

Shape and literary style of the Absalom Rebellion Narrative (2 Samuel 15-18)

STYLE

- Elements that emphasize urgency, e.g.,
 - *hinneh*, “behold!” (17 times of 46 in 2 Samuel)
 - infinitive absolute (i.e, verb doubling, 11 times of 35 in 2 Samuel)
- Use of numerous characters and places
- Deception in intent and action among the characters (and the narrator?)
- “Action” in the sense of armies on the move
- Ironic humor, e.g., the hair-proud Absalom getting his head caught in tree branches
- “Gaps” that lead to questions of motivation

INTERPRETIVE OPTIONS

- **Nathan’s word in 2 Samuel 12.11 is determinative:** “Thus says YHWH: I will raise up trouble against you from within your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this very sun.”

That is, the rebellion, like the death of Amnon, is YHWH’s punishment of David for killing Uriah.
- **David has gone slack in attending to the role of the king** to provide security and justice, thus opening a path for Absalom’s popular rebellion.
- **David’s “long con” is to clear the obstacles for Solomon to succeed**, in order to please the Egyptian colonial overlords (see 1 Kg 3.1; 2 Kg 23.29). Thus, he “played” dumb for years to allow Absalom’s rebellion to proceed, allowing a justification for Absalom’s death.

SHAPE

15.1-13: **Absalom’s** rebellion gains strength.

15.14-37: **David** exits Jerusalem and ascends the Mount of Olives.

16.1-14: **David and his entourage** come down the Mount of Olives and journey to the Jordan River.

16.15-17.14: **Absalom consults with advisors** and develops a military strategy, having been **deceived by Hushai, David’s agent**.

17.15-29: The **two sides prepare for battle** in the Transjordan region.

18.1-18: **The battle ensues:** Israel is defeated and Absalom killed and buried.

18.19-33: **Runners bring the “good tidings”** to King David.