

## Nathan

I am Nathan, prophet for David, king of Israel and Judah. I kept a record of his reign and after he officially assumed the throne, it was a dream job for a prophet – no bad news at all. So, when the king spoke of building a temple for the LORD, I said, “Go and do all that is on your heart, for the LORD is with you.”

I was wrong! The word of the LORD came to me that night. “Go to my servant David and say, ‘When your time comes and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up after you your descendant, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He will build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.’”

David took the disappointment of not building a house for the LORD and saw the incredibly good news that his line would go on without end. That’s the way he is, insightful and positive. But having to come to him with a correction of my previous advice was a preparation – for me and for him -- for a later incident. That was a hard one.

David had not gone with Joab to fight the Ammonites and besiege Rabbah. One evening he walked the roof of the palace and saw a beautiful woman bathing on a nearby roof. After finding out who she was, he sent for her. The rest, as they say, is history, and led to my first difficult job as a prophet. David had called Bathsheba to spend the night with him and then sent her home. When she sent word that she was pregnant, David called her husband, Uriah the Hittite, back to Jerusalem on the pretense of needing word of the battle. He then told Uriah to go home, thinking he would sleep with his wife and this would cover up the sin. Uriah refused to go home when his fellow warriors were in the field, even the second night when David got him drunk.

Next, David – I could not believe it when it was revealed to me – sent word to Joab to put Uriah in danger to make sure he died in battle. After he was killed in action and Bathsheba had completed mourning, David took her as his wife.

I had to confront my friend. This was so unlike him. He had refused to kill King Saul, who was continually trying to murder him. The LORD not only gave me the assignment but gave me the words. It was in the form of a story – told as if a true event needing judgement.

“There were two men in a certain city, one rich and the other poor. The rich man had a large number of sheep and cattle, but the poor man had nothing except one small ewe lamb that he had bought. It lived and grew up with him and his children. It shared his meager food and drank from his cup; it slept in his arms, and it was like a daughter to him. Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man could not bring himself to take one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the poor man’s lamb and prepared it for his guest.”

David was infuriated with the man and said to me, “As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this deserves to die!” I then said, “You are the man!” And there was more. I explained the whole thing in detail and declared that there would be consequences. “This is what the LORD says, ‘I am going to bring disaster on you from your own family.’”

Now, another king might have had me executed on the spot. After all, David had already killed to cover it up. But his heart had been touched with the injustice and he realized that it was not a secret from the LORD. The follow-up was the next most difficult part of my career. I saw the charmed life of this good man go to pieces. He was indeed a tenderhearted warrior, a humble king, a sensitive poet and he loved the LORD with all his heart, soul and strength. But actions have consequences.

Despite being forgiven, the sins reproduced themselves in his household. The first child of Bathsheba died. Then David's son Amnon raped his half-sister, Tamar. As a result, Tamar's brother Absalom, killed Amnon. Incredibly, David did not talk to his children about these issues. I think it is hard to discuss issues with your children that you have failed to conquer yourself.

Finally, Absalom tried to take the kingdom from his father and might have succeeded but for some trickery. David sent his advisor, Ahithophel, to Absalom, pretending to have turned against David and confound the wise advice of Hushai, that might have turned the battle to Absalom. The final outcome was the death of Absalom to David's great grief.

But by the mysterious grace of the LORD God of Israel, Solomon, the second child of that union, which began in sin, was the next in line for the throne and the next in the blood line of the promised king whose kingdom would never end.

2 Chronicles 29, 2 Samuel 7 – 12, 1 Kings 1