

Absalom had killed Amnon in revenge for the rape of his sister Tamar and then fled to Geshur. King David had not sent for Absalom to return. After three years, however, David longed to see Absalom again (2 Sam. 13:39).

JOAB'S PLAN (2 SAMUEL 14:1-11)

Joab, having served King David for two decades, knew David's heart was inclined towards Absalom (v. 1). Joab understood David's preference for indirect approaches and devised a story.

David was often moved by tender stories. For instance, when the prophet Nathan confronted him with a parable about a rich man taking a poor man's lamb (2 Samuel 12:1-7), David's anger led to his repentance. David's deep lamentation over Saul and Jonathan's deaths (2 Samuel 1:17-27) and his kindness to Mephibosheth, Jonathan's crippled son (2 Samuel 9:1-13), further show his deep emotional capacity.

Joab enlisted a wise woman from Tekoah to present a fabricated story to David. She claimed to be a widow with two sons, one having killed the other. Her family demanded the surviving son's life for vengeance. Her plea mirrored David's own situation with Absalom, stirring his compassion. David promised protection for her son, showing his sensitivity to a grieving mother's plight and his inclination to show mercy.

JOAB'S SECRET REVEALED (2 SAMUEL 14:12-20)

The woman, having received what she wanted, pressed her luck and asked to say one more thing (v. 12). Upon receiving permission, she criticized King David for not bringing Absalom back, suggesting it was a sin against Israel (v. 13). She implored him to bring Absalom home, arguing logically that life is too short to hold grudges (v. 14) and spiritually that God allows the banished to return to Him (v. 14).

Verse 14 highlights God's relentless efforts to bring back those estranged from Him. Stories in the Bible, such as the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32), Jonah (Jonah 1-4), and Peter's denial and restoration (John 21:15-19), exemplify God's pursuit and forgiveness.

In verses 15-20, the woman of Tekoah reveals that Joab orchestrated the entire scenario to persuade King David to reconcile with Absalom.

ABSALOM RETURNS (2 SAMUEL 14:21-27)

King David grants Joab's request to bring Absalom back to Jerusalem. Joab, grateful, bows and thanks David. Joab is likely grateful because he got what he wanted and the king didn't punish him.

Absalom returned to Jerusalem, but for unstated reasons, David did not meet with his son. Instead, he allowed Absalom to live in Jerusalem without seeing him.

No one in Israel was praised for beauty like Absalom. From head to toe, he had no blemish (v. 25). His hair was particularly notable, weighing about five pounds when cut yearly (v. 26). This striking appearance boosted his charisma and influence among the people.

The term "polled" in the context of verse 26 means "cut" or "trimmed." In historical and biblical usage, "poll" as a verb means to cut or clip, especially hair or wool. The etymology of "poll" traces back to Middle English, originating from the Old English word "polle," which referred to the top part of the head. Over time, "poll" came to be associated with cutting hair, particularly the hair on the head, thus extending to the act of trimming or cutting hair.

In modern English, the term "poll" is more commonly associated with voting or surveys, where it refers to the counting of heads or gathering of opinions. However, the older usage as seen in the Bible carries the meaning of cutting or trimming hair.

Cutting hair only once a year was not a common practice for young Jewish men during biblical times. It is mentioned in the context of Absalom to highlight his extraordinary and notable appearance, as well as his distinctiveness and perhaps even vanity. Most Jewish men would have adhered to more regular grooming practices, and specific religious vows—such as the Nazirite vow—sometimes included not cutting hair for a certain period, but these were exceptions rather than the norm.

Absalom also had three sons and a daughter named Tamar, who was described as a beautiful woman (v. 27).

DAVID AND ABSALOM RECONCILED (2 SAMUEL 14:28-33)

Absalom spent two years in Jerusalem without seeing his father, King David, face to face. Prior to that, he had lived in Geshur for three years after fleeing from Jerusalem.

Eventually, this situation upset Absalom, and his patience ran out. He had his servants set Joab's fields on fire, indicating that perhaps Joab wasn't providing him with much information about the issue or was dragging his feet. This act got Joab's attention, and Absalom lamented that he would have been better off in Geshur if he had known he would not be able to see David (v. 32). So Joab told David and pleaded with him, and David finally invited Absalom into his presence. Absalom is now back in good stead with David. ...but for how long?

CONCLUSION

The story of David and Absalom shows a father's reluctance to reconcile with his estranged son, unlike the parable of the prodigal son where the father eagerly welcomes his wayward child. David's hesitation highlights the challenges and emotional struggles in forgiveness and reconciliation.

The parable of the prodigal son powerfully depicts God's unconditional love and forgiveness. The father in the parable represents God, waiting patiently for the lost to return. Unlike David, who needed time to accept Absalom, God always welcomes us with open arms, regardless of our past.

This comparison reminds us of the incredible grace and mercy God extends to each of us. We can be thankful that, like the father in the parable, God is always watching and waiting for our return, ready to forgive and restore us to His family. His patience and love are boundless, offering us hope and assurance that no matter how far we stray, He is always there to welcome us back.