

OCTOBER 25TH, 2026

KINGDOM: WHAT A KING BEHOLDS

WHEN THE HOUSE FALLS APART

DEVOTIONAL

A five-day guided reading from 2 Samuel 13–14, where the trouble Nathan warned about comes home to David's own children. Written for someone who's heard this sermon — in the room or however you caught it since — and for someone who hasn't; you don't need the sermon to follow along. Read one day at a time.

BEFORE YOU START

This week's chapters tell the story of a young woman, a king's daughter, who is raped by her half brother, and of everyone around her who looked away. It's one of the most painful stories in the Bible, and I'm not going to hurry you through it. Read it slowly. Put it down when you need to.

If any of this is your story, or your family's, you don't have to carry it alone, and you get to decide when and to whom you tell it. You can reach us at **info@emcaz.org**, or write to Denny Harkins on our staff at **dennyh@emcaz.org**. If you need someone right now, at any hour, the National Sexual Assault Hotline is **800-656-4673** (or chat at **hotline.rainn.org**). If you're in danger, call **911**. And if a child is in danger now, tell someone who can act, today: call **911** or Arizona's child abuse hotline, **1-888-SOS-CHILD (1-888-767-2445)**.

DAY 1 — THE DOOR IS BOLTED

Read: 2 Samuel 13:1–17; Genesis 45:1–2

Start with where everybody is.

Amnon is in bed, pretending to be sick. His cousin Jonadab gave him the idea. David, the king and the father of them both, comes to visit, and Amnon asks for one thing: send my sister Tamar to cook for me. And David does.

> **6 So Amnon lay down and pretended to be ill. And when the king came to see him, Amnon said to the king, “Please let my sister Tamar come and make a couple of cakes in my sight, that I may eat from her hand.” 7 Then David sent home to Tamar, saying, “Go to your brother Amnon’s house and prepare food for him.” 8 So Tamar went to her brother Amnon’s house, where he was lying down. And she took dough and kneaded it and made cakes in his sight and baked the cakes. 9 And she took the pan and emptied it out before him, but he refused to eat. And Amnon said, “Send out everyone from me.” So everyone went out from him.**
>
> **2 Samuel 13:6–9 (ESV)**

Send out everyone from me. So everyone went out from him.

I keep picturing the people who walked out of that room. Servants, probably. Whoever was on duty in a prince's house. They did what they were told. They went out, and they were on the other side of a wall.

Here's something you can only see in the Hebrew. Amnon's order, *Send out everyone from me*, is word for word the order Joseph gives in Genesis 45.

> **1 Then Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him. He cried, “Make everyone go out from me.” So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. 2 And he wept aloud, so that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it.**
>
> **Genesis 45:1–2 (ESV)**

Same words. Joseph clears the room so he can finally tell his brothers the truth, and he weeps so loud the whole household of Pharaoh hears it. Amnon clears the room so nobody will hear anything at all.

What happens next, the text tells plainly in verses 11 through 14. Tamar says no, more than once, and the text says *he would not listen to her* (13:14). Then he hates her, and he has her thrown out.

> **[17] He called the young man who served him and said, "Put this woman out of my presence and bolt the door after her."**
>
> **2 Samuel 13:17 (ESV)**

There's no *woman* in the Hebrew. He just says, *this one.* Then the bolt slides home.

Now come back outside the door with me. I don't know what the servants heard. The text never says. Maybe nothing. Maybe something they decided not to have heard. What I do know is that a cleared room and a bolted door are both ways of making sure a sound doesn't travel.

Most of us have stood on the far side of some door. A family. An office. A hospital room. A police station. Something was happening in there, and we didn't know. Or we half knew and told ourselves it wasn't our business. I'm not saying that to pile guilt on you. I'm saying it because hearing starts right there, outside the door, with being willing to believe a sound when you hear one.

Reflect: Where are the doors in your life, the rooms you've been sent out of or chose to stay out of? Is there a sound you've been hearing and not listening to?

Pray: Lord, You hear what happens behind every door. Give me ears that don't wait for permission to hear. And for anyone who was on the other side of a door like this one, be near them today. Amen.

DAY 2 — CRYING ALOUD

Read: 2 Samuel 13:17–19; Genesis 37:3, 23, 31–32

The door is bolted. Tamar is outside it now, in the street.

> **[18] Now she was wearing a long robe with sleeves, for thus were the virgin daughters of the king dressed. So his servant put her out and bolted the door after her. [19] And Tamar put ashes on her head and tore the long robe that she wore. And she laid her hand on her head and went away, crying aloud as she went.**
>
> **2 Samuel 13:18–19 (ESV)**

Look at what she's wearing. *A long robe with sleeves.* The narrator stops to tell us that this is what the king's virgin daughters wore. It marked her. Everyone who saw it knew whose daughter she was.

In the Hebrew, only one other person in the whole Bible wears that robe, and it's Joseph. Most English Bibles call his *a robe of many colors*, but it's the same phrase. And the two stories handle the robe in opposite ways.

Joseph's brothers stripped his off him (Genesis 37:23). Then they did this:

> **[31] Then they took Joseph's robe and slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in the blood. [32] And they sent the robe of many colors and brought it to their father and said, "This we have found; please identify whether it is your son's robe or not."**
>
> **Genesis 37:31–32 (ESV)**

They used the robe to cover what they'd done. They dipped it in blood and handed their father a story.

Tamar tears her own.

She puts ashes on her head. She lays her hand on her head, an old sign of grief. And she goes, *crying aloud as she went.* Not a whisper. Not a closed door. Everybody else in these two chapters is going to try to keep this covered. She's the only one who doesn't. I love Tamar for that. She doesn't go quietly.

I want to be careful here, because her cry was hers to give. We aren't told a single word she said, and I'm not going to put words in her mouth. A cry like that carries. You can't walk through a city in a torn royal robe, with ashes on your head, crying aloud, and not be heard. So stay with the sound for a minute. If you'd been on that

street, what would you have done? Crossed to the other side? Waited to see if anyone else would go? Gone to her?

Hold on to one word, too: *ashes.* We'll come back to it on Day 5.

Reflect: When someone near you cries out, loudly or in the quieter ways people do, what's your first instinct: to move toward them, or to manage the noise?

Pray: Lord, You never once told the hurting to keep it down. Make me someone who moves toward the crying. Forgive me for the times I crossed the street. Amen.

DAY 3 — HOLD YOUR PEACE

Read: 2 Samuel 13:20–22, 32–33

Her brother Absalom is the first to speak to her.

> **[20] And her brother Absalom said to her, "Has Amnon your brother been with you? Now hold your peace, my sister. He is your brother; do not take this to heart." So Tamar lived, a desolate woman, in her brother Absalom's house. [21] When King David heard of all these things, he was very angry. [22] But Absalom spoke to Amnon neither good nor bad, for Absalom hated Amnon, because he had violated his sister Tamar.**
>
> **2 Samuel 13:20–22 (ESV)**

I want to be fair to Absalom. He calls her *my sister.* He takes her into his house. He clearly loves her. And then he says three things, and every one of them is about keeping it quiet. *Hold your peace … He is your brother; do not take this to heart.*

Some of you know those sentences. You've heard them at a kitchen table. *Let's not make this bigger than it is. Think about what this would do to the family. Just don't dwell on it.* They're usually said by people who love you. That's what makes them so hard to argue with.

Then there's David. *He was very angry.* And that's the whole verse. He doesn't go to his daughter. He doesn't say a word to his son. The text gives us nothing more.

And then Absalom goes quiet too, toward Amnon. Two full years of it, and underneath the quiet, hate.

Three silences, all in three verses. One put on Tamar. One kept by her father. One kept by her brother.

There's a fourth person who stays quiet, and you won't see him again until late in the chapter. When word comes that Absalom has had Amnon killed, it's Jonadab who explains it to the king:

> **[32] But Jonadab the son of Shimeah, David's brother, said, "Let not my lord suppose that they have killed all the young men, the king's sons, for Amnon alone is dead. For by the command of Absalom this has been determined from the day he violated his sister Tamar. [33] Now therefore let not my lord the king so take it to heart as to suppose that all the king's sons are dead, for Amnon alone is dead."**
>
> **2 Samuel 13:32–33 (ESV)**

Jonadab knew. *From the day he violated his sister Tamar.* He knew for two years, and the text records him saying nothing until after the murder. And now listen to his advice to the king: *let not my lord the king so take it to heart.*

It's the same advice Absalom gave Tamar. The Hebrew uses a different verb, but it's the same idiom: don't let this reach your heart. The same counsel turns up in two different mouths, and both times it's working to keep something from being felt.

So here's where I want you to sit today. The silence in this chapter is the kind other people put on someone: *hold your peace, do not take this to heart.* Left alone, it carries the hurt in the dark, and the hurt doesn't go anywhere. And if that silence was put on you, hear this: when you tell it, and to whom, is yours to decide. Whenever you're ready, and to whoever is safe.

Reflect: Have you ever said some version of *don't take it to heart* to someone who'd been hurt? What were you trying to protect? What might it have sounded like to listen instead?

Pray: Lord, forgive me for the times I asked someone to be quiet so I wouldn't have to feel it. Teach me to let other people's pain reach my heart. And for anyone who was told to hold their peace, give them people who will listen, when they're ready. Amen.

DAY 4 — TAMAR WAS THEIR SISTER

Read: 2 Samuel 13:20; 14:24–27; 1 Chronicles 3:1–9

The last thing chapter 13 tells us about Tamar is where she lived.

So Tamar lived, a desolate woman, in her brother Absalom's house (13:20).

Desolate is a word the Bible usually uses for land and cities that an army has gone through and left in ruins. It's the word here. And then the narrator turns away from her and doesn't come back.

Chapter 14 is a whole chapter about bringing someone home. Absalom ran after he had Amnon killed. Three years later Joab finally maneuvers him back to Jerusalem, and it's two more years before the king will see his face. It takes a staged story, a clever woman, and a burned barley field. At the end of the chapter the king kisses his son.

In all of that, nobody goes to Tamar. Nobody speaks her name to the king. Her name shows up exactly once in chapter 14, and not as hers.

> [27] **There were born to Absalom three sons, and one daughter whose name was Tamar. She was a beautiful woman.**
>
> **2 Samuel 14:27 (ESV)**

Absalom named his daughter Tamar.

I've gone back and forth on that verse. Was it love, a brother making sure his sister's name kept living in his house? Or was it a reminder that hurt, a name said every day over a wrong nobody ever put right? The text doesn't tell us. Maybe it was both. I'd rather leave it open than pretend to know.

Now jump ahead centuries. The books of Chronicles retell the story of David's kingdom, and they leave out almost all of this. No David and Bathsheba. No Amnon and Tamar. No Absalom's revolt. But in a list of David's sons in 1 Chronicles 3, after all the boys' names, there's one more line:

> [9] **All these were David's sons, besides the sons of the concubines, and Tamar was their sister.**
>
> **1 Chronicles 3:9 (ESV)**

And Tamar was their sister.

I can't tell you why the Chronicler kept that line. The people who know these books best don't offer a reason either, and I'm not going to invent one. But I notice that the story is gone and her name is still there. Whoever she was to her family, she was still somebody's sister, still one of David's children, still in the list.

From outside the door, this is one of the few things you can always do. You can keep saying a name. Not out loud to everyone, because someone else's story isn't yours to tell. But to God, who never forgot it.

Reflect: Is there someone whose story got folded into a family's silence, whose name you could keep bringing to God?

Pray: Lord, You know every name the world has gone quiet about. Keep them in Your list. Teach me to remember people the way You do, without exposing them, and without letting them disappear. Amen.

DAY 5 — HE HEARS

Read: Isaiah 53:3–4; Luke 22:37; Isaiah 61:1–4; Luke 4:16–21; Isaiah 54:1

For four days I've asked you to stand outside the door and listen. Today I want to turn around and speak to someone else.

Some of you reading this haven't been outside the door. You've been the one told to hold your peace. Maybe it was a long time ago. Maybe it isn't over. If that's you, this day is yours. Everyone else can read over your shoulder.

I want you to see who God sent.

> **3 He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. 4 Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.**
>
> **Isaiah 53:3–4 (ESV)**

As one from whom men hide their faces. Think about all the faces that turned away in David's house. The father who said nothing. The brother who told her to be still. The cousin who knew. A whole chapter about whose face the king would agree to see, with nobody going to see her. Isaiah describes a Servant who knows what it is to have faces hidden from Him. He's not a stranger to being looked away from.

And Jesus said this chapter was about Him. On the night He was arrested, He quoted it:

> **37 For I tell you that this Scripture must be fulfilled in me: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors.' For what is written about me has its fulfillment."**
>
> **Luke 22:37 (ESV)**

He was counted among the guilty, though He'd done nothing wrong. Hear that carefully. That doesn't mean He takes the side of the one who hurt you. He stood under the sin to carry it, and He stands beside your cry to hear it. He never calls it less than it was. You can't carry something you won't admit is there.

David heard and got angry and did nothing. This King hears, and He doesn't hide His face.

Now one more passage. When Jesus stood up in the synagogue in His hometown, the scroll He was handed was Isaiah, and He read from the opening lines of chapter 61 (Luke 4:16–19). Here's how that passage goes on:

> **1 The Spirit of the LORD GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; 2 to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; 3 to grant to those who mourn in Zion—to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified.**
>
> **Isaiah 61:1–3 (ESV)**

Remember the ashes from Day 2? It's the same Hebrew word here. *A beautiful headdress instead of ashes.* And in the next verse, *they shall raise up the former devastations*, from the same root as Tamar's *desolate.*

Then Jesus rolled up the scroll and sat down and said, *Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing* (Luke 4:21).

And a few chapters earlier, right after the Servant song we just read, Isaiah says this:

> **1 "Sing, O barren one, who did not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, you who have not been in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than the children of her who is married," says the LORD.**
>
> **Isaiah 54:1 (ESV)**

The desolate one. It's the same word that was used of Tamar in 13:20.

I need to be honest with you about what these verses do and don't say. They were first spoken to a people, to Zion, a whole city that had been ruined. They aren't a forecast of anyone's life. I'm not promising you a wedding

or children or a story that ties up neatly, and Isaiah isn't either. And I'm not going to tell you this worked out for Tamar. The text doesn't say what became of her, and I won't fill that in.

Here's what I will say. God has a word for people the world calls desolate, and He says it to them. Jesus read the opening of that very passage out loud and said it was being fulfilled in Him.

Nothing here asks you to say it didn't matter. It mattered. And nothing here asks you to shout it, either. He already knows. He heard it the first time.

If you want someone with skin on to hear it too, we'd be honored: **info@emcaz.org**, or **Denny Harkins** at **dennyh@emcaz.org**. At any hour, **800-656-4673**. In danger, **911**.

Reflect: If you've been the one told to be quiet, what would you want to say to the One who already heard it? If you've been outside the door all week, who might need you to hear them?

Pray: Jesus, You were looked away from, and You never look away. You heard what nobody else would hear. Hold what I can't put down. Give me, in Your time, a beautiful headdress instead of ashes. And don't let anyone tell me to be quiet in Your name. Amen.

For the Curious

This is the scholarship underneath the five days. You don't need any of it to read them. It's here for anyone who wants to see the work.

Scripture quotations are from the ESV. Hebrew definitions follow BDB (Brown, Driver and Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*) and HALOT (Koehler and Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*).

Day 1. *Send out*: Amnon's order at 2 Sam 13:9, *hôṣîʾû kol-ʾîš mēʿālay*, "make every man go out from me," is identical in the Hebrew to Joseph's at Gen 45:1 (checked in the Hebrew text). The verb is **go out — יָצָא — *yāṣāʾ* — go or come out; Hiphil, cause to go out, bring out (BDB).** *Violate*: **violate — עָנָה — *ʿānâ* — Piel, to do violence to, to rape a woman (HALOT, II ענה, Piel 2a)**, at 13:12, 14. At 13:17 Amnon's words are *šilḥû-nāʾ ʾet-zōʾt*, "send this one out"; the ESV's "woman" is not in the Hebrew. *Send*: **send — שָׁלַח — *šālaḥ* — Qal, to send, despatch; Piel, to let go, dismiss, send away (HALOT, I שלח).** The study makes no claim about what the servants heard; the text is silent.

Day 2. *Robe*: the phrase *kĕtōnet passîm* occurs only at Gen 37:3, 23, 32 and 2 Sam 13:18, 19; Joseph and Tamar are the only two people who wear it. In Gen 37 the brothers strip the robe (37:23) and dip it in blood (37:31); the garments torn in that chapter are Reuben's (37:29) and Jacob's (37:34). Tamar tears her own (13:19). *Ashes*: **ashes — אֵפֶר — *ʾēper* — ashes (BDB).** *Cry*: **cry — זָעַק — *zāʿaq* — cry, cry out, call; to one's aid, in need (BDB)**; at 13:19, *hālôk wĕzāʿāqâ*, "going and crying out." The text records no words of her cry, and none are supplied here. The hand on the head as a sign of grief is the ordinary reading (compare Jer 2:37).

Day 3. *Be silent*: **be silent — חָרַשׁ — *ḥārēš* — be silent; Hiphil, exhibit silence (BDB)**; at 13:20, *haḥărîšî*, a feminine imperative. *Put, set*: Absalom's *ʾal-tāšîtî ʾet-libbēk* (13:20) uses **set — שִׁית — *šît* — put, set; set one's mind to, give heed (BDB)**; Jonadab's *ʾal-yāśēm … ʾel-libbô* (13:33) uses **put — שׂוּם — *śûm* — put, place, set (BDB).** The idiom is shared; the verbs differ (checked in the Hebrew text). That Jonadab knew from the day of the rape is his own statement at 13:32. The three silences of 13:20–22 are read from the text.

Day 4. *Desolate*: at 13:20, *šōmēmâ*, which BDB files under the adjective **devastated — שָׁמֵם — *šāmēm* — devastated (BDB p. 1031)**; the related verb is used of lands and cities laid waste (BDB p. 1030). 1 Chr 3:9 reads *wĕtāmār ʾăḥôtām*, "and Tamar was their sister." Chronicles has no parallel to 2 Sam 13–20. The two standard commentaries on that point give no reason for the omission of this story: Sara Japhet, *I & II Chronicles*, Old

Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), on 1 Chr 3:9 and 20:1–3; Gary N. Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1–9*, Anchor Bible 12 (New York: Doubleday, 2004), on 3:9, which traces the line to 2 Sam 13:1. The name of Absalom's daughter (14:27) is read by some commentators as a memorial and by others as a lasting hurt; both are inferences from the same silence, and the study holds both.

Day 5. *Hide*: Isa 53:3, *ûkĕmastēr pānîm mimmennû*; *mastēr* occurs only here and shares the root *str* with *bassēter*, "secretly," at 2 Sam 12:12. The shared vocabulary between Isa 53 and 2 Sam 12–14 is the editor's own observation from the concordance; Isaiah 53 does not allude to 2 Samuel 13–14. *Ashes and headdress*: Isa 61:3, *pĕʾēr taḥat ʾēper*; **headdress — פְּאֵר — *pĕʾēr* — head-dress, turban (BDB).** *Devastations*: Isa 61:4, *šōmĕmôt*, from **be desolated — שָׁמֵם — *šāmēm* — be desolated, appalled (BDB p. 1030)**; the same root as 13:20, filed by BDB under the verb rather than the adjective. *The desolate one*: Isa 54:1, *šômēmâ*, the same word in the same form as 13:20 (written with an extra vowel letter in Isaiah); David Toshio Tsumura, *The Second Book of Samuel*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019), on 13:20, compares Isa 54:1. Isa 54 and Isa 61 are addressed to Zion. Luke 4:18–19 quotes Isa 61:1–2 and stops before the line about ashes; the study does not say Jesus read 61:3 aloud. Luke 22:37 quotes Isa 53:12. Reading Isa 61 and 54 here is the study's own move and is not a claim about what happened to Tamar.