

19. Therefore, Jonadab was envious of the entire Davidic line and was thus motivated by jealousy and envy to stir up conflict whenever possible.
20. Consequently, within the families of Jesse and David the common mental-attitude sins were jealousy and envy. These were certainly true in the soul of Absalom. He was the brains and the motivation for the rebellion brewing in Priest Nation Israel.
21. Following the assassination, Absalom fled to G^éshur, a small kingdom to the northeast of the Sea of Galilee where his father-in-law, Tálmai, was king. Absalom remained sequestered there for three years.
22. It is during this time that Absalom began to develop his strategy. He had sedition on his mind. His objective was to undermine David's authority motivated by envy.

Principle: Jealousy is directed toward another person's asset which he wishes to acquire, while envy is directed toward the individual person. In the latter case, he wishes to rob David of his power.

2 Samuel 15:2 Now Absalom would habitually rise up early in the morning, and stand by the side of the Castle Gate Road so that when anyone had a grievance and came to the king for a judicial decision, then Absalom called out to him and said, "Of what city are you?" And he would reply, "Your loyal subject is from one of the tribes of Israel." (EXT)

1. As far as the people of Israel and Jerusalem are concerned, Absalom and David are back on cordial terms with each other.
2. Absalom is brilliant, handsome, engaging, famous, cordial, well-liked by the people and is accepted as someone who can be trusted to hear the grievances of the people.
3. This encounter in verse 2 is not a situation that Absalom conducted for just a few days. It was his habitual practice day in and day out. The issues that concerned the citizens who appeared at the Castle Gate Road were legal ones that required a judicial decision from the king.
4. Prior to Saul becoming king of Israel, the Jews judicial issues were decided by the judges. The Book of Judges¹ covers this period. Once the people opted for a king, Saul and later David held the high office of Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Israel.

¹ "The judges were military and civil leaders ruling during the time when the nation was a loose confederacy. Historically, the book serves to link the conquest of Palestine and the monarchy" (Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Ryrie Study Bible* [Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, 1995], 372).

5. Notice in verse 2 that the reason these people were consistently arriving at the Castle Gate Road was because they “had a grievance and came to the king for a judicial decision.”
6. The word “grievance” is the masculine noun, רִיב (*riv*): “The word is used in a legal sense to refer to an argument or case made in one’s defense.”
7. What the people sought was a “judicial decision,” indicated by the masculine noun, מִשְׁפָּט (*mishpat*).

**Jurisprudence. One comes before the king or judge for a judicial decision (2 Samuel 15:2,6).
Legal Case. In 2 Samuel 15:4, this sense of *mishpat* is defined more precisely by association with רִיב *riv*, “lawsuit.”²**

8. The person who adjudicated these complaints was no longer a judge but the king who on this occasion was officially David. However, he was ignoring the legitimate complaints of the citizens of Israel.
9. David allows this because he is out of fellowship. He has made a series of poor decisions. He allowed the crown prince, Amnon, to get away with raping his daughter, Tamar. How disrespectful, how thoughtless, how irresponsible to let that pass! Yet he did.
10. Because of that failure, David allowed Absalom’s anger to metastasize into murder lust resulting in the assassination of Amnon. David again did nothing.
11. Unbelievably, David wrongly tried to make up with Absalom with an official kiss on his head, an act that communicated to the people that Absalom had been forgiven and his good standing with the king was restored.
12. As time passed, Absalom’s mental-attitude sins have evolved from resentment over to revenge motivation energized by the sins of jealousy and envy. His plot was designed to take down David.
13. At first, he was jealous of the fact that David was still king. His strategy was to become accepted by the people of Israel. David made another mistake by ignoring Absalom’s personal propaganda campaign at the castle gate.
14. Over a period of about seven years, David had systematically made a sequence of poor decisions that resulted in giving Absalom the power to foment rebellion.

² B. Johnson, “מִשְׁפָּט,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, eds. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David E. Green (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 9:89.



15. Every time Absalom met one of the men who appeared before him on the Castle Gate Road, he conducted an interview. Three examples are given: **(1)** “What city are you from?” (2 Samuel 15:2), **(2)** “Your claims are good and right, but no man listens to you on the part of the king” (2 Samuel 15:3), and **(3)** “Oh, that one would appoint me judge in the land, then every man who has any suit could come to me and I would give him justice” (2 Samuel 15:4).
16. The second question Absalom poses is designed to create doubt about David’s integrity and that of his administration. Absalom makes a comment that supports the man’s claims but in doing so he asserts that he is not getting the kind of attention from the king that he should.
17. These are typical tactics used by those out of power. Absalom is envious of David because of his many failures over the past seven years. His strategy is to engage in systematically using David’s failures as king to undermine his regime.
18. One of his initial tactics is to capitalize on the breakdown of administering justice. He has already started organizing what we refer to in the twenty-first century as a “mailing list.”
19. He didn’t have such a system that he could employ, but he opts for the best thing available . He finds out where each man lives. He establishes the fact he is a Jew; he learns from him which tribe he is a member, and the name of the community where he lives.
20. Over time he develops a contact list from which he can recruit campaign managers in each city and tribe. The tactic he uses to lure them in is noted in:
2 Samuel 15:3 Furthermore, Absalom would say to the man, “Look, your grievances are valid and legitimate, but you have no man representing you before the king to judge the case. (EXT)
1. Absalom plants the seed that David’s judicial system is not fair, the people’s rights are not being addressed, and their complaints are therefore being ignored.
2. He plants the seed that if Absalom was free to function as his ombudsman things would be different.
3. All that Absalom tells these fellow Israelites are legitimate observations. In my lifetime, I have observed the playing out of obviously unjust, unconstitutional, and therefore illegal acts by those in power in our national government.

4. It is true that once a person is elected to an office, he holds that office by the will of the majority, however, although he legitimately holds the office, which must be respected, nevertheless, he or she is not above criticism.
5. We the people are constitutionally equipped to verbalize our opposition to error, poor decision-making, and violations of the Bill of Rights. We are granted these rights by the Bill of Rights. When government infringes on these rights by limiting their execution, then they may be disobeyed.
6. Here's an example:

Amendment II: A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep [own or possess] and bear [see definitions³] arms, shall not be infringed [see definition⁴].

7. The right to disobey is in the context of Amendment II. When the government imposes restrictions on the “right to keep and bear arms” then appeal to the phrase, “shall not be infringed,” may be asserted.
8. The State of Virginia recently made it illegal to possess certain “arms.” Citizens of the state responded by declaring specific counties as “sanctuary counties” for “arms.” They claim the “right ... to keep and bear arms” since the right to do so “shall not be infringed,” each protection cited in Amendment II.
9. When duly elected politicians violate the rights described and defined in the Constitution, the people have the right to resist. Our Founders did this when King George got uppity by imposing what the Colonists referred to as the Intolerable Acts among others. Their resistance became official with the release of the Declaration of Independence.
10. There is nothing new under the sun. Poor decisions have always been the case on this planet since Ishah ate the forbidden fruit. It shall remain so until the inauguration of the Millennium's perfect environment under the singular leadership of our Lord Jesus Christ.
11. Absalom had a personal right to disagree with his father's decisions as king. So does the man with whom he is speaking. But these correct opinions were used as means of then propagandizing the man into shifting his allegiance away from David over to another individual who does not have the authority to address the issue.

³ “Bear: to be equipped or furnished with; to call for as suitable or essential. To allow, assume, accept. Bear arms: 1. To carry or possess arms.” (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. [2014], s.v. “bear.”)

⁴ “Infringe; infringed: To encroach upon in a way that violates law or the rights of another. An encroachment or trespass on a right or privilege.” (*Ibid.*, s.vv. “infringe,” “infringed.”)



12. Absalom is actually attacking a major doctrine regarding the laws of divine establishment. It is one thing to disagree; it is another to utilize the disagreement to stoke rebellion. The solution to the problem must follow establishment guidelines.
13. In a monarchy, there are two legitimate solutions to the removal of a king: **(1)** David chooses to abdicate the throne or **(2)** David dies and the crown prince accedes the throne.
14. These are legal and effective; however, the latter is not likely while the former does not appear ready to step down anytime soon. Historically, there is a third solution that has been more commonly used, although illegal, and that is regicide: the killing or murder of a king.
15. The plot in Absalom's soul continues its advance. The next verse indicates that Absalom is moving away from jealousy over to envy.

2 Samuel 15:4 Then Absalom would say, “Who will appoint me [Qal active imperfect of שׁוּם (*sum*): appoint, call, consider] judge [שָׁפַט (*shaphat*): governor] in the land of Israel, that every man who has a cause [מִשְׁפָּט (*mishpat*): a legal case, claim] could come to me and I would do him justice [צָדַקְתִּי (*sethaqah*)]. (EXT)

1. There are four words in this verse that reveal the strategy that Absalom plans to use to win the confidence of the people. Asserting that he will resolve their legal issues fairly is designed to win their support in his scheme to usurp David's authority.
2. The first word is “appoint” (*sum*). This statement is his not-so-subtle way to begin his political campaign to become “governor” (*shaphat*) of Isreal. Anyone would be able to come to him to hear his legal case (*mishpat*) with confidence they would receive justice (*sethaqah*).
3. An analysis of the word “judge” reveals a few things behind Absalom's strategy to become a judge or “governor” (שָׁפַט (*shaphat*)):

שָׁפַט (*shaphat*). **Governor. According to 2 Samuel 15:4, Absalom longed for the office of *shaphat*, so as to be able to decide all the suits [מִשְׁפָּט (*mishpat*): a legal case] that the king could not hear (v. 3). In other words, Absalom wished to become a kind of governor, representing in the capital before the king the concerns of the Israelites outside Jerusalem. (p. 422)**

Insofar as the monarchy relies on armed forces, the jurisdictional authority of their commander is extended. In addition, a royal administration develops, based and modeled on the royal household, so that the king assumes the juridical competence of a paterfamilias. A new element is the personal jurisdiction of the king (2 Samuel 15:1–6). This was necessary, since the establishment of the monarchy resulted in new legal constellations that required decisions. In addition, the monarchy sought to bring as many areas as possible under its own control. Thus the monarchy also made use of juridical structures to pursue its own goals. This development went hand in hand with a centralization of juridical authority in the capital and the towns, as is evident above all from the texts that speak of judges (2 Samuel 15:1–5).⁵
(p. 424)

4. Absalom’s strategy was to gain juridical authority over the people outside Jerusalem. In so doing he could win them over by making favorable legal decisions that would cause many to come to him for assistance regarding their own “legal cases”: מִשְׁפָּט (*mishpat*).
5. The final assertion made by Absalom was the idea that he would make sure their claims would receive justice: שֶׁתִּצְדָּק (*sethaqah*).
6. If successful, Absalom could acquire some of David’s authority as Governor and turn the rural areas to his advantage. David is still king. David still has power.
7. Absalom no longer is jealous of David. He now is envious of what David has that he does not possess and that is power. If he can further weaken David, he could satisfy his lust pattern for power.
8. In our studies we have distinguished the difference between jealousy and envy. The sequence of events we have noted in 2 Samuel reveals Absalom’s transition from on to the other.
9. In English Bibles, both the words “envy” and “jealousy” are translated by the Hebrew verb קָנָא (*qana’*) and the noun, קִנְיָה (*qin’ah*). Context apparently determines which English word is chosen by these translators.

⁵ H. Niehr, “מִשְׁפָּט,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, (2006), 15:422, 424.



10. However, what we have learned in our examination of the core meanings of “envy” and “jealousy” is confirmed by this brief excerpt by E. Reuter:

The fact that Hebrew has only a single word to cover seems less surprising when we note, for example, that the languages of central Europe did not distinguish zeal, envy, and jealousy until after the Middle Ages. Even today the distinction is not always entirely clear.⁶ (p. 49)

11. Absalom’s envious lust for power, begins by focusing his attention on usurping it from David by assuming a quasi-judicial⁷ office of **שֹׁפֵט** (*shaphat*): “judge or governor.”

2 Samuel 15:5 Following his strategy in verse 4, when a man approached, he would show obeisance by bowing before Absalom who would extend his hand, embrace him, and kiss him. (EXT)

1. The first effort is made by the man who approached Absalom. The custom to approach a superior is to show “obeisance.” This verb, **שָׁחָה** (*shachah*) is the Hiph’il stem which indicates the action is causative.
2. In the culture of Israel, it was required of those who approached a superior to be caused to bow down before him.
3. This verse simply reports the mechanics of showing respect to the royal family and then each going through the customs and traditions in the Levant for saying, “hello.”
4. The verb “to kiss” seems out of place, but it is because of cultural mores instead of anything romantic. The verb is the Qal perfect of **נָשַׁק** (*nashaq*) which describes the custom of a cordial greeting between two people. Western culture’s equivalent is the practice of shaking hands.
5. Absalom’s cordiality to this man, whom he did not know, indicates his strategy to acquire David’s power. He was not as much interested in acquiring the power of the crown as he was in removing that power from his father.
6. The man in verse 5 is one example of how Absalom used his gregarious personality, his stature of royalty, his willingness to be approachable, and his inherent power to do the people’s bidding in cases of jurisprudence.

⁶ Ibid., E. Reuter, “שָׁחָה” (2004), 13:49.

⁷ “Essentially judicial in character but not within the judicial power or function especially as constitutionally defined” (*Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary* [2014], s.v. “quasi-judicial”).



7. His underlying mind-set was not jealousy, but envy, “If I am not going to have the power, then you aren’t either.”

2 Samuel 15:6 Consequently, Absalom functioned under this rationale. All who approached the castle, he intervened and with his engaging personality, he stole the hearts of the men of Israel. (EXT)

Summary:

1. The government of Israel is in chaos. An interloper, even one of royal blood, is able to undermine the system when the man on the throne is disengaged from what is going on around him.
2. This was not a new situation for David. His obvious loss of thought became starkly evident when he ignored Amnon’s rape of his daughter, Tamar. She was Absalom’s sister.
3. Absalom rightly thought that surely David would punish his brother Amnon’s crime. When David did nothing at all, Absalom began a thought process in his soul that led to the drama that proceeded over the course of almost a decade.
4. He was first appalled, then furious, then vindictive, then murderous. During all these events, David did nothing.
5. Who was David exactly? He was the first king of Israel from the royal line of Judah, the bloodline of Messiah. He was commander-in-chief of its military. His early reign was filled with his dependence on the God of Israel as he defended the domain of the priest nation.
6. Prosperity emerged from his leadership. Enemies were subdued and defeated. The people lived in an environment of peace. This led to prosperity testing.
7. When good decisions result in an abundance of blessings beginning with peace throughout the commonwealth, far too often the people forget the fact that it is God, His Word, His promises, and His protection that enables prosperity to occur and continue.
8. Conversely a collective loss of thought caused chaos to occur in Israel. The loss of thought emerged from the castle all the way through the country so that the safety and prosperity once enjoyed was being withdrawn.
9. Principle: There is nothing new under the sun.
10. However, there is a reckoning coming down like a mighty stream in client nation America. The Progressives have envisioned nirvana but have unleashed chaos.

