

# Absalom's Conspiracy

Notes for 8 Feb

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Read: [2 Samuel 15](#)

Thankfully the body-count is down this week, and nobody gets killed. Phew!

Once again, our narrator tells a seemingly simple tale. Inserting the details of the palace intrigue between the lines of the story is up to us. So, what *is* going on?

Last week we were in 2 Sam 14 where Absalom and David were awkwardly avoiding each other. Verse 28 tells us that "Absalom lived in Jerusalem for two years, but he never got to see the King [David]". After some light arson involving a field belonging to Joab, "at last David summoned Absalom, who came and bowed low before the king, and the king kissed him". All is well in the Court of Jerusalem!

Maybe not...

Absalom buys himself much bling - a chariot and horses and 50 bodyguards to run before him. We already know that he is a handsome man, and he knows he is a handsome man. Verse 2 tells us that "he got up early every morning and went out to the gate of the city. When people brought a case to the king for judgment, Absalom would ask where in Israel they were from, and they would tell him their tribe. Then Absalom would say, 'You've really got a strong case here! It's too bad the king doesn't have anyone to hear it. I wish I were the judge. Then everyone could bring their cases to me for judgment, and I would give them justice!'"

- Jerusalem is not a very big city, but we get the impression from this story that it is full of impressive people doing very public and impressive things. What is Absalom doing?
  - Absalom spends a lot of time offering himself as an alternative candidate for the king even though the role is not vacant. What do you think David is doing about this upstart?
  - The people seem to like what he is doing. Verse 5 tells us that "When people tried to bow before him, Absalom wouldn't let them. Instead, he took them by the hand and kissed them. Absalom did this with everyone who came to the king for judgment, and so he stole the hearts of all the people of Israel."
    - Life in opposition is much easier than life in power. Do you think Absalom had any better ideas about how to administer justice than does David?
    - Think of modern politics. Are we too easily taken in by those in opposition?
    - Why are we (along with the people of Jerusalem) so fickle?
    - When were you last impressed when a new leader came to power?
    - Do we demand too much?
    - How do you view our political leaders? Is everyone a scoundrel? And if you think they are, does that tell us more about you than it does about them?
- Discuss!
- Do you think that David had neglected his judicial duties?
  - *Why* do you think David apparently did nothing about Absalom?

Absalom is patient. After four years (four years!) he makes his move... He heads off to Hebron, using worship as a cover for political activity. There he launches his coup. Absalom takes 200 men from Jerusalem as 'guests', who, apparently didn't know what was going to happen. And he sends for Ahithophel, one of David's advisors. "Many others also joined Absalom, and the conspiracy gained momentum."

It's a little unclear what happens next and in what order. Read verses 13 to 16.

- What is David doing?
- Why?
- In verse 19 David refers to "King Absalom". Has David given up? What has happened to the anointed shepherd boy, defeater of Goliath, and brilliant military strategist?
- Note that the Ark of the Covenant and Zadok, the Priest, went with David. What does this tell us about the power struggles? Where is God? Where is the political 'might'?

David sends Zadok and the Ark back to Jerusalem. He heads up to the Mount of Olives and has an encounter with Hushai the Arkite, about whom we know almost nothing, other than he is called "the King's friend" (1 Chron 27:33).

Despite, apparently, giving up the monarchy David isn't quite done yet. He tells Hushai to go back to Jerusalem and to offer his services as an advisor to "frustrate and counter Ahithophel's advice" (v33). He enlists the sons of the priests Zadok and Abiathar to act as spies and relay information back to him.

The chapter ends with a cliffhanger.

"So David's friend Hushai returned to Jerusalem, getting there just as Absalom arrived"...

Watch this space... David is not done yet.