

2ND SAMUEL

Week 17, chapters 11 and 12

We are about halfway through 2nd Samuel chapter 11, the story of David and Bathsheba. When we last met David had summoned Bathsheba's husband, **Uriyah**, from the battlefield in the area of Rabbah and told him to come immediately to Yerushalayim. **Uriyah** was a key military leader in David's army. In 2nd Samuel 23 **Uriyah** is listed as one of 30 **gibborim**, mighty men of Israel, so he was a senior military officer who would have been well-known to David if not most of Israel. This was not some obscure rank-and-file army officer. In fact, there is evidence in later chapters that Bathsheba's father **Eilam** may have been a high ranking civilian official in David's court. This would account for Uriyah and Bathsheba's residence being inside the walls of the City of David, a most prestigious location.

David had taken advantage of **Uriyah's** absence to seduce his beautiful young wife, Bathsheba. While in and of itself a risky thing to do, complications set in around 5 or 6 weeks later when Bathsheba sent word to David that she was now pregnant. David's political self-preservation instincts kicked in and so he began to devise a means to cover-up his despicable act. His solution was to find an excuse to get **Uriyah** to come home immediately, go to bed with his wife before there were any outward signs that she was carrying David's child, and then when her pregnancy became known it would appear to everyone that the child was **Uriyah's**.

The problem was that Uriyah wasn't co-operating. At least at first, **Uriyah** wasn't quite sure what the matter was that would prompt his king to suddenly recall him from the battlefield in the midst of a siege. In fact no reason whatsoever given by David to Uriyah is recorded and so we can reasonably speculate that none was put forward. Thus when Bathsheba's husband arrives to the City of David to report to the king, David merely inquires about Joab (the commanding general who is also David's nephew), the overall state of the battle, and the well-being of the Israelite soldiers. **Uriyah** dutifully answers his king's questions and is a bit taken aback when David suggests that he go home to have some time with his wife. He assumes that the king just hasn't gotten around to the important reason that brought Uriyah here so unexpectedly. Being a faithful officer in the Israelite army, bound in honor to his men and to Israel's national good, he chooses to stay readily available at the palace with the other men who are in service to the king as he waits for David to ask of him whatever it is that was so important as to have him disengage from battle and rush to Yerushalayim.

But after a couple of failed attempts by David to get **Uriyah** to go home, David's increasing insistence upon it is arousing suspicion especially since David keeps suggesting that **Uriyah** consort with his wife. The ancient Sages say that Uriyah sensed that something was not right and that something may have transpired between David and Bathsheba. Thus Uriyah invoked his military duty and patriotism as a reason to refuse to go home (therefore thwarting David's plan). Whether this was in intentional effort to sidestep King David's orders, or merely the behavior of a man displaying the highest level of faithfulness and being obedient to his conscience, is debatable.

But David would not be deterred. If **Uriyah** would not become a willing dupe to the cover-up then there was no choice but to remove him from the equation altogether. Let's pick up there in our story.

RE-READ 2ND SAMUEL 11: 14 – end

A couple of lessons ago I explained that Judaism turns this story on its head and makes David the hero and **Uriyah** the bad guy in order that David fulfills their view as a near perfect human who possesses every positive attribute of the Messiah. Thus **Uriyah's** refusal to obey David and go home to his wife and have sex with her is viewed as insubordination and rebellion even though by now Bathsheba's husband had a strong suspicion about what might have occurred. The reality is obviously otherwise. While indeed **Uriyah**, the battle-hardened soldier and intelligent military officer, probably smelled a rat everything he did displayed a great faithfulness to the king and to the God of Israel. In fact, what comes next paints **Uriyah** as either the most amazingly loyal of troops or the most naïve and there can be no doubt that he is the former rather than the latter.

In verse 14 David wrote a message for **Uriyah** to take with him back to the siege and to give to **Yo'av**. **Uriyah** is essentially carrying with him his own death warrant. And yet the irony is that the homicidal and adulterous David fully understands that **Uriyah** is so trustworthy and dedicated there is no reason to wonder if he might open the message and read it. To be sure the means of such communication was a scroll with a wax seal affixed that made tampering with it obvious. Nonetheless **Uriyah** could have devised any number of ways to view the contents, or offer a solid excuse as to why it had been opened, should what was inside turn out to be benign. On other hand, such a scroll could be easily "lost" and never delivered to Joab

if **Uriyah**'s suspicions proved true. **Uriyah** could even have chosen to defect to some other nation if he confirmed David's intentions to have him eliminated.

The contents of the letter are chilling. David knows that his seduction of Bathsheba will become public, and that he has no chance of pinning Bathsheba's pregnancy on her husband because the entire royal court witnessed Uriyah doggedly refusing to leave the palace. So now David compounds his adultery with conspiracy to commit murder. By the Law of Moses both adultery and murder require capital punishment. Of course, David is the king and there is absolutely no way that he will suffer such consequences at the hand of men. So David is by no means attempting to save his own life by his actions; rather this all about politics and sexual lust (something that has gone hand-in-hand since time immemorial because the common denominator for both is the desire for power).

Now as cold-blooded as are David's instructions to have **Uriyah** killed, so they are equally as improbable and clumsy. One can only imagine **Yo'av** opening the scroll, reading the royal order, and thinking that his uncle must be losing his grip because the instructions are fanciful if not delusional. David tells **Yo'av** to have **Uriyah** sent to the front of the fighting and then have all the men suddenly pull back and abandon him, that way the enemy can easily kill him. Joab knew that this was impossible. First of all, **Uriyah** himself commanded the troops. Second, what intelligent, experienced and aware soldier would simply stand there and allow himself to be left behind as the others suddenly left. But Joab is himself a consummate political animal, a family member of David's, and so keeping his high ranking position is job one. So he fully understands that while David's prescribed method is absurd, the intent is unambiguous: get **Uriyah** killed by the enemy so that it appears that it was just another sad battlefield death. And Joab coldly calculates the best way to accomplish that without regard to the morality of the act.

In order to give David's plan some credibility, verses 16 and 17 explain how Joab accomplished the king's wishes. Knowing that if you're going to make an omelet you'll have to break a few eggs, Joab sends **Uriyah** along with what would have been some of **Uriyah's** men to where the fighting was always the most dangerous during a siege: right next to the city walls. Several Israelite troops were killed by the Ammonites, along with **Uriyah**; mission accomplished. And, according to the Rabbis, justice was served because David was legally entitled to have **Uriyah** put to death because he had been disrespectful by not obeying David to go home and have sex with Bathsheba. I don't think I need to spend any time disputing such a hopelessly ill-conceived claim.

This might be a good time to pause a moment and talk about something that we're all familiar

with: dutifully following orders no matter how illegitimate or immoral they might be. And then when confronted with the dastardly consequences putting up the defense that we were just “doing our job” and thus ought to be held immune by God and men. The reality is that in that situation, in God’s view we are nothing less than co-conspirators to intentional wrong-doing against Him.

Such a thing can take many subtle forms; Joab’s was classic. But since we are currently in the political silly-season another good example would be the outright lies and distortions hurled by one opponent towards the other in hopes of winning an election. Or the pronouncement of a litany of false promises that the politician has no intentions of keeping (with victory as the same hoped-for outcome). But of course the candidate for office invariably has a highly paid team behind him who advises and creates the narrative and the advertising that puts forth those falsehoods. What is their rationale for avoiding responsibility? “It’s my job”. It’s just part of the process. It’s usual and customary and merely what I was hired to do. We all know that politicians don’t tell the truth, have one face for the public and another behind closed doors, so for them distorting or withholding the truth is just a daily part of their profession and therefore ought not be seen as wrong or criminal or even as indicative of their character. So the person who aids them must be even more innocent.

How about the highly paid corporate accountant who is instructed by upper management to manipulate numbers or make falsified reports even though he knows full well it is full of intended inaccuracies? What is his excuse for complying? I’m innocent because I just did what I was told to do. It’s not my job to judge my boss. I could lose my job if I didn’t do it.

How about the real estate agent that helps his client hide serious defects in the property he is selling to an unwitting buyer who would never complete the sale if he found out? Or a lawyer who is given the legal right to know with certainty that his client is guilty as charged but instead works to have him fully exonerated, escape justice and given the opportunity to go out and offend again? How about the Doctor that overcharges for some tests or procedures on your behalf so that the insurance will pay enough to cover the legitimate charges and thus he makes more but it costs you less? Or how about the Pastor, Priest or Rabbi who teaches his congregation a doctrine or religious principle that he knows is not true, but it adheres to his denominational creed to which he has vowed fidelity and thus teaching it allows him to maintain his position in the Church or Synagogue that employs him?

Killing **Uriyah** certainly wasn’t Joab’s idea, nor did he seem to have anything against him. But Joab was every bit as guilty as David because it’s one thing to send men into harm’s way in war, knowing that the inevitable result of legitimate battle is that many will lose their lives. But

it's quite another to knowingly use the enemy as a means of killing a comrade you want dead for ulterior motives. Joab was merely trying to please his king, do what he was told, and now he had blood guilt on his head. David did too. And yet neither held the weapon that killed Bathsheba's husband. Let him who has ears, hear.

Yo'av sends a courier back to Yerushalayim to tell David about the initial setback near the walls of Rabbah, in which Israel suffered tragic casualties. Wanting to be cautious and not fully trusting the messenger to be as blindly loyal as himself Joab disguises the part of the message that David is waiting anxiously to hear by making it seem as though **Uriyah's** death was merely an incidental part of the report. He fully expected David to understand the intent; however if David became angry (by failing to understand that the deaths of the other soldiers were necessary collateral damage in order for the king's command to be carried out) then the messenger was to emphasize **Uriyah's** demise.

And indeed David did get angry when he heard the report. David couldn't fathom why Joab would do something so fundamentally unsound from a tactical standpoint as to put his men directly under the city walls where they were vulnerable and bound to suffer casualties. However David's anger stemmed more from **Yo'av** not going about things as David had ordered (no matter how ridiculous and impossible the order) than about the soldiers being killed (and his callous response demonstrates this).

David's reply to be sent back to **Yo'av** sounds to the messenger like a standard soldier's cliché: ***"Don't let this matter get you down. The sword devours in one way or another....."***

It's like troops saying in our day: "every bullet has its billet". But because David's intent was to send a coded message back to Joab that he understood why the other soldiers had to die in order for **Uriyah** to be killed, David's words are full of deceit and cold blooded and devised so that the messenger would be none the wiser. Oh well, if a few unimportant foot soldiers die, so what? That's just the price of success. That's just the reasonable cost of David achieving his cover-up, keeping his reputation clean, and getting the girl. As we'll see in the next chapter, David's exact words will come back to haunt him and his family in ways David could never have imagined.

This chapter ends with Bathsheba getting word of her husband's death and engaging in the standard ritual mourning protocol. The mourning period would have been 7 days. Even the Rabbis admit that the way the wording of verse 26 is structured makes it that IMMEDIATELY following the 7 days of mourning David sent for Bathsheba and married her. The reason for such haste (beyond his raging lust and impatience) is that by now Bathsheba was probably between 2 and 3 months pregnant and her growing belly was soon going to show. Marrying the

widow of a deceased man was not unusual in that era; in fact David married Abigail under somewhat similar circumstances and it was not at all deemed evil by God (at least so far as we know). However marrying Bathsheba so quickly was merely part of the cover-up plan, and in some ways it was for her benefit so that she would not be humiliated and shunned when her condition became apparent.

It is interesting that we find David's descendant, Miriam, mother of Yeshua, pregnant before formal marriage and her betrothed, Joseph, marrying her partly to save Miriam the embarrassment of being obviously pregnant out of wedlock. The circumstances aren't exact, nor the motives pure in David's and Bathsheba's case, but the parallel and pattern cannot be ignored.

The final verse of this chapter has the narrator doing the thing that on one level makes the Bible the trustworthy and believable document that it is. In all eras the faithful biographer of a king did not record anything but those acts of merit and courage displayed by his employer. Especially in the scores of thousands of Egyptian, Syrian, Mesopotamian, and other ancient documents uncovered and translated, kings and royalty are held up as having impeccable character and absolutely never committing a wrong. But in the Bible, even the greatest heroes such as David have their worst deeds and thoughts exposed. There is no effort by the Biblical writers to place these men (and women) on heavenly pedestals, even though both Christianity and Judaism often do.

Without equivocation the writer of the David and Bathsheba episode says that the Lord God saw what David had done as evil. And the Lord cannot allow evil to stand. The next chapter shows that even God's anointed and specially chosen and beloved is not above divine justice.

READ 2ND SAMUEL CHAPTER 12 all

I want to quote to you something written by a wonderful Jewish scholar, Rabbi Nosson Scherman, as directly concerns our study but also as it pertains to David being a shadow and type of Messiah. I think that while Judaism does not recognize that the Messiah has come, and thus some of the mystery about Messiah that they still see as existing has actually been

resolved, on the other hand Judaism does see certain elements of the link between David and Messiah that we Christians often overlook.

Rabbi Scherman says this: ***“From its very beginning, the process through which the Davidic dynasty and the eventual King Messiah were to come into being has been mysterious and hidden. The nation of Moab (the nation that Ruth, the ancestress of David came from) came into being when Lot lived incestuously with his daughter. Peretz, the ancestor of David, was born from the strange relationship of Judah and Tamar. David descended from the marriage of Ruth and Boaz, a relationship that some criticized as being a violation of halachah. David’s dynasty descended from his marriage with Bathsheba, which was so shrouded in obvious impropriety.”***

So while on the one hand I cannot overlook (or teach you to overlook) the obvious violence done to the Holy Scriptures concerning David as done by Sages and Rabbis anxious to hold David above all wrong doing and perhaps as the most pious man ever to live, on the other hand those same men have done us a great service in setting the stage for a richer understanding of the nature and purpose of Messiah if only we’ll get outside of many of our own manmade Christian doctrines that act more like barriers to enlightenment than road markers to truth.

One of the means to apprehending a much more thorough understanding of David (and thus some deeper insights into Biblical Messianic principles) is by reading the Psalms. And yet, it is important to read the Psalms not like a book (one after the other) but rather each Psalm in the context of the events and circumstances they were created (if we are to get their true essence).

Psalms 32 and 51 are directly related to what we are studying as regards David and Bathsheba. David wrote them in the midst of what we are currently reading in 2nd Samuel. Thus to exclude them from our study would be to leave large blanks left unfilled that could give us insight into what David was thinking and feeling throughout his self-made trials and self-caused exile from God.

While we’re not going to thoroughly study these Psalms, I would like us to read them and then I’d like to make a few comments about them that I think are appropriate for our purposes. These were not necessarily written in the order they are numbered. In fact I suspect strongly that Psalm 51 was written before Psalm 32. Nonetheless I’d like to begin by reading Psalm 32.

READ PSALM 32 all

Even though it is fully halfway through 2nd Samuel chapter 12, and after Nathan has read David the riot act on God's behalf, before we see David openly confesses his sin, I want to prepare us for when we get to that particular verse with some key points of Psalm 32.

As with us all, despite how we might outwardly appear to be confident in the rightness of our actions and content in our status before the Lord, seemingly sailing along unimpeded on the course that God has set out for us, when we belong to the Lord our hidden wrong doing will not allow us any rest. That was David's situation. It didn't take Nathan delivering God's oracle for David to recognize that he was being eaten alive from the inside-out; rather it took Nathan's message for him to take the required action to reverse the process. The burden of his sin was terrible, and because David refused to face it his heart was like a piece of raw meat dropped into a glass of coke. It was shriveling up, turning rancid, and about to become unusable.

David had committed the terrible sin of adultery with Bathsheba because he had way too much time on his hands, and this was because he had decided to sit in Yerushalayim in comfort and safety rather than to go out with his army to Holy War as he should. The Lord had moved away from him because David had decided to reign as though he was a gentile king. The sin with Bathsheba came about well down the line of a steady process of his moving away from the Lord.

Sin begets other sin; that's how it works. Little ones lead to more sins and bigger ones. And big ones lead to horrific ones. David did not spot Bathsheba and then instantly have murderous intentions towards her husband. I think his first thought was that he wanted her for his harem, but more he simply wanted her because he was impulsively overcome with lust. I suspect that if he could have called upon her for sexual favors from time to time (as the urge moved him) he may well have been satisfied enough with that arrangement. But out of his adultery came something he hadn't counted on: her pregnancy. So next David tried to deal with the fallout of his sin that resulted in her pregnancy by quickly calling her husband home from war (again, with no intentions to harm Uriyah) so that **Uriyah** would have relations with her (having no idea his wife was already a few weeks pregnant) and then **Uriyah** and everyone else would assume the child to be his.

When this failed, then David panicked; he took yet another step away from God and brought blood guilt upon himself when he ordered Uriyah to be murdered. Thus David would try to solve this now complex (and originally unintended) web of sin by immediately marrying the widow (which he was certain would be publically seen as a good and merciful thing to do), she would later have the baby that she was carrying (but that was not currently publically known), and so he would be home free. Political problem solved. Whew! But the problem is that God's economy doesn't work that way. Sin always demands a payment. God's justice is not set aside, for anyone, ever.

But beyond that, Psalm 32 shows how David learned an invaluable lesson: confession is essentially the point at which we shove our foot on the brake, crank the steering wheel hard to the left, and make a U-turn. Confession is the key to restoring our relationship with God. Confession is when the raw meat is removed from the glass of coke and the harsh chemical reaction begins to subside.

In Psalm 32 verse 3 David says it this way: ***"When I kept silent, my bones wasted away....."***

Silence and lack of acknowledgment of our sin causes us to waste away. David had to outwardly admit his sin. He had to acknowledge the terribleness of what he had done and that it was a violation against God and man. He had to take personal responsibility for it. And until he did, nothing would change in his life. It's not that he had to draw a crowd and confess to them. We don't have to go on Oprah and pour our soul out to strangers to be counted as having confessed.

Therefore, says verse 5, ***"When I acknowledged my sin to you.....you forgave the guilt of my sin"***.

It is not to people but to God that we must acknowledge our sin. We must confess to him, not our Rabbi, not our Pastor, not our Priest. Now there is a very important principle contained here that we must not overlook. And it is one that many of our brethren in the Church have been taught to deny and the ramifications of this go deep. And that denial is a result of a damaging disrespect for God's Word that has infected the Church for centuries. It is that grace and not sacrifices brings us righteousness before God. What, you say? Why I've been taught all along that we are forgiven by grace! Actually what you've been taught is that grace is a New Testament dispensation brought about by Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. You've been taught that grace never existed before the New Testament era, and thus the Old Testament is just an obsolete and faulty system of bloody sacrifices as the path to atonement. Thus in the

Old Testament redemption is by Law and animal sacrifices and in the New Testament redemption is by grace, a concept that was first introduced by Christ.

Verse 10: ***“Many are the torments of the wicked, but grace surrounds those who trust in Adonai. Be glad in Adonai; rejoice, you righteous! Shout for joy, all you upright in heart!”***

Grace surrounds those who trust in Adonai. Rejoice you righteous, because your righteousness is the result of the grace that comes by your trust in the God of Israel. Shout for joy all you upright in HEART. Having a circumcised HEART is the issue, not a circumcised flesh. David wasn't pronouncing prophecy; he was pronouncing a present and existing truth that stood before the pillars of the world did. You see, part of the reason that David is so keen to speak about grace and confession in this Psalm is because of the blood-guilt of murder that was heaped upon his head. The Law provides NO means of animal sacrificial atonement for murder (or adultery for that matter). There is no ritual protocol to pay for murder; there is but the life of the murderer that is forfeit as payment. So if David is indeed forgiven (as God says he is), and there is no animal sacrifice available to facilitate forgiveness for this sin, what does David actually view as the divine dynamic that produced forgiveness for him? **Grace**. And the reality is that despite the divine call for animal sacrifices, in the end it has always been grace that saves us from the death penalty for our sins, not the blood of bulls and goats.

Even the Rabbis of old understood that the animal sacrifices were actually about obedience to God. And true obedience is born of trust, not legalistic and mechanical observance of rules. It's not that animal carcasses or that their blood possessed some magical quality. It's that God, in His grace, set up a system that allowed His people a way to overcome their sin and a means to get back into fellowship with Him IF it was observed with the proper understanding and attitude of trust in Him. The system was a visible and tangible means for humans to comprehend spiritual realities. That system involved sacrifice of an innocent creature as a substitute for the guilty party and it still does. It's just that instead of our being obedient to the sacrificial protocol of animals, we are to be obedient to the sacrifice protocol of Yeshua. In both cases the underlying element of sacrifice was God's grace. Redemption has always been by grace, not by Law or anything else. But what a difficult concept this is for human beings to fully grasp. David obviously grasped it and he's communicating it here in Psalm 32.

Let's stop and we'll continue with the aftermath of David's sin with Bathsheba, and the deep God-principles that are highlighted as a result, next time.