

# KING DAVID AND BAT SHEVA: AN AFFAIR TO REMEMBER

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## 1. II Samuel 11:1-8, 27

<sup>1</sup>At the turn of the year, the season when kings go out [to battle], David sent Joab with his officers and all Israel with him, and they devastated Ammon and besieged Rabbah; David remained in Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup>Late one afternoon, David rose from his couch and strolled on the roof of the royal palace; and from the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, <sup>3</sup>and the king sent someone to make inquiries about the woman. He reported, “She is Bathsheba daughter of Eliam [and] wife of Uriah the Hittite.” <sup>4</sup>David sent messengers to fetch her; she came to him and he lay with her—she had just purified herself after her period—and she went back home. <sup>5</sup>The woman conceived, and she sent word to David, “I am pregnant.” <sup>6</sup>Thereupon David sent a message to Joab, “Send Uriah the Hittite to me”; and Joab sent Uriah to David...<sup>8</sup>Then David said to Uriah, “Go down to your house and bathe your feet.” When Uriah left the royal palace, a present from the king followed him...<sup>27</sup>After the period of mourning was over, David sent and had her brought into his palace; she became his wife and she bore him a son.

## 2. II Samuel 12:7-13

<sup>7</sup>And Nathan said to David, “That man is you! Thus said the LORD, the God of Israel: ‘It was I who anointed you king over Israel and it was I who rescued you from the hand of Saul. <sup>8</sup>I gave you your master’s house and possession of your master’s wives; and I gave you the House of Israel and Judah; and if that were not enough, I would give you twice as much more. <sup>9</sup>Why then have you flouted the command of the LORD and done what displeases Him? You have put Uriah the Hittite to the sword; you took his wife and made her your wife and had him killed by the sword of the Ammonites. <sup>10</sup>Therefore the sword shall never depart from your House—because you spurned Me by taking the wife of Uriah the Hittite and making her your wife.’ <sup>11</sup>Thus said the LORD: ‘I will make a calamity rise against you from within your own house; I will take your wives and give them to another man before your very eyes and he shall sleep with your wives under this very sun. <sup>12</sup>You acted in secret, but I will make this happen in the sight of all Israel and in broad daylight.’” <sup>13</sup>David said to Nathan, “I stand guilty before the LORD!” And Nathan replied to David, “The LORD has remitted your sin; you shall not die.

3. Shabbat 56a

R. Samuel b. Nahmani said in R. Jonathan's name: Whoever says that David sinned is merely erring, for it is said, And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways: and the Lord was with him (I Sam. 18:14). Is it possible that sin came to his hand, yet the Divine Presence was with him? Then how do I interpret, Wherefore have you despised the word of the Lord, to do that which is evil in his sight? (II Sam. 12:9). He wished to do [evil], but did not. Rab observed: Rabbi, who is descended from David, seeks to defend him, and expounds [the verse] in David's favor.... For R. Samuel b. Nahmani said in R. Jonathan's name: Everyone who went out in the wars of the house of David wrote a bill of divorcement for his wife.

4. Abarbanel on II Samuel chapter 11

These words of our Sages are the ways of *derash*, and I have no need to respond to them.... I prefer to say that [David] sinned greatly and confessed greatly and repented fully and accepted his punishment and in this manner he attained atonement for his sins.

5. Sotah 27b

Just as she is prohibited to the husband so is she prohibited to the paramour.

6. Ketubot 9a-b

And if you will say: [In the case of] the occurrence that happened [Bat Sheba]. why did they not declare her forbidden? [The answer is:] There it was compulsion. And if you wish you can say as R. Samuel the son of Nahmani said [that] R. Jonathan said: Everyone who goes out into the war of the House of David writes for his wife a deed of divorce.

7. Sanhedrin 107a

Raba expounded:...David exclaimed before the Holy One, blessed be He...When they are engaged in studying the four deaths inflicted by Beth din they interrupt their studies and taunt me [saying], "David, what is the death penalty of him who seduces a married woman?" I reply to them, "He who commits adultery with a married woman is executed by strangulation, yet has he a portion in the world to come. But he who publicly puts his neighbor to shame has no portion in the world to come."

8. Sifrei VaEthanah 26

Two good leaders led Israel, Moses and David king of Israel. Moses said to God, Master of the Universe! Write about the sin I committed, so people should not say that it appears Moses forged the Torah or that he said something he was not commanded...David said to God, do not write about the sin I committed. God replied, this is unbecoming to you, as people will say that because God loved him, He forgave him.