gilead (toward the east) and Jezreel (toward the west), we have a moderate sized, contiguous area. This seems to be the most reasonable of the 3 options.

Our other option is going as far west as Jezreel and northwest as Asher (which is below Phœnicia along the Mediterranean Sea). This makes a little less sense, as we are listing, essentially, two western borders (although one could be seen as a southwestern border and the other as northern western).



This map came from <http://www.anova.org/sev/atlas/htm/038.htm>

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What almost every translator and commentator does is ignore the different sets of prepositions here, and, for that reason, they struggle with Ishbosheth ruling *over* Jezreel and Asher (Geshur?). Gordon, for instance, says<sup>28</sup> that Jezreel was under Philistine control (1Sam. 31:7), so he suggests that this might be an area over which Ishbosheth *claimed* authority, but, in reality, had none. Whether we speak of Asher or Geshur, there are problems with Ishbosheth ruling over those areas as well (Geshur had its own king at this time—2Sam. 3:3). However, we are not really dealing here with what Ishbosheth *claims* to rule over; this is stated as an unequivocal fact. On the other hand, if this is the extent of Ishbosheth's kingdom—it goes out as far as Jezreel and Geshur—then the problems disappear. Furthermore, this is the sense of the preposition used; and changed to a different preposition for the remainder of this verse stands out in the Hebrew, but is not even referenced in most English translations. So, if you look to the English and try to interpret this verse, you will run into problems. If you interpret this verse as per the Hebrew, then the problems disappear. So that you can see what I am talking about, as I have exegeted this verse in pieces throughout, it looks like this: **And Abner [lit., he] made him reign even to Gilead, to the Ashurite [or, Asherite; possibly Geshurite], and to Jezreel; and over Ephraim, Benjamin and all Israel.** Abner makes Ishbosheth rule *unto* (or, *as far as*) Gilead, Geshur and Jezreel; Abner makes Ishbosheth rule *over* Ephraim, Benjamin and all Israel. By simply rendering these 2 prepositions as they should be rendered, all of the problems cited by Gordon and others are no longer problems.

Most of the time, you can go to certain translations of Scripture (NASB, NKJV) and rest assured that you are getting a very accurate rendering of the text. However, in this case, the English raises false issues, which the original Hebrew solves. There are many reasons that you need a good pastor teacher in order to grow; this is just one of many. Therefore, let me list just some of...

<sup>28</sup> Robert Gordon, *I & II Samuel A Commentary*; Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI; ©1986; p. 213.

## The Reasons You Need a Pastor Teacher

1. People don't like to be under the authority of someone else, and resent having a pastor teacher over them. However, every believer in Jesus Christ needs to be authority-oriented. There is not one verse in the Bible which tells you to go out and grow spiritually and then execute the spiritual life on your own.
2. God has given the gift of pastor teacher to certain men. If God has given certain men this gift, then who are we to say, "No, God; thanks anyway, but I have a much better system for my own spiritual maturity." That is complete and total arrogance, and shows a complete lack of authority-orientation.
3. A pastor is going to know the original languages (ideally speaking) and can give you a better understanding of God's Word through these languages, as well as clear up many problem passages (e.g., this one).
4. A pastor generally has a working knowledge of ancient history, and can give us a great many details which help to explain this or that passage.
5. A pastor has an overall view of theology, and can present Scripture from this organized approach. As believers, we often find things which some believers do, and, if these things seem to be spiritual, then we copy them. We may violate every mandate that we have ever read, but then we attempt to copy this or that action, no matter what the dispensation. An easy example here is polygamy—many of the Old Testament had several wives—this does not make polygamy Biblical, spiritual or advisable. In fact, in most places, polygamy is illegal. Therefore, when you have more than one wife, you are breaking the law of the land, which puts you into direct conflict with much of Scripture. A good pastor can distinguish for you, what is a mandate; and which ones we are subject to. Now, there are pastors who go overboard on this or that approach in Scripture; these are pastors to be avoided.
6. Despite the fact that so many pastor teachers tell you to engage in your own Bible study and to set up home Bible studies, and to read your Bible every night on your own—this simply tells you that this guy is not your pastor teacher and that he expects you to do his job for him. Find another pastor.

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Related to these points is...

## Pastor Teachers You Should Avoid

1. Any pastor who expects you to grow spiritually by reading your Bible.
2. Any pastor teacher who tries to run your life. You do not grow spiritually by having someone stand over you and tell you what to do. In fact, any church where you are made to do the right thing through social pressure is wrong. You do the right thing by being filled with the Holy Spirit and believing in God's Word, which sets the standards.
3. If a pastor teacher does not teach how to get in and out of fellowship, then you need to find another church; this is one of the most fundamental concepts of the spiritual life.
4. Any pastor who teaches that salvation requires something more than faith in Jesus Christ.
5. Any pastor who teaches that you can lose your salvation.
6. Any person who was saved one day, and, a month or a year later, starts *preaching the Word*. A year is not near enough time for a pastor to develop any sort of spiritual growth, and certainly not enough time to accumulate enough doctrine to teach a congregation. Now, if such a person stands up and gives a testimony after a month or a year—that is fine, as long as it is not overdone.
7. A pastor who over-emphasizes minor things in Scripture: e.g., the virgin Mary, healings, tongues, exorcisms, Sabbath observance, giving, the wrongness of other faiths, door to door evangelism, or even the Holy Spirit. Recall that, **when He, the Holy Spirit, comes, He will not speak of Himself**. There are some things mentioned often in Scripture, and a pastor should concentrate on those things as well. However, there are a lot of minor things mentioned in Scripture which too many pastors emphasize. By the way, the list of things I gave here does not mean that the pastor will never touch on these subjects; however, for instance, if people regularly speak in tongues in your church, then you are in the wrong church.

There are a few basics we should expect in a church: Jesus Christ should be extolled as the only Savior, our only way to God; fellowship is restored not by feelings or by works, but by naming your personal sins to God; and that God left us His Word so that we could grow spiritually by it.

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Now I realize that I have gone pretty far off on a tangent here; however this tangent was inspired by the fact that, if you simply read this in your Bible, you would never have figured out that there are two sets of different prepositions here, and that in each set, we have something different being said. A pastor who knows Hebrew would point this out; a pastor who is speaking from his heart would miss this (in fact, he probably would not even teach this passage). The second set of prepositions comes up next:

### 2Samuel 2:9d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that, so that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʿal (עַל) [pronounced <i>gahl</i> ]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
Note the change in the preposition.			
ʿEph <sup>e</sup> rayim (אֶפְרַיִם) [pronounced <i>ef-RAH-yim</i> ]	<i>to bear fruit, to be fruitful; transliterated Ephraim</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #669 BDB #68

**Translation: ...and over Ephraim,...** The Philistines struck a bit south of Ephraim; Ephraim would be the beginning of the northern kingdom. Note that the preposition changed here. We no longer have the preposition *unto* but *over*. Too many translations treat this as though we have a listing here of 6 different areas over which Ishbosheth exerted his authority (e.g., ESV, LTHB, NASB, NKJV, WEB, Young's LT). However, what we actually have here are 3 boundaries which describe the extent of Ishbosheth's reign and 3 groups of people over whom Ishbosheth ruled. The prepositions used are not the same, as the English translations would have you think.

### 2Samuel 2:9e

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that, so that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʿal (עַל) [pronounced <i>gahl</i> ]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
Bin <sup>e</sup> yâmîyn (בִּנְיָמִין) [pronounced <i>bin-yaw-MEEN</i> ]	transliterated <i>Benjamin</i> , it means <i>son of [my] right hand</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #1144 BDB #122
Spelled here Bin <sup>e</sup> yâmîn (בִּנְיָמִין) [pronounced <i>bin-yaw-MIN</i> ].			

**Translation: ...Benjamin...** The Philistines struck primarily in the territory of Benjamin and soundly defeated Israel. However, this does not mean that they completely destroyed the population of Israel or that they completely

controlled that particular area. The Philistines had decimated Saul's army; however, there were still Israeli settlements and cities throughout the territory of Benjamin, which was, essentially the border between northern and southern Israel.

## 2Samuel 2:9f

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
ʿal (עַל) [pronounced <i>gahl</i> ]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
Yisʿrâʾêl (יִשְׂרָאֵל) [pronounced <i>yis-raw-ALE</i> ]	transliterated <i>Israel</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #3478 BDB #975
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i> ]; also kol (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kol</i> ]	<i>all, all things, the whole, totality, the entirety, everything</i>	masculine singular noun without the definite article; with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #3605 BDB #481

**Translation: ...and all Israel.** When we have previously seen the term *Israel*, it referred to the northern and southern kingdoms; however, in this situation, *Israel* refers to the northern (and eastern) portion of Israel. As mentioned previously, the Philistines had a tendency to attack Israel from the center and work out from there, which encouraged a split in Israel.

Several commentators (e.g., Barnes and Gill<sup>29</sup>) seem to think that there was some kind of a military campaign by Abner in order to take control of these areas and these tribes; however, there is nothing in this context to indicate this. Given how eager Israel was to have a king prior to Saul, it is not much of a stretch to think that these tribes would want to have Ishbosheth, Saul's son, over them. They have been invaded by the Philistines; there is no reason to assume that there would be any reticence on their part in this regard. The freewill actions of all the tribes when they recognize David as their king supports the point I am making here. On the other hand, there may have been some fighting between Abner and the Philistines; it is not recorded, and I don't think that occurred, but I don't want to rule out that possibility.

**A son of 40 years Ishbosheth, a son of Saul, in his reign over Israel and two years he reigned; but a house of Judah were after David.**

2Samuel  
2:10

**Ishbosheth, Saul's son, [was] 40 years old [lit., a son of 40 years] when he reigned over Israel—and he reigned two years; but the house of Judah followed [lit., were after] David.**

**Saul's son, Ishbosheth, was 40 years old when he began to rule over Israel; he ruled for 2 years; however, the house of Judah followed David.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

### Ancient texts:

<sup>29</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, 2Sam. 2:9. And Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, 2Sam. 2:9.

Latin Vulgate	Isboeth the son of Saul was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and he reigned two years; and only the house of Juda followed David.
Masoretic Text	A son of 40 years Ishbosheth, a son of Saul, in his reign over Israel and two years he reigned; but a house of Judah were after David.
Septuagint	Jebosthe, Saul's son was forty years old, when he reigned over Israel; and he reigned two years, but not over the house of Juda, who followed David.

Significant differences: No significant differences; the Greek translation appears to do some very minor paraphrasing. The Latin adds the adverb *only*.

#### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	Ishbosheth was forty years old at the time, and he ruled for two years. But the tribe of Judah made David their king...
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#### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

HCSB	Saul's son Ish-bosheth was 40 years old when he began his reign over Israel; he ruled for two years. The house of Judah, however, followed David.
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#### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

WEB	Ishbosheth, Saul's son, was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and he reigned two years. But the house of Judah followed David.
Young's Updated LT	A son of forty years, is Ish-Boshes son of Saul, in his reigning over Israel, and two years he has reigned, only the house of Judah have been after David.

**The gist of this verse?** Ishbosheth is 40 when he begins to rule in northern and eastern Israel; he maintains this position for approximately 2 years. .

### 2Samuel 2:10a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
bên (בֶּן) [pronounced <i>bane</i> ]	<i>son, descendant</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #1121 BDB #119
אַרְבָּעִים (אַרְבָּעִים) [pronounced <i>ar<sup>e</sup>-BAW-GEEM</i> ]	<i>forty</i>	undecidable plural noun	Strong's #705 BDB #917
שָׁנָה (שָׁנָה) [pronounced <i>shaw-NAW</i> ]	<i>year</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #8141 BDB #1040.
אִישׁ-בֹּשֶׁת (אִישׁ-בֹּשֶׁת) [pronounced <i>eesh-BOH-sheath</i> ]	<i>man of Baal; transliterated Ishbosheth</i>	masculine singular proper noun	Strong's #378 BDB #36
bên (בֶּן) [pronounced <i>bane</i> ]	<i>son, descendant</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #1121 BDB #119

## 2Samuel 2:10a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
Shâ`ûwl (שׂוּל) [pronounced <i>shaw-OOL</i> ]	which is transliterated <i>Saul</i> ; it means <i>asked for</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #7586 BDB #982
b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b<sup>eh</sup></i> ]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
When verbs in the infinitive construct are preceded by the bêyth preposition, b <sup>e</sup> acts as a temporal conjunction; that is, <i>in their being created</i> = <i>when they were created</i> (Gen. 2:4); <i>in their being in the field</i> = <i>when they were in the field</i> (Gen. 4:8). <sup>30</sup>			
mâlak <sup>e</sup> (מָלַךְ) [pronounced <i>maw-LAHK<sup>e</sup></i> ]	<i>to reign, to become king or queen</i>	Qal infinitive construct with a 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #4427 BDB #573
al (עַל) [pronounced <i>gahl</i> ]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
Yis <sup>e</sup> râ`êl (יִשְׂרָאֵל) [pronounced <i>yis-raw-ALE</i> ]	transliterated <i>Israel</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #3478 BDB #975

**Translation:** *Ishbosheth, Saul's son, [was] 40 years old [lit., a son of 40 years] when he reigned over Israel...* We have previously discussed the issue of Ishbosheth and Abner both being alive at this time after a war where Saul and 3 of his sons died. One explanation is, this was on Saul's orders. Saul returned from Endor, knowing he was going to die, and he told Abner to take Ishbosheth and to cross over the Jordan into safer territory before the battle broke out. You may object, *this is against God's will; God told Saul that he and his dynasty was finished!* However, just because God makes His will known, does not mean that we are going to go along with it. Believers every day, including myself, know God's will, and yet go against it. There is nothing unusual about that. Saul, on the one hand, may have been convinced that he was going to die; on the other hand, it is not out of the question for him to try to maintain his dynasty with his youngest son as the next king. Bear in mind, this is pure conjecture on my part—I am just offering some back story which could help to explain the events which transpire here.

Ishbosheth's age is interesting. He is approximately David's age. However, Jonathan and David became close friends; he and David did not. We know nothing about the interactions between Ishbosheth and David as young men. Although we may reasonably assume that they served together in Saul's army (and this is assuming that Ishbosheth served under his father), we know nothing more than that.

## 2Samuel 2:10b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וְ) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that, so that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251

<sup>30</sup> *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew-English Lexicon*; Hendrickson, ©1979, pp. 90–91.

## 2Samuel 2:10b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
sh <sup>e</sup> tayîm (שְׁתַּיִם) [pronounced sh <sup>e</sup> TAH-yim]	<i>two, a second [time]; a repetition, a repeating</i>	feminine numeral substantive	Strong's #8147 BDB #1040
Although there are a number of Kennicott and Derossi manuscripts which read differently here, all ancient manuscripts read <i>two</i> . That Ishbosheth reigns for 2 years and David for 7½, many have sought to smooth this out in a number of ways. It is not inconceivable that some later manuscripts reflect this.			
shânâh (שָׁנָה) [pronounced shaw-NAW]	<i>year</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #8141 BDB #1040
mâlak <sup>e</sup> (מָלַךְ) [pronounced maw-LAHK <sup>e</sup> ]	<i>to reign, to become king or queen</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect; pausal form	Strong's #4427 BDB #573

**Translation:** ...—and he reigned two years;... This is interesting that Ishbosheth only reigned for 2 years over northern and eastern Israel, but that David will be king over Judah for 7½ years (v. 11). We will discuss that further when we come to v. 11.

When Saul's age and length of rule was given before (1Sam. 13:1), you may recall that there were some serious problems with the text. However, here we have a number, and we can sort some things out.

## How the Age of Ishbosheth Impacts other Numbers in Scripture

Person (s)	Their Relative Ages and Logical Conjectures
Ishbosheth:	His father, King Saul, had died 5½ years previous to Ishbosheth ruling over northern and eastern Israel. Ishbosheth was 40 years old when he begins to rule and he rules for 2 years (2Sam. 2:10).
King Saul	Reigned over Israel for about 40 years (Acts 13:21).
David	David is 30 years old when he begins to rule and he will reign for 40 years (2Sam. 5:4). He reigns for 7½ years from Hebron over Judah and then for 33 years from Jerusalem over all Israel (2Sam. 2:11 5:5).
David and Ishbosheth	Therefore, from Saul's death to the time when Ishbosheth actually ascends to the throne, approximately 5 years transpire. Ishbosheth is therefore 35 when David begins to rule in Jerusalem, and David is 5 years younger than he.
David and Jonathan	Given that Jonathan is the eldest of 4 children, he is at least 5 years older than David (that would be a reasonable low end figure). Jonathan is roughly 40 years old at his death; possibly older.
Saul and his children	Since Saul rules for approximately 40 years, this means that Ishbosheth was born to him after he had ruled for 5 years. We do not know about Saul's other children. His youngest child, Ishbosheth, is 35 at Saul's death. He is obviously not too young to serve under Saul in the military; however, he and Abner both escape to eastern Israel, even though Saul and his other sons are killed. My theory is, this involved some pre-planning; and possibly planning which took place the morning that the Philistines and Israel began their battle.

## How the Age of Ishbosheth Impacts other Numbers in Scripture

Person (s)	Their Relative Ages and Logical Conjectures
Saul and Jonathan	A portion of Saul's kingship is never covered historically (it would fall between 1Sam. 13:1 and 13:2). There is a brief overview given in 1Sam. 14:47. Jonathan may have been as young as, say, 15 or 16, when he is mentioned as a military commander in 1Sam. 13:2. His younger brothers are not mentioned in connection with the military at this time, making them, perhaps, too young to be associated with the military (this is conjecture, mind you). In 1Sam. 12, Saul is confirmed as king; in 1Sam. 13, we have Saul's (first?) great failure. We may reasonably suppose that some time had passed between chapters 12 and 13, the amount of time we could only guess at—say, 10–20 years.
Samuel and David	Samuel anoints David king over Israel when David is so young, his father Jesse does not even consider him as someone that he should even introduce to Samuel. There is reason to suppose that David is the <i>runt of the litter</i> and he may be as young as 8 or 9, and probably no older than 13 or 14 at this time (this is an educated guess).
David and Saul	David came to Saul as a musician and singer to soothe Saul's attacks—I would make David out to be about 12–16 at this time.
David and Goliath	David's 3 oldest brothers were in Saul's army when they faced Goliath in 1Sam. 17. This suggests that David and the 3 or 4 intervening brothers are possibly too young to go to war (which suggests that they are anywhere between 10–20). However, this is an assumption that they are too young to go to war, as David, when he faces Goliath, is young; but he had fought a lion and a bear successfully by that time (1Sam. 17:33–37). Given that Saul calls David <i>a youth</i> , I would have to guess that David is between 14–16.
David and Jonathan	David and Jonathan are probably 10–20 years apart in age. However, what knits them together is Bible doctrine in their souls. Both David and Jonathan show themselves to be men of God, oriented to God's workings in our lives (see 1Sam. 14:6 17:45–47).

It is surprising that a few numbers pulls everything together for us. In this case, the ages of Ishbosheth and David.

I have made the assumption that, 5 years pass between the time of Saul's death and the installation of Ishbosheth as king over Israel. The other assumption, that Ishbosheth dies, 5 years pass, and then David becomes king over all Israel, is less likely, but a possibility. The truth may actually be somewhere in the middle, where 3 or 4 years pass after Saul dies and Ishbosheth is named king; and 2 or 3 years pass after the death of Ishbosheth before David assumes control over all Israel. This means that David and Ishbosheth could very nearly be the same age.<sup>31</sup>

Clarke<sup>32</sup> offers an even less likely theory that, Ishbosheth reigns for 2 years, and then Abner rules for 5 years after that (i.e., Ishbosheth was king in name only during those final 5 years).

There are even other theories, but much weirder and less likely than those presented so far. Some may be found in Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; 2Sam. 2:10–11. I will list some of these theories in [2Sam. 2:11](#).

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<sup>31</sup> To be honest with you, I had not really considered this possibility, and had to read Albert Barnes' explanation several times to get the difference. See Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, 2Sam. 2:10.

<sup>32</sup> Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, 2Sam. 2:10. Also, realize, that some of these commentators, like myself, offer up a variety of theories, to which they may or may not hold.



## 2Samuel 2:10c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾak <sup>e</sup> (אָכַ) [pronounced <i>ahk<sup>e</sup></i> ]	<i>surely, certainly, no doubt, only, but; only now, just now, only this once; nothing but</i>	adverb of restriction, contrast, time, limitation, and exception. Also used as an affirmative particle	Strong's #389 BDB #36
The Latin inserts the adverb <i>only</i> at this point.			
bayith (בַּיִת) [pronounced <i>BAH-yith</i> ]	<i>house, household, habitation as well as inward</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #1004 BDB #108
Y <sup>e</sup> hūwdâh (יְהוּדָה) [pronounced <i>y<sup>e</sup>hoo-DAW</i> ]	possibly means <i>to praise, to be praised</i> ; and is transliterated <i>Judah</i>	masculine proper noun/location	Strong's #3063 BDB #397
hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced <i>haw-YAW</i> ]	<i>to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person plural, Qal perfect	Strong's #1961 BDB #224
ʾachârêy (אַחֲרָי) [pronounced <i>ah-kuh-RAY</i> ]	<i>hinder parts; behind, after; following; after that, afterwards</i>	preposition; plural form	Strong's #310 BDB #29
Dâvid (דָּוִד); also Dâvîyd (דָּוִיִּד) [pronounced <i>daw-VEED</i> ]	<i>beloved</i> and is transliterated <i>David</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #1732 BDB #187

**Translation:** ...but the house of Judah followed [lit., were after] David. For many years while under pursuit, David functioned in southern Canaan, in the land of Judah. Despite the difficult circumstances that David found himself in, he was observed often by the people of Judah. They learned to trust him and recognized that he was an honorable man. Although David had a military career throughout Israel, and even though there were songs extolling his exploits, there was apparently an extended period of time when David was first in Judah and then just outside of Judah in Philistine controlled territory. In other words, the time frame where Saul was actively pursuing David was relatively long—possibly up to 10 years. Therefore, the northern kingdom would have had little or no contact with David over that period of time—while he was on the run from Saul, and they would be less inclined to suddenly accept him as their king. On the other hand, Saul has ruled over all Israel for about 40 years and, for the most part, has been valiant and protective of Israel. Therefore, we would expect that northern and eastern Israel would be more disposed to follow someone in Saul's line.

**And so he is a number of the days when was David king in Hebron over a house of Judah: seven years and six months.**

2Samuel  
2:11

**And so it was [that] the number of days that David was the king in Hebron over the house of Judah [for] seven years and six months.**

**David ruled over the house of Judah from Hebron for 7½ years.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

#### Masoretic Text

And so he is a number of the days when was David king in Hebron over a house of Judah: seven years and six months.

Septuagint                      And the days which David reigned in Chebron over the house of Juda were seven years and six months.

Significant differences: No significant differences.

#### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV                                ...and he ruled from Hebron for seven and a half year.

#### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

HCSB                                The length of time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months.

#### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

ESV                                    And the time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months.

Young's Updated LT              And the number of the days that David has been king in Hebron, over the house of Judah, is seven years and six months.

The gist of this verse?            The time that David ruled in Hebron over Judah was 7½ years.

### 2Samuel 2:11

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced <i>haw-YAW</i> ]	<i>to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #1961 BDB #224
miç <sup>o</sup> phâr (מִסְפָּר) [pronounced <i>mis<sup>o</sup>-FAWR</i> ]	<i>number, counted, numerical total; a recounting, a narration</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #4557 BDB #708
yâmîym (יָמַיִם) [pronounced <i>yaw-MEEM</i> ]	<i>days, a set of days; time of life, lifetime; a specific time period, a year</i>	masculine plural noun with the definite article	Strong's #3117 BDB #398
ʾăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>uh-SHER</i> ]	<i>that, which, when, who, whom</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced <i>haw-YAW</i> ]	<i>to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #1961 BDB #224
Dâvid (דָּוִד); also Dâvîyd (דָּוִיִּד) [pronounced <i>daw-VEED</i> ]	<i>beloved and is transliterated David</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #1732 BDB #187
melek <sup>e</sup> (מֶלֶךְ) [pronounced <i>MEH-lek</i> ]	<i>king, ruler, prince</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #4428 BDB #572

## 2Samuel 2:11

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
b <sup>e</sup> (ב) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
Cheb <sup>e</sup> rōwn (חֶבְרוֹן) [pronounced khe <sup>b</sup> v-ROHN]	<i>association, league, joined; transliterated Hebron</i>	proper noun; location	Strong's #2275 BDB #289
ʿal (עַל) [pronounced ʿahl]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
bayith (בַּיִת) [pronounced BAH-yith]	<i>house, household, habitation as well as inward</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #1004 BDB #108
Y <sup>e</sup> hūwdāh (יְהוּדָה) [pronounced y <sup>e</sup> hoo-DAW]	possibly means <i>to praise, to be praised</i> ; and is transliterated <i>Judah</i>	masculine proper noun/location	Strong's #3063 BDB #397
sheba <sup>ʿ</sup> (שֶׁבַע) [pronounced she <sup>b</sup> -VAHG]	<i>seven</i>	numeral masculine noun	Strong's #7651 BDB #987
shânâh (שָׁנָה) [pronounced shaw-NAW]	<i>year</i>	feminine plural noun	Strong's #8141 BDB #1040
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
shishshâh (שֵׁשׁ) [pronounced shish-SHAW]	<i>six</i>	feminine form of numeral	Strong's #8337 BDB #995
chôdesh (חֹדֶשׁ) [pronounced KHOH-desh]	<i>new moon, month</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #2320 BDB #294

**Translation:** *And so it was [that] the number of days that David was the king in Hebron over the house of Judah [for] seven years and six months.* As was mentioned previously, Saul's son, Ishbosheth, ruled for only two years over northern and eastern Israel; however, we are told here that David ruled for 7½ years over southern Israel. What we do not have is the amount of time which was devoted to Abner setting up Ishbosheth as king over northern Israel. I don't think that he necessarily spent all of 5 years laying the groundwork for the rule of Ishbosheth, but he apparently spent some time negotiated with and talking to the various elders throughout northern and eastern Israel. In v. 9, we have the territory over which Ishbosheth ruled given in great detail. Even though it is never so stated, it is very likely that the places mentioned here are the places to where Abner went and spoke to the elders of those various territories and cities. Even prior to this, there is going to be a year or two after Israel was soundly defeated before Abner and Ishbosheth feel that they can move about freely.

You may wonder, *why aren't there Philistines everywhere throughout Israel ruling?* The Philistines and Israel have been at war with one another for well over a century or two. If you think the Palestinians and the Israelis during our time have problems seeing eye-to-eye, this is nothing compared to the Philistines and Israelis during the time of the judges, Samuel, Saul and David. We are not looking at decades of war, but centuries of war. This constant war took a toll on the manpower of both sides. Even after a complete and total victory, neither side really had the

manpower to go into the other territory and rule over them with an iron fist—at least, not for very long. So, no doubt, the Philistines exploited their victory over Israel as much as they could; but, after a few years, at best, they simply collected tribute and partially occupied a few cities, if even that.

When it comes to the peoples of the ancient world, each group and each leader is significantly different. You may recall Nahash the Ammonite who would have let the men of Jabesh Gilead live under the condition that he gouge out the right eye of each and every man in that city. God ordered Saul through Samuel to wipe out every single Amalekite; David, when he was living in Ziklag, killed every person of each group that he attacked. However, there is nothing to indicate that the Philistines did likewise. We have no words which indicate that they were as brutal as Nahash or that they looked to completely destroy the Jews (if they were collecting tribute, then this would be killing the goose that lays the golden egg). Given that the Philistines had outposts in various Jewish cities (alluded to several times in 1Samuel), we may reasonably assume that, at least during the time of Eli, Saul and David, the Philistines did not look to maim or completely wipe out the Jews; such an approach would be in keeping with the collecting of tribute (spoken of several times in the book of Judges, but not mentioned in connection with the Philistines and Jews, making it a matter of logical conjecture on my part).

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In almost every commentary I read, the different time periods of rule for David and for Ishbosheth are said to be difficult to understand. Personally, I saw no reason for this difference in numbers to be perplexing. Let me give you a suggested time line:

A Time-Line for the Divided Kingdom		
Time	Ishbosheth	David
3 years	The Philistines control northern Israel. They occupy some cities and exact tribute.	
2 years	As the foothold of the Philistines weakens, Abner goes about northern and eastern Israel speaking to the elders about Ishbosheth ruling them. There may have even been a military campaign run by Abner against the occupying Philistines (that is the reasonable suggestion of some, but there is no documentation for this in Scripture).	David rules over Judah from Hebron. Although the Philistines are fairly powerful in northern and eastern Israel, they do not move into Judah. Very likely, they lack the manpower, they fear David, and the ruler of Gath does not want to attack David.
2 years	Ishbosheth rules over northern and eastern Israel; during this time, there is a civil war between northern and southern Israel (Judah) wherein David is victorious.	
6 months	There is a time frame during which northern and eastern Israel do not have a Jewish ruler.	Elders from northern Israel come to David and ask him to rule over them.

There is nothing magic about the numbers found in this time line, apart from Ishbosheth ruling for 2 years and David for 7½. This is simply conjecture as to why these time periods are different and what happened during those other 5½ years.

There's no contradiction here; and, although Scripture does not give us a complete explanation as to why the times that these two men ruled is different. However, it does appear that one or two men, in later manuscripts, did change the text to make it nice and neat (11 of Kennicott's manuscripts and 9 of DeRossi's manuscripts read differently when it comes to the time that these men ruled).

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It never occurred to me that there was a serious problem here, but almost every commentator is concerned that Ishbosheth rules for 2 years (2Sam. 2:10) and David ruled over Judah alone for 7.5 years (2Sam. 5:5). The simple explanation is, David took control of Judah almost immediately after the death of Saul; Ishbosheth, over an area partially controlled by the Philistines, did not take control right away, and needed time to drum up support from the other tribes of Israel. The time frame I offered above is merely conjecture, but it is reasonable. The number of years given is not carved in stone (apart from the 2 years and 7.5 years), and are only given by way of illustration.

### Other Theories Dealing with the Length of Ishbosheth's Reign

Commentator	Theory and Comments
<b>Barnes, Geisler and Howe, Gill, Kimchi, Kukis, Tidwell</b>	Ishbosheth did not begin ruling over eastern and northern Israel immediately upon Saul's death. <sup>33</sup> This is the simplest and least complicated explanation, for which I have given an illustration above.
<b>Clarke</b>	<i>It is well observed that Ish-bosheth reigned all the time that David reigned in Hebron, which was seven years and six months. Perhaps the meaning of the writer is this: Ish-bosheth reigned two years before any but the tribe of Judah had attached themselves to the interest of David. Some think that Abner in effect reigned the last five years of Ish-bosheth, who had only the name of king after the first two years.</i> <sup>34</sup> Clarke also goes off into some weird explanation as to how there is textual corruption here (it is true that later manuscripts are in agreement, but <i>that</i> probably is the textual corruption).
<b>Freedman</b>	David was acknowledged to be the ruler of Judah during that final 5.5 years of Saul's reign. <sup>35</sup> However, David fled Judah for the final year and a half, as he was afraid of Saul. This does not sound like the actions of someone ruling over Judah. Furthermore, there is no capitol city established during this time and no proclamations ever sent out (compare this to 2Sam. 2:3–7).
<b>Gordon</b>	David ruled both Judah and Israel from Hebron for 5½ years. <sup>36</sup> Quite simply, this is not what 2Sam. 5:5 says ( <a href="#">At Hebron, David reigned over Judah 7½ years and in Jerusalem he reigned 33 years over all Israel and Judah</a> ).
<b>Keil and Delitzsch</b>	The short duration of Ishbosheth's reign can only be explained, therefore, on the supposition that he was not made king, as David was, immediately after the death of Saul, but after the recovery by Abner of the land which the Philistines had taken on this side the Jordan, which may have occupied five years. <sup>37</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., citing Tidwell, SVT 30 (1979), pp. 203f. Also, Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, 2Sam. 2:10; Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, 2Sam. 2:1; and *When Critics Ask*; Geisler and Howe, ©1992, Victor Books, p. 171.

<sup>34</sup> Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, 2Sam. 2:10.

<sup>35</sup> Actually, Robert Gordon refers to Freedman's theory in Robert Gordon, *I & II Samuel A Commentary*; Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI; ©1986; p. 214. He cites D. N. Freedman, 'Early Israelite History in the Light of Early Israelite Poetry', in *Unity and Diversity* (ed. H. Goedicke, J. J. M. Roberts; Baltimore, 1975), p. 16. There are others named as well with this theory.

<sup>36</sup> Robert Gordon, *I & II Samuel A Commentary*; Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI; ©1986; p. 214.

<sup>37</sup> Quoted from Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; 2Sam. 2:10–11.

## Other Theories Dealing with the Length of Ishbosheth's Reign

Commentator	Theory and Comments
<b>The Open Bible</b>	Ishbosheth rules in Mahanaim for 5.5 years over Gilead, the Ashurties, Jezreel, Benjamin and Ephraim, but he only rules over all Israel for the final two years before being assassinated. <sup>38</sup>

By the way, the only significance of Abner's age and length of reign being mentioned first, and then David's, is not a matter of chronological order (the length of their reigns and their ages are mentioned in 2Sam. 2:10–11 and 5:5). Abner's length of reign is mentioned in v. 10 and David's in v. 11. Keil and Delitzsch suggest that the inferior line is followed first, as we find throughout the book of Genesis.<sup>39</sup> However, that David is reigning from Hebron has already been mentioned in 2Sam. 2:1–7 (we just studied it); and now Ishbosheth's reign is mentioned. Therefore, there is really not even a problem with chronology here (and why Keil and Delitzsch think to bring this up confuses me, since it is not an issue in any way). The author of Samuel is simply proceeding in an essentially chronological narrative, and, once David begins his reign over all Israel, then his age and the length of his rule are given.<sup>40</sup>

To be quite frank with you, I have no idea if this represents all of the various theories or not. However, this gives you enough of a taste to hopefully recognize that the explanation for this verse and 2Sam. 5:5 is the one which I have been giving you up until this time.

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### Civil War between Abner and David's Nephews

**And so goes out Abner, son of Ner and servants of Ishbosheth, son of Saul, from Mahanaim Gibeon-ward.**

2Samuel  
2:12

**Then Abner ben Ner, and the servants of Ishbosheth ben Saul, went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon.**

**Then Abner, the son of Ner, and the servants of Ishbosheth, Saul's son, went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

**Masoretic Text**      And so goes out Abner, son of Ner and servants of Ishbosheth, son of Saul, from Mahanaim Gibeon-ward.

**Septuagint**      And Abenner the son of Ner went forth, and the servants of Jebosthe the son of Saul, from Manaem to Gabaon.

Significant differences: None.

#### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

**CEV**      One day, Abner and the soldiers of Ishbosheth left Mahanaim and went to Gibeon.

<sup>38</sup> Paraphrased from *The Open Bible*; the New Living Translation; Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN; ©1996, p. 408. You will note that they do not distinguish between the two different sets of prepositions, which helps to lead them to this faulty conclusion.

<sup>39</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; 2Sam. 2:10–11.

<sup>40</sup> Quite frankly, some commentators make an issue out of absolutely nothing. I mention these things just in case you read through Keil and Delitzsch; and out of respect for their generally excellent, but dense, commentary.

**Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):**

God's Word™  
HCSB

Ner's son Abner and the officers of Saul's son Ishbosheth went from Mahanaim to Gibeon.  
Abner son of Ner and soldiers of Ish-bosheth son of Saul marched out from Mahanaim to Gibeon.

**Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

WEB

Abner the son of Ner, and the servants of Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon.

Young's Updated LT

And Abner son of Ner goes out, and servants of Ish-Bosheth son of Saul, from Mahanaim to Gibeon.

**The gist of this verse?**

There are two options at this point: David and Ishbosheth could rule over their respective territories, or they could war with each other for complete control. Abner takes an army from Mahanaim to Gibeon in order to face off David.

**2Samuel 2:12**

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced waw]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
yâtsâ' (יָצָא) [pronounced yaw-TZAWH]	<i>to go out, to come out, to come forth; to rise; to flow, to gush up [out]</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #3318 BDB #422
ʾĀb <sup>e</sup> nêr (אֲבִנֵר) [pronounced u <sup>b</sup> v <sup>e</sup> -NAYR]	<i>my father is Ner or my father is a lamp, and is transliterated Abner</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #74 BDB #4
bên (בֶּן) [pronounced bane]	<i>son, descendant</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #1121 BDB #119
Nêr (נֵר) [pronounced nair]	<i>lamp and is transliterated Ner</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #5369 BDB #633
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וְ) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʿebed (עֶבֶד) [pronounced ĠE <sup>b</sup> -ved]	<i>slave, servant</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #5650 BDB #713
ʾĪysh-Bôsheth (אִישׁ־בֹּשֶׁת) [pronounced eesh-BOH-sheath]	<i>man of Baal; transliterated Ishbosheth</i>	masculine singular proper noun	Strong's #378 BDB #36
bên (בֶּן) [pronounced bane]	<i>son, descendant</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #1121 BDB #119
Shâ'ûwl (שָׂאֻל) [pronounced shaw-OOL]	<i>which is transliterated Saul; it means asked for</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #7586 BDB #982
min (מִן) [pronounced min]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577

## 2Samuel 2:12

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
Machānayim (מַחֲנַיִם) [pronounced mahkh-uh-AH-yim]	<i>two camps</i> ; transliterated <i>Mahanaim</i>	proper singular noun; location	Strong's #4266 BDB #334
Gib <sup>e</sup> ōn (גִּבְעוֹן) [pronounced gibv <sup>e</sup> -GOHN]	<i>hill, hill-city</i> ; transliterated <i>Gibeon</i>	proper noun, masculine singular; with the directional hê	Strong's #1391 BDB #149

**Translation:** [Then Abner ben Ner, and the servants of Ishbosheth ben Saul, went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon.](#) Mahanaim is the new capital of eastern and northern Israel, from which Ishbosheth reigns. Gibeon is in Benjamin, south of the Philistine-Israeli war zone of perhaps a few years back, and not too far from the southern kingdom of Judah. If Abner goes to Gibeon with an army, this is an act of aggression against David. Gibeon would be a border town between the territory controlled by Ishbosheth and the territory controlled by David (and territory conquered by the Philistines).

This is also a strategic move; Abner does not bring his army of crack troops to Gibeon without reason.

### Why Abner Goes to Gibeon

1. The Philistine hold over this general area has probably relaxed. They moved in as aggressors, but, now, over 5 years later, there is going to be less animosity between the occupying Philistines and Israelis.
2. The Benjamites, if only by virtue that Saul, Abner and Ishbosheth are Benjamites, would be naturally more open to Ishbosheth's leadership. Therefore, we would expect additional help from local Benjamites if needed (which appears to be what happens near the end of this chapter).
3. David's control is primarily over Judah. If he intends to rule over a greater portion of land, then we would expect him to begin exerting his influence further and further north, which would begin in the territory of Benjamin. This would be a way of nipping any northward movement in the bud.
4. Abner knows this area well, as he is a Benjamite. He knows the roads and the hills and he will set up troops strategically to back him up if necessary.
5. Even though it is claimed here that Ishbosheth was king over northern Israel, we do not find the popular support for him in northern Israel as we will for David (as found in the latter half of 1Chron. 12). Therefore, taking a stand in any other territory is not going to necessarily result in an overwhelming support of all the residents, particularly when going up against David's army.

There are a number of things which help your memory. If you have a general idea of the layout of Israel and its principle cities, and know roughly which cities and what land is involved in this or that piece of history, the history itself is more likely to remain in your mind. The mind is a very complex thing, and being able to visualize a map causes the history of Israel to stick with you, more than it would if these cities are just names and nothing else to you. Dates are the same way, by the way. If you have a time line in your mind of approximately when Moses brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, when the judges controlled Israel, when David was king, when Isaiah functioned as a prophet, when the northern and then the southern kingdoms were overrun and disperse, etc., then when you hear about an historical incident, it is much easier to recall because you can drop it into the slot of this or that time frame.

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The verb found here, *to go out*, is often used for an army mobilizing for war and going to a particular place to battle (Num. 21:23, 33 1Sam. 18:30). However, this is one usage of many.



Barnes suggests<sup>41</sup> that part of what Abner has on his mind is establishing a capital city closer to where Saul ruled from, which is Gibeah (Gibeon and Gibeah are very near to one another). This could also be seen as an act of aggression from Abner against David.

It is possible that Ishbosheth and Abner, having been given power over all northern and eastern Israel, decided to explore the option of taking Judah. Despite the fact that the Philistines continually attacked central Israel, Israel still perceived itself as one whole nation; and it would have seemed reasonable to Ishbosheth and Abner that they should rule over all Israel. After all, at no time had there been any formal separation between these two areas.

It is interesting that there is more thought given to David and his control of Judah, rather than to the Philistines. At this point, we are about 5 years after the Philistine army fought Saul's army and they now occupy many Israeli cities in central Israel (which is where these troops are). Furthermore, it does not sound as though we are dealing with a full-sized army here, and the statistics which will follow will bear this out.

**And Joab son of Zeruiah and servants of David go out and they meet them by a pool of Gibeon together. And so they remain, these by the pool from here and these by the pool from there.**

2Samuel  
2:13

**Also, Joab ben Zeruiah and the servants of David went out, and they all [lit., *together*] met by the pool of Gibeon. They remained there, these on this side of the pool and those [lit., *these*] on that side.**

**Joab ben Zeruiah and David's army also went out, and they all met by the pool of Gibeon. They remained there for a time, with one army on one side and the other on the other side.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

##### Masoretic Text

And Joab son of Zeruiah and servants of David go out and they meet them by a pool of Gibeon together. And so they remain, these by the pool from here and these by the pool from there.

##### Septuagint

And Joab the son of Saruia, and the servants of David, went forth from Chebron, and met them at the fountain of Gabaon, at the same place; and these sat down by the fountain on this side, and those by the fountain on that side.

##### Significant differences:

The Greek adds that Joab and his men went out from Hebron. The Greek phrase *at the same place* seems to correspond with *together* in the Hebrew. The word in the Hebrew which I translated *remain* could also be rendered *sit*, so there is no real difference here. The verbiage *on this side...on that side* in the Greek is also a reasonable way to render the Hebrew. So, even though these verses may look as though there are several differences, there is really one primary difference: the addition of the words *from Hebron* in the Greek (missing from the Hebrew, Latin and Syriac). The addition or lack of that word really does not change anything; we would assume that they would be coming from Hebron, where David has his capital city.

#### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

##### CEV

Meanwhile, Joab the son of Zeruiah was leading David's soldiers, and the two groups met at the pool in Gibeon. Abner and his men sat down on one side of the pool, while Joab and his men sat on the other side.

#### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

<sup>41</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, 2Sam. 2:12.

## God's Word™

Zeruiah's son Joab and David's officers also left Hebron. Both groups met at the pool of Gibeon. They sat down there, one group on one side of the pool and the other group on the other side of the pool.

## HCSB

So Joab son of Zeruiah and David's soldiers marched out and met them by the pool of Gibeon. The two groups took up positions on opposite sides of the pool.

## Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

## MKJV

And Joab the son of Zeruiah, and the servants of David, went out and met by the pool of Gibeon and sat down, the one on the one *side* of the pool, and the other on the other *side* of the pool.

## Young's Literal Translation

And Joab son of Zeruiah, and servants of David, have gone out, and they meet by the pool of Gibeon together, and sit down, these by the pool on this *side*, and these by the pool on that.

## The gist of this verse?

David's army goes to the same place, with Joab leading them. They stand on opposite sides of the pool of Gibeon.

## 2Samuel 2:13a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
Yôw`âb (יֹאבָב) [pronounced <i>YOH-aw<sup>b</sup>v</i> ]	<i>Yah is father and is transliterated Joab</i>	masculine singular proper noun	Strong's #3097 BDB #221
bên (בֶּן) [pronounced <i>bane</i> ]	<i>son, descendant</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #1121 BDB #119
Ts <sup>e</sup> rûwyâh (צֶרׁוּיָה) [pronounced <i>tz<sup>e</sup>roo-YAW</i> ]	transliterated <i>Zeruiah</i>	feminine singular proper noun	Strong's #6870 BDB #863
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ēbed (עֶבֶד) [pronounced <i>E<sup>b</sup>-ved</i> ]	<i>slave, servant</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #5650 BDB #713
Dâvid (דָּוִד); also Dâviyd (דָּוִיִּד) [pronounced <i>daw-VEED</i> ]	<i>beloved and is transliterated David</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #1732 BDB #187
yâtsâ` (יָצָא) [pronounced <i>yaw-TZAWH</i> ]	<i>to go out, to come out, to come forth; to rise; to flow, to gush up [out]</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #3318 BDB #422

The Greek adds *from Hebron*.

**Translation:** Also, Joab ben Zeruiah and the servants of David went out,... We have seen Joab only once before in 1Chron. 2:13–15 and 1Sam. 26:6. David had several brothers and two sisters, one of them being Zeruiah; Zeruiah had several sons, including Abishai and Joab. Abishai was one of David's most trusted soldiers, as we saw in 1Sam. 26:6–12; and obviously, Joab is as well, as Joab commands one of David's battalions. You may

find this interesting, that, even though David's brothers never thought much of David, his nephews by one sister thought very highly of him, and they became trusted high-ranking soldiers in David's army.

This march from Hebron to Gibeon is approximately 24 miles.<sup>42</sup>

<b>2Samuel 2:13b</b>			
<b>Hebrew/Pronunciation</b>	<b>Common English Meanings</b>	<b>Notes/Morphology</b>	<b>BDB and Strong's Numbers</b>
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that, so that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
pâga <sup>c</sup> (פָּגַע) [pronounced <i>paw-GAHG</i> ]	<i>to fall upon, to meet, to encounter, to reach</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect; with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural suffix	Strong's #6293 BDB #803
al (עַל) [pronounced <i>gahl</i> ]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
b <sup>e</sup> rêkâh (בְּרֵכָה) [pronounced <i>b<sup>e</sup>-ray-KAW</i> ]	<i>pool, pond</i>	feminine singular construct	Strong's #1295 BDB #140
Gib <sup>e</sup> ôn (גִּבְעוֹן) [pronounced <i>gibv<sup>e</sup>-GOHN</i> ]	<i>hill, hill-city; transliterated Gibeon</i>	proper noun, masculine singular; with the directional hê	Strong's #1391 BDB #149
yachad (יַחַד) [pronounced <i>YAH-khahd</i> ]	<i>together, alike, all together; union, junction, mutually, with one another; equally</i>	adverb	Strong's #3162 BDB #403

There are several slightly different spellings of this adverb.

**Translation:** *...and they all [lit., together] met by the pool of Gibeon.* This is another one of the interesting situations (to me at least); they undoubtedly did not both end up there by accident. However, we have no explanation as to how they gathered here together. Did Abner begin a march on Judah, and did Abner know this was occurring, and sent a force to meet them? Were there communications between the two armies and they decided to meet in Gibeon? Another question which we cannot answer and feel comfortable with.

There are, apparently, several reservoirs in Gibeon,<sup>43</sup> and we have the mention of this one (or another one) in Jer. 41:12b (*they found him by the great waters that are in Gibeon*).

What is also interesting here is, we do not see to have a Philistine involvement here. Abner marches over the Jordan and into central Israel, where the Philistines are living (they have not supplanted the Israelites, but are living side-by-side the Israelites); and we do not see a Philistine response; but there does appear to be a response by David.

<sup>42</sup> Bunting's Travels, p. 146 (cited by Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, 2Sam. 2:13).

<sup>43</sup> See Robinson's Palestine ii. pp. 135-6; Tobler, Topography. v. Jerusalem, ii. pp. 515-6

## 2Samuel 2:13c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
yâshab (יָשַׁב) [pronounced yaw-SHAH <sup>AV</sup> ]	<i>to remain, to stay; to dwell, to live, to inhabit; to sit</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #3427 BDB #442
ʾelleh (אֵלֶּה) [pronounced ALE-leh]	<i>these, these things</i>	demonstrative plural adjective	Strong's #428 BDB #41
ʿal (עַל) [pronounced ǧahl]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
b <sup>e</sup> rêkâh (בְּרֵכָה) [pronounced b <sup>e</sup> -ray-KAW]	<i>pool, pond</i>	feminine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #1295 BDB #140
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i> ]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
zeh (זֶה) [pronounced <i>zeh</i> ]	<i>here, this, this one; thus; possibly another</i>	masculine singular demonstrative adjective	Strong's #2088, 2090 (& 2063) BDB #260
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וְ) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʾelleh (אֵלֶּה) [pronounced ALE-leh]	<i>these, these things</i>	demonstrative plural adjective	Strong's #428 BDB #41
ʿal (עַל) [pronounced ǧahl]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
b <sup>e</sup> rêkâh (בְּרֵכָה) [pronounced b <sup>e</sup> -ray-KAW]	<i>pool, pond</i>	feminine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #1295 BDB #140
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i> ]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
zeh (זֶה) [pronounced <i>zeh</i> ]	<i>here, this, this one; thus; possibly another</i>	masculine singular demonstrative adjective	Strong's #2088, 2090 (& 2063) BDB #260

The combination זֶה וְגַם preceded by זֶה מִן means *hence and hence; on this side...and on that side, on either side*.

**Translation:** They remained there, these on this side of the pool and those [lit., these] on that side. This was an awkward situation. Although there had been some civil disputes in Israel, including one which almost destroyed the tribe of Benjamin, this could be the most serious stand off to date. Both Abner and Joab and their respective armies stood on opposite sides of the pool of Gibeon, sizing up the situation and each other. It was a difficult situation. They knew that splitting up Israel was not the right move; so the two kingdoms should not remain separated. However, neither side was willing to give into the other side. Furthermore, given that the Philistines

had beaten down Israel's army, what Joab had and what Abner had by way of manpower was probably pretty equal. A full out civil war could wipe out a huge number of men from both sides.

The men in both armies know that the result of a civil war could be devastating to both sides; they know that this is almost unprecedented. As Abner examines the situation, he comes up with a plan.

**And so says Abner unto Joab, "Will arise, please, the young men and make sport to our faces."**

2Samuel  
2:14

**Then Abner said to Joab, "[Let] the young men arise and compete [lit., *make sport, play*] before us."**

**And so says Joab, "They arise."**

**And Joab said, "[Let] them arise."**

**Then Abner suggested to Joab, "Let these young men get up and compete before us."**

**And Joab agreed to this.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### **Ancient texts:**

Masoretic Text      And so says Abner unto Joab, "Will arise, please, the young men and make sport to our faces."

Septuagint      And so says Joab, "They arise."  
And Abenner said to Joab, "Let now the young men arise, and play before us." And Joab said, "Let them arise."

Significant differences: No significant differences.

#### **Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:**

CEV      Abner yelled to Joab, "Let's have some of our best soldiers get up and fight each other!"  
Joab agreed,...

#### **Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):**

*God's Word*<sup>TM</sup>      Abner said to Joab, "Let's have the young men hold a contest." Joab agreed.  
HCSB      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.

#### **Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

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

Young's Updated LT      And Abner says unto Joab, "Let the youths rise up, I pray you, and they play before us."  
And Joab says, "Let them rise."

**The gist of this verse?**      Abner suggests to Joab that their young men square off in some sort of competition, as opposed to an all-out conflict; and Joab agrees to this.

## 2Samuel 2:14a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]	and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
ʾamar (אָמַר) [pronounced aw-MAHR]	to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
ʾĂb <sup>e</sup> nêr (אָבְנֵר) [pronounced u <sup>b</sup> v <sup>e</sup> -NAYR]	my father is Ner or my father is a lamp, and is transliterated Abner	masculine proper noun	Strong's #74 BDB #4
ʾel (אֶל) [pronounced el]	unto; into, among, in; toward, to; against; concerning, regarding; besides, together with; as to	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)	Strong's #413 BDB #39
Yôw <sup>ʾ</sup> âb (יְוֹאָב) [pronounced YOH-aw <sup>b</sup> v]	Yah is father and is transliterated Joab	masculine singular proper noun	Strong's #3097 BDB #222

**Translation:** Then Abner said to Joab,... We do not know Abner's age; however, he is probably Saul's uncle (discussed in great detail in 1Sam. 26:5); however, an uncle is not necessarily older than his nephew (although that is usually the case). Joab, on the other hand, is one of David's nephews, and—as I have just stated—not necessarily younger than David. However, it is likely that Abner is considerably older than Joab—we have the old general facing the young general. For that reason, Abner speaks first and makes the suggestion that we will find.

There are a couple of possible scenarios—Abner could be yelling across the pool to Joab; or they could have met along side the pool by mutual agreement.

## 2Samuel 2:14b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
qûwm (קוּמ) [pronounced koom]	to stand, to rise up, to get up; to establish, to establish a vow, to cause a vow to stand, to confirm or to fulfill a vow	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #6965 BDB #877
nâ <sup>ʾ</sup> (נָא) [pronounced naw]	now; please, I pray you, I respectfully implore (ask, or request of) you, I urge you	particle of entreaty	Strong's #4994 BDB #609
n <sup>a</sup> ar (נְעָר) [pronounced NĀH-ġahr]	boy, youth, young man, personal attendant	masculine plural noun with the definite article	Strong's #5288 & #5289 BDB #654
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וְ) [pronounced weh]	and, even, then; namely; when; since, that, so that; though	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
sâchaq (שָׂחַק) [pronounced saw-KHAHK]	to joke, to jest, to laugh repeatedly, to play, to amuse, to dance	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Piel imperfect	Strong's #7832 BDB #965

Possibly used here to mean *to compete*.

## 2Samuel 2:14b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <sup>l</sup> )	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
pânîym (פָּנִים) [pronounced paw-NEEM]	<i>face, faces countenance; presence</i>	masculine plural noun (plural acts like English singular); with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person plural suffix	Strong's #6440 BDB #815

Together, they mean *before us, before our faces, in our presence, in our sight, in front of us.*

**Translation:**...“[\[Let\] the young men arise and compete](#) [lit., *make sport, play*] [before us.](#)” The verb that we find here is not what we would expect. This is a verb which is used for children playing or women dancing or men joking. Abner suggests this as though it is a friendly competition; however, it is anything but. This will be a battle to the death.

Barnes notes the passages Judges 16:25 and 1Sam. 18:7, and comments: *Here, the word is applied to the serious game of war, to be played by twelve combatants on each side, with the two armies for spectators.*<sup>44</sup>

## 2Samuel 2:14c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
ʾamar (אָמַר) [pronounced aw-MAHR]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
Yôwʾâb (יֹאבָב) [pronounced YOH-aw <sup>b</sup> v]	<i>Yah is father and is transliterated Joab</i>	masculine singular proper noun	Strong's #3097 BDB #222
qûwm (קָוַם) [pronounced koom]	<i>to stand, to rise up, to get up; to establish, to establish a vow, to cause a vow to stand, to confirm or to fulfill a vow</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #6965 BDB #877

**Translation:** [And Joab said, “\[Let\] them arise.](#)” What Abner suggests, on the surface, seems reasonable. There will be less bloodshed as a result. However, it is questionable whether the loser in either case would be willing to simply let things go.

Gill reasonably suggests<sup>45</sup> that David ordered Joab to be on the defensive, and to avoid bloodshed if possible. Therefore, his responses might be that of a younger, less experienced general; or his responses may have been tempered by David's likely instructions.

<sup>44</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, 2Sam. 2:14.

<sup>45</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, 2Sam. 2:14.

And so they arise and so they pass over in a number two-teen to Benjamin and to Ishbosheth son of Saul and two-teen from servants of David.

2Samuel  
2:15

So then they arose and crossed over by number: 12 for Benjamin and for Ishbosheth ben Saul and 12 from the servants of David.

Then 12 young men of Benjamin belonging to Ishbosheth son of Saul, arise and cross over to meet 12 young men from the servants of David.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text                   And so they arise and so they pass over in a number two-teen to Benjamin and to Ishbosheth son of Saul and two-teen from servants of David.

Septuagint                        And there arose and passed over by number twelve of the children of Benjamin, belonging to Jebosthe the son of Saul, and twelve of the servants of David.

Significant differences:       Although the sense is clearly the same, in the Hebrew, it is the men who are arising and crossing over. Also, there seems to be a different sense of the men of Ishbosheth, in the Greek and Syriac as versus the Hebrew. In the Greek and Syriac, 12 men arise who are Benjamites that *belong to* Ishbosheth. Had I not mentioned this, you may have read over the Hebrew and Greek translation and not noticed the subtle difference.

#### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV                                 ...and twelve of Ishbosheth's men from the tribe of Benjamin got up to fight twelve of David's men.

#### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

*God's Word*<sup>TM</sup>                   The men got up and were counted as they passed by. Twelve were from the tribe of Benjamin (representing Saul's son Ishbosheth), and twelve were from David's officers.

HCSB                               So they got up and were counted off—12 for Benjamin and Ish-bosheth son of Saul, and 12 from David's soldiers.

#### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Updated *Emphasized Bible*   Then there arose and went over by number, 12 [men] of Benjamin, pertaining to Ishbosheth, son of Saul, and 12 of the servants of David.

WEB                                Then they arose and went over by number: twelve for Benjamin, and for Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, and twelve of the servants of David.

Young's Updated LT           And they rise and pass over, in number twelve of Benjamin, even of Ish-Bosheth son of Saul, and twelve of the servants of David.

**The gist of this verse?**       12 of Joab's men and 12 of Abner's men arise and go over to meet one another.



## 2Samuel 2:15a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]	and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
qûwm (קוּמ) [pronounced koom]	to stand, to rise up, to get up; to establish, to establish a vow, to cause a vow to stand, to confirm or to fulfill a vow	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #6965 BDB #877
wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]	and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
‘âbar (עָבַר) [pronounced ‘âw-VAHR]	to pass over, to pass through, to pass on, to pass, to go over, to cross, to cross over	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #5674 BDB #716
b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]	in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
miç <sup>e</sup> phâr (מִסְפָּר) [pronounced mis <sup>e</sup> -FAWR]	number, counted, numerical total; a recounting, a narration	masculine singular noun	Strong's #4557 BDB #708
sh <sup>e</sup> tayîm (שְׁתַּיִם) [pronounced sh <sup>e</sup> -TAH-yim]	two, a second [time]; a repetition, a repeating	feminine numeral substantive	Strong's #8147 BDB #1040
‘âsâr (עָשָׂר) [pronounced ‘âw-SAWR]	ten; –teen [resulting in numbers 11–19]	masculine singular noun	Strong's #6240 BDB #797
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l <sup>e</sup> )	to, for, towards, in regards to	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
Bin <sup>e</sup> yâmîyn (בִּן יְמִינֵי) [pronounced bin-yaw-MEEN]	transliterated Benjamin, it means son of [my] right hand	masculine proper noun	Strong's #1144 BDB #122
Spelled here Bin <sup>e</sup> yâmîn (בִּן יְמִין) [pronounced bin-yaw-MIN].			
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וְ) [pronounced weh]	and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l <sup>e</sup> )	to, for, towards, in regards to	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
‘ÿysh-Bôsheth (אִישׁ בֹּשֶׁת) [pronounced eesh-BOH-sheath]	man of Baal; transliterated Ishbosheth	masculine singular proper noun	Strong's #378 BDB #36
bên (בֶּן) [pronounced bane]	son, descendant	masculine singular construct	Strong's #1121 BDB #119
Shâ`ûwl (שָׁאוּל) [pronounced shaw-OOL]	which is transliterated Saul; it means asked for	masculine proper noun	Strong's #7586 BDB #982

**Translation:** So then they arose and crossed over by number: 12 for Benjamin and for Ishbosheth ben Saul... It is not completely clear to me whether this verb applies to all 24 men; however, the general sense is clear: these 24 men all met up together.

2Samuel 2:15b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that, so that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
sh <sup>e</sup> tayîm (שׁוֹתַיִם) [pronounced <i>sh<sup>e</sup>TAH-yim</i> ]	<i>two, a second [time]; a repetition, a repeating</i>	feminine numeral substantive	Strong's #8147 BDB #1040
ʿâsâr (עָשָׂר) [pronounced <i>gaw-SAWR</i> ]	<i>ten; –teen [resulting in numbers 11–19]</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #6240 BDB #797
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i> ]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
ʿebed (עֶבֶד) [pronounced <i>GĒ<sup>b</sup>-ved</i> ]	<i>slave, servant</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #5650 BDB #713
Dâvid (דָּוִד); also Dâvîyd (דָּוִיִּד) [pronounced <i>daw-VEED</i> ]	<i>beloved and is transliterated David</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #1732 BDB #187

**Translation:** ...and 12 from the servants of David. These men are continually spoken of as the servants of David.

In the mind of Joab, Abner's suggestion makes sense—instead of both armies going to war right then and there, for 12 of the best from each side to compete to the death. Such an approach could possibly save the lives of many. I think that Abner has several scenarios in his mind, as to what he will do if this or that happens; I think that Joab is playing this by ear, trying to determine what he can do to prevent civil war, but without backing down.

**And so takes a man in a head of his associate and his sword in a side of his associate and so they fall together. And so he calls to the place the that Helkath-Hazzurim, which [is] in Gibeon.**

2Samuel  
2:16

**So each man grabbed the head of his associated and [thrust] his sword into the side and they both fell. Therefore, that place, which [is] in Gibeon, is called Helkath-Hazzurim.**

**So each man grabbed the head of his associated and thrust his sword into the side and the both fell. Therefore, that place is called Helkath-Hazzurim.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

##### Masoretic Text

And so takes a man in a head of his associate and his sword in a side of his associate and so they fall together. And so he calls to the place the that Helkath-Hazzurim, which [is] in Gibeon.

##### Septuagint

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

Significant differences: In the Greek, the head is grabbed *with one's hand*.

### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	They grabbed each other by the hair and stabbed each other in the side with their daggers. They all died right there! That's why the place in Gibeon is called "Field of Daggers."
<i>The Message</i>	The men from each side grabbed their opponents' heads and stabbed them with their daggers. They all fell dead--the whole bunch together. So, they called the place Slaughter Park. It's right there at Gibeon.
NJB	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.
NLT	Each one grabbed his opponent by the hair and thrust his sword into the other's side so that all of them died. The place has been known ever since as the Field of Swords [Hebrew <i>Helkath-hazzurim</i> ].

### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

<i>God's Word™</i>	Each one grabbed his opponent by the head, stuck his sword into his opponent's side, and they fell down together. Therefore, that place in Gibeon is called the Field of Enemies.
HCSB	Then each man grabbed his opponent by the head and <i>thrust</i> 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.
JPS (Tanakh)	Each one grasped his opponent's head [Septuagint adds "with his hand"] [and thrust] his dagger into his opponent's side; thus they fell together. That place, which is in Gibeon, was called Helkath-Hazzurim [Meaning perhaps "the Field of the Flints (or Blades)"].

### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

LTHB	And each one lay hold on the head of his companion, and <i>thrust</i> his sword into the side of his companion. And they fell together. And <i>one</i> called that place The Field of Rocks, which is in Gibeon.
WEB	They caught everyone his fellow by the head, and <i>thrust</i> his sword in his fellow's side; so they fell down together: therefore that place was called Helkath Hazzurim, which is in Gibeon.
Young's Updated LT	And they lay hold, each on the head of his companion, and his sword is in the side of his companion, and they fall together, and one calls that place Helkath-Hazzurim, which is in Gibeon.

**The gist of this verse?** The 24 soldiers all kill one another. Where this takes place is named Helkath-Hazzurim, which means *the field of blades*

## 2Samuel 2:16a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (1) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253

## 2Samuel 2:16a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
châzaq (חָזַק) [pronounced <i>khaw-ZAHK</i> ]	<i>to take, to strengthen, to repair, to hold fast, to grab</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Hiphil imperfect	Strong's #2388 BDB #304
ʾîysh (אִישׁ) [pronounced <i>eesh</i> ]	<i>a man, a husband; anyone; a certain one; each, each one, everyone</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #376 BDB #35
b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b<sup>eh</sup></i> ]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
rô`sh (רֹאשׁ) [pronounced <i>rohsh</i> ]	<i>head, top, chief, front, choicest</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #7218 BDB #910
rêa` (רֵעַ) [pronounced <i>RAY-ahg</i> ]	<i>associate, neighbor, colleague, fellow, acquaintance</i>	masculine singular noun with a 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #7453 BDB #945
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וְ) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
chereb (חֶרֶב) [pronounced <i>khe-RE<sup>B</sup>V</i> ]	<i>sword, knife, dagger; any sharp tool</i>	feminine singular noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #2719 BDB #352
b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b<sup>eh</sup></i> ]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
tsad (צַד) [pronounced <i>tzahd</i> ]	<i>side</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #6654 BDB #841
rêa` (רֵעַ) [pronounced <i>RAY-ahg</i> ]	<i>associate, neighbor, colleague, fellow, acquaintance</i>	masculine singular noun with a 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #7453 BDB #945

**Translation:** [So each man grabbed the head of his associated and \[thrust\] his sword into the side...](#) I think that what Abner had in mind was, his older and more experienced soldiers would quickly dispatch David's men, and that he might be able to call this a victory, and prevent further bloodshed. The idea would be that, if his 12 best defeated David's 12 best, then the best David could hope for is for all of his soldiers to die eventually. I am sure that Abner had an alternative plan as well; in the unlikely event that he lost, he could suggest a truce and suggest that he would return to confer with his king. However, what happened instead of this is, these 12 pairs of men killed one another, meaning that the armies of Abner and David were quite evenly matched.

It does seem quite unlikely that anyone has a hand large enough to grab the head of another man; however, some probably grabbed the beards of their adversary, and others may have grabbed the hair of their heads (saying that each man grabbed the head of his adversary allows for either understanding). You may have wondered why the US military requires all men to shave their heads and beards upon entering boot camp.

From the Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge: *Plutarch, in his Apophthegms, informs us, that all things being ready for a battle, that Alexander's captains asked him whether he had anything else to*

command them. “Nothing, but that the Macedonians shave their beards.” Parmenio, when he asked why they should do so, was told, “Don’t you know that in a fight, there is no better hold than the beard?”<sup>46</sup>

### 2Samuel 2:16b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
nâphal (נָפַל) [pronounced <i>naw-FAHL</i> ]	<i>to fall, to lie, to die a violent death, to be brought down, to settle, to sleep deeply</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #5307 BDB #656
yachad (יָחַד) [pronounced <i>YAH-khahd</i> ]	<i>together, alike, all together; union, junction, mutually, with one another; equally</i>	adverb	Strong's #3162 BDB #403

There are several slightly different spellings of this adverb.

**Translation:** ...and they both fell. Both David's men and Abner's men stabbed one another simultaneously and all pairs of men died.

### 2Samuel 2:16c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
qârâ' (קָרָא) [pronounced <i>kaw-RAW</i> ]	<i>to call, to proclaim, to read, to call to, to call out to, to assemble, to summon; to call, to name [when followed by a lamed]</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #7121 BDB #894
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l</i> )	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
mâqôwm (מָקוֹם) [pronounced <i>maw-KOHM</i> ]	<i>place, situated; for a soldier, it may mean where he is stationed; for people in general, it would be their place of abode (which could be their house or their town)</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #4725 BDB #879
hûw' (הוּוּ) [pronounced <i>hoo</i> ]	<i>that; this</i>	masculine singular, demonstrative pronoun with a definite article	Strong's #1931 BDB #214

<sup>46</sup> *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880, with introduction by R. A. Torrey; courtesy of E-sword, 2Sam. 2:16. I did a little editing, using some phrasing from Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, 2Sam. 2:16.

## 2Samuel 2:16c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
Chel <sup>q</sup> ath Hatstsûrîym (חֶלְקֵת הַצְּרִיִּים) [pronounced kehI-KATH-hahts-tsoo]	a field of swords [blades], a field of the adversaries; a field of rocks; transliterated Helkath-hazzurim	proper noun/location	Strong's #2521 BDB #324
ʾăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced uh-SHER]	that, which, when, who, whom	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]	in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
Gib <sup>e</sup> ʾôn (גִּבְעוֹן) [pronounced gibv <sup>e</sup> -GOHN]	hill, hill-city; transliterated Gibeon	proper noun, masculine singular	Strong's #1391 BDB #149

**Translation:** Therefore, that place, which [is] in Gibeon, is called *Helkath-Hazzurim*. In the translations, three are a variety of interpretations for this name, most of them agreeing upon a *Field of Blades [or, Swords]*. The first word is clearly taken from chel<sup>q</sup>âh (חֶלְקָה) [pronounced khelê-KAW], which means a *parcel or portion [of ground]; allotment, field; smoothness, smooth part; flattery*. Strong's #2513 BDB #324. In our verse, this word is in the construct form, which accounts for the slight differences. The second word is more difficult. It is possible that the hă (ה) is the definite article (as we do not have a Hebrew word like *Hazzurim*); and it is possible that what we have here is the definite article combined with the plural of tsar (צַר) [pronounced tsahr], which means *an adversary, an enemy, distress, affliction*. This noun actually has three sets of meanings: ❶ *an adversary, an enemy* (except for Num. 10:9, it is found used this way only in poetry—Job 16:9 Deut. 32:27 Psalm 81:15 Lam 1:7 Isa. 9:10—and in the later writings—Esther 7:4 Neh. 9:27; generally in the plural without a definite article). ❷ It also means *distress, affliction* (Psalm 18:7 66:14 106:44 102:3—generally in the singular with a definite article). ❸ *A stone* (Isa. 5:28). These correspond to the slightly different meanings of its verb cognate. BDB lists these under two separate headings, with a third for the adjective. The *ts* in Hebrew is often transliterated as a *z*. Given the scenario herein described, it would be reasonable to understand this to mean *The Smooth Ground of the Enemies* or *The Field of the Adversaries*. To me, this makes the most sense, and I am surprised most commentators do not suggest this meaning.

Just so you don't have to look this up, here are the comments of various commentators:

Commentators Explain the Meaning of Helkath-Hazzurim	
Commentator	Translation and Commentary
Barnes <sup>47</sup>	"The part, field, or plat (Gen. 23:19) of the sharp edges or blades." This seems, on the whole, the best explanation of this rather obscure name.
CEV <sup>48</sup>	<i>Field of Daggers; or Field of Opponents</i> or "Battlefield."

<sup>47</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, 2Sam. 2:16.

<sup>48</sup> *The Promise* (The Contemporary English Version); Thomas Nelson Publishers; ©1995; p. 328.

## Commentators Explain the Meaning of Helkath-Hazzurim

Commentator	Translation and Commentary
Clarke <sup>49</sup>	"The portion of the mighty;" or, "The inheritance of those who were slain," according to the Targum.
Gill <sup>50</sup>	<i>The field of rocks, or of mighty men as strong as rocks, who stood as immovable, and would not give way, but fell and died in the field of battle; the Targum interprets it, the inheritance of the slain.</i>
Henry <sup>51</sup>	<i>The field of rocky men, men that were not only strong in body, but of firm and unshaken constancy, that stirred not at the sight of death.</i>
Keil and Delitzsch <sup>52</sup>	The place itself received the name of Helkath–hazzurim, " <i>field of the sharp edges,</i> " in consequence (for this use of zur, see Psalm 89:44).
NIV Study Bible <sup>53</sup>	<i>Field of daggers or field of hostilities.</i>
Scofield <sup>54</sup>	That is, <i>Field of Swords.</i>
Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge <sup>55</sup>	That is, <i>the field of strong men.</i>
Wesley <sup>56</sup>	<i>The field of rock; that is, of men who stood like rocks unmovable, each one dying upon the spot where he fought.</i>

And I still stand by my very logical *The Field [or, smooth ground] of the Adversaries*. I was surprised to find so little agreement with this (and more surprised that I should find this agreement with the CEV).

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**And so is the battle fierce as far as exceedingly in the day the that; and so was struck down Abner and men of Israel to faces of servants of David.**

2Samuel  
2:17

**And the [subsequent] battle was exceedingly fierce in that day; and Abner was struck down as well as [lit., and] the soldiers of Israel before the servants of David.**

**The subsequent battle was extremely fierce that day. Even Abner was struck down, along with the soldiers of Israel with him before David's men.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

### Ancient texts:

<sup>49</sup> Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, 2Sam. 2:16.

<sup>50</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, 2Sam. 2:16.

<sup>51</sup> Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, 2Sam. 2:8–17.

<sup>52</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; 2Sam. 2:14–16.

<sup>53</sup> *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 421.

<sup>54</sup> C. I. Scofield, *Scofield Notes from the Scofield King James' Bible*; from e-Sword, 2Sam. 2:16.

<sup>55</sup> *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880, with introduction by R. A. Torrey; courtesy of E-sword, 2Sam. 2:16.

<sup>56</sup> John Wesley; *Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible*; courtesy of e-sword, 2Sam. 2:16.

Masoretic Text                   And so is the battle fierce as far as exceedingly in the day the that; and so was struck down Abner and men of Israel to faces of servants of David.  
 Septuagint                        And the battle was very severe on that day; and Abenner and the men of Israel were worsted before the servants of David.

Significant differences:       No significant differences.

**Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:**

CEV                                 Then everyone started fighting. Both sides fought very hard, but David's soldiers defeated Abner and the soldiers of Israel.  
*The Message*                    The fighting went from bad to worse throughout the day. Abner and the men of Israel were beaten to a pulp by David's men.

**Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):**

*God's Word™*                    Fierce fighting broke out that day, and David's men defeated Abner and the men of Israel.  
 HCSB                               The battle that day was extremely fierce, and Abner and the men of Israel were defeated by David's soldiers.  
 JPS (the Tanakh)                A fierce battle ensued that day, and Abner and the men of Israel were routed by David's soldiers.

**Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

ESV                                 And the battle was very fierce that day. And Abner and the men of Israel were beaten before the servants of David.  
 Young's Updated LT             And the battle is very hard on that day, and Abner is struck down, and the men of Israel, before the servants of David.

**The gist of this verse?**        A battle breaks out between Abner's and Joab's army, and it is very vicious, as only a civil war can be.

Some commentators (e.g., Barnes, Gill) note that, because there was no clear cut victory for either side, these two armies began fighting one another. I will grant, that is a possibility; however, let me suggest that Abner had a strategy, which Joab did not:

<b>Abner's Strategy</b>	
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Abner's Strategy</b>
Abner's 12 men win	Abner will either claim total victory, or, if his men win, they will have great confidence if they have to battle Joab's army. Joab's army will feel much less confident.
Abner's 12 men lose	Abner will excuse himself, saying that he will report this to his king; and leave. He will return with a much larger army.
Abner's 12 and Joab's 12 kill each other.	I don't think that Abner had a strategy here. I don't believe he anticipated this outcome.

This is strictly conjecture on my part; however, you will notice that Abner takes the lead in suggesting what should be done. He has a lot more experience here than Joab.



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### 2Samuel 2:17a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced <i>haw-YAW</i> ]	<i>to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person feminine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #1961 BDB #224
mil <sup>e</sup> châmâh (מִלְחָמָה) [pronounced <i>mil-khaw-MAW</i> ]	<i>battle, war</i>	feminine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #4421 BDB #536
qâsheh (קָשָׁה) [pronounced <i>kaw-SHEH</i> ]	<i>hard, severe, difficult, fierce, intense, vehement, stiff, harsh, stubborn</i>	feminine singular adjective/noun	Strong's #7186 BDB #904
ʿad (עַד) [pronounced <i>gahd</i> ]	<i>as far as, even to, up to, until</i>	preposition	Strong's #5704 BDB #723
m <sup>e</sup> ʾôd (מְאֹד) [pronounced <i>m<sup>e</sup>-ODE</i> ]	<i>exceedingly, extremely, greatly, very</i>	adverb	Strong's #3966 BDB #547
Together, ʿad + m <sup>e</sup> ʾôd mean <i>up to abundance, to a great degree, exceedingly</i> .			
b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b<sup>eh</sup></i> ]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
yôwm (יוֹם) [pronounced <i>yohm</i> ]	<i>day; time; today (with a definite article); possibly immediately</i>	masculine singular noun with a definite article	Strong's #3117 BDB #398
hûw <sup>ʾ</sup> (הוּא) [pronounced <i>hoo</i> ]	<i>that; this</i>	masculine singular, demonstrative pronoun with a definite article	Strong's #1931 BDB #214

**Translation:** *And the [subsequent] battle was exceedingly fierce in that day;... Abner's plan was to claim victory if his 12 more seasoned veterans killed David's men, but that did not happen. All of the 24 men who fought killed one another. Almost immediately, a fierce battle broke out between the armies which remained. We are told that the fighting was extremely fierce, as only fighting can be between brothers.*

### 2Samuel 2:17b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253

## 2Samuel 2:17b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
nâgaph (נָגַף) [pronounced naw-GAHF]	<i>to be struck down, to be smitten, to be hit; [possibly] beaten, wounded</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Niphal imperfect	Strong's #5062 BDB #619
ʾĀb <sup>e</sup> nêr (אָבְנֵר) [pronounced u <sup>b</sup> v <sup>e</sup> -NAYR]	<i>my father is Ner or my father is a lamp, and is transliterated Abner</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #74 BDB #4

**Translation: ...and Abner was struck down...** This is an interesting use of this verb, as well as unexpected. When I find this particular verb used, I expect that the subject of the verb dies. However, in this case, *Abner and his men* is a metonym for his army, and this means that his army was soundly defeated. In fact, let me be more specific: it is Abner and his men who are soundly defeated, even though Abner himself may not actually even fall to the ground. It is apparent that Abner is not dead, as we will find him to be very active in this and subsequent chapters of 2Samuel.

## 2Samuel 2:17c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that, so that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʾānāsîym (אֲנָשִׁים) [pronounced uh-NAW-seem]; also spelled ʾîyshîym (אִישִׁים) [pronounced ee-SHEEM]	<i>men; inhabitants, citizens; companions; soldiers, followers</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #376 BDB #35
Yis <sup>e</sup> râ <sup>l</sup> êl (יִשְׂרָאֵל) [pronounced yis-raw-ALE]	transliterated <i>Israel</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #3478 BDB #975
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l <sup>e</sup> )	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
pânîym (פָּנִים) [pronounced paw-NEEM]	<i>face, faces, countenance; presence</i>	masculine plural construct (plural acts like English singular)	Strong's #6440 BDB #815
Together, they mean <i>upon the face of, before, before the face of, in the presence of, in the sight of, in front of</i> . When used with God, it can take on the more figurative meaning <i>in the judgment of</i> . This can also mean <i>forwards; the front part</i> [or, the edge of a sword]. L <sup>e</sup> pânîym (לְפָנַי) can take on a temporal sense as well: <i>before, of old, formerly, in the past, in past times</i> .			
ʿebed (עֶבֶד) [pronounced ĞE <sup>b</sup> -ved]	<i>slave, servant</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #5650 BDB #713
Dâvid (דָּוִד); also Dâvîyd (דָּוִיִּד) [pronounced daw-VEED]	<i>beloved and is transliterated David</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #1732 BDB #187

**Translation:** ...and the soldiers of Israel before the servants of David. Abner's soldiers were also defeated, many of them dying at the hands of David's men. It is normal for us to have the singular noun (Abner) and singular verb (to fall) as we had in v. 17b, and yet for that verb to really apply to *Abner and the men of Israel*. Again, it is not necessary for Abner to even be actually injured in this battle; what is necessary, is for his army to be soundly defeated, which is what took place.

The *servants of David* refers to David's army, in the capable hands of Joab, his nephew.

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### Abner Kills Asahel, David's Nephew

And so are there three sons of Zeruiah: Joab and Abishai and Asahel; and Asahel [is] swift in his feet as one of the gazelles which [is] in the field. 2Samuel 2:18

And there were three of Zeruiah's sons there: Joab, Abishai and Asahel; and Asahel is [as] fast on his feet as one of the wild gazelle's [lit., one of the gazelles of the field].

And there were three of Zeruiah's sons there: Joab, Abishai and Asahel; and Asahel is as fast on his feet as one of the wild gazelle's.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text And so are there three sons of Zeruiah: Joab and Abishai and Asahel; and Asahel [is] swift in his feet as one of the gazelles which [is] in the field.

Septuagint 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.

Significant differences: No significant difference; the Greek presents the simile in a slightly different way; and *roe* is singular. However, the sense of this statement is unaltered.

#### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV Zeruiah's three sons were there: Joab, Abishai, and Asahel. Asahel could run as fast as a deer in an open field,...

*The Message* The three sons of Zeruiah were present: Joab, Abishai, and Asahel. Asahel, as fast as a wild antelope.

#### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

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

#### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

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

Young's Updated LT And there are there three sons of Zeruiah, Joab, and Abishai, and Asahel, and Asahel is light on his feet, as one of the roes which are in the field.

**The gist of this verse?** Zeruiah, David's sister, has 3 sons, Joab, Abishai and Asahel; and they are all with the rest of David's servants here standing up against Abner and his army.

### 2Samuel 2:18a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced <i>haw-YAW</i> ]	<i>to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #1961 BDB #224
shâm (שָׁמָּה) [pronounced <i>shawm</i> ]	<i>there; at that time, then; therein, in that thing</i>	adverb	Strong's #8033 BDB #1027
sh <sup>l</sup> ôshâh (שְׁלוֹשָׁה) [pronounced <i>shiloh-SHAW</i> ]	<i>a three, a trio, a triad, a threesome</i>	feminine numeral	Strong's #7969 BDB #1025
bên (בְּנֵי) [pronounced <i>bane</i> ]	<i>son, descendant</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #1121 BDB #119
Ts <sup>r</sup> ûwyâh (צְרוּיָהּ) [pronounced <i>tz<sup>r</sup>oo-YAW</i> ]	transliterated <i>Zeruiah</i>	feminine singular proper noun	Strong's #6870 BDB #863
Yôw <sup>l</sup> âb (יוֹאָב) [pronounced <i>YOH-aw<sup>b</sup>v</i> ]	<i>Yah is father</i> and is transliterated <i>Joab</i>	masculine singular proper noun	Strong's #3097 BDB #222

**Translation:** *And there were three of Zeruiah's sons there: Joab,...* David had a number of brothers and two sisters that we know of (Abigail and Zeruiah). Zeruiah had 3 sons, and one of them is Joab. Now Joab is mentioned nearly 150 times in Scripture, so all we will recognize here is that he is David's nephew, and, although he is young, he is probably at least in his later teens if not in his early 20's. Zeruiah is probably an older sister to David.

You will recall that David's family, for the most part, did not think much of David. When Samuel had asked to see Jesse's sons, it did not occur to Jesse to bring David out to meet Samuel—this may have been because of David's age and it may have been because he did not much favor David. We have seen that David's brothers, if anything, were antagonistic toward him. When David heard the challenge of Goliath and Saul's offer, he did not ask his brothers for details, even though he was bringing supplies to them—he asked someone else, and his oldest brother jumped all over him for his curiosity (this is all found in 1Sam. 17). We never know if David's brothers ever had a change of heart; however, his sister Zeruiah obviously favored David (or came to, anyway), as she trusted David with her 3 sons.

### 2Samuel 2:18b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וְ) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that, so that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251

## 2Samuel 2:18b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾĂbîyshay (אַבִּי־יֵשַׁי) [pronounced ūb- <sup>v</sup> ee-SHAH-ee]	<i>my father is Jesse and is transliterated Abishai</i>	masculine singular proper noun	Strong's #52 BDB #5
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that, so that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʿĂsâh`êl (עֲשָׂה־אֵל) [pronounced ġuh-SAW-HALE or ġuhs-aw-ALE]	<i>God has made; transliterated Asahel</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #6214 BDB #795

**Translation: ...Abishai and Asahel;...** We know of 3 sons of Zeruah: Joab, Abishai and Asahel. In the very near future, we are going to witness quite a drama which involves these three boys and Abner. We do not know their ages, but I would assume that Joab is the oldest, as he seems to have preeminence; and that all of them are either in their teens or early 20's.

## 2Samuel 2:18c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that, so that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʿĂsâh`êl (עֲשָׂה־אֵל) [pronounced ġuh-SAW-HALE or ġuhs-aw-ALE]	<i>God has made; transliterated Asahel</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #6214 BDB #795
qal (קַל) [pronounced kahʃ]	<i>light, swift, quick, fleet</i>	masculine singular adjective	Strong's #7031 BDB #886
b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
regel (רֶגֶל) [pronounced RĒH-geʃ]	<i>foot, feet</i>	feminine plural noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #7272 BDB #919
kaph or k <sup>e</sup> (כּ) [pronounced k <sup>e</sup> ]	<i>as, like, according to; about, approximately</i>	preposition of comparison or approximation	No Strong's # BDB #453
ʿechâd (אֶחָד) [pronounced eh-KHAWD]	<i>one, first, certain, only; but it can also mean a composite unity; possibly particular</i>	numeral adjective	Strong's #259 BDB #25
ts <sup>e</sup> bîy (צְבִי) [pronounced ts <sup>eb</sup> -VEE]	<i>splendor, beauty, glory, honor; roebuck, gazelle</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #6643 BDB #840
ʿăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced uh-SHER]	<i>that, which, when, who, whom</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81

## 2Samuel 2:18c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
b <sup>e</sup> (ב) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
sâdeh (הַשָּׂדֶה) [pronounced saw-DEH]	<i>field, land, country, open field, open country</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #7704 BDB #961

**Translation:** ...and Asahel is [as] fast on his feet as one of the wild gazelle's [lit., one of the gazelles of the field]. I am a literalist, to some degree, and I take the Bible literally much of the time. However, there are passages like this one where it is obvious that Asahel does really run as fast as a gazelle; the idea is simply that he is extremely fast. The kaph preposition which we find here indicates that this is a simile, but not something which should be taken flat out literally. Most of the time in Scripture, when a passage is not supposed to be taken completely and totally literally, it is fairly clear by the words which are used or by the context. We could have had the phrase, "His feet were the feet of gazelle's" and we would not think that Asahel did not have hooves for feet, but that he was exceptionally fast. We find similar idioms in 2Sam. 1:23 1Chron. 12:8 Psalm 18:33 147:10 SOS 2:17 8:14.

When it comes to the interpretation of Scripture, we may view much of the narrative portion as we would any other narrative. There are certain figures of speech and certain ways of expressing some things in a not so literal way. E. W. Bullinger wrote a very thick volume which deals with the figures of speech which are found in the Bible, but, in many cases, it boils down to simple common sense. Even though the Holy Spirit was the divine author of Scripture, the human authors were fully human and some would use a variety of figures of speech, e.g., similes, metonymies, ellipses, exaggeration, etc. Often, these figures of speech are used at random, just as we do when we write or speak. If we walk through the door of our home and announce to anyone who will listen, "I am dead tired," no one will call an ambulance (or an undertaker), and no one is going to misunderstand what you are saying. This does not mean that you will, from that point on, speak only in exaggeration. You may enumerate very exactly what it was that you had done that day which made you so tired ("I had to work 3 hours overtime"); and you may continue exaggerating ("I must have worked 1000 hours overtime this week!"). Similarly, when we examine Scripture, we should do the same thing—just as we would understand the examples that I gave as exaggerations, there are times when we will find similar figures of speech in the Bible, and we should understand them as such. In this verse, it is so obvious that this is a figure of speech, that most commentators do not even say that it is (yet none of them suggest that Asahel was really as fast as a gazelle).

**And so pursues Asahel after Abner and he had not turned to go upon the right and upon the left from following after Abner.**

2Samuel  
2:19

**So Asahel pursued after Abner, and he did not veer to the right or to the left from following Abner.**

**So Asahel continued pursuing after Abner, and he did not veer off to the right or to the left from following Abner.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

##### Masoretic Text

And so pursues Asahel after Abner and he had not turned to go upon the right and upon the left from following after Abner.

##### Septuagint

And Asael followed after Abenner, and turned not to go to the right hand or to the left from following Abenner.

Significant differences: None.

### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV ...and he ran straight after Abner, without looking to the right or to the left.  
 The Message ...on the open plain, chased Abner, staying hard on his heels.

### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God's Word™ He chased Abner and refused to leave him alone.  
 HCSB He chased Abner and did not turn to the right or the left in his pursuit of him.

### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

WEB Asahel pursued after Abner; and in going he didn't turn to the right hand nor to the left from following Abner.  
 Young's Updated LT And Asahel pursues after Abner, and has not turned aside to go to the right or to the left, from after Abner.

The gist of this verse? Asahel, noted for being fast, continued chasing Abner, and nothing caused him to veer off in either direction.

## 2Samuel 2:19a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced wah]	and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
râdaph (רָדַף) [pronounced raw-DAHf]	to pursue, to follow after; to chase with hostile intent, to persecute	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #7291 BDB #922
ʿĀsâh ʿêl (אַסְהֵאֵל) [pronounced ăuh-SAW-HALE or ăuhs-aw-ALE]	God has made; transliterated Asahel	masculine proper noun	Strong's #6214 BDB #795
ʿachârêy (אַחֲרָי) [pronounced ah-kuh-RAY]	hinder parts; behind, after; following; after that, afterwards	preposition; plural form	Strong's #310 BDB #29
ʿĂb ʿnêr (אַבְנֵר) [pronounced u <sup>b</sup> v <sup>e</sup> -NAYR]	my father is Ner or my father is a lamp, and is transliterated Abner	masculine proper noun	Strong's #74 BDB #4

**Translation:** So Asahel pursued after Abner,... Asahel was the one who pursued Abner, as it was known that he was extremely fast. This indicates that, Abner himself did not fall in battle (as previously discussed).

## 2Samuel 2:19b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וְ) [pronounced weh]	and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251

## 2Samuel 2:19b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lô' (לו' or לא') [pronounced low']	<i>not, no</i>	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
nâṭâh (נָטָה) [pronounced naw-TAWH]	<i>to stretch out, to spread out, to bow, to extend, to incline, to turn</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #5186 BDB #639
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l <sup>e</sup> )	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
hâlak <sup>e</sup> (הָלַךְ) [pronounced haw-LAHK <sup>e</sup> ]	<i>to go, to come, to depart, to walk; to advance</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #1980 (and #3212) BDB #229
ʿal (עַל) [pronounced ʿahl]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over; on the ground of, because of, according to, on account of, on behalf of, with, by, besides, in addition to, to, toward, together with, in the matter of, concerning, as regards to</i>	preposition of proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
yâmîyn (יְמִינִי) [pronounced yaw-MEEN]	<i>the right hand, the right side, on the right, at the right; the south</i>	feminine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #3225 BDB #411
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʿal (עַל) [pronounced ʿahl]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over; on the ground of, because of, according to, on account of, on behalf of, with, by, besides, in addition to, to, toward, together with, in the matter of, concerning, as regards to</i>	preposition of proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
s <sup>e</sup> mô' (שְׂמֹאל) [pronounced s <sup>e</sup> MOHL]	<i>the left, the left hand, the left side; north [when facing east]</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #8040 BDB #969
mê'achar (מֵאַחַר) [pronounced may-ah-KHAHR]	<i>from, from after, from (being) after, from behind, from following after</i>	compounded prepositions	Strong's #4480 BDB #577 and Strong's #310 BDB #29
ʿĂb <sup>e</sup> nêr (אֲבִנֵר) [pronounced u <sup>b</sup> v <sup>e</sup> -NAYR]	<i>my father is Ner or my father is a lamp, and is transliterated Abner</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #74 BDB #4



**Translation:** ...and he did not veer to the right or to the left from following Abner. Asahel was very focused; nothing distracted him from chasing Abner. This pursuit is on foot, since Asahel's speed on foot is alluded to a few verses back.

By the way, this expression of not veering to the right or left is found several times in Scripture: Joshua 1:7 23:6 2Sam. 2:21 2Kings 22:2 Prov. 4:27.

**And so turns Abner after him and so he says, "Is you that, Asahel?"** 2Samuel **Then Abner turned behind him and said, "Is that you, Asahel?"**

2:20

**And so he says, "I."**

**And he answered, "[It is] I."**

**Then Abner glanced back and called out, "Is that you, Asahel?"**

**And Asahel answered, "It is I."**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text And so turns Abner after him and so he says, "Is you that, Asahel?"

Septuagint And so he says, "I."  
And Abenner looked behind him, and said, "Are you Asael himself?" And he said, "I am."

Significant differences: No significant differences, apart from Abner *looking back* in the Greek and *turning back* in the Hebrew.

#### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

*The Message* Abner turned and said, "Is that you, Asahel?" "It surely is," he said.

#### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

*God's Word*<sup>™</sup> When Abner looked back, he asked, "Are you Asahel?" "Yes," Asahel answered.  
HCSB Abner glanced back and said, "Is that you, Asahel?" "Yes it is," Asahel replied.

#### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

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

Young's Updated LT And Abner looks behind him, and says, "Are you he—Asahel?" and he says, "I am."

**The gist of this verse?** Abner realizes that he is being pursued by someone, and he suspects that he knows who it is. They are close enough to yell back and forth, but not so close that Asahel can grab him.

## 2Samuel 2:20a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
pânâh (פָּנָה) [pronounced <i>paw-NAWH</i> ]	<i>to turn, to turn away from, to turn toward, to turn one's face away from, to turn one's face to</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #6437 BDB #815
ʿĂb <sup>e</sup> nêr (אַבְנֵר) [pronounced <i>u<sup>b</sup>v<sup>e</sup>-NAYR</i> ]	<i>my father is Ner or my father is a lamp, and is transliterated Abner</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #74 BDB #4
ʿachârêy (אַחֲרָי) [pronounced <i>ah-kuh-RAY</i> ]	<i>hinder parts; behind, after; following; after that, afterwards</i>	preposition; plural form; with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #310 BDB #29

**Translation:** [Then Abner turned behind him...](#) We talked about a verb back in v. 17, which often means that a man is killed; however, its use there with Abner and the fact that Abner is running clearly means that this verb refers to Abner and his army being defeated, but not completely wiped out; and obviously, Abner is fine. At this point, Abner is running, and he turns slightly around—he turns around enough to know that he is being pursued, but he does not stop and look back—had he done that, he would not have to ask who this is.

## 2Samuel 2:20b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
ʿâmar (אָמַר) [pronounced <i>aw-MAHR</i> ]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
hă (הֲ) [pronounced <i>heh</i> ]	interrogative particle which acts almost like a piece of punctuation, like the upside-down question mark which begins a Spanish sentence. The verb <i>to be</i> may be implied.		Strong's #none BDB #209
ʿattâh (אַתָּה) [pronounced <i>ah<sup>t</sup>-TAW</i> ]	<i>you</i> (often, the verb <i>to be</i> is implied)	2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, personal pronoun	Strong's #859 BDB #61
zeh (זֶה) [pronounced <i>zeh</i> ]	<i>here, this, this one; thus; possibly another</i>	masculine singular demonstrative adjective	Strong's #2088, 2090 (& 2063) BDB #260
ʿĂsâh`êl (עֲשָׂה אֵל) [pronounced <i>g<sup>uh</sup>-SAW-HALE</i> or <i>g<sup>uhs</sup>-aw-ALE</i> ]	<i>God has made; transliterated Asahel</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #6214 BDB #795

**Translation:** [...and said, "Is that you, Asahel?"](#) Abner barely glances around; just enough to know he is being pursued. Whether he actually sees Asahel or whether he suspects that Asahel would be the man to follow him, we don't know. However, when turning around, Abner then calls out, "Is that you, Asahel?"

Abner has known David from way back when David was a part of Saul’s army. Since David had achieved a high status, it is also very likely that Abner knew David’s family quite well. I think what actually is occurring is, Abner knew Asahel is a young boy, and he guessed that this was Asahel the young man following him, and so inquires while running.

<b>2Samuel 2:20c</b>			
<b>Hebrew/Pronunciation</b>	<b>Common English Meanings</b>	<b>Notes/Morphology</b>	<b>BDB and Strong’s Numbers</b>
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong’s # BDB #253
`âmar (אָמַר) [pronounced <i>aw-MAHR</i> ]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong’s #559 BDB #55
`ânôkîy (אֲנִי) [pronounced <i>awn-oh-KEE</i> ]	<i>I, me; (sometimes a verb is implied)</i>	1 <sup>st</sup> person singular personal pronoun	Strong’s #595 BDB #59

**Translation:** *And he answered, “[It is] I.”* Abner is more battle-trained than Asahel, and will gain a slight advantage here. Abner, first of all, does not have to look behind to see who it is; Asahel volunteers this information. This way, Abner is not slowed down, and he can determine a possible strategy to deal with this situation. Abner is an intelligent man who knows how to use his head in an intense situation. Asahel is a lot less knowledgeable and probably does not realize that Abner is planning anything.

**And so says to him, Abner, “Turn aside to you upon your right or upon your left and seize to yourself one from the young men and take his spoil. And would not consent Asahel to turn aside from after him.**

2Samuel  
2:21

**Abner then said to him, “Turn aside to your right or to your left and take a hold of one of the young men and take his armor [and weapons].” But Asahel was not willing to turn aside from following after him.**

**Abner then said to him, “Turn aside and take a hold of one of the young men on your right or left, and take from him his armor or weapons.” However, Asahel was not willing to be so distracted.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

**Ancient texts:**

Masoretic Text

And so says to him, Abner, “Turn aside to you upon your right or upon your left and seize to yourself one from the young men and take his spoil. And would not consent Asahel to turn aside from after him.

Septuagint

And Abenner said to him, “Turn to the right hand or to the left, and lay hold for thyself on one of the young men, and take to thyself his armor.” But Asael would not turn back from following him.

Significant differences:

No significant differences.

**Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:**

CEV

Abner said, "There are soldiers all around. Stop chasing me and fight one of them! Kill him and take his clothes and weapons for yourself." But Asahel refused to stop.

The Message

Abner said, "Let up on me. Pick on someone you have a chance of beating and be content with those spoils!" But Asahel wouldn't let up.

**Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):***God's Word™*

Abner told him, "Leave me alone! Catch one of the young men, and take his weapon." But Asahel refused to turn away from him.

HCSB

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.

**Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

LTHB

And Abner said to him, Turn aside to your right, or to your left, and seize one of the young men for yourself, and take his spoil for yourself. And Asahel was not willing to turn aside from following him.

Young's Updated LT

And Abner says to him, "Turn aside to your right hand or to your left, and seize for you one of the youths, and take to you his armor;" and Asahel has not been willing to turn aside from after him.

**The gist of this verse?**

Abner suggests to Asahel that he take out one of the younger men that he is running past, in order to seize his armor and possessions (and Saul's former army is certainly going to be better equipped than David's). However, Asahel was not willing to turn from Abner.

**2Samuel 2:21a**

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
ʾamar (אָמַר) [pronounced <i>aw-MAHR</i> ]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l</i> )	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
nâṭâh (נָטָה) [pronounced <i>naw-TAWH</i> ]	<i>to stretch out, to spread out, to bow, to extend, to incline, to turn</i>	2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperative	Strong's #5186 BDB #639
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l</i> )	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
ʿal (עַל) [pronounced <i>gahl</i> ]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over; on the ground of, because of, according to, on account of, on behalf of, with, by, besides, in addition to, to, toward, together with, in the matter of, concerning, as regards to</i>	preposition of proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752

## 2Samuel 2:21a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
yâmîyn (יָמִיַן) [pronounced yaw-MEEN]	<i>the right hand, the right side, on the right, at the right; the south</i>	feminine singular noun with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #3225 BDB #411
ʾô (וָאוּ) [pronounced oh]	<i>or, or rather, otherwise, also, and</i>	conjunction	Strong's #176 BDB #14
ʿal (עַל) [pronounced ʿahl]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over; on the ground of, because of, according to, on account of, on behalf of, with, by, besides, in addition to, to, toward, together with, in the matter of, concerning, as regards to</i>	preposition of proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
s°môʾl (שָׁמֹאל) [pronounced s°MOHL]	<i>the left, the left hand, the left side; north [when facing east]</i>	masculine singular noun with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #8040 BDB #969

**Translation:** Abner then said to him, “Turn aside to your right or to your left... Abner and much of his army are retreating, and they are going in several directions. Asahel is focused on Abner, who is straight ahead of him; however, there are men from Abner’s army peeling off to the right and left, hoping to save themselves.

## 2Samuel 2:21b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w° (or v°) (ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that, so that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʾâchaz (אַחַז) [pronounced aw-KHAHZ]	<i>to grasp, to take hold of, to seize; to take [by hunting, fishing]; to hold [something taken]; to take possession of</i>	2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperative	Strong's #270 BDB #28
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l°)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
ʿechâd (אֶחָד) [pronounced eh-KHAWD]	<i>one, first, certain, only; but it can also mean a composite unity; possibly particular</i>	numeral adjective	Strong's #259 BDB #25
min (מִן) [pronounced min]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
n°aʿar (נְעָרִים) [pronounced NĀH-ġahr]	<i>boy, youth, young man, personal attendant</i>	masculine plural noun with the definite article	Strong's #5288 & #5289 BDB #654

**Translation:** ...and take a hold of one of the young men... It is unclear whether these young men are fleeing as well as Abner or whether they lie dead along the way. It is possible that Abner and Asahel are running through a battlefield where a lot of young men lie slain, struck with arrows (putting them at a distance from Asahel's brothers and army); or that there are a number of young men also running from the battle, as well as Abner, and Abner is suggesting that Asahel grab one of them. Given the verb that we find here, it seems more reasonable that these are moving targets which Asahel would have to physically grab in order to kill them and take their armor and weapons. So, the picture here is one of Abner and his army fleeing from the battle, completely defeated (which is in line with what we have been told in v. 17).

### 2Samuel 2:21c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that, so that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
lâqach (לָקַח) [pronounced <i>law-KAHKH</i> ]	<i>take, seize, take away, take in marriage; send for, fetch, bring, receive</i>	2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperative	Strong's #3947 BDB #542
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l<sup>e</sup></i> )	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
ʿêth (אֶת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]	generally untranslated; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
châlîytsâh (חַלְיֻצָהּ) [pronounced <i>khahl-ee-SAW</i> ]	<i>spoils, that which is stripped off, what belonged to a dead man (armor, clothing, weapons, belt)</i>	feminine singular noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #2488 BDB #322

**Translation:** ...and take his armor [and weapons].” The word for *spoil* here is rarely found (just here and Judges 14:19), but it refers to whatever another owns which is of value, but it appears to refer to whatever the person is specifically wearing (which could include a weapon). This word is related to a word which means *knife* (Strong's #4252 BDB #322); to one which refers to a change of clothes (Strong's #2487 BDB #322); and to another which refers to a royal robe (Strong's #4254 BDB #323). So, even though we only find this particular word twice, it is reasonable that it refers to the clothing, armor and weapons that another wears and carries. Abner suggests to Asahel that he stop for a moment and grab a young man who has these things and to take it for himself. “Be content with killing a lesser man and taking his weapons instead,” is what Abner suggests.

Gill comments: *[Abner suggests that Asahel take out] one of the common soldiers, or an attendant on Abner, a young man like himself, whom he might be able to cope with, and take him a prisoner and disarm him, when he was not a match for such an old experienced officer as he was; and this Abner seems to speak as a friend, consulting the young man's safety and his honour too.*<sup>57</sup>

Abner, in my opinion, is not really thinking of this young man's safety, per se. This may have something to do with his thinking process, but I believe that Abner was primarily concerned about Asahel. The conversation would, if anything, distract Asahel, so that Abner could determine what to do. Although it is possible that Abner did not want to kill Asahel, he will obviously do so willingly—perhaps under the concept of kill or be killed; but, Abner could have surrendered and probably he would have been spared. Therefore, I think it is reasonable to suppose that Abner

<sup>57</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, 2Sam. 2:21.

was looking to save Abner so that he could live to fight another day. However, this looking into Abner's head, as we have done previously, is logical conjecture. That is, I am reasonably sure of my conclusion, but I may not want to bet the farm on it.

### 2Samuel 2:21d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that, so that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
lô' (לוֹ' or לוֹא) [pronounced <i>low</i> ]	<i>not, no</i>	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
ʾâbâh (אָבָה) [pronounced <i>aw<sup>b</sup>-VAWH</i> ]	<i>to be willing, to consent</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #14 BDB #2
ʾâbâh with the negative means <i>to choose not to, not to be willing to, to refuse consent, to refuse, to refuse to do.</i>			
ʿĀsâhʾêl (עֲשָׂה־אֵל) [pronounced <i>ġuh-SAW-HALE</i> or <i>ġuhs-aw-ALE</i> ]	<i>God has made; transliterated Asahel</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #6214 BDB #795
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l<sup>e</sup></i> )	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
çûwr (סוּר) [pronounced <i>soor</i> ]	<i>to turn aside, to depart, to go away</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #5493 (and #5494) BDB #693
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i> ]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
ʾachârêy (אַחֲרָי) [pronounced <i>ah-kuh-RAY</i> ]	<i>hinder parts; behind, after; following; after that, afterwards</i>	preposition; plural form; with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #310 BDB #29
This compound appears to be treated more like one word, as below:			
mêʾachâr (מֵאַחֲרַי) [pronounced <i>may-ah-KHAHR</i> ]	<i>from, from after, from (being) after, from behind, from following after</i>	compounded prepositions	Strong's #4480 BDB #577 and Strong's #310 BDB #29

**Translation:** *But Asahel was not willing to turn aside from following after him.* Asahel was very single minded at this point, and nothing tempted him. Apparently many of the young men from Abner's army had fallen and some of them had better armor and weapons than Asahel owned; however, he was not to be distracted from catching Abner.

Clarke: *[Asahel], fired with the ambition of taking him, and not content with any prey short of him; and perhaps was the more animated by what he said, as supposing it arose from fear of him.*<sup>58</sup> Clarke is

<sup>58</sup> Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, 2Sam. 2:21.

simply doing what I am doing—trying to determine what is going on inside the mind of Asahel. I personally think that Asahel is simply focused on Abner and catching and/or killing him.

**Application:** We sometimes get caught up in having a single-minded focus—a very narrow objective—and we have problems deviating from that objective. There are times in your life that you must have focus and other times when you need to be flexible. I know of an individual right now who is about to be evicted who purchased a vehicle for \$400/month. He was focused on getting this vehicle; the end result is, he is unable to pay his bills. He has the truck, but now he cannot afford to pay his rent. I am not saying that, when faced with a minor roadblock that you should no longer pursue this or that goal; but I am saying, now and again, you need to reevaluate your focus in life. That which you are pursuing needs to be thought about now and again. Asahel is so focused on Abner, that he is not even realizing that he is going to be lured into a trap. He will be so single-minded that he will die because of it.

There is even the possibility that Asahel was focused on the glory and the honor of taking down Abner, the head of Israel's army; and he would have Abner's sword to display forever this great victory.

And so adds again Abner to say unto Asahel, "Turn aside to you from after me; for why do I strike you ground-ward and how will I lift up my faces unto Joab your brother?"

2Samuel  
2:22

Then Abner continued against to speak to Asahel, "Turn aside from following after me; for why cause me to strike you to the ground? And how will I lift up my face to your brother Joab [after this]?"

Abner continued to try to reason with Asahel, saying, "Please turn back from chasing after me; don't make me strike you down. How will I face your brother Joab after this?"

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

##### Masoretic Text

And so adds again Abner to say unto Asahel, "Turn aside to you from after me; for why do I strike you ground-ward and how will I lift up my faces unto Joab your brother?"

##### Septuagint

And Abenner said yet again to Asael, "Stand aloof from me, lest I strike you to the ground? And how should I lift up my face to Joab?"

##### Significant differences:

The slight differences are probably a matter of translation from the Hebrew into the Greek.

#### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

##### CEV

Abner said, "If you don't turn back, I'll have to kill you! Then I could never face your brother Joab again."

##### The Message

Abner tried again, "Turn back. Don't force me to kill you. How would I face your brother Joab?"

#### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

##### God's Word™

So Abner spoke again to Asahel. "Stop following me," he said. "Why should I kill you? How could I look your brother Joab in the face again?"

##### HCSB

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?"

#### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:



ESV 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?"

Young's Updated LT And Abner adds again, saying unto Asahel, "Turn you aside from after me, why do I strike you to the earth? And how do I lift up my face unto Joab your brother?"

**The gist of this verse?** Abner continues to try to reason with Asahel. He tells Asahel to turn aside from chasing after him and then asks, "Why do you cause me to strike you down? And how can I look your brother Joab in the eye after this?"

### 2Samuel 2:22a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
yâçaph (וַיַּצֵּף) [pronounced yaw-SAHPH]	<i>to add, to augment, to continue to do a thing</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #3254 BDB #414
ôwd (וַעֲדָ) [pronounced <i>ôhd</i> ]	<i>still, yet, again, besides, in addition to, even yet</i>	adverb	Strong's #5750 BDB #728
Āb <sup>e</sup> nêr (אֲבִנֵר) [pronounced u <sup>b</sup> v <sup>e</sup> -NAYR]	<i>my father is Ner or my father is a lamp, and is transliterated Abner</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #74 BDB #4
lâmed (לְ) (pronounced <i>l</i> )	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
âmar (אָמַר) [pronounced aw-MAHR]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #559 BDB #55
el (אֶל) [pronounced <i>e</i> ]	<i>unto; into, among, in; toward, to; against; concerning, regarding; besides, together with; as to</i>	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)	Strong's #413 BDB #39
Āsâh <sup>e</sup> el (אֲשָׁהֵל) [pronounced <i>âh-SAW-HALE</i> or <i>âhs-aw-ALE</i> ]	<i>God has made; transliterated Asahel</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #6214 BDB #795

**Translation:** Then Abner continued against to speak to Asahel,... Asahel is gaining on Abner; he is moving closer and closer. Abner again speaks to him, to try to dissuade him from this chase. His reasons are going to be quite reasonable and well thought out for a man running during a battle.

### 2Samuel 2:22b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
çûwr (וַיִּסָּו) [pronounced <i>soor</i> ]	<i>turn aside, depart, go away</i>	2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperative	Strong's #5493 (and #5494) BDB #693

## 2Samuel 2:22b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <sup>l</sup> )	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
mê'achar (מֵאַחַר) [pronounced <i>may-ah-KHAHR</i> ]	<i>from, from after, from (being) after, from behind, from following</i>	compounded prepositions; with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person plural suffix; pausal form	Strong's #4480 BDB #577 and Strong's #310 BDB #29

**Translation:**...“Turn aside from following after me;... Abner calls back to Asahel, who is slowly gaining on him, and he pleads with him to stop chasing him. Abner has already suggested that Asahel turn aside and go after one of the other soldiers, but Asahel seems resolute here. Abner is going to give him another reason why he should stop chasing him.

## 2Samuel 2:22c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <sup>l</sup> )	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
mâh (מַה) [pronounced <i>maw</i> ]	<i>what, how, why</i>	interrogative; exclamatory particle	Strong's #4100 BDB #552
Lâmed + mâh can be rendered <i>why, for what reason, to what purpose, for what purpose</i> , indicating an interrogatory sentence.			
nâkâh (נָכַח) [pronounced <i>naw-KAWH</i> ]	<i>to smite, to assault, to hit, to strike, to strike [something or someone] down, to defeat, to conquer, to subjugate</i>	1 <sup>st</sup> person singular, Hiphil imperfect; with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong #5221 BDB #645
'erets (אֶרֶץ) [pronounced <i>EH-rets</i> ]	<i>earth (all or a portion thereof), land, ground, soil</i>	feminine singular noun with the directional hê	Strong's #776 BDB #75

**Translation:** ...for why cause me to strike you to the ground? We find the Hiphil stem here, which is causative; since Asahel continues to chase after Abner, and since he is probably gaining on Abner, Abner will have to defend himself, and Abner, although he cannot outrun Asahel, he knows he can outfight him. Abner does not want to be put into this position of having to kill Asahel. Asahel, on the other hand, does not consider the possibility that Abner will kill him. He sees himself as younger and stronger and faster than Abner; and, due to his own youth, sees himself as indestructible.

## 2Samuel 2:22d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that, so that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʿêyk (אֵיךְ) [pronounced <i>ayche</i> ]	<i>how</i>	interrogative adverb	Strong's #349 BDB #32
nâsâ' (נָשָׂא) [pronounced <i>naw-SAW</i> ]	<i>to lift up, to bear, to carry</i>	1 <sup>st</sup> person singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #5375 (and #4984) BDB #669
pânîym (פָּנִים) [pronounced <i>paw-NEEM</i> ]	<i>face, faces, countenance; presence</i>	masculine plural construct (plural acts like English singular); with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix	Strong's #6440 BDB #815
ʿel (עַל) [pronounced <i>e]</i>	<i>unto; into, among, in; toward, to; against; concerning, regarding; besides, together with; as to</i>	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)	Strong's #413 BDB #39
Yôw'âb (יְהוֹאָב) [pronounced <i>YOH-aw<sup>b</sup>v</i> ]	<i>Yah is father and is transliterated Joab</i>	masculine singular proper noun	Strong's #3097 BDB #222
ʿâch (אָח) [pronounced <i>awhk</i> ]	<i>brother, kinsman or close relative</i>	masculine singular noun with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #251 BDB #26

**Translation:** *And how will I lift up my face to your brother Joab [after this]?* What Abner is really asking here is, “If I kill you, how can I look your brother in the eye?” Even though David had been estranged from Saul for a decade or so, Abner apparently had some sort of relationship with David’s family. Some of them were brought closer to the palace. There were David’s 3 brothers who served in Saul’s military (we are not told what happened to them when David left the palace). Given David’s original position in the palace and given that 3 of his brothers at least, at one time, served in Saul’s military, it is reasonable that one of his sisters moved closer. It is also reasonable for Abner to have known Joab, and it appears as though he knew Joab and his younger brothers from an early age. We don’t really have any details here, but Abner definitely knew Joab, and there was some sort of a close relationship there, despite the previous decade or so of David being in exile. Abner recognizes that, once he kills Asahel, there is no turning back; this will cause a permanent riff in their relationship.

Matthew Henry comments: *Abner, it seems, either loved Joab or feared him; for he was very loth to incur his displeasure, which he would certainly do if he slew Asahel. It is commendable for enemies to be thus respectful one to another. Abner's care how he should lift up his face to Joab gives cause to suspect that he really believed David would have the kingdom at last, according to the divine designation, and then, in opposing him, he acted against his conscience.*<sup>59</sup>

I must admit that, I go back and forth on Abner’s motivation (which is purely speculation, anyway). For Abner to know who Asahel is, suggests a prior relationship with him; for Abner to make the comments that he does, tells us that he knows Joab intimately as well. Given the difference in their ages, further suggests that Abner probably knew these young men as boys, through David, as these are David’s nephews. Abner could reasonably not want to chance permanently destroying his relationship with Joab through this act of self-defense.

<sup>59</sup> Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, 2Sam. 2:18–24.

And so refuses to turn aside and so strikes him down Abner in an end of the spear unto the fifth [rib; possibly, *abdomen*], and so comes out the spear from hinder parts [*back?*]. And so he falls there and so he dies under him. And so he is each of the one coming unto the place where fell there Asahel and so he dies; and so they remain.

2Samuel  
2:23

But he refuses to turn aside and Abner struck him down with the end of his spear into to abdomen and the spear came out [his] back. So he fell there and died at his feet [lit., *beneath him*]. And it was that each one who came to that place where Asahel fell and died, that they remained.

However, Asahel refused to turn back, so Abner struck him down with the end of his spear, thrusting it through his abdomen so that it came out his back. Therefore, Asahel fell there and died at his feet. Also, each man who came to that spot just stopped and looked.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

Latin Vulgate	But he refused to hearken to him, and would not turn aside: wherefore Abner struck him with his spear with a back stroke in the groin, and thrust him through, and he died upon the spot: and all that came to the place where Asael fell down and died stood still.
Masoretic Text	And so refuses to turn aside and so strikes him down Abner in an end of the spear unto the fifth [rib; possibly, <i>abdomen</i> ], and so comes out the spear from hinder parts [ <i>back?</i> ]. And so he falls there and so he dies under him. And so he is each of the one coming unto the place where fell there Asahel and so he dies; and so they remain.
Septuagint	“And what does this mean? Return to Joab your brother?” But he would not stand aloof; and Abenner strikes 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.
Significant differences:	The first two sentences in the Greek are not found in the Hebrew. Apart from that, these are apparently equivalent (although it is not clear exactly where Asahel is struck). Part of this difficulty is the Hebrew itself, as we will see.

#### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	But Asahel would not turn back, so Abner struck him in the stomach with the back end of his spear. The spear went all the way through and came out of his back. Asahel fell down and died. Everyone who saw Asahel lying dead just stopped and stood still.
<i>The Message</i>	When he refused to quit, Abner struck him in the belly with the blunt end of his spear so hard that it came out his back. Asahel fell to the ground and died at once. Everyone who arrived at the spot where Asahel fell and died stood and gaped-- Asahel dead!

#### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

<i>God's Word</i> ™	But Asahel refused to turn away. So Abner struck him with the butt of the spear. The spear went into his belly and came out his back. He fell down there and died on the spot. And everyone who came to the place where Asahel fell and died stopped there.
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## HCSB

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,...

## Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

## WEB

However he refused to turn aside: therefore Abner with the hinder end of the spear struck him in the body, so that the spear came out behind him; and he fell down there, and died in the same place: and it happened, that as many as came to the place where Asahel fell down and died stood still.

## Young's Updated LT

And he refuses to turn aside, and Abner strikes him with the hinder part of the spear unto the fifth rib, and the spear comes out from behind him, and he falls there, and dies under it. And it comes to pass, every one who has come unto the place where Asahel has fallen and has died—they stand still.

## The gist of this verse?

Asahel refuses to back off, so, when he comes close enough, Abner puts a spear straight through him and Asahel dies there. When others catch up, they stop in their steps when they see Asahel's body.

## 2Samuel 2:23a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced waw]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
mâ`ên (מֵאֵן) [pronounced maw-AIN]	<i>to refuse, to be unwilling; to cease, to leave off</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Piel imperfect	Strong's #3985 BDB #549
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l) )	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
çûwr (סוּר) [pronounced soor]	<i>to turn aside, to depart, to go away</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #5493 (and #5494) BDB #693

**Translation:** *But he refuses to turn aside...* Asahel is right behind Abner. He continues to follow him. What Abner says cannot dissuade him. Abner has suggested that he take out one of Abner's young men for his weapons; Abner has appealed to him on a personal level, saying, "How could I look your brother in the eye if I kill you?" Neither argument slows Asahel down.

## 2Samuel 2:23b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced waw]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
nâkâh (נָכַח) [pronounced naw-KAWH]	<i>to smite, to assault, to hit, to strike, to strike [something or someone] down, to defeat, to conquer, to subjugate</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect; with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong #5221 BDB #645

## 2Samuel 2:23b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
ʿachărêy (אַחֲרָי) [pronounced ah-kuh-RAY]	<i>hinder parts; behind, after; following; after that, afterwards</i>	preposition; plural form	Strong's #310 BDB #29
The preposition ʿachărêy appears to have a rare substantive use as well; here, it can mean <i>the end of, the butt of, the end portion; the back</i> . <sup>60</sup>			
ḥăñîyth (חֲנִיִּת) [pronounced khuh-NEETH]	<i>spear</i>	feminine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #2595 BDB #333
ʿel (עַל) [pronounced e]	<i>unto; into, among, in; toward, to; against; concerning, regarding; besides, together with; as to</i>	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)	Strong's #413 BDB #39
chômesh (חֹמֶשׁ) [pronounced KHOH-mesh]	<i>belly, abdomen, stomach; fifth [rib]; fifth [part]</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #2569 & #2570 BDB #332

BDB seems to struggle with this word, but, in my estimation, without cause. 4 times it clearly refers to the *belly, stomach* or *abdomen* (2Sam. 2:23 3:27 4:6 20:10); one time, it refers to the *fifth part* of produce—i.e., it refers to a tax (Gen. 47:26). Its cognates, for the most part, are related to the numeral 5. What is likely the case is, this word was understood to mean *the fifth rib*; but was used commonly and metaphorically for the *stomach* or *abdomen*. The idea could have come from the idea of stabbing a person above or below the fifth rib was likely to result in a quick death for that person, so that became the target area in battle. Given what happens in this context, one could reasonably argue that this word came to be used even in reference to the *stomach* below the ribs.

**Translation:** ...and Abner struck him down with the end of his spear into to abdomen... Abner is carrying a spear and he thrusts this through Asahel. Although it sounds like it is the wrong end of the spear here, that is not necessarily the case. We do not find this substantive used enough to guarantee that is how it should be interpreted. However, it is not out of the question for Abner to have the end of the spear sharpened and for him to have quickly thrust the spear backwards into Asahel as he runs. This is no doubt a maneuver that Abner had perfected on the battlefield. Asahel had youthful enthusiasm, and the bravery of youth; but Abner was realistic and experienced. Abner was an older man who was still alive after spending much of his life in the military; and he remained alive by not making any mistakes in battle. The speed at which he dispensed with Asahel probably surprised Asahel greatly. It did not occur to him that he would be so deftly outsmarted.

What Barnes reasonably suggests is, the handle-end of Abner's spear was probably sharpened as well. Saul's sword was stuck into the ground next to him as he slept in 1Sam. 26:7; it is reasonable that it is the wooden end which was stuck into the ground, and not the spear head itself. Such a modification of the spear would not cause a problem with its usage.

Although there is a question here in the Hebrew as to which end of the spear was used, I think that what happened here was a sudden, unexpected movement on Abner's part. He knew that the blunt end of his spear was sharp

<sup>60</sup> *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*; Hendrickson Publishers; ©1996; p. 30.

enough to piece a man's stomach. A spear is something which would have been carried by hand, and not in a sheath. For balance, Abner would be holding this spear in the middle, not at the end. So, we have Asahel pursuing close after Abner, and Abner is carrying his spear; Asahel obviously has a weapon of some sort himself. Abner then slows almost imperceptibly, enough to where Asahel moves dangerously close to him; suddenly, as Asahel is within a foot of him, ready to reach out and grab him, Abner, whose arms are going slightly back and forth anyway from running, throws his right arm holding the spear straight back, and he stops. Asahel keeps going, his arms are up to grab Abner, and Abner's backward thrust and Asahel's forward movement result in the end of Abner's spear penetrating Asahel's stomach. Abner slowing down, the lifting of Asahel's hands to grab Abner, the suddenly backward thrust of Abner's right hand, then Abner's sudden stop, all occurred in a split second. Asahel did not stand a chance.

### 2Samuel 2:23c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
yâtsâ' (יָצְאָה) [pronounced yaw-TZAWH]	<i>to go out, to come out, to come forth; to rise; to flow, to gush up [out]</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person feminine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #3318 BDB #422
ḥăniyth (חֲנִיִּיתָ) [pronounced khuh-NEETH]	<i>spear</i>	feminine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #2595 BDB #333
min (מִן) [pronounced min]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
ʾachărêy (אַחֲרָיָם) [pronounced ah-kuh-RAY]	<i>hinder parts; behind, after; following; after that, afterwards</i>	preposition; plural form; with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #310 BDB #29

The preposition ʾachărêy appears to have a rare substantive use as well; here, it can mean *the end of, the butt of, the end portion; the back*.<sup>61</sup> If you have noticed, we find this substantive used in 3 very different ways in this passage.

The translation *fifth rib* found in the KJV is erroneous, and not repeated in the MKJV or the NKJV.

**Translation:** ...and the spear came out [his] back. Whichever end of the spear went into Asahel, it went right through him and came out his back. This stopped Asahel in his tracks. A stomach wound is one of the most serious in battle—there is no protection to the stomach and the abdominal area, and Abner strikes with extreme force. Abner did not become an older military man by striking with limited or tentative force. This backward thrust was designed to go into Asahel's abdomen, but there was enough power behind it to dispatch Asahel even if the sword went into his ribs.

Matthew Henry comments: *This was a pass which Asahel was not acquainted with, nor had learned to stand upon his guard against; but Abner, perhaps, had formerly used it, and done execution with it; and here it did effectual execution. Asahel died immediately of the wound. See here, 1. How death often comes upon us by ways that we least suspect. Who would fear the hand of a flying enemy or the butt-end of a spear? Yet from these Asahel receives his death's wound. 2. How we are often betrayed by the accomplishments we are proud of. Asahel's swiftness, which he presumed so much upon, did him no kindness, but forwarded his fate, and with it he ran upon his death, instead of running*

<sup>61</sup> *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*; Hendrickson Publishers; ©1996; p. 30.

from it. Asahel's fall was not only Abner's security from him, but put a full stop to the conqueror's pursuit.<sup>62</sup>

2Samuel 2:23d			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced wah]	and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
nâphal (נָפַל) [pronounced naw-FAHL]	to fall, to lie, to die a violent death, to be brought down, to settle, to sleep deeply	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #5307 BDB #656
shâm (שָׁמָּה) [pronounced shawm]	there; at that time, then; therein, in that thing	adverb	Strong's #8033 BDB #1027
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced wah]	and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
mûwth (מָוַת) [pronounced mooth]	to die; to perish, to be destroyed	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #4191 BDB #559
tachath (תַּחַת) [pronounced TAH-khahth]	underneath, below, under, beneath; instead of, in lieu of; in the place [in which one stands] [when found in accusative position]; on the basis of	preposition of location or foundation; with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #8478 BDB #1065

**Translation:** So he fell there and died at his feet [lit., beneath him]. It was apparently just Abner and Asahel behind him. There was no large army pursuing Abner—just this young man. Anyone else in pursuit was far enough behind so that Abner could stop at this point, which he would have in order to retrieve his weapon.

Clarke comments: *It seems Asahel wished to get the armor of Abner as a trophy; this also was greatly coveted by ancient heroes. Abner wished to spare him, for fear of exciting Joab's enmity; but as Asahel was obstinate in the pursuit, and was swifter of foot than Abner, the latter saw that he must either kill or be killed, and therefore he turned his spear and ran it through the body of Asahel. This turning about that he might pierce him is what we translate "the hinder end of his spear." This slaying of Asahel cost Abner his life, as we shall find in the next chapter.*<sup>63</sup>

2Samuel 2:23e			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced wah]	and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced haw-YAW]	to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #1961 BDB #224

<sup>62</sup> Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, 2Sam. 2:18–24.

<sup>63</sup> Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, 2Sam. 2:21.



## 2Samuel 2:23e

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced kohl]	<i>the whole, all of, the entirety of, all; can also be rendered any of</i>	masculine singular construct followed by a definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
bôw' (בֹּוֹ) [pronounced boh]	<i>the one entering [coming, one going] [in]; he who enters [goes, comes (in)]</i>	Qal active participle with the definite article	Strong's #935 BDB #97
'el (אֶל) [pronounced el]	<i>unto; into, among, in; toward, to; against; concerning, regarding; besides, together with; as to</i>	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)	Strong's #413 BDB #39
mâqôwm (מִקּוֹם) [pronounced maw-KOHW]	<i>place, situated; for a soldier, it may mean where he is stationed; for people in general, it would be their place of abode (which could be their house or their town)</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #4725 BDB #879
'ăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced uh-SHER]	<i>that, so that, in that; for that, since; which; when, at what time; who, whom; where, wherever; the fact that = how; because that, because; as, like as; yea, even, yea even; until that; then, so [in an apodosis]</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
nâphal (נָפַל) [pronounced naw-FAHL]	<i>to fall, to lie, to die a violent death, to be brought down, to settle, to sleep deeply</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #5307 BDB #656
shâm (שָׁמָּה) [pronounced shawm]	<i>there; at that time, then; therein, in that thing</i>	adverb	Strong's #8033 BDB #1027
'Ăsâh'êl (אֲשָׁהָל) [pronounced ŷuh-SAW-HALE or ŷuhs-aw-ALE]	<i>God has made; transliterated Asahel</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #6214 BDB #795
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
mûwth (מוּת) [pronounced mooth]	<i>to die; to perish, to be destroyed</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #4191 BDB #559

**Translation:** [And it was that each one who came to that place where Asahel fell and died,...](#) Apparently, as this battle raged, and even as Abner and his men were retreating, Joab's men continued to advance. Asahel and Abner were apparently the furthest along until Abner killed Asahel. Now, as the others begin to catch up, they come across Asahel's body and they stop suddenly.

## 2Samuel 2:23f

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
ʿâmad (אָמַד) [pronounced gaw-MAHD]	<i>to take a stand, to stand, to remain, to endure, to withstand</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #5975 BDB #763

**Translation:** ...that they remained. These other soldiers of Joab's who have been pursuing Abner's retreating army just stop right there at Asahel's body. These soldiers each stop and mourn; however, Joab and Abishai see this and they continue to pursue Abner, being both shocked and grieved to see their brother lying there in his blood.

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### A Temporary Truce is Called

And so pursue, Joab and Abishai, after Abner and the sun is going in and they have come as far as a hill of Ammah which [is] upon faces of Giah, a way of a desert-wilderness of Gibeon.

2Samuel  
2:24

Joab and Abishai [continue] pursuing after Abner and [as] the sun is setting, they had come as far as the hill of Ammah, which [is] before Giah [on] the road [to] the desert-wilderness of Gibeon.

Joab and Abishai continued to pursue Abner. As the sun is setting, they come as far as the hill of Ammah, which faces Giah on the road to the wilderness of Gibeon.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

##### Masoretic Text

And so pursue, Joab and Abishai, after Abner and the sun is going in and they have come as far as a hill of Ammah which [is] upon faces of Giah, a way of a desert-wilderness of Gibeon.

##### Septuagint

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.

Significant differences: None.

#### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

##### CEV

But Joab and Abishai went after Abner. Finally, about sunset, they came to the hill of Ammah, not far from Giah on the road to Gibeon Desert.

##### The Message

But Joab and Abishai kept up the chase after Abner. As the sun began to set, they came to the hill of Ammah that faced Giah on the road to the backcountry of Gibeon.

#### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

## God's Word™

But Joab and Abishai chased Abner. When the sun went down, they came to the hill of Ammah, opposite Giah on the road from Gibeon to the desert.

## HCSB

...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.

## Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

## WEB

But Joab and Abishai pursued after Abner: and the sun went down when they were come to the hill of Ammah, that lies before Giah by the way of the wilderness of Gibeon.

## Young's Updated LT

And Joab and Abishai pursue after Abner, and the sun has gone in, and they have come in unto the height of Ammah, which is on the front of Giah, the way of the wilderness of Gibeon.

## The gist of this verse?

Although the other soldiers stop when they come to Asahel's body, his brothers, Joab and Abishai, relentlessly continue pursuing Abner. As the sun goes down, they come to the mountain of Ammah which faces Giah on the wilderness road to Gibeon.

## 2Samuel 2:24a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced waw]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
râdaph (רָדַף) [pronounced raw-DAHf]	<i>to pursue, to follow after; to chase with hostile intent, to persecute</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #7291 BDB #922
Yôw`âb (יוֹאָב) [pronounced YOH-aw <sup>b</sup> v]	<i>Yah is father and is transliterated Joab</i>	masculine singular proper noun	Strong's #3097 BDB #222
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וְ) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
`Ăbîyshay (אֲבִישַׁי) [pronounced ūb- <sup>v</sup> ee-SHAH-ee]	<i>my father is Jesse and is transliterated Abishai</i>	masculine singular proper noun	Strong's #52 BDB #5
`achârêy (אַחֲרָי) [pronounced ah-kuh-RAY]	<i>hinder parts; behind, after; following; after that, afterwards</i>	preposition; plural form	Strong's #310 BDB #29
`Ăb <sup>e</sup> nêr (אֲבִנֵר) [pronounced ūb <sup>v</sup> - <sup>e</sup> -NAYR]	<i>my father is Ner or my father is a lamp, and is transliterated Abner</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #74 BDB #4

**Translation:** Joab and Abishai [continue] pursuing after Abner... Joab and Abishai come upon the slain body of their brother, and continue to pursue Abner. It is unclear whether they witnessed Asahel's death, but it would be easy for them to instantly determine that Abner did it, as, at one point, they saw Asahel, who was known for being fast, go after Abner, and now, they come across Asahel's slain body. Although they probably saw what happened from a distance, even if they did not, they could certainly figure it out.

## 2Samuel 2:24b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that, so that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
shemesh (שֶׁמֶשׁ) [pronounced <i>SHEH-mesh</i> ]	<i>sun</i>	feminine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #8121 BDB #1039
bôw' (בּוֹא) [pronounced <i>boh</i> ]	<i>to come in, to come, to go in, to go, to enter</i>	feminine singular, Qal active participle	Strong's #935 BDB #97

When used of the sun, this verb can mean *to enter [a chamber]*; in other words, *to set*. BDB gives a definitive list of the passages where this is used this way (including Gen. 15:12, 17 28:11 Ex. 17:12 22:25), and points out that the verb used for the sun rising is yâtsâ' (יָצָא) [pronounced *yaw-TZAWH*] (Strong's #3318 BDB #422).<sup>64</sup>

**Translation:** ...and [as] the sun is setting,... We do not know what time these two forces squared off, nor how long the battle took; however, as Abishai and Joab pursue Abner, the sun begins to set over the Mediterranean, which is to the west (they are moving eastward).

I also want to point out that we do not know what the landscape was like, but I suspect that they may have been on a roadway in a wooded area and that Abner, once he was far enough along, could have disappeared into the woods. However, even if this was an option, Abner did not do so. His escape route along the roadway was clear. He has yet another trick up his sleeve.

## 2Samuel 2:24c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that, so that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
hëmmâh (הֵמָּה) [pronounced <i>haym-mawh</i> ]	<i>they, those; themselves; these [with the definite article]</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural personal pronoun	Strong's #1992 BDB #241
bôw' (בּוֹא) [pronounced <i>boh</i> ]	<i>to come in, to come, to go in, to go, to enter</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person plural, Qal perfect	Strong's #935 BDB #97
It appears as the writer here is having some fun with the language; in the previous few verses, we have a word used in 3 clearly different ways; and again, in this verse, we find a verb used twice, but with very different applications.			
ad (אֲדָ) [pronounced <i>gahd</i> ]	<i>as far as, even to, up to, until</i>	preposition of extent	Strong's #5704 BDB #723
gib <sup>e</sup> âh (גִּבְעָה) [pronounced <i>gi<sup>b</sup>v<sup>e</sup>-GAW</i> ]	<i>hill; this same word is transliterated Gibeah</i>	feminine singular noun construct	Strong's #1389 BDB #148

<sup>64</sup> The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon; Hendrickson Publishers; ©1996; p. 98.

## 2Samuel 2:24c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿAmmâh (אֲמָה) [pronounced <i>ahm-MAW</i> ]	<i>foundation; beginning; metropolis; transliterated Ammah</i>	proper feminine singular noun/location	Strong's #520 BDB #52

This is the same noun which is used to mean *cubit*.

**Translation:** ...they had come as far as the hill of Ammah,... I would expect that Abner is moving eastward, toward the Jordan, which he would cross over in order to get to Mahanaim. Moving eastward from Gibeon would take them right into a mountain range, so we would expect him to come to a hill or two. This particular hill was known at the time of writing, but we find it only here, and we know nothing about it, apart from the fact that it is surely east of Gibeon, and a part of the hilly area of Ephraim and Judah (which goes through Benjamin).

## 2Samuel 2:24d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿăšher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>uh-SHER</i> ]	<i>that, which, when, who, whom</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
ʿal (עַל) [pronounced <i>gah</i> ]	<i>upon, against, above</i>	preposition	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
pânîym (פְּנֵי) [pronounced <i>paw-NEEM</i> ]	<i>face, faces, countenance; presence</i>	masculine plural construct (plural acts like English singular)	Strong's #6440 BDB #815
Together, ʿal and pânîym mean <i>upon the face of, facing, in front of, before (as in preference to), in addition to, overlooking</i>			
Giyach (גֵּיַח) [pronounced <i>GHEE-ahkh</i> ]	<i>a spring, fountain; transliterated Giah</i>	proper singular noun/location	Strong's #1520 BDB #161

**Translation:** ...which [is] before Giah... The city of Giah is mentioned only here.

## 2Samuel 2:24e

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
derek <sup>e</sup> (דֶּרֶךְ) [pronounced <i>DEH-rek<sup>e</sup></i> ]	<i>way, distance, road, path; journey, course; direction, towards; manner, habit, way [of life]; of moral character</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #1870 BDB #202
mid <sup>e</sup> bâr (מִדְּבָר) [pronounced <i>mid<sup>e</sup>-BAWR</i> ]	<i>wilderness, unpopulated wilderness, desert wilderness; mouth</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #4057 BDB #184

## 2Samuel 2:24e

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
Gib <sup>e</sup> ʿōn (גִּבְעוֹן) [pronounced gibv <sup>e</sup> - GOHN]	hill, hill-city; transliterated Gibeon	proper noun, masculine singular	Strong's #1391 BDB #149

**Translation:**...[on] the road [to] the desert-wilderness of Gibeon. They were near the pool of Gibeon, and Abner's retreat will, at some point, take him east and he would cross over the Jordan, and go to the capital of the new northern-eastern kingdom of Mahanaim. Although the directions here are quite explicit, we are too far removed to know exactly the route that Abner took. However, east of Gibeon are the mountains of Ephraim/Judah, which would coincide with the direction we would expect Abner to go in. There was obviously a road leading out of Gibeon, which is what Abner was using for his route of escape.

**And so gather themselves together sons of Benjamin behind Abner and so they are for a band—one. And so they stand upon a head of a hill—one.** 2Samuel 2:25 **Then the sons of Benjamin gathered themselves together behind Abner and they become one unit. Then they took a stand on top of a particular hill.**

**Then the men of Benjamin gathered themselves behind Abner and formed a solitary unit, taking their stand on top of a particular hill.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

**Ancient texts:**

**Masoretic Text** And so gather themselves together sons of Benjamin behind Abner and so they are for a band—one. And so they stand upon a head of a hill—one.  
**Septuagint** 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.

Significant differences: The Greek adds a relative pronoun, more than likely to smooth out their translation.

**Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:**

**CEV** Abner brought the men of Benjamin together in one group on top of a hill, and they got ready to fight.  
**The Message** The Benjaminites had taken their stand with Abner there, deployed strategically on a hill.

**Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):**

**God's Word™** The men of Benjamin rallied behind Abner, banding together and taking their position on top of a hill.  
**HCSB** The Benjaminites rallied to Abner; they formed a single unit and took their stand on top of a hill.

**Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

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

*Young's Literal Translation* And the sons of Benjamin gather themselves together after Abner, and become one troop, and stand on the top of a certain height.

**The gist of this verse?** The men of Benjamin gather themselves as a solid military unit behind Abner, and they take their stand on a particular hill.

### 2Samuel 2:25a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
qâbats (קָבְצוּ) [pronounced <i>kaw-BATS</i> ]	<i>to gather selves together, to be gathered together, to be collected</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Hithpael imperfect	Strong's #6908 BDB #867
bên (בָּנָיו) [pronounced <i>bane</i> ]	<i>son, descendant</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #1121 BDB #119
Bin <sup>e</sup> yâmîn (בִּנְיָמִין) [pronounced <i>bin-yâw-MIN</i> ]	transliterated <i>Benjamin</i> , it means <i>son of [my] right hand</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #1144 BDB #122
ʿachârêy (אַחֲרָיו) [pronounced <i>ah-kuh-RAY</i> ]	<i>hinder parts; behind, after; following; after that, afterwards</i>	preposition; plural form	Strong's #310 BDB #29
ʿĂb <sup>e</sup> nêr (אַבְנֵר) [pronounced <i>u<sup>b</sup>v<sup>e</sup>-NAYR</i> ]	<i>my father is Ner or my father is a lamp, and is transliterated Abner</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #74 BDB #4

This author is making the most of the language here. In previous verses, we have Asahel pursuing *after Abner*; and here, the sons of Benjamin gather *after Abner*.

**Translation:** *Then the sons of Benjamin gathered themselves together behind Abner...* Saul was a Benjamite. Obviously, his son Ishbosheth, the new king over the northern and eastern territories of Israel, is a Benjamite. Abner, who is Saul's uncle, would also be a Benjamite. That Abner brings his army to the territory of Benjamin in order to meet Joab is obviously good strategy on the part of Abner.

We do not know if these are men from Abner's army, or if these were reserves, which Abner had stationed here in the event that he was routed by Joab. In any case, this helps to paint the scene for us—many, if not all, of Joab's army was stopped in their tracks by the body of Asahel. However, Joab and Abishai continued to advance, chasing Abner. If anyone else was with them, it would have been an army of reduced sized. They come up the hill, and suddenly, here is Abner stopped, with a small army of Benjamites with him. There is apparently some distance between them.

### 2Samuel 2:25b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253

## 2Samuel 2:25b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
hâyâh (הָיָא) [pronounced haw-YAW]	<i>to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #1961 BDB #224
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l <sup>e</sup> )	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
ăguddâh (אֲגֻדָּה) [pronounced uh-good-DAW]	<i>a bunch, a bundle, a band; unit, group; troop</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #92 BDB #8
ʿechâd (אֶחָד) [pronounced eh-KHAWD]	<i>one, first, certain, only; but it can also mean a composite unity; possibly particular</i>	numeral adjective	Strong's #259 BDB #25

**Translation: ...and they become one unit.** It is interesting that these men are not a part of the army led by Abner, but they are citizen soldiers, who suddenly come to the aide of their king and his highest ranking field commander. I suspect that Abner recruited them and stationed them here, just in case he is pushed back.

The intelligence appears to be good, and that Abner and Joab's small armies are equivalent. However, Abner provides himself here with a little insurance—just in case, just a little ways outside of Gibeon, he has another small army of loyal Benjamites willing to back him.

Gill, instead, suggests<sup>65</sup> that these men hear of Abner's defeat (which would have occurred only hours earlier) and mobilized themselves in support of Abner. Although I do not deny the possibility of this, I believe that my scenario better reflects Abner's outstanding military strategy. Although the last we heard of Saul's army was the defeat on Mount Gilboa, this army was, for the most part, extremely successful. An all-too-brief recitation of their victories is found in 1Sam. 14:47–48. That Israel is capable of having a small but dramatically successful army is borne out by the wars that Israel has fought in the latter half of 20<sup>th</sup> century. The present-day Israel is a postage stamp of a country composed of less than 1% of the land of the Middle East; yet, large enough to give some Arab groups endless psychological grief; and great enough to withstand continuing attacks. Some of this is resolve and some of this is great military strategy. No matter what you think of Abner, you must realize that this is one very intelligent man in the realm of military tactics and strategy. Therefore, I don't see this as some mob which has conveniently shown up, but as a military unit strategically placed by Abner if the very worst happened.

## 2Samuel 2:25c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
ʿâmad (אָמַד) [pronounced ġaw-MAHD]	<i>to take a stand, to stand, to remain, to endure, to withstand</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #5975 BDB #763

<sup>65</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, 2Sam. 2:25.



2Samuel 2:25c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
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Again, note the way this author uses the language. This same word was used of Joab's soldiers when they were stopped in their tracks at the sight of the fallen Asahel. Here, this same verb is used for taking a stand behind Abner.

ʿal (עַל) [pronounced ʿah/]	<i>upon, against, above</i>	preposition	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
rô`sh (רֶשֶׁת) [pronounced rohsh]	<i>head, top, chief, front, choicest</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #7218 BDB #910
gib <sup>e</sup> ʾâh (גִּבְעָה) [pronounced gib <sup>h</sup> v <sup>e</sup> -GAW]	<i>hill; this same word is transliterated Gibeah</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #1389 BDB #148
ʿechâd (אֶחָד) [pronounced eh-KHAWD]	<i>one, first, certain, only; but it can also mean a composite unity; possibly particular</i>	numeral adjective	Strong's #259 BDB #25

Again, the writer takes a word and uses it twice, in near proximity, but in a different way. This second use of ʿechâd is to note that they take their stand on a particular or specific mountain.

It seems very odd for a writer to do this. The language is—how should I put it—almost being played with. The multifarious meanings of various words are found throughout in close proximity. However, the subject matter itself is very grim.

**Translation:** *Then they took a stand on top of a particular hill.* The men of Benjamin seem to back the wrong horse again and again. Maybe it is in the water? Recall that almost the entire tribe of Benjamin was wiped out, apart from 600 men in the book of Judges. Now, a few centuries later, the tribe has built itself up again, and they are backing Abner, who is the general for Ishbosheth, the son of Saul, who is a Benjamite. In other words, given that Ishbosheth is a Benjamite and that his rule is over the northern and eastern portions of Israel, what we find here makes sense. They still are backing the wrong horse. This does not mean that Abner does not have the upper hand at this point—he certainly does (and he has had the upper hand throughout, apart from the actual combat).

These men gather as a solid, military unit on top of one of the hills east of Gibeon.

And so calls Abner unto Joab and so he says, “Will to perpetuity devours a sword? Do you not know that bitterness is in the end? And as far as when do you not say to the people to turn from after their brothers?”

2Samuel 2:26

Then Abner called out unto Joab, saying, “Will the sword devour [us all] forever? Do you not know that the end is bitterness? And how long will it be before you bid the people to turn from [pursuing] after their brothers [lit., how long until you not bid the people from (going) after their brothers]?”

Then Abner called out to Joab, saying, “Will the sword continue to devour us forever? Don't you know that there will be nothing but bitterness in the end? How long will it be until you bid your people to turn back from pursuing their own brothers?”

Here is how others have translated this verse:

**Ancient texts:**

Masoretic Text	And so calls Abner unto Joab and so he says, "Will to perpetuity devours a sword? Do you not know that bitterness is in the end? And as far as when do you not say to the people to turn from after their brothers?"
Septuagint	And Abenner called Joab, and said, "Will the sword devour perpetually? Don't you know that it will be bitter at the end? How long then will you refuse to tell the people to turn from following our brethren?"

Significant differences: No significant differences.

#### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	Abner shouted to Joab, "Aren't we ever going to stop killing each other? Don't you know that the longer we keep on doing this, the worse it's going to be when it's all over? When are you going to order your men to stop chasing their own relatives?"
<i>The Message</i>	Abner called out to Joab, "Are we going to keep killing each other till doomsday? Don't you know that nothing but bitterness will come from this? How long before you call off your men from chasing their brothers?"

#### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

<i>God's Word™</i>	Then Abner called to Joab, "Should this slaughter go on forever? Don't you know this will end in bitterness? How long will it be before you will call off your troops from chasing their relatives?"
HCSB	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?"

#### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

WEB	Then Abner called to Joab, and said, "Shall the sword devour forever? Don't you know that it will be bitterness in the latter end? How long shall it be then, before you bid the people return from following their brothers?"
Young's Updated LT	And Abner calls unto Joab, and says, "For ever does the sword consume? Have you not known that it is bitterness in the latter end? And till when do you not say to the people to turn back from after their brothers?"

<b>The gist of this verse?</b>	Abner tries to reason with Joab, saying, "Will war between us continue forever? Don't you know that this will result in great bitterness until the end? How long until you speak to your own people, to convince them to back off from pursuing their own brothers?"
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### 2Samuel 2:26a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
qârâ` (קָרָא) [pronounced <i>kaw-RAW</i> ]	<i>to call, to proclaim, to read, to call to, to call out to, to assemble, to summon; to call, to name [when followed by a lâmed]</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #7121 BDB #894

## 2Samuel 2:26a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾĂb <sup>e</sup> nêr (אַבְנֵר) [pronounced u <sup>b</sup> v <sup>e</sup> -NAYR]	<i>my father is Ner or my father is a lamp, and is transliterated Abner</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #74 BDB #4
ʿel (עַל) [pronounced eɫ]	<i>unto; into, among, in; toward, to; against; concerning, regarding; besides, together with; as to</i>	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)	Strong's #413 BDB #39
Yôw <sup>l</sup> âb (יְוָאֵב) [pronounced YOH-aw <sup>b</sup> v]	<i>Yah is father and is transliterated Joab</i>	masculine singular proper noun	Strong's #3097 BDB #222

**Translation:** [Then Abner called out unto Joab,...](#) You will note that Abner, on several occasions, initiates a conversation hoping to establish a treaty of some sort. He has been able to reason with Joab before, and now he will try it again. Abner is no doubt older than Joab and more experienced. Also, as a man gets older, he becomes more concerned for his own mortality. Abner does not want to continue in this fight as, the end result could be his own death. Furthermore, at this time, Abner rules over the army of the north and east; he does not want to relinquish that power and position either. He has a place with Ishbosheth, which was probably set up by Saul prior to his death.

## 2Samuel 2:26b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וּ) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
ʾămar (אָמַר) [pronounced aw-MAHR]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
hă (הֲ) [pronounced heh]	interrogative particle which acts almost like a piece of punctuation, like the upside-down question mark which begins a Spanish sentence. The verb <i>to be</i> may be implied.		Strong's #none BDB #209
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l <sup>e</sup> )	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
nêtsach (נֶצַח) [pronounced NAY-tsahkh]	<i>forever, constantly, perpetuity, eternity, enduring; continually</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #5331 BDB #664
ʾăkal (אָכַל) [pronounced aw-KAHL]	<i>to eat; to devour, to consume, to destroy</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person feminine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #398 BDB #37
chereb (חֶרֶב) [pronounced khe-RE <sup>b</sup> V]	<i>sword, knife, dagger; any sharp tool</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #2719 BDB #352

**Translation:** [...saying, "Will the sword devour \[us all\] forever?](#) Abner paints the picture that war between the two halves of Israel will perpetuate and have no decisive end. The sword would continue to devour the men of both sides of Israel.

Even though Abner is a brilliant military man and probably had these men stationed as strategic backup, this does not mean that his conciliatory tone here is insincere. He has a small army of Benjamites with him at this time; at the bottom of the hill are as few as two men, Joab and Abishai. Most of their army stopped at the body of Asahel. Abner could reasonably strike these men and be victorious. Abner could have led these men into the midst of these Benjamites, and likely emerged victorious.

I think that what is happening is, Abner is experiencing a change of heart here. I don't think that what he says here is to save his own skin, but a sincere plea to these two bereaved brothers.

2Samuel 2:26c			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
hă ( הַ ) [pronounced <i>heh</i> ]		interrogative particle which acts almost like a piece of punctuation, like the upside-down question mark which begins a Spanish sentence. The verb <i>to be</i> may be implied.	Strong's #none BDB #209
lô' ( לוֹ' or לֹא ) [pronounced <i>low</i> ]	<i>not, no</i>	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
hă lô' together expect an affirmative answer.			
yâda' ( יָדָע ) [pronounced <i>yaw-DAHÇ</i> ]	<i>to know, to perceive, to acquire knowledge, to become acquainted with, to know by experience, to have a knowledge of something; to see</i>	2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #3045 BDB #393
kîy ( כִּי ) [pronounced <i>kee</i> ]	<i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>	explanatory or temporal conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
mârâh ( מָרָה ) [pronounced <i>maw-RAW</i> ]	<i>bitter, bitterness</i>	feminine singular adjective/noun	Strong's #4751 BDB #600
hâyâh ( הָיָה ) [pronounced <i>haw-YAW</i> ]	<i>to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person feminine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #1961 BDB #224
b <sup>e</sup> ( בְּ ) [pronounced <i>b<sup>eh</sup></i> ]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
ʿachărôn ( אַחֲרָיוֹן ) [pronounced <i>ah-kha-ROHN</i> ]	<i>coming after, behind, later, following, last; end</i>	feminine singular adjective with the definite article	Strong's #314 BDB #30

**Translation:** *Do you not know that the end is bitterness?* Few wars can bring about such bitterness as those between brothers. You may recall the viciousness of the Civil War and the viciousness of the carpet baggers against the south even after the war. Abner is saying that the only result of a continual war is going to be bloodshed and bitterness. At the end of all their fighting will simply be bitterness between the two halves of divided Israel.

## 2Samuel 2:26d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that, so that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʿad (עד) [pronounced gahd]	<i>as far as, even to, up to, until</i>	preposition of extent	Strong's #5704 BDB #723
mâthay (מתי) [pronounced <i>maw-THAH-ee</i> ]	<i>when?</i>	interrogative adverb	Strong's #4970 BDB #607
Together, ʿad + mâthay mean <i>until when, how long?</i>			
lôʾ (לא or לוּא) [pronounced <i>low</i> ]	<i>not, no</i>	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
ʾamar (אמר) [pronounced <i>aw-MAHR</i> ]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think</i>	2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l <sup>e</sup> )	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
ʿam (עם) [pronounced gahm]	<i>people; race, tribe; family, relatives; citizens, common people; companions, servants; entire human race; herd [of animals]</i>	masculine singular collective noun with the definite article	Strong's #5971 BDB #766

**Translation:** [And how long will it be before you bid the people...](#) There is a negative found here. The idea in the Hebrew is, Joab (or David) would eventually have to tell the people to back down from pursuing Abner and Ishbosheth. There will come a point in time when it is clear that the advance against them is hopeless. Bear in mind, this is Abner's stated perception, but it appears to be well-reasoned.

## 2Samuel 2:26e

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l <sup>e</sup> )	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
shûwb (שוב) [pronounced <i>shoo<sup>b</sup>v</i> ]	<i>to return, to turn, to turn back, to reminisce, to restore something, to bring back something, to revive, to recover something, to make restitution</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #7725 BDB #996
min (מן) [pronounced <i>min</i> ]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577

## 2Samuel 2:26e

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾachârêy (אַחֲרָי) [pronounced ah-kuh- RAY]	<i>hinder parts; behind, after; following; after that, afterwards</i>	preposition; plural form	Strong's #310 BDB #29
ʾâch (אַח) [pronounced awhk]	<i>brother, kinsman or close relative</i>	masculine plural noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural suffix	Strong's #251 BDB #26

You may wonder, now and again, how do we know that the singular noun, *the people*, is actually a collective noun referring to many? We know this in many ways, and one of them is the fact that we find the masculine plural suffix at the end of *brothers*, which would refer back to *the people*.

**Translation:** *...to turn from [pursuing] after their brothers [lit., how long until you not bid the people from (going) after their brothers]?"* This is what Abner suggests that Joab will eventually say to his own people—he will eventually tell his own people that they should turn away from attacking their own brothers. At some point in time, a truce has to be reached.

Bear in mind that, even though what Abner is saying is reasonable—and he may completely believe it himself—that does not mean that he has all the answers. He is assuming that they will continue to fight; there will continue to be bloodshed, and that there will be no complete victory for either side. At some point, the aggressors, David's army, will have to stand down. This is how Abner sees it. However, there are two other alternatives: Abner's army could be victorious or David's army could be victorious.

Also bear in mind that, even though David's army is small (no doubt he could gather more men from the tribe of Judah and Simeon), his army was also very successful, recently defeating a much larger force of Amalekites. On the other hand, Abner's army recently suffered a vicious defeat at the hands of the Philistines, and, even though he had standing with him men of Benjamin, he no longer has a full army of crack troops as before.

I want you to notice how Abner has, throughout this chapter, been steering the conversation, initiating agreements, and making all of the suggestions. Joab and his army may or may not agree to all the Abner suggests, but again and again, Abner is the one making the suggestions. He is much older than Joab and would be well-respected, despite the fact that he is the enemy.

I also want you to notice that Abner could be seen as the general who is for peace. He has, on several occasions, made suggestions which would—theoretically—result in less bloodshed. People often vote for politicians that they see as men of peace. However, it is Abner's original plot to set up Ishbosheth as king which has initiated this civil war (probably a result of Saul's final command to Abner). Therefore, I don't put all of this on Abner. Recall that I have speculated that Saul may have put him up to this, when he saw that all was lost. This would help to explain why Saul's lead general and one of his sons survive the battle against the Philistines where Saul and his other sons were killed.

Abner is doing what he has been asked to do, but he may be expressing second thoughts on the matter here. First off, defeating David's army is not going to be easy—it may not even be possible. His original intention would have been to feel out David's ability to resist him, and he realizes that he may be in for a tougher fight than he anticipated.

I want you to think about Abner's motivation. He has just killed Joab's younger brother. Either he must kill Joab and Abishai, or they will kill him. Best case scenario for Abner, if the conflict continues, is he kills them and David and his brothers will personally come after him—and that is the best case scenario. Abner's army has been defeated—probably barely—and he just killed a young man which potentially endangers his own life more than

leading an army. His best move here is to part in peace. Abner is a smart and experienced soldier; he knows when to fold up his tent and go home, and now is the time. He has been able to manipulate Joab thus far, and he continues to do so. He needs to steer Joab before his grief turns to uncontrollable anger. Abner has to make this sound as though this is best for both armies, for both territories. Do you see just how smart Abner is? Not only is this the right move for him, but this is the only move for him; and a lesser man would be unable to think with such clarity. If Abner says or does the wrong thing, he is dead, eventually. If Joab and Abishai don't kill him right there on the spot, then David and his brothers would. Abner appeals to the idea of the greater good.

Bearing all this in mind, do not think that all of this is sheer craftiness on the part of Abner. His speaking to these two young men, warning them of what would be the reasonable result of their continued conflict—and this may be what Abner believes to be true in his own soul. After their brief battle in which his own army was decimated, Abner is rethinking the idea of reunifying Israel by force. Tactically, at this time, Abner has the upper hand. He may not have it for long, as he does not necessarily know that much of Joab's army is stopped at the body of Asahel. However, for at least a brief period of time, he has the upper hand. To be sure, it is Abner's aggression which began this conflict; however, this does not mean that Abner cannot rethink his position.

**And so says Joab, "Living Elohim, for if you did not speak, that then from the morning, would have departed the people a man from after his brother."**

2Samuel  
2:27

**Joab answered, "[As] Elohim lives, had you not spoken, then from this morning, the people would have departed—each man—from following after his brother."**

**Joab answered Abner, saying, "As God lives, even had you not spoken, the people would have stopped pursuing your men this very morning."**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### **Ancient texts:**

Masoretic Text

And so says Joab, "Living Elohim, for if you did not speak, that then from the morning, would have departed the people a man from after his brother."

Septuagint

And Joab said, "As the Lord lives, if you had not spoken, even from the morning the people had gone up every one from following his brother."

Significant differences:

No significant differences.

#### **Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:**

CEV

Joab shouted back, "I swear by the living God, if you hadn't spoken, my men would have chased their relatives all night!"

*The Message*

"As God lives," said Joab, "if you hadn't spoken up, we'd have kept up the chase until morning!"

#### **Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):**

*God's Word™*

Joab answered, "I solemnly swear, as God lives, if you had not spoken, the men would not have stopped chasing their relatives until morning."

HCSB

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

JPS (the Tanakh)

And Joab replied, "As God lives, if you hadn't spoken up, the troops would have given up the pursuit of their kinsmen only the next morning." [Emendation yields, "If you have only spoken up, the troops would already have give up the pursuit of their kinsmen this morning."].

NIV

Joab answered, "As sure as God lives, if you have not spoken, the men would have continued the pursuit of their brothers until morning." [or, *had you not spoken, the*

*men would not have taken up the pursuit of their brothers; or, had you not spoken, the men would have given up the pursuit of their brothers by morning].*

**Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

- Bullinger (updated)      *And Joab said [to Abner], “As God lives, unless you had spoken [the words which gave the provocation in v. 14—“Let the young men arise and contest against one another”] surely then in the morning the people would have gone away, every one from following his brother.”*
- Edersheim (updated)    *And Joab said, “As the Elohim lives! For unless you had spoken, then if before the morning the people had returned, each from after his brother!” [In other words, the pursuit would have been continued till the morning].*
- ESV                            *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."*
- LTHB                         *And Joab said, As God lives, for if you had not spoken, surely then in the morning the people would have gone up, each one from following his brother.*
- Young’s Updated LT     *And Joab says, “God lives! For unless you had spoken, surely then from the morning had the people gone up each from after his brother.”*

**The gist of this verse?**      Although there might be a couple of ways to interpret this verse, it sounds to me as though Joab is saying, “As God lives, even had you said nothing, we still would have stopped pursuing you as of this coming morning.”

<b>2Samuel 2:27a</b>			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong’s # BDB #253
`amar (אָמַר) [pronounced <i>aw-MAHR</i> ]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong’s #559 BDB #55
Yôw`âb (יְהוָה) [pronounced <i>YOH-aw<sup>b</sup></i> ]	<i>Yah is father and is transliterated Joab</i>	masculine singular proper noun	Strong’s #3097 BDB #222
chay (חַי) [pronounced <i>KHAH-ee</i> ]	<i>living, alive, active, lively, vigorous [used of man or animals]; green [vegetation]; fresh [used of a plant]; flowing [water]; reviving [of the springtime]; raw [flesh]</i>	adjective	Strong’s #2416 BDB #311
`Ēlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced <i>el-o-HEEM</i> ]	<i>gods, foreign gods, god; God; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>	masculine plural noun with the definite article	Strong’s #430 BDB #43

**Translation:** *Joab answered, “[As] Elohim lives,...* Joab answers Abner with an oath—he is going to assure Abner that this is what would have happened even if Abner had not made the suggestion to back off. In English, we would have added at least the word *as* to the oath.



## 2Samuel 2:27b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced <i>kee</i> ]	<i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>	explanatory or temporal conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
lûlêy (לוֹלֵי) [pronounced <i>loo-LAY</i> ]	<i>otherwise, except that, if not, unless</i>	preposition	Strong's #3884 BDB #530
dâbar (דָּבַר) [pronounced <i>daw<sup>b</sup>-VAHR</i> ]	<i>to speak, to talk [and back with action], to give an opinion, to expound, to make a formal speech, to speak out, to promise, to propose, to speak kindly of, to declare, to proclaim, to announce</i>	2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Piel perfect	Strong's #1696 BDB #180

**Translation:** ...had you not spoken,... This idea is, Joab is making an oath that, what he will say is what would have happened, even if Abner had not called out to him. Now, so far, this is fairly certain in the Hebrew. The next portion of this verse, however, is moderately difficult.

## 2Samuel 2:27c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced <i>kee</i> ]	<i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>	explanatory or temporal conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
ʾâz (אָז) [pronounced <i>awz</i> ]	<i>then, at that time, in that case (when following an if or though), now, as things are; that being so</i>	adverb	Strong's #227 BDB #23
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i> ]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
bôqer (בֹּקֶר) [pronounced <i>BOH-ker</i> ]	<i>morning</i>	masculine singular noun with a definite article	Strong's #1242 BDB #133
ʿâlâh (עָלָה) [pronounced <i>gaw-LAWH</i> ]	<i>to be made to go up; to be made to depart, to be driven away; to be elevated or exalted [used of God]</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Niphal perfect	Strong's #5927 BDB #748
ʿam (עַם) [pronounced <i>gahm</i> ]	<i>people; race, tribe; family, relatives; citizens, common people; companions, servants; entire human race; herd [of animals]</i>	masculine singular collective noun with the definite article	Strong's #5971 BDB #766
ʾîysh (אִישׁ) [pronounced <i>eesh</i> ]	<i>a man, a husband; anyone; a certain one; each, each one, everyone</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #376 BDB #35

## 2Samuel 2:27c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i> ]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
ʿachārêy (אַחֲרָי) [pronounced <i>ah-kuh-RAY</i> ]	<i>hinder parts; behind, after; following; after that, afterwards</i>	preposition; plural form	Strong's #310 BDB #29
ʾâch (אָח) [pronounced <i>awhk</i> ]	<i>brother, kinsman or close relative</i>	masculine singular noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #251 BDB #26

**Translation:** ...that from this morning, the people would have departed—each man—from following after his brother.” The verb found here is in the Niphal, and can mean *to be caused to go up, to be made to go up*. So, we might understand this as, the next morning, Joab would have commanded his troops to continue pursuing Abner. However, I think the exact opposite is true here—not that Joab would have caused them to go up, but that he would have caused the men to depart. I think that, what Joab was trying to convey is, “I agree with you; I was thinking exactly the same thing...I just had not acted on it yet.” It was nightfall, and Joab and his men would probably have stopped pursuing Abner by the next morning. Abner and his men are called *brothers* here because they are all Israelites.

Then Abner called out unto Joab, saying, “Will the sword devour [us all] forever? Do you not know that the end is bitterness? And how long will it be before you bid the people to turn from [pursuing] after their brothers [lit., how long until you not bid the people from (going) after their brothers]?” Then Joab answered him, with the oath: “[As] Elohim lives, had you not spoken, then from this morning, the people would have departed—each man—from following after his brother.” Interpreting this oath is not easy. Here are the takes of several commentators.

## Commentators Interpret Joab's Oath

Commentator	Commentary
<b>Barnes</b>	Joab's speech means either “unless you had spoken (challenged us to fight, 2Sam. 2:14), the people would have returned from the pursuit of their brethren (many hours ago, even) this morning;” or, “If you had not spoken (asked for peace, 2Sam. 2:26), surely the people would have returned, etc., in the morning, i. e. would not have ceased the pursuit until the morning.” The latter interpretation is the more accordant with Joab's boastful character. <sup>66</sup>
<b>Bullinger</b>	Bullinger says that understanding the interpretation is a matter of elipsis, and that is why it is difficult to understand. <b>And Joab said</b> [to Abner], “ <b>As God lives, unless you had spoken</b> [the words which gave the provocation in v. 14—“Let the young men arise and contest against one another”] <b>surely then in the morning the people would have gone away, every one from following his brother.</b> ” <sup>67</sup> So, according to Bullinger, when Abner suggested that the young men face each other in hand-to-hand combat, that is what began the aggressions. If not for that, Joab would have taken his men home. I must admit that first, I did not care for this interpretation; but is growing on me.

<sup>66</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, 2Sam. 2:27.

<sup>67</sup> *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*; E. W. Bullinger; ©originally 1898; reprinted 1968 Baker Books; p 53.

Commentators Interpret Joab's Oath	
Commentator	Commentary
Clarke	The meaning of this verse appears to be this: If Abner had not provoked the battle, (see 2Sam. 2:14), Joab would not have attacked the Israelites that day; as his orders were probably to act on the defensive. Therefore the blame fell upon Israel. <sup>68</sup>
Gill	<a href="#">unless you had spoken</a> ; that is, these words in 2Sam. 2:14—"let the young men arise and play"—that he had not given the challenge to fight:  <a href="#">surely then in the morning the people had gone up everyone from following his brother</a> ; they would have gone away and never fought at all; they were not desirous of shedding their blood, and following after them to slay them: thus he lays the blame upon Abner, and makes him to be the cause and beginner of the war. Some render the particle by "if", and give the sense, that if he had spoken what he last did sooner, the people would long before this time have desisted from pursuing them; for it was not from a thirst after their blood, and a desire to seek vengeance on them, that they pursued them, but to bring them to submission, and lay down their arms; for they could not in honour retreat until they desired it; but the former sense seems best, and is the general sense of the Jewish commentators. <sup>69</sup>
Gordon	The more likely sense is: "if you had not spoken, surely the men would not have given up the pursuit of their brethren until the morning." <sup>70</sup>
Keil and Delitzsch	Joab replied, "If you had not spoken (i.e., challenged to single combat, 2Sam. 2:14), the people would have gone away in the morning, every one from his brother," i.e., there would have been no such fratricidal conflict at all. The first kîy (כִּי) introduces the substance of the oath, as in 1Sam. 25:34; the second gives greater force to it (vid., Ewald, §330, b.). Thus Joab threw all the blame of the fight upon Abner, because he had been the instigator of the single combat; and as that was not decisive, and was so bloody in its character, the two armies had felt obliged to fight it out. But he then commanded the trumpet to be blown for a halt, and the pursuit to be closed. <sup>71</sup>
Wesley	Unless you had made the motion that they should fight, 2Sam. 2:14. It was you, not I, that gave the first occasion of this fight. Abner was the sole cause of this war; otherwise all things had been ended by an amicable agreement: which might have been made that very morning, if he had so pleased. <sup>72</sup>

My take on this was, Joab would have ceased pursuing Abner the very next morning, even if nothing was said. In any case, Abner understands what Joab is saying, and Joab is speaking with great force (hence, the oath); and the oath clearly indicates agreement with Abner's position. Whatever interpretation there is beyond that is obviously a bit more difficult.

It is interesting that, even though we are unable to interpret, with complete confidence, what Joab's oath is; its essence is actually fairly clear to us.

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<sup>68</sup> Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, 2Sam. 2:27.

<sup>69</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, 2Sam. 2:27.

<sup>70</sup> Robert Gordon, *I & II Samuel A Commentary*; Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI; ©1986; p. 216.

<sup>71</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; 2Sam. 2:27–28.

<sup>72</sup> John Wesley; *Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible*; courtesy of e-sword, 2Sam. 2:27.

And so blows Joab in the trumpet and so take a stand all the people and they do not pursue any again after Israel and they have not added again to fight.

2Samuel  
2:28

Then Joab blew the trumpet and the all the people remained and they did not pursue Israel again and they discontinued fighting [lit., *they did not continue to fight*].

After Joab blew the trumpet, the people stopped advancing, and they did not chase after Israel again and they discontinued fighting as well.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text                      And so blows Joab in the trumpet and so take a stand all the people and they do not pursue any again after Israel and they have not added again to fight.  
Septuagint                              And Joab sounded the trumpet, and all the people departed, and did not pursue after Israel, and did not fight any longer.

Significant differences:              The second verb is markedly different in the Greek, although, in general, it implies the same result. The Latin and Syriac, as usual, agree with the Hebrew.

#### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV    Joab took his trumpet and blew the signal for his soldiers to stop chasing the soldiers of Israel. Right away, the fighting stopped.  
*The Message*                              Then he blew the ram's horn trumpet and the whole army of Judah stopped in its tracks. They quit chasing Israel and called off the fighting.

#### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

*God's Word*<sup>TM</sup>                              So Joab blew a ram's horn, and all the troops stopped. They didn't chase or fight Israel anymore.  
HCSB    Then Joab blew the ram's horn, and all the troops stopped; they no longer pursued Israel or continued to fight.

#### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

MKJV    And Joab blew a ram's horn, and all the people stood still and did not pursue after Israel any more, nor did they fight any more.  
Young's Updated LT                      And Joab blows with a trumpet, and all the people stand still, and pursue no more after Israel, nor have they added any more to fight.

**The gist of this verse?**                      Once Joab blew the trumpet, his army ceased pursuit of Abner and his army.

### 2Samuel 2:28a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced wah]	and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
tâqa' (תִּקַּעַ) [pronounced taw-KAHG]	to fasten, to thrust, to clap, to give a blow, to give a blast	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #8628 BDB #1075

## 2Samuel 2:28a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
The key to the meaning of this verb is context and the direct object.			
Yôw'âb (יֹאבָב) [pronounced YOH-aw <sup>b</sup> v]	<i>Yah is father</i> and is transliterated <i>Joab</i>	masculine singular proper noun	Strong's #3097 BDB #222
b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
shôwphâr (שׁוֹפָר; also שֹׁפָר) [pronounced shoh-FAWR]	<i>horn, trumpet; transliterated shophar</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #7782 BDB #1051

**Translation:** [Then Joab blew the trumpet...](#) In the ancient world, in order to execute certain maneuvers, the trumpet was used to direct the troops. One trumpet sound would be for the troops to advance; another might be to retreat; another might be to hold their ground. We know this is true because Paul uses this as an illustration in 1Cor. 14. People are all speaking in tongues all at once, and Paul says, this is like a trumpeter giving an unclear message, so that the troops do not have any idea what to do.

## 2Samuel 2:28b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
'âmad (אָמַד) [pronounced gaw-MAHD]	<i>to take a stand, to stand, to remain, to endure, to withstand</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #5975 BDB #763
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced kohl]	<i>the whole, all of, the entirety of, all; can also be rendered any of</i>	masculine singular construct followed by a definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
'am (אָם) [pronounced gahm]	<i>people; race, tribe; family, relatives; citizens, common people; companions, servants; entire human race; herd [of animals]</i>	masculine singular collective noun with the definite article	Strong's #5971 BDB #766

**Translation:** [...and the all the people remained...](#) This is sort of an odd verb to use here, but it is in agreement with the Latin and Syriac. A contemporary verb might be *to stand down*. When they heard the trumpet, Joab's army stopped, and, for all intents and purposes, stood at attention.

## 2Samuel 2:28c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that, so that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
lô' (לֹא or לוֹא) [pronounced <i>low</i> ]	<i>not, no</i>	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
râdaph (רָדַף) [pronounced <i>raw-DAHf</i> ]	<i>to pursue, to follow after; to chase with hostile intent, to persecute</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #7291 BDB #922
'ôwd (עוֹד) [pronounced <i>gohd</i> ]	<i>still, yet, again, besides, in addition to, even yet</i>	adverb	Strong's #5750 BDB #728
'achârêy (אַחֲרָי) [pronounced <i>ah-kuh-RAY</i> ]	<i>hinder parts; behind, after; following; after that, afterwards</i>	preposition; plural form	Strong's #310 BDB #29
Yis <sup>e</sup> râ'êl (יִשְׂרָאֵל) [pronounced <i>yis'-raw-ALE</i> ]	transliterated <i>Israel</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #3478 BDB #975

**Translation:** ...and they did not pursue Israel again... *Israel* refers to the northern kingdom ruled by Ishbosheth; and Israel was on the run. However, Joab and his men ceased chasing them.

## 2Samuel 2:28d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that, so that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
lô' (לֹא or לוֹא) [pronounced <i>low</i> ]	<i>not, no</i>	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
yâçaph (יָצַף) [pronounced <i>yaw-SAHPh</i> ]	<i>to add, to augment, to continue to do a thing</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal perfect	Strong's #3254 BDB #414
'ôwd (עוֹד) [pronounced <i>gohd</i> ]	<i>still, yet, again, besides, in addition to, even yet</i>	adverb	Strong's #5750 BDB #728
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l</i> )	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
lâcham (לָחַם) [pronounced <i>law-KHAHM</i> ]	<i>to engage in battle, to engage in war, to wage war; to fight, to battle</i>	Niphal infinitive construct	Strong's #3898 BDB #535

**Translation:** ...and they discontinued fighting [lit., *they did not continue to fight*]. The army of Joab discontinued fighting with those in Abner's army. The death of his brother, and Abner's sincere words, caused Joab to back off at this point.

**And Abner and his men had gone in the plain [or, *the Arabah*] all the night the that. And so they cross the Jordan and so they go all the mountain pass [or, *Bithron*]. And so they come in [to] Mahanaim.**

2Samuel  
2:29

**Abner and his soldiers went through the plain all that night and then crossed over the Jordan. Then they went through a mountain pass and [finally] came to Mahanaim.**

**Abner and his soldiers marched over the plain all that night, and then crossed over the Jordan. Then, after going through a mountain pass trail, finally came to Mahanaim.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### **Ancient texts:**

Latin Vulgate	And Abner and his men walked all that night through the plains: and they passed the Jordan, and having gone through all Beth-horon, came to the camp.
Masoretic Text	And Abner and his men had gone in the plain [or, <i>the Arabah</i> ] all the night the that. And so they cross the Jordan and so they go all the mountain pass [or, <i>Bithron</i> ]. And so they come in [to] Mahanaim.
Peshitta	And Abner and his men walked all that night in the desert, and crossed the Jordan, and went toward Geshur, and they came to Mahanaim.
Septuagint	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.

Significant differences: There are several significant differences which will be covered with the Hebrew exegesis.

#### **Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:**

CEV	Abner and his troops marched through the Jordan River valley all that night. Then they crossed the river and marched all morning until they arrived back at Mahanaim.
<i>The Message</i>	Abner and his soldiers marched all that night up the Arabah Valley. They crossed the Jordan and, after a long morning's march, arrived at Mahanaim.

#### **Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):**

<i>God's Word</i> <sup>TM</sup>	Abner and his men marched through the plains all that night. They crossed the Jordan River and passed through the entire Bithron until they came to Mahanaim.
HCSB	So Abner and his men marched through the Arabah all that night. They crossed the Jordan, marched all morning, and arrived at Mahanaim.

#### **Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

ESV	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.
MKJV	And Abner and his men went all that night through the plain and passed over Jordan, and went all the forenoon and came to Mahanaim.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	And Abner and his men have gone through the plain all that night, and pass over the Jordan, and go on <i>through</i> all Bithron, and come in to Mahanaim.

**The gist of this verse?** The soldiers who were still alive returned to Mahanaim with Abner.

<b>2Samuel 2:29a</b>			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʾĂb <sup>e</sup> nêr (אַבְנֵר) [pronounced <i>u<sup>b</sup>v<sup>e</sup>-NAYR</i> ]	<i>my father is Ner or my father is a lamp, and is transliterated Abner</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #74 BDB #4
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʾănâsîym (אַנְשֵׁימ) [pronounced <i>uh-NĀW-seem</i> ]; also spelled ʾîyshîym (אִישֵׁימ) [pronounced <i>ee-SHEEM</i> ]	<i>men; inhabitants, citizens; companions; soldiers, followers</i>	masculine plural noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #376 BDB #35
hâlak <sup>e</sup> (הָלַךְ) [pronounced <i>haw-LAHK<sup>e</sup></i> ]	<i>to go, to come, to depart, to walk; to advance</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person plural, Qal perfect	Strong's #1980 (and #3212) BDB #229
b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b<sup>eh</sup></i> ]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
ʿārâbâh (עֲרַבְיָה) [pronounced <i>guh-raw-VAW</i> ]	<i>plain; arid, sterile region; a desert; transliterated Arabah with the definite article</i>	feminine singular noun; with the definite article	Strong's #6160 BDB #787
With the definite article, ʿārâbâh often refers to the valley which runs from the Sea of Chinnereth (the Sea of Galilee) down to the Gulf of Aqaba.			
The Greek does not have <i>Arabah</i> here, but indicates that they began moving out that evening. The Latin and Hebrew list this as <i>the Arabah</i> (or, <i>plain</i> ). The Syriac tells us that they crossed over <i>desert</i> , which is a reasonable rendering of this noun. Because the Syriac, Latin and Hebrew come from the same family of manuscripts, they are generally in agreement while the Greek is generally the odd man out.			
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i> ]	<i>the whole, all of, the entirety of, all; can also be rendered any of</i>	masculine singular construct followed by a definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
lay <sup>e</sup> lâh (לַיְלָה) [pronounced <i>LĀY-law</i> ]	<i>night; that night, this night, the night</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #3915 BDB #538
hûw <sup>ʾ</sup> (הוּא) [pronounced <i>hoo</i> ]	<i>that; this</i>	masculine singular, demonstrative pronoun with a definite article	Strong's #1931 BDB #214

**Translation:** [Abner and his soldiers went through the plain all that night..](#) From v. 24, when Abner and Joab spoke, we know that the sun was going down. Abner was in favor of a truce, to which Joab agreed, grieved over his brother. Now, Abner is going to get his army out of there right away, so they march that night across the plain



toward the Jordan River. He knows that he does not want to remain there, as he has just killed Joab's brother. Even though Joab has agreed to a truce, that does not mean that Joab will feel that way an hour later.

2Samuel 2:29b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
ʿâbar (עָבַר) [pronounced <i>gaw<sup>b</sup>-VAHR</i> ]	<i>to pass over, to pass through, to pass on, to pass, to go over, to cross, to cross over</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #5674 BDB #716
ʿêth (אֶת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]	generally untranslated; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
Yâr <sup>e</sup> dên (יַרְדֵּן) [pronounced <i>yar<sup>e</sup>-DAYN</i> ]	transliterated <i>Jordan</i>	proper noun with the definite article	Strong's #3383 BDB #434

**Translation:** ...and then crossed over the Jordan. Abner and Joab faced off one another in west central Israel. David had his headquarters set up south of there in Judah and Ishbosheth had his capital city across the Jordan. Therefore, to take his army back home, Abner is going to go eastward, over the Jordan River.

2Samuel 2:29c			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
hâlak <sup>e</sup> (הָלַךְ) [pronounced <i>haw-LAHK<sup>e</sup></i> ]	<i>to go, to come, to depart, to walk; to advance</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #1980 (and #3212) BDB #229
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i> ]	<i>the whole, all of, the entirety of, all; can also be rendered any of</i>	masculine singular construct followed by a definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
Bith <sup>e</sup> rôwn (בֵּית רֹוּן) [pronounced <i>bith<sup>e</sup>-ROHN</i> ]	<i>a region divided by mountains; a valley which divides mountains; division, cleft, ravine and is transliterated Bithron</i>	proper noun/territory	Strong's #1338 BDB #144

Whether this is understood as a proper noun or not is immaterial, as the meaning of the proper noun would have been taken from the region which it describes.

Gordon says<sup>73</sup> that the root meaning of this word is *to divide*, which suggests a ravine or a mountain pass or a valley between mountains. This is logical and fits well with the passage and context.

<sup>73</sup> Robert Gordon, *I & II Samuel A Commentary*; Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI; ©1986; p. 216. I added the second two meanings; God only suggests *ravine*. He also suggests that it could mean *morning*.

## 2Samuel 2:29c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
<p>All of the ancient manuscripts disagree at this point, and, quite frankly, what we find outside of the Hebrew is fairly odd. Bear in mind that we have just crossed over the Jordan (as per all the ancient versions), placing us in eastern Israel, which is where we would expect, as that is where Abner and Ishbosheth are headquartered.</p>			
<p>In the Syriac, they are moving <i>toward Geshur</i>, which is east of the Jordan, but too far north (Geshur is east of the Sea of Chinnereth). My guess is, their manuscript was quite messed up at this time, because a poorly formed bêyth might be mistaken for a gîmel; and both words contain an <i>r</i>. The rest would have simply been poor guesswork.</p>			
<p>In the Latin, they have gone through Beth-horon to get to Mahanaim (next portion of this verse), which places us fairly close to Jerusalem, which is too far south and on the wrong side of the Jordan. Having not seen this particular noun before, Jerome probably made his best guess here.</p>			
<p>Those translating from Hebrew into Greek were also nonplussed here, so they made a guess in translating this noun (<i>the whole adjacent country</i>). Since Mahanaim cannot be too far the other side of the Jordan, perhaps what they over exaggerated at this point.</p>			

**Translation:** Then they went through a mountain pass... As you can see from above, there is quite a disagreement at this point in the ancient manuscripts. However, what we find in the Latin and Syriac is easily explained, and clearly wrong (see above). The geography of this area indicates that the army would have traveled through some mountains, and, no doubt, there was a mountain trail which went through the mountain valleys. Whether there is a city Bithron, or an area, or even if this is the name of the road marched upon, the idea is the same—there are valleys between the mountains, and this would have been the normal way for an army to proceed.

When we find a place like this, where the name occurs but once, there are often theories associated with it.

Where is Bithron?	
Scripture	Incident
Clarke citing Bunting	Bithron, according to Bunting, was in the tribe of Gad, twenty eight miles from Jerusalem northeastward, lying between Dibon and Jordan. <sup>74</sup>
Keil and Delitzsch	Bithron is a district upon the eastern side of the Jordan, which is only mentioned here. Aquila and the Vulgate identify it with Bethhoron; but there is no more foundation for this than for the suggestion of Thenius, that it is the same place as Bethharam, the later Libias, at the mouth of the Nahr Hesbân (see at Num. 32:36). It is very evident that Bithron is not the name of a city, but of a district, from the fact that it is preceded by the word <i>all</i> , which would be perfectly unmeaning in the case of a city. The meaning of the word is a cutting; and it was no doubt the name given to some ravine in the neighbourhood of the Jabbok, between the Jordan and Mahanaim, which was on the north side of the Jabbok. <sup>75</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, 2Sam. 2:29. Clarke is referencing Bunting, *Travels*, etc. p. 145, 146.

<sup>75</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; 2Sam. 2:29.

## Where is Bithron?

Scripture	Incident
Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge	Bithron or Bether is probably the same as Betarus, which is placed in the Antonine Itinerary between Caesarea of Palestine and Diospolis or Lydda, 18 miles from the former, and 22 from the latter. The Jerusalem Itinerary mentions a place called Bethar, 16 miles from Caesarea, and 20 from Diospolis, which is probably the same. The Talmudists say that it was four miles distant from the sea. SOS. 2:17 mentions Bether. <sup>76</sup>

If this is to be taken as a proper noun, then it is obviously somewhere between Gibeon and Mahanaim, east of the Jordan. I personally take it to refer to a mountain pass.

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## 2Samuel 2:29d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
bôw' (בּוֹ) [pronounced boh]	<i>to come in, to come, to go in, to go, to enter</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #935 BDB #97
Machānayim (מַחֲנַיִם) [pronounced mahkh-uh-AH-yim]	<i>two camps; transliterated Mahanaim</i>	proper singular noun; location	Strong's #4266 BDB #334

**Translation:** ...and [finally] came to Mahanaim. Mahanaim is the capital city for Ishbosheth and his captain Abner. This is where Abner set Ishbosheth up to rule. As discussed earlier, this was probably at Saul's request.

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## The Casualty Report to David

**And Joab returned from after Abner and so he gathers together all the people and so he is lacking from servants of David nine-teen a man and Asahel.** 2Samuel 2:30

**When Joab returned from [pursuing] after Abner, he gathered together all of the people and, from David's servants, he lacked 19 men and Asahel.**

**After Joab returned from pursuing Abner, he gathered together his soldiers and noted that he lost 19 men and Asahel from this battle.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

### Ancient texts:

<sup>76</sup> *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880, with introduction by R. A. Torrey; courtesy of E-sword, 2Sam. 2:29.

Masoretic Text	And Joab returned from after Abner and so he gathers together all the people and so he is lacking from servants of David nine-teen a man and Asahel.
Septuagint	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.

Significant differences: There is one minor difference noted with the different color above.

#### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	As soon as Joab stopped chasing Abner, he got David's troops together and counted them. There were nineteen missing besides Asahel.
<i>The Message</i>	After Joab returned from chasing Abner, he took a head count of the army. Nineteen of David's men (besides Asahel) were missing.

#### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

<i>God's Word</i> ™	Joab returned from chasing Abner. When he had gathered all the troops, only 19 of David's officers and Asahel were missing.
HCSB	When Joab had turned back from pursuing Abner, he gathered all the troops. In addition to Asahel, 19 of David's soldiers were missing,...

#### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

ESV	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.
Young's Updated LT	And Joab has turned back from after Abner, and gathers all the people, and there are lacking of the servants of David nineteen men, and Asahel.

**The gist of this verse?** Joab numbers his men after this altercation with Abner, and finds that he lost 19 men and his brother Asahel.

### 2Samuel 2:30a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wāw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
Yôw'âb (יֹאבָב) [pronounced <i>YOH-aw<sup>b</sup>v</i> ]	<i>Yah is father and is transliterated Joab</i>	masculine singular proper noun	Strong's #3097 BDB #222
shûwb (שׁוּב) [pronounced <i>shoo<sup>b</sup>v</i> ]	<i>to return, to turn, to turn back, to reminisce, to restore something, to bring back something, to revive, to recover something, to make restitution</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #7725 BDB #996
mê'achar (מֵאַחַר) [pronounced <i>may-ah-KHAHR</i> ]	<i>from, from after, from (being) after, from behind, from following after</i>	compounded prepositions	Strong's #4480 BDB #577 and Strong's #310 BDB #29
Āb <sup>e</sup> nêr (אֲבִנֵר) [pronounced <i>u<sup>b</sup>v<sup>e</sup>-NAYR</i> ]	<i>my father is Ner or my father is a lamp, and is transliterated Abner</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #74 BDB #4

**Translation:** When Joab returned from [pursuing] after Abner,... Joab made several mistakes: he listened to Abner and went along with what Abner suggested, and now, he determines his losses long after the fact. Had Joab known that his losses were so minimal, he could have said to Abner, “Your suggestion is rejected; now, unconditionally surrender or die—your choice.” Joab had the manpower and the momentum. Abner, an older and wiser general, deprived him of this.

There was also the problem of, Joab’s army, for the most part, stopped and stood next to the body of Asahel, as Joab and Abishai pursued Abner. Once they caught up with Abner, he was backed by an army of men from Benjamin. With this strength, Abner was able to dictate their truce (although, it does appear as though he did so with great sincerity and not a little grief over having to kill Asahel).

We may wonder, as we read further into the next chapter, why Joab could simply walk away from Abner at this time. He will later assassinate Abner (sorry to spoil that for you). There were two reasons: (1) Joab was in shock from seeing his youngest brother laying dead on the battlefield. He is so shocked that he does not determine his losses until later, and is very suggestible—Abner, the killer of his brother, actually suggests what they should do, and Joab goes along with it. (2) Recall that Joab and Abishai came up a hill, with most of their men far behind, standing around Asahel’s body, and are confronted with Abner and a backup army of Benjamites. Bravado at this time, without an army right behind them, would have been ill-advised.

<b>2Samuel 2:30b</b>			
<b>Hebrew/Pronunciation</b>	<b>Common English Meanings</b>	<b>Notes/Morphology</b>	<b>BDB and Strong’s Numbers</b>
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong’s # BDB #253
qâbats (קָבַט) [pronounced <i>kaw-BATS</i> ]	<i>to take, to grasp with the hand; to collect; to congregate</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong’s #6908 BDB #867
’êth (אֶת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]	generally untranslated; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong’s #853 BDB #84
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i> ]	<i>the whole, all of, the entirety of, all; can also be rendered any of</i>	masculine singular construct followed by a definite article	Strong’s #3605 BDB #481
’am (אָם) [pronounced <i>’ahm</i> ]	<i>people; race, tribe; family, relatives; citizens, common people; companions, servants; entire human race; herd [of animals]</i>	masculine singular collective noun with the definite article	Strong’s #5971 BDB #766

**Translation:** ...he gathered together all of the people... Abner and his army was retreating. They would have scattered in several different directions. Abner, as we have discussed, is brilliant, and he would have directed his men to retreat in such a manner, so as not to be easily pursued as a whole. Therefore, when all was said and done, Joab did not know how many men he had lost. He stood before a battlefield which was covered mostly with the blood of Abner’s men. His thoughts were with Asahel. So, once Joab returned, he gathered his troops to determine the damage. As you can see, it was minimal. 12 men died when Abner suggested a modified conflict (2Sam. 2:14–16). The actual subsequent battle was severe, but it was Abner’s army which was clearly defeated (v. 17), something which appeared to elude Joab in his grief.

Joab and Abner came with different objectives. Joab came to see what Abner and his troops had in mind, and, probably at David’s insistence, was not there to incite an all-out civil war. Abner was there to possibly defeat

David's army, although I don't think he bargained on killing a young man he had seen grow up from a youth. The defeat and his killing of Asahel caused Abner to rethink his position; and I don't believe that Joab desired an all-out civil war to begin with.

### 2Samuel 2:30c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
pâqad (פָּקַד) [pronounced <i>paw-KAHD</i> ]	<i>to be sought, missed, to be lacking, visited, to be visited upon, to be appointed</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Niphal imperfect	Strong's #6485 BDB #823
<p>It is very difficult to give pâqad one or two English translations. (1) It can be used in a good sense <i>to go to someone or to a place</i>. (a) <i>to visit</i>; (b) to go in order to inspect and/or explore; hence <i>to search</i>; (c) <i>to review, to number, to inventory</i>; also, therefore, <i>to miss, to find wanting</i> (in this review or inventory); (d) to go to someone to take care of them; hence, <i>to look after</i>; also, <i>to look to another for help</i>. (2) Pâqad can be used in a causal sense (generally, then found in the Hiphil): (a) <i>to set</i> (someone over anything); (b) <i>to commit, to charge to the care of</i>; (c) <i>to deposit</i> anywhere. (3) The third set of meanings center around going to someone in a bad sense. Hence: (a) <i>to fall upon, to attack</i>; (b) used of God <i>to chastise</i> [the wicked]. There are further considerations depending upon the preposition which follows.</p>			
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i> ]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
ʿebed (עֶבֶד) [pronounced <i>Ē<sup>b</sup>-ved</i> ]	<i>slave, servant</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #5650 BDB #713
Dâvid (דָּוִד); also Dâvîyd (דָּוִיִּד) [pronounced <i>daw-VEED</i> ]	<i>beloved and is transliterated David</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #1732 BDB #187
tish <sup>e</sup> âh (תִּשְׁעָה) [pronounced <i>tishsh<sup>e</sup>-ĠAW</i> ]	<i>nine</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #8692 BDB #1077
ʿâsâr (עָשָׂר) [pronounced <i>ġaw-SAWR</i> ]	<i>ten; –teen</i> [resulting in numbers 11–19]	masculine/feminine singular noun	Strong's #6240 BDB #797
ʿîysh (אִישׁ) [pronounced <i>eesh</i> ]	<i>a man, a husband; anyone; a certain one; each, each one, everyone</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #376 BDB #35
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וְ) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that, so that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʿĂsâh ʿêl (עֲשָׂה אֵל) [pronounced <i>ġuh-SAW-HALE</i> or <i>ġuhs-aw-ALE</i> ]	<i>God has made; transliterated Asahel</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #6214 BDB #795

**Translation:** ...and, from David's servants, he lacked 19 men and Asahel. Let's run the numbers. Asahel died at the hand of Abner; 12 men died around the fountain of Gibeon; and Joab lost only 5 more men in a fierce battle with Abner's soldiers. As far as battles go, that is nothing. As far as severe battles go, that is less than nothing. Joab had victory in his hand, and yet he allowed Abner to out think him.

Do you see how Joab's judgment was clouded? We are already told that he had clearly defeated Abner and his army. At this point, he had only lost 19 men and his brother. His most reasonable military move would have been to gain an unconditional surrender from Abner, which could have been achieved. He allowed Abner twice to out think him when he should not have done so. He let the pressures get to him. His entire army should have continued to pursue Abner. Probably, his best move would have been to bring Abner back, in chains, to David. However, the battle, the fact that he had a relationship with Abner from his youth, and the loss of his brother, did not allow Joab to think this through. He left himself open for another attack from Abner.

**Application:** You have to go to doctrine in your soul when you are under pressure. You cannot just function based upon how you feel. Joab was down because his brother had been killed, and he did not properly estimate the situation that he found himself in. Complete and total victory was his, and yet it eluded him because he acted on emotion, and he allowed his enemy to guide him. Now, don't misunderstand this—there are actually times when your personal enemies can actually offer you good advice; however, think about what is going on—what is in it for them? Think doctrinally. Think from divine viewpoint.

**And servants of David struck down from Benjamin and in men of Abner three hundreds and sixty a man died.**

2Samuel  
2:31

**The servants of David struck down from Benjamin and among Abner's soldiers, 360 men died.**

**The servants of David killed 360 of the men from the tribe of Benjamin and from Abner's army.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

**Ancient texts:**

Latin Vulgate	But the servants of David had killed of Benjamin, and of the men that were with Abner, three hundred and sixty, who all died.
Masoretic Text	And servants of David struck down from Benjamin and in men of Abner three hundreds and sixty a man died.
Peshitta	But the men of David had slain of Benjamin and of Abner, 360 men.
Septuagint	And the servants of David struck down of the children of Benjamin, of the men of Abenner, three hundred and sixty men belonging to him.

Significant differences: The Hebrew verse is rather unwieldy; there is either a missing word or two; a problem with one of the prepositions; and/or and additional word or two at the end. The Latin most closely follows the Hebrew, but adds a few words in order to make it come out right. The Peshitta removes a few words so that this verse comes out right; and the Greek adds several words so that a reasonable sentence structure is maintained. Even though we could spend some time trying to fix this or examine it, the meaning remains the same in all ancient languages. The only problem is in the Hebrew, where either something is missing or something was mistakenly added.

**Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:**

<i>The Message</i>	David's men had cut down three hundred and sixty of Abner's men, all Benjaminites—all dead.
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**Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):**

<i>God's Word™</i>	However, David's officers had killed 360 of the men of Benjamin under Abner's command.
HCSB	...but they had killed 360 of the Benjaminites and Abner's men.

**Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

ESV But the servants of David had struck down of Benjamin 360 of Abner's men.  
 LTHB And David's servants had struck three hundred and sixty men of Benjamin, even among the men of Abner these died.  
 Young's Updated LT And the servants of David have smitten of Benjamin, even among the men of Abner, three hundred and sixty men—they died.

**The gist of this verse?** Even though only 20 men from David's army were killed, 360 men in Saul's army were killed.

### 2Samuel 2:31a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʿebed (עֶבֶד) [pronounced ʿE <sup>b</sup> -ved]	<i>slave, servant</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #5650 BDB #713
Dâvid (דָּוִד); also Dâvîyd (דָּוִיִּד) [pronounced <i>daw-VEED</i> ]	<i>beloved and is transliterated David</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #1732 BDB #187
nâkâh (נָכַח) [pronounced <i>naw-KAWH</i> ]	<i>to smite, to assault, to hit, to strike, to strike [something or someone] down, to defeat, to conquer, to subjugate</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person plural, Hiphil perfect	Strong #5221 BDB #645
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i> ]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
Bin <sup>e</sup> yâmîn (בִּנְיָמִין) [pronounced <i>bin-yâw-MIN</i> ]	<i>transliterated Benjamin, it means son of [my] right hand</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #1144 BDB #122

**Translation:** *The servants of David struck down from Benjamin...* The servants of David are Joab's army, and it sounds, by the number which follows, that both armies are rather small. We would expect something like, *The servants of David struck down from the tribe of Benjamin...* And then we would have expected to see this thought continued. Or, this could be a complete thought: *David's army struck down those from the tribe of Benjamin.* In either case, it seems to make more sense if I insert a construct noun, e.g., *the tribe of*. Since Saul was from the tribe of Benjamin, and since he made headquarters there, we would expect many from his tribe to be in his army.

This actually gives us a better idea as to exactly what happened. There appears to be no fighting which takes place when Joab and Abishai come upon Abner standing with the men of Benjamin. However, when speaking of casualties, men from Benjamin are included. Therefore, Abner either had a number of Benjamite soldiers to begin with; and/or he gathered a few more as he traveled through the territory of Benjamin to meet up with Joab. As mentioned earlier, some Benjamites were stationed a few miles away, just in case Abner had to make a retreat (or, *stage* a retreat, a ruse which has been used before in Israel's history in Joshua 8). In any case, these men of Benjamin did not just happen to be there. They were stationed there, another indication of Abner's military brilliance (just because he was soundly defeated does not mean that he was not a brilliant general).



## 2Samuel 2:31b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b<sup>eh</sup></i> ]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
ʾānāsîym (אֲנָשִׁים) [pronounced <i>uh-NĀW-seem</i> ]; also spelled ʾīyshîym (אִישִׁים) [pronounced <i>ee-SHEEM</i> ]	<i>men; inhabitants, citizens; companions; soldiers, followers</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #376 BDB #35
ʾĀb <sup>e</sup> nêr (אָבְנֵר) [pronounced <i>u<sup>b</sup>v<sup>e</sup>-NAYR</i> ]	<i>my father is Ner or my father is a lamp, and is transliterated Abner</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #74 BDB #4
shâlôsh (שָׁלוֹשׁ) [pronounced <i>shaw-LOHSH</i> ]	<i>a three, a trio, a triad, a threesome</i>	numeral; masculine singular noun	Strong's #7969 BDB #1025
mêʾôwth (מֵאוֹת) [pronounced <i>may-AW</i> ]	<i>hundreds</i>	feminine plural absolute; numeral	Strong's #3967 BDB #547
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
shishshîym (שִׁשִּׁשִּׁים) [pronounced <i>shish-SHEEM</i> ]	<i>sixty</i>	indeclinable singular noun	Strong's #8346 BDB #995
ʾīysh (אִישׁ) [pronounced <i>eesh</i> ]	<i>a man, a husband; anyone; a certain one; each, each one, everyone</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #376 BDB #35
mûwth (מוֹת) [pronounced <i>mooth</i> ]	<i>to die; to perish, to be destroyed</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person plural, Qal perfect	Strong's #4191 BDB #559

**Translation:** ...and among Abner's soldiers, 360 men died. The Hebrew does not easily break up into two sentences; nor does it stand as a single sentence. What we might like to see here is: [The servants of David struck down from the tribe of Benjamin and from the army of Abner 360 men.](#) I added a few words at the beginning; changed a preposition in the middle, and dropped the verb at the end. If you look at the literal Hebrew rendering, it can be understood, but just is not properly divided into one or two sentences. However, in any case, the meaning is clear: Joab's army killed 360 men from Abner's army. Or, Abner, 20; Joab, 360. Every time one of Joab's men died, 18 of Abner's men died. Even with the messed up sentence structure, that meaning comes through.

Joab's army saw 19 casualties, and Abner's saw 360. A reasonable question is, *are these numbers correct? Is it possible for Abner to have suffered so many losses while Joab's army suffered so few?* Gill comments on this.

## Gill on the Disparity of the Losses

[The small number of Joab's men kill here] has made some think that the twelve men of the servants of David were not killed in the duel, or otherwise there must be but seven slain in the battle; though that is not more strange than that in the battle with Midian not one should be slain, and, yet a terrible slaughter was made of the Midianites, Num. 31:1. So in a sharp battle between the Spartans and Arcadians, ten thousand of the latter were slain, and not one of the former.\* Stilicho killed more than an hundred thousand of the army of Rhadagaisus, king of the Goths, without losing one of his own men, no, not so much as one wounded, as Austin affirms.\*\* At the battle of Issus the Persians lost an hundred ten thousand men, and Alexander not two hundred.† Julius Cæsar killed in the three camps of Juba, Scipio, and Labienus, ten thousand men, with the loss of fifty men only.†† After these instances, not only the case here, but that between the Israelites and Midianites, cannot be thought incredible, for the sake of which the above are produced. This account, according to Josephus,‡ was taken the day following.‡‡

So, while this is unusual, it is not unheard of.

\* Diodor. Sic. l. 15. p. 383.

\*\* De civitate Dei, l. 5. c. 23.

† Curtius, l. 3. c. 11.

†† Hirtius de Bello African. c. 86.

‡ Antiquities l. 7. c. 1. sect. 3.

‡‡ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, 2Sam. 2:30.

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**And so they lift up Asahel and so they bury him in a tomb of his father which [is in] Bethlehem. And so they walk all the night, Joab and his men; and so it is light to them in Hebron.**

2Samuel  
2:32

**They lifted up Asahel and buried him in his father's tomb in Bethlehem. Joab and his men marched all night, and it became light to them in Hebron.**

**Joab and his men buried Asahel in his father's tomb in Bethlehem. Then they advanced to Hebron, where it became light as they entered into the city.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

### Ancient texts:

#### Masoretic Text

And so they lift up Asahel and so they bury him in a tomb of his father which [is in] Bethlehem. And so they walk all the night, Joab and his men; and so it is light to them in Hebron.

#### Septuagint

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.

Significant differences: The Greek becomes a little more flowery about the morning; apart from that, these are very similar.

### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

#### CEV

Joab and his troops carried Asahel's body to Bethlehem and buried him in the family burial place. Then they marched all night and reached Hebron before sunrise.

#### The Message

They brought Asahel and buried him in the family tomb in Bethlehem. Joab and his men then marched all night, arriving in Hebron as the dawn broke.

### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God's Word™

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

HCSB

Afterwards, 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.

**Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

ESV

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.

Young's Updated LT

And they lift up Asahel, and bury him in the burying-place of his father, which is in Bethlehem, and they go all the night—Joab and his men—and it is light to them in Hebron.

**The gist of this verse?**

Asahel has fallen in battle, so he is lifted up to be returned home, and he is buried in the family burial plot in Bethlehem. Joab and his men have a forced march to Hebron, marching all night.

### 2Samuel 2:32a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
nâsâ' (נָשָׂא) [pronounced <i>naw-SAW</i> ]	<i>to lift up, to bear, to carry</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #5375 (and #4984) BDB #669
'êth (אֶת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]	generally untranslated; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
'Ăsâh`êl (עֲשָׂה אֵל) [pronounced <i>ġuh-SAW-HALE</i> or <i>ġuhs-aw-ALE</i> ]	<i>God has made; transliterated Asahel</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #6214 BDB #795

**Translation:** *They lifted up Asahel...* We don't know about the other bodies. However, Asahel's body was lifted up and carried with the army of Joab. No doubt, this was at Joab's insistence (and there would be no opposition to this). For men to simply stop in their tracks when they came to his body indicates that Asahel was a beloved soldier (although it does not say much for the military discipline).

### 2Samuel 2:32b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
qâbar (קָבַר) [pronounced <i>kaw-BAHR</i> ]	<i>to bury, to heap up a mound</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect; with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #6912 BDB #868

## 2Samuel 2:32b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
b <sup>e</sup> (בֵּ) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
qeber (קֶבֶר) [pronounced KEH <sup>b</sup> -VEHR]	<i>grave, sepulcher, tomb; burial place</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #6913 BDB #868
ʾâb (אָב) [pronounced aw <sup>b</sup> v]	<i>father, both as the head of a household or clan</i>	masculine singular noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #1 BDB #3
ʾăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced uh-SHER]	<i>that, which, when, who, whom</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
bêyth lechem (בֵּית לֶחֶם) [pronounced bayth-LEH-khem]	<i>house of bread and is transliterated Bethlehem</i>	proper noun, location	Strong's #1035 BDB #111

**Translation:** ...and buried him in his father's tomb in Bethlehem. This does not mean that Asahel's father is dead; this simply means that there is a family tomb established in Bethlehem, and that there is a place where the family would be buried. Asahel might be the first one laid in this grave (or tomb). That the father of Joab, Asahel and Abishai is only mentioned here is remarkable.

Barnes suggests that the other men were buried where they fell, and Asahel in his hometown. This seems to have all been done quickly. Possibly the idea was, to quickly report back to David what had happened.

Let me suggest to you that Asahel should not have been treated any differently than the other men in the field. Taking them to their individual burial places may have been out of the question; and what Joab did may have even been a popular decision. However, there is no reason to assume that his death was any more meaningful than the deaths of his comrades-in-arms. However, throughout this short confrontation, Joab made several mistakes, this being the last of them.

Joab's mistakes are numerous, despite the final outcome.

### The Mistakes of Joab

1. In general, Joab followed Abner's lead; whatever Abner suggested, Joab did. Every time that Abner made a suggestion, Joab should have realized that this suggestion always favored Abner.
2. Joab allowed his men to stop pursuing Abner, and to stop at the body of Asahel and mourn.
3. Joab and his brother ran into, essentially, an ambush, and, had not Abner been sincerely upset by having to kill their brother, he and his Benjamite soldiers may have killed both Joab and Abishai.
4. Joab waited too long to determine the outcome of the battle. He should have had some system in place to quickly determine the loss of life.
5. Joab and his men should have gotten an unconditional surrender from Abner (however, there may have been orders from David not to push this fight too far).
6. Joab did not exploit his clear victory over Abner.
7. Joab treated the body of his younger brother with more respect than he did the other soldiers who fell.

This does not mean that Joab is a failure; nor does it mean that I could have done a better job. This simply indicates that he is very young, has a lot of responsibility, and does not completely have things under control. On the plus side, Joab's men clearly defeated Abner's army. However, that victory was not exploited.

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### 2Samuel 2:32c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
hâlak <sup>e</sup> (הָלַךְ) [pronounced haw-LAHK <sup>e</sup> ]	<i>to go, to come, to depart, to walk; to advance</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #1980 (and #3212) BDB #229
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced kohl]	<i>the whole, all of, the entirety of, all; can also be rendered any of</i>	masculine singular construct followed by a definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
lay <sup>e</sup> lâh (לַיְלָה) [pronounced LĀY-law]	<i>night; that night, this night, the night</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #3915 BDB #538
Yôw <sup>a</sup> âb (יוֹאָב) [pronounced YOH-aw <sup>b</sup> v]	<i>Yah is father and is transliterated: Joab</i>	masculine singular proper noun	Strong's #3097 BDB #222
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וְ) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that, so that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʾânâsîym (אֲנָשִׁים) [pronounced uh-NĀW-seem]; also spelled ʾiyshîym (אִישִׁים) [pronounced ee-SHEEM]	<i>men; inhabitants, citizens; companions; soldiers, followers</i>	masculine plural noun; with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #376 BDB #35

**Translation:** *Joab and his men marched all night,...* Just as Abner and his men immediately marched toward their capital city, so did Joab and his men. They first marched to Bethlehem to bury Asahel (notice, there is no long ceremony, meeting of the relatives, etc.); and then they continue on their march to Hebron. Although, I suppose we could assume that they stayed a few days in Bethlehem; it would make little sense for them to march all night to Hebron if they stayed in Bethlehem. The implication, since it says they marched all night, is that the burial was quickly done.

### 2Samuel 2:32d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253

## 2Samuel 2:32d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾōwr (אור) [pronounced <i>ohr</i> ]	<i>to be illuminated, to become lighted up, to become light</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Niphal imperfect	Strong's #215 BDB #21
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l</i> )	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition; with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
b <sup>e</sup> (ב) [pronounced <i>b<sup>eh</sup></i> ]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
Cheb <sup>e</sup> rôwn (חברון) [pronounced <i>khe<sup>b</sup>-v-ROHN</i> ]	<i>association, league, joined; transliterated Hebron</i>	proper noun; location	Strong's #2275 BDB #289

**Translation:** ...and it became light to them in Hebron. Hebron is David's capital city; they stopped at Bethlehem first to bury Asahel. I would have expected greater fanfare; a more ceremonious burial. However, that seems to have been quickly dispensed with.

One author<sup>77</sup> suggests that the distance from Gibeon to Bethlehem was 16 miles, and then the distance from Bethlehem to Hebron was another 20 miles. This is a reasonable estimate, according to the maps which I have access to; and a small army traveling this distance in one evening is also reasonable.

<sup>77</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, 2Sam. 2:32. Gill is actually quoting Bunting, *Travels*, pp. 145–146.