

# FEED MY SHEEP

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## A Biblical Case of Rape and Incest

We left off last time with the very tragic fall of David into the sins of adultery and murder. The first words in this chapter are: “And it came to pass after this,...”. As is typical of the Bible, huge chunks of time are passed over in silence so that certain incidents can be dealt with in some detail. Therefore, we must realize that many years must have now passed since the affair of David and Bathsheba resulting in the death of their firstborn son and the crimes chronicled in this story. This is obvious since many of David’s children are adults now and have children of their own.

**2 Samuel 13:1** And it came to pass after this, that Absalom the son of David had a fair [lovely] sister, whose name was Tamar; and Amnon the son of David loved her.

The cast of players in this and a number of succeeding issues of FMS is going to get somewhat complex. For that reason, we have drawn up the chart on the next page so that the reader can keep it for ready reference. Complex as it is, even this chart is simplified—Bathsheba and several other wives of David and their offspring are absent. We will include them in a different chart as the story unfolds. Refer to the chart now as we introduce the key players so that you can see the various relationships among them in this true-life drama. Some of these people we have already encountered in previous studies in the life of David. For example, remember this verse from several studies back? Among the sons of David are listed:

**2 Samuel 3:3** And his second, Chileab, of Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite; and the third, Absalom the son of Maacah the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur;

Incidentally, the name Amnon literally means “faithful.” Sometimes people fulfill their names, and other times, they evidently do not. We cannot discern the exact ages of Amnon and Tamar here, but both are apparently young adults. Notice that the very first name in this story is Absalom. That is appropriate because although this first chapter deals with the rape of Tamar by Amnon, the next seven chapters are really focused on Absalom, the third-born son of David.

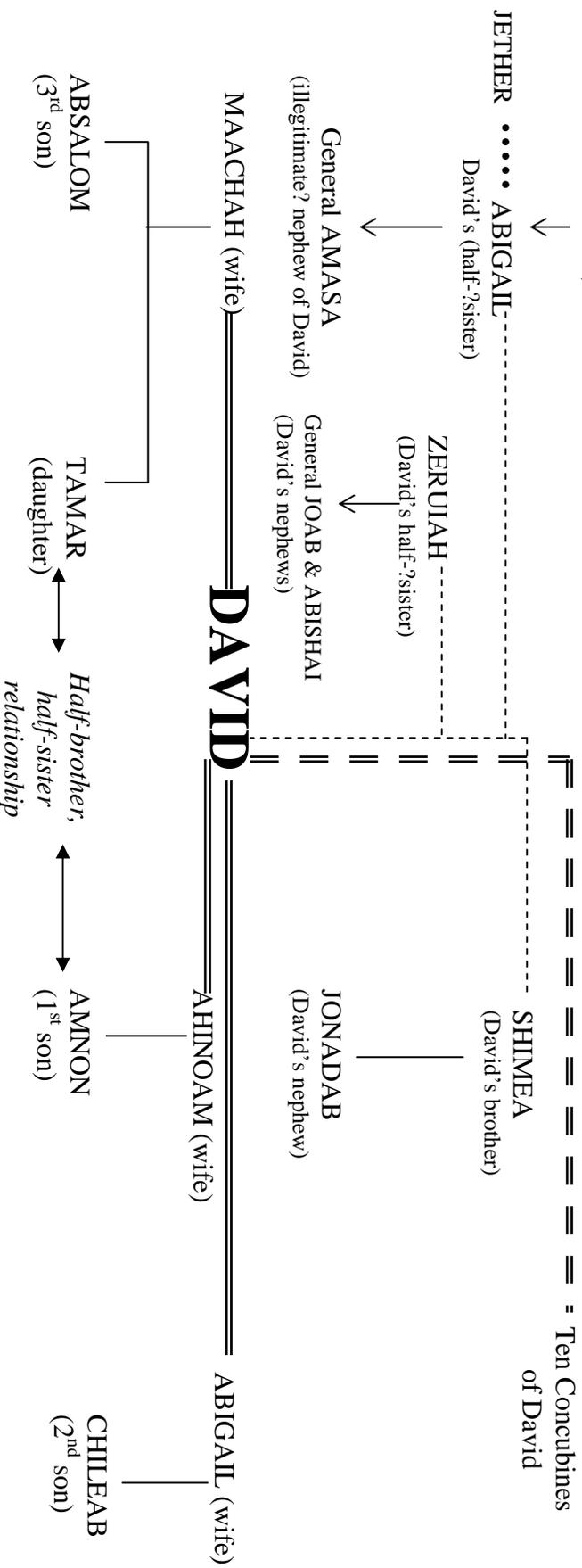
After David had seen to it that Bathsheba’s husband Uriah the Hittite was killed, Nathan prophesied to David that God would raise up evil against him *out of his own family* and that since he, David, had taken another man’s wife in secret that “a neighbor” of his would lie with David’s wives in broad daylight.

This neighbor is none other than David’s own son, Absalom, and that is the reason why Absalom is taking center stage for the next seven chapters. This is the means by which God is bringing this prophecy to pass in judgment upon David for his transgressions. But the event which triggers this whole series of events is the rape of Absalom’s full sister, Tamar.

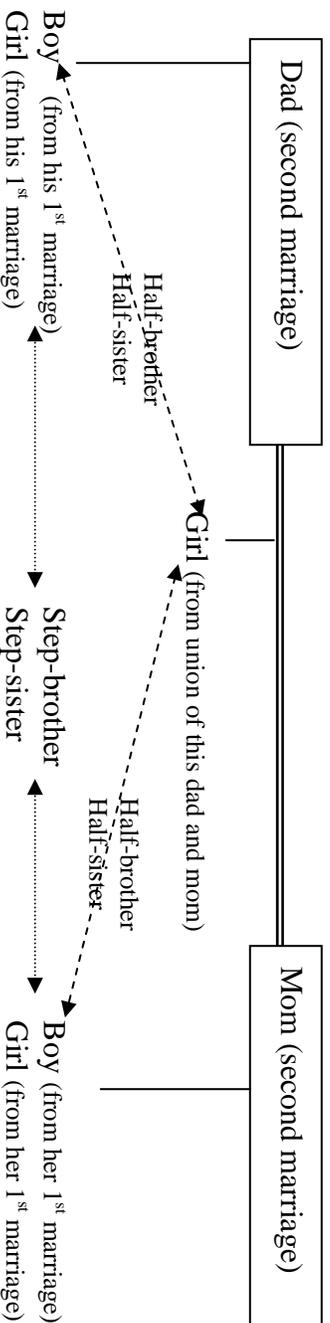
To better understand some parts of the story, let me apprise you of some of the customs of the day in the ancient Middle East. First of all, the unmarried, virgin daughters of the monarch were kept on a very tight leash, as it were. They were kept in virtual seclusion from the company of men. No strangers were allowed, nor even relatives of the opposite sex, unless there were witnesses present. The sad truth is that one of the reasons they were so closely guarded and protected was not so much for religious or virtuous

# FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS OF KING DAVID

(Chart to go with Tapes/CDS #423 & 424: All in the Family: Incest, Rape and Murder and succeeding lectures)



## Correct Terminology for Blended Family Relationships



See: **Leviticus 18: 9, 11**  
**Leviticus 20:17**

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reasons, but because of their political value. Princesses were used to cement relationships with foreign nations by having the princess marry a prince or other high ranking person of another country.

Of course, if the princess lost her virginity before marriage, she was useless as a political commodity. Now I know that sounds cold and ruthless and grossly unfair to women, and it is abhorrent to us today that they were used as a political tool, but those were the political facts of life. In recent years, with the spate of television documentaries on the plight of women in Muslim countries, we have learned that many of these customs which are degrading to women still prevail. Years ago none of us had ever heard the word *burkha*, (also spelled *birkha* or *burqa*) but I would surmise that many in my audience now know that a burkha is that garment that Muslim women wear which covers them from head to toe. (It can also refer only to the veil covering the woman's face.)

Incidentally, political marriages have never ceased; they have simply moved to a higher level of sophistication. I am thinking of some interesting alliances in the political, financial and media worlds today. For example, NBC news reporter Andrea Mitchell is married to Alan Greenspan, former chairman of the Federal Reserve System. Democratic Party spin doctor James Carville is married to George H. W. Bush campaign chairman, Mary Matelin. She was (perhaps still is) on the staff of Vice President Dick Cheney. ABC News' Diane Sawyer is married to Hollywood film director Mike Nichols, whose real name is Michael Igor Peschkowsky. Turning back to our story, despite all the protections surrounding a princess, prince Amnon, David's heir-apparent, had obviously been in the presence of Tamar many times for him to have developed such a violent passion for her.

**2 Samuel 13: 2 And Amnon was so vexed, that he fell sick for his sister Tamar;**

In other words, Amnon was frustrated to the point of illness. What was he so frustrated about? Well, the text continues...

**for she was a virgin; and Amnon thought it hard [marg.: saw that it was improper] for him to do any thing to her.**

To be blunt, Amnon wanted to have sex with her, but he knew it was wrong and yet he could not

stop pondering the idea. Enter the wily facilitator Jonadab from stage left. Who is he?

**3 But Amnon had a friend, whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shimeah David's brother: and Jonadab was a very subtil [crafty, cunning] man.**

(Look on the chart for Shimeah and Jonadab.) Therefore, Amnon and Jonadab are first cousins and apparently, best friends.

**2 Samuel 13: 4 And he said unto him, Why art thou, being the king's son, lean from day to day? wilt thou not tell me?**

Jonadab is puzzled by Amnon's appearance and he might have said: "My dear cousin Amnon, being a prince in Israel, you surely do not have trouble buying groceries. There is always enough food in your house. Why in the world are you looking so thin and gaunt?" The verse continues...

**And Amnon said unto him, I love Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister.**

He *l-o-o-o-oves* Tamar. Really? Was it love or was it more specifically love of the lust variety? As you know, our English word "love" carries a wide variety of meanings and connotations. It's the same in Hebrew. Here is just a part of the definition for this Hebrew word:

1) to love 1a) (Qal) 1a1) human love for another, includes family, and sexual 1a2) human appetite for objects such as food, drink, sleep, wisdom 1a3) human love for or to God 1a4) act of being a friend 1a4a) lover (participle) 1a4b) friend (participle) 1a5) God's love toward man 1a5a) to individual men 1a5b) to people Israel 1a5c) to righteousness 1b) (Niphal) 1b1) lovely (participle) 1b2) loveable (participle) 1c) (Piel) 1c1) friends 1c2) lovers (fig. of adulterers) 2) to like

By the way, the Hebrew word for love here is *ahab*, as in Captain Ahab in Melville's novel, *Moby Dick*. This *ahab*, however, is not the same word as the name of that notorious later king Ahab of Israel who married Jezebel. That name is *awchab* in Hebrew. I suspect, however, that since the two words are spelled the same in English, that Melville named his character for the wicked king of Israel. In Leviticus 18 we can review laws pertinent to the incident about to occur in

the household of King David:

**Leviticus 18: 9 The nakedness of thy sister, the daughter of thy father, or daughter of thy mother, whether she be born at home, or born abroad, even their nakedness thou shalt not uncover.**

We have commented on this before, but for the sake of new people, we point out the phrase “to uncover the nakedness” of someone is a Hebrew idiom which means to have sex with someone. Notice also that the Bible is very clear here to cover the case of step-brothers and step-sisters, like Amnon and Tamar. That is why it appears redundant at first for verse 9 to say: “the daughter of thy father, *or* daughter of thy mother.” It is *not* a redundancy. In an ideal family, the daughter of the father is also the daughter of the mother, but not when one or the other parent has been widowed or divorced and remarried, or as in the case here, when there are multiple wives. But the law is clear, having sex with your sister or half-sister is incest. It is forbidden. Verse 11 also relates to this.

**11 The nakedness of thy father’s wife’s daughter, begotten of thy father, she is thy sister, thou shalt not uncover her nakedness.**

Let’s parse the sentence and let each of us put ourselves into this picture to help understand it. Where it says “thy”, that’s you and me. So it speaks of your father’s wife’s daughter. If we just stopped there, it is clearly inferred that your father’s wife is not your mother. Polygamy is virtually unheard of in America today, but blended families are very common. A blended family is where parents have divorced and remarried (or where spouses have died). In the new family there may be children from each of the partners in the second marriage, as well as one or more children from the new marriage. That’s a blended family. (Follow the following discussion using the chart.)

We have this hypothetical blended family on the chart: Dad, Mom, and each has children from a first marriage; let’s say a boy and a girl from each. What is the relationship between the boy from the dad and the girl from the mom? It’s a step-sister/step-brother relationship. According to God’s law, could they marry or would that be incest? Answer: they could marry. Now, let’s say everything is the same, except now the mom and dad in this second marriage have a baby girl. What is the relationship between the dad’s boy from

the first marriage and the daughter from the union of the dad and mom in the second marriage? They are half-sister and half-brother. Now, continuing to parse verse 11, let’s read the rest of it:

**11 The nakedness of your father’s wife’s daughter, begotten of thy father, [that is the situation we just described as half-sister/half-brother] she is thy sister, you shalt not uncover her nakedness.**

So according to God’s law here, if you are the boy of the father from the first marriage, can you marry your half-sister? Or from the girl’s perspective, let’s say the union of the mom and dad in the second marriage produced a boy. And if you are the girl from the dad in the first marriage, can you marry your half-brother? The answer is: No, that is incest. Now, look in Leviticus 20:17 where we find a similar statute, plus the judgment for violation of this law.

**Leviticus 20: 17 And if a man shall take his sister, his father’s daughter, or his mother’s daughter, and see her nakedness, and she see his nakedness; it is a wicked thing; and they shall be cut off in the sight of their people: he hath uncovered his sister’s nakedness; he shall bear his iniquity.**

There is some debate as to the penalty for this sin. The debate revolves around the question: does “cut off” mean to execute or to send into exile? We will not get into that debate at this time. Now back to David’s blended family and Amnon and Tamar. Were they *step*-brother and sister, or were they *half*-brother and sister? Answer: She was his half-sister; he was her half-brother. According to God’s law, could they marry? No! With that understanding of God’s standard of righteousness, we are now prepared to continue next issue with this tragic story within David’s own family. We leave off where David’s nephew—Amnon’s cousin—Jonadab, has concocted a cunning plan to help his cousin fulfill his unlawful lust.

*(To be continued)*

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