

Amnon and Tamar

Second Samuel 13: 1-22

DIG: What is the difference between love and lust? In what way was Jonadab "shrewd?" How did Amnon react to Tamar's rape? Why did Tamar refuse to be banished? What greater wrong had Tamar experienced after the rape? Why did Amnon end up hating Tamar? How did the rape affect Tamar's life? How did Absalom react to his sister's rape initially? Later (Second Samuel 13:28)? How did David respond? How did David respond as he faced the problems brought on by his children? How had David's credibility been compromised?

REFLECT: If you do not hate sin - especially your own sin enough, where should you go? How about a hill outside Jerusalem? In what ways have you been impacted by sexual sins in the past (your past or another's)? How have you managed to control the damage? To be forgiven? Do you think rape victims get sufficiently compassionate treatment in today's society? Do you think "love" badly needs a biblical definition in today's society? What's your definition? As a parent, or a potential parent, how do you evaluate your present example for your family? What do you think of David as a dad?

981 BC

Because of his affair with Bathsheba, Nathan told David that the sword would never depart from his house (see **Dc - Nathan Rebukes David**). It was not long before David began to experience the heartbreaks of rape and murder within his own family. His sin had come home to roost. Something seems to have snapped somewhere; the bonds of integrity within his home life collapsed and David seemed, like Jacob (see my commentary on **Genesis 1e - The Slaughter at Shechem by Simeon and Levi**), unable to cope with it.³⁵⁸

The Trap: In the course of time, after the incident with Bathsheba and Uriah, Amnon son of David thought he was in love with Tamar, tragic in her beauty, she was the sister of Absalom son of David. It was evil for him to nurture an abnormal love for his half-sister and he should have stopped feeding that appetite the moment it started (**Matthew 5:27-30**). Amnon became so obsessed with his half-sister Tamar that he loved her and made himself sick thinking about it. She was a virgin that seemed to inflame Amnon's passion all the more. The virgin princesses were kept secluded in their own quarters, apart even from their male relatives. So it seemed impossible for him to do anything to her (**Second Samuel 13:1-2**). But Amnon's imagination worked overtime thinking about her (**James 1:13-15**).³⁵⁹

Now Amnon had an adviser named Jonadab, son of David's brother Shammah (First Samuel 16:9), here called Shimeah. So Jonadab was David's nephew and a cousin to Amnon, Absalom and Tamar. He embodies the consummate politician - he gets things done. He knew how to work all the angles, he knew how to make anything succeed . . . even the rape of a cousin. He was a very shrewd man, and perhaps the most dangerous man in the whole fiasco. He asked Amnon, "Why do you, the king's son, look so haggard morning after morning? Won't you tell me" (Second Samuel 13:3-4a)?

Jonadab, and those like him, have the skill to leak evil everywhere they go. They are dangerous because they have the skill without scruple, wisdom without ethics and insight without integrity. This was Jonadab - nothing succeeds like success; nothing impedes like standards! Jonadab can show you how to raise needed funds for your place of worship or how to rape a scrumptious female . . . whichever you want. There is never a line he won't cross. He was a pimp for his male cousin, a disgrace to his female cousin and disloyal to his uncle, the king. All of this should help us see the caution light blinking in our lives. We should pray that when ADONAI has given us some skill, we choose to add a measure of integrity and sincerity so that we may keep ourselves from the shrewdness of a man like Jonadab.³⁶⁰

Amnon said to him, "I'm in love with Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister." Jonadab advised Amnon to pretend to be ill. Jonadab knew that when David heard of Amnon's "illness," he would come to see him. At that point Amnon should say: I would like my sister Tamar to come and give me something to eat. Let her prepare the food in my sight so I may watch her and then eat it from her hand. So Amnon lay down and pretended to be ill. When King David came to see him, Amnon said: I would like my sister Tamar to come and make some special bread in my sight, so I may eat from her hand (Second Sam. 13:4b-6). David's indulgence of his children would now bring the sword into his house.

The Rape: So David sent word to Tamar at the palace, "Go to the house of your brother Amnon and prepare some food for him." It appears that each brother had his own house. This would have provided the privacy needed for Amnon to rape Tamar. So without hesitation the unsuspecting Tamar went to the house of her brother Amnon, who was lying down. He looked harmless lying there. She took some dough, kneaded it, made the bread in his sight and baked it. Then she took the pan and served him the bread, but he refused to eat (Second Samuel 13:7-9a). We must suppose that a servant took the bread to Amnon and, when he refused to eat it, brought them back to Tamar.

"Send everyone out of here," Amnon said. So everyone left him. Then Amnon said to Tamar, "Bring me food here in my bedroom so I may eat from your hand." And Tamar took the bread she had prepared and brought it to her brother Amnon in his bedroom. But when she took it to him to eat, he overpowered her and said: Come to

bed with me, my sister (2 Sam 13:9b-11). This was, and is, an abomination to the LORD, for a half-brother and half-sister to have sexual relations (Lev 18: 9,11 and 20:17; Deut 27:22). Now Amnon was the oldest of David's sons and the apparent heir to the throne. But just like Reuben, he lost his favored position due to sexual sin (see commentary on [Genesis 1k - Reuben Went In and Slept with His Father's Concubine Bilhah](#)).

Trapped, she tried to reason with him. "No, my brother!" she pleaded, "Don't force me! The term **force** (Hebrew: *'anah*) can be translated *to oppress* or *to humiliate*. It reflects more than an act of sexual exploitation. The rape is an act of the strong overpowering the weak. Tamar was helpless before Amnon's unrestrained passion. Amnon was satisfied. Tamar was violated. The rape was quick, but it will take seven years to live through the consequences of that one foolish act of lust (Second Samuel 13:23, 38, and 14:28). **Such a thing should not be done in Isra'el! Don't do this wicked thing. What about me? Where could I get rid of my disgrace? And what about you? You would be like one of the wicked fools in Isra'el. Please speak to the king; he will not keep me from being married to you.**" Now Tamar knew this was also against the Torah, but she probably made this suggestion in an effort to escape from being raped. However, her pleading was to no avail. He refused to listen to her, and since he was stronger than she, he raped her (Second Samuel 13:12-14). Such loss of a maiden's virginity was an unbearable curse in Isra'el (Deuteronomy 22:13-21). Moreover, such relationships between brothers and sisters were strictly forbidden under the Torah. Those guilty were to be cut off from the covenant community (Leviticus 20:17).

The Results: Then Amnon quickly lost interest in Tamar. He hated her with intense hatred. In fact, he hated her more than he had [lusted after] her. Tamar had barely caught her breath after being raped, Amnon said two words to her in Hebrew: **Get up and get out.** Now detached, he wanted to get rid of her. "No!" she begged him. "Sending me away would be a greater wrong than what you have already done to me." But the egotistical Amnon had neither ears nor heart. Heir apparent, he was used to having his own way and not accustomed to accepting advice. He refused to listen to her. He called his personal servant and said: **The English version does not reproduce the deep contempt that is expressed in the Hebrew.** Amnon declared: **Get this thing** (Hebrew: *zo't*) **out of my sight and bolt the door after her. So his servant put her out and bolted the door after her.** Once he had satisfied his lustful desires, he discarded her as trash.

Amnon had multiplied himself thousands of times in contemporary music videos and rap music, where we meet remarkably one-dimensional characters, ruled entirely by their all-powerful genitalia. Such media glamorize the hard, bitter, sadistic sex they promote, but also expose it for those who have eyes to see. But teenagers seldom do.³⁶¹

She was wearing an ornate robe like Joseph's coat (see my commentary on **Genesis 12:10 - Joseph's Coat of Many Colors**), for this was the kind of garment the virgin daughters of the king wore. She would be immediately recognized as she returned home. Tamar put ashes on her head and tore the ornate robe she was wearing. She put her hands on her head and went away, as a sign of mourning, weeping aloud as she went (**Second Samuel 13:15-19**).

Her brother Absalom instantly suspected what had happened. He said to her, "Has that Amnon, your brother, been with you? This was a nice, euphemistic way of describing the offense. Be quiet for now, my sister; he is your brother. Or don't make a public scandal out of this. Don't take this thing to heart." She was not to take vengeance. Absalom would do that for her in due time. And Tamar lived in her brother Absalom's house, a desolate woman with no hope of ever being married or having a family (**Second Samuel 13:20**). For a Hebrew woman it was a living death. This would have been a great shame in Israel even though she did nothing wrong.

When king David heard all this, he was furious. But something was not right with David's fury. It should have led to a righteous result. His anger should have led to justice. Amnon should have been punished and Tamar exonerated. Instead, Amnon is not held accountable and Tamar receives no restoration, and Absalom is handed a plausible excuse for revenge. Like Jacob, he did nothing (**Genesis 34: 25-29**). How could he discipline his son when he himself had committed his own sexual offense? Like Eli and Samuel, David failed to control his own sons. Ultimately, he didn't protect his daughter. If David had done something, maybe Absalom wouldn't have taken matters into his own hands. One may understand his failure to act; however, one may not excuse it. In the final analysis, as Nathan had prophesied, the sword would never depart from his house and this episode would lead to tragic consequences.

As often noted, this chapter begins with Amnon's "love" and ends with Absalom's hatred. Absalom hated Amnon because Amnon had abused his sister. But Absalom's hatred was a sophisticated, high-class hatred. He bided his time. His was a cool, patient hatred, a rage that would wait. He never said a word to Amnon, either good or bad, but simply waited for the right time to kill his brother and avenge his sister. Amnon's hatred for his half-sister Tamar was replaced by Absalom's hatred for his half-brother Amnon (**Second Samuel 13:21-22**), which would give birth to murder.

ADONAI hates all sin. When we think God's thoughts we also hate sin. Just as YHVH never excuses or ignores sin, neither can we ignore sin. The LORD chooses forgiveness for sin when there is repentance; but forgiveness is entirely different from excusing or ignoring sin. Discipline is God's loving tool that He uses for the benefit of His child. An excellent verse

for parents to teach to their children on **the Lord's love** which disciplines His children is in **Hebrews 12:5-6** And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says,

**"My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline,
and do not lose heart when he rebukes you,
because the Lord disciplines the one he loves,
and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son."**

Repentance also needs explanation as not being flippant words of "I'm sorry" - but a genuine heart of sorrow over their part in the wrong, as opposed to sorrow over the consequences. Rabbi Sha'ul talks about this: **Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death (2 Corinthians 7:10).**

Prayer is always an excellent way to bring the focus back to **God**. The child that learns to ask for **God's** forgiveness will see sin as bigger than just disobeying a rule or his mom or dad. A good way to conclude is for the parents to encourage their children that next time when they are tempted, they should pray to **ADONAI** for help to give them victory over the situation. **God loves** to help each child and is always ready to help. **No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it (First Corinthians 10:11).** The way out of sin is not to ignore it, but to ask for **God's** help.