

Iconoclastic Arrogance, 2 Samuel 13:21 cp./w the Septuagint

2 Samuel 13:21 - Now when King David heard all these things he became extremely angry.

This one sentence is all that appears in the three major English translations. There is apparently something missing which is very important to the evaluation of this passage.

The Masoretes [Mas-ah-reeets] were Jewish scholars who from about the 6th to 10th centuries A.D. labored at Talmudic academies in Babylonia and Palestine to reproduce, as far as possible, the original text of the Hebrew Old Testament. The resultant Masoretic Text was the manuscript used by those who translated the Hebrew into the English of the King James Version.

A much more reliable manuscript is the Septuagint which dates back to the 3rd century [280] B.C. This is the earliest Greek translation of the Old Testament from the original Hebrew and was accomplished by 70 [LXX] Jewish scholars of the day. The Septuagint [LXX: the Seventy] adds the following sentence to 2 Samuel 13:21:

He [David] did not trouble the spirit of Amnon his son however because he loved him for he was his firstborn.

This quotation is also found in:

Josephus, Flavius. Book 7, chap. 8, par. 2 in Antiquities of the Jews. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston; p. 219b:

When David his father knew this, he was grieved at the actions of Amnon; but because he had an extraordinary affection for him, for he was his eldest son, he was compelled not to afflict him.

Apparently both the Seventy and Josephus copied this sentence from the same source—the original ancient Hebrew text, or a copy considered by both to be authentic. This conclusion does not verify that this “*missing sentence*” is in fact a part of the original text. It could have been a marginal gloss which found its way into subsequent copies of the Hebrew manuscripts. However, these sources, which appeared centuries before the Masoretic Text, indicate that Jewish scholars and historians considered the sentence to be a part of the original text.

A very renowned and respected theologian, Dr. Merrill F. Unger, professor at Dallas Theological Seminary in its salad days, makes the same assumption in his:

Unger, Merrill F. Unger’s Commentary on the Old Testament. Vol. 1. Chicago: Moody Press, 1981; p. 430b:

David showed his weakness and leniency because of his own failures and his giving in to the lusts of the flesh. He was very angry, and the Greek adds, “But he vexed not the spirit of Amnon, his son, because he loved him, because he was his firstborn.”

And so, with all this in view, we wind up with the following corrected translation:

2 Samuel 13:21 - Now when King David heard all these things he became extremely angry. ([LXX]: But he did not trouble the life of Amnon his son because he loved him and because he was the firstborn.)