

1 **ABSALOM, MY SON**

2 Samuel 14

2 **WARRIORS & POETS**

- A verse-by-verse study through the United Kingdom period of Israel, and the reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon.
- David begins recovering from the consequences of his sin with Bathsheba just in time to witness an even greater (and more tragic) sin within the members of his own family: Amnon, his heir apparent, forces himself upon his sister, David's daughter Tamar.
- David leaves Amnon's sin unpunished (extra-Biblical sources state this is because David was reticent to punish his eldest son). As a result, Absalom (Tamar's brother, David's third son) decides to take vengeance into his own hands -- which for him is a dish best served cold.
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3 **THE MURDER OF AMNON**

- Absalom waits two years, then invites the king and the king's sons to a feast to celebrate the shearing of his flocks. During the feast, he has Amnon killed. He invited David to the feast as well, but it's unclear as to whether or not he intended him to go and what he would have done if he had gone. Since Amnon was also in line for the throne, there is every possibility that Absalom originally meant this to be a shot at David's life as well.
- The rest of David's sons flee before the murder becomes a massacre (though it does not appear that Absalom meant to kill the rest of his half-brothers). Aware of the implications of what he has just done, Absalom high-tails it out of the country until the heat dies down.

4 **A PRINCE IN EXILE**

- *But Absalom fled and went to Talmi the son of Ammihud, king of Geshur. And David mourned for his son day after day. So Absalom fled and went to Geshur, and was there three years. And the spirit of the king longed to go out to Absalom, because he was comforted about Amnon, since he was dead. (2 Samuel 13:37-39)*
- David, after weeping over Amnon, longs to be restored with his son Absalom.
- Absalom spends three years as an exile in Geshur.

5 **GESHUR**

- Absalom's mother, Maachah, was the daughter of Talmi, king of Geshur. Geshur was an independent Aramean (Syrian) city-state in what is today the Golan Heights. This land was originally allotted to the tribe of Manasseh, but they were unable to drive out the Geshurites (Joshua 13). This marriage was probably originally conceived as a political alliance and foreshadows the many such alliances David's son Solomon would make.
- So when Absalom flees, he is essentially seeking asylum in the court of his grandfather, with his mother's family.

6 **JOAB**

- David, meanwhile, longs to call Absalom back -- but takes no action. He is stuck in a passive rut where his past failures provide the excuse for future inaction.
- As he often does, Joab decides to step in and act on David's behalf.
- *Now Joab the son of Zeruiah knew that the king's heart went out to Absalom. And Joab sent to Tekoa and brought from there a wise woman and said to her, "Pretend to be a mourner*

and put on mourning garments. Do not anoint yourself with oil, but behave like a woman who has been mourning many days for the dead. Go to the king and speak thus to him." So Joab put the words in her mouth. (2 Samuel 14:1-3)

7 **THE WISE WOMAN'S PLIGHT**

- *When the woman of Tekoa came to the king, she fell on her face to the ground and paid homage and said, "Save me, O king." And the king said to her, "What is your trouble?" She answered, "Alas, I am a widow; my husband is dead. And your servant had two sons, and they quarreled with one another in the field. There was no one to separate them, and one struck the other and killed him. And now the whole clan has risen against your servant, and they say, 'Give up the man who struck his brother, that we may put him to death for the life of his brother whom he killed.' And so they would destroy the heir also. Thus they would quench my coal that is left and leave to my husband neither name nor remnant on the face of the earth." (2 Samuel 14:4-7)*

8 **THE WISE WOMAN'S PLIGHT**

- The woman goes before King David and tells him a story: She has two sons who quarreled, fought, and one of them was killed.
- The rest of her clan is demanding the life of the other son under the biblical concept of "the avenger of blood." But this will leave her without an heir.
- Note that the "Cities of Refuge" were originally created for just such a case as this one
- What is more, it would mean that her family would no longer have any representation in Israel. This is what she means by "they would quench my coal."

9 **DAVID'S PROMISE**

- *Then the king said to the woman, "Go to your house, and I will give orders concerning you." And the woman of Tekoa said to the king, "On me be the guilt, my lord the king, and on my father's house; let the king and his throne be guiltless." (2 Samuel 14:8-9)*
- David assures the woman that he will handle the situation, but this is not enough for her. She expresses a concern that if David pardons her son (who is guilty of manslaughter), the guilt of the crime will be upon the king.

10 **MANSLAUGHTER**

- *The king said, "If anyone says anything to you, bring him to me, and he shall never touch you again." (2 Samuel 14:10)*
- Under Old Testament law, those potentially guilty of manslaughter (in this case the accidental, unwitnessed, or unpremeditated killing of another) could flee to the "Cities of Refuge" – cities established throughout Israel where the accused killer could be safe from the vengeance of the dead person's family and allowed a just trial.

11 **CITIES OF REFUGE**

- *"Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan, then you shall select cities to be cities of refuge for you, that the manslayer who kills any person without intent may flee there. The cities shall be for you a refuge from the avenger, that the manslayer may not die until he stands before the congregation for judgment. (Numbers 35:10-12)*

12 **CITIES OF REFUGE**

- Once within a city of refuge, the person's case would be heard and the evidence would be examined. If they were found innocent, they could continue to dwell in the city of refuge until the death of the high priest – at which point they could go free.
- If they were found guilty, they were brought outside the city of refuge and handed over to the Avenger of Blood.

13 **CITIES OF REFUGE**

- By law, this wise woman's hypothetical son ought to have fled to a city of refuge and stay there until a trial could be had and a verdict could be rendered.
- By declaring that he will intervene on behalf of the widow, David is circumventing God's law in regard to manslaughter so that this family will not have to be divided: David is unwilling to allow tragedy to be the result of more tragedy.

14 **DAVID'S OATH**

- *The king said, "If anyone says anything to you, bring him to me, and he shall never touch you again." Then she said, "Please let the king invoke the LORD your God, that the avenger of blood kill no more, and my son be not destroyed." He said, "As the LORD lives, not one hair of your son shall fall to the ground."* (2 Samuel 14:10-11)
- The woman asks for confirmation -- for David to swear an oath by the LORD That he will do as he has said he will do. David takes the oath, and it is in this moment that the woman reveals herself and confronts David for his hypocrisy:

15 **DAVID'S HYPOCRISY**

- *Then the woman said, "Please let your servant speak a word to my lord the king." He said, "Speak." And the woman said, "Why then have you planned such a thing against the people of God? For in giving this decision the king convicts himself, inasmuch as the king does not bring his banished one home again. We must all die; we are like water spilled on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again. But God will not take away life, and he devises means so that the banished one will not remain an outcast."* (2 Samuel 14:12-14)

16 **DAVID'S HYPOCRISY**

- The wise woman points out David's hypocrisy: He was willing to intervene and circumvent the usual requirements of the law in order to keep her family in tact. Why is he so unwilling, then, to seek reconciliation with his own son?
 - "we are like water spilled on the ground" – We all have a limited amount of time on this earth, and a limited amount of time to be reconciled.
 - God Himself is a God of reconciliation and forgiveness. He "devises means" – this may be a direct allusion to the fact that God has not rejected David in spite of David's sin, which was arguably greater than that of Absalom.

17 **PEACEMAKER**

- Peacemaking is a fundamental part of God's nature:
 - *Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.* (1 Thessalonians 5:23)

18 **PEACEMAKER**

- Peacemaking is a fundamental part of God's nature:

- *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. (2 Corinthians 5:17-20)*

19 **PEACEMAKER**

- By our nature, we are rebels who have committed treason against God. We are much further off than Absalom.
- Jesus, by His sacrifice, offers freedom and amnesty. He "devises a means" so that you and I do not have to remain outcasts and rebels, if only we will lay down the weapons of our independence and embrace his free gift.

20 **PEACEMAKERS**

- *"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. (Matthew 5:9)*
- Jesus did not say "if you want to be a child of God, you must first be a peacemaker."
- He is saying that one of the ways people will recognize us as the sons of our father is that we, like Him, are peacemakers.

21 **PEACEMAKERS**

- The key to being a peacemaker lies a few verses later in Matthew 5:43-45, where Jesus uses similar wording:
- *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. (Matthew 5:43-45)*

22 **PEACEMAKERS**

- Jesus defines peacemaking as: Acts of love by which we overcome the enmity between ourselves and others, and ultimately between others and God.
- This is the duty of sons: To bring sinners to their Father.

23 **POSTSCRIPT**

- *The king said, "Is the hand of Joab with you in all this?" The woman answered and said, "As surely as you live, my lord the king, one cannot turn to the right hand or to the left from anything that my lord the king has said. It was your servant Joab who commanded me; it was he who put all these words in the mouth of your servant. In order to change the course of things your servant Joab did this. But my lord has wisdom like the wisdom of the angel of God to know all things that are on the earth." Then the king said to Joab, "Behold now, I grant this; go, bring back the young man Absalom." (2 Samuel 14:19-21)*

24 **UNRECONCILED**

- *So Joab arose and went to Geshur and brought Absalom to Jerusalem. And the king said, "Let him dwell apart in his own house; he is not to come into my presence." So Absalom lived apart in his own house and did not come into the king's presence. (2 Samuel 14:23-24)*
- David sends Joab to bring Absalom back, but still refuses to be reconciled with his son. For the next two years, Absalom will remain banished from the king's presence – making him a

much more dangerous foe in the process.

25 **BE RECONCILED**

- Be reconciled with God – do not let your pride or self-sufficiency or the shame of your past failures come between you and the Father who loves you, and who is pursuing you.
- Be reconciled with man – it's not enough here to ask for or grant nominal forgiveness, and then not seek the actual restoration of the *relationship*, which is what God desires we do and what David failed to do with Absalom.

26 **BE A PEACEMAKER**

- Pray for those who persecute you.
- Don't salute only your brethren – in other words, don't be nice only to those with whom you agree or are on good terms.
 - Don't nurse a grudge
 - Don't avoid talking to people
 - This is not phony politeness! God is concerned about the attitude of your heart.
- *Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.* (Philippians 2:3)