

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

Sept. 18

MONDAY

Amnon instructed his servants to drag the resisting Tamar from his room and lock her out. Tamar was wearing the typical garment for an unmarried daughter of the King: a colorful robe. She ripped it, poured ashes on her head, and left Amnon's private quarters in tears. Her brother Absalom saw her in that state and learned what she had suffered at the hands of their brother Amnon. He told her to let him handle it (meaning revenge) and he had her stay in his own house (within the palace) where she remained in great sorrow, mourning the loss of her virginity.

READ: II Samuel 13:17-20

When Tamar ripped her clothing and poured ashes on her head, she must have realized that such activity by the King's daughter would be noticed. Absalom came upon her and asked directly, "Did Amnon do this to you?" Was that the greatest guess in the world! Or, perhaps Absalom had some basis for making that his first guess? In any case, he assumed responsibility for both revenge and for taking care of his sister.

TUESDAY

David heard of these things and was furious, but apparently he did nothing. As for Absalom, he was so angry about it, he didn't speak to his brother for two years.

READ: II Samuel 13:21,22

David was very angry about what Amnon had done to Tamar, as any father would have been. But David did not do anything about it. The Septuagint (Greek translation of Hebrew text) has an explanation of this in the text: *David saddened not the spirit of Amnon, for he loved him and he was his first-born*. Even without this text, it seems as if David committed the sin of Eli and did not discipline his own children. He put entire cities to the sword for their sins, but would not confront his own son for his sin! The biblical order is this: confront one's own sin first; then the sins of those under one's house; then the sin of those in the church; and after that, the sin of others.

WEDNESDAY

Two years later, Absalom invited the royal household to go to Baal-hazor where the sheep-shearers would be shearing the sheep. David refused the invitation, but Absalom asked David if at least Amnon might go with him, and in the end, David consented to that, and, in fact, he gave permission for all his sons to go.

READ: II Samuel 13:23-27

Isn't it remarkable that although Amnon could commit a heinous sin that went against the deepest desires and most urgent teaching of his father, he could not go to a party his brother threw without his father's permission! Is it not also remarkable that although David was silent regarding the terrible sin which Amnon committed, here he is so vocal about something as insignificant as a festival? Lord, teach us to know the difference between the trivial and the important. Teach us when to speak up and when to be quiet.

THURSDAY

Absalom instructed his servants to get Amnon drunk, and then, on Absalom's signal, to kill him. "Don't worry about Amnon being David's son," he assured them. "I, too, am one of David's sons and I will accept full responsibility. Now go do what I have told you." His servants did just that! When

the rest of David's sons witnessed Amnon's slaying, they all jumped on their mules and fled, thinking that they would be the next victim!

READ: II Samuel 13:28,29

Make no mistake about it: murder is wrong. This was not a justified execution, it was a barbaric plan to murder Amnon. There were ways in which Absalom could have abstracted justice for the wrong done to Tamar - ways that would have been both honorable and according to the law - but this was neither. Let us not deceive ourselves by justifying our wrong-doings. If it's not God's way, it's wrong. Revenge is never sweet when it goes against what God has said!

FRIDAY

Word reached David that Absalom had killed all his sons. It wasn't true: the other brothers had merely fled. But hearing the news, David ripped his clothing (as did his servants) and threw himself to the ground to express remorse! Then Jonadab showed up and explained to David what had actually taken place - that only Amnon was dead and that he had been revenged for his sin against Tamar. He told David that all his other sons still lived.

READ: II Samuel 13:30-33

How did such terrible, and as it turned out, such faulty information reach David? Because those who passed such information onto David were as trustworthy as those who passed on classified information to President Bush about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq! The lesson is that we should be slow to believe the worst we hear. Almost all of the time, some of it will be wrong. And some of the time, almost all of it will be wrong! Train your ears to discern. Train your mind to evaluate. Train your heart to measure. And a lot of the stuff we get really upset about when we first hear it will turn out to be untrue. Any lie can be e-mailed! Check sources carefully.

SATURDAY

While Absalom fled far to the south to Geshur, back in the capital, the other sons of David began to return to Jerusalem. They came back wailing and weeping, and David and his servants joined in with them. David continued mourning every day for his dead son, Amnon.

READ: II Samuel 13:34-37

David's sorrow over the death of his son is intense. It is made even more so by his own awareness that he was partially responsible, for he had failed to act on behalf of his daughter Tamar when he should have, and in doing nothing, he had sinned. None of us can ever know the "what if" of any story. What if David had acted? What if he had punished Amnon? We just don't know. But this is different: What happened because David did nothing? We know the answer to that! Absalom did what he thought his father should have done, only he did it in a wrong way. David's sin found him out. It always does.

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