

CHAPTER 11

INTRODUCTION TO SECOND SAMUEL 11

This chapter begins with the destruction of the Ammonites, and the siege of Rabbah their chief city, (^{<0100>}2 Samuel 11:1); and enlarges on the sins of David in committing adultery with Bathsheba, (^{<0102>}2 Samuel 11:2-5); in contriving to conceal his sin by sending for her husband home from the army, (^{<0106>}2 Samuel 11:6-13); in laying a scheme for the death of him by the hand of the Ammonites, (^{<0114>}2 Samuel 11:14-25); and in marrying Bathsheba when he was dead, (^{<0126>}2 Samuel 11:26,27).

Ver. 1. *And it came to pass, that after the year was expired*, etc.] Or at the end of the year, as the Targum, which concluded with the month Adar or February, the spring of the year:

at the time when kings go forth [to battle]; in the month Nisan, as the Targum on (^{<0300>}1 Chronicles 20:1); adds, the same with Abib, which was the first month of the year, (^{<0202>}Exodus 12:2 13:4), a fit time to go out to war; when, as the Jewish commentators observe, the rains were over, and there were grass in the fields, and fruit on the trees, and corn ripe, and so food for horse and men. This month was called Nisan, as some think ^{f173}, from **nySn**, the military banners then erected; so by the Romans it is called Martius, and by us March, from Mars, the god of war; though some ^{f174} take this to be the month Tisri, answering to part of September, and part of October, when all the fruits of the earth were gathered in, and supposed to be a fit time for war, when the heat of the year was declining:

that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; his whole army under Joab as general; in (^{<0300>}1 Chronicles 20:1); it is “the power of the army”; the whole body of it: and they destroyed the children of Ammon; burnt their cities, and slew the inhabitants of them, and laid their land waste wherever they came:

and besieged Rabbah; their chief city, called Rabathamana by Polybius ^{f175}, that is, Rabbah of Ammon, and afterwards. Philadelphia, from Philadelphus, king of Egypt, as it was in the times of Jerom ^{f176}:

but David tarried still at Jerusalem; which is observed for the sake of the following history; it would have been well for him if he had gone forth with the army himself, then the sin he fell into would have been prevented.

Ver. 2. *And it came to pass in an eveningtide*, etc.] Some time in the afternoon, when the sun began to decline; not in the dusk of the evening, for then the object he saw could not have been seen so distinctly by him:

that David arose from off his bed; having taken a nap in the heat of the day after dinner; indulging himself more than he used to do to sloth and luxury, which prepared him, and led him on the more eagerly to the lust of uncleanness:

and walked upon the roof of the king's house; to refresh himself after his sleep, it being the cool of the day, and the roof of the house being flat and fit to walk upon, as the houses of Judea were; (see ^{<RB>}Deuteronomy 22:8);

and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; in a bath in her garden, or in an apartment in her house, the window being open:

and the woman [was] very beautiful to look upon; of a fine shape and good complexion, and comely countenance; all which were incentives to lust, at which his eye was attracted to, and his heart was ensnared with her.

Ver. 3. *And David sent and inquired after the woman*, etc.] Who she was, what her name, and whether married or unmarried; if the latter, very probably his intention was to marry her, and he might, when he first made the inquiry, design to proceed no further, or to anything that was dishonourable; but it would have been better for him not to have inquired at all, and endeavoured to stifle the motions raised in him at the sight of her:

and [one] said, [is] not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam; who in (^{<RB>}1 Chronicles 3:5); is called Bathshua, and her father Ammiel, which is the same with Eliam reversed:

the wife of Uriah the Hittite? who either was of that nation originally, and became a proselyte; or had sojourned there for a while, and took the name or had it given him, for some exploit he had performed against that people, as Scipio Africanus, and others among the Romans; this was said by one that David inquired of, or heard him asking about her, and was sufficient to have stopped him from proceeding any further, when he was informed she

was another man's wife: some say^{f177} she was the daughter of Ahithophel's son; (see ~~1034~~ 2 Samuel 23:34).

Ver. 4. *And David sent messengers*, etc.] To invite her to his palace:

and took her; not by force, but through persuasion:

and she came in unto him; into the apartment where he was:

and he lay with her; she consenting to it, being prevailed upon, and drawn into it through the greatness and goodness of the man, which might make the sin appear the lesser to her. This is recorded to show what the best of men are, when left to themselves; how strong and prevalent corrupt nature is in regenerate persons, when grace is not in exercise; what need the saints stand in of fresh supplies of grace, to keep them from falling; what caution is necessary to everyone that stands, lest he fall; and that it becomes us to abstain from all appearance of sin, and whatever leads unto it, and to watch and pray that we enter not into temptation; and such a record as this is an argument for the integrity of the Scriptures, that they conceal not the faults of the greatest favourites mentioned in them, as well as it serves to prevent despair in truly penitent backsliders:

for she was purified from her uncleanness; this clause is added in a parenthesis, partly to show the reason of her washing herself, which was not for health and pleasure, and to cool herself in a hot day, but to purify herself from her menstruous pollution, according to the law in (~~1859~~ Leviticus 15:19); the term of her separation being expired; and partly to give a reason why she the more easily consented, and he was the more eager to enjoy her; and in this he sinned, not that he did not lie with an unclean person; but, then, as some observe, he did that which was much worse, he committed adultery; also this may be added to observe, that she was the more apt for conception, as Ben Gersom notes, and to account for the quickness of it, with which the philosopher^{f178} agrees:

and she returned unto her house; whether that evening, or next morning, or how long she stayed, is not said.

Ver. 5. *And the woman conceived*, etc.] Whereby the sin would be discovered, and shame, and disgrace, or worse, would follow upon it:

and sent and told David, and said, I [am] with child; this message she sent to David, that he might think of some ways and means to prevent the

scandal that would fall both upon him and her, and the danger she was exposed unto; fearing the outcries of the people against her, in acting so unfaithful a part to her husband, so brave a man, who was now fighting for his king and country; and the rage and jealousy of her husband when he should come to the knowledge of it, and the death which by the law she was guilty of, even to be stoned with stones, (see ~~4485~~ John 8:5).

Ver. 6. *And David sent to Joab*, etc.] Who was with the army besieging Rabbah, which, according to Bunting^{f179}, was sixty four miles from Jerusalem:

[saying], send me Uriah the Hittite; the scheme David had contrived in his mind was to get Uriah home to his wife for a few days, that it might be thought the child she had conceived was his, whereby the sin of David, and her own, might be concealed:

and Joab sent Uriah to David; not knowing his business, and besides it was his duty to obey his command.

Ver. 7. *And when Uriah was come unto him*, etc.] To David, to whom he came first, before he went to his own house, desirous of knowing what was the special business of the king with him:

David demanded of him how Joab did, and how the people did, and how the war prospered; he asked of the welfare of Joab the general, and of the common soldiers, and of the warriors, as the Targum, the mighty men that went along with Joab, (~~3000~~ 2 Samuel 10:7 11:1). David seems to have been at a loss what to say to him. These questions were so mean and trivial, that it might justly give Uriah some suspicion that it could never be on this account, that he was sent for; since David could not want intelligence of such things, expresses being daily sending him.

Ver. 8. *And David said to Uriah, go down to thy house, and wash thy feet*, etc.] For his refreshment, and to prepare for bed, which was what he wanted to get him to:

and Uriah departed out of the king's house; in order as it might seem to the king to go to his own:

and there followed him a mess [of meat] from the king: no doubt a delicious dish, to eat with his wife before he went to bed, to excite him the more to desire the enjoyment of her this mess consisted, according to

Abarbinel, of bread, wine, and flesh; and who also observes, after Ben Gersom, that the word may be interpreted of a torch to light him home to his house, being night.

Ver. 9. *But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house, with all the servants of his lord,* etc.] The bodyguards, which were placed there to watch the palace in the night season; Uriah first fell into a conversation with these as is highly probable, to whom he was well known, and who might inquire of one and another of their friends in the army; and he being weary, laid himself down among there, and slept:

and went not down to his house; whether the trifling questions David asked him, or the information the guards might give him of his wife being sent for to court; made him suspect something, and so had no inclination to go to this own house; or however so it was ordered by the providence of God, which directed him to act in this manner, that the sin of David and Bathsheba they studied to hide might be discovered.

Ver. 10. *And when they had told David,* etc.] The next morning, either those that went with the mess of meat, or the guards with whom he slept all night:

saying, Uriah went not down to his house; as the king had ordered him; which those persons being acquainted with, informed him of it, as an act of disobedience to him:

David said unto Uriah; having sent for him upon the above information:

camest thou not from [thy] journey? and which was a long one of sixty four miles, as before observed and therefore might well be weary, and want refreshment and rest, and his own house was the most proper place for it; for which reason David suggests he had sent him thither, and did not require nor need his service among his guards:

why [then] didst thou not go down unto thine house? which was the fittest place for him in such circumstances.

Ver. 11. *And Uriah said unto David,* etc.] As an apology for this conduct:

the ark, and Israel and Judah, abide in tents; meaning not the people of Israel and Judah in the land of Canaan; for they did not now dwell in tents, though indeed the ark of the Lord did, (^{XXXV}2 Samuel 7:2), which some think is here referred to; but the armies of Israel and Judah besieging

Rabbah, with whom it seems the ark was, which sometimes was carried with them when they went out to war, (^{900b}1 Samuel 4:4 14:18), though Abarbinel thinks this was not the ark in which were the two tables of stone, and therefore is not called the ark of the covenant, but an ark which was made to put the ephod, and Urim and Thummim in that they might upon occasion inquire of the Lord by them:

and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord are encamped in the open fields: around Rabbah they were besieging; he calls Joab his lord, because he was the chief general under whom he served and the rest of the commanding officers he calls the servants of his lord as distinguished from the common soldiers. The Jews, who are for excusing David from blame in the case of Uriah, observe ^{f180}, that he was guilty of rebellion against David, and so worthy of death not only because he disobeyed his command, in not going to his house when he ordered him but by calling “Joab my lord” in his presence: but this was only a respectable character of his general and no overt act of treason to his king; nor did David so understand it, nor in the least resent it: now seeing such great men, who were far superior to him in rank and office were obliged to lie on the bare ground, he argues:

shall I then go into mine house to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? if he had any suspicion of David’s crime, he might purposely add the last clause; and if not, it was enough to awaken the conscience of David, and cut him to the quick had he not been greatly hardened through the deceitfulness of sin to observe, that a faithful subject and a soldier of his would not allow himself the enjoyment of lawful pleasures, when his fellow soldiers were exposing their lives to danger for their country; and yet he under such circumstances indulged to sinful lusts and criminal pleasures:

[as] thou livest and [as] thy soul liveth I will not do this thing; he swears to it for the confirmation of it; this he did to prevent any further solicitations from the king, or his wife unto it, who were both anxiously desirous of it; for though no mention is made of his wife, yet no doubt she did all she could to prevail upon him to come to his house but all to no purpose; his mind was so bent to the contrary through the overruling providence of God to which it must be ascribed.

Ver. 12. *And David said to Uriah, tarry here today also,* etc.] In his court, when he found he could not persuade him to go to his own house:

and tomorrow I will let thee depart: after he had tried one method more with him:

so Uriah abode in Jerusalem that day and the morrow; not in his own house, but the king's palace.

Ver. 13. *And when David had called him*, etc.] Invited him to sup with him:

he did eat and drink before him; very freely and plentifully:

and he made him drunk: this was another sin of David's, done in order to make him forget his oath and vow, and that being inflamed with wine, desires might be excited in him to go home and lie with his wife; but even this scheme did not succeed:

and at even he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord: in the guard room, where he had lain before:

but went not down to his house; for he was not so drunk but he remembered his oath, and kept his resolution not to go down to his own house; the Lord no doubt working upon his mind and disinclining him to it.

Ver. 14. *And it came to pass in the morning*, etc.] When David was informed that Uriah did not go to his own house, but slept with his servants, Satan put it into his head and heart to take the following wicked and cruel method:

that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent [it] by the hand of Uriah; to have him cut off by the sword of the enemy. If Uriah suspected David's criminal conversation with his wife, he was so true and trusted a servant to him, that he would not open his letter to Joab, which had he, it would have betrayed the base design. No one that knows the story of Bellerophon can read this without thinking of that, they are so much alike; and indeed that seems to be founded upon this, and taken from it with a little alteration. Bellerophon rejecting the solicitations of Sthenobaea, who was in love with him, she prevailed upon her husband Praetus to send letters by him to Jobates (a name similar to Joab), the general of his army, which contained instructions to take care that he was killed; who sent him upon an expedition for that purpose^{f181}.

Ver. 15. *And he wrote in the letter, saying*, etc.] Giving the following orders to Joab:

set ye Uriah is the forefront of the hottest battle: over against that part of the city where the enemy was strongest, and the battle the fiercest, and the stones and arrows were cast the thickest:

and retire ye from him; leave him to himself to combat the enemy alone; who seeing him deserted, would sally out upon him, and the few that might be with him, and slay him:

that he may be smitten, and die; thus he sought to add murder to adultery, and that in the basest manner, and which he accomplished; and this is often the case, that murder follows adultery, either by way of revenge for it, or in order to cover it, as here.

Ver. 16. *And it came to pass, when Joab observed the city*, etc.] Where lay its greatest strength, and where it was best defended; or besieged it, as the Targum:

that he assigned Uriah unto a place where he knew that valiant men [were]; who would not easily give way, and when they saw an opportunity would sally out, Joab cannot be excused from sin, unless he thought that Uriah had been guilty of death, and that David took this way of dispatching him for some political reason; however David was king, and to be obeyed.

Ver. 17. *And the men of the city went out*, etc.] Made a sally out, as Joab expected they would, when they appeared before them at that part of the city where valiant men were:

and fought with Joab; at least with part of his army posted with Uriah:

and there fell [some] of the people of the servants of David: which made David's sin the more heinous, that several lives were lost through the stratagem he devised to procure the death of Uriah; who could not be placed in a dangerous post alone, and therefore others must be sacrificed with him, as were:

and Uriah the Hittite died also; which was the thing aimed at, and the end to be answered by this scheme.

Ver. 18. *Then Joab sent*, etc.] Messengers to David, as soon as Uriah was killed:

and told David all the things concerning the war; how the siege had been carried on; what success they had had, good or ill; what their advantages

and disadvantages; what men they had lost, and especially in one sally of the enemy upon them, for the sake of which the express was sent.

Ver. 19. *And charged the messenger*, etc.] Gave him a particular direction and instruction what he should say at the close of his narrative, according as he should observe the king's countenance to be:

saying, when thou hast made an end of telling the matters of the war unto the king; giving an account of all the events that happened since the siege was begun to that time.

Ver. 20. *And if so be that the king's wrath arise*, etc.] Which might be seen in his countenance, or expressed in his words:

and he say, wherefore approached ye so nigh unto the city when ye did fight? as to expose the king's troops to the enemy on the wall, who by stones or darts greatly annoyed them, or sallied out on them, and killed many of them:

knew ye not that they would shoot from the wall? they must have known that, and therefore should have kept out of the reach of their shot.

Ver. 21. *Who smote Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth?* etc.] The same with Jerubbaal, who was Gideon, (^{<0062>}Judges 6:32); Baal, one part of his name, was the name of an idol, and sometimes called Bosheth or Besheth, which signifies shame, being a shameful idol; Gideon had a son called Abimelech, who was smitten, and it is here asked, by whom?

did not a woman cast a millstone upon him from the wall, that he died in Thebez? which should have been a warning not to go too near the wall of an enemy; the history is recorded in (^{<0062>}Judges 9:52,53);

why went ye nigh the wall? exposing your lives to so much danger, and by which so many lives were lost:

then say thou, thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also; the whole has not been told, the worst of all is, as the messenger was to represent it, that brave gallant soldier Uriah is dead; this Joab ordered to be told last, as knowing very well it would pacify the king's wrath, and was the agreeable news he wanted to hear.

Ver. 22. *So the messenger went*, etc.] From Joab, from the army before Rabbah:

and came; to David in Jerusalem, a course of sixty four miles:

and showed David all that Joab had sent him for; all the events of the war hitherto.

Ver. 23. *And the messenger said unto David*, etc.] The particulars of his account follow:

surely the men prevailed against us; the men of the city of Rabbah, the besieged there, in one onset they made upon them:

and came out unto us in the field; the besiegers that lay encamped there; they sallied out upon them:

and we were upon them, even unto the entering of the gate; rallied upon them, and drove them back, and pursued them to the gate of the city.

Ver. 24. *And the shooters shot from off of the wall upon thy servants*, etc.] Arrows out of their bows, or stones out of their engines; the Israelites following them so closely to the gate of the city, came within the reach of their shot from the wall:

and [some] of the king's servants be dead; killed in the sally upon them, and by the shot from the wall:

and thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also; the messenger did not entirely obey the orders of Joab to wait and observe if the king's wrath arose, but was in haste to tell him the last piece of news; perhaps he had some suspicion, from the manner of Joab's telling him what he should say, that this would be acceptable to the king.

Ver. 25. *Then David said to the messenger*, etc.] Whom he dispatched again to Joab upon the delivery of his message:

thus shall thou say to Joab; in the name of David:

let not this thing displease thee; be not grieved, and cast down, and intimidated at the repulse he had met with, and the loss of so many brave men, and especially Uriah;

for the sword devours one as well as another; officers as well as soldiers the strong as well as the weak, the valiant and courageous as well as the more timorous; the events of war are various and uncertain, and to be submitted to, and not repined at, and laid to heart. David's heart being

hardened by sin, made light of the death of his brave soldiers, to which he himself was accessory; his conscience was very different now from what it was when he cut off the skirt of Saul's robe, and his heart in a different frame from that in which he composed the lamentation over Saul and Jonathan:

make thy battle more strong against the city, and overthrow it; more closely besiege it, more vigorously attack it; assault it, endeavour to take it by storm, and utterly destroy it, razing the very foundations of it: and encourage thou him; which words are either said to the messenger to encourage and animate Joab in David's name, which is not so likely that a messenger should be employed to encourage the general; or rather the words of David to Joab continued, that he would "encourage it", the army under him, who might be disheartened with the rebuff and loss they had met with; and therefore Joab is bid to spirit them up, to carry on the siege with vigour.

Ver. 26. *And when the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead*, etc.] The news of which were soon sent her by David, though it is very probable she knew nothing of the plot to take away his life; and, besides, David chose to have his death published abroad as soon as possible, the more to hide his sin:

she mourned for her husband; expressed tokens of mourning by shedding tears, putting on a mourning habit, seeing no company, and this continued for the space of seven days, it may be, (^{<0813>}1 Samuel 31:13); as little time as possible was spent in this way, and the marriage hastened, that the adultery might not be discovered.

Ver. 27. *And when the mourning was past*, etc.] The seven days were at an end, or sooner; for he stayed not ninety days from the death of her husband, which the Jews in later times enjoined ^{f182}, that it might be known whether with child by her former husband, and so to whom it belonged; and because David did not wait this time, Abarbinel charges it upon him as an additional sin:

David sent, and fetched her to his house; took her home to his palace to live with him:

and she became his wife; he married her according to the usual form of marriage in those days:

and bare him a son; begotten in adultery:

but the thing that David had done displeased the Lord; or “was evil in the eyes of the Lord”^{f183}; for though it was not done in the eyes of men, being scarcely or very little known, yet was in the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro throughout the earth, and sees all things that are done: the adultery he had been guilty of with another man’s wife was abominable to the Lord, and for which, according to the law, both he and she ought to have been put to death, (^{<ORIO>}Leviticus 20:10); the murder of her husband, which he was accessory to, as well as the death of many others, and the marriage of her under such circumstances, were all displeasing to God, and of such an heinous nature, that his pure eyes could not look upon with approbation: the Jews^{f184} endeavour to excuse David from sin; from the sin of murder, by making Uriah guilty of rebellion and treason, as before observed; and from the sin of adultery, by affirming that it was the constant custom for men, when they went out to war, to give their wives a bill of divorce; so that from the time of giving the bill they were not their wives, and such as lay with them were not guilty of adultery; but for this there is no foundation: it is certain David was charged with it by the Lord; he himself owned it, and bewailed it, both that and his blood guiltiness, and the following chapter abundantly proves it.