

Through the Bible - 2 Samuel 11-15 & 1 Chronicles 20 & Psalm 51

8/30/2023 – Joshua Tallent

Recap

- [PPT - Map] 2 Samuel 10 tells us about David's three campaigns.
 - Ammonites capital is Rabbah. New king Hanun rejected David's emissaries and sent them back to David in shame
 - Ammonites hired the Arameans as mercenaries.
 - David sent Joab to fight the Ammonites and Arameans. He divided his forces and was successful.
 - After pushing back the Arameans, he went back home to Jerusalem, leaving the Ammonites in Rabbah.
 - Then the Arameans gathered more of their people from the other side of the Euphrates River with the goal of taking out the Israelites.
 - So David went out to fight them in Helam. The Israelites won, and the Arameans made peace with David.

Setting the Stage

- 2 Samuel 11 – However, David still had a problem: Rabbah was still standing, and the Ammonites had not been defeated.
- So, when the springtime came around again, the time when wars begin again, David sent Joab to finish the job.
 - In case you think it's odd that the spring was when kings went off to war: In June 2014, the US Department of Justice released a report, *Seasonal Patterns in Criminal Victimization Trends*, whose results showed an increase in the many crimes during summer months versus winter months, including burglary, aggravated assault, rape, and domestic violence.
 - Shakespeare even mentions this trend in *Romeo and Juliet*: "For now, these hot days, is the mad blood stirring"
- However, while his army went off to war, David, the king, stayed home.
- And in doing so, he got himself into trouble.

Bathsheba

- The king was restless at night, and took a walk on his roof.
- [PPT-Jerusalem] Remember, we learned a few weeks ago that David's palace was situated at the top of the hill on the north end of the city, with a great view of the city below him.
- The houses closest to him would have been the homes of those closest to the king, the men of renown. And Jerusalem was not a large city, despite being the capital of the country. It is likely that David knew exactly who Bathsheba was, since she was the wife of one of his officers.

- I'd like to talk about Bathsheba a bit. Normally when we hear this story preached we focus our attention on David. And, I think, rightfully so. David bears the bulk of the guilt here. He was the king. He should have been out at the war with his army. He should have walked away. He should have avoided the temptation, and even run from it. (Remember Joseph?)
- However, (and this might be surprising to some of you) Bathsheba was not without fault here, either. The Hebrew text says וַיִּקְחָהּ וַתָּבוֹא אֵלָיו, “and he took her and she came to him,” which implies a willingness to come. There is nothing in the text that implies David forced her to come. She could have sent away the messengers and come to the palace at a more proper time of day. Yes, the king is the king, but there are rules about these things.
- What's even more compelling in this story is its juxtaposition with the story of Amnon and Tamar in chapter 13. In the story of David and Bathsheba there no suggestion of rape, only of adultery. The same is not true two chapters later.
- The Hebrew here is different than the Hebrew in the story of Tamar, and this is a great example of why the original languages are important to our study of the Bible:
 - [PPT] The story of Bathsheba says, וַיִּשְׁכַּב עִמָּהּ *vayyishkav imah*, and he slept with her.
 - [PPT] The story of Tamar says, וַיִּעַנְהָ וַיִּשְׁכַּב אִתָּהּ *vayanneha vayyishkav otah*, and he raped her and he slept with her.
 - [PPT] Even the construction of the last two words in those phrases, עִמָּהּ *imah* and אִתָּהּ *otah*, show a difference in the situations. Both words combine the Hebrew word הִיא *he'*, which means “her” with a preposition and means “with”, so both are normally translated as “with her.”
 - [PPT] In the Bathsheba story, the word עִמָּהּ uses the preposition עִם, of which Bruce Waltke's *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* says “the most common sense involves accompaniment (fellowship and companionship)...” However, in the story of Tamar, the word אִתָּהּ uses the proposition אֵת, and Waltke says “The preposition has a spatial sense... (‘near’)...”
 - In other words, the “slept with her” in David and Bathsheba's case includes the indication of companionship, while the “slept with her” in Amnon and Tamar's case indicates the opposite, just a proximal or spatial connection, not an intimate one.
- I think the implication in the text is that in the case of Bathsheba, she was partially responsible for what happened, as well, and at the very least went along with it.
 - This is in line with what the Torah says about adultery in Deuteronomy 22:22:
 - “If a man is found sleeping with a married woman, then both of them shall die, the man who slept with the woman, and the woman; so you shall eliminate the evil from Israel.”
- However, regardless of all of that, David bears the vast bulk of the guilt here, as he acted on his impulse instead of just going to bed, or, better yet, going with his armies as he should have. He was the king. The buck stopped with him. And he led Bathsheba astray into sin.
- [PPT] David's choices also eventually led to death. James, the brother of Jesus, explains this process in James 1:14-15:

- But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it has run its course, brings forth death.
- Note what the text says in verse 4 about Bathsheba cleansing herself from uncleanness. This comes from Leviticus 15:18, which says, “If a man sleeps with a woman so that there is a seminal emission, they shall both immerse in water and be unclean until evening.”
- It is interesting that Bathsheba made the effort to immerse in a mikvah, one in David’s own house, to cleanse herself from this ritual impurity, but at the same time did not shrink from the sin of adultery.
- We are all the same. Like David, we find it easy to convince ourselves to do something we know we should not do. I can just see David pacing around on his roof, stealing glances at Bathsheba next door, thinking, “You know, I really should just go back inside and go to sleep.” But then, as James says, he gave in to the temptation.
- And just like Bathsheba, we choose to do something we shouldn’t do, while at the same time (acting like the *hypokrites*, the actors in Greek plays that Jesus refers to) we ignore the sin that is entangling us and continue to perform the outward religious practice that hides our inward state.
- So, can we call out Bathsheba for her sin? Yes. Can we call out David for his sin? Yes. And likewise we should be careful to look at the plank in our own eyes at the same time.

Uriah

- Bathsheba became pregnant, and now David had a bigger problem: His sin was going to be found out.
- So he sent for Bathsheba’s husband, Uriah the Hittite, under the guise of getting an update on the siege of Rabbah, and hoping that when Uriah came home he would take the opportunity to sleep with his wife and thus think that the child was his own.
- But Uriah was a righteous man, and did not even enter his own house, choosing to sleep outside because the other men of the army were not able to come home yet. David even tried to get him drunk so he would go home and sleep with his wife, and that didn’t work, either.
- So, instead, David sent him back to Joab, the commander of the army, with a letter detailing his own demise. (2 Samuel 11:15) “Station Uriah on the front line of the fiercest battle and pull back from him, so that he may be struck and killed.”
- Joab followed these instructions without questioning them, to his own shame, even leading to the death of other soldiers.

Nathan the Prophet

- 2 Samuel 12 continues the story. Nathan the prophet comes to David and tells him a story about a rich man and a poor man, and how the rich man stole the poor man’s beloved sheep.
- David was irate and said, (12:5-6) “As the LORD lives, the man who has done this certainly deserves to die! So he must make restitution for the lamb four times over, since he did this thing and had no compassion.”

- So Nathan lays it on him, and pronounces God’s verdict that David’s sin will result in troubles for himself and his family the rest of his life, and that the child Bathsheba was carrying would die.
- Rashi, a rabbi who lived in the middle ages, talking about David’s declaration that the rich man who took the lamb must “make restitution for the lamb four times over”, says: “This is what [eventually] happened, he was punished with [problems concerning] four children: the child, Amnon, Tamar, and Absalom.”
- Note the end of Nathan’s prophecy (12:14), “However, since by this deed **you have shown utter disrespect for the LORD**, the child himself who is born to you shall certainly die.” Targum Yonatan, an Aramaic translation of the Hebrew Bible that was written around the time of Jesus, translates this as: “Because you have opened up the mouth of [those] who hate the people of God.”
- David desecrated God’s name among the people who hate God. He was God’s chosen king, the representative of God among the nations. He was supposed to be held to a higher standard.
- Just like David, we are representatives of God in this world, and what we do brings honor or desecration to His name.

The Aftermath

- I think it’s important to note David’s reaction to the uncovering of his sin. He repented immediately.
- That’s what shows us really how David’s heart was dedicated to God. Yes, he fell, he sinned, he allowed himself to get pulled astray, but he also repented immediately and showed a truly contrite heart. I believe that’s the only reason he was spared from death himself.
- After this whole things happened, David wrote Psalm 51, which I hope you were all able to read this week. It shows just how contrite he was and how his heart broke at his own sin.
- When the baby was born, he became ill. David did fasted and prayed for God to turn back His judgment. But despite his own contrite heart, the baby was still taken.
- As you read the rest of the story of David, watch for how this whole incident had an effect on him. I believe it impacted him to his core and affected how he handled all of the other issues with his family going forward.

Back to Battle

- **[PPT - Map]** Meanwhile in Rabbah, Joab had breached the outer walls and the only thing left was to capture the citadel in the middle of the city. He sent for David, and David went to the battle, as he should have done in the first place.
- Rashi says There were two enforced walls [of cities] in it, an outside one and an inside one. The outside city was [called] the royal city, and the inside [city] was a fortress and stronghold.
- Some time after this, war broke out again with the Philistines. Who were the Philistines?

- Originally from the Greek island of Crete, also known as Caphtor, they invaded the lowlands on the coastline of Israel, or were settled there by the Egyptians after losing a battle to them.
- The Philistines were powerful warriors and were known to use chariots (since they lived in the flat areas where chariots were more powerful).
- Goliath the Gittite (meaning he was from the city of Gath) was a larger-than-average man who fought on the side of the Philistines.
- In 1 Chronicles 20 we read more about the battles David had with the Philistines, and especially with the “descendants of the Rephaim.” The Rephaim were giants. Deuteronomy tells us that the Anakim and the Zamzumim were both Rephaim. The picture being painted here in 1 Chronicles 20 and elsewhere in the scriptures is one of spiritual warfare and cosmic geography. If you are interested in digging into that more, I highly recommend you read the book [*The Unseen Realm*](#) by Michael Heiser.

David’s Family

- [PPT] Let’s meet David’s family.
- 2 Samuel 3:2-5 – Sons were born to David in Hebron: his firstborn was Amnon, by Ahinoam the Jezreelitess; and his second, Chileab, by Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite; and the third, Absalom the son of Maacah, the daughter of Talmai, king of Geshur; and the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith; and the fifth, Shephatiah the son of Abital; and the sixth, Ithream, by David’s wife Eglah. These sons were born to David in Hebron.
- Note that Amnon was David’s firstborn son, and was born to him when he was in Hebron, at the beginning of his reign as king. Absalom was David’s third son, born from a different mother. As a matter of fact, all of David’s sons that were born in Hebron were born to different women.
- We get a more complete list of David’s children in 1 Chronicles 3:
 - These were the children born to him in Jerusalem: Shimea, Shobab, Nathan, and Solomon, four by Bath-shua the daughter of Ammiel; and Ithar, Elishama, Eliphelet, Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia, Elishama, Eliada, and Eliphelet, nine. All of these were the sons of David, besides the sons of the concubines; and Tamar was their sister.
- Which wife of David is missing in this list?
 - Micah, the daughter of Saul, David’s first wife. (2 Samuel 6:23) “And Michal the daughter of Saul had no child to the day of her death.”

Amnon and Tamar

- 2 Samuel 13 – This story is a setup for the future issues David has with his family.
- It likely did not happen immediately after the incident above, but is the next important story in the life of David. Note also that the story is spread out across a few years, it didn’t happen all at once.
- Amnon, David’s firstborn son, became enamored with his half sister, Tamar.
- Jonadab, his cousin, conspired with him to find a way for Amnon to get what he wanted.
 - Pretended to be ill

- Got the king to send Tamar to him
- Had her cook pastries for him
- Sent away the servants
- Asked her to come into his bedroom and feed him
- Then he assaulted her. Remember, the Hebrew here is different than the Hebrew in the story of Bathsheba. Tamar was clearly raped.
- When Amnon got what he wanted, Tamar immediately became repugnant in his eyes:
 - 2 Samuel 13:15 – Then Amnon hated her with a very great hatred; indeed, the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her.
- The Torah actually talks about this kind of scenario, and it commands the man to marry the woman.
 - Deuteronomy 22:28–29 – “If a man finds a girl who is a virgin, who is not betrothed, and he seizes her and has sexual relations with her, and they are discovered, then the man who had sexual relations with her shall give the girl’s father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall become his wife, because he has violated her; he is not allowed to divorce her all his days.”
 - This command was not intended to make it easy for someone like Amnon to go around raping women willy-nilly. It was actually intended both to discourage the practice, and to protect the woman.
 - The normal practice in the ancient pagan world was that women would be raped and kicked out. They would end up as prostitutes or worse, and would be rejected from normal society.
 - However, God’s Torah is righteous and holy, and He gave the Jewish people a better way. He told them to 1) require the man to marry the woman, thus ensuring she would be taken care of and not kicked out into the street, 2) preclude him from ever divorcing her regardless of how much he might hate her, and 3) require him to pay a much higher than normal bride price to her family.
 - In Leviticus 27:3-4, we see that when a person was dedicated to God, they had to be redeemed. The redemption value of a man in that situation was 50 shekels and the redemption value of a woman was 30 shekels. How much was the bride price supposed to be according to Deuteronomy 22? 50 shekels.
 - It may not come across this way to us when we read it with our modern sensibilities, but the Torah is **much more** concerned with the rights of women than any other culture or legal code of its day.
 - The Torah portion that includes Deuteronomy 21 and 22 contains a bunch of other laws that provide benefits to women that were uncommon in the ancient world. It begins with a law prohibiting Israelite soldiers from raping women captured in battle. It continues with inheritance laws guaranteeing the rights of an unfavored wife over those of her rival. It creates recourse for the innocent bride slandered by her new husband. A series of laws attempt to protect women victimized by rape or seduction. The custom of betrothal, the paying of a bride price, and the penalties for breach of the marriage contract are introduced. Several prohibited unions are mentioned. And the prohibition on “his father’s

wife” alludes to the broad body of legislation forbidding sexual relations with close relatives (Leviticus 18) before identifying other prohibited partners.

- So, Amnon should have married Tamar, but instead he sent her away in shame.
- Tamar went home to her brother, Absalom, and told him what happened, and Absalom told her he would take care of it.
- I find it interesting (and actually quite infuriating) that David became angry (13:21), but didn’t do anything about it. Why?

Absalom Avenges Tamar

- Two years passed. Absalom decided to throw a sheep shearing party.
- He invited David, but David didn’t want to be a burden on him (I think Absalom expected that to happen). So he asked if Amnon and his other brothers could come instead. David seems to be a bit surprised about this (13:26), since Absalom had refused to speak to his brother for the last two years (13:22). Maybe David thought this would be a good chance for the brothers to make up. So all of the brothers were invited to the party.
- During the height of the party, when Amnon was drunk, Absalom had his servants kill Amnon.
- The other brothers fled for their lives, probably fearing that Absalom was attempting to consolidate power and kill off his rivals to the throne.
- Someone sent word to David that all of the sons had been killed, and he threw himself on the floor in mourning (again).
- Jonadab, the cousin who convinced Amnon to rape Tamar originally, speaks up and apparently already knows what was going on. Was he in on it? How did he know what was happening? [PPT] Honestly, Jonadab just feels to me like Gríma Wormtongue from Lord of the Rings.
- Absalom had also fled, knowing that having his brother killed was a capital offense. [PPT - Map] He went to Geshur, which is a region northeast of Israel, and stayed there three years.
- Meanwhile, David mourned for Amnon, but eventually he was comforted and he just wanted to have his son Absalom back in Jerusalem.

Sidebar: Joab

- Joab (*Yoav*) is an interesting character who might fade into the background a bit if we aren’t careful. What do we know about him?
- 1 Chronicles 2:16 - Zeruiah was one of David’s sisters. Joab was her son, David’s nephew.
- 2 Samuel 2 – When David was ruling over Judah from Hebron and Ishbosheth the son of Saul was king of the northern tribes of Israel, Abner was Ishbosheth’s general. At the end of a battle in Gibeon, when Abner and his army were running for their lives, Joab’s younger brother Asahel was chasing Abner and was faster than everyone else behind him. Abner tried to tell Asahel to give up the chase, but Asahel was relentless and zealous and would not give up. So, Abner eventually stopped and ran Asahel through with the blunt end of his spear.

- Joab, as you can imagine, didn't take his little brother's death too well. Later, when Abner decided to switch sides and try to convince the northern tribes to make David their king instead of Ishbosheth, Joab convinced Abner to meet him at the city gate in Hebron, and he murdered him there in the gate. (2 Samuel 3:26–30)
- [PPT] (This is the city gate at Megiddo, which would have been similar to other city gates of this period. The gate at Hebron has not been uncovered, as far as I can tell. Archaeological excavations are hard to do there since it's in an Arab-controlled area of Israel.)
 - Why was it murder? The Torah, in Numbers 35, discusses this issue in detail.
 - In our story, Abner first murdered Asahel. It was murder, despite being at the tail end of a battle, because he could have done any number of other things to stop Asahel from chasing him. That's not a "just shoot him in the leg" argument, it's really that Abner is portrayed as older and more experienced, and he could have found another option.
 - That being said, we can also go with the "it was during battle" argument, and say that Asahel was not murdered. Maybe it was manslaughter.
 - Regardless, Joab considered Asahel to have been murdered, and he apparently thought that he was a legitimate blood avenger of his brother.
 - However, he broke the Torah and became a murderer himself, because he killed Abner in a City of Refuge.
 - Joshua 21:13 – "So to the sons of Aaron the priest they gave Hebron, the city of refuge for the one who commits manslaughter..."
 - David mourned the death of Abner, but he left the matter in God's hands instead of pronouncing judgement on Joab: 2 Samuel 3:39 – "And I am weak today, though anointed king; and these men, the sons of Zeruah, are too difficult for me. May the LORD repay the evildoer in proportion to his evil."
- 1 Chronicles 11:6 – After David became king over all of Israel, and wanted to make Jerusalem his capital, Joab was the one who found a way into the city of Jerusalem when it was occupied by the Jebusites. As a result of that feat, defeating a city that was considered impenetrable, Joab was made the general of David's army.
- 1 Chronicles 11:8 - While David was repairing and building the northern end of the city of Jerusalem, Joab built the rest of the city.
- As we have discussed tonight, he led the campaign against the Ammonites in Rabbah, and the Arameans (Syrians) in Helam, and then successfully besieged the city of Rabbah the next year.

Absalom's Return

- Joab loved his uncle David, and he saw how sad David was that Absalom had exiled himself to Geshur. He wanted David to be reconciled to Absalom, so he concocted a plan that sounds similar to the story of Nathan earlier.
- Have someone (in this case a widow from Tekoa) tell the king a little story, get the king to think differently about the situation, and hopefully get the father and son back together.

- Initially it worked, and David allowed Absalom to move back to Jerusalem, but he did not invite Absalom to live in the palace and did not want to see him.
- Absalom lived in the city for two years, not being allowed to see his own father. He tried to get Joab to intervene, but Joab didn't even come to his house when Absalom called.
- Finally, Absalom had his servants set Joab's field on fire, which forced Joab to actually show up.
- Joab petitioned the king, and David agreed to let his son come to the palace. Absalom showed up and bowed down before the king, showing his apparent allegiance.

Absalom's Conspiracy

- But Absalom apparently had an ulterior motive. He wanted to be king. His oldest brother Amnon is dead, and the second in line is only ever mentioned in that one verse that lists David's sons, so he may not have made it out of childhood. Absalom was next in line.
- So he hired a bulletproof limo and a bunch of bodyguards. I mean, a chariot and 50 men to protect him. And he sat in the city gate leading into Jerusalem.
- The city gate in the ancient world is where you would go to conduct business, talk with the city leaders, hear the news, and try to get justice for a wrong that was done to you.
 - **[PPT]** It was not uncommon to have a special place in the gate complex where the judge or king could sit and hear cases. This is the platform used for that kind of thing in the city of Dan in northern Israel. (With my friend Jake standing on top.)
- Now, Absalom was a handsome guy, a charmer, and he used that charm to convince the people who were coming to Jerusalem from other parts of the country to petition the king for justice in legal matters that David didn't care for them and "If only I were the judge I would be able to help you."
- After four years of working on this plot, Absalom went to Hebron. (**Why Hebron?**)
 - Note: The Masoretic Hebrew text says this was 40 years, but some ancient manuscripts say 4. The Talmud (Temurah 14b) addresses the issue by saying that this occurred 40 years after Israel asked Samuel for a king. That the rebellion against God at that time is connected to the rebellion against David here.
- Absalom then sent spies throughout the land to declare at the sound of the shofar that he had been crowned king.

David Flees Jerusalem

- When the conspiracy was revealed and David saw that the people were on Absalom's side, he decided to flee the city of Jerusalem.
- 2 Samuel 15:19 – Ittai the Gittite was a Philistine from the city of Gath who had dedicated himself to David and joined with Israel. He chose to flee with David despite David's suggestion that he just return home. He'll show up again later.
- 2 Samuel 15:30 – "And David was going up the ascent of the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went, and his head was covered, and he was walking barefoot. Then all the people who were with him each covered his own head, and they were going up, weeping as they went."
 - This exile of David prefigures the eventual exile of the people of Israel from the land at the hand of the Babylonians.

- Zadok the High Priest (remember him?) grabbed some Levites and brought the Ark of the Covenant to David, ready to take out of the city, too. But David sent him back, both because he wasn't sure if this was actually God's doing, and because Zadok would be secure as the High Priest. Absalom would not kill him, and Zadok could be a spy and send word out of the city about how things were going.
- David also sent his friend Hushai back to the city as a spy, in hopes of counteracting the advise of Ahithophel, one of his counselors who had joined Absalom.
- And we'll leave it there on a cliffhanger until our next class on September 13th!