*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

July 12 - 17

David, King of Israel

**Monday, July 12 2 Samuel 2:1-11**

*“David anointed king of Judah”*

With the death of Saul and Jonathan, it is time for David to become king, first in Judah in the south and eventually over all Israel. Though the way for David is clear in theory, there are obstacles to his kingship. The Philistines have demonstrated their military prowess and occupy Israelite lands, and Saul’s son Ish-Bosheth has legitimate claims from a human perspective to the kingship of his father. If David is to become king of a unified Israel, he will need godly wisdom to guide him.

The first step for David is to enquire of the Lord whether he should move back to one of the towns of Judah (he was living in Ziklag in Philistine territory at the time of Saul’s death). God leads him to live in the Judean city of Hebron, and it is there that the people of Judah anoint him as their king, doing publicly what the prophet Samuel had done privately when David was still a boy. But, Ish-Bosheth had been declared king of the northern territories, and we now have competing monarchies in Israel.

*In all things, Lord, we need your wisdom to guide us. Amen.*

**Tuesday, July 13 2 Samuel 2:12-32**

*“War between the rival monarchies”*

In the hopes of settling the conflict between the houses of David in the south and Ish-Bosheth in the north, the generals of the two armies agree to representative combat in which man-to-man fighting is substituted for full-fledged battle in an effort to settle the dispute without recourse to extensive bloodshed. But, the twenty-four men are all killed and no side can claim the victory. As a result, the hostilities continue. In the end, the forces of David are victorious as the surviving soldiers of Ish-Bosheth flee the battle.

The episode between Abner, the general of the northern army, and Asahel, the brother of Joab who is the general of the southern army, serves two purposes. In the immediate context it explains how the death of Asahel stuns both sides in a conflict where many of the men on the two sides know one another, and a truce is declared. In the larger story, the episode explains why hostility between Joab and Abner continues.

*How terrible it is, Lord, when brothers are at war with one another. Amen.*

**Wednesday, July 14 2 Samuel 3:1-39**

*“The death of Abner”*

Rather than recount further gruesome details of the civil war, the text merely states that it goes on a long time and that David gradually gains strength while Ish-Bosheth grows weaker. Abner has grown in political influence and strength with the army of Ish-Bosheth, the elders of Israel, and the Benjamites, enough so that he is able to sway the entire northern kingdom toward David. Accused by Ish-Bosheth of having sexual relations with the king’s concubine, Abner defiantly proclaims that while he has been completely loyal to the house of Saul he will now go over to David. In doing so and using his influence within the northern kingdom, he effectively lays the foundation for David to become king of a unified Israel.

In narrating Joab’s murder of Abner, the narrator goes to great lengths to emphasize David’s innocence. Three times he repeats the refrain that David sent Abner away in peace, and when Joab summons Abner with the clearly premeditated intent to kill him, we are told that David did not know it. Further, we are told that the people of Israel accepted David’s innocence in the matter.

*Revenge is in the human heart, Lord, but forgiveness resides in yours. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

July 12 - 17

David, King of Israel

**Thursday, July 15 2 Samuel 4:1-12**

*“The death of Ish-Bosheth”*

The brutal end for Ish-Bosheth seems inevitable. As long as he had Abner in his camp, there was hope. But once he insulted the general’s loyalty and drove him into an agreement with David, his is a death waiting to happen. As in the narration of Abner’s death, the biblical historian is concerned to document David’s innocence. Any hint that Ish-Bosheth’s murder was engineered by David could hinder the king’s attempt to win the loyalty of the northern tribes. David’s quote reminds us there is a right and a wrong way to become king, and the cruel murder of an innocent man in his own house is not the right way.

The reference to Mephibosheth may seem out of place. This is the first time we meet Jonathan’s son, and the reference here prepares us for his role later in the story of David. Its inclusion also highlights the diminishing influence of Saul’s line. Together with Ish-Bosheth (whose life is about to end) there is one more descendant of Saul still living but he is crippled. Thus, the way is clear for David to become king of all Israel.

*The killing of the innocent, Lord, is never a part of your plan. Amen.*

**Friday, July 16 2 Samuel 5:1-10**

*“David becomes king over all Israel”*

The tribes of Israel, through their representative elders, present themselves to David at Hebron and are ready to commit to his rule over a united monarchy if he is willing to include the northern tribes. The biblical explanation for David’s rise to power identifies many factors. David is king of all Israel because historically Abner has paved the way for the northern tribes to support him and Ish-Bosheth was an ineffective ruler. Sociologically the northern tribes enter into a covenant agreeing to the terms of David’s kingship. Psychologically David is a powerful figure who commands the loyalty of the people. Beyond these important factors, however, the books of Samuel argue for the legitimacy of David because of theological causation. God has chosen him!

David cannot rule a newly unified nation incorporating especially the northern tribes from a southern base at Hebron. Jerusalem is ideal for its natural defenses, central location, and lack of previous attachment to the tribes of Israel. David cleverly devises a means of attack and turns the venerable “fortress of Zion” into his own possession, the “City of David.”

*May all who are chosen by you, Lord, look to you to fulfill your promises. Amen.*

**Saturday, July 17 2 Samuel 5:11-25**

*“David’s kingship is solidified”*

David’s kingship is affirmed outside Israel when the powerful king of Tyre builds a palace for David in Jerusalem. And, although it is in violation of God’s command given in Deuteronomy 17:17, like other kings he takes concubines and wives, the purpose of which is primarily to solidify allegiances between himself and the women’s families, many of whom would have represented foreign royal houses.

As long as Israel was divided into two competing nations, southern Judah and northern Israel, the Philistines could tolerate an anointed King David in the south. But the idea of a united Israel with David as king is a threat they attempt to prevent. The text narrates two battles with the Philistines, who attack Judah’s heartland in an apparent attempt to drive a wedge between David’s two constituencies. David’s army is victorious in both battles, and the abandonment of the Philistine idols and their capture by David and his men is a powerful image of the superiority of the God of Israel over pagan gods.

*As a person after your heart, Lord, may I continually look to you for guidance. Amen.*