

Rosh Hashanah Second Day 5771

Discussion Text

2 Samuel 11-12

At the turn of the year, the season when kings go out to battle, David sent Yoav with his officers and all Israel with him, and they devastated Amnon and besieged Rabbah; David remained in Jerusalem. 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, and the king sent someone to make inquiries about the woman. He reported, "She is Batsheva, daughter of Eliam and wife of Uriah the Hittite." 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. The woman conceived, and sent word to David, "I am pregnant." Thereupon David sent a message to Yoav, "Send Uriah the Hittite to me"; and Yoav sent Uriah to David.

When Uriah came to him, David asked him how Yoav and the troops were faring and how the war was going. 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. But Uriah slept at the entrance of the royal palace, along with the other officers of his lord, and did not go down to his house. When David was told that Uriah had not gone to his house, he said to Uriah, "You just came from a journey; why didn't you go down to your house?" Uriah answered David, "The Ark and Israel and Judah are located at Succot, and my master Yoav and Your Majesty's men are camped in the open; how can I go home and eat and drink and sleep with my wife? As you live, by your very life, I will not do this!" David said to Uriah, "Stay here today also, and tomorrow I will send you off." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day. The next day, David summoned him, and he ate and drank with him until he got him drunk; but in the evening, Uriah went out to sleep in the same place, with his lord's officers; he did not go down to his home.

In the morning, David wrote a letter to Yoav, which he sent with Uriah. He wrote in the letter as follows: "Place Uriah in the front line where the fighting is fiercest; then fall back so that he may be killed." So when Yoav was besieging the city, he stationed Uriah at the point where he knew that there were able warriors. The men of the city sallied out and attacked Yoav, and some of David's officers among the troops fell; Uriah the Hittite was among those who died....

When Uriah's wife heard that her husband Uriah was dead, she lamented over her husband. 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.

But the Lord was displeased with what David had done, and the Lord sent Nathan to David. He came to him and said, "There were two men in the same city, one rich and one poor. The rich man had very large flocks and herds, but the poor man had only one little lamb that he had bought. He tended it and it grew up together with him and his children: it used to share his morsel of bread, drink from his cup, and nestle in his bosom; it was like a daughter to him. One day, a traveler came to the rich man, but he was loath to take anything from his own flocks or herds to prepare a meal for the guest who had come to him; so he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him."

David flew into a rage against the man, and said to Nathan, "As the Lord lives, the man who did this deserves to die! He shall pay for the lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and showed no pity." 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. I gave you your master's house and possession of your master's wives; and I have given you the House of Israel and Judah; and if that were not enough, I would give you twice as much more. 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. Therefore the sword shall never depart from your House--because you spurned Me by taking the wife of Uriah the Hittite and make her your wife.' 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. You acted in secret, but I will make this happen in the sight of all Israel in broad daylight.'"

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. However, since you have spurned the enemies of the Lord by this deed, even the child about to be born to you shall die."

Nathan went home, and the Lord afflicted the child that Uriah's wife had borne to David, and it became critically ill. David entreated God for the boy; David fasted, and he went in and spent the night lying on the ground. The senior servants of his household tried to induce him to get up from the ground; but he refused, nor would he partake of food with them. On the seventh day the child died. David's servants were afraid to tell David that the child was dead; for they said, "We spoke to him when the child was alive and he wouldn't listen to us; how can we tell him that the child is dead? He might do something terrible?" When David saw his servants talking in whispers, David understood that the child was dead; David asked his servants, "Is the child dead?" "Yes," they replied.

Thereupon David rose from the ground; he bathed and anointed himself, and he changed his clothes. He went into the House of the Lord and prostrated himself. Then he went home and asked for food, which they set before him, and he ate. His servants asked him, "Why have you acted in this manner? While the child was alive, you fasted and wept; but now that the child is dead, you rise and take food!" He replied, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept because I thought: 'Who knows? The Lord may have pity on me, and the child may live.' But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will never come back to me."

David consoled his wife Batsheva; he went to her and lay with her. She bore a son and she named him Solomon.

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