

David and Batsheva

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 Moshe & Liorah Berger
 in honor of the yahrtzeit of Liorah's mother,
 Sarah Chaya bat Pinchas Eliyahu Halevi, ע"ה

The Teshuva Diaries

Division of Opinions in David and Batsheva

Incident	Abarbanel/Mahari Karo	Malbim/Chazal
OVERALL ARGUMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have to read this as it appears. It says that David committed adultery and he sent the husband to the battlefield and we have to take that at face value. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chazal tell us David didn't sin Tanach still see David as a hero and his son from this union is the one who builds the Beis Hamikdash If there is a case of adultery, the woman is forbidden to the husband and the adulterer but we don't see that here at all.
David sees Batsheva and calls her to his palace (11:3)	David sinned not only in indulgence but in adultery	She must be divorced at this point with the military Get. This is clear from the fact that: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> He inquires after her before she comes Her grandfather is Achitofel, David's advisor and likely one who introduced the Get policy in the first place
David summons Uriah from the warfront and sends him home (11:6)	David is trying to mask the father of the baby by having Uriah think it might be him, thereby jeopardizing the lineage of the family <ul style="list-style-type: none"> He could have instead brought the child up privately to avoid this. 	David realized that if he would let her give birth, it would be discovered since she is so close to Achitofel. This would spark great Chilul H' and rebellion (as later happened with Achitofel). He therefore had to cover it, with the intention of telling that child later about his true lineage.
David sends Uriah to the warfront with his death warrant (11:15)	This is David abusing his power to get rid of the obstacle between him and Batsheva.	Uriah had rebelled against the king and is chayav misah on 2 accounts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> He was told to go home and this would mean not to return to war but he did not listen The king sent him home with a meal from the king but he refused to take it.
David immediately marries Batsheva afterwards (11:27)	This is David still running after his indulgences. He does not even control himself after all is said and done.	David needed to account for this pregnancy as soon as possible so the child would not be seen as born out of wedlock.
David exclaims the rich shepherd is to die (12:5)	That is the punishment for adultery	This is the king acting beyond the call of justice to remove cruel people from society
David admits sinning to H' (12:13)	The sin was private. There were two parties involved. Uriah is dead and Batsheva is married to me, so please let me deal with this privately and not have to have this become a public ordeal.	It is clear from here that David did not sin in the legal sense against others. It was not the correct way for a king to behave but there was no adultery and murder.

1. Talmud Bavli, Shabbos 56a

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

Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahmani said that Rabbi Yonatan said: Anyone who says that David sinned with Bathsheba is nothing other than mistaken, as it is stated: "And David succeeded in all his ways; and the Lord was with him" (I Samuel 18:14). Is it possible that sin came to his hand and nevertheless the Divine Presence was with him?

אלא מה אני מקיים מדוע בזית את דבר ה' לעשות הרע שביקש לעשות ולא עשה

However, how then do I establish the meaning of the rebuke of the prophet Nathan: "Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do that which is evil in My sight? Uriah the Hittite you have smitten with the sword, and his wife you have taken to be your wife, and him you have slain with the sword of the children of Ammon" (II Samuel 12:9), indicating that David sinned? The Gemara answers: David sought to do evil and have relations with Bathsheba while she was still married to Uriah but did not do so.

...

את אוריה החתי הכית בחרב שהיה לך לדונו בסנהדרין ולא דנת ואת אשתו לקחת לך לאשה ליקוחין יש לך בה

That which is written: "**Uriah the Hittite you have smitten with the sword,**" means **that you could have judged him before the Sanhedrin** as one guilty of treason against the throne, **and you did not judge** him in that manner. Instead, you had him executed in a manner that deviated from the generally accepted principles of judgment. With regard to that which is written: "**And his wife you have taken to be your wife**"; it means that **you have rights of marriage with her**, as by law Bathsheba was already divorced from Uriah.

דאמר רבי שמואל בר נחמני אמר רבי יונתן כל היוצא למלחמת בית דוד כותב גט כריתות לאשתו שנאמר ואת עשרת חריצי החלב האלה תביא לשר האלף ואת אחיך תפקד לשלום ואת ערבתם תקח

As Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahmani said that Rabbi Yonatan said: Anyone who goes to a war waged by the royal **house of David writes a conditional bill of divorce to his wife**. That was done to prevent a situation in which the soldier's wife would be unable to remarry because the soldier did not return from battle and there were no witnesses to his fate. The conditional bill of divorce accorded her the status of a divorcee and freed her to remarry. **As it is stated: "And carry these ten cheeses to the captain of their thousand, and to your brothers bring greetings and take their pledge [arubatan]" (I Samuel 17:18).**

מאי ערבתם תני רב יוסף דברים המעורבים בינו לבינה

What is the meaning of arubatan? Rav Yosef taught: It refers to **matters that are shared [hame'oravim] between him**, the husband, **and her**, the wife, i.e., marriage. The verse should be read: Take the bill of divorce that determines the status of the relationship between husband and wife. As, apparently, it was customary for men at war to send their wives a conditional divorce, since Uriah later died, Bathsheba retroactively assumed divorced status from the time that he set out to war. She was not forbidden to David.

ואתו הרגת בחרב בני עמון מה חרב בני עמון אי אתה נענש עליו אף אוריה החתי אי אתה נענש עליו

With regard to that which is written: "**And him you have slain with the sword of the children of Ammon,**" it means: **Just as you are not punished for soldiers killed by the sword of the children of Ammon in the course of the war, so too you are not punished for the death of Uriah the Hittite.**

מאי טעמא מורד במלכות הוה דאמר ליה ואדני יואב ועבדי אדני על פני השדה חנים

What is the reason that David was not liable for the death of Uriah? Because Uriah was a traitor against the throne. As he said to David: "And my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are encamped in the open fields" (II Samuel 11:11). In the presence of the king, one may not refer to another as his lord. Doing so is treason.

The Big Why

2. I Divrei Hayamim 19:19-20:1

וַיֵּרְאוּ עַבְדֵי הַדָּדָעְזַר כִּי נִגְפוּ לִפְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּשְׁלִימוּ עִם־דָּוִד וַיַּעֲבְדוּהוּ וְלֹא־אָבְדָה אֲלֵהֶם לְהוֹשִׁיעַ אֶת־בְּנֵי־עַמּוֹן עוֹד: (פ)

And when all the vassals of Hadadezer saw that they had been routed by Israel, they submitted to David and became his vassals. And the Arameans would not help the Ammonites anymore.

וַיְהִי לְעֵת תְּשׁוּבַת הַשָּׁנָה לָעֵת | צֵאת הַמְּלָכִים וַיִּנְהַג יוֹאָב אֶת־חֵיל הַצָּבָא וַיִּשְׁחַת | אֶת־אֶרֶץ בְּנֵי־עַמּוֹן וַיִּבְאֵל וַיַּצַּר אֶת־רַבָּה וַדָּוִד יָשָׁב בִּירוּשָׁלַם וַיֵּד יוֹאָב אֶת־רַבָּה וַיִּהַרְסָהּ:

At the turn of the year, the season when kings go out [to battle], Joab led out the army force and devastated the land of Ammon, and then besieged Rabbah, while David remained in Jerusalem; Joab reduced Rabbah and left it in ruins.

Idea One: The Danger of Tests

“Your faith was strong but you needed proof”

- Leonard Cohen

3. Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 107a

אמר רב יהודה אמר רב לעולם אל יביא אדם עצמו לידי נסיון שהרי דוד מלך ישראל הביא עצמו לידי נסיון ונכשל אמר לפניו רבש"ע מפני מה אומרים אלהי אברהם אלהי יצחק ואלהי יעקב ואין אומרים אלהי דוד אמר אינהו מינסו לי ואת לא מינסית לי אמר לפניו רבש"ע בחנני ונסני שנאמר (תהלים כו.ב) בחנני ה' ונסני וגו'

§ Apropos Ahithophel, the Gemara relates the events that led to his death. **Rav Yehuda says that Rav says: A person should never bring himself to undergo an ordeal, as David, king of Israel, brought himself to undergo an ordeal and failed.** David said before God: **Master of the Universe, for what reason does one say in prayer: God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob, and one does not say: God of David? God said to David: They have undergone ordeals before Me, and you have not undergone an ordeal before Me.** David said before Him: **Examine me and subject me to an ordeal, as it is stated: “Examine me, Lord, and subject me to an ordeal; try my kidneys and my heart” (Psalms 26:2).**

Idea Two: The Power of Teshuva

“And even though it all went wrong
I’ll stand right here before the Lord of song”

- Leonard Cohen

The Point of this whole section

4. Talmud Bavli, Avodah Zarah 4b-5a

והיינו דא"ר יוחנן משום ר"ש בן יוחאי לא דוד ראוי לאותו מעשה ולא ישראל ראוי לאותו מעשה לא דוד ראוי לאותו מעשה דכתיב (תהלים קט.כב) ולבי חלל בקרבי

And this is similar to that which Rabbi Yohanan says in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yoḥai: David was not fit to act as he did in that incident involving Bathsheba, and the Jewish people were not fit to act as they did in that incident of the Golden Calf. David was not fit to act as he did in that incident involving Bathsheba (see II Samuel, chapter 11), as it is written: “And my heart is

wounded within me” (Psalms 109:22), i.e., he had vanquished his evil inclination, and therefore it should not have been able to rule over him to that extent.

ולא ישראל ראוין לאותו מעשה דכתיב מי יתן והיה לבבם זה להם ליראה אותי כל הימים אלא למה עשו

And likewise the Jewish people were not fit to act as they did in that incident of the Golden Calf, as it is written with regard to the Jewish people of that time: “Who would give that they had such a heart as this always, to fear Me and keep all My commandments, that it might be good for them, and with their children forever” (Deuteronomy 5:25). Rather, why did they perform these sins?

לומר לך שאם חטא יחיד אומרים לו כלך אצל יחיד ואם חטאו צבור אומרים לו כלך אצל צבור

This serves to say to you that if an individual has sinned, one says to him: Go to that famous individual who sinned, King David, and learn from him that one can repent. And if the community sinned, one says to them: Go to the community that sinned, i.e., the Jewish people at the time of the Golden Calf.

והיינו דרבי שמואל בר נחמני א"ר יונתן מאי דכתיב (שמואל ב כג. א) נאם דוד בן ישי ונאם הגבר הוקם על נאם דוד בן ישי שהקים עולה של תשובה

And this is similar to that which Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahmani says that Rabbi Yonatan says: What is the meaning of that which is written: “The saying of David, son of Yishai, and the saying of the man raised on high [al]” (II Samuel 23:1)? This is the meaning of the verse: The saying of David, son of Yishai, who raised and lightened the yoke [ullah] of repentance, as he taught the power of repentance through his own example.

Linguistic Expression of this

Perek 11

1 וַיְהִי לְתִשׁוּבַת הַשָּׁנָה
4 וַתָּשָׁב, אֶל-בֵּיתָהּ.
12 וַיֹּאמֶר דָּוִד אֶל-אוּרִיָּה, שֵׁב בְּזָה גַם-הַיּוֹם
15 הָבֹ אֶת-אוּרִיָּה, אֶל-מוֹל פְּנֵי הַמְּלַחְמָה הַחֲזָקָה, וְשִׁבְתָּם
מֵאַחֲרָיו, וְנָפְהָ וּמָת.

Perek 12

23 - וְעִתָּה מִת, לָמָּה זֶה אֲנִי צָם--הָאוֹכֵל לֶהֱשִׁיבוֹ, עוֹד: אֲנִי הֲלִיךְ
אֵלָיו, וְהוּא לֹא-יָשׁוּב אֵלָי.
31 וַיָּשָׁב דָּוִד וְכָל-הָעָם, יְרוּשָׁלַם.

The Two Stages of Teshuva

5. Orot HaTeshuva, Perek 2

לגבי משך זמנה, התשובה מתחלקת לשני חלקים: תשובה פתאומית ותשובה הדרגית.

פתאומית באה מתוך איזה ברק רוחני הנכנס בנשמה, בפעם אחת מכיר הוא את הרע ואת הכעור של החטא ומהפך לאיש אחר, וכבר מרגיש הוא בקרבו השתנות גמורה לטובה. התשובה זו באה ע"י איזו הופעה של סגולה פנימית, ע"י איזו השפעה נשמתית גדולה, שראוי לחפש את נתיבותיה בעמקי תעלומה.

וישנה תשובה הדרגית. לא בריקה הבריקה בקרבו להתהפך מן העומק של הרע אל הטוב, אלא מרגיש הוא שצריך להיות הולך ומטיב דרכיו וארחות הייו, רצונו, הלך-מחשבותיו, ובמהלכו זה הולך הוא וכובש לאט לאט את דרכי היושר, מתקן את המידות, מטיב את המעשים, מלמד את עצמו איך להתכשר יותר ויותר עד שהוא בא למעלה רמה של זכוך ותקון.

With respect to the passing of time, Teshuvah is divided into 2 aspects: Sudden Teshuvah and Gradual Teshuvah.

Sudden Teshuvah comes amidst a sudden spiritual flash than enters the soul. All at once one recognizes the wrong and ugliness of one's error, and one is transformed into a different being, already feeling inside the complete transformation to the good. This Teshuvah comes from the appearance of an inner remedy that greatly influences the soul, so it is able to seek the paths within the depths of mystery.

And there is gradual Teshuvah. No inner lightening flash transforms one from the depths of bad to good, but rather one feels that one must continue on and improve the paths and ways one lives, ones will, ones mind-stream. An in this way one subdues little by little, attaining the integrity, to rectifying the soul-traits, improving ones deeds, teaching oneself how to become more and more skillful, until one come to a high level of refinement and perfection.

The Suffering of David

6. Yalkut Shimoni, Letter 165

בעשרים ושניים שנים שנסתלקה רוח הקדש מדוד מלך ישראל, בכל יום ויום היה מוריד כוס של דמעות ואכל פתו באפר שנאמר כי אפר כלחם אכלתי. אמר לפניו רבונו של עולם, קבלני בתשובה כדי שתוכיח את הרשעים, ותאמר להם ומה אם דוד מלך ישראל שעשה לפני דבר חמור כיון שחזר בתשובה לפני קבלתי אותו, אתם על אחת כמה וכמה שהייתי מקבל אתכם

Vindications of David's Teshuva

7. Tehillim 24:7

שָׂאוּ שַׁעְרֵיכֶם | רְאֵשֵׁיכֶם וְהִנְשְׂאוּ פִתְחֵי עוֹלָם וַיָּבֹא מֶלֶךְ הַכְּבוֹד:

O gates, lift up your heads! Up high, you everlasting doors, so the King of glory may come in!

8. Talmud Bavli, Moed Katan 9a

אמר רב יהודה אמר רב בשעה שביקש שלמה להכניס ארון למקדש דבקו שערים זה לזה אמר שלמה עשרים וארבע רגלות ולא נענה נענה פתח ואמר (תהלים כד, ז) שאו שערים ראשיכם וגו' ולא נענה

Rav Yehuda said that Rav said: When Solomon sought to bring the Ark into the Temple the gates clung together and could not be opened. Solomon uttered twenty-four songs of praise, and his prayer was not answered. He began and said: “Lift up your heads, O you gates, and be lifted up, you everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in” (Psalms 24:7), but once again his prayer was not answered, and the Temple gates remained closed.

כיון שאמר (דברי הימים ב.ו. מב) ה' אלהים אל תשב פני משיחך זכרה לחסדי דוד עבדך מיד נענה באותה שעה נהפכו פני שונאי דוד כשולי קדירה וידעו הכל שמחל לו הקב"ה על אותו עון

Once he said: “Now therefore arise, O Lord God, into your resting place, You, and the Ark of Your strength; Let your priests, O Lord God, be clothed with victory and let Your pious ones rejoice in goodness. **O Lord God, do not turn away the face of Your anointed; remember the faithful love of David Your servant**” (II Chronicles 6:41–42), **he was immediately answered. At that moment the faces of David’s enemies turned dark like the charred bottom of a pot, and all knew that the Holy One, Blessed be He, forgave him for that sin** involving Bathsheba, as they saw that it was only in his merit that the gates of the Temple opened.

9. Tehillim 30:1

מִזְמוֹר שִׁיר־תְּהִלָּה לַיהוָה:

A psalm of David. A song for the dedication of the House.

10. Radak, ad loc.

מזמור שיר חנכת הבית לדוד: חברו דוד שיאמרוהו בחנכת בית המקדש. ואף על פי אין בזה המזמור זכר הבית הזכיר בו סליחת פשעיו, שהיו חושבים איביו שלא תתקים לו המלוכה ולזרעו אחריו לעונש אותו עון. ואף על פי שנאמר לו על ידי נביא, כי בנו שימלוך אחריו הוא יבנה הבית, לא היו מאמינים שיוכל להיות כי בן שיוולד לו מאותה האשה יהיה מלך ויבנה בית המקדש ליי' שיהיה מקום סליחה וכפרה. וכשמרד אדניה בסוף ימיו ורצה למלוך מעצמו בלא רשות היו סבורים שלא יהיה שלמה מלך. וכיון שהמלך וראו כי הצליח הדבר, כי הקושרים עם אדניה לא עמדו במרדם וברחו איש לאהליו, הכירו כל ישראל כי מיי' היא מלכות שלמה. וכיון שרצה האל כי בן שנוולד לו מאותה האשה יהיה מלך על כל ישראל ידעו באמת כי נמחל לדוד אותו עון מחילה גמורה. והראה לשלמה צורת הבית לעיני כל ישראל והתנדב הוא לבנין הבית והתנדבו בו בני ישראל לפניו. לפיכך חבר מזמור שיר חנכת הבית על זה הדרך שהזכיר בו סליחת חטאיו שהיא רפואת נפשו, כי בזה הענין נודעה הסליחה לכל אדם.