

From the Rabbi's Desk

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Stories with a Twist

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King Solomon and the Ark

Insights into Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 107b

(Revised September 2020)



Background to Our Story

The Biblical Story: II Samuel Chapter 11

1. And it was, at the return of the year, at the time of the going out of kings [to battle], and David sent Joab and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David stayed in Jerusalem. **2.** And it came to pass, at the time of evening, that David arose from his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house, and he saw a woman bathing, from the roof; and the woman was very beautiful. **3.** And David sent, and inquired about the woman. And he said: "Is this not Batsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" **4.** And David sent messengers, and he took her and she came to him and he lay with her: and she was purified from her uncleanness; and she returned to her house. **5.** And the woman conceived; and she sent, and she told David, and she said: "I am pregnant." **6.** And David sent to Joab, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent Uriah to David. **7.** And Uriah came to him, and David inquired concerning the welfare of Joab, and the peace of the people, and the welfare of the war. **8.** And David said to Uriah: "Go down to your house, and wash your feet." And Uriah departed from the king's house, and there followed him the king's food. **9.** And 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.** And they told David saying: "Uriah did not go down to his house." And David said to Uriah, "Have you not come from a journey? Why did you not go down to your house?" **11.** And Uriah said to David: "The ark and Israel and Judah dwell in booths, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are encamped in the open field; and shall I come to my house to eat and to drink and to live with my wife? By your life and by the life of my soul, if I will do this thing." **12.** And David said to Uriah: "Remain here today also, and

tomorrow I will send you off." And Uriah stayed in Jerusalem that day and the morrow. **13.** And David called him, and he ate before him, and he drank, and he made him drunk; and he went out in the evening to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but to his house he did not go down. **14.** And it came to pass, in the morning, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and he sent it by the hand of Uriah. **15.** And he wrote in the letter saying: "Place Uriah at the forefront of the fiercest battle, and go away from him, so that he will be hit and will die." **16.** And it came to pass, when Joab kept watch upon the city that he assigned Uriah to the place where he knew that there were valiant men. **17.** And the men of the city went out, and fought with Joab and some of the people of the servants of David fell; and Uriah the Hittite also died. **18.** And Joab sent and told David all the facts concerning the war. **19.** And he charged the messenger saying: 'When you have finished telling the king all the facts concerning the war. **20.** And it shall be if the king's anger is aroused, and he says to you: "Why did you approach [so near] the city to wage battle? Did you not know that they would shoot from upon the wall? **21.** Who smote Abimelech the son of Jerubesheth? Did not a woman throw an upper millstone upon him from upon the wall, and he died [there] at Thebez? Why did you approach the wall?" And you shall say: "Also your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead." **22.** And the messenger went, and he came and told David all that Joab had sent him for. **23.** And the messenger said to David, "When the men prevailed over us and came out against us to the field, then we came upon them as far as the entrance of the gate. **24.** And the shooters shot at your servants from upon the wall, and some of the king's servants died, and also your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead." **25.** And David said to the messenger, "So shall you say to Joab; Let not this thing displease you, for the sword devours many time this number; strengthen your battle against the city, and destroy it, and encourage him." **26.** And the wife of Uriah the Hittite heard that Uriah her husband was dead, and she mourned over her husband. **27.** And the mourning [period] passed, and David sent and gathered her to his house. And she became his wife, and she bore him a son. And the thing that David did was displeasing to the Lord.

? Why did King David encourage Uriah to go back to his home and be with his wife?

Bonus ? How do we know that King David knew his actions were reprehensible?

The Text: Babylonia Talmud Sanhedrin 107b

אמר לפניו: "רבונו של עולם, מחול לי על אותו עון". "מחול לך". "עשה עמי אות לטובה, ויראו שנאי ויבשו כי אתה ה' עזרתני ונתמתני". אמר ליה: "בתיך איני מודיע, אבל אני מודיע בתיי שלמה בנד".

בשעה שבנה שלמה את בית המקדש ביקש להכניס ארון לבית קדשי הקדשים. דבקו שערים זה בזה. אמר שערים וארבעה רגנות ולא נענה. אמר: "שאו שערים ראשיכם והנשאו פתחי עולם ויבוא מלך הכבוד מי זה מלך הכבוד ה' עזוז וגבור ה' גבור מלחמה, ונאמר: 'שאו שערים ראשיכם ושאו פתחי עולם ויבוא מלך הכבוד' וגו'. ולא נענה.

פיון שאמר: "ה' אלהים אל תשב פני משיחך זכרה לחסדי דויד עבדך", מיד נענה. באותה שעה נהפכו פני שונאי דוד בשולי קדירה, ונדעו כל ישראל שמחל לו הקדוש ברוך הוא על אותו העון.

David said before Him [God]: Master of the Universe, pardon me for this sin.

God said to him: It is forgiven for you.

David requested: *"Perform on my behalf a sign for good, that they that hate me may see it and be put to shame"* (Psalms 86:17); show me a sign in my lifetime so that everyone will know that You have forgiven me.

God said to him: In your lifetime I will not make it known that you were forgiven, but I will make it known in the lifetime of your son, Solomon.

The Gemara describes the event through which David's forgiveness was made known:

When Solomon built the Temple and sought to bring the Ark into the Holy of Holies, the gates clung together and could not be opened.

Solomon uttered twenty-four songs of praise, and his prayer was not answered. He said: *"Lift up your heads, you gates, and be you lifted up, you everlasting doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is the King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle"* (Psalms 24:7-8). And it is stated: *"Lift up your heads, you gates, yea, lift them up, you everlasting doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who then is the King of glory? The Lord of hosts; He is the King of glory. Selah"* (Psalms 24:9-10), and he was not answered.

Once he said: *"O Lord God, turn not away the face of Your anointed; remember the good deeds of David Your servant"* (II Chronicles 6:42), he was immediately answered, and the gates opened (II Chronicles 7:1).


At that moment, the faces of all of David's enemies turned dark like the charred bottom of a pot. And all of the Jewish people knew that the Holy One, Blessed be He, had forgiven him for that sin.



Explaining the Story

What is the sequence of events that take place in the story?

Comprehension and Analysis Questions

Bonus  From our story, how do we know that King David's repentance was sincere?

? King David asked for a sign that God forgave him. God answered him that this sign would come after his death. Why do you think such a sign would be important after his death?

? Why do you think King Solomon didn't invoke his father's name from the beginning?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

Answer 3 _____

? From our story, what can we learn about the relationship between King Solomon and his father?

? What lesson do you think God wanted to teach King Solomon? How did King Solomon learn it?

"The Twist" – Or the Lessons We Can Learn from the Text

! If God can forgive, so can you!



Artscroll's Translation

[David] said before [the Holy One, Blessed is He]: - Master of the Universe!
- Forgive me for that sin!

The Holy One, Blessed is He, replied: You are forgiven.

David then requested (Psalms 86:17): "*Display for me a sign for good, so that my enemies may see it and be ashamed, for You, Hashem, will have helped and consoled me.*"

[The Holy One, Blessed is He,] said to [David]: - During your lifetime, I will not make it known publicly that I have forgiven you. - However, I shall make it known publicly during the lifetime of your son, Solomon.

The Gemara describes the event through which David's forgiveness was made known:

At the time that Solomon built the Holy Temple, - he [Solomon] sought to bring the Ark into the Holy of Holies. However, the gates of the Holy of Holies clung to each other miraculously and could not be opened.

Solomon recited twenty-four songs of prayer, - but he was not answered and the gates remained closed.

He said (Psalms 24:7-9): "*Raise up your heads, O gates, and be uplifted, you everlasting entrances, so that the King of Glory may enter! - Who is this King of Glory? HASHEM, the mighty and strong, HASHEM, the strong in battle. - And it is stated further: Raise up your heads, O gates, and raise up, you everlasting entrances, so that the King of Glory may enter, etc.*" - Nevertheless, [Solomon] was not answered and the gates remained closed.

As soon as he said (II Chronicles 6:42): "*Hashem, God! Turn not away the face of Your anointed one! Remember the pieties of David, Your servant*" - he was answered immediately and the gates opened. - At that moment, the faces of David's enemies turned dark with humiliation like the bottom of a pot that has been blackened by fire, - and all Israel knew that the Holy One, Blessed is He, had forgiven [David] for that sin.