

David and Absalom: A Law of the Reaper Relationship

By Doug Hamilton

We are first introduced to Absalom in 2 Samuel 3. He was in the list of sons who were born in Hebron during the early years of David's kingdom.

- 2 Samuel 3:2-5, Sons were born to David at Hebron: his firstborn was **Amnon**, by Ahinoam the Jezreelitess; ³ and his second, **Chileab**, by Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite; and the third, **Absalom** the son of Maacah, the daughter of Talmai, king of Geshur; ⁴ and the fourth, **Adonijah** the son of Haggith; and the fifth, **Shephatiah** the son of Abital; ⁵ and the sixth, **Ithream**, by David's wife Eglah. These were born to David at Hebron.

Amnon, the half-brother of Absalom, planned to rape his half-sister Tamar.

- 2 Samuel 13:1-39, Now it was after this that Absalom the son of David had a beautiful sister whose name was Tamar, and Amnon the son of David loved her. ² Amnon was so frustrated because of his sister Tamar that he made himself ill, for she was a virgin, and it seemed hard to Amnon to do anything to her. ³ But Amnon had a friend whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shimeah, David's brother; and Jonadab was a very shrewd man. ⁴ He said to him, "O son of the king, why are you so depressed morning after morning? Will you not tell me?" Then Amnon said to him, "I am in love with Tamar, the sister of my brother Absalom." ⁵ Jonadab then said to him, "Lie down on your bed and pretend to be ill; when your father comes to see you, say to him, 'Please let my sister Tamar come and give me *some* food to eat, and let her prepare the food in my sight, that I may see *it* and eat from her hand.'" ⁶ So Amnon lay down and pretended to be ill; when the king came to see him, Amnon said to the king, "Please let my sister Tamar come and make me a couple of cakes in my sight, that I may eat from her hand." ⁷ Then David sent to the house for Tamar, saying, "Go now to your brother Amnon's house, and prepare food for him."

He threw her out on the street to add insult to injury.

- 2 Sam 13:15-19, Then Amnon hated her with a very great hatred; for the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her. And Amnon said to her, "Get up, go away!" ¹⁶ But she said to him, "No, because this wrong in sending me away is greater than the other that you have done to me!" Yet he would not listen to her. ¹⁷ Then he called his young man who attended him and said, "Now throw this woman out of my *presence*, and lock the door behind her." ¹⁸ Now she had on a long-sleeved garment; for in this manner the virgin daughters of the king dressed themselves in robes. Then his attendant took her out and locked the door behind her. ¹⁹ Tamar put ashes on her head and tore her long-sleeved garment which *was* on her; and she put her hand on her head and went away, crying aloud as she went.

David was angry, but did nothing. Absalom took the issue into his own hands.

- 2 Samuel 13:20-22, Then Absalom her brother said to her, "Has Amnon your brother been with you? But now keep silent, my sister, he is your brother; do not take this matter to heart." So Tamar remained and was desolate in her brother Absalom's house. ²¹ Now when King David heard of all these matters, he was very angry. ²² But Absalom did not

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speak to Amnon either good or bad; for Absalom hated Amnon because he had violated his sister Tamar.

Two years later, Absalom's plot to kill Amnon was carried out.

- 2 Samuel 13:28-29, Absalom commanded his servants, saying, "See now, when Amnon's heart is merry with wine, and when I say to you, 'Strike Amnon,' then put him to death. Do not fear; have not I myself commanded you? Be courageous and be valiant." ²⁹ The servants of Absalom did to Amnon just as Absalom had commanded. Then all the king's sons arose and each mounted his mule and fled.

Absalom fled the kingdom.

- 2 Samuel 13:37, Now Absalom fled and went to Talmai the son of Ammihud, the king of Geshur. And *David* mourned for his son every day. ³⁸ So Absalom had fled and gone to Geshur, and was there three years. ³⁹ *The heart of King David* longed to go out to Absalom; for he was comforted concerning Amnon, since he was dead.

David pardoned Absalom for murder and banned him from his presence.

- 2 Samuel 14:21-24, Then the king said to Joab, "Behold now, I will surely do this thing; go therefore, bring back the young man Absalom." ²² Joab fell on his face to the ground, prostrated himself and blessed the king; then Joab said, "Today your servant knows that I have found favor in your sight, O my lord, the king, in that the king has performed the request of his servant." ²³ So Joab arose and went to Geshur and brought Absalom to Jerusalem. ²⁴ However the king said, "Let him turn to his own house, and let him not see my face." So Absalom turned to his own house and did not see the king's face.

He was a conceited, spoiled, brat, pretty boy.

- 2 Samuel 14:25-26, Now in all Israel was no one as handsome as Absalom, so highly praised; from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no defect in him. ²⁶ When he cut the hair of his head (and it was at the end of every year that he cut it, for it was heavy on him so he cut it), he weighed the hair of his head at 200 shekels by the king's weight.
- 2 Samuel 14:30-33, Therefore he said to his servants, "See, Joab's field is next to mine, and he has barley there; go and set it on fire." So Absalom's servants set the field on fire. ³¹ Then Joab arose, came to Absalom at his house and said to him, "Why have your servants set my field on fire?" ³² Absalom answered Joab, "Behold, I sent for you, saying, 'Come here, that I may send you to the king, to say, "Why have I come from Geshur? It would be better for me still to be there." ' Now therefore, let me see the king's face, and if there is iniquity in me, let him put me to death." ³³ So when Joab came to the king and told him, he called for Absalom. Thus he came to the king and prostrated himself on his face to the ground before the king, and the king kissed Absalom.
- 2 Samuel 15:1, Now it came about after this that Absalom provided for himself a chariot and horses and fifty men as runners before him.

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Absalom planned to overthrow King David.

- 2 Samuel 15:2-6, Absalom used to rise early and stand beside the way to the gate; and when any man had a suit to come to the king for judgment, Absalom would call to him and say, “From what city are you?” And he would say, “Your servant is from one of the tribes of Israel.”³ Then Absalom would say to him, “See, your claims are good and right, but no man listens to you on the part of the king.”⁴ Moreover, Absalom would say, “Oh that one would appoint me judge in the land, then every man who has any suit or cause could come to me and I would give him justice.”⁵ And when a man came near to prostrate himself before him, he would put out his hand and take hold of him and kiss him.⁶ In this manner Absalom dealt with all Israel who came to the king for judgment; so Absalom stole away the hearts of the men of Israel.

Absalom overtook the kingdom, causing David to flee for his life.

- 2 Samuel 15:13-14, Then a messenger came to David, saying, “The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom.”¹⁴ David said to all his servants who were with him at Jerusalem, “Arise and let us flee, for *otherwise* none of us will escape from Absalom. Go in haste, or he will overtake us quickly and bring down calamity on us and strike the city with the edge of the sword.”

Absalom publically shamed David by sleeping with his harem.

- 2 Samuel 16:22, So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the roof, and Absalom went in to his father’s concubines in the sight of all Israel.

Absalom wanted his own father David to die.

- 2 Samuel 17:1-4, Furthermore, Ahithophel said to Absalom, “Please let me choose 12,000 men that I may arise and pursue David tonight.”² “I will come upon him while he is weary and exhausted and terrify him, so that all the people who are with him will flee. Then I will strike down the king alone,³ and I will bring back all the people to you. The return of everyone depends on the man you seek; *then* all the people will be at peace.”⁴ So the plan pleased Absalom and all the elders of Israel.

Absalom died on the battlefield against the troops of David.

- 2 Samuel 18:9-15, Now Absalom happened to meet the servants of David. For Absalom was riding on *his* mule, and the mule went under the thick branches of a great oak. And his head caught fast in the oak, so he was left hanging between heaven and earth, while the mule that was under him kept going.¹⁰ When a certain man saw *it*, he told Joab and said, “Behold, I saw Absalom hanging in an oak.”¹¹ Then Joab said to the man who had told him, “Now behold, you saw *him!* Why then did you not strike him there to the ground? And I would have given you ten *pieces* of silver and a belt.”¹² The man said to Joab, “Even if I should receive a thousand *pieces* of silver in my hand, I would not put out my hand against the king’s son; for in our hearing the king charged you and Abishai and Ittai, saying, ‘Protect for me the young man Absalom!’¹³ “Otherwise, if I had dealt treacherously against his life (and there is nothing hidden from the king), then you yourself would have stood aloof.”¹⁴ Then Joab said, “I will not waste time here with you.” So he took three spears in his hand and thrust them through the heart of Absalom

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while he was yet alive in the midst of the oak.¹⁵ And ten young men who carried Joab's armor gathered around and struck Absalom and killed him.

David lamented over the death of Absalom.

- 2 Samuel 18:31-33, Behold, the Cushite arrived, and the Cushite said, "Let my lord the king receive good news, for the LORD has freed you this day from the hand of all those who rose up against you."³² Then the king said to the Cushite, "Is it well with the young man Absalom?" And the Cushite answered, "Let the enemies of my lord the king, and all who rise up against you for evil, be as that young man!"³³ The king was deeply moved and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept. And thus he said as he walked, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

Application

In retrospect, David contributed greatly to a broken and destructive relationship with his son Absalom. He set a bad example with his own life, which likely led to bad behavior of his own son Amnon fulfilling lustful desires. Other than being angry with Amnon, David offered no justice for Tamar, leading to vigilante emotions in Absalom, which in return, led to the death of Amnon. David did not chasten Absalom, but invited him back, leading to empowerment of narcissistic behavior by Absalom later on, including vandalism, conceit, conspiracy, and insurrection. Ultimately it resulted in the weakening of a kingdom and the death of Absalom. David had a "Law of the Reaper" relationship with his son Absalom.

Paul wrote in *Galatians 6:7-8*, "*Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life*" In the Law of the Reaper, three things are true. 1. You reap what you sow 2. You reap more than you sow. 3. You reap after you sow. Boundaries were not made nor kept, and the destructive crop of a broken relationship ensued. Let us be careful in all our relationships to sow only the best seed with anticipation of a good crop for the future. Let us be careful to carefully examine the seeds which we are sowing, knowing the Law of the Reaper is always a reality.