

SECOND SAMUEL

Chapter 13

Amnon and Tamar

In the course of time, Amnon son of David fell in love with Tamar, the beautiful sister of Absalom son of David.² Amnon became frustrated to the point of illness on account of his sister Tamar, for she was a virgin, and it seemed impossible for him to do anything to her.³ Now Amnon had a friend named Jonadab son of Shimeah, David's brother. Jonadab was a very shrewd man.⁴ He asked Amnon, "Why do you, the king's son, look so haggard morning after morning? Won't you tell me?" Amnon said to him, "I'm in love with Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister."⁵ "Go to bed and pretend to be ill," Jonadab said. "When your father comes to see you, say to him, '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.'" ⁶ So Amnon lay down and pretended to be ill. When the king came to see him, Amnon said to him, "I would like my sister Tamar to come and make some special bread in my sight, so I may eat from her hand."⁷ David sent word to Tamar at the palace: "Go to the house of your brother Amnon and prepare some food for him."⁸ So Tamar went to the house of her brother Amnon, who was lying down. She took some dough, kneaded it, made the bread in his sight and baked it.⁹ Then she took the pan and served him the bread, but he refused to eat. "Send everyone out of here," Amnon said. So everyone left him.¹⁰ Then Amnon said to Tamar, "Bring the food here into 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.¹¹ But when she took it to him to eat, he grabbed her and said, "Come to bed with me, my sister."¹² "Don't, my brother!" she said to him. "Don't force me. Such a thing should not be done in Israel! Don't do this wicked thing."¹³ 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 Israel. Please speak to the king; he will not keep me from being married to you."¹⁴ But he refused to listen to her, and since he was stronger than she, he raped her.¹⁵ Then Amnon hated her with intense hatred. In fact, he hated her more than he had loved her. Amnon said to her, "Get up and get out!"¹⁶ "No!" she said to him. "Sending me away would be a greater wrong than what you have already done to me." But he refused to listen to her.¹⁷ He called his personal servant and said, "Get this woman out of here and bolt the door after her."¹⁸ So his servant put her out and bolted the door after her. She was wearing a richly ornamented robe, for this was the kind of garment the virgin daughters of the king wore.¹⁹ Tamar put ashes on her head and tore the ornamented robe she was wearing. She put her hand on her head and went away, weeping aloud as she went.²⁰ Her brother Absalom said to her, "Has that Amnon, your brother, been with you? Be quiet now, my sister; he is your brother. Don't take this thing to heart." And Tamar lived in her brother Absalom's house, a desolate woman.²¹ When King

David heard all this, he was furious. ²² **Absalom never said a word to Amnon, either good or bad; he hated Amnon because he had disgraced his sister Tamar.**

13:1–39 The trouble within David's family begins (see note on 12:10). (CSB)

13:1 *Absalom.* In line after Amnon for succession to the throne of David. (TLSB)

Amnon. David's oldest son (3:2). (CSB)

Tamar. David's daughter by Maacah of Geshur (3:3), and Absalom's full sister. (CSB)

13:2 *made himself ill.* His lust for Tamar consumed him. (TLSB)

impossible ... to do anything to her. As a young virgin daughter of the king, Tamar was housed under protective care and supervision. (TLSB)

13:3 *a friend.* Also a counselor. (tlsb)

Shimeah. Called Shammah in 1Sa 16:9. (CSB)

crafty. Or, "wise." Able to recognize opportunities and manipulate circumstances. Cf Gn 3:1; Jer 4:22; Jas 3:14–15. (TLSB)

13:5 *when your father comes.* To visit his supposedly ill son Involving the king would lend legitimacy to the scheme. (TLSB)

13:7 *sent home.* The older royal sons lived in their own houses. Cf v 20. (TLSB)

13:8 *made cakes in his sight.* Amnon could see the food preparation area (usually a courtyard) from his bedroom, perhaps through the doorway. Tamar was not yet in the chamber with him. Men and women did not typically work together closely, so such domestic activities may have had sensual appeal. (TLSB)

13:9 *emptied it out before him.* Tamar was in full view of Amnon, but in modesty she did not bring the food to him. (TLSB)

everyone went out. Everyone else had been sent away, both out of sight and out of earshot, with the exception of Amnon's personal servant (v 17); there was no one to hear or respond to Tamar's cries for help (cf Dt 22:23–27). (TLSB)

13:11 *my sister.* They were paternal siblings, having the same father (David), but different mothers. The Law forbids a man to have sexual relations with his sister, "whether the daughter of his father or the daughter of his mother" (Dt 27:22; cf Lv 18:9, 11). (TLSB)

13:12 *not done in Israel.* The Law God gave to Israel forbids it. (TLSB)

13:13 *where could I carry my shame?* Rape would rob Tamar of her present life and future hope. She would no longer be a virgin daughter of the king; marriage arrangements for her

would be badly complicated. There would always be the suspicion of fault or willingness on her part. (TLSB)

what about you? This act would jeopardize Amnon's position as crown prince and heir to the throne. (CSB)

he will not keep me from being married to you. Possibly a futile attempt by Tamar to escape Amnon's immediate designs rather than a serious proposal, since such a marriage was prohibited in Israel (see Lev 18:9; 20:17; Dt 27:22). (CSB)

It is questionable whether David would sanction such a marriage (Lv 18:9, 11; Dt 27:22), but Tamar preferred to be married to her father's son (cf Gn 20:12) than to be taken by force. Aside from that, she was buying time to find protection from his advances. (TLSB)

13:14 *he violated her.* He raped her. Cf 12:11. (TLSB)

13:15 *Amnon hated her.* The reversal in Amnon's feelings toward Tamar demonstrates that his former "love" (v. 1) was nothing but sensual desire. (CSB)

His "love" was never true, only self-serving. Perhaps this hate came from his own guilt and shame. (TLSB)

13:16 *Sending me away would be a greater wrong.* No longer a virgin, she could not be offered by her father to any other potential husband (see v. 21 and note). (CSB)

By law, Amnon was required to marry her (Dt 22:28–29). But in sending her away, he insinuated that she, not he, was at fault (cf Dt 22:13–21). Tamar's reputation was ruined. (TLSB)

13:17 *Put this woman out.* He implies that Tamar had done the wrong, perhaps that she had seduced him. (TLSB)

13:18 *richly ornamented robe.* See Ge 37:3 and note. (CSB)

13:19 *put ashes on her head.* A sign of great mourning. (CSB)

tore the ornamented robe. Thus expressing her anguish and announcing that her virginity had been violated. (CSB)

Sign of mourning and graphic indication of what has been taken from her: she is no longer a virgin daughter of the king. (TLSB)

put her hand on her head. Also a sign of grief (see Jer 2:37). (CSB)

13:20 *Be quiet now, my sister ... Don't take this thing to heart.* Absalom urges his sister not to make the matter a public scandal, and attempts to quiet her by minimizing its significance. Meanwhile, he formulates his own secret plans for revenge (see vv. 22, 28, 32). (CSB)

Absalom attempted to console his sister. Either he did not want her to make a public spectacle of herself and their family, or he was already formulating his plot for revenge, which would require patient silence (vv 22–29). (TLSB)

desolate woman. Raped and rejected, Tamar could no longer live in her father’s house as one of his virgin daughters. (TLSB)

13:21 *he was furious.* Although David was incensed by Amnon’s rape of Tamar, there is no record that he took any punitive action against him. Perhaps the memory of his own sin with Bathsheba adversely affected his judicious handling of the matter. Whatever the reason, David abdicated his responsibility both as king and as father. This disciplinary leniency toward his sons (see notes on 14:33; 1Ki 1:6) eventually led to the death of Amnon and the revolts of Absalom and Adonijah. (CSB)

David did nothing. Amnon was the heir apparent at this time; punishment would have been embarrassing. David had learned through personal experience to know the Lord’s forgiveness. In his own fallible way, he demonstrated fatherly patience and mercy toward his wayward children. Unfortunately, he did not grasp that a father’s love and discipline belong together (Heb 12:5–11). David’s fatherly care and provision for Tamar were also missing. (TLSB)

13:22 *Absalom never said a word to Amnon ... he hated Amnon.* He quietly bided his time. (CSB)

Contrary to God’s Law in Lv 19:17–18. (TLSB)

13:1–22 Amnon’s lust for his sister Tamar leads him to commit a vile crime against her. David, from misguided love for his son or sinful weakness, fails to administer justice. The way is thus paved for further violence in the house of David. The covetous desires of our hearts, when nurtured instead of resisted, can burst forth into deadly wickedness. We need the Law’s restrictions and guidance. Our only hope for mercy is in the Lord, who forgives even the most heinous of crimes for the sake of Jesus Christ, the Son of David. Yet, “the Lord disciplines the one He loves” (Heb 12:6) and calls us to daily repentance to strengthen faith in the forgiveness of sins. • O Lord, spare us from the curse and consequences of our sin for the sake of Christ’s sufferings. Amen. (TLSB)

Absalom Kills Amnon

²³ Two years later, when Absalom’s sheepshearers were at Baal Hazor near the border of Ephraim, he invited all the king’s sons to come there. ²⁴ Absalom went to the king and said, “Your servant has had shearers come. Will the king and his officials please join me?” ²⁵ “No, my son,” the king replied. “All of us should not go; we would only be a burden to you.” Although Absalom urged him, he still refused to go, but gave him his blessing. ²⁶ Then Absalom said, “If not, please let my brother Amnon come with us.” The king asked him, “Why should he go with you?” ²⁷ But Absalom urged him, so he sent with him Amnon and the rest of the king’s sons. ²⁸ Absalom ordered his men, “Listen! When Amnon is in high spirits from drinking wine and I say to you, ‘Strike Amnon down,’ then kill him. Don’t be afraid. Have not I given you this order? Be strong and brave.” ²⁹ So Absalom’s men did to Amnon what Absalom had ordered. Then all the king’s sons got up,

mounted their mules and fled. ³⁰ While they were on their way, the report came to David: “Absalom has struck down all the king’s sons; not one of them is left.” ³¹ The king stood up, tore his clothes and lay down on the ground; and all his servants stood by with their clothes torn. ³² But Jonadab son of Shimeah, David’s brother, said, “My lord should not think that they killed all the princes; only Amnon is dead. This has been Absalom’s expressed intention ever since the day Amnon raped his sister Tamar. ³³ My lord the king should not be concerned about the report that all the king’s sons are dead. Only Amnon is dead.” ³⁴ Meanwhile, Absalom had 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.”³⁵ Jonadab said to the king, “See, the king’s sons are here; it has happened just as your servant said.” ³⁶ As he finished speaking, the king’s sons came in, wailing loudly. The king, too, and all his servants wept very bitterly. ³⁷ Absalom fled and went to Talmai son of Ammihud, the king of Geshur. But King David mourned for his son every day. ³⁸ After Absalom fled and went to Geshur, he stayed there three years. ³⁹ And the spirit of the king longed to go to Absalom, for he was consoled concerning Amnon’s death.

13:23 *two full years.* Long enough to avoid suspicions of his hatred of Amnon. (TLSB)

sheepshearers. Sheepshearing was a time of celebration. (TLSB)

he invited all the king’s sons. The time of sheep shearing was a festive occasion (see 1Sa 25:4, 8). (CSB)

To mask his vengeful plot against Amnon. (TLSB)

13:25 *burdensome.* An excuse. Not likely that the king would take time away from governing to attend a party out of town. By inviting his father, Absalom took a calculated risk to conceal his real agenda. (TLSB)

his blessing. David unknowingly blessed Absalom’s plot to execute Amnon. (TLSB)

13:26 *let my brother Amnon come.* Upon David’s refusal of the invitation, Absalom diplomatically requested that Amnon, the crown prince and oldest son, be his representative. (CSB)

If the king could not come to Absalom’s party, then the heir apparent should represent his father. (TLSB)

Why should he go with you? David’s question suggests some misgivings because of the strained relationship between the two half brothers (see v. 22). (CSB)

13:28 *kill him.* Absalom arranged for the murder of his half brother in violation of Eastern hospitality. In the wicked acts of Amnon and Absalom, David’s oldest sons became guilty of sexual immorality and murder, as their father had before them. With the murder of Amnon, Absalom not only avenged the rape of his sister but also secured for himself the position of successor to the throne (see 3:3; 15:1–6). Kileab, David’s

second son (3:3), may have died in his youth since there is no reference to him beyond the announcement of his birth. (CSB)

have I not commanded. Like father, like son; cf 11:12–25. (TLSB)

Be courageous and be valiant. Absalom believed he was meting out divine justice. Cf Jsh 1:5–9. (TLSB)

13:29 *mules.* Apparently the normal mount for royalty in David's kingdom (see 18:9; 1Ki 1:33, 38, 44; see also note on 1Ki 1:33). (CSB)

13:30 Message suggests there may have been fear of rivalry for David's throne among his sons. (TLSB)

13:31 *tore his clothes and lay down on the ground.* Common ways of expressing grief (see Jos 7:6; 1Ki 21:27; Est 4:1, 3; Job 1:20; 2:8). (CSB)

Expression of grief and mourning. Cf v 19; 12:20. (TLSB)

lay on the earth. Recognition of his own mortality (cf Gn 3:19). (TLSB)

13:32 *Jonadab.* Amnon's counselor (v 3). (TLSB)

13:23–33 Absalom takes the law into his own hands and avenges Amnon's rape of his sister Tamar. By failing to discipline his sons, David is partially responsible for all these events. Vengeance is not to be taken into our own hands; punishment and discipline are rightly administered through the offices God has established (parents, government God confronts our sin head-on with His judgment so He may then cleanse us by the precious blood of the Son of David, Jesus Christ. He prepares for us a feast of peace, the supper of a King who gives us life. • Lord Jesus, deal with us not as we deserve but according to Your great mercy by granting us sincere repentance and faith. Amen. (TLSB)

13:34 *Absalom fled.* To avoid punishment. (TLSB)

kept the watch. At Jerusalem (cf 18:24). (TLSB)

the road behind him. People fleeing from Baal-hazor took a roundabout journey, which may have been the safest course under the circumstances. (TLSB)

13:37 *Talmi son of Ammihud, the king of Geshur.* Absalom's grandfather (see 3:3). (CSB)

Absalom's (and Tamar's) maternal grandfather (3:3). Although under David's military control (8:3–8; 10:6–19), Geshur affords a measure of political asylum. (TLSB)

mourned for his son. May mean that David mourned for both Amnon and Absalom (v 39; 14:1). (TLSB)

13:39 *longed to go to Absalom.* With Absalom a refugee, David had lost both of his oldest living sons. (CSB)

Either David yearned to be reunited with his son, though caught by the demands of justice, or he desired to punish Absalom. Either way, he did nothing. (TLSB)

13:34–39 Absalom flees from his father and goes into exile. Thus, the king has lost two sons: the murdered Amnon and the runaway Absalom. One sin leads to another, leaving a trail of consequences along the way. While our sin does not always lead to outright murder, unrepentant sin does lead to our spiritual death and to much grief. True reconciliation with God is granted us through the forgiveness of our sins, through the atoning death of God's own Son. • O Lord Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on us! Pardon our iniquity, and with Your forgiveness bring an end to the warfare of our sin. Amen. (TLSB)