



Book of Failure? 12:00 PM: David and Batsheva: So Why Does Gd Love You?

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Dedicated in memory of HaRav Pesach ben Avraham Moshe HaKohen

Dedicated by Dr. Ellen Warner and Dr. Jeff Lipton

in appreciation of the wonderful work of the Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Dedicated by Annie and Allen Heber l'zecher nishmat Sara (Sonya) Kaplan a"h



1. Shemuel I 18:14

וַיְהִי דָוִד לְכֹל דְרָכוֹ מִשְׁפִּיל נֶדַע עִמּוֹ:

And David was insightful in all of his ways, and Gd was with him.

2. An email from a friend (edited)

I can see clearly that David has strong faith and belief in Hashem. He takes immediate responsibility for his actions and makes sincere repentance. I assume this is what saves his life and the House of David. I also see that the point of this narrative is that all mankind sins and that however terrible the sin is, if man sincerely repents Gd will accept his repentance although he may still receive some punishment in this world.

We also see from the narrative and Hashem's discussion with Natan, that David's actions with Batsheva and Uriah are deemed reprehensible by Hashem. It does not take long for us to see that David is severely punished personally in a Middah Kenegged Midah fashion by Hashem and in a very public way. There seems no doubt that David's action constitute a very grave sin.

Furthermore the people are so outraged by David's action that they soon leave him and swear their allegiance to David's son Abshalom. They begin to doubt David's innocence in the death of Avner and Ishbosheth. Even the great leaders of the day, Shimei ben Gera and Ahithophel turn against David. It is felt that David is not fit to be King because of his behavior in the Batsheva and Uriah incidents. It seems clear from the text and the reaction of the people and their leaders that David has committed a terrible sin. It seems clear from Hashem's swift and severe punishments that David has committed a grave sin.

If this is the case why does the Talmud, the Rishonim and many Scholars go out of their way to mitigate this sin...

3. Recording: Batsheva: Maestro Matriarch <https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/914116/>

The Problem

4. Shemuel II 11-12 (tr. JPS 1985, from sefaria.org)

(א) וַיְהִי לְתִשְׁבֻּת הַשָּׁנָה לַעֲת צֹאת הַמְּלָאכִים וַיִּשְׁלַח דָּוִד אֶת יוֹאָב וְאֶת עֶבְדָּיו עִמּוֹ וְאֶת כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּשְׁחָתוּ אֶת בְּנֵי עִמּוֹן וַיִּצְרּוּ עַל רַבָּה וְדָוִד יוֹשֵׁב בִּירוּשָׁלַם: (ב) וַיְהִי לַעֲת הָעָרִב וַיָּקָם דָּוִד מֵעַל מִשְׁכְּבוֹ וַיִּתְהַלֵּךְ עַל גַּג בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיִּרְא אִשָּׁה רֹחֶצֶת מֵעַל הַגֶּג וְהָאִשָּׁה טוֹבַת מְרָאָה מְאֹד: (ג) וַיִּשְׁלַח דָּוִד וַיְדַרְשׁ לְאִשָּׁה וַיֹּאמֶר הֲלוֹא זֹאת בַּת שָׁבַע בַּת אֶלְיָעָם אִשְׁתׁ אֲוִרְיָה הַחַתָּי: (ד) וַיִּשְׁלַח דָּוִד מַלְאָכִים וַיִּקְחֶהָ וַתְּבוֹא אֵלָיו וַיִּשְׁכַּב עִמָּה וְהִיא מִתְקַדְּשֶׁת מִטְּמֵאתָהּ וַתִּשָּׁב אֶל בֵּיתָהּ: (ה) וַתַּהַר הָאִשָּׁה וַתִּשְׁלַח וַתִּגְדַּל לְדָוִד וַתֹּאמֶר הִרָה אֲנִי: (ו) וַיִּשְׁלַח דָּוִד אֶל יוֹאָב שְׁלַח אֵלַי אֶת אֲוִרְיָה הַחַתָּי וַיִּשְׁלַח יוֹאָב אֶת אֲוִרְיָה אֶל דָּוִד:

(ז) וַיִּקְרָא לוֹ דָּוִד וַיֹּאכַל לֶפְנָיו וַיִּשְׁתֶּה וַיִּשְׁכַּרְהוּ וַיִּצָּא בְּעָרִב לְשֹׁכֵב בְּמִשְׁכְּבוֹ עִם עֶבְדָּיו אֲדָנָיו וְאֵל בֵּיתוֹ לֹא יָרַד:

(ח) וַיֹּאמֶר דָּוִד אֶל הַמֶּלֶךְ כֹּה תֹאמַר אֶל יוֹאָב אֵל גִּרְע בְּעֵינַי אֶת הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה כִּי כֹזֵב וְכֹזֵב תֹּאכַל הַחֶרֶב הַחֹזֵק מִלְחָמָתְךָ אֵל הַעִיר וְהַרְסָה וְחִנְקֶהוּ: (ט) וַתִּשְׁמַע אִשְׁתׁ אֲוִרְיָה כִּי מֵת אֲוִרְיָה אִשָּׁה וַתִּסְפַּד עַל בְּעֵלָהּ: (כז) וַיַּעֲבֵר הָאֱבֹל וַיִּשְׁלַח דָּוִד וַיִּצְאָהָ אֶל בֵּיתוֹ וַתְּהִי לוֹ לְאִשָּׁה וַתִּלְד לוֹ בֶן וַיִּרְע הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה דָּוִד בְּעֵינָיו ד': (א) וַיִּשְׁלַח ד' אֶת נְתָן אֶל דָּוִד וַיִּבְאֵהוּ אֵלָיו וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ שְׁנֵי אֲנָשִׁים הֵיוּ בְּעִיר אַחַת אַחַד עֹשִׂיר וְאַחַד רָאשׁ: (ב) לְעֹשִׂיר הָיָה צֹאן וַיִּקְרַח הַרְבֵּה מְאֹד: (ג) וְלְרֹשׁ אִין כָּל כִּי אִם כְּבִשָׁה אַחַת קִטְנָה אֲשֶׁר קָנָה וַיִּחְיֶה וַתִּגְדַּל עִמּוֹ וְעַם בְּנָיו יִחְדּוּ מִפְתּוֹ תֹאכַל וּמִפְסוֹ תִשְׁתֶּה וּבְחִיקוֹ תִשָּׁבַב וַתְּהִי לוֹ קֶבֶת: (ד) וַיִּבְאֵהוּ הַלֵּךְ לְאִישׁ הַעֹשִׂיר וַיִּחְמַל לְקַחַת מִצְאָנוֹ וּמִבְּקָרוֹ לַעֲשׂוֹת לְאָרֶם הַבָּא לוֹ וַיִּקַּח אֶת כְּבִשַׁת הָאִישׁ הַרְאשׁ וַיַּעֲשֶׂה לְאִישׁ הַבָּא אֵלָיו: (ה) וַיִּחַר אַף דָּוִד בְּאִישׁ מְאֹד וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל נְתָן חַי ד' כִּי בֶן מֵת הָאִישׁ הַעֹשֶׂה זֹאת: (ו) וְאֶת הַכְּבִשָׁה יִשְׁלַם אַרְבַּע־מֵתִים עֶקֶב אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה אֶת הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה וְעַל אֲשֶׁר לֹא חָמַל: (ז) וַיֹּאמֶר נְתָן אֶל דָּוִד אַתָּה הָאִישׁ כֹּה אָמַר ד' אֱלֹקֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲנִי מִשְׁחַתֵּיךְ לְמַלְךְ עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֲנִי הַצֹּלֵתִיךְ מִיַּד שְׂאוּל: (ח) וְאַתָּה לָךְ אֶת בֵּית אֲדֹנֶיךָ וְאֶת נְשֵׁי אֲדֹנֶיךָ בְּחִיקָה וְאַתָּה לָךְ אֶת בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיְהִי וְאִם מֵעַט וְאִסְפָּה לָךְ כֶּהֵנָּה וְכֵהֵנָּה: (ט) מְדוּעַ בְּזִית אֶת דְּבַר ד' לַעֲשׂוֹת הַרְעָ בְּעֵינַי אֶת אֲוִרְיָה הַחַתָּי הַכִּיתָ בְּחֶרֶב וְאֶת אִשְׁתּוֹ לְקַחַת לָךְ לְאִשָּׁה וְאִתּוֹ הַרְגָתָ בְּחֶרֶב בְּנֵי עִמּוֹן: (י) וְעַתָּה לֹא תִסּוּר חֶרֶב מִבֵּיתְךָ עַד עוֹלָם עֶקֶב כִּי בְזַתְנִי וַתִּקַּח אֶת אִשְׁתׁ אֲוִרְיָה הַחַתָּי לְהִיּוֹת לָךְ לְאִשָּׁה: (יא) כֹּה אָמַר ד' הַגִּבִּי מְקִים עָלֶיךָ רַעַה מִבֵּיתְךָ... (יב) וַיֹּאמֶר דָּוִד אֶל נְתָן חֲטָאתִי לַד' ס וַיֹּאמֶר נְתָן אֶל דָּוִד גַּם ד' הַעֲבִיר חֲטָאתְךָ לֹא תָמוּת: (יג) אֲפָס כִּי נֶאֱמַר אֶת אֲבִי ד' בְּדָבָר הַזֶּה גַּם הִבֵּן הַיְלֹוֹד לָךְ מוֹת יָמוּת:...

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. 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 Bathsheba 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 she sent word to David, "I am pregnant." Thereupon David sent a message to Joab, "Send Uriah the Hittite to me"; and Joab sent Uriah to David...

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...

Whereupon David said to the messenger, "Give Joab this message: 'Do not be distressed about the matter. The sword always takes its toll. Press your attack on the city and destroy it!' Encourage him!" 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 ewe 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 Gd 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 gave 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 making her your wife.' Thus said the Lord: 'I will make a calamity rise against you from within your own house...'

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."...

#### 5. Abarbanel to Shemuel II 15:1

לא כווננו ישראל למרוד בדוד מלכם ולא להמיתו... כי אם להמליך במקומו את אבשלום בנו הגדול כדי שלא ימלך שלמה בן בת שבע Israel did not intend to rebel against David, their king, or to kill him, Gd forbid, but only to coronate his oldest son Avshalom in his place in order that Shlomo, son of Batsheva, should not reign.

#### 6. Shemuel II 16:7

וְכֹה אָמַר שְׁמִיעִי בְּקִלְלוֹ צַא צַא אִישׁ הַדְּמִים וְאִישׁ הַבְּלִיעַל:

And so said Shimi, when he cursed [David]: Leave, leave, man of blood, man of evil!

#### 7. Talmud, Shabbat 56a

אמר רבי שמואל בר נחמני אמר רבי יונתן: כל האומר דוד חטא - אינו אלא טועה, שנאמר ויהי דוד לכל דרכיו משכיל וד' עמו וגו', אפשר חטא בא לידו ושכינה עמו?

אלא מה אני מקיים "מדוע בזית את דבר ד' לעשות הרע"? שביקש לעשות ולא עשה.

"את אוריה החתי הכית בחרב"? שהיה לך לדונו בסנהדרין ולא דנת.

"ואת אשתו לקחת לך לאשה"? ליקוחין יש לך בה, דאמר רבי שמואל בר נחמני אמר רבי יונתן: כל היוצא למלחמת בית דוד כותב גט כריתות לאשתו...

"ואתו הרגת בחרב בני עמון"? מה חרב בני עמון אי אתה נענש עליו, אף אוריה החתי אי אתה נענש עליו. מאי טעמא? מורד במלכות הוה, דאמר ליה "ואדני יואב ועבדי אדני על פני השדה חנים."

Rabbi Shemuel bar Nachmeni cited Rabbi Yonatan: Anyone who says David sinned is only mistaken, as it says, "And David was insightful in all of his ways, and Gd was with him, etc." Can it be that sin came to his hand and the *Shechinah* was with him?

Rather, how do I explain, "Why did you degrade the word of Gd, to practice evil?" He tried to do it, and did not do it. "You struck Uriah the Hittite by the sword"? You should have judged him in the Sanhedrin, and you did not.

"And you took his wife for your wife"? You have valid marriage with her, for Rabbi Shemuel bar Nachmeni cited Rabbi Yonatan: Anyone who went to the wars of David's house wrote a bill of divorce for his wife...

"And you killed him with the sword of Amon"? Just as you are not punished for those killed by Amon's sword, so you are not punished for Uriah the Hittite. Why? He rebelled against the throne, saying, "And my master Yoav and my master's servants are camped in the field."

### So was it a failure?

#### 8. Talmud, Avodah Zarah 4b-5a

א"ר יוחנן משום ר"ש בן יוחאי: לא דוד ראוי לאותו מעשה, ולא ישראל ראוי לאותו מעשה; לא דוד ראוי לאותו מעשה, דכתיב: ולבי חלל בקרבי; ולא ישראל ראוי לאותו מעשה, דכתיב: מי יתן והיה לבבם זה להם ליראה אותי כל הימים, אלא למה עשו? לומר לך, שאם חטא יחיד - אומרים לו: כלך אצל יחיד, ואם חטאו צבור - אומרים להו לכו אצל צבור. וצריכא...

Rabbi Yochanan cited Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai: David was not suited for that deed, and Israel was not suited for that deed [the Golden Calf]. David was not suited for that deed, as Tehillim 109:22 says, "My heart is hollow [Rashi: powerless, dead] in me." And Israel was not suited for that deed, as Devarim 5:26 says, "Would that they have this heart, to revere Me, forever." Then why did they do it? To teach you that if someone sins, we tell him, "Go to the individual." And if a community sins, we tell him, "Go to the community." And we need ...

#### 9. Tosafot Avodah Zarah 5a

וצריכא - פי' לכתוב חטאם וקבלת תשובתם.

"And we need" to record their sins, and the acceptance of their repentance.

#### 10. Talmud, Yevamot 99b

בהמתן של צדיקים אין הקב"ה מביא תקלה על ידן צדיקים עצמן לא כ"ש

For the animals of the righteous, Gd will not let them stumble – how much more so the righteous themselves!

#### 11. Melachim I 9:4

וְאַתָּה אִם תֵּלֵךְ לִפְנֵי פָאֶשֶׁר הֵלֵךְ דָּוִד אָבִיךָ בְּתָם לֵבָב וּבִישׁוֹר לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִיךָ חָקִי וּמִשְׁפָּטֵי תִשְׁמֹר:

And you, if you will walk before me as your father David walked, with a pure heart and righteousness to do according to all I have commanded you, guarding all of My statutes and laws.

### Review Questions

What are the textual, logical and story-based problems the Talmud is trying to solve regarding David's actions?

What is the implication of "And Gd was with him"?

How does Shabbat 56a solve these problems, and what can we learn from this?

How does Avodah Zarah 4b solve these problems, and what can we learn from this?