

2 Samuel 3

Verse 1

Now there was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David; and David became steadily stronger, while the house of Saul became steadily weaker.

Abner had lost many of his able soldiers in the battle that resulted in Saul's death and now he had to war against David. The war between the house of Saul and David continued for about 2 years.

Verses 2 - 5

² Sons were born to David in Hebron: his firstborn was Amnon, by Ahinoam the Jezreelitess; ³ and his second, Chileab, by Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite; and the third, Absalom the son of Maacah, the daughter of Talmai, king of Geshur; ⁴ and the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith; and the fifth, Shephatiah the son of Abital; ⁵ and the sixth, Ithream, by David's wife Eglah. These sons were born to David in Hebron.

David had 6 sons by 6 different wives when he lived in Hebron.

See chart 305

These *sons* were born to David in Hebron.

Num.	Child	Mother	Background
1	Amnon	Ahinoam	the Jezreelitess
2	Chileab	Abigail	the widow of Nabal the Carmelite
3	Absalom	Maacah	the daughter of Talmai, king of Geshur
4	Adonijah	Haggith	?
5	Shephatiah	Abital	?
6	Ithream	Eglah	?

Amnon (1st son) will rape his half-sister Tamar.

Absalom (son number 3) will rebel against his father and seek to dethrone him.

Adonijah (son number 4) will proclaim himself to be king during the final illness of David. Nothing is known about Chileab, Shephatiah, and Ithream.

When David becomes King of all Israel he will have other wives.

See 1 Chronicles 3:5 - 9

⁵ These were the children born to him in Jerusalem: Shimea, Shobab, Nathan, and Solomon, four by Bath-shua the daughter of Ammiel; ⁶ and Ibhar, Elishama, Eliphelet, ⁷ Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia, ⁸ Elishama, Eliada, and Eliphelet, nine. ⁹ All of these were the sons of David, besides the sons of the concubines; and Tamar was their sister.

These sons were born to David in Jerusalem.

Num.	Child	Mother	Background
1	Shimea	Bath-shua	former wife of Uriah the Hittite
2	Shobab	Bath-shua	former wife of Uriah the Hittite
3	Nathan	Bath-shua	former wife of Uriah the Hittite
4	Solomon	Bath-shua	former wife of Uriah the Hittite
5	Ibhar	?	?
6	Elishama	?	?
7	Eliphelet	?	?
8	Nogah	?	?
9	Nepheg	?	?
10	Japhia	?	?
11	Elishama	?	?
12	Eliada	?	?
13	Eliphelet	?	?
?	sons	Concubines	?

David had 19 sons with about 10 wives and other sons with an unknown number of concubines. How many daughters do you suppose he had?

Verses 6 - 11

⁶ Now it happened that while there was war between the house of Saul and the house of David, Abner was strengthening himself in the house of Saul. ⁷ And Saul had a concubine whose name was Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah; and Ish-bosheth said to Abner, “Why have you gone in to my father’s concubine?” ⁸ Then Abner became very angry over Ish-bosheth’s question and said, “Am I a dog’s head that belongs to Judah? Today I show kindness to the house of Saul your father, to his brothers and to his friends, and have not let you fall into the hands of David; yet today you call me to account for wrongdoing with that woman? ⁹ May God do so to me, and more so, if as the Lord has sworn to David, I do not accomplish this for him: ¹⁰ to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul, and to establish the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan even to Beersheba!” ¹¹ And *Ish-bosheth* could no longer say a word in response to Abner, because he was afraid of him.

⁶ Now it happened that while there was war between the house of Saul and the house of David, Abner was strengthening himself in the house of Saul.

Ishbosheth was the king but Abner was the power behind the throne.

⁷ And Saul had a concubine whose name was Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah; and Ish-bosheth said to Abner, “Why have you gone in to my father’s concubine?”

Ishbosheth as king had exclusive rights to the concubines of Saul so Abner knew what he had done was wrong.

⁸ Then Abner became very angry over Ish-bosheth’s question and said, “Am I a dog’s head that belongs to Judah? Today I show kindness to the house of Saul your father, to his brothers and to his friends, and have not let you fall into the hands of David; yet today you call me to account for wrongdoing with that woman?

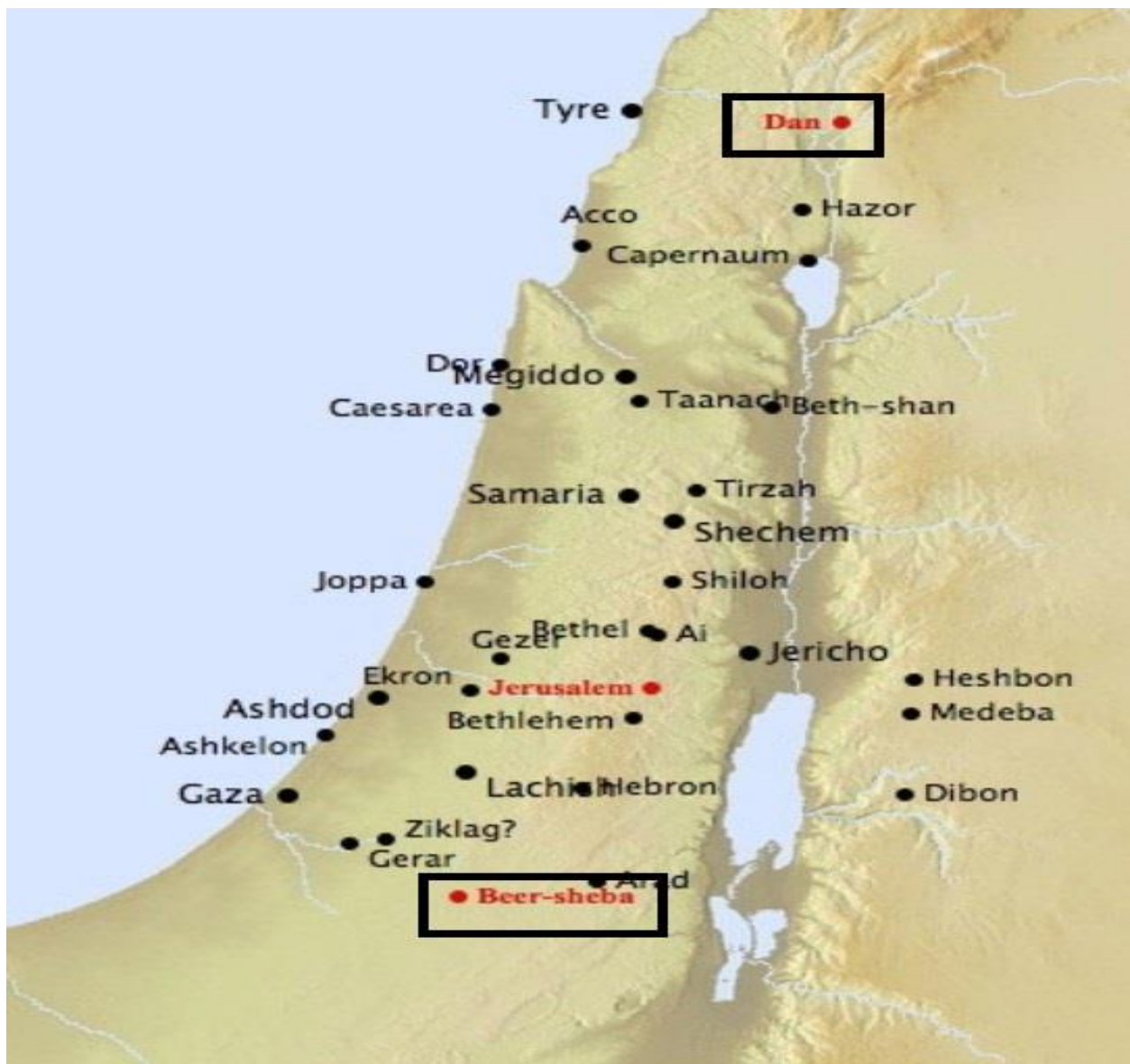
Rather than admit his wrong and ask for forgiveness Abner decided to go on the offensive. He argued that if it was not for him, the king and other members of Saul’s family would have been taken over by David. Therefore the king should be appreciative of what Abner has done and not question him about “that woman”.

⁹ May God do so to me, and more so, if as the Lord has sworn to David, I do not accomplish this for him: ¹⁰ to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul, and to establish the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan even to Beersheba!”

Abner knew that God had given the kingdom to David but Abner opposed it because of his own self-serving ambitions. Now he will do God's will, but only from a motive of revenge.

The phrase Dan to Beersheba means all of Israel.

See map 315



Verses 12 - 16

¹² Then Abner sent messengers to David at his place, saying, “Whose is the land? Make your covenant with me, and behold, my hand shall be with you to bring all Israel over to you.” ¹³ And he said, “Good! I will make a covenant with you, only I require one thing of you, namely, that you shall not see my face unless you first bring Michal, Saul’s daughter, when you come to see me.” ¹⁴ So David sent messengers to Ish-bosheth, Saul’s son, saying, “Give me my wife Michal, to whom I was betrothed for a hundred foreskins of the Philistines.” ¹⁵ Ish-bosheth sent *men* and had her taken from *her* husband, from Paltiel the son of Laish. ¹⁶ And her husband went with her, weeping as he went, following her as far as Bahurim. Then Abner said to him, “Go, return.” So he returned.

¹² Then Abner sent messengers to David at his place, saying, “Whose is the land? Make your covenant with me, and behold, my hand shall be with you to bring all Israel over to you.”

We don’t know what the specific terms of the covenant were but Abner wanted to make peace with David and help him be king over all of Israel. This is a bit unusual because David already had a commander of the armed forces (Joab). So what would Abner’s position in the kingdom be?

¹³ And he said, “Good! I will make a covenant with you, only I require one thing of you, namely, that you shall not see my face unless you first bring Michal, Saul’s daughter, when you come to see me.”

David was glad to have his help but this new friendship was conditional.

Do you think David made this request out of love for Michal? It’s true that Saul had reneged on his promise to give her to David but at this point he already had 6 wives.

¹⁴ So David sent messengers to Ish-bosheth, Saul’s son, saying, “Give me my wife Michal, to whom I was betrothed for a hundred foreskins of the Philistines.”

David made this demand of Abner but he made his request known to the king. Abner may have suggested this to David so Ishbosheth would look weak before the people of Israel.

¹⁵ Ish-bosheth sent *men* and had her taken from *her* husband, from Paltiel the son of Laish. ¹⁶ And her husband went with her, weeping as he went, following her as far as Bahurim. Then Abner said to him, “Go, return.” So he returned.

Michal had a husband who loved her but now instead of being in a loving home, she is now one seven wives.

This is a sad story in several ways:

The love she once had for David had been ignored by Saul.

The love she now has for Paltiel was being ignored by David.

¹⁶ And her husband went with her, weeping as he went, following her as far as Bahurim. Then Abner said to him, “Go, return.” So he returned.

When the commander of the armed forces tells you to go home, it is best to go home.

Verses 17 - 19

¹⁷ Now Abner had a consultation with the elders of Israel, saying, “In times past you were seeking for David to be king over you. ¹⁸ Now then, do *it!* For the Lord has spoken regarding David, saying, ‘By the hand of My servant David I will save My people Israel from the hand of the Philistines, and from the hands of all their enemies.’” ¹⁹ Abner also spoke to Benjamin; and in addition Abner went to speak to David in Hebron everything that seemed good to Israel and to the entire house of Benjamin.

¹⁷ Now Abner had a consultation with the elders of Israel, saying, “In times past you were seeking for David to be king over you.

Evidently there had been an earlier attempt to make David king of all Israel but Abner's personal ambition had frustrated that effort.

So why did the North go without a king for 5 ½ years before Abner made Ish-bosheth king? We are not told why but it seems that Abner did not desire the role of being king but at the same time he did not want David to be their king. As David got stronger he realized he needed to make Ish-bosheth king figuring David would not attempt a coup of a sitting king. That worked until Ish-bosheth became confident in his role as king and stood up to Abner.

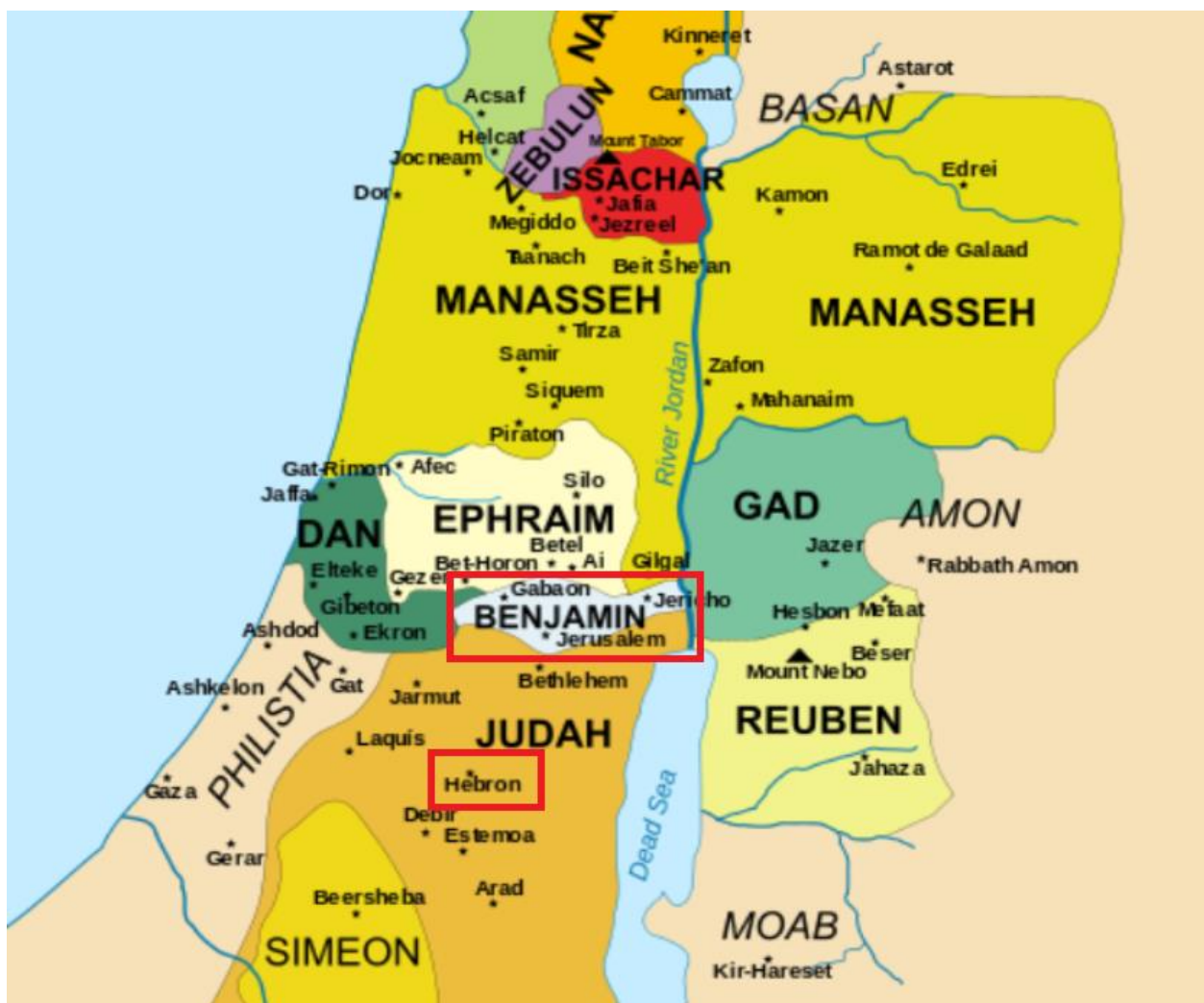
¹⁸ Now then, do *it!* For the Lord has spoken regarding David, saying, ‘By the hand of My servant David I will save My people Israel from the hand of the Philistines, and from the hands of all their enemies.’”

This is not recorded in scripture.

¹⁹ Abner also spoke to Benjamin; and in addition Abner went to speak to David in Hebron everything that seemed good to Israel and to the entire house of Benjamin.

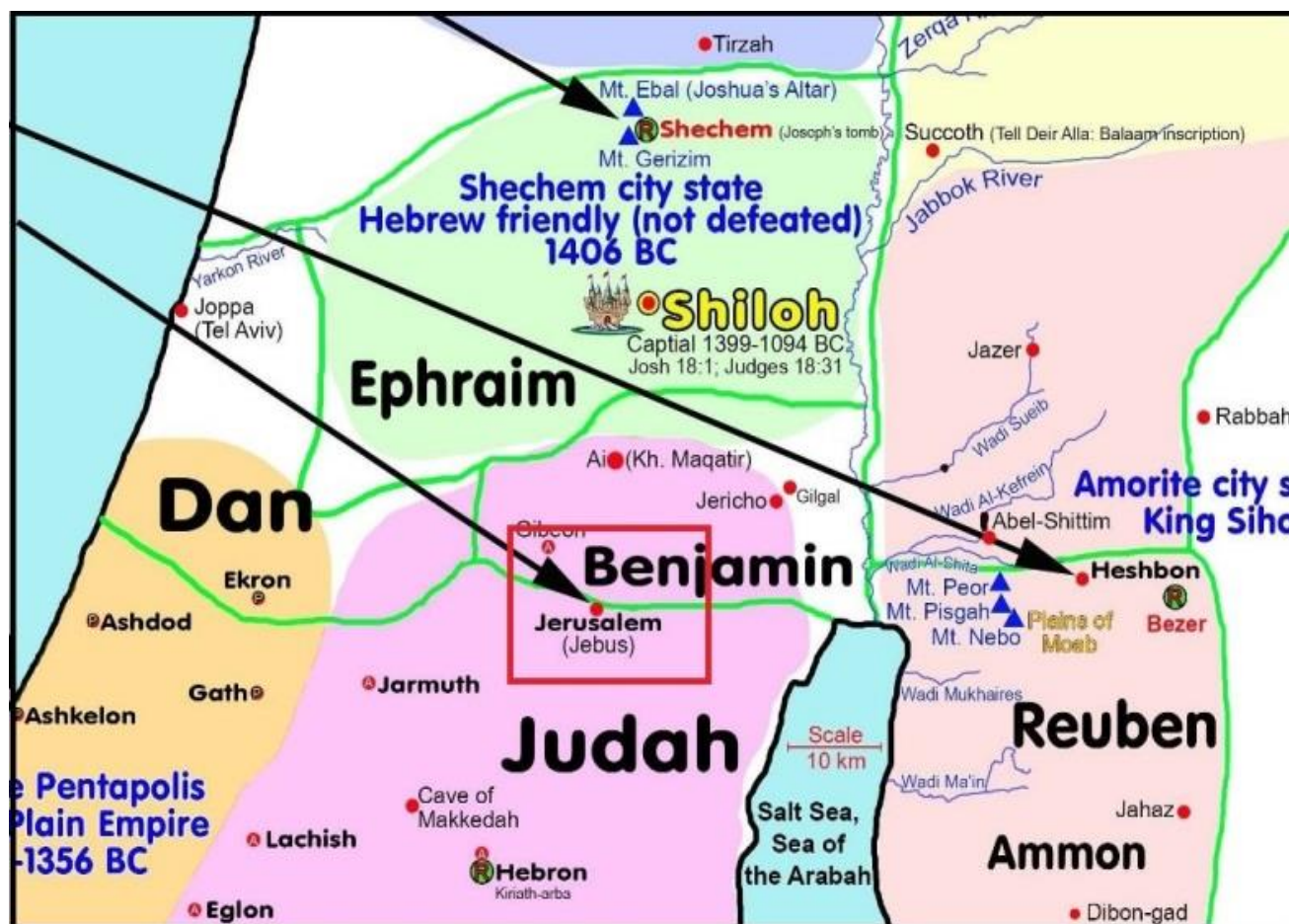
Saul was from the tribe of Benjamin and they felt a special kinship with Ishbosheth, his son. It was important to win the tribe of Benjamin over to David since Benjamin was located very close to Judah.

See map 320



Also, soon after David was made king he conquered Jerusalem and made it his home and the capital of Israel. Since Jerusalem is on the border of Benjamin & Judah it was imperative that Benjamin was fully behind David becoming king.

See map 325



Many maps show Jerusalem well within the border of Benjamin but the following scriptures seem to dispel that idea.

Judges 1:21

²¹ **But the sons of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who lived in Jerusalem; so the Jebusites have lived with the sons of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day.**

Joshua 15:63

⁶³ **Now as for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the sons of Judah could not drive them out; so the Jebusites live with the sons of Judah in Jerusalem to this day.**

Verses 20 - 21

²⁰ Then Abner and twenty men with him came to David at Hebron. And David held a feast for Abner and the men who were with him. ²¹ Abner said to David, “Let me set out and go and gather all Israel to my lord the king, so that they may make a covenant with you, and that you may be king over all that your soul desires.” So David let Abner go, and he went in peace.

There was one major problem with this arrangement. What did Abner expect from David for doing this? Would Abner be satisfied to play 3rd fiddle to David & Joab? Would David’s men be willing to follow Abner as their commander?

Verses 22 - 25

²² And behold, the servants of David and Joab came from a raid and brought a large amount of plunder with them; but Abner was not with David in Hebron, since he had let him go, and he had gone in peace. ²³ When Joab and all the army that was with him arrived, they informed Joab, saying, “Abner the son of Ner came to the king, and he has let him go *on his way*, and he has gone in peace.” ²⁴ Then Joab came to the king and said, “What have you done? Behold, Abner came to you; why then have you let him go, so that he is already gone? ²⁵ You know Abner the son of Ner, that he came to gain your confidence, and to learn of your going out and coming in and to find out everything that you are doing.”

²⁵ You know Abner the son of Ner, that he came to gain your confidence, and to learn of your going out and coming in and to find out everything that you are doing.”

Joab sees this move by Abner as a plot to gain David’s confidence in order to secure some kind of advantage over David. However, David had never come across as being naïve about worldly affairs particularly when it came to dealing with an enemy.

Was David naïve about Saul? Was he naïve about the Philistine King of Gath? Was he naïve about his own men and their motives? No, No and No.

Joab jumped to a conclusion based on very little information and that usually indicates that there is another motive involved. In this case it isn’t hard to find that motive. Abner had killed Joab’s brother Asahel.

It didn’t take a genius to figure this one out? See the next five verses. 😊

Verses 26 - 30

²⁶ When Joab left David's presence, he sent messengers after Abner, and they brought him back from the well of Sirah; but David did not know *about it*. ²⁷ So when Abner returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside into the middle of the gate to speak with him privately, and there he struck him in the belly, so that he died on account of the blood of his brother Asahel. ²⁸ Afterward, when David heard *about* this, he said, "I and my kingdom are innocent before the Lord forever of the blood of Abner the son of Ner. ²⁹ May it turn upon the head of Joab and on all his father's house; and may there not be eliminated from the house of Joab someone who suffers a discharge, or has leprosy, or holds the spindle, or falls by the sword, or lacks bread." ³⁰ So Joab and his brother Abishai killed Abner because he had put their brother Asahel to death in the battle at Gibeon.

²⁷ So when Abner returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside into the middle of the gate to speak with him privately, and there he struck him in the belly, so that he died on account of the blood of his brother Asahel.

Did Joab have a lawful reason to do this? Abner did kill Asahel, but it was in battle. This could not be defended as blood-revenge according to the law. We all understand that people dying in battle is not the same as a peace time murder. Besides, Abner had given him repeated warnings to turn back. He had to kill him or he would have lost his own life.

²⁹ May it turn upon the head of Joab and on all his father's house; and may there not be eliminated from the house of Joab someone who suffers a discharge, or has leprosy, or holds the spindle, or falls by the sword, or lacks bread."

David invoked a curse on Joab and his father's house for doing this and Joab was stripped of his office for a period of time.

See 1 Chronicles 11:4- 6

⁶ Now David had said, "Whoever is first to kill a Jebusite shall be chief and commander." Joab the son of Zeruiah went up first, so he became chief.

He regained his position by taking the city of Jerusalem.

However, many years later David also told Solomon not to allow Joab to go down to the grave in peace.

³⁰ So Joab and his brother Abishai killed Abner because he had put their brother Asahel to death in the battle at Gibeon.

We find out here that Joab had some help in this escapade.

Verses 31 - 39

³¹ Then David said to Joab and to all the people who were with him, “Tear your clothes and put on sackcloth, and mourn before Abner.” And King David walked behind the bier. ³² And they buried Abner in Hebron; and the king raised his voice and wept at the grave of Abner, and all the people wept. ³³ And the king sang a song of mourning for Abner and said,

“Should Abner die as a fool dies?

³⁴ Your hands were not bound, nor your feet put in bronze shackles; As one falls before the wicked, you have fallen.”

And all the people wept over him again. ³⁵ Then all the people came to provide food for David *in his distress* while it was still day; but David vowed, saying, “May God do so to me, and more so, if I taste bread or anything else before the sun goes down.” ³⁶ Now all the people took note of *David’s vow*, and it pleased them, just as everything that the king did pleased all the people. ³⁷ So all the people and all Israel understood on that day that it had not been *the desire* of the king to put Abner the son of Ner to death. ³⁸ Then the king said to his servants, “Do you not know that a leader and a great man has fallen in Israel this day? ³⁹ And I am weak today, though anointed king; and these men, the sons of Zeruiah, are too difficult for me. May the Lord repay the evildoer in proportion to his evil.”

³¹ Then David said to Joab and to all the people who were with him, “Tear your clothes and put on sackcloth, and mourn before Abner.” And King David walked behind the bier. ³² And they buried Abner in Hebron.

A bier was a "bed" on which the body was laid, and carried to the grave.

How a person was buried depended on their social & economic standing in the community. For example,

1. Abraham, Isaac & Jacob were buried in a cave.
2. Rebekah's nurse Deborah died when Jacob was on his way to the Land of Canaan, close to Bethel, where she was buried under a tree.

³⁵ Then all the people came to provide food for David *in his distress* while it was still day; but David vowed, saying, “May God do so to me, and more so, if I taste bread or anything else before the sun goes down.”

David did things based on principle, and part of the mourning process included abstaining from food for a period of time.

³⁷ So all the people and all Israel understood on that day that it had not been the desire of the king to put Abner the son of Ner to death.

People look at how leaders act in public as an indication of their true character. David's sincerity convinced them that he was not responsible for Abner's death.

³⁸ Then the king said to his servants, “Do you not know that a leader and a great man has fallen in Israel this day? ³⁹ And I am weak today, though anointed king; and these men, the sons of Zeruiah, are too difficult for me. May the Lord repay the evildoer in proportion to his evil.”

David could not afford to order the execution of Joab because the army was loyal to him and without the ability and loyalty of Joab, David's kingship might have been threatened.

Also the close family ties prevented David from having Joab put to death. Zeruiah was a sister of King David and one of her three sons was Joab. So he left the family of Joab to the judgment of God.