

Exegetical Notes – 2 Samuel 14:1-24

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2 Samuel 14:1-24

Verse 1

¹ ***Joab son of Zeruiah knew that the king's heart longed for Absalom.***

- David's son Amnon had raped his half-sister, Tamar, David's daughter by another woman. Absalom, David's son by Tamar's mother, had killed his half-brother, Amnon, to revenge his sister's rape. After killing his half-brother, Absalom fled to Geshur to avoid David's wrath. Absalom lived in exile for three years (see 2 Samuel 13:1-39 and the exegetical notes prepared for that passage for a fuller explanation).
- Joab was the commander of David's army. He knew that David longed to bring Absalom home from Geshur (see 2 Samuel 13:39).
- Amnon was David's first-born son. Absalom was David's second born son. With Amnon dead, Absalom became Israel's crown prince. So, Amnon, the crown prince, had been killed by his half-brother, Absalom, who became crown prince when Amnon died.

Verses 2-3

² ***So Joab sent someone to Tekoa and had a wise woman brought from there. He said to her, "Pretend you are in mourning. Dress in mourning clothes, and don't use any cosmetic lotions. Act like a woman who has spent many days grieving for the dead."*** ³ ***Then go to the king and speak these words to him."*** ***And Joab put the words in her mouth.***

- Seeing the king's grief and the political situation in Israel, the crown prince was in self-imposed exile, Joab devised an elaborate plan to enable David to restore Absalom to his place in Israel.
- Joab had a "wise woman" brought to Jerusalem from Tekoa. The term "wise woman," may be some kind of title, but there is no certainty about it. Why Joab brought the woman from Tekoa is also unclear. Perhaps Joab knew the woman and that she could do what he was about to ask her to do.

- Joab instructed the woman to dress in deep mourning and to go to David and tell David the tale he tells her to tell David. Joab wrote the script for the drama. He was carefully managing the events that unfolded.

Verses 4-7

⁴ When the woman from Tekoa went to the king, she fell with her face to the ground to pay him honor, and she said, "Help me, Your Majesty!"

⁵ The king asked her, "What is troubling you?"

She said, "I am a widow; my husband is dead. ⁶ I your servant had two sons. They got into a fight with each other in the field, and no one was there to separate them. One struck the other and killed him. ⁷ Now the whole clan has risen up against your servant; they say, 'Hand over the one who struck his brother down, so that we may put him to death for the life of his brother whom he killed; then we will get rid of the heir as well.' They would put out the only burning coal I have left, leaving my husband neither name nor descendant on the face of the earth."

- When the woman went to the king, she begged him for help. She explained that she was a widow. She had two sons who had gotten into a fight with each other. One struck the other and killed his brother. Now her family demanded that the surviving son be executed for killing his brother. The family wanted the surviving son killed so that they could gain title to her husband's property. Their motivation was NOT justice. It was greed. If the surviving son was executed, she would be left without any means of support. She wanted David to forgive the surviving son for her sake.
- It is important to remember that none of this is true. The woman's story is a lie created by Joab to allow David to forgive Absalom. There are extenuating circumstances in the woman's story as there are in the situation with Absalom. Joab's argument was that David should act upon these "circumstances" and restore Absalom to protect the succession to the throne. He hoped that, in the woman's story, David will get his point.

Verses 8-11

⁸ The king said to the woman, "Go home, and I will issue an order in your behalf."

⁹ But the woman from Tekoa said to him, "Let my lord the king pardon me and my family, and let the king and his throne be without guilt."

¹⁰ *The king replied, "If anyone says anything to you, bring them to me, and they will not bother you again."*

¹¹ *She said, "Then let the king invoke the LORD his God to prevent the avenger of blood from adding to the destruction, so that my son will not be destroyed."*

"As surely as the LORD lives," he said, "not one hair of your son's head will fall to the ground."

- David decided in favor of the woman. He decreed that he would issue an order in the woman's favor and that her son would not be harmed. Her son would be under the king's protection.

Verses 12-17

¹² *Then the woman said, "Let your servant speak a word to my lord the king." "Speak," he replied.*

¹³ *The woman said, "Why then have you devised a thing like this against the people of God? When the king says this, does he not convict himself, for the king has not brought back his banished son?" ¹⁴ Like water spilled on the ground, which cannot be recovered, so we must die. But that is not what God desires; rather, he devises ways so that a banished person does not remain banished from him.*

¹⁵ *"And now I have come to say this to my lord the king because the people have made me afraid. Your servant thought, 'I will speak to the king; perhaps he will grant his servant's request.' ¹⁶ Perhaps the king will agree to deliver his servant from the hand of the man who is trying to cut off both me and my son from God's inheritance."*

¹⁷ *"And now your servant says, 'May the word of my lord the king secure my inheritance, for my lord the king is like an angel of God in discerning good and evil. May the LORD your God be with you.'"*

- After the woman received the king's favor, she pointed out to him that he has put Israel in the same place her family has put her in. Israel's future is uncertain because David's heir is in exile. She implored him to see that what he was doing to Israel is like what her family was doing to her.

Verses 18-20

¹⁸ *Then the king said to the woman, "Don't keep from me the answer to what I am going to ask you."*

"Let my lord the king speak," the woman said.

¹⁹ *The king asked, "Isn't the hand of Joab with you in all this?"*

The woman answered, “As surely as you live, my lord the king, no one can turn to the right or to the left from anything my lord the king says. Yes, it was your servant Joab who instructed me to do this and who put all these words into the mouth of your servant.”²⁰ Your servant Joab did this to change the present situation. My lord has wisdom like that of an angel of God—he knows everything that happens in the land.”

- David suspected that Joab was behind what had taken place with the woman. He asked her outright if that was so and she admitted that it was.

Verses 21-22

²¹ The king said to Joab, “Very well, I will do it. Go, bring back the young man Absalom.”²² Joab fell with his face to the ground to pay him honor, and he blessed the king. Joab said, “Today your servant knows that he has found favor in your eyes, my lord the king, because the king has granted his servant’s request.”

- David told Joab to bring Absalom home.
- Joab humbly acknowledged that he knows he has found favor with David because David has taken his advice about this matter.

Verses 23-24

²³ Then Joab went to Geshur and brought Absalom back to Jerusalem.²⁴ But the king said, “He must go to his own house; he must not see my face.” So Absalom went to his own house and did not see the face of the king.

- So, Joab went to Geshur and brought Absalom home to Jerusalem.
- King David refused to welcome Absalom home or to grant him any royal favor. He was allowed to return home, but not allowed to see the king.

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