

*Sunday School Lesson*  
**2 Sam. 11:1-27**  
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**The Bathsheba Affair**



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The focus in this third study on David is his affair with Bathsheba. This is one of the very dark spots in David's career and as such becomes a warning to us about consistent obedience to our God.

**I. Context**

In this third segment of our character study of the life of David, the external history here remains the same as in the first study in 1 Sam. 17. Thus the relevant material, as summarized in the second study in 2 Sam. 6, will be repeated here.

**a. Historical**

Regarding the **external history**, the essence of the first study on David's life provides the needed background for this study. Our passage is also a part of that cohesive history of the Israelites from the exodus to the exile in Babylon of the southern kingdom. This material initially came into existence as detached oral and written stories that were shared and memorized, then passed down from generation to generation until assuming the finalized written form that we know. To be sure, segments most likely came into written expression early on as well, but the bulk of the material existed in oral form for many centuries. The earliest effort to begin the pulling together of large chunks of this material most likely began as a part of the reforms instituted by Josiah (ca. 640 - 609 BCE) in the southern kingdom (2 Kings 23). But it reaches the finalized form that we know either during the exile or just after it in the 500s BCE.

Our passage is a part of the David cycle of stories. The sources of material for understanding the life of David have their origin in several places, as J.M. Myers (*Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v., "David," iPreach) summarizes:

The main sources are the books of SAMUEL and I Kings 1:1-2 (see KINGS, I AND II, § 1), paralleled, with significant omissions and additions, in I Chr. 11-29 (see CHRONICLES, I AND II). Many of the materials of Samuel and Kings are contemporary, or nearly so, with the times of David -- notably the court records of II Sam. 9:1-20--and are manifestly some of the most authentic historical writings of the OT.

David ruled Israel from 1000 to 962 BCE. He began with control over the southern tribes from Hebron, then gradually consolidated his control over all twelve tribes.

The Bathsheba affair took place during a time of continued warfare with both the Philistines who occupied the coastal region of the eastern Mediterranean Sea, and groups of people to the east of the Jordan. In the Deuteronomic story of David, this incident is one of the episodes during the middle part of David's reign. We have no way of dating it precisely within the 1000 to 962 BCE time frame. But from the third

David cycle, 2 Sam. chaps 1-24, it would seem to be located somewhere in the middle, or beyond, of that appx. 40 year reign.

The particular enemies being opposed by David are identified in chapter ten as the [Ammonites](#) and the [Arameans](#). G.M. Landes (“Ammon, Ammonites,” *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, iPreach) summarizes this period of the Ammonite history:

**d. Israelite conquest of Ammon: Ammon as vassal state under David and Solomon (ca. 1000-922).**

During the early years of the tenth century Israel’s new king, David, became a good friend of Nahash (II Sam. 10:2). When Hanun, son of Nahash, succeeded his father on the Ammonite throne, conditions were soon created for renewed conflict between Ammon and Israel (II Sam. 10:3-5). The Ammonites sent for military assistance from the S Aramean states of Beth-rehob, Maacah, and Tob (II Sam. 10:6; I Chr. 19:6). The Aramean army quickly descended into S Gilead and encamped before the Reubenite town of Medaba. When Joab reached the vicinity of Rabbah, he discovered the Arameans already closing in (II Sam. 10:9; I Chr. 19:10). He was forced to divide his forces, sending the stronger and more capable troops against the Arameans, while leaving the rest to resist the Ammonites (II Sam. 10:9-10; I Chr. 19:10-11). Fortunately, the “picked men of Israel” were strong enough to beat back the Aramean attack, while troops under ABISHAI held the Ammonites at bay (II Sam. 10:13-14; I Chr. 19:14-15). But the victory was not decisive. David therefore launched a devastating expedition against Aram, making it a vassal (II Sam. 8:5-6; I Chr. 18:5-6). In the following year he concentrated on Ammon, sending another strong army under Joab’s leadership, which ravaged the Ammonite countryside and besieged Rabbah (II Sam. 11:1, 22-24; 12:26; I Chr. 20:1). With the fall of Rabbah, Ammon became another Israelite vassal state.

Throughout the United Monarchy (ca. 961-922), Ammon remained subservient to Israel. It appears that David appointed a viceroy from the old Ammonite royal family to rule over the land, for when David fled to Mahanaim, among those who came to minister to him and his army was “Shobi the son of Nahash from Rabbah of the Ammonites” (II Sam. 17:27). Solomon probably continued David’s policy of keeping the governorship of Ammon within the old royal family. Undoubtedly the Ammonites, while under Israelite suzerainty, shared in the wealth and prosperity of the Solomonic era. Even before their conquest by David, they must already have had a successful trading state. They were among the first of the Transjordan peoples to take full advantage of their position on the edge of the Syrian Desert to gain substantial control of the camel-caravan routes for their own profit. In such an ethnically diverse kingdom as Solomon’s, it was inevitable that cultural and religious syncretism would develop, and we learn that among the foreign women Solomon loved were Ammonite women (I Kings 11:1), who eventually influenced him to build a sanctuary to their god Milcom (see MOLECH) on the mountain opposite Jerusalem (I Kings 11:7). The name of one of these Ammonite women, Naamah, mother of Rehoboam, is preserved by biblical tradition (I Kings 14:21, 31; II Chr. 12:13), which marks the first clear historical instance of Ammonite blood being introduced into the Israelite royal family.

The Arameans were a nomadic group of people to whom Abraham belonged as a descendent from the earlier groups. The LXX identifies them as Syrians. R.A. Bowman (“Arameans,” *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, iPreach) summarizes the history during the united monarchy of David and Solomon:

**5. Arameans and Israelites.** By the period of the judges (ca. 1225-1020) there was a strong concentration of Arameans about the sources of the Jordan River, and small Aramean states lined the N and NE borders of the land claimed by the Hebrews. E of the Sea of Galilee, contiguous to the regions claimed by Manasseh and Naphtali along the W border of the land of Bashan, were two small states, Geshur and Maacah, which the Hebrews could not conquer (Josh. 13:13). Geshur furnished for David’s harem the daughter of its king Talmai, and she became the mother of Absalom (II Sam. 3:3; 13:37-38). Her granddaughter Maacah became the wife of Rehoboam (I Kings 15:2; II Chr. 11:20-22) and a queen mother to the time of King Asa II Chr. 15:16). It was to his grandfather in Geshur that Absalom fled when he had killed his brothers (II Sam. 13:37-38). The Arameans of neighboring Maacah, closely associated with Geshur, are traditionally related to the Nahor Arameans of Harran (Gen. 22:24), as are those of Tubihi (Tebah of Gen. 22:24) of Zobah (I Chr. 18:8 LXX). The capital of Maacah, Abil-beth-maacah (Abil el Qamh), S of Dan, overlooking the marshes of Lake Huleh, temporarily protected Sheba after his unsuccessful rebellion against David (II Sam. 20:15). The tiny state of Tob, which sent troops against David (II Sam. 10:8), was located near Edrei in Transjordan, at Et-Tayyibe on the road from Bosra to Der’a; it was in Tob that Jephthah sought asylum (Judg. 11:3-5).

Associated with Zobah and Maacah against David were the Arameans of Aram-beth-rehob II Sam. 10:8). This state, among the Arameans hired by Ammon against David, was situated near the border of Hamath (Num. 13:21) with the city Laish-dan in its valley (Judg. 18:28-29), near the source of the Jordan River. Tradition explains that the Ammonites, who hired the Arameans, as well as their neighbors the Moabites, were also Arameans, related to Abraham and the Nahor Arameans of Harran through Lot, son of Haran (Gen. 11:26-27; 19:30-38).

Most of the Aramean groups were small city-states relatively weak by themselves. The inscription of Zakir of Hamath, as well as II Sam. 8:10, indicates that they fought with one another and could readily be hired as

mercenaries when it was to their own advantage (II Chr. 16:1-4). The strength of the Arameans lay in their readiness and ability to enter into more or less temporary alliances to meet an existing threat. At Qarqar, a “royal city” of Hamath, a coalition of about eleven such small states in 853 B.C. under the leadership of Damascus fought the Assyrians under Shalmaneser III to a stalemate and frustrated his plans to subjugate all of Syria and Palestine.

The reign of David, thus, represents a decisive turn in Israelite history. Previously these people groups had either harassed or dominated the Israelites, although David had enjoyed relatively peaceful relationships with many of them early on. 2 Sam. 10 becomes a turning point where David subdues both these people groups as well as others in an expansion of his kingdom and the strengthening of its borders against foreign invasion.

As the map indicates, both these groups lay in the transjordan region to the east and northeast of the promised land.

With 2 Sam. 10, we are prepared to better understand the depths of David’s foul deed with Bathsheba in chapter eleven. His military successes with these groups evidently created an arrogance that would lead to disaster personally. And that personal failure would bring trouble not just for him and his family, but would plague his reign and the Israelites people for centuries to come.

**b. Literary**

2 Sam. 11 is a part of the third David cycle of stories contained in 2 Samuel that runs from 9:1 to 20:26. These episodes depict the middle period of David’s reign where he is mostly concerned with consolidating and securing his kingdom, especially against foreign invaders who saw Israel as an attractive area for expansion of their territory. David had to fight enemies on both the eastern and western sides of the promised land. Larry Bandstra (*Reading the Old Testament*) provides a helpful outline of 1 and 2 Samuel that helps position our passage contextually.

- I. Samuel Cycle (1 Samuel 1-12)
  - A. Samuel’s Birth, Dedication and Early Ministry (1:1-4:1a)
  - B. The Travels of the Ark (4:1b-7:17)
  - C. Search for a King (8:1-12:25)
- II. Saul Cycle (1 Samuel 13-31)
  - A. Saul’s disobedience (13:1-15:35)
  - B. Saul versus David (16:1-31:13)
- III. David Cycle (2 Samuel 1-24)
  - A. David’s rise to power (1:1-8:18)



**B. Dynastic succession struggles (9:1-20:26)**

**C. David's last days (21:1-24:25)**

The literary **genre** (form) of chapter eleven is again straight narrative material, written in the typical fashion of the Deuteronomic historian. For clearer understanding of the Bathsheba affair one must include both chapters ten and twelve since chapter ten sets up the situation and chapter twelve brings the situation with Bathsheba to its theological climax with the condemnation of David by the prophet Nathan. A.A. Anderson (vol. 11, *Word Biblical Commentary*, Logos Systems) provides some insight into the literary character of chapter eleven:

From the literary point of view vv 1–27a are fairly self-contained and form a single narrative unit but theologically they require chap. 12 for their completion because the story ends with an unrepentant David and without any divine judgment or critique on his behavior.

McCarter (290) is convinced that chaps. 11–12 are yet another contribution from the same prophetic author who produced 1 Sam 8:11–17 and similar passages. In his view, 11:1–27 may have been “received intact in the prophetic writer’s source” while his own contribution may well be confined to 11:27b–12:26 or 11:27b–12:15a (McCarter, 291).

Gunn (*King David*, 38–49) has stressed the importance of traditional motifs in the David stories, and his general conclusion is equally valid for our particular chapter: “It is reasonable, therefore, to argue at the same time both for there to be genuine historical antecedents to the story and for it to have acquired non-historical characteristics through its transmission in tradition” (49). However, for us the practical differentiation is far from easy.

## II. Message

The **internal literary structure** of chapter eleven is characterized by Anderson (*WBC*) as:

Chap. 11 deals with four main episodes which provide the basic structure of the narrative (see Augustin, *BZ 27* [1983] 150). In the present form of the narrative, v 1 serves as an introduction and provides the historical setting. The first main event is David’s affair with Bathsheba (vv 2–5), followed by David’s efforts to tackle the unpleasant consequences created by his adultery. So vv 6–13 narrate in a lively and moving manner how the king’s attempts to deceive the cuckolded husband foundered on the unsuspecting Uriah’s loyalty and uprightness. Ackroyd (102) has well remarked that “Uriah drunk is more pious than David sober!” The third episode (vv 14–25) depicts both David’s scheme to murder Uriah and its eventual implementation. Essentially, it was a murder dressed up as a hero’s death; this method must have been chosen because it provided a convenient final solution. The last episode (vv 26–27a) concludes this series of events, both tragic and unsavory. The culprits receive their immediate “reward” and they get each other: Bathsheba becomes David’s wife.

This is a common division of the subunits of material, and thus will become the basis for our study of chapter eleven. Ganse Little (*Interpreter’s Bible*, exposition section) characterizes this in terms of a drama from a narrative critical perspective that is a quite helpful summary of chaps 11 and 12:

It is first desirable to see clearly the story of David and Bathsheba in the intricate and highly dramatic relationships of its various parts to the central theme. Some of its values are best apprehended when we study it as drama of the most gripping and searching kind.

**The Prologue.**—(a) The temptation of the eye: common to all men, part of our physical heritage, not sin. (b) The lustful thought: common to all men, the threshold of sin, to be fought against as contrary to the will of God because contrary to the highest welfare of our neighbor. (c) The inner decision: sin. So Jesus in Matt. 5:28.

**Act I. Scene 1.**—David’s act of adultery with Bathsheba brings about the unexpected complication of Bathsheba’s pregnancy.

**Scene 2.**—David’s clever strategem: the summoning of Uriah, an outstanding warrior, “one of thirty” (see 23:39); David’s desire probably not completely selfish—he wished to protect both Uriah and Bathsheba as well as himself.

**Scene 3.**—The second unforeseen complication: Uriah’s high-minded (not suspicious) refusal to re-establish intimate relations with his wife while the army was in the field (see Exeg. on 11:5-13).

**Act II. Scene 1.**—David is unsuccessful in his attempt to secure protection through awakening drunken desire in Uriah. Again David’s first thought is to protect Uriah’s home against the disastrous effects of Bathsheba’s obedience to the king’s lust. David is revealed as not wanting to marry Bathsheba at this juncture, else he would have instituted direct action from the beginning. David’s conscience hurts him as he foresees the tragic effects of his own passing fancy.

**Scene 2.**—David signs Uriah’s death warrant. The Gordian knot is to be cut, failing fruitless efforts to untie it. Sin is like quicksand; the more energetic the human effort to extricate oneself, the deeper the involvement.

**Scene 3.—Uriah is killed and David takes Bathsheba to wife.** This was not mere lust, but neither can we believe it was overwhelming devotion. The sentimentalizing of David's relationship to Bathsheba does a disservice to the biblical narrative and to the moral involved. The story nowhere indicates that David was especially devoted to Bathsheba. A very helpful and illuminating commentary upon this whole relationship can be found in Gladys Schmitt's historical novel, *David the King*.<sup>6</sup> It has blemishes in its treatment of biblical fact at points in David's career, but its handling of David's relationships with Bathsheba and with Solomon is masterly. David married Bathsheba to protect himself, her, and her unborn child. His decision was based on pragmatic grounds more than on love. Bathsheba's feelings are not clear, due to the controlling circumstance of her own precarious position as a married woman pregnant by another man, and as a woman (low status to begin with) completely subject to the king's will.

**Act III. Scene 1.—The visit of the prophet Nathan to the king.** God is not mocked! The semisincere desire of a "good" man to protect all concerned is sheerest hypocrisy in the light of the stark nature of sin in the sight of God. Nathan's courage is of a high order.

**Scene 2.—The punishment: the death of the child.** Symbolic of the worst result of sin: the suffering of the innocent. James again assesses the inescapable relationship between immoral cause and tragic effect: "Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin; and sin when it is full-grown brings forth death" (Jas. 1:15).

**Epilogue.—The birth of Solomon.** God makes the wrath of men to praise him (Ps. 76:10). "How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!" (Rom. 11:33.) Solomon's name of Jedidiah: "Favored of God." God's mercy brings good out of evil. A very different idea from the pagan philosophy, "Why not do evil that good may come?" (Rom. 3:8). The forgiveness of God utilized a result of David's sin for the advancement of his sovereign purpose for David's kingdom. Maltbie D. Babcock's hymn states the eternal truth both as to the discipline and the forgiveness of sin:

This is my Father's world,  
O let me ne'er forget  
That tho' the wrong seems oft so strong,  
God is the ruler yet

We will follow the more common division of the text for clarity's sake:

#### a. The first sin, v. 1-5

##### NASB

1 Then it happened in the spring, at the time when kings go out *to battle*, that David sent Joab and his servants with him and all Israel, and they destroyed the sons of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David stayed at Jerusalem. 2 Now when evening came David arose from his bed and walked around on the roof of the king's house, and from the roof he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful in appearance. 3 So David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" 4 David sent messengers and took her, and when she came to him, he lay with her; and when she had purified herself from her uncleanness, she returned to her house. 5 The woman con-

##### NRSV

1 In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab with his officers and all Israel with him; they ravaged the Ammonites, and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem. 2 It happened, late one afternoon, when David rose from his couch and was walking about on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; the woman was very beautiful. 3 David sent someone to inquire about the woman. It was reported, "This is Bathsheba daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite." 4 So David sent messengers to get her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she was purifying herself after her period.) Then she returned to her house. 5 The woman conceived; and she

##### NLT

1 The following spring, the time of year when kings go to war, David sent Joab and the Israelite army to destroy the Ammonites. In the process they laid siege to the city of Rabbah. But David stayed behind in Jerusalem. 2 Late one afternoon David got out of bed after taking a nap and went for a stroll on the roof of the palace. As he looked out over the city, he noticed a woman of unusual beauty taking a bath. 3 He sent someone to find out who she was, and he was told, "She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite." 4 Then David sent for her; and when she came to the palace, he slept with her. (She had just completed the purification rites after having her menstrual period.) Then she returned home. 5 Later, when Bathsheba discovered that

ceived; and she sent and told David, and said, "I am pregnant."

sent and told David, "I am pregnant."

she was pregnant, she sent a message to inform David.

### Notes:

Verse one sets up the situation with a rather curious introduction: "1 In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab with his officers and all Israel with him; they ravaged the Ammonites, and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem." Joab, David's military commander, is dispatched to take the royal capital of the Ammonites. The actual taking of the capital is narrated in [12:26-31](#). As is described in the *New Bible Commentary*,

"It was normal for military enterprises to cease in the winter months, so David resumed his operations against Ammon *In the spring*. V 1 does not imply that David's duty was to accompany the army. His presence in person was hardly necessary when an Israelite victory was so certain. The Ammonites' army was quickly *destroyed* and their capital city *besieged*. By now the Israelite army was powerful, and David's position very secure. It is all too often the case that a sense of ease and security is the prelude to spiritual and moral failure."

When David spotted Bathsheba taking a bath on a rooftop, she caught his attention and desire. Most kings of that day would simply take such a woman into their harem, even though married, and no questions would be asked by anyone in their kingdom. But the Israelites operated under a different code of conduct that applied to everyone, even the king. Bathsheba (=daughter of Sheba) is identified as the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah, the Hittite. Interestingly, Bathsheba will surface in the genealogy of Jesus in Matt. 1:6. Uriah belonged to a elite set of military troops, the "Thirty" (2 Sam. 23:39), which may indicate nobility. Although of Hittite origin, he was a trusted member of the Israelite army. The probable reason for Bathsheba taking a bath is indicated in 4b: it was a part of the purification process after completing her menstruation period. David anticipated a "one-night stand" but when news reached him afterwards (v. 5) that she was pregnant, David's world changed dramatically.

The applications of these verses are obvious. Sexual relations with a woman other than one's wife are just as wrong today as they were for David. On that the Bible is very clear. The sixth commandment in the Decalogue (Ex. 20:14 / Deut. 5:18) is very clear: "[You shall not commit adultery.](#)" The oral tradition on this was widely understood and taught during David's time; he knew this commandment well. Yet, in a moment of temptation during a period of feeling power and authority from his military successes, he yielded to his flesh and subsequently paid dearly for it. The inclusion of this story in the history of one of Israel's greatest kings reminds us of the Israelite and later Jewish willingness to face the dark sides of their heroes. Other cultures of that era would have possibly narrated such a story as though it were a perfectly legitimate action for royalty, or else would have omitted it from their records. In our day when sexual activity between unmarried people is so common, these verses remind us again of the higher standards that God's people are held accountable to by Almighty God.

### b. The attempted coverup vv. 6-13

#### NASB

6 Then David sent to Joab, saying, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." So Joab sent Uriah to David. 7 When Uriah came to him, David asked concerning the welfare of

#### NRSV

6 So David sent word to Joab, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent Uriah to David. 7 When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab and the people fared,

#### NLT

6 So David sent word to Joab: "Send me Uriah the Hittite." 7 When Uriah arrived, David asked him how Joab and the army were getting along and how the war was



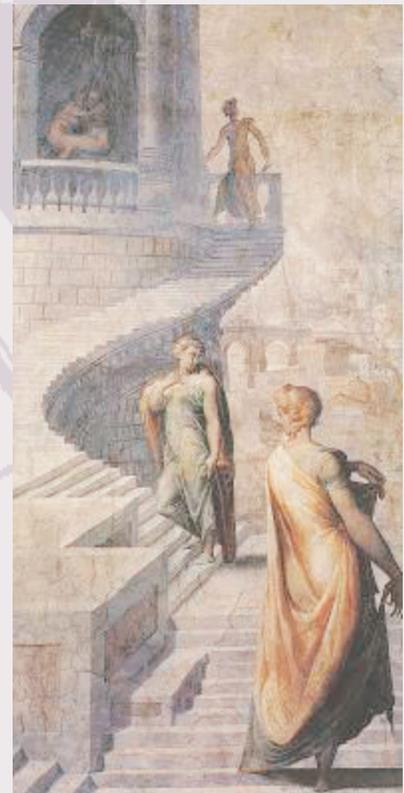
Joab and the people and the state of the war. 8 Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house, and wash your feet." And Uriah went out of the king's house, and a present from the king was sent out after him. 9 But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house. 10 Now when they told David, saying, "Uriah did not go down to his house," David said to Uriah, "Have you not come from a journey? Why did you not go down to your house?" 11 Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in temporary shelters, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field. Shall I then go to my house to eat and to drink and to lie with my wife? By your life and the life of your soul, I will not do this thing." 12 Then David said to Uriah, "Stay here today also, and tomorrow I will let you go." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. 13 Now David called him, and he ate and drank before him, and he made him drunk; and in the evening he went out to lie on his bed with his lord's servants, but he did not go down to his house.

and how the war was going. 8 Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house, and wash your feet." Uriah went out of the king's house, and there followed him a present from the king. 9 But Uriah slept at the entrance of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house. 10 When they told David, "Uriah did not go down to his house," David said to Uriah, "You have just come from a journey. Why did you not go down to your house?" 11 Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah remain in booths; and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field; shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do such a thing." 12 Then David said to Uriah, "Remain here today also, and tomorrow I will send you back." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day. On the next day, 13 David invited him to eat and drink in his presence and made him drunk; and in the evening he went out to lie on his couch with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house.

progressing. 8 Then he told Uriah, "Go on home and relax." David even sent a gift to Uriah after he had left the palace. 9 But Uriah wouldn't go home. He stayed that night at the palace entrance with some of the king's other servants. 10 When David heard what Uriah had done, he summoned him and asked, "What's the matter with you? Why didn't you go home last night after being away for so long?" 11 Uriah replied, "The Ark and the armies of Israel and Judah are living in tents, and Joab and his officers are camping in the open fields. How could I go home to wine and dine and sleep with my wife? I swear that I will never be guilty of acting like that." 12 "Well, stay here tonight," David told him, "and tomorrow you may return to the army." So Uriah stayed in Jerusalem that day and the next. 13 Then David invited him to dinner and got him drunk. But even then he couldn't get Uriah to go home to his wife. Again he slept at the palace entrance.

#### Notes:

With the schattering words, "I am pregnant," David then set out to coverup his sinful action by bringing Uriah home from the battlefield in order to create the impression that Bathsheba's child belonged to her husband. A message was sent to the commander Joab to send Uriah home from the battlefield with the outward intention to learn news of how the campaign was going (vv. 6-7), but David's true intention was to get Uriah home so that he would sleep with his wife and "legitimize" Bathsheba's baby. Initially, he told Uriah to go home to refresh himself (v. 8) but Uriah's loyalty would not allow him to indulge himself in normal marital pleasures while his comrades were still on the battlefield (v. 9). When David confronted him the next morning with this (v. 10), Uriah responds with a solemn oath of loyalty (v. 11). The battlefield at Rabbah was quite a distance from Jerusalem to the northeast and evidently from Uriah's depiction Joab and mercenary units were conducting the campaign while the national army ("Israel and Judah", v. 11) was still stationed at Jerusalem in reserve. David's



“plan B” then was to get Uriah drunk and send him home to his wife as the solution to the problem (v. 12-13).

As we read this segment, the scene gets darker and darker. Sin, especially when exposed and potentially damaging, always seeks a dark place to hide. Attempted coverup almost always accompanies this. We are familiar with this in our culture and perhaps in our own lives over the years. What David did here is not atypical. Instead, his actions characterize human nature, especially when it is sensitive to accountability from both others and from God. Yet, hiding our sins and covering up our sins typically only leads to worse sins, as vv. 14-25 illustrate.

Ironically, Uriah’s loyalty cost him his life. Had he given in and gone home, his life would have been spared.

### c. The second sin, vv. 14-25

#### NASB

14 Now in the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent *it* by the hand of Uriah. 15 He had written in the letter, saying, "Place Uriah in the front line of the fiercest battle and withdraw from him, so that he may be struck down and die." 16 So it was as Joab kept watch on the city, that he put Uriah at the place where he knew there *were* valiant men. 17 The men of the city went out and fought against Joab, and some of the people among David's servants fell; and Uriah the Hittite also died. 18 Then Joab sent and reported to David all the events of the war. 19 He charged the messenger, saying, "When you have finished telling all the events of the war to the king, 20 and if it happens that the king's wrath rises and he says to you, 'Why did you go so near to the city to fight? Did you not know that they would shoot from the wall? 21 'Who struck down Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? Did not a woman throw an upper millstone on him from the wall so that he died at Thebez? Why did you go so near the wall?'--then you shall say, 'Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.' " 22 So the messenger departed and came and reported to David all that Joab had sent him *to tell*. 23 The messenger said to David, "The men prevailed against us and came out

#### NRSV

14 In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah. 15 In the letter he wrote, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, so that he may be struck down and die." 16 As Joab was besieging the city, he assigned Uriah to the place where he knew there were valiant warriors. 17 The men of the city came out and fought with Joab; and some of the servants of David among the people fell. Uriah the Hittite was killed as well. 18 Then Joab sent and told David all the news about the fighting; 19 and he instructed the messenger, "When you have finished telling the king all the news about the fighting, 20 then, if the king's anger rises, and if he says to you, "Why did you go so near the city to fight? Did you not know that they would shoot from the wall? 21 Who killed Abimelech son of Jerubbaal? Did not a woman throw an upper millstone on him from the wall, so that he died at Thebez? Why did you go so near the wall?' then you shall say, "Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead too.' " 22 So the messenger went, and came and told David all that Joab had sent him to tell. 23 The messenger said to David, "The men gained an advantage over us, and came out against us in the field; but we drove them

#### NLT

14 So the next morning David wrote a letter to Joab and gave it to Uriah to deliver. 15 The letter instructed Joab, "Station Uriah on the front lines where the battle is fiercest. Then pull back so that he will be killed." 16 So Joab assigned Uriah to a spot close to the city wall where he knew the enemy's strongest men were fighting. 17 And Uriah was killed along with several other Israelite soldiers. 18 Then Joab sent a battle report to David. 19 He told his messenger, "Report all the news of the battle to the king. 20 But he might get angry and ask, 'Why did the troops go so close to the city? Didn't they know there would be shooting from the walls? 21 Wasn't Gideon's son Abimelech killed at Thebez by a woman who threw a millstone down on him?' Then tell him, 'Uriah the Hittite was killed, too.'" 22 So the messenger went to Jerusalem and gave a complete report to David. 23 "The enemy came out against us," he said. "And as we chased them back to the city gates, 24 the archers on the wall shot arrows at us. Some of our men were killed, including Uriah the Hittite."

against us in the field, but we pressed them as far as the entrance of the gate. 24 "Moreover, the archers shot at your servants from the wall; so some of the king's servants are dead, and your servant Uriah the Hittite is also dead."

back to the entrance of the gate. 24 Then the archers shot at your servants from the wall; some of the king's servants are dead; and your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also."

#### Notes:

When it became clear that under no circumstances was Uriah going to sleep with his wife, then David devised "plan C": get rid of Uriah so he could "legitimately" marry Bathsheba. Bruce Birch (2 Samuel, New Interpreter's Bible, iPreach) has a helpful summation of these verses:

It is chilling how easily cover-up plan shifts to murder plot. As before, it begins with a message from David to Joab, but this time Uriah must carry the cruel order for his own death (v. 14). The letter orders Joab to place Uriah in the midst of heavy fighting and withdraw support (v. 15). Thus Uriah is to be given a hero's death in battle. He is to be honored in death for the sake of preserving David's honor in life. This section of the story is dominated by forms of the verb "to die" (יָמַת *ûmût*, vv. 15, 17, 21, 24, 26). God's anointed king has become an agent of death. Self-interested use of power has led David into a deadly chain of events from seizure to deception to death.

Joab quickly carries out David's order, and Uriah is killed (vv. 16-17), but not without further cost. The effort to expose Uriah leads to the death of others from among "the servants of David" (v. 17). This leads to an elaborate reporting of events to David. Joab sends a messenger to David (v. 18) but anticipates that David will become angry at the loss of troops that resulted from a foray so close to the city walls (vv. 19-20) and that he will recall the death of Abimelech when a woman threw a millstone on him from the wall (v. 21; cf. Judg 9:50-55).<sup>284</sup> If David responds in this angry manner, the messenger is to add the news, "Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead too" (v. 21b).

In v. 22, the messenger makes his report to David, and the Hebrew text does not report an angry response on his part. Nevertheless, vv. 23-24 report a speech by the messenger justifying the tactic that took them close to the wall and cost lives among the servants of David. He ends with the news that Uriah was also dead. The Greek text of these verses does include the angry response of David in virtually identical language to the anticipation of his anger by Joab. This fuller text makes more sense out of the messenger's defensive response and the mollifying news of Uriah's death.

David sends a callous and cynical response back to Joab (v. 25): "Do not let this thing be evil in your eyes, for the sword devours now one, now another." The NRSV and the NIV soften the opening phrase and in the process lose a precise parallel with the closing comment of the chapter (v. 27b). David presumes to say that what has happened is not an evil thing. It is just the unfortunate cost of war. Get on with the siege. David engages in a moral cover-up to match the cover-up of his actual deeds. Perhaps he is trying to convince himself as much as Joab that this was an act of war and not an act of murder. He is not so calmly accepting of the costs of war when the reported death is that of his own son Absalom (18:33). David speaks as if the matter is finished. He imagines his sinful deeds can be masked by the inevitable loss of life that takes place in war.

Now David has added to his sin of adultery the sin of murder (the commandment just before adultery in the Decalogue; Exod. 20:13 / Deut. 5:17). In an interesting play on these two commandments -- perhaps with this episode of David in mind -- James 2:10-11 declares: "10 For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. 11 For the one who said, 'You shall not commit adultery,' also said, 'You shall not murder.' Now if you do not commit adultery but if you murder, you have become a transgressor of the law." Certainly David became a "transgressor of the Law" that God had established with Moses on Mt. Sinai.

What a warning these verses are to us! One sin leads to another and we find ourselves on a downward spiral into ruin. Certainly this was where David was headed.

#### d. Another coverup, vv. 26-27a

##### NASB

25 Then David said to the messenger, "Thus you shall say to Joab, 'Do not let this thing displease you, for the sword devours

##### NRSV

25 David said to the messenger, "Thus you shall say to Joab, 'Do not let this matter trouble you, for the sword devours now one

##### NLT

25 "Well, tell Joab not to be discouraged," David said. "The sword kills one as well as another! Fight harder next time, and con-

one as well as another; make your battle against the city stronger and overthrow it'; and so encourage him." 26 Now when the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband. 27 When the *time of mourning* was over, David sent and brought her to his house and she became his wife; then she bore him a son.

and now another; press your attack on the city, and overthrow it.' And encourage him." 26 When the wife of Uriah heard that her husband was dead, she made lamentation for him. 27 When the mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife, and bore him a son.

quer the city!" 26 When Bathsheba heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him. 27 When the period of mourning was over, David sent for her and brought her to the palace, and she became one of his wives. Then she gave birth to a son.

### Notes:

Bathsheba followed traditional custom of going through a period of mourning for the death of her husband -- without knowing the truth about his death. Then David achieves his plan C goal: to legitimize the illegitimate child by bringing Bathsheba into his household as his wife.

But this dastardly deed would not go unnoticed by God. The second part of verse 27, which sets up chapter 12, declares: "[But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord...](#)" 2 Sam. 12:1-23 will describe two expressions of God's wrath on David: 1) the prophet Nathan publicly condemns David for what he has done, thus exposing the truth (vv. 1-15a); and 2) the illegitimate child will die (vv. 15b-19). This prompts David to reach out to God in repentance and remorse (vv. 20-23). Traditionally, [Psalm 51](#) is thought to have been the outcome of David's repentance here.

One additional insight is important here, beyond the obvious. It is provided by Bruce Birch (2 Samuel, *New Interpreter's Bible*, iPreach) and grows out of tracing how this episode has been interpreted down through the years:

Evidence that this story strikes close to home can be seen in the many efforts to soften the impact of the story. This is apparent in the endless fascination with the tale of David and Bathsheba through the generations and the many efforts to find some justification or mitigating circumstances that avoid the simple conclusion that David, the hero of our story, has become an adulterer and a murderer. These efforts are seen not only in scholarly treatments, from the ancient rabbis to modern academics, but also in numerous treatments of the David and Bathsheba story in art, poetry, literature, and film.<sup>285</sup>

As modern readers, teachers, and preachers, we must face the harsh realities of the story and avoid the temptation to soften them. To do so will mean countering many distorted readings of this story already present in past interpretation and popular cultural. These distorted readings take several forms:

**Scapegoating.** Perhaps the most common distortion of this story through the ages is the effort to portray Bathsheba as a seductress or co-conspirator, thereby transforming David to some degree from perpetrator to victim. The story gives us nothing explicit to substantiate such views and, in fact, shows little interest in Bathsheba as a subject at all. Yet, the following excerpt from a turn-of-the-century treatment of this story has been typical of many treatments of the episode down to the present: "No one of good moral character could have acted as she did in her seduction and conquest of David. She doubtless exposed herself that the king might be tempted; she willingly came to the palace when she was sent for; and conspired with David for the murder of her husband."<sup>286</sup> This scapegoating of Bathsheba as the temptress who led David astray was present in some ancient rabbinic efforts to soften David's guilt, and it is still present in some church education curriculum treatments. Recent movie and television treatments of the story uniformly show Bathsheba engaging in seductive behavior and usually portray her as the initiator of the relationship by means of such behavior.<sup>287</sup> Joseph Heller's novel on David has Bathsheba say, "I made up my mind to meet you. A king and all that too—who could resist? So I began bathing on my roof every evening to attract you."<sup>288</sup> These efforts to make Bathsheba the initiator are unfortunately consistent with a common defense in cases of the rape and abuse of women: "She asked for it." Even the NRSV's and the NIV's softening of the verb "take" to make David's messengers merely "getting" Bathsheba (v. 4a) shows our unwillingness to face the coercion in David's action. This would suggest that it might be difficult to face similarly coercive behaviors between the sexes in our own experience.

**Rationalizing.** Another common effort to soften the harsh realities of this story is the search for mitigating circumstances that help to explain, if not justify, David's actions. In a 1985 film, *King David*,<sup>289</sup> Bathsheba reveals to a shocked David that Uriah is an abusive husband, thus giving David a noble motive for the act of murder and

the rescue of an abused woman. The ancient rabbis sought to lessen David's guilt in a variety of ways. Some claimed the chain of events was due to the marriage of a Hittite man to an Israelite wife and that the marriage to David rectified that unacceptable state. Others claimed that Satan appeared as a bird and when David shot an arrow at it, the screen shielding Bathsheba at her bath was toppled, and the chain of events was begun.<sup>290</sup> Another form of rationalizing David's great sin has been to claim that his repentance was correspondingly great, as evidenced by Psalm 51:1. Such a traditional argument usually seems to mean that we can ignore the sordid story of 1 Samuel 11:1.

*Romanticizing.* Some readers prefer to describe Bathsheba as the beautiful woman with whom "David fell in love when he saw her bathing." What better way to soften the harshness of this story than to make it a love story? Indeed, David and Bathsheba often make the list of the world's great lovers, alongside Romeo and Juliet, Anthony and Cleopatra, and others. Hollywood could not resist this temptation, and many people's view of this story is colored by the sweeping romance of Gregory Peck and Susan Hayward in Darryl F. Zanuck's 1951 film *David and Bathsheba*.<sup>291</sup> This film presents Uriah as a soldier with no interest in his wife, David as lonely in his royal office, and Bathsheba as a neglected wife who finds her true love in David. But the biblical text does not give us a romance. David has no interest in an ongoing relationship or marriage until Bathsheba becomes pregnant, and even then he prefers the solution of making Uriah the father. Romances do not begin with "taking" and end with murder, and we romanticize this tale at our own peril. There is too much in present popular culture that romanticizes violence and the abuse of women.

When we preach and teach this story, we must be clear: It is a story of a fallen hero. One cannot help recalling David's own lament over Saul and Jonathan, "How the mighty have fallen" (2 Sam 1:19). This time it is David who has fallen, and the fall is not in battle but in moral character. The difficulty we have in facing the harsh reality of this story is a testimony to the ease with which we excuse our own sin. But if we can face David's sin for what it is, we may better face our own. This theme will continue in the confrontation with Nathan in chap. 12.

To preach this story will require an honest facing of our own complicity with David. To face the sin of our greatest biblical heroes can allow us to face our own impulses to use others for the fulfillment of our own desires and to face the tragic ease with which we can become entangled in growing webs of sinful acts as we try to cover up and avoid accountability for our own manipulation of others. This story is especially directed to those whose positions of power, leadership, and influence provide constant opportunity for manipulating or exploiting those in more vulnerable positions. Our newspapers today are filled with stories of those—from presidents to pastors—who have abused the power of their offices for the fulfillment of their own self-interested desires or gains. Perhaps we need to preach this bleak side of David's story more often, not simply to point fingers at the sins of the mighty but to acknowledge how often we excuse and emulate them.

Prof. Birch has powerfully reminded us of the human tendency to "water down" sin. In whatever way possible, we want to diminish its seriousness and destructive consequences. But it has always been, and remains, profoundly serious business with God. Anything that causes God's Son to die on Calvary is deadly serious business. We would do well to take it as seriously as God does. No matter how we try to play down what David did -- as illustrated in the 300 plus year old painting below -- sin is sin and has devastating consequences!



2 Samuel 11:1 WTT וַיְהִי לְתַשׁוּבַת הַשָּׁנָה לַעֲתָו צָאֵת הַמְּלָאכִים  
וַיִּשְׁלַח הַדָּוָד אֶת־יוֹאָב וְאֶת־עֲבָדָיו עִמּוֹ וְאֶת־כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל  
וַיִּשְׁחָתוּ אֶת־בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן וַיִּצְרוּ עַל־רַבָּה וְדָוִד יוֹשֵׁב  
בִּירוּשָׁלַם׃

2 וַיְהִי לַעֲתָו הָעָרֵב וַיָּקָם דָּוִד מֵעַל מִשְׁכְּבוֹ וַיִּתְהַלֵּךְ עַל־גֶּגֶז  
בֵּית־הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיֵּרָא אִשָּׁה רַחֲצַת מֵעַל הַגֶּגֶז וְהָאִשָּׁה טוֹבַת  
מְרֵאָה כְּאֵד׃

3 וַיִּשְׁלַח הַדָּוָד וַיִּדְרֹשׁ לָאִשָּׁה וַיֹּאמֶר הֲלוֹא־זֹאת בַּת־שִׁבְעָה  
בַּת־אֲלִיעֶם אִשְׁת׃ אֹרִיָה הַחַתָּי׃

4 וַיִּשְׁלַח הַדָּוָד מְלָאכִים וַיִּקְחֶהָ וַתָּבוֹא אֵלָיו וַיִּשְׁכַּב עִמָּה  
וְהִיא מִתְקַדֶּשֶׁת מִטְּמֵאָתָה וַתֵּשֶׁב אֶל־בֵּיתָהּ׃

5 וַתַּהַר הָאִשָּׁה וַתִּשְׁלַח וַתַּגִּד לְדָוִד וַתֹּאמֶר הִרָה אֲנִי׃

6 וַיִּשְׁלַח הַדָּוָד אֶל־יוֹאָב שְׁלַח אֵלַי אֶת־אֹרִיָה הַחַתָּי וַיִּשְׁלַח  
יֹאָב אֶת־אֹרִיָה אֶל־הַדָּוָד׃

7 וַיָּבֵא אֹרִיָה אֵלָיו וַיִּשְׁאַל הַדָּוָד לְשָׁלוֹם יוֹאָב וְלְשָׁלוֹם הָעָם  
וְלְשָׁלוֹם הַמְּלַחְמָה׃

8 וַיֹּאמֶר הַדָּוָד לְאֹרִיָה רֵד לְבֵיתְךָ וּרְחֵץ רִגְלֶיךָ וַיֵּצֵא אֹרִיָה  
מִבֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ וַתֵּצֵא אַחֲרָיו מִשְׁאֵת הַמֶּלֶךְ׃

9 וַיִּשְׁכַּב אֹרִיָה פֶתַח בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵת כָּל־עֲבָדֵי אֲדֹנָיו וְלֹא  
יָרַד אֶל־בֵּיתוֹ׃

10 וַיַּגִּדוּ לְדָוִד לֵאמֹר לֹא־יָרַד אֹרִיָה אֶל־בֵּיתוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר הַדָּוָד  
אֶל־אֹרִיָה הֲלוֹא מְדַרְדֵּךְ אַתָּה בָּא מִדָּוַע לֹא־יָרַדְתָּ  
אֶל־בֵּיתְךָ׃

11 וַיֹּאמֶר אֹרִיָה אֶל־הַדָּוָד הָאֲרוֹן וְיִשְׂרָאֵל וַיְהוּדָה יֹשְׁבֵים  
בַּסָּפוֹת וְאֲדֹנָי יוֹאָב וְעֲבָדֵי אֲדֹנָי עַל־פְּנֵי הַשָּׂדֶה חֲנִים וְאֲנִי  
אָבוֹא אֶל־בֵּיתִי לֶאֱכֹל וְלִשְׁתּוֹת וְלִשְׁכַּב עִם־אִשְׁתִּי חֵידָה וְחַי  
נַפְשִׁיךָ אִם־אֵעֲשֶׂה אֶת־הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה׃

12 וַיֹּאמֶר הַדָּוָד אֶל־אֹרִיָה שֵׁב בְּזֶה גַם־הַיּוֹם וּמָחָר אֲשַׁלְּחֶךָ  
וַיֵּשֶׁב אֹרִיָה בִירוּשָׁלַם בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא וּמִמָּחָרְתָּ׃

13 וַיִּקְרָאֵלוּ הַדָּוָד וַיֹּאכַל לְפָנָיו וַיִּשְׁכַּרְהוּ וַיֵּצֵא בְעָרֵב  
לְשַׁכַּב בְּמִשְׁכְּבוֹ עִם־עֲבָדֵי אֲדֹנָיו וְאֶל־בֵּיתוֹ לֹא יָרַד׃

14 וַיְהִי בַבֶּקֶר וַיִּכְתֹּב הַדּוֹד סֵפֶר אֶל-יֹאבֵב וַיִּשְׁלַח בְּיַד אֹרִיֵהוּ  
15 וַיִּכְתֹּב בַּסֵּפֶר לֵאמֹר הִבֹּי אֶת-אֹרִיֵהוּ אֶל-מוֹלַת פְּנֵי  
הַמְּלַחְמָה הַחֲזֹקָה וְשִׁבְתֶּם מֵאַחֲרָיו וְנָכַח וּמָתָּ ס  
16 וַיְהִי בְשָׁמֹר יֹאבֵב אֶל-הָעִיר וַיִּתֵּן אֶת-אֹרִיֵהוּ אֶל-הַמְּקוֹם  
אֲשֶׁר יָדַע כִּי אֲנָשֵׁי-חֵיל שָׁם  
17 וַיִּצְאוּ אֲנָשֵׁי הָעִיר וַיִּלַּחֲמוּ אֶת-יֹאבֵב וַיִּפֹּל מִן-הָעַם  
מֵעֲבָרֵי הַדּוֹד וַיָּמָת גַּם אֹרִיֵהוּ הַחֲתָנִי  
18 וַיִּשְׁלַח יֹאבֵב וַיַּגֵּד לְדָוִד אֶת-כָּל-דִּבְרֵי הַמְּלַחְמָה  
19 וַיִּצְוּ אֶת-הַמְּלָאָךְ לֵאמֹר פְּכַלּוּתְךָ אֵת כָּל-דִּבְרֵי הַמְּלַחְמָה  
לְדַבֵּר אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ  
20 וְהָיָה אִם-תַּעֲלֶה חֲמַת הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאָמַר לְךָ מִדַּוְעַ נִגַּשְׁתָּם  
אֶל-הָעִיר לְהִלָּחֵם הֲלֹא יָדַעְתֶּם אֵת אֲשֶׁר-יָרִוּ מֵעַל הַחֹמָה  
21 מִיַּהֲפֹה אֶת-אֲבִימֶלֶךְ בְּיָרֵבְשָׁת הַלֹּא-אִשָּׁה הַשְּׁלִיכָה  
עָלָיו פֶּלֶח רָכַב מֵעַל הַחֹמָה וַיָּמָת בְּתַבִּיץ לָמָּה נִגַּשְׁתֶּם  
אֶל-הַחֹמָה וְאָמַרְתָּ גַם עַבְדְּךָ אֹרִיֵהוּ הַחֲתָנִי מָתָּ  
22 וַיִּגְדֵךְ הַמְּלָאָךְ וַיָּבֵא וַיַּגֵּד לְדָוִד אֵת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר שָׁלַחוּ יֹאבֵב  
23 וַיֹּאמֶר הַמְּלָאָךְ אֶל-דָּוִד כִּי-גִבְרֹו עָלִינוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים וַיִּצְאוּ  
אֵלֵינוּ הַשָּׂדֶה וְנִהְיָה עֲלֵיהֶם עַד-פֶּתַח הַשַּׁעַר  
24 (וַיִּרְאוּ) (וַיִּרְוּ) (הַמֹּרְאִים) (הַמֹּרְרִים) אֶל-עַבְדְּךָ מֵעַל  
הַחֹמָה וַיָּמוּתוּ מֵעֲבָרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְגַם עַבְדְּךָ אֹרִיֵהוּ הַחֲתָנִי מָתָּ  
ס  
25 וַיֹּאמֶר דָּוִד אֶל-הַמְּלָאָךְ כֹּה-תֹאמַר אֶל-יֹאבֵב אֶל-יָרֵעַ  
בְּעֵינֶיךָ אֶת-הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה כִּי-כֹזֵה וְכֹזֵה תֹאכַל הַחֲרֹב הַחֲזֹק  
מִלַּחְמָתְךָ אֶל-הָעִיר וְהִרְסָה וְחִזְקָהּ  
26 וְתִשְׁמַע אִשְׁתְּ אֹרִיֵהוּ כִּי-מָת אֹרִיֵהוּ אִשָּׁה וְתִסְפָּד  
עַל-בַּעֲלָהּ  
27 וַיַּעֲבֹר הָאֵבֶל וַיִּשְׁלַח דָּוִד וַיֵּאֲסֹפָה אֶל-בֵּיתוֹ וַתַּהֲיִלּוּ  
לְאִשָּׁה וַתֵּלֶד לוֹ בֶן וַיִּרְעַ הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה דָּוִד בְּעֵינָיו  
יְהוָה פ

**LXT 2 Samuel 11:1** καὶ ἐγένετο ἐπιστρέψαντος τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ εἰς τὸν καιρὸν τῆς ἐξοδίας τῶν βασιλέων καὶ ἀπέστειλεν Δαυὶδ τὸν Ἰωαβ καὶ τοὺς παῖδας αὐτοῦ μετ' αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸν πάντα Ἰσραὴλ καὶ διέφθειραν τοὺς υἱοὺς Ἀμμων καὶ διεκάθισαν ἐπὶ Ραββαθ καὶ Δαυὶδ ἐκάθισεν ἐν Ἱερουσαλημ

<sup>2</sup> καὶ ἐγένετο πρὸς ἐσπέραν καὶ ἀνέστη Δαυὶδ ἀπὸ τῆς κοίτης αὐτοῦ καὶ περιεπάτει ἐπὶ τοῦ δώματος τοῦ οἴκου τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ εἶδεν γυναῖκα λουομένην ἀπὸ τοῦ δώματος καὶ ἡ γυνὴ καλὴ τῷ εἶδει σφόδρα <sup>3</sup> καὶ ἀπέστειλεν Δαυὶδ καὶ ἐζήτησεν τὴν γυναῖκα καὶ εἶπεν οὐχὶ αὕτη Βηρσαβεε θυγάτηρ Ἐλιαβ γυνὴ Ουριου τοῦ Χετταίου <sup>4</sup> καὶ ἀπέστειλεν Δαυὶδ ἀγγέλους καὶ ἔλαβεν αὐτὴν καὶ εἰσῆλθεν πρὸς αὐτόν καὶ ἐκοιμήθη μετ' αὐτῆς καὶ αὕτη ἀγιαζομένη ἀπὸ ἀκαθαρσίας αὐτῆς καὶ ἀπέστρεψεν εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτῆς <sup>5</sup> καὶ ἐν γαστρὶ ἔλαβεν ἡ γυνὴ καὶ ἀποστείλασα ἀπήγγειλεν τῷ Δαυὶδ καὶ εἶπεν ἐγὼ εἰμι ἐν γαστρὶ ἔχω

<sup>6</sup> καὶ ἀπέστειλεν Δαυὶδ πρὸς Ἰωαβ λέγων ἀποστείλον πρὸς με τὸν Ουριαν τὸν Χετταῖον καὶ ἀπέστειλεν Ἰωαβ τὸν Ουριαν πρὸς Δαυὶδ <sup>7</sup> καὶ παραγίνεται Ουρίας καὶ εἰσῆλθεν πρὸς αὐτόν καὶ ἐπηρώτησεν Δαυὶδ εἰς εἰρήνην Ἰωαβ καὶ εἰς εἰρήνην τοῦ λαοῦ καὶ εἰς εἰρήνην τοῦ πολέμου <sup>8</sup> καὶ εἶπεν Δαυὶδ τῷ Ουρια καταβῆθι εἰς τὸν οἶκόν σου καὶ νύψαι τοὺς πόδας σου καὶ ἐξῆλθεν Ουρίας ἐξ οἴκου τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ ἐξῆλθεν ὀπίσω αὐτοῦ ἄρσις τοῦ βασιλέως <sup>9</sup> καὶ ἐκοιμήθη Ουρίας παρὰ τῆ θύρα τοῦ βασιλέως μετὰ τῶν δούλων τοῦ κυρίου αὐτοῦ καὶ οὐ κατέβη εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ <sup>10</sup> καὶ ἀνήγγειλαν τῷ Δαυὶδ λέγοντες ὅτι οὐ κατέβη Ουρίας εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ καὶ εἶπεν Δαυὶδ πρὸς Ουριαν οὐχὶ ἐξ οἴκου σὺ ἔρχῃ τί ὅτι οὐ κατέβης εἰς τὸν οἶκόν σου <sup>11</sup> καὶ εἶπεν Ουρίας πρὸς Δαυὶδ ἡ κιβωτὸς καὶ Ἰσραὴλ καὶ Ἰουδας κατοικοῦσιν ἐν σκηναῖς καὶ ὁ κύριός μου Ἰωαβ καὶ οἱ δοῦλοι τοῦ κυρίου μου ἐπὶ πρόσωπον τοῦ ἀγροῦ παρεμβάλλουσιν καὶ ἐγὼ εἰσελεύσομαι εἰς τὸν οἶκόν μου φαγεῖν καὶ πιεῖν καὶ κοιμηθῆναι μετὰ τῆς γυναικός μου πῶς ζῆ ἡ ψυχὴ σου εἰ ποιήσω τὸ ῥῆμα τοῦτο <sup>12</sup> καὶ εἶπεν Δαυὶδ πρὸς Ουριαν κάθισον ἐνταῦθα καὶ γε σήμερον καὶ αὔριον ἐξαποστελῶ σε καὶ ἐκάθισεν Ουρίας ἐν Ἱερουσαλημ ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ καὶ τῇ ἐπαύριον <sup>13</sup> καὶ ἐκάλεσεν αὐτόν Δαυὶδ καὶ ἔφαγεν ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ καὶ ἔπιεν καὶ ἐμέθυσεν αὐτόν καὶ ἐξῆλθεν ἐσπέρας τοῦ κοιμηθῆναι ἐπὶ τῆς κοίτης αὐτοῦ μετὰ τῶν δούλων τοῦ κυρίου αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ οὐ κατέβη

<sup>14</sup> καὶ ἐγένετο πρῶτὸν καὶ ἔγραψεν Δαυὶδ βιβλίον πρὸς Ἰωαβ καὶ ἀπέστειλεν ἐν χειρὶ Ουριου <sup>15</sup> καὶ ἔγραψεν ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ λέγων εἰσάγαγε τὸν Ουριαν ἐξ ἐναντίας τοῦ πολέμου τοῦ κραταίου καὶ ἀποστραφήσεσθε ἀπὸ ὀπισθεν αὐτοῦ καὶ πληγήσεται καὶ ἀποθάνεται <sup>16</sup> καὶ ἐγενήθη ἐν τῷ φυλάσσειν Ἰωαβ ἐπὶ τὴν πόλιν καὶ ἔθηκεν τὸν Ουριαν εἰς τὸν τόπον οὗ ἦδει ὅτι ἄνδρες δυνάμειος ἐκεῖ <sup>17</sup> καὶ ἐξῆλθον οἱ ἄνδρες τῆς πόλεως καὶ ἐπολέμουν μετὰ Ἰωαβ καὶ ἔπεσαν ἐκ τοῦ λαοῦ ἐκ τῶν δούλων Δαυὶδ καὶ ἀπέθανεν καὶ γε Ουρίας ὁ Χετταῖος <sup>18</sup> καὶ ἀπέστειλεν Ἰωαβ καὶ ἀπήγγειλεν τῷ βασιλεῖ πάντας τοὺς λόγους τοῦ πολέμου <sup>19</sup> καὶ ἐνετείλατο τῷ ἀγγέλῳ λέγων ἐν τῷ συντελέσαι σε πάντας τοὺς λόγους τοῦ πολέμου λαλήσαι πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα <sup>20</sup> καὶ ἔσται ἐὰν ἀναβῆ ὁ θυμὸς τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ εἴπη σοι τί ὅτι ἠγγίσατε πρὸς τὴν πόλιν πολεμῆσαι οὐκ ἦδειτε ὅτι τοξεύουσιν ἀπάνωθεν τοῦ τείχους <sup>21</sup> τίς ἐπάταξεν τὸν Αβιμελεχ υἱὸν Ἰεροβααλ οὐχὶ γυνὴ ἔρριψεν ἐπ' αὐτόν κλάσμα μύλου ἀπάνωθεν τοῦ τείχους καὶ ἀπέθανεν ἐν Θαμασι ἵνα τί προσηγάγετε πρὸς τὸ τεῖχος καὶ ἐρεῖς καὶ γε Ουρίας οἱ δοῦλός σου ὁ Χετταῖος ἀπέθανεν

<sup>22</sup> καὶ ἐπορεύθη ὁ ἄγγελος Ἰωαβ πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα εἰς Ἱερουσαλημ καὶ παρεγένετο καὶ ἀπήγγειλεν τῷ Δαυὶδ πάντα ὅσα ἀπήγγειλεν αὐτῷ Ἰωαβ πάντα τὰ ῥήματα τοῦ πολέμου καὶ ἐθυμώθη Δαυὶδ πρὸς Ἰωαβ καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς τὸν ἄγγελον ἵνα τί προσηγάγετε πρὸς τὴν πόλιν τοῦ πολεμῆσαι οὐκ ἦδειτε ὅτι πληγήσεσθε ἀπὸ τοῦ τείχους τίς ἐπάταξεν τὸν Αβιμελεχ υἱὸν Ἰεροβααλ οὐχὶ γυνὴ ἔρριψεν ἐπ' αὐτόν κλάσμα μύλου ἀπὸ τοῦ τείχους καὶ ἀπέθανεν ἐν Θαμασι ἵνα τί προσηγάγετε πρὸς τὸ τεῖχος <sup>23</sup> καὶ εἶπεν ὁ ἄγγελος πρὸς Δαυὶδ ὅτι ἐκραταίωσαν ἐφ' ἡμᾶς οἱ ἄνδρες καὶ ἐξῆλθον ἐφ' ἡμᾶς εἰς τὸν ἀγρόν καὶ ἐγενήθημεν ἐπ' αὐτοὺς ἕως τῆς θύρας τῆς πύλης <sup>24</sup> καὶ ἐτόξευσαν οἱ τοξεύοντες πρὸς τοὺς παῖδάς σου ἀπάνωθεν τοῦ τείχους καὶ ἀπέθαναν τῶν παίδων τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ γε ὁ δοῦλός σου Ουρίας ὁ Χετταῖος ἀπέθανεν <sup>25</sup> καὶ εἶπεν Δαυὶδ πρὸς τὸν ἄγγελον τάδε ἐρεῖς πρὸς Ἰωαβ μὴ ποιηρὸν ἔστω ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖς σου τὸ ῥῆμα τοῦτο ὅτι ποτὲ μὲν οὕτως καὶ ποτὲ οὕτως φάγεται ἡ μάχαιρα κραταίωσον τὸν πόλεμόν σου πρὸς τὴν πόλιν καὶ κατασπασον αὐτὴν καὶ κραταίωσον αὐτόν

<sup>26</sup> καὶ ἤκουσεν ἡ γυνὴ Ουριου ὅτι ἀπέθανεν Ουρίας ὁ ἀνὴρ αὐτῆς καὶ ἐκόψατο τὸν ἄνδρα αὐτῆς <sup>27</sup> καὶ διῆλθεν τὸ πένθος καὶ ἀπέστειλεν Δαυὶδ καὶ συνήγαγεν αὐτὴν εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐγενήθη αὐτῷ εἰς γυναῖκα καὶ ἔτεκεν αὐτῷ υἱόν καὶ ποιηρὸν ἐφάνη τὸ ῥῆμα ὃ ἐποίησεν Δαυὶδ ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖς κυρίου

## NASB

1 Then it happened in the spring, at the time when kings go out *to battle*, that David sent Joab and his servants with him and all Israel, and they destroyed the sons of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David stayed at Jerusalem. 2 Now when evening came David arose from his bed and walked around on the roof of the king's house, and from the roof he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful in appearance. 3 So David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" 4 David sent messengers and took her, and when she came to him, he lay with her; and when she had purified herself from her uncleanness, she returned to her house. 5 The woman conceived; and she sent and told David, and said, "I am pregnant."

6 Then David sent to Joab, *saying*, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." So Joab sent Uriah to David. 7 When Uriah came to him, David asked concerning the welfare of Joab and the people and the state of the war. 8 Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house, and wash your feet." And Uriah went out of the king's house, and a present from the king was sent out after him. 9 But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house. 10 Now when they told David, saying, "Uriah did not go down to his house," David said to Uriah, "Have you not come from a journey? Why did you not go down to your house?" 11 Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in temporary shelters, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field. Shall I then go to my house to eat and to drink and to lie with my wife? By your life and the life of your soul, I will not do this thing." 12 Then David said to Uriah, "Stay here today also, and tomorrow I will let you go." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. 13 Now David called him, and he ate and drank before him, and he made him drunk; and in the evening he went out to lie on his bed with his lord's servants, but he did not go down to his house.

14 Now in the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent *it* by the hand of Uriah. 15 He had written in the letter, saying, "Place Uriah in the front line of the fiercest battle and withdraw from him, so that he may be struck down and die." 16 So it was as Joab kept watch on the city, that he put Uriah at the place where he knew there *were* valiant men. 17 The men of the city went out and fought against Joab, and some of the people among David's servants fell; and Uriah the Hittite also died. 18 Then Joab sent and reported to David all the events of the war. 19 He charged the messenger, saying, "When you have finished telling all the events of the war to the king, 20 and if it happens that the king's wrath rises and he says to you, 'Why did you go so near to the city to fight? Did you not know that they would shoot from the wall? 21 'Who struck down Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? Did not a woman throw an upper millstone on him from the wall so that he died at Thebez? Why did you go so near the wall?'--then you shall say, 'Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.' " 22 So the messenger departed and came and reported to David all that Joab had sent him *to tell*. 23 The messenger said to David, "The men prevailed against us and came out against us in the field, but we pressed them as far as the entrance of the gate. 24 "Moreover, the archers shot at your servants from the wall; so some of the king's servants are dead, and your servant Uriah the Hittite is also dead."

25 Then David said to the messenger, "Thus you shall say to Joab, 'Do not let this thing displease you, for the sword devours one as well as another; make your battle against the city stronger and overthrow it'; and so encourage him." 26 Now when the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband. 27 When the *time of* mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house and she became his wife; then she bore him a son. But the thing that David had done was evil in the sight of the LORD.

## NRSV

1 In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab with his officers and all Israel with him; they ravaged the Ammonites, and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem. 2 It happened, late one afternoon, when David rose from his couch and was walking about on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; the woman was very beautiful. 3 David sent someone to inquire about the woman. It was reported, "This is Bathsheba daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite." 4 So David sent messengers to get her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she was purifying herself after her period.) Then she returned to her house. 5 The woman conceived; and she sent and told David, "I am pregnant."

6 So David sent word to Joab, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent Uriah to David. 7 When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab and the people fared, and how the war was going. 8 Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house, and wash your feet." Uriah went out of the king's house, and there followed him a present from the king. 9 But Uriah slept at the entrance of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house. 10 When they told David, "Uriah did not go down to his house," David said to Uriah, "You have just come from a journey. Why did you not go down to your house?" 11 Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah remain in booths; and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field; shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do such a thing." 12 Then David said to Uriah, "Remain here today also, and tomorrow I will send you back." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day. On the next day, 13 David invited him to eat and drink in his presence and made him drunk; and in the evening he went out to lie on his couch with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house.

14 In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah. 15 In the letter he wrote, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, so that he may be struck down and die." 16 As Joab was besieging the city, he assigned Uriah to the place where he knew there were valiant warriors. 17 The men of the city came out and fought with Joab; and some of the servants of David among the people fell. Uriah the Hittite was killed as well. 18 Then Joab sent and told David all the news about the fighting; 19 and he instructed the messenger, "When you have finished telling the king all the news about the fighting, 20 then, if the king's anger rises, and if he says to you, 'Why did you go so near the city to fight? Did you not know that they would shoot from the wall?' 21 Who killed Abimelech son of Jerubbaal? Did not a woman throw an upper millstone on him from the wall, so that he died at Thebez? Why did you go so near the wall?' then you shall say, 'Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead too.'" 22 So the messenger went, and came and told David all that Joab had sent him to tell. 23 The messenger said to David, "The men gained an advantage over us, and came out against us in the field; but we drove them back to the entrance of the gate. 24 Then the archers shot at your servants from the wall; some of the king's servants are dead; and your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also."

25 David said to the messenger, "Thus you shall say to Joab, 'Do not let this matter trouble you, for the sword devours now one and now another; press your attack on the city, and overthrow it.' And encourage him." 26 When the wife of Uriah heard that her husband was dead, she made lamentation for him. 27 When the mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife, and bore him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord,

## NLT

1 The following spring, the time of year when kings go to war, David sent Joab and the Israelite army to destroy the Ammonites. In the process they laid siege to the city of Rabbah. But David stayed behind in Jerusalem. 2 Late one afternoon David got out of bed after taking a nap and went for a stroll on the roof of the palace. As he looked out over the city, he noticed a woman of unusual beauty taking a bath. 3 He sent someone to find out who she was, and he was told, "She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite." 4 Then David sent for her; and when she came to the palace, he slept with her. (She had just completed the purification rites after having her menstrual period.) Then she returned home. 5 Later, when Bathsheba discovered that she was pregnant, she sent a message to inform David.

6 So David sent word to Joab: "Send me Uriah the Hittite." 7 When Uriah arrived, David asked him how Joab and the army were getting along and how the war was progressing. 8 Then he told Uriah, "Go on home and relax." David even sent a gift to Uriah after he had left the palace. 9 But Uriah wouldn't go home. He stayed that night at the palace entrance with some of the king's other servants. 10 When David heard what Uriah had done, he summoned him and asked, "What's the matter with you? Why didn't you go home last night after being away for so long?" 11 Uriah replied, "The Ark and the armies of Israel and Judah are living in tents, and Joab and his officers are camping in the open fields. How could I go home to wine and dine and sleep with my wife? I swear that I will never be guilty of acting like that." 12 "Well, stay here tonight," David told him, "and tomorrow you may return to the army." So Uriah stayed in Jerusalem that day and the next. 13 Then David invited him to dinner and got him drunk. But even then he couldn't get Uriah to go home to his wife. Again he slept at the palace entrance.

14 So the next morning David wrote a letter to Joab and gave it to Uriah to deliver. 15 The letter instructed Joab, "Station Uriah on the front lines where the battle is fiercest. Then pull back so that he will be killed." 16 So Joab assigned Uriah to a spot close to the city wall where he knew the enemy's strongest men were fighting. 17 And Uriah was killed along with several other Israelite soldiers. 18 Then Joab sent a battle report to David. 19 He told his messenger, "Report all the news of the battle to the king. 20 But he might get angry and ask, 'Why did the troops go so close to the city? Didn't they know there would be shooting from the walls? 21 Wasn't Gideon's son Abimelech killed at Thebez by a woman who threw a millstone down on him?' Then tell him, 'Uriah the Hittite was killed, too.'" 22 So the messenger went to Jerusalem and gave a complete report to David. 23 "The enemy came out against us," he said. "And as we chased them back to the city gates, 24 the archers on the wall shot arrows at us. Some of our men were killed, including Uriah the Hittite."

25 "Well, tell Joab not to be discouraged," David said. "The sword kills one as well as another! Fight harder next time, and conquer the city!" 26 When Bathsheba heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him. 27 When the period of mourning was over, David sent for her and brought her to the palace, and she became one of his wives. Then she gave birth to a son. But the LORD was very displeased with what David had done.