

The Biblical Story of Absalom – Rape, Incest, and Fratricide

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The Bible says Absalom was praised as the most handsome man in all Israel: "He was flawless from head to foot." (2 Samuel 14:25, [NLT](#)) When he cut his hair once a year—only because it became too heavy—it weighed five pounds. It seemed everyone loved him.

Absalom had a beautiful sister named Tamar, who was a virgin. Another of David's sons, Amnon, was their half-brother. Amnon fell in love with Tamar, raped her, then rejected her in disgrace.

For two years Absalom kept silent, sheltering Tamar in his home. He had expected his father David to punish Amnon for his act. When David did nothing, Absalom's rage and anger seethed into a vengeful plot.

One day Absalom invited all the king's sons to a sheep-shearing festival. When Amnon was celebrating, Absalom ordered his soldiers to kill him.

After the assassination, Absalom fled to Geshur, northeast of the [Sea of Galilee](#), to the house of his grandfather. He hid there for three years. David missed his son deeply. The Bible says in 2 Samuel 13:37 that David "mourned for his son day after day." Finally, David allowed him to come back to [Jerusalem](#).

Gradually, Absalom began to undermine King David, usurping his authority and speaking against him to the people. Under the pretense of honoring a vow, Absalom went to Hebron and began to gather an army. He sent messengers throughout the land, proclaiming his kingship.

When King David learned of the rebellion, he and his followers fled Jerusalem. Meanwhile, Absalom took advice from his counselors on the best way to defeat his father. Before the battle, David ordered his troops not to harm Absalom. The two armies clashed at Ephraim, in a large oak forest. Twenty thousand men fell that day. The army of David prevailed.

As Absalom was riding his mule under a tree, his hair got entangled in the branches. The mule ran off, leaving Absalom hanging in the air, helpless. Joab, one of David's generals, took three javelins and thrust them into Absalom's heart. Then ten of Joab's armor-bearers circled Absalom and killed him.