

STUDIES IN SAMUEL  
A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 14

- Vv. 1-20 *Joab and the woman of Tekoah.* Joab took steps to bring Absalom back from exile. He discerned that David was longing to see his son. He evidently believed that David needed an excuse for bringing the young man back from his grandfather's country. Joab therefore engaged the services of a woman who posed a case of blood revenge, which was quite similar to what prevailed in the house of David. When David gave judgment to the woman, she asked him to be of like mind in his own case.
- Vv. 21-33 *David recalls Absalom.* David understood that Joab had instituted proceedings to bring Absalom from Geshur and he had indicated that he would be willing to let the young man come back to Jerusalem. Joab then saw that Absalom came back and after two years Absalom was given an audience with the king.

LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. "*The voice is Jacob's voice*" (Genesis 27:22). When Jacob deceived his father Isaac by clothing his hands in kid skin, Isaac said that the voice was the voice of Jacob, but the hands were the hands of Esau. A woman from Tekoah came to David for a judgment in her case, but David saw through the incident and discerned that Joab must have been behind it all. Too often we find Christian people who are deceptive. They may have the hands of Esau, but the voice of Jacob. We need to be straightforward in all our dealings.
2. *Time heals all wounds.* It was two years after Absalom's return before David would consent to see him.

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Finally, the king called the young man to him. This delay indicates the grievous nature of the crimes involved. Sometimes a great deal of time is needed to alleviate a situation.

### 5. Absalom's Exile Ended, 14:1-33.

#### *Joab and the Woman of Tekoah.* 14:1-20

Now Joab the son of Zeruiah perceived that the king's heart *was* toward Absalom.

2 And Joab sent to Tekoah, and fetched thence a wise woman, and said unto her, I pray thee, feign thyself to be a mourner, and put on now mourning apparel, and anoint not thyself with oil, but be as a woman that had a long time mourned for the dead:

3 And come to the king, and speak on this manner unto him. So Joab put the words in her mouth.

4 And when the woman of Tekoah spake to the king, she fell on her face to the ground, and did obeisance, and said, Help, O king.

5 And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, I *am* indeed a widow woman, and mine husband is dead.

6 And thy handmaid had two sons, and they two strove together in the field, and *there was* none to part them, but the one smote the other, and slew him.

7 And, behold, the whole family is risen against thine handmaid, and they said, Deliver him that smote his brother, that we may kill him, for the life of his brother whom he slew; and we will destroy the heir also: and so they shall quench my coal which is left, and shall not leave to my husband *neither* name or remainder upon the earth.

8 And the king said unto the woman, Go to thine house and I will give charge concerning thee.

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9 And the woman of Tekoah said unto the king, My lord, O king, the iniquity *be* on me, and on my father's house: and the king and his throne *be* guiltless.

10 And the king said, Whosoever said *ought* unto thee, bring him to me, and he shall not touch thee any more.

11 Then said she, I pray thee, let the king remember the Lord thy God, that thou wouldest not suffer the revengers of blood to destroy any more, lest they destroy my son. And he said, As the Lord liveth, there shall not one hair of thy son fall to the earth.

12 Then the woman said, Let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak *one* word unto my lord the king. And he said, Say on.

13 And the woman said, Wherefore then hast thou thought such a thing against the people of God? for the king doth speak this thing as one which is faulty, in that the king doth not fetch home again his banished.

14 For we must needs die, and *are* as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect *any* person: yet doth he devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him.

15 Now therefore that I am come to speak of this thing unto my lord the king, *it is* because the people have made me afraid: and thy handmaid said, I will now speak unto the king; it may be that the king will perform the request of his handmaid.

16 For the king will hear, to deliver his handmaid out of the hand of the man *that would* destroy me and my son together out of the inheritance of God.

17 Then thine handmaid said, The word of my lord the king shall now be comfortable: for as an angel of God, so *is* my lord the king to discern good and bad: therefore the Lord thy God will be with thee.

18 Then the king answered and said unto the woman, Hide not from me, I pray thee, the thing that I shall ask

thee. And the woman said, Let my lord the king now speak.

19 And the king said, *Is not* the hand of Joab with thee in all this? And the woman answered and said, As thy soul liveth, my lord the king, none can turn to the right hand or to the left from ought that my lord the king hath spoken: for thy servant Joab, he bade me, and he put all these words in the mouth of thine handmaid:

20 To fetch about this form of speech hath thy servant Joab done this thing: and my lord *is* wise, according to the wisdom of an angel of God, to know all *things* that *are* in the earth.

1. *What was David's attitude towards Absalom? 14:1*

The first verse of this chapter is understood by the majority of commentators as signifying that David was favorably disposed towards Absalom. The Syriac translation as well as the Vulgate translated the passage to show that David was inclined towards Absalom. Keil and Delitzsch take the position that David was against Absalom and therefore Joab took action to bring him back where his case could be presented to the king. Joab's part in this is hard to understand.

2. *What was Joab's motive in bringing Absalom back?*  
14:2

Joab could see that David was mourning for his son. This fact alone might have prompted Joab to effect Absalom's return. More than likely there was some hidden personal interest on Joab's part. David was able to see through the woman's story, for the whole thing sounded like something that Joab would plan. He did not believe the woman, and he asked whether or not Joab plotted it. Even though David did accede, a complete reconciliation was not effected at once. Absalom was not permitted to see the king.

3. *Where was Tekoah? 14:4*

Tekoah was a town in Judah some eight miles south of Bethlehem. This was the home of the prophet Amos (Amos 1:1), and has been identified as the modern Tekua. No significance was attached to the fact that the woman was a wise woman, so far as making her a prophetess, wizard, or necromancer is concerned. She was to pretend to be in mourning, wearing the proper clothing and giving every appearance of having been in grief for a long period of time.

4. *How could the woman have access to the king? 14:5*

Although a number of officers were appointed by David to take care of the affairs of state, many seemingly incidental matters were brought to his attention. His trying to care for all these judgments was a source of aggravation to some of the people, and Absalom capitalized on the king's inability to take care of some of their appeals (II Kings 15:2-6). Moses had tried to sit in judgment on all the affairs of the Israelites in his day, but the staggering load of responsibility was too much for him. He appointed rulers of tens, fifties, hundreds, and thousands, to hear the minor cases; only the most important cases were brought to him (Exodus 18:26). Joab may have been able to bypass all these subordinate officers and bring the woman's case directly to the king.

5. *Why would the family want to kill her son? 14:7*

The woman pretended to have two sons, one of whom had killed the other. There was nobody to part them, since the father was said to have been dead. The rest of the family were asking that God's immutable law be followed. God had said that He would require the life of man at the hand of every man's brother (Genesis 9:5). Manslaughter was recognized as the unpremeditated killing of a man, and provision was made for the manslayer to flee to the cities of refuge (Numbers 35:1-34). The

relatives had judged the surviving son to be worthy of death, and they were crying out for his execution. In the primitive society, the nearest relative of the slain man had the solemn responsibility of avenging the murder. Had the family carried out the law in this, they would have left this woman without any heirs. This is what she meant when she said that they would "quench my coal." The candle of life would flicker and go out as far as she and her husband were concerned. They would have neither name nor remainder on the earth.

6. *What was David's decision? 14:8*

The woman was sent away with David's promise that he would pass judgment in the matter. She understood that to mean that he would prevent the family from avenging her son's death. Although this was an unusual sentence, the woman was grateful for it; and she assumed full responsibility for it, leaving the king and his throne guiltless for suspending the normal processes of law in this case. David indicated to her that those who objected to his decision should be brought to him. Should the woman suffer any persecution on account of the decision, the culprit was to answer to David. The matter was fully discussed and brought to a satisfactory conclusion.

7. *What was the woman's final request? 14:13*

Having received her initial request from David the woman went on to show the inconsistency of David's conduct. David also had a son who was being sought by those who were the avengers of blood. Some of his subjects must have been calling for him to execute Absalom; and although he had not done this as yet, he had rendered no judgment in the case. The woman showed David that he was sparing her fictitious son; she could not see any reason why he should not spare Absalom.

8. *What was the woman's view of life? 14:14*

The woman was very philosophical about life and death. She knew that death was inevitable. She regarded man's

life as being very fragile, describing man as being "as water spilt on the ground." Once it has been spilled, of course, it cannot be gathered up again. She also believed that God was not any respecter of persons, and she did not understand why it would be legitimate for David to spare her son and not spare his son.

9. *Why did the woman call David an "angel of God?"*  
14:17

The Israelites had a very deep respect for their kings and all their national leaders. The fact that this woman and Mephibosheth (II Samuel 19:27) gave this title to David was not an indication of their having an unholy respect for David. Neither was it an indication of their considering him as being the angel of the covenant, the mediator of the blessings of Divine grace to the people of Israel. God had said that He would send His angel before Moses, and His angel did lead them through the wilderness (Exodus 14:19). This woman was not identifying David with that angel but looking to him as God's messenger and servant. She thought that he did have unnatural and unusual grace and ability.

10. *Why did David suspect Joab? 14:19*

In some way Joab had learned the king's mind in the matter of Absalom's exile. From day to day, he had the opportunity for conversations with him; and in some of these exchanges he could have expressed his view which would have been similar to that which he prompted the woman to express. The woman was honest and affirmed that Joab had instigated the entire affair. Once again, she was impressed with David's wisdom and said that it was as the wisdom of the "angel of God" (verse 20).

*David Recalls Absalom. 14:21-33*

21 And the king said unto Joab, Behold now, I have done this thing: go therefore, bring the young man Absalom again.

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22 And Joab fell to the ground on his face, and bowed himself, and thanked the king: and Joab said, Today thy servant knoweth that I have found grace in thy sight, my lord, O king, in that the king hath fulfilled the request of his servant.

23 So Joab arose and went to Geshur, and brought Absalom to Jerusalem.

24 And the king said, Let him turn to his own house, and let him not see my face. So Absalom returned to his own house, and saw not the king's face.

25 But in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him.

26 And when he polled his head, (for it was at every year's end that he polled *it*: because *the hair* was heavy on him, therefore he polled it:) he weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels after the king's weight.

27 And unto Absalom there were born three sons, and one daughter, whose name *was* Tamar: she was a woman of a fair countenance.

28 So Absalom dwelt two full years in Jerusalem, and saw not the king's face.

29 Therefore Absalom sent of Joab, to have sent him to the king; but he would not come to him: and when he sent again the second time, he would not come.

30 Therefore he said unto his servants, See Joab's field is near mine, and he hath barley there; go and set it on fire. And Absalom's servants set the field on fire.

31 Then Joab arose, and came to Absalom unto *his* house, and said unto him, Wherefore have thy servants set my field on fire?

32 And Absalom answered Joab, Behold, I sent unto thee, saying, Come hither, that I may send thee to the king, to say, Wherefore am I come from Geshur? *it had been* good for me *to have been* there still: now therefore



let me see the king's face; and if there be *any* iniquity in me, let him kill me.

33 So Joab came to the king, and told him: and when he had called for Absalom, he came to the king, and bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king: and the king kissed Absalom.

11. *What was David's final decision? 14:21*

Since David had already committed himself to the woman, he followed through by giving Joab the order to bring Absalom back to Jerusalem. Joab was grateful for this turn of events and expressed his thanks to the king. His profuse conversation about it revealed that he made this request to the king either before the coming of the woman or at least through her partitions.

12. *Why did David refuse to see Absalom? 14:24*

David was acting contrary to the letter of the Law. The Law stipulated that a man who had done what Absalom had done should be put to death. It was an overruling of the king which permitted him to live. David must have felt somewhat conscience-stricken about this and refused to see Absalom. He felt that it was enough that he was permitted to live without his being reinstated to his full rank in the king's house. Absalom was returned to his homeland; but he was not restored to the favor of the king, his father.

13. *What kind of man was Absalom? 14:25-27*

Absalom proved to be crafty, fearless, vengeful, murderous, strong-willed, and very vain. He had cunningly schemed to bring about Amnon's death and had fearlessly executed his plot. He harbored a hatred that cried out for revenge, until finally he achieved his ends, not even stopping at murder. He was a handsome man, there being none in all Israel so much to be praised as Absalom for

his beauty. No blemish was found in him; every feature was manly. An outstanding part of his person was his hair, which was exceedingly heavy; and he ceremoniously cut it every year. This shaving of his head at the year's end may have had some religious signification, as was true with the Nazarites (Numbers 6:5). The weight of his hair would be six pounds or three pounds according to whether the shekel was the sacred shekel or the royal shekel. He must have worn it as a sign of his manly power.

14. *When did Absalom finally come before the king?*  
14:28-33

Absalom was in exile for three years. He was in Jerusalem after his return for two years. In all, it had been five years since he last saw the king. Joab probably refused to come at Absalom's bidding, because he felt that he had done enough for him. Absalom forced Joab to come to him by burning Joab's barley field. His destructive action marked him as a man who would stop at nothing to gain his objective.

15. *Why did David finally agree to see Absalom?* 14:33

Only after Joab came to the king and told him of Absalom's actions and attitude did David agree to see the young man. Absalom had told Joab that he might as well have stayed with his grandfather in Geshur. He still did not know whether he was safe from the king's wrath, since the king had not agreed to see him. He wanted a final settlement in his case; and if there was iniquity in him, he was willing to go to the gallows to pay for his crime. When David learned of Absalom's extreme measures in setting Joab's field on fire and the gist of his conversation with him, he agreed to see him. David fully accepted Absalom and forgave him for killing Amnon. This was evident from his receiving him into his presence and kissing him when he saw him.

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CHAPTER 14 IN REVIEW

1. Who instituted proceedings to bring Absalom home? \_\_\_\_\_
2. From what city did he fetch a woman to aid him? \_\_\_\_\_
3. By what adjective is the woman described? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What prophet later came from the same town? \_\_\_\_\_
5. How many sons did the woman once have? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What happened to one? \_\_\_\_\_
7. What did the family want to do with the remaining son? \_\_\_\_\_
8. By what figure did the woman refer to her posterity? \_\_\_\_\_
9. By what title did the woman refer to David? \_\_\_\_\_
10. How many years did Absalom live in Jerusalem before he saw David again? \_\_\_\_\_

PART FOUR

ABSALOM'S  
REVOLT

15:1—19:43