



This week's Triennial Torah reading can be found at:

https://sightedmoon.com/sightedmoon_2015/files/TriennialCycleBeginningAviv.pdf

Gen 42	2 Sam 13-14	Ps 85	Luke 4:31 – 5:39
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Owning Up and Growing Up (Genesis 42-43)

It had been 22 years now since the brothers had sold Joseph into slavery and deceived their father, Jacob. That is a very long time to maintain a lie, and it seems to have taken its toll on the sons of Israel. Things got a little rough in Egypt when Joseph accused them of being spies. The brothers were clearly shaken. Their crime against Joseph must never have been far from mind, for when Joseph demanded they bring Benjamin to Egypt as proof of their story, they immediately viewed their trouble as punishment for what they did so long ago. Reuben adds an “I told you so” since he had originally planned to save Joseph. But he, of course, had become just as responsible as the others, for he had not told their father the truth either, nor had he attempted to find and free his enslaved brother once he discovered what had happened.

The many years with unresolved guilt have matured the brothers since their earlier misdeed. Contrast the younger and older Judah for instance. In Genesis 37, it was Judah who originated the idea of selling Joseph to the Arabian traders. Now, in Genesis 43, he is willing to offer himself as collateral to protect Joseph's brother, Benjamin. Before, he did not regard his father's happiness. But now he is willing to accept blame forever rather than hurt his father again. Judah will prove the genuineness of his change and the sincerity of his promise in chapter 44.

While the brothers deal with their guilt, Joseph seems to have a number of mixed emotions. At first, he feels a little indignant at them when he recognizes that the dreams for which they hated him so long ago (37:8) have come true. Testing their attitudes, he deals rather roughly with them. But when he hears their sorrow and distress as they discuss their regret, Joseph weeps secretly. He now forgives them in his heart. Although he continues to give them a very distressing time openly, he does kind things for them behind the scenes.

The Sword Comes to David's House (2 Samuel 13)

“The Tamar/Amnon/Absalom story is not simply a tale of lust and a brother's revenge. Amnon, as David's oldest son (3:2-5), was first in line for the throne. Kileab [or Chileab] had apparently died [as Absalom will act as heir apparent on his return from exile following Amnon's death, see 15:1-3], so Absalom was next in line after Amnon. Rivalry already existed between Amnon and Absalom! We need to understand the political implications of the events to fully understand the story” (Lawrence Richards, *The Bible Reader's Companion*, 1991, note on 2 Samuel 13).

David, by his sin, had set a horrible example for his children—that of a man unable to govern his passions. We now find Amnon, David's firstborn, unable to govern *his* passions. He is in “love” with his virgin half-sister Tamar, David's daughter by Maacah. David's only daughter recorded in Scripture, Tamar is the full sister of Absalom.

Marriage to a sister or half-sister is forbidden (Leviticus 18:11). So Amnon's infatuation cannot be satisfied. Yet he is so obsessively consumed with his longing for her that he visibly loses weight. Upon discovering the reason for this, his crafty cousin Jonadab encourages Amnon to pursue his wicked desire by using trickery to get Tamar alone with him. The plot succeeds, but she refuses his urging her to lie with him, suggesting rather that he ask for her hand of the king —no doubt a ploy to escape the situation, as she certainly knows that David cannot legally grant such a request. Undaunted, Amnon forces himself upon her. The words “he forced her” here “can also mean, ‘he humiliated her.’ Victims of rape sometimes speak more strongly of their humiliation than of the physical pain they were made to suffer” (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on 2 Samuel 13:14). Of course, it was undoubtedly physically painful—but the psychological anguish she suffered was likely much worse.

There is a strong distinction between love and lust. The Scriptures reveal the true characteristics of love. Love is kind. It does not seek its own gratification. It does not think evil. It does not rejoice in iniquity (1 Corinthians 13). In contrast, lust requires immediate gratification. It is totally contrary to the way of love. Amnon's “love” reveals itself for what it is—perverted *lust*—in the rape and in his attitude immediately following it. Amnon now *hates* his sister. Once his lust and his desire to conquer were satisfied, there was a big letdown as he realized he had no real love for Tamar. “The sudden revulsion is easily accounted for; the atrocity of his conduct, with all the feelings of shame, remorse, and dread of exposure and punishment, now burst upon his mind, rendering the presence of Tamar intolerably painful to him” (*Jamieson, Fausset & Brown's Commentary*, note on verse 15). Perhaps he even irrationally blames her for what she has “made him do.”

Amnon tells her to “be gone” (verse 15). But she does not. Defiled and with no apparent witnesses to what has happened, she will be left shamed and destitute, with no prospect for future marriage. Amnon, however, will hear none of it. He summons a servant and orders him to put her out. Tamar is

devastated by this horrific ruining of her life. She is overcome with grief and despair. After telling Absalom of her plight, her brother encourages her to keep the matter to herself, which she does, while he plots revenge. Absalom certainly cares for his sister—later naming his own daughter after her (14:27). But remember that, secondarily, politics were probably also involved in this matter. Absalom now has what he perhaps reasons to be a legitimate reason to dispose of Amnon and become heir to the throne.

David, though becoming extremely angry on hearing of the matter, takes no action at all. As to why this is we can only guess. First of all, there may have been some confusion in the case since, upon Absalom's urgings, Tamar did not make the matter public. Secondly, while seizing a betrothed woman and having sexual relations with her against her will was a capital crime punishable by death under Israel's civil code, the death penalty was not mandated for seizing an *unbetrothed* woman and having sexual relations with her. The preset punishment in this case was the payment of a bride price and a forced marriage for life if the father so deemed (see Deuteronomy 22:28-29). Could that be allowed here? After all, Abraham being married to Sarah, his half-sister, might seem to serve as precedent (compare Genesis 20:12). But since the time of Moses, incest with even a half-sister was punishable by the death of both participants (Leviticus 20:17).

Yet if it could be ascertained that the woman was unwilling in the act of incest, just as in the matter of the rape of a betrothed woman, she would not be punished—only the man. It is possible that Tamar did not “cry out” when she was raped or was not heard (compare Deuteronomy 22:24). Furthermore, there was evidently no examination to determine that defilement had taken place. It would seem, however, that a thorough interrogation of those who had been sent out before the rape (compare 2 Samuel 13:9), might have yielded the essence of what had happened—perhaps some actually did hear a cry from Tamar but were afraid of retribution from Amnon. Remember that someone could only be put to death on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Tamar was only one witness if Amnon refused to testify against himself—although evidence itself could also be considered a “witness” in a matter, as the New Testament makes clear (compare 1 John 5:7-8, NRSV).

Nevertheless, David, as already stated, does nothing—he apparently does not even investigate the matter. Perhaps he doesn't want to shame his own household—particularly with a possible lack of needed evidence. Or it may just be that, as with many parents, David is trying to protect his son from the consequences of his actions. Indeed, David displays an apparent unwillingness to appropriately discipline his children, as can be seen even at the end of his life in the example of Adonijah (see 1 Kings 1:6). And even others of his relatives, such as Joab, sometimes literally get away with murder.

Of course, none of this explains why David took no action on Tamar's behalf, given the normally deep-seated sense of protection a father feels for a daughter. Perhaps David was giving special consideration to Amnon as firstborn and heir apparent. Or it could be that David, having been spared the death penalty in his own adultery and even murder, is unwilling to put his son to death for less.

Although David had repented of his sins, he was probably still burdened with feelings of guilt. Often those who feel guilty are reluctant to take a strong moral stand, feeling they have lost their moral authority and would be hypocritical to take firm action.

This often contributes to a downward moral spiral in families and nations. It may even be that David felt his own sin was partly responsible for what happened, since one of its consequences was to be family infighting.

Remember, God had proclaimed that the sword would never depart from David's house (12:10). And that sword first comes when, two years after Tamar's rape, Absalom finally exacts his revenge. David won't do anything about Amnon—but Absalom does. The deed completed, David's oldest son—an incestuous rapist—is dead. And the one who is now his oldest son is a fugitive from justice charged with murder.

Absalom flees the country to Geshur, northeast of the Sea of Galilee, receiving amnesty from the king there, Talmai, who is his grandfather on his mother's side (see 3:3). There he remains for three years. As David's grief over Amnon's death gradually subsides, he desires a restored relationship with Absalom but perhaps views it as inappropriate to pursue it anytime soon under the circumstances.

Seeds of Rebellion (2 Samuel 14)

Absalom certainly didn't grow up in a good family situation. Remember, David had six sons by six different women in seven and a half years (see 2 Samuel 3:2-5; 5:5), of whom Absalom was the third. The marriage of his mother, Maacah, daughter of King Talmai of Geshur, to David was undoubtedly a political one, and thus there was probably little love involved in it. This was far from ideal for God intended the stable home environment of a loving, monogamous marriage to produce godly offspring (see Malachi 2:15). But sadly, Absalom and his other siblings have been denied this. This is not to say that people cannot overcome an adverse family situation, as a number of biblical heroes did. It is just to point out that those in such circumstances begin with a disadvantage. Furthermore, it appears that David was rarely home while his earlier children were growing up. Instead, he was away fighting wars (compare 2 Samuel 3-10). This is not stated to condemn David, as these wars carved out the empire God intended Israel to attain. Rather, it is to help us understand the added difficulty Absalom and David's other earlier children had while growing up. And it should also serve as a lesson that a person can be righteous and still need to work on properly balancing work and family responsibilities.

It should also be pointed out that Absalom was a teenager when David committed his terrible sin with Bathsheba and Uriah. How disillusioning this must have been for the boy. His father, the righteous king and great hero, reduced to this. David's actions surely left an impression on his children. Furthermore, besides the natural consequences all of these factors might have produced on their own, God's punishment of turmoil as a consequence of David's sin is now directly at work in David's

family. Amnon's character was probably, in part, a result of the same upbringing Absalom experienced. The weaknesses in both of David's sons played a part in the awful circumstances of our previous reading—and the continuing turmoil that God had foretold.

In his longing to see Absalom (13:39), David perhaps thought about some of the mistakes he had made as a father. He probably couldn't help but realize the fact that his own sin of adultery and murder was, at least in part, responsible for what was happening.

Joab, perhaps viewing the king's distraction over the matter as a threat to national security, devises a scheme to get David to reexamine the whole situation and reestablish a relationship with his son. He sends a woman to tell the king a supposedly parallel story—as Nathan had done earlier following David's sin with Bathsheba. Yet this story is only partially parallel: "The fictitious story does not fit Absalom's case, which involved premeditated murder with known hostile intent (13:32). David could only have responded as he did because he wanted his son to return so badly (cf. vv. 37-39)" (*Bible Reader's Companion*, note on 14:1-4).

However, there may have been a mitigating circumstance in Absalom's killing of Amnon that David could have considered, though it isn't stated in the account. God equated rape with murder—"for just as when a man rises against his neighbor and kills him, even so is this matter" (Deuteronomy 22:26). Though rape in this verse is that of an engaged or married woman, the rape of a sister, who could not legally marry her guilty brother, was surely just as heinous. Indeed, both crimes merited the death penalty. Had Amnon *murdered* Tamar, Absalom could have, according to the law, pursued and killed him as the "avenger of blood." Perhaps there was some justification, then, for avenging something that was evidently *on par* with murder. Moreover, David may have come to reason that he should have personally ordered Amnon put to death—and that Absalom was justified for doing what he did upon David's own failure to act.

In any case, David acquiesces to Joab's wish to have Absalom brought back. However, the king refuses to see his son face to face for another two years. Perhaps he cannot break through the barrier of resentment that has built up over the killing of Amnon. Yet this just serves to further fuel Absalom's growing resentment. For consider how atrocious this is from the young man's perspective. First, his father would not punish Amnon for defiling his sister. Then, he is not allowed to see his father for three years. When his father at last sends for him to come back, he still refuses to see him for two more years, which must have been humiliating. It is apparently during these five years that Absalom's children are born, some at Jerusalem. And yet David will not even deign to visit his own grandchildren. Worse, it may even be that some of Absalom's sons die in infancy during this period—as we later see a declaration from him that he has no sons (18:18)—and yet David still won't come to see Absalom, and neither will he allow Absalom to see him.

Absalom finally presses Joab into intervening, which results in a meeting at last between David and his son—Absalom bowing his head to the ground and the king kissing him. "The kiss was the symbol

of their reconciliation. Although David and Absalom were reconciled, the seeds of bitterness that had been sown would soon bear the fruit of conspiracy and rebellion. David's protracted delay in coming to terms with his son ultimately led to disaster. For the moment, though, there was peace" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on 14:33).

The Scriptures tell us that it is always best to resolve our differences and not let them drag on. There is no other way out. If an offense occurs, both parties should seek settlement and reconciliation. One of David's major faults was that of not addressing family problems head on, along with not spending the time to guide, direct and correct his children in a timely manner. David, a man after God's own heart, was by no means an evil person. Rather, like all of us, he made mistakes—and those mistakes had serious consequences.

Psalm 85

another psalm of the sons of Korah, is a lamenting plea for national restoration. Its specific setting is unknown. God has here forgiven His people and returned them from captivity (verses 1-3) but the effects of His wrath—as the lingering consequences of their sins—are still being felt (verses 4-7). This could describe the end of some foreign oppression during the period of the judges. Or it could conceivably apply to the time of King Hezekiah's reforms following the captivity and return of 200,000 Jews at the hands of the northern kingdom of Israel in alliance with Syria during the reign of Hezekiah's father Ahaz (see 2 Chronicles 28). Yet it could also fit with the later return from Babylonian captivity. "Many believe that vv. 1-3 refer to the return from exile and that the troubles experienced are those alluded to by Nehemiah and Malachi. Verse 12 suggests that a drought has ravaged the land and may reflect the drought with which the Lord chastened his people in the time of Haggai (see Hag 1:5-11)" (*Zondervan NIV Study Bible*, note on Psalm 85).

After pleading for revival, mercy and salvation (verses 6-7), the psalmist states that he will hear what God has to say, trusting that God will "speak peace" to His people—that is, with peaceful intent or directing them in the way to peace—as long as they don't ignore His words and turn back to the foolishness of their sins (verse 8). God's salvation, prayed for in verse 7, is available to those who fear Him (verse 9)—that is, who with the appropriate mind frame of awe and respect will heed and follow whatever God says.

In verse 10, "the union of God's mercy and truth and His righteousness and peace describes the way things ought to be, or the state of peace spoken of in v. 8. The blending of the ideals of truth and righteousness in v. 11 suggest a vision of the kingdom of God (see Is. 11)" (*The Nelson Study Bible*, note on verses 10-13). As noted above, verse 12 may indicate a period of drought and assurance, on one level, that the land will yield physical produce. Yet the picture here is primarily figurative, as verse 11 shows truth as the crop that is produced—thanks to the figurative sunlight and rain of God's righteousness from above.

Truth springing out of the earth may also be a messianic reference (compare Isaiah 53:2). Notice the final words of Psalm 85, wherein God's righteous footsteps become the path for us to follow (verse 13). Yeshua HaMashiach has set the example for us of how to live, that we "should follow His steps" (1 Peter 2:21). And this pathway, as the highway to Zion in the previous psalm (84:5-7), leads to the glorious Kingdom of God—so that all of us may be part of the harvest of truth.

Luke 4:31- 5:39

The text picks up with Yeshua teaching in Kephrah Nahum on the Sabbaths and tells us the people were amazed at His authority of the Words. A man with an unclean spirit was there. This man's unclean spirit cried out to Yeshua and knew exactly who He was. Yeshua commanded the spirit come out of the man, and it did. The people were absolutely astonished at His Authority.

He next healed Shimon's mother-in-law from an illness of inflammation and He continued on through those areas proclaiming the Good News and healing many.

Yeshua enters into a boat on lake Gennesar and begins teaching the people from there, and then He tells Shimon to go back out into the deeper water and let down his net for fish. They caught so many fish that the nets were about broken and the boats about to sink. Kepha was so amazed, along with all the people, he could not contain himself. He fell down and Yeshua's feet in great conviction. Yeshua told him not to worry for soon he would be a "fisher of men."

Yeshua heals a man with leprosy. Yeshua forgives a paralytic of his sins – the one man who was let down through the roof of the place where Yeshua was. Scribes and Pharisees were there that day and were amazed and accused Yeshua of blasphemy for forgiving sins.

Yeshua calls Levi the tax collector to follow Him and Levi makes a great feast. Once again the Scribes and Pharisees are put out saying He is eating with sinners. Of course, Yeshua came for the sick, not the righteous, as He proceeds to tell them. He also shares the parable of new wine.

He chose His disciples because they had not had formal teaching and been ruined by it. They are new, new cloths, new wine... and Yeshua was teaching them a "renewed" Way. Therefore He did not attempt to put "new wine" into old wineskins... for it does not work. People prefer the old because it is comfortable to them and very much resist change.