

Healing the hurt of rape and abuse



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Rape is an unspeakable act reaching across time, space, and culture to affect millions of people throughout history. It can happen to anyone - even to the daughter of a powerful king.

The rape of a princess

The age-old story of Tamar's rape is hard to read especially when we are confronted with the description of the actual rape and the raw emotion exploding on the page. Yet this story is in the Bible, not only to show the corruption of David's household, but to show those who have been sexually assaulted that they are not alone in feeling shamed, unloved and abandoned.

Tamar was the daughter of King David. Her half-brother Amnon was passionately in love with her and constantly thought of ways to get her to love him. Then his friend Jonadab came up with a plan:

"Lie down on your bed and pretend to be sick. When your father comes to see you, ask him to send Tamar, so you can watch her cook something for you. Then she can serve you the food."

So Amnon went to bed and pretended to be sick. When the king came to see him, Amnon said, "Please, ask Tamar to come over. She can make some special bread while I watch, and then she can serve me the bread." [2 Samuel 13:5-6](#)

In a male dominated society where women had few rights, David thought nothing of ordering his daughter to do

his bidding and disregarding the custom of the time where a young girl was kept from meeting men: *"Go over to Amnon's house and prepare him some food."*

[2 Samuel 13:7b](#)

The horror of rape

When she got there, he was lying in bed. She mixed the dough, made the loaves, and baked them while he watched. Then she took the bread out of the pan and put it on his plate, but he refused to eat it.

Amnon said, "Send the servants out of the house." After they had gone, he said to Tamar, "Serve the food in my bedroom."

Tamar picked up the bread that she had made and brought it into Amnon's bedroom. But as she was taking it over to him, he grabbed her and said, "Come to bed with me!" [2 Samuel 13:8-11](#)

Tamar begs him not to shame her.

"No! Please don't force me! This sort of thing isn't done in Israel. It's too disgusting! Think of me. I'll be disgraced for ever! And think of yourself. Everyone in Israel will say you're nothing but a load of rubbish! Just ask the king, and he will let you marry me."

But Amnon would not listen to what she said. He was stronger than she was, so he overpowered her and raped her.

[2 Samuel 13:12-14](#)

After getting his way with her, Amnon turns his back on Tamar in disgust:

Then Amnon hated her even more than he had loved her before. So he told her, "Get up and get out!"

She said, "Don't send me away! That would be worse than what you have already done."

But Amnon would not listen. He called in his servant and said, "Throw this woman out and lock the door!"

2 Samuel 13:15-17

Tamar's life torn to shreds

As a young virgin, being forcibly raped, Tamar must have experienced severe physical pain. However, her shame was far greater than the pain of the rape.

Tamar tore the robe she was wearing and put ashes on her head. Then she covered her face with her hands and cried loudly as she walked away.

2 Samuel 13:19

A culture of silence

Tamar was denied justice. The seriousness of the rape is underplayed. She is told to keep it quiet and forget about it. Not only is her reputation in tatters, but her future is destroyed.

Tamar's brother Absalom said to her, "How could Amnon have done such a terrible thing to you! But since he's your brother, don't tell anyone what happened. Just try not to think about it."

2 Samuel 13:20a

Sexual abuse tears families apart

When King David heard what had happened, he was furious. And Absalom hated Amnon so much that, ... *On the day that Amnon raped Tamar, Absalom decided to kill him.*

2 Samuel 13:32c

Tamar soon moved into Absalom's house, but she was always sad and lonely.

2 Samuel 13:20b

She is never mentioned in the Bible again.

Healing the hurt

Prayer enables the power of God to come into a situation to heal the hurt and suffering of the victims and undo the bad touch that they felt at the time of the abuse.

*I cry like a swallow;
I mourn like a dove.
My eyes are red
from looking to you, LORD.
I am terribly abused.
Please come and help me.*

*Your words and your deeds
bring life to everyone,
including me.
Please make me healthy
and strong again.*

Isaiah 38:14,16

*He sent me to give them flowers
in place of their sorrow,
olive oil in place of tears,
and joyous praise
in place of broken hearts.*

Isaiah 61:3a

Prayer for rape survivors

Lord, I have been hurt and broken.
Heal me from the hurt. Restore me to wholeness. Amen

Rape Alert!

A study by Interpol has revealed that South Africa leads the world in rapes. A woman is raped in South Africa every 17 seconds. This does not include the number of child rape victims.

If you or someone close to you has been raped, or are at risk of being raped, get help from the Rape Crisis Centre or Life Line counsellor in your area.

***Scripture verses taken from the Contemporary English Version.**

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