

### 2<sup>ND</sup> SAMUEL

#### Week 20, chapter 13

In the previous chapter we saw something that ought to give us great pause, if not perhaps discomfort. It is that although David was forgiven (as an act of grace) by Yehoveh, God of Israel; and although the Lord again showed David favor, neither he nor his family nor his government ever fully recovered from the immorality of the David and Bathsheba affair.

As we follow the progress of David we will see a steadily weakening man, brought low by the burden of a continuous succession of heartbreaks and calamities that were laid upon him at the very hand of the one who had forgiven him. David well understood that the source of his troubles was his own sin and the judgment of the God who had no choice in His perfect holiness but to let David feel the sting of rebuke and divine justice.

Why ought we to pay such close attention to this bit of tragic history? It is certainly not so that we can show proper Christian sympathy and understanding towards David's troubles; rather it is because we need to wake up and understand that the way the Lord treated David is the pattern after which we shall all be treated. How many people who have sincerely prayed the sinner's prayer, faithfully gone to church on countless Sundays, and happily placed 10% of their income into a silver offering plate have dejectedly walked away from God after experiencing His harsh hand upon them in response to their sinning? And this because a horribly misguided doctrine has been taught to them by a church leadership whose goal was to make God more attractive to them, in hopes that more of the lost world would walk through their doors. Often as a result of that doctrine those who feel God's severity also feel betrayed that the promise of immunity from the earthly repercussions of their rebellion turned out to be a false expectation.

The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, testify in harmony that sin will be, and must be, responded to by the Lord or He is not a just God. And because Yehoveh **is** a just God, sin is and will be responded to on two levels: spiritually and earthly. And thus because all sin is first and worst a trespass against the Lord, a spiritual payment is due. And that spiritual payment HAS been made for those who trust in the one who made it: Yeshua HaMashiach, Jesus the

Christ. But an earthly penalty is also due, depending on the nature of the sin. Sometimes the payment is through the justice system of human governments (which God created and ordained as an authorized means to carry out justice). Other times it is a payment directly caused by God (and we'll see especially that happen in David's life since, as king, he was generally beyond the reach of human government).

If it makes you feel better to define God's action against you for your sinning as "discipline" be my guest. But if that is your decision, then please assign that same term to the horrors that we will see visited upon David's family as well. For what is befalling David is of the same nature and intent as what befalls us when we choose to defy our God and His commandments and trespass upon His holy nature.

2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel chapter 13 follows the chapter wherein Yehoveh pronounced His judgment upon David that the sword would never leave his household. This means that divinely caused treachery, violence and death would play out for generations to come among David's closest descendants.

What we are about to read and dissect is sometimes called "Amnon's Incest". The perverted behavior and immorality depicted in this chapter has been somewhat watered down especially in the English translations of the original Hebrew manuscripts and as we get into it, it will become obvious why that is.

Therefore let me give you a caution; just as modern day theatrical films require a rating and a warning that the contents may not be suitable for all audiences, I want you to be aware that the contents of this chapter may be offensive or disturbing to some of you and may be a little too intense for younger children. I cannot possibly know who among you have special sensitivities to sexual violence and violation, nor can I know whether your children are properly prepared or mature enough to hear what happens (that is entirely up to you). I just want you to know what is coming so that you can make a decision. I will do my best to keep my words discrete and try not to be more graphic than needed. On the other hand, this is God's Word and I cannot just bypass the difficult parts nor can I blunt the impact that these passages were intended to have upon us, the Lord's disciples. So with that, open your Bibles to 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel chapter 13.

**READ 2<sup>ND</sup> SAMUEL CHAPTER 13 all**

The setting is that we are somewhere around the 20<sup>th</sup> year of David's reign (a little later than that perhaps but certainly not earlier). Amnon's sin is but the beginning of a long series of domestic troubles (and even coup attempts) in David's household.

David had become self-indulgent and therefore also indulgent of his children. He had given them a bad example in many areas of life. Most weren't around in his glory days of such admirable faith and trust in the Lord that led to his assumption of the throne. Thus it was the less desirable characteristics of their father that they mostly witnessed, and of course they picked up on it as but the rights of privileged royalty (of which they were part).

I have stated on numerous occasions that while so many Bible stories seem to come to us out of left field, so to speak, in fact there was usually a logical context to why the characters chose to act as they did. And their behavior and motivations were not much different than what drives us moderns in our time. Bible scholars (as well as the ancient Sages) reasonably conjecture that the background for what we see happening with **Amnon**, **Tamar**, and Absalom revolved around competition for succession to David's throne. This was no small matter; it was a deadly serious game because the rewards for success were enormous. Because David had so many children by so many wives, the number of competitors wrestling for position was great.

**Amnon** was David's firstborn; he was the son of David's wife **Ahinoam** (who we read about in chapter 3). And it seems that **Avishalom** was generally considered as 2<sup>nd</sup> in line (behind Amnon) to be king upon David's eventual demise. **Avishalom's** position as 2<sup>nd</sup> in line came about not as a result of being the 2<sup>nd</sup> born (he probably wasn't) but because not only was he the legitimate son of King David he was also the grandson of another king on his mother's side, the King of Geshur; both sides of his family were royalty. Sadly their mutual sister **Tamar** played the role of a political pawn in both Amnon's and Absalom's ruthless designs to position themselves as the next King of Israel.

Verse 1 informs us that Absalom (**Avishalom** in Hebrew) had a very beautiful sister named **Tamar**. Their mother was **Maacah**, daughter of the King of Geshur. Although the Scriptures infer that the two were indeed brother and sister in the same way that we would all think of it, some of the ancient Sages and later Rabbis said that they had different mothers. I want to get this out of the way upfront by explaining their reasoning for their conclusions because the relationship between Absalom and Tamar is central to the story.

I've spoken before of the exaggerated, carnal and even completely contrary teachings of the Rabbis about David and his life story, as compared to the generally plainly worded text of the Bible. And the reason for this is that David is seen by Judaism as virtually sinless (very nearly the same way Christians view Christ) and almost as the first appearance of the Messiah. Thus no matter what Scripture may say, David is defended and meanings are violently twisted to make things turn out in his favor.

Thus while verse 1 implies nothing other than Absalom and Tamar being brother and sister in every biological sense some Rabbis go to great length to claim that they were not. Rather they say that although they (along with Amnon) had a common father (David), 3 separate mothers were involved. Thus each was a step sibling to the other. Another opinion by the Rabbi Mahari Kara admits that Absalom and Tamar had the same mother (**Maacah**), but that **Tamar** was not really David's daughter; rather she had a different father.

The goal of all of this Judaistic gerrymandering of relationships among **Amnon, Avishalom and Tamar** is to reduce the blame on David to effectively zero, and to make it that Amnon and Tamar could have legally married so that the crime was far less significant than what it might otherwise seem. In other words, if Tamar had an entirely different set of parents than Amnon, then there was no incest whatsoever and their marriage would have solved any legal issues. In my view none of these views are credible but rather are simply fanciful imaginings of those whose number one goal is to protect the doctrines of Judaism and the Synagogue. And before anyone thinks that this is some kind of rant against either, let me state that our beloved church has done the same sorts of things for at least 1800 years. There is plenty of guilt and responsibility to go around.

Thus it will be my position throughout that Absalom and Tamar are full brother and sister, and Amnon is their half brother, all having David as their common biological father.

With the relationship established let's move on. Even though the end of verse 1 states that Amnon fell in **love** with Tamar, verse 2 immediately defines the type of love this amounted to; it was sexual obsession. Amnon was struck with an erotic lust for Tamar. The last thing on his mind was to make Tamar his wife in order to start a family.

We are informed that Tamar was a virgin. While in modern Western society that term only

explains that such a person has never had intercourse, in Hebrew society it means that plus a number of other things. First, it means that the person is a female (males were never called virgins). Second it means that this girl was young. Third it means the girl was still living in her father's household, under his authority, and she had never been married. While that means that she was available for marriage, the end of verse 2 says clearly that Amnon knew he could not have any kind of relationship with her beyond a sister and brother relationship.

Some Rabbis say that words mean that **Amnon** couldn't have anything to do with her only **because** she was a virgin; but unless that means he was barred from having sex with her because of her virgin status then such an argument isn't fruitful. There was NO restriction of a man having a relationship with a virgin; it merely could not include a sexual relationship. Courting (within the super-modest Hebrew concept of courting) was usual, normal, and allowed by the Law of Moses. It didn't matter at all whether the girl was a virgin or not as regards a sexual relationship; sex outside of marriage (even if the woman was a widow or divorcee) is forbidden. It is obvious that Amnon's disappointment was that because Tamar was his half-sister, the Law did not permit incest nor did it permit their marriage and thus he could not have sex with her (which was his goal).

It is interesting to me that Amnon succumbed to the same character flaw and crime as his father, David. We see here a similar theme in that David developed an uncontrollable lust for Bathsheba based on her rare beauty and David's son, Amnon, succumbs to the same. Only this time (if it were even possible) Amnon's improper desires are worse than his father's. Why this is interesting is because we see the Lord supernaturally handing down proportional justice upon David just as He said He would. It is the classic eye-for-an-eye principle whereby because David lusted after a woman who was legally taboo for him, so now his firstborn son lusts after a woman who is legally taboo for him. And the result of both cases would be domestic violence and death.

Remembering, now, that a lot of jockeying for position to succeed King David was behind the actions of David's family, we are introduced to **Yonadav** a cousin of Amnon's (and **Yonadav** saw an opportunity to advance himself). He noticed that Amnon was looking depressed and so asked him what the problem was and Amnon freely told him. The wily **Yonadav** devised a plan to lure **Tamar** into Amnon's chambers. The plan was that Amnon was to get in his bed and pretend to be sick. David would do his fatherly duty by coming by to visit Amnon and then Amnon, looking pitiful and half-dead, would tell his father that perhaps if his half-sister Tamar came by to fix him some food he might find the strength to eat it and feel better. Since a woman's job was to fix food, attend to men, and be a comforter David agreed.

While Amnon was indeed pretending to be physically ill, there is no doubt that he was sincerely love-sick (or better, overcome with lust) and genuinely in distress (no matter how self-centered the cause). He would lie awake all night thinking about her and thus look haggard in the morning. The Jewish scholar Shimon Bar-Efrat says that when spoken out loud Amnon's deepest emotions are revealed in the words he used to beg his father for his sister to come to him because the words are arranged in such a way as to sound like a series of heavy, deep, forlorn sighs.

In English it says: <sup>CJB</sup> **2 Samuel 13:5** ..... ***'Please let my sister Tamar come and give me food to eat, and have her prepare the food where I can watch. I'll eat what she serves me.'***

In Hebrew it sounds like: "et Tamar a *hot ahv ahi ahni ohev*". Very dramatic, very melancholy. Certainly the words were arranged and spoken in a dramatic way so as to bring David nearly to tears in sympathy for his greatly distressed son. What father could deny his son something as simple as having his own sister come and prepare some food for him to eat and perhaps lift his spirits?

David sent word to Tamar that she was to go to her ill brother and prepare him some food. In verse 8 she complied. Tamar lived in a separate area of the City of David from her half-brother Amnon. Since David had a sizeable harem, he would have had several virgin daughters of marriageable age. It is believed from some later verses (and some other Scriptural evidence) that the virgin girls of the royal court lived more or less together in a kind of convent; a highly protected environment. They lived separated from the men so that nothing immodest (or worse) could happen. In fact, as we'll shortly see, the virgins even wore a special uniform that both publically testified to their virgin status and was especially lovely and modest in its design.

We're told that indeed she prepared the cakes and baked them in Amnon's sight, according to his request. The cakes were a dumpling-like food. But in this context there was a subtle double meaning buried in the Hebrew words chosen, which a Hebrew from that era would have immediately understood. It is that the FIRST use of the phrase "made cakes" was **levav**, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> use (just a few words later) was **levivah**. The root word these are taken from is **lev**, which means "heart". Thus the name for this particular kind of cake is "heart cakes" or "heart dumplings". It is NOT that they were heart shaped like valentines. Rather it is that "heart cakes" were a quickly prepared food that would (in old English style) "strengthen the heart". In other words they tasted good and they provided a quick boost of energy; perhaps we might

term them a “comfort food” (a food that brightens our mental outlook more than simply filling our bellies). But of course we now see the double meaning that the girl who was the cause of Amnon’s heart-ache was fixing him heart-cakes.

Before we move forward also notice how it was King David who facilitated his virgin daughter Tamar going to Amnon, and this would directly lead to her being raped! Of course that is not what David intended, but it is an irony that no doubt it was all part of the Lord’s punishment upon David such that even attempting to show concern for his son ended up devastating his family. And once again we see divine Lex Talionis (eye-for-an-eye) playing out. David had cruelly used an unwitting messenger to go and fetch an unsuspecting Bathsheba to his palace so that he might have immoral (and probably not completely unopposed) sex with her. Now David himself is made the unwitting messenger that is used by Amnon to fetch the unsuspecting Tamar to the man who would force himself on her, have immoral sex with her, and end her virginity.

When Tamar had finished cooking the heart-cakes and tried to serve them to her half-brother he still refused to eat. In that kind of whimsical authoritative way that only princes and princesses have at their disposal he waves his hand and orders all of the servants (hers and his) to leave immediately. He tells Tamar to bring the cakes into his bed chamber; I imagine that by now Tamar was starting to get a feeling that all wasn’t right. She begins to serve him when the supposedly ill and frail Amnon makes his move; he reaches out, grabs her, and tells her of his desire to have intercourse with her. Tamar attempted to escape by pointing out the inherent wickedness of Amnon’s desire: “No my brother” she says, “don’t force me. Things like this aren’t done in Israel; don’t behave so disgracefully!”

By Tamar unequivocally uttering “NO!” to Amnon’s advances, all of the sin of what was occurring fell upon Amnon. Amnon was about to become a rapist. But inevitably, it was the woman, Tamar, the victim who would suffer the most. In verse 13 Tamar tries to bring Amnon to his senses by rightly telling him that they would both suffer the worst shame from this; she because of the loss of her virginity, and he because of the crime of rape and incest.

Some have completely misinterpreted the final words of verse 13 (“Speak to the king, because he won’t keep me from you”) as meaning that David would find a way to allow Amnon and Tamar to be married so that they could avoid committing an immoral act. That is not at all the intent. As I mentioned earlier the virgin girls were generally kept separated from the male population. But she was claiming that if Amnon insisted that he had such a deep affection for her (as his sister) their father David wouldn’t intentionally keep them from visiting one another. But by no means was either sex or marriage a part of her meaning. Even the Sages say that



without doubt Tamar was trying every tactic she could think of to talk her way out of this dangerous situation.

It was to no avail; Amnon had thought about this moment for a very long time. He had played this out in his mind over and over again and would not be denied. I have no doubt that in some twisted way he actually thought of this as romantic; I also have no doubt that he thought she would comply and he even hoped that she was as anxious for love-making as was he. But in reality none of that mattered; he was bigger and stronger and so he forced himself upon her.

Let me say something before I go any farther that needs to be spoken even among Believers. Ladies, young women and girls especially, let me tell you something about men that you may not understand. Something that is not flattering about us but it has been so for all ages and will never change until heaven and earth changes. When something of this nature is approaching (as we are witnessing between Amnon and Tamar) the only hope is for the woman to attempt to gain control because it's unlikely the man will come to his senses. The best solution is of course for a women to do all she can to keep herself out of such circumstances in the first place (but in this case Tamar had no choices). Men love to talk about a woman's raging hormones, but men's hormones rage at least as strongly. And ours are the more problematic. Yours can be very frustrating and emotional (for you and us); but ours can be downright criminal. And the younger we are the worse it is.

Once Amnon had all the circumstances running in his favor it was like a Lion herding an exhausted and frantic gazelle into a box canyon. The Lion hadn't gone through all that trouble just to let the gazelle go. By no means do I mean to make light of what was happening, but ladies, at moments of intense sexual encounter it's you who are the only ones who have any semblance of a working brain function. For men the almost certain consequences for our rash behavior, especially when it comes to sex, finishes a distant second to what our hormones are demanding. I am not at all rationalizing bad behavior or deflecting our male responsibility. I'm trying to tell you that of the many ways that the Lord has made us delightfully different, one of them is that our sex drives operate very differently.

Tamar was concerned about the consequences; Amnon was concerned about immediate gratification. The Scriptures state that he wouldn't listen to her; he would not hear her pleas to be obedient to the Laws of Moses as the chosen people had an obligation to be. And the truth is that women will always bear the unequal brunt of the aftermath. Tamar's life would be ruined and she knew it; Amnon would merely move on.



The minute Amnon was finished with her a revulsion for her welled up inside of him. Tamar had resisted in every way. Her refusal and disgust have essentially ruined the experience that he had fantasized over for so long. His animal lust for her had instantly turned into a hatred that was even greater than his so-called love. Only now that his hormones are satisfied does Amnon begin to contemplate the earthly consequences of his fiendish foolishness. What this means for Tamar is nowhere in his thoughts. He blames her.

Things go from bad to worse; Amnon orders his victim to get up off of his bed and leave. He didn't want the object of his unrequited passion to be in his sight any longer. She is horrified; being sent away as though she was a street prostitute would be an even greater shame. What she had in mind by wanting to not yet leave is hard to say; possibly it was little more than some time to digest this calamity, to think about what to do next, or possibly to get her emotions and physical appearance in order. Some Rabbis say it was to wait until nighttime when she might be able to sneak away less noticed. Other Rabbis say that despite the law against it, she wanted him to marry her. When we see what was going on in David's day with little mention of a functioning priesthood, and the falling back to common Middle Eastern customs and traditions in place of following the Laws of Moses, it could well be that the regulations about marriage and incest were not being vigorously enforced. We are given an earlier example of this in the David and Bathsheba matter. But Amnon would have none of it; he ordered his servants to throw Tamar out and lock the door behind.

Interestingly, sadly, verse 17 doesn't have Amnon saying "throw this woman out". Rather he completely dehumanized her. The Hebrew for woman is *ishah*; but Amnon refers to her as *et-zot*, "this one". Throw this one out, he says to his servants. He treats her as though she were a stalker or a hanger-on who needs to be kept away from him.

Whether or not the laws concerning sex and marriage were being followed in David's day is up for debate; but let's see what Deuteronomy says about it.

### READ DEUTERONOMY 22:13 – 29

Notice that in reality the penalty for a man in this situation is primarily financial. But for the woman, the loss of her virginity is a life-long calamity. In fact under certain circumstances it can lead to her execution. No man wanted to marry a girl who wasn't a virgin unless she was a widow, or perhaps a divorcee. Literally a typical Hebrew girl's financial worth to her family became near zero if she were unmarried but not a virgin.

Tamar is in a classic Catch-22. By no fault of her own, she is no longer pure. The incest laws of Lev. 18:6-12 says that under no circumstances can she marry a half brother. On the other hand she can't marry anyone else; no other decent Hebrew man would marry this non-virgin because it would bring shame upon him. As of now she is an outcast, a pariah. It is unlikely that she'll ever be able to fulfill her womanly duty to be fruitful and multiply. She will almost certainly not be able to marry. She will always be seen as one who was involved in incest and wherever she goes the hushed tones and disapproving looks will follow after her.

Let's finish up this week with verses 18 and 19. Here is described this long sleeved virgin's robe that Tamar was wearing. After she was thrown out the door, her clothes disheveled and torn, she couldn't hide her state. She threw ashes over herself in the unmistakable sign among Hebrews of mourning and grief.

Here is where our understanding of patterns helps us out. The word used to describe her virgin's robe is ***ketoneth***. It is a word rarely used in the Bible, but there is one other place where it is used that you will quickly recognize; it is the same word used for Joseph's coat of many colors. There is no doubt that the choice of this word ***ketoneth*** is intended by the author to draw a graphic parallel between the final state of Joseph's tunic and Tamar's.

Do you remember the significance of Joseph's tunic? After his brothers sold him to Arab slave traders they needed a believable story to explain his disappearance to his father Jacob. So they rubbed goat blood on the coat, handed it to Jacob, and told him Joseph was killed by a wild animal.

So what we have here in 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel is an equally graphic scene. The violated, rejected Tamar was dressed in a ***ketoneth***. She is destroyed and throws ashes all over herself in despair. But there is something else on that tunic other than dirt and ashes: blood. She was a young virgin and she was wearing the tunic all during Amnon's rape. You'll recall that while this is a bit hard for us to discuss in a mixed audience, in ancient times there was the tradition of the marriage cloth whereby the newly weds would consummate their marriage on a new white cloth, and the expectation of blood upon it was highly anticipated by the bride's parents as proof of their daughter's prior virginity. In fact the marriage cloth was carefully stored away to be used as legal evidence in case the husband ever wished to divorce his wife (and get his bride-price back from her father) using the excuse that she wasn't a virgin when he married her and so had been defrauded.

The blood on Tamar's virgin's ***ketoneth*** was public proof that she was no longer pure. There was no hiding it. What should have been a prized marriage cloth was now permanent evidence of her life-long shame.

We'll continue with chapter 13 next week.