

## Who was Amnon in the Bible?

Amnon was King David's firstborn son. His mother was Ahinoam. Amnon showed despicable character, an alarming lack of self-control, and great selfishness.

Amnon fell in love—or in lust—with his half-sister Tamar. She was the full sister of David's son Absalom, and the Bible says she was very beautiful (2 Samuel 13:1). Amnon was obsessed with the desire to sleep with her, and his obsession became so consuming that Amnon grew physically sick (verse 2).

Jonadab, David's nephew, was Amnon's adviser. He noted Amnon's depression and, being a shrewd man (2 Samuel 13:3), came up with a plan for Amnon to sate his desire to have Tamar for himself. Jonadab gave Amnon wicked advice: he advised Amnon to feign illness and request that Tamar come to his quarters to make him some food and feed him herself. This would provide the opportunity that Amnon desired. Amnon followed the counsel, and Tamar innocently came to Amnon's quarters to prepare some bread. When the food was ready, Amnon cleared his quarters of everyone except for Tamar and asked her to come into his bedroom to feed him. She did, and he grabbed her and said, "Come to bed with me, my sister" (verse 11).

Tamar refused Amnon's advances, calling his actions a "wicked thing" (2 Samuel 13:12). She tried to reason with him, pointing out the unlawfulness of his desire and that, if he took her virginity, she would bear a lifelong disgrace. She warned him that he would be counted among "the wicked fools in Israel" (verse 13). To buy time, Tamar told Amnon to request their father for her hand in marriage—such a marriage was unlawful and would not have been granted, but Tamar was clutching at straws. But Amnon did not heed her, and he proceeded to rape her (verse 14).

Immediately after the rape, Amnon was filled with hatred toward Tamar; in fact, “he hated her more than he had loved her” (2 Samuel 13:15). In all likelihood, Amnon knew what he had done was abhorrent. But instead of allowing himself to feel guilty, he turned his anger on Tamar. He ordered her out and had his servant bolt the door, ignoring Tamar’s pleas to not shame her in this manner. Tamar knew she was ruined, so she tore the robes that designated her as a virgin, put ashes on her head, and mourned loudly as she left.

Sadly, David, although furious at his son’s crime, did not punish Amnon (2 Samuel 13:21). But Absalom hated Amnon for what he had done to his sister and sought revenge. Two full years later, he devised a plan to move Amnon into a place of vulnerability. Absalom asked David and the princes to attend a sheep-shearing with him. David declined but allowed his sons to go with Absalom. When all the sons had gathered and were drinking together, Absalom ordered his men to kill Amnon in cold blood (verse 28). In fear for their lives, the rest of Absalom’s brothers fled back to the palace (verse 29).

While they were on their way, a false report saying that Absalom had killed all his brothers reached David. Distraught, David fell down in despair (2 Samuel 13:31). Jonadab appeared to inform the king that only Amnon had been killed, and Jonadab told him why: “This has been Absalom’s express intention ever since the day Amnon raped his sister Tamar” (verse 32). When the remainder of David’s sons reached the palace, they came to David and mourned with him. Absalom, meanwhile, fled to Geshur to escape punishment for his brother’s murder.

Although David eventually found consolation and wanted Absalom to return (2 Samuel

13:39), it was several years before the two met again. Sadly, however, the family had been irreparably torn apart by Amnon's and Absalom's actions. In time, Absalom tried to take his father's throne and was killed by David's army commander, Joab.