
2SAMUEL 14: 1 Now Joab the son of Zeruah perceived that the king's heart was toward Absalom.

A woman of Tekoah, by the advice of Joab, comes to the king; and by a fictitious story persuades him to recall Absalom, vv. 1-20. Joab is permitted to go to Geshur, and bring Absalom from thence, 2Sam 14:21-23. Absalom comes to Jerusalem to his own house, but is forbidden to see the king's face, 2Sam 14:24. An account of Absalom's beauty, and the extraordinary weight of his hair, 2Sam 14:25, 2Sam 14:26. His children, 2Sam 14:27. He strives to regain the king's favor, and employs Joab as an intercessor, 2Sam 14:28-32. David is reconciled to him, 2Sam 14:33.

2SAMUEL 14: 2 Joab sent to Tekoa, and fetched there a wise woman, and said to her, "Please act like a mourner, and put on mourning clothing, please, and don't anoint yourself with oil, but be as a woman who has mourned a long time for the dead.

Verse 2

Joab sent to Tekoah - Tekoah, according to St. Jerome, was a little city in the tribe of Judah, about twelve miles from Jerusalem.

There are several circumstances relative to this woman and her case which deserve to be noticed: -

1. She was a widow, and therefore her condition of life was the better calculated to excite compassion.
 2. She lived at some distance from Jerusalem, which rendered the case difficult to be readily inquired into; and consequently there was the less danger of detection.
 3. She was advanced in years, as Josephus says, that her application might have the more weight.
 4. She put on mourning, to heighten the idea of distress.
 5. She framed a case similar to that in which David stood, in order to convince him of the reasonableness of sparing Absalom.
 6. She did not make the similitude too plain and visible, lest the king should see her intention before she had obtained a grant of pardon. Thus her circumstances, her mournful tale, her widow's needs, her aged person, and her impressive manner, all combined to make one united impression on the king's heart. We need not wonder at her success. See Bishop Patrick.
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2SAMUEL 14: 3 Go in to the king, and speak like this to him." So Joab put the words in her mouth.

2SAMUEL 14: 4 When the woman of Tekoa spoke to the king, she fell on her face to the ground, showed respect, and said, "Help, O king!"

2SAMUEL 14: 5 The king said to her, "What ails you?" She answered, "Truly I am a widow, and my husband is dead.

Verse 5

I am indeed a widow woman - It is very possible that the principal facts mentioned here were real, and that Joab found out a person whose circumstances bore a near resemblance to that which he wished to represent.

2SAMUEL 14: 6 Your handmaid had two sons, and they both fought together in the field, and there was no one to part them, but the one struck the other, and killed him.

2SAMUEL 14: 7 Behold, the whole family has risen against your handmaid, and they say, 'Deliver him who struck his brother, that we may kill him for the life of his brother whom he killed, and so destroy the heir also.' Thus they would quench my coal which is left, and would leave to my husband neither name nor remainder on the surface of the earth."

Verse 7

The whole family is risen - They took on them the part of the avenger of blood; the nearest akin to the murdered person having a right to slay the murderer.

They shall quench my coal which is left - A man and his descendants or successors are often termed in Scripture a lamp or light. So, 2Sam 21:17, the men of David said, when they swore that he should no more go out with them to battle, That thou Quench not the Light of Israel. See also Psa 132:17. And to raise up a lamp to a person signifies his having a posterity to continue his name and family upon the earth: thus, quench my coal that is left means destroying all hope of posterity, and extinguishing the family from among the people. The heathens made use of the same similitude. The few persons who survived the deluge of Deucalion are termed ζῶπυρα living coals, because by them the vital flame of the human race was to be rekindled on the earth.

2SAMUEL 14: 8 The king said to the woman, "Go to your house, and I will give a command concerning you."

Verse 8

I will give charge concerning thee - This would not do, it was too distant; and she could not by it bring her business to a conclusion: so she proceeds: -

2SAMUEL 14: 9 The woman of Tekoa said to 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."

Verse 9

The iniquity be on me - She intimates that, if the king should suppose that the not bringing the offender to the assigned punishment might reflect on the administration of justice in the land, she

was willing that all blame should attach to her and her family, and the king and his throne be guiltless.

2SAMUEL 14: 10 The king said, "Whoever says anything to you, bring him to me, and he shall not touch you any more."

Verse 10

Whosoever saith aught unto thee - Neither did this bring the matter to such a bearing that she could come to her conclusion, which was, to get the king pledged by a solemn promise that all proceedings relative to the case should be stopped.

2SAMUEL 14: 11 Then she said, "Please let the king remember the LORD your God, that the avenger of blood destroy not any more, lest they destroy my son."

He said, "As the LORD lives, not one hair of your son shall fall to the earth."

Verse 11

Let the king remember the Lord thy God - Consider that when God is earnestly requested to show mercy, he does it in the promptest manner; he does not wait till the case is hopeless: the danger to which my son is exposed is imminent; if the king do not decide the business instantly, it may be too late.

And he said, As the Lord liveth - Thus he binds himself by a most solemn promise and oath; and this is what the woman wanted to extort.

2SAMUEL 14: 12 Then the woman said, "Please let your handmaid speak a word to my lord the king." He said, "Say on."

2SAMUEL 14: 13 The woman said, "Why then have you devised such a thing against the people of God? For in speaking this word the king is as one who is guilty, in that the king does not bring home again his banished one.

Verse 13

Wherefore then hast thou thought such a thing - The woman, having now got the king's promise confirmed by all oath, that her son should not suffer for the murder of his brother, comes immediately to her conclusion: Is not the king to blame? Does he now act a consistent part? He is willing to pardon the meanest of his subjects the murder of a brother at the instance of a poor widow, and he is not willing to pardon his son Absalom, whose restoration to favor is the desire of the whole nation. Is that clemency to be refused to the king's son, the hope of the nation and heir to the throne, which is shown to a private individual, whose death or life can only be of consequence to one family? Why, therefore, dost thou not bring back thy banished child?

2SAMUEL 14: 14 For we must die, and are like water split on the ground, which can't be gathered up again; neither does God take away life, but devises means, that he who is banished not be an outcast from him.

Verse 14

For we must needs die - Whatever is done must be done quickly; all must die; God has not exempted any person from this common lot. Though Amnon be dead, yet the death of Absalom cannot bring him to life, nor repair this loss. Besides, for his crime, he justly deserved to die; and thou, in this case didst not administer justice. Horrible as this fratricide is, it is a pardonable case: the crime of Amnon was the most flagitious; and the offense to Absalom, the ruin of his beloved sister, indescribably great. Seeing, then, that the thing is so, and that Amnon can be no more recalled to life than water spilt upon the ground can be gathered up again; and that God, whose vicegerent thou art, and whose example of clemency as well as justice thou art called to imitate, devises means that those who were banished from him by sin and transgression, may not be finally expelled from his mercy and his kingdom; restore thy son to favor, and pardon his crime, as thou hast promised to restore my son, and the Lord thy God will be with thee. This is the sum and sense of the woman's argument.

The argument contained in this 14th verse is very elegant, and powerfully persuasive; but one clause of it has been variously understood, Neither doth God respect any person; the Hebrew is, אלהים נפש לא יקח וְיִסַּא אֱלֹהִים נֶפֶשׁ, "And God doth not take away the soul." The Septuagint has it, Καὶ ληψεται ὁ Θεὸς τὴν ψυχὴν; And God will receive the soul. This intimates that, after human life is ended, the soul has a state of separate existence with God. This was certainly the opinion of these translators, and was the opinion of the ancient Jews, at least three hundred years before the incarnation; about which time this translation was made. The Vulgate has, Nec volt Deus perire animam, "Nor does God will the destruction of the soul." God is not the author of death; neither hath he pleasure in the destruction of the living; imitate him; pardon and recall thy son.

2SAMUEL 14: 15 Now therefore seeing that I have come to speak this word to my lord the king, it is because the people have made me afraid: and your handmaid said, 'I will now speak to the king; it may be that the king will perform the request of his servant.'

2SAMUEL 14: 16 For the king will hear, to deliver his servant out of the hand of the man who would destroy me and my son together out of the inheritance of God.

2SAMUEL 14: 17 Then your handmaid said, 'Please let the word of my lord the king bring rest; for as an angel of God, so is my lord the king to discern good and bad. May the LORD, your God, be with you.'

2SAMUEL 14: 18 Then the king answered the woman, "Please don't hide anything from me that I ask you." The woman said, "Let my lord the king now speak."

2SAMUEL 14: 19 The king said, "Is the hand of Joab with you in all this?" The woman answered, "As your soul lives, my lord the king, no one can turn to the right hand or to the left from anything that my lord the king has spoken; for your servant Joab, he urged me, and he put all these words in the mouth of your handmaid;

2SAMUEL 14: 20 to change the face of the matter has your servant Joab done this thing. My lord is wise, according to the wisdom of an angel of God, to know all things that are in the earth.”

Verse 20

According to the wisdom of an angel of God - This is quite in the style of Asiatic flattery. A European is often addressed, "Saheb can do every thing; we can do nothing; none can prevent the execution of Saheb's commands; Saheb is God." See Ward.

2SAMUEL 14: 21 The king said to Joab, “Behold now, I have done this thing. Go therefore, bring the young man Absalom back.”

Verse 21

And the king said unto Joab - It appears that Joab was present at the time when the woman was in conference with the king, and no doubt others of David's courtiers or officers were there also.

2SAMUEL 14: 22 Joab fell to the ground on his face, showed respect, and blessed the king. Joab said, “Today your servant knows that I have found favour in your sight, my lord, king, in that the king has performed the request of his servant.”

2SAMUEL 14: 23 So Joab arose and went to Geshur, and brought Absalom to Jerusalem.

2SAMUEL 14: 24 The king said, “Let him return to his own house, but let him not see my face.” So Absalom returned to his own house, and didn't see the king's face.

Verse 24

Let him not see my face - He would not at once restore him to favor, though he had now remitted his crime; so that he should not die for it. It was highly proper to show this detestation of the crime, and respect for justice.

2SAMUEL 14: 25 Now in all Israel there was no one 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 defect in him.

Verse 25

None to be so much praised as Absalom - It was probably his personal beauty that caused the people to interest themselves so much in his behalf; for the great mass of the public is ever caught and led by outward appearances.

There was no blemish in him - He was perfect and regular in all his features, and in all his proportions.

2SAMUEL 14: 26 When he cut the hair of his head (now it was at every year's end that he cut it; because it was heavy on him, therefore he cut it); he weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels, after the king's weight.

Verse 26

When he polled his head - Not at any particular period, but when the hair became too heavy for him. On this account of the extraordinary weight of Absalom's hair, see the observations at the end of this chapter, 2Sam 14:30 (note).

2SAMUEL 14: 27 To Absalom there were born three sons, and one daughter, whose name was Tamar: she was a woman of a beautiful face.

Verse 27

Unto Absalom there were born - These children did not survive him; see 2Sam 18:18.

Tamar - The Septuagint adds, And she became the wife of Roboam, the son of Solomon, and bare to him Abia; see Mat 1:7. Josephus says the same. This addition is not found in the other versions.

2SAMUEL 14: 28 Absalom lived two full years in Jerusalem; and he didn't see the king's face.

2SAMUEL 14: 29 Then Absalom sent for Joab, to send him to the king; but he would not come to him: and he sent again a second time, but he would not come.

2SAMUEL 14: 30 Therefore he said to his servants, "Behold, Joab's field is near mine, and he has barley there. Go and set it on fire." Absalom's servants set the field on fire.

Verse 30

Go and set it on fire - This was strange conduct, but it had the desired effect. He had not used his influence to get Absalom to court; now he uses it, and succeeds.

Additional observations on 2Sam 14:26 : - "And at every year's end, he (Absalom) polled his head; and he weighed the hair at two hundred shekels."

The very learned Bochart has written a dissertation on this subject (vide Bocharti Opera, vol. iii., col. 883, edit. Lugd. 1692) in a letter to his friend M. Faulkell. I shall give the substance in what follows.

There is nothing more likely than that corruptions in the Scripture numerals have taken place. Budaeus de Asse (lib. ii., p. 49 and 51, also lib. iii., p. 67 etc). complains loudly of this.

This might easily have happened, as in former times the numbers in the sacred writings appear to have been expressed by single letters. The letter Ϟ resh stands for two hundred, and might in this place be easily mistaken for Ϛ dalet which signifies four; but this may be thought to be too little, as

it would not amount to more than a quarter of a pound; yet, if the two hundred shekels be taken in the amount will be utterly incredible; for Josephus says, (*Antiq. lib. vii., cap. 8*), Σικλους διακοσιους, οὔτοι δε εἰσι πεντε μναι, i.e., "Two hundred shekels make five minae," and in *lib. xiv., cap. 12*. he says, Ἡ δε μνα παρ' ἡμιν ἰσχει λιτρας β' και ημισυ; "And a mina with us (i.e., the Jews) weighs two pounds and a half." This calculation makes Absalom's hair weigh twelve pounds and a half! *Credat Judaeus Apella!*

Indeed, the same person tells us that the hair of Absalom was so thick, etc., ὡς μολις αυτην ἡμεραις αποκειρειν οκτω, "that eight days were scarcely sufficient to cut it off in!" This is rabbinism, with a witness.

Epiphanius, in his treatise *De Ponderibus et Mensuris*, casts much more light on this place, where he says, Σικλος ὁ λεγεται και κοδραντης τεταρτον μεν εστι της ουγκιας, ἡμισυ δε του στατηρος, δυο δραχμας εχων; "A shekel, (i.e., a common or king's shekel, equal to half a shekel of the sanctuary), which is called also a quarter, is the fourth part of an ounce, or half a stater; which is about two drachms." This computation seems very just, as the half-shekel, (i.e., of the sanctuary), *Exo 30:13*, which the Lord commanded the children of Israel to give as an offering for their souls, is expressly called in *Mat 17:24*, το διδραχμον, "two drachms:" and our Lord wrought a miracle to pay this, which the Romans then exacted by way of tribute: and Peter took out of the fish's mouth a stater, which contained exactly four drachms or one shekel, (of the sanctuary), the tribute money for our Lord and himself.

The king's shekel was about the fourth part of an ounce, according to what Epiphanius says above; and Hesychius says the same: Δυναται δε ὁ σικλος δυο δραχμας Αττικας; "A shekel is equal to, or worth, two Attic drachms." The whole amount, therefore, of the two hundred shekels is about fifty ounces, which make four pounds two ounces, Troy weight, or three pounds two ounces, Avoirdupois. This need not, says my learned author, be accounted incredible, especially as abundance of oil and ointments were used by the ancients in dressing their heads; as is evident, not only from many places in the Greek and Roman writers, but also from several places in the sacred writings. See *Psa 23:5; Ecc 9:8; Mat 6:17*.

Josephus also informs us that the Jews not only used ointments, but that they put gold dust in their hair, that it might flame in the sun; and this they might do in considerable quantities, as gold was so plentiful among them. I must own I have known an instance that makes much for Bochart's argument: an officer, who had upwards of two pounds of powder and ointments put on his head daily, whose hair did not weigh a fourth part of that weight. And Absalom, being exceedingly vain, might be supposed to make a very extensive use of these things. There are some, however, who endeavor to solve the difficulty by understanding *לָקַח* shakal to mean rather the value than the weight.

Bochart concludes this elaborate dissertation, in which he appears to have ransacked all the Hebrew, Greek, and Roman authors for proofs of his opinion, by exhorting his friend in these words of Horace: - *Si quid novisti rectius istis,*

Candidus imperti; si non, his utere mecum.

To me the above is quite unsatisfactory; and, with due deference to so great a character, I think I have found out something better.

I believe the text is not here in its original form; and that a mistake has crept into the numeral letters. I imagine that *ל* lamed, Thirty, was first written; which, in process of time, became changed

for ר resh, Two Hundred, which might easily have happened from the similarity of the letters. But if this be supposed to be too little, (which I think it is not), being only seven ounces and a half in the course of a year; let it be observed that the sacred text does not limit it to that quantity of time, for מִקֵּץ יָמִים לְיָמִים mikkets yamim laiyamim signifies literally, "From the end of days to days;" which Jonathan properly renders, מִזְמַן עֵדֶן לְעֵדֶן mizzeman iddan leiddan, "at proper or convenient times," viz., when it grew too long or weighty, which it might be several times in the year. Besides, this was not all his hair; for his head was not shaved but polled, i.e., the redundancy cut off.

But how was it probable that these two numerals should be interchanged? Thus; if the upper stroke of the ל lamed were but a little impaired, as it frequently is both in MSS. and printed books, it might be very easily taken for ר resh, and the remains of the upper part of the lamed might be mistaken for the stroke over the ר, which makes it the character of two hundred.

But how could מֵאָתַיִם mathayim, two hundred, in the text, be put in the place of שְׁלוֹשִׁים sheloshim, thirty? Very easily, when the numbers became expressed by words at length instead of numeral letters.

The common reading of the text appears to me irreconcilable with truth; and I humbly hope that what I have offered above solves every difficulty, and fully accounts for all that the sacred historian speaks of this vain-comely lad. Verse 27 "Absalom had a daughter, whose name was Tamar."

2SAMUEL 14: 31 Then Joab arose, and came to Absalom to his house, and said to him, "Why have your servants set my field on fire?"

2SAMUEL 14: 32 Absalom answered Joab, "Behold, I sent to you, saying, 'Come here, that I may send you to the king, to say, 'Why have I come from Geshur? It would be better for me to be there still. Now therefore let me see the king's face; and if there is iniquity in me, let him kill me.'""

2SAMUEL 14: 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.
