

## A Study of II Samuel

### *The Life of David*

### Chapter Thirteen

### A House of Trouble

**The Lust of Ammon (1-20):** Absalom and Tamar were David's children by Maacah, the daughter of the king of Geshur (3:3). Ammon was David's son by Ahinoam the Jezreelitess (3:2).

What follows in this chapter and throughout the remaining chapters is the reaping of the whirl wind of sin for David's killing of Uriah. The following verse should be kept in mind throughout these chapters:

**Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house ... (2 Samuel 12:11)**

*Evil Devised (2-5):* Ammon sickly lusted after his sister Tamar and sought within himself opportunity to be with her but Tamar being an unmarried member of the royal harem was rarely left alone (2).

Jonadab is described in verse 3 as the son of Shimeah, who was the brother of David, making Jonadab a cousin to Amnon as well as his friend. He is called "very wise", a very shrewd or crafty person. Being Amnon's friend it is Jonadab that devises a plan for Amnon to have Tamar (3-5).

*Evil Conceived (6-14):* David becomes an unknowing accomplice in Amnon and Jonadab's evil plan (6-7): Amnon is burning with lust so that he will not listen to reason from Tamar (12-13). Amnon had an evil desire, and he will see it to its awful end (14).

Such loss of a maiden's virginity was unbearable curse in Israel (Deut. 22:13-21). Moreover, such a relationship between a half brothers and sisters were strictly forbidden in the Law. Those guilty of such things were to be cut off from the covenant community (Lev. 20:17). In this case, of course, Tamar was innocent since she had been assaulted (Deut. 22:25-29).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See the following passages to shed light on the Law concerning such matters: Adultery (Deut. 22:22); Fornication (Deut. 22:23-24); Rape (Deut. 22:25-29); Incest (Deut. 22:30).

*Tamar Hated (15-18):* To add insult to injury and in further violation of the Law, Amnon sent Tamar away (15-17). Amnon desires to have her gone from his immediate presence is a repudiation of her as a bride. He had humbled a virgin and the Law demanded that he marry her (Deut. 22:29).

*Tamar's Lament (19-20):* Tamar's reaction to all this – putting ashes on her head and tearing her royal robe shows the intensity of her sorrow at losing her purity and perhaps any further opportunity for marriage.

Recommending her to be silent about it and not publish her own and her family's dishonor, he gave no inkling of his angry feelings to Amnon. But all the while he was in secretly nursing wrath, waiting his time to avenge his sister's wrongs (20).

**The Revenge of Absalom (21-36):** David was content merely to be angry since he himself had been guilty of adultery. However, his lack of an appropriate action stemmed from his affection toward his son and his habitual failure to discipline members of his family (21).

When Tamar got to the house of her brother Absalom, he suspected at once what had happened. No doubt he knew full well the propensities of Amnon. With plans for vengeance already developing in his won mind he concealed his sister to remain silent about the matter and to stay in his house (21).

Two long years passed before Absalom implemented his plan for retaliation (see vs 32). He hosted a festival to celebrate the time of sheepshearing, a custom observed in Israel from the earliest times (Gen. 38:12-13; I Sam. 25:2, 8). He invited and urged his father to join him at Baalhazor the scene of the festivities, but David declined. Absalom then requested that Amnon attend in David's place, a request the king reluctantly granted. During the merriment the servants of Absalom, on prearranged signal, attacked and murdered the unsuspecting Amnon.

A roomer had surfaced that all of David's sons were murdered which put David into a grief-stricken anguish. Even when he later knew that the report was unfounded and that only Amnon was dead he could not be comforted (vs. 36).

**David and Absalom (37-39):** Absalom fled to Talmai, his maternal grandfather, at Geshur.

The law as to premeditated murder (Num. 35:21) gave Absalom no hope of remaining with impunity in his own country. The cities of refuge could afford him no sanctuary and he was compelled to leave the kingdom. There Absalom remained for three years though his father, finally consoled, longed to have him return.

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**The Plan of Joab (1-3):** Joab perceived that David's heart was toward Absalom devises a plan. Joab took a woman on the land of Tekoa, a place near by where Joab grew up. Tekoa later was the home of the Prophet Amos (Amos 1:1). Joab convinced or commanded a wise woman from Tekoa to disguise herself as a mourner and go to the king with a story which he concocted.

**The Woman of Tekoah (4-20):** Having gained access to the king the woman of Tekoa related to David her supposed story: The woman had two sons, one of whom had murdered the other. The relatives of the slain son could avenge the death of their son by killing the remaining son. Since the mother of the sons was a widow, this would mean the elimination of her own source of support and more importantly she would have no heir to carry on the name of her dead husband.

David obviously touched by the story tells the woman to return home in peace and he would issue a resolve to settle the matter. The woman continued to press the matter until David made a formal oath that her accused son would suffer not even the slightest harm: **"Then said she, I pray thee, let the king remember the LORD thy God, that thou wouldest not suffer the revengers of blood to destroy any more, lest they destroy my son. And he said, As the LORD liveth, there shall not one hair of thy son fall to the earth."** (2 Samuel 14:11)

Once the king made his oath that her son would not die though worthy of death boldly tells the king the meaning of the parable (12-17). In granting amnesty to an unknown murderer, it was now binding on David that he does the same for his son Absalom.

Though there were circumstances under which the death penalty could be revoked that was not the case with Absalom for his premeditated murder, however there was still the principle of mercy of which David showed to her fictional son in the story.

David is onto the whole plot perceiving that it was Joab behind all these words for David must have understood Joab's interest in Absalom and his desire for David to be reconciled to his son Absalom.

**The Return of Absalom (21-27):** Joab is told to retrieve Absalom his son. David however refuses to meet him personally or to let him visit the palace. Perhaps David felt that too ready a reconciliation would lead the people to believe that he did not view Absalom's crime with sufficient seriousness (21-24, 28).

Absalom's beauty is mentioned (25-27). His hair is mentioned specifically here as a reference for his future undoing (18:9).

Also note his love for his violated sister Tamar, Absalom names his daughter after her (27).

**Absalom's Drastic Measures to be united to David (28-33):** After two more years of estrangement from his father, Absalom twice sought Joab's aid in bringing about a final resolution of their differences. Rebuffed each time, Absalom resorted to dramatic measures - he set Joab's barley fields on fire. Joab concedes and intervenes on behalf of Absalom and reunites Absalom and David.

The reuniting of David to his son was cordial but as subsequent events would demonstrate David's long delay in accepting his son back into his presence came too late. Absalom was embittered and resolves to do whatever was necessary to make David pay for his stubbornness.

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**Absalom Steals the heart of the men of Israel (1-6):** Absalom begins a vigorous campaign to win the loyalty of the people of Israel. Absalom's first move to achieve his purpose of revenge was to make himself conveniently available to hear the complaints of the citizens.

Cleverly he insinuated that the king was too busy to hear them, and that David had not even provided a lesser judge to resolve their cases. If only he were chief judge, he would listen to one and all and deal impartially in every matter.

In doing this Absalom stole the heart of the men of Israel.

**Absalom's Conspiracy (7-12):** One day, feeling his popular support was overwhelming, Absalom requested and received permission from the king to go to Hebron, allegedly to pay a vow to the LORD which he had made while he had made in exile in Geshur (13:37).

Now the time was ripe for revolution. When Absalom reached Hebron, the very center of the Davidic dynasty, where David was begun his reign (II Sam. 3:2-3), Absalom announced his usurpation of power (15:10).

The 200 men who accompanied him from Jerusalem were ignorant of his plans. Apparently, they were won over as was Ahithophel, David's own chief counselor. Ahithophel the grandfather of Bathsheba. Ahithophel's involvement it would seem stemmed from the disgrace David brought upon his family, as well as his murder of his son-in-law, Uriah.

**The Flight of the King (13-37):** News quickly reached the capital that Absalom had influenced a coup and all Israel is siding with Absalom. David knows perfectly well what Absalom is capable of, having killed Amnon chooses to flee the city to protect the remaining loyal servant.

The people including 600 Gittites: These were the men who had gathered around David on his flight from Saul and emigrated with him to Gath. Afterward they lived with him in Ziklag, and eventually followed him to Hebron and Jerusalem (16-18).

David would leave behind only 10 housekeeping concubines of which would fall prey to Absalom's wickedness.

David tried to persuade his Philistine mercenary officer, Ittai and Gath, to remain behind since he had nothing to fear from Absalom. But to his credit Ittai refused, preferring to honor his commitment of loyalty by joining the king in banishment (19-22).

Zadok and Abiathar, the two chief priests, were sent back to Jerusalem by David. He knew that if it was God's will for him to return as king, he would do so. Hence there was no reason need to keep the ark away from the sanctuary. After all, it was David and the LORD who was going into exile. Besides the priest's two sons could carry to David any revelations which God might give their father. (Ahimaaz, Zadok's son, and Jonathan, Abiathar's son)

David and his loyal supporters made their way east across the Kidron Valley and up the Mount of Olives. His covered head and unshod feet indicated his depth of despair (30).

To make matters worse David discovered that his trusted adviser Ahithophel had joined Absalom's cause. To contravene Ahithophel's effectiveness David recruited Hushai, a friend who asked to accompany the king on the way and persuaded his to return to Jerusalem and attach himself to Absalom's court as a counselor (31-37). His mission would be to conduct the advice of Ahithophel and to communicate Absalom's plans to Zadok and Abiathar whose sons in turn would relay them to David.

Absalom took firm control of Jerusalem.