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Absalom Flees
Second Samuel 13: 34-39

Absalom flees DIG: Where did Absalom flee? What might he get from his grandfather that he dare not ask his father for? With Amnon dead, what might Absalom think as a refugee and heir apparent to the throne of Isra'el? What was his plan? "Skill without scruple, wisdom without ethics, and insight without integrity." This summary of the character of Jonadab brings to mind the thought that skill, wisdom and insight may be the qualities that we look for in the leaders of the congregations of God. But do we remember the other three qualities also?

REFLECT: From what hurts do you feel like "running away?" Where would you go? How long have you waited to reconcile with one of your children? Your parents? Do you protect your children or spoil them? How did David parent? How did David react when Tamar was raped? How did he react when Absalom fled? In your life is "tough love" appropriate in some circumstance? What can you learn from David's mistakes?

980 BC



Meanwhile, Absalom fled in the opposite direction, probably during the confusion

that ensued when **the king's sons** ran for **their** lives fearing assassination themselves. Only **Absalom** and **his** guilty servants knew what was going to happen at the feast, so everyone else was caught off guard. They were all witnesses and could easily testify that **Absalom** was guilty. **Absalom** knew **he** was in jeopardy. So **Absalom** did not wait. **He fled**.

Now the man standing watch looked up and saw many people on the road west of him, coming down the side of the hill. The watchman went and told the king, "I see men in the direction of Horonaim, on the side of the hill." Jonadab recognized **the princes** and pointed out that **he** had been right, saying **to the king, "See, the king's sons have come. It has happened just as your servant said." The watchman** just reported **seeing many people**, but **Jonadab** knew just who **they** were because **he** was part of the plot. **Just as he finished speaking, the king's sons came in, wailing loudly. The king, too, and all his attendants wept very bitterly (Second Samuel 13:34-36).** Although **all the sons** were not killed, **Amnon** was killed, and that was reason to **weep**.

Absalom fled eighty miles northeast to the home of **his** maternal grandparents in **Geshur**, where **his grandfather, Talmai**, was **king (Second Samuel 3:3b).** No doubt this safe haven had been arranged beforehand, and it's likely that **Talmai** would have loved seeing **his grandson** crowned **king of Isra'el**.[364] **Absalom** had escaped, Amnon being brought to justice, but at the same time it seemed that **Absalom** had forfeited any likelihood of inheriting the throne of **Isra'el**. Meanwhile, back in Jerusalem, **King David mourned day after day for his** firstborn **son, Amnon (Second Samuel 13:37).**

After Absalom fled and went to Geshur, a buffer state between **Isra'el** and Syria, **he stayed there three years. Three years** is a long time, **and King David** *was finished with wanting* (Hebrew: *kalah* means *to come to an end*, *to be finished,* or *against*) **to go to Absalom. David was consoled concerning Amnon's death. David** had to come to terms with the loss of **Amnon** because **he** was dead. **Absalom**, however, might as well have been dead so far as **his father** was concerned. **They** were both deadlocked. **David** was reluctant to take up arms and capture **his son**, and **Absalom** (Hebrew: *my father is peace*) was unwilling to throw **himself** on the mercy of **the king**. **David's** love and **his** sense of justice found no place for reconciliation, so, torn between the two, **he** did nothing **(Second Samuel 13:38-39)**. It is ironic that **David**, who was innocent in **his** younger days by taking no action against Sha'ul, became guilty in **his** later years for failing to

execute justice within **his** own family. One reason had to do with **his** own failing, which **he** saw being reproduced in **his sons**; yet another reason arose out of **his** love for **his sons**, who nevertheless did not hesitate in deceiving **him** into doing whatever **they** wanted and involving **him** in **their** wicked plans.[365]

We have come all the way through **Chapter 13** where disaster followed disaster, and life in **David's** family rushed along, driven by lust, conniving, weakness, and hatred. A shattered woman remained ignored by justice and unrestored by murder. And **YHVH** is never mentioned in the whole affair. Not once! What was **He** doing all that time? Was the monarchy **He** established reeling out of control, its course subject only the whims and sins of mankind?

That's sometimes our impression of **God's** Kingdom or **His** sovereign rule in human history. It all seems like a microcosm of **Second Samuel 13**, with everything bashing and bouncing around with **Ha'Shem** seemingly indifferent. But, of course, that wasn't true for **David** and isn't true for us. We have already been given a clue for this chapter in **12:10-12**. **YHVH** had told **David** that **the sword would not depart from your house** and that **He** was **rising up disaster against you from your own house**. Is this not what has begun to happen in **Chapter 13**? Many have pointed out the appropriateness of **the disaster**: **Amnon's** sexual escapade with **Tamar** corresponding to **David's** with Bathsheba, and **Absalom's** arranged murder paralleling **David's** murder of Uriah. In this sleazy episode, then, **Ha'Shem was fulfilling His word or judgment against the house of David.** Humanly speaking everything seems to be coming unhinged; yet **ADONAI** is fulfilling **His** word spoken through **Nathan His prophet**. **The LORD** is in total control. **God** has not hung out a vacancy sign over **His** universe or **His** people. **He** is there, fulfilling **His** word. Sometimes only that assurance keeps us sane.[366]