

II Samuel 12: 13-24, New JPS translation	<i>Shmu'el bukh</i> , trans. Frakes	<i>Glikl</i> , trans. Friedman	Beila Perlhefter, Introduction to <i>Sefer Be'er Sheva</i> , trans. Greenblatt
<p>And David said to Natan, I have sinned against the Lord. And Natan said to David, The Lord also has commuted thy sin; thou shalt not die. Howbeit because by this deed thou hast greatly blasphemed the Lord, the child also that is born to thee shall surely die. Nathan went home, and the LORD afflicted the child that Uriah's wife had borne to David, and it became critically ill. David entreated God for the boy; David fasted, and he went in and spent the night lying on the ground. The senior servants of his household tried to induce him to get up from the ground; but he refused, nor would he partake of food with them. On the seventh day the child died.</p> <p>David's servants were afraid to tell David that the child was dead; for they said, "We spoke to him when the child was alive and he wouldn't listen to us; how can we tell him that the child is dead? He might do something terrible."</p>	<p>(1296) Now, when the prophet Nathan left King David, the child was about to die; its illness had begun. King David then at once had misery enough. He beat himself with both hands. (1297) From the depths of his heart he beseeched his Lord God, blessed be He, with fasting and with weeping for the infant. He lay on the ground for six full days; his tongue was never still in his mouth. (1298) The Torah scholars went to the king. They heard his great lamentation and his prayers. They wanted to raise him up from the ground. He did not want to get up from his lamentations and prayers. (1299) Nor did he wish to eat anything. "Lord God, blessed be He, by your mercy attend to my cry!" On the seventh day the child, alas, died.</p> <p>His servants there feared his negative reaction to the news, (1300) so that they did not dare tell the king. They were afraid that the king would beat himself in his grief. His servants were speaking quietly,</p>	<p>I, your mother, was bereaved in my husband's lifetime by the death of a child of about three who was like no other child, as I have already written, and I was not wise enough to recall the late devout King David whose firstborn, the son he had with Bathsheba, suffered from an illness.</p> <p>During the bouts of illness, King David observed mourning, fasted, gave to charity, and prayed, but God, blessed be He, took the child.</p> <p>When the boy died, all the king's servants fell silent and kept it a secret, saying: "The king observed mourning when the boy was ill and there was still some hope that he would live—what will the king do now, once he finds out that the boy is dead and there is no</p>	<p>And my husband consoled me and said: "Let go of your misery and mourning already, one must accept for the good everything that God sends to us people. And the copious crying and mourning that one performs over a dead person is not well accepted. One can learn this from King David, may he rest in peace, whose first son—born to him by Batsheva—died.</p>

<p>When David saw his servants talking in whispers, David understood that the child was dead; David asked his servants, "Is the child dead?" "Yes," they replied. Thereupon David rose from the ground; he bathed and anointed himself, and he changed his clothes. He went into the House of the LORD and prostrated himself. Then he went home and asked for food, which they set before him, and he ate.</p> <p>His courtiers asked him, "Why have you acted in this manner? While the child was alive, you fasted and wept; but now that the child is dead, you rise and take food!" He replied, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept because I thought: 'Who knows? The LORD may have pity on me, and the child may live.' But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will never come back to me."</p>	<p>but he heard them and was saddened: "Is the child dead. Tell me the truth!" (1301) They said: "It is, alas, dead. May God, blessed be He, compensate you for it." He arose from the ground and had his stool placed there for himself. He bathed and anointed himself and put on fine clothes. He turned to the ark of holiness. (1302) He returned home and commanded that food be brought for himself.</p> <p>That astonished all his servants so much that they were obsessed by it. They said: "My lord, tell us, without rancor: earlier you lamented pitifully, and why now do you do thus? (1303) No one has ever seen a king lament as you did while the child was alive. But now that it is dead, you no longer mourn. We would like to know the truth of it, O noble and exalted king!" (1304) He said: "While the child was still alive, I prayed to God, blessed be He, that He restore its health, if the King of all the world were to be mindful of His mercifulness and would show mercy to David, His servant. (1305) Now the child is, alas, dead. I desire no more lamentation. Even if I were to mourn, I could not bring it back. I cannot bring it back to this earth. I will myself have to go to him in the next world."</p>	<p>longer any hope?" So no one would say a thing.</p> <p>But devout King David inferred from their silence that the boy was dead. He asked the servants if the boy was dead, but no one replied. Thus he realized that his beloved son was indeed dead. He then rose from where he was sitting in the ashes, requested some water, and bid his servants to bring him food and drink, then he ate and drank.</p> <p>This amazed the servants. Finally one of them was bold enough to ask: "Your Highness, when the boy was still alive you observed deep mourning, you neither ate nor drank; day and night you remained sitting in the ashes, but as soon as you heard that your son was dead, you justified the Divine judgment, as one should, and you said: <i>Blessed are You, true judge, the Lord has given, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord forever and ever.</i> Then immediately you rose and asked for food and water, as though the boy were still alive." The king told them: "I will tell you, my loyal servants. While the boy was ill and still had a soul, I did everything possible. I wailed, screamed, I repented, prayed, gave to charity, thinking perhaps God, blessed be He, would show mercy and heal him. But when all this was to no avail, and God, blessed be He, has taken back his pledge, what good is wailing and weeping? My son will never come back to us; we shall go to him." You</p>	<p>So he went into the bath and ate and drank and was well. While beforehand, during the child's illness, he had been very sad, and fasted, but after the child's death he was cheerful.</p> <p>For he said: 'While the child was ill, I prayed to God that He would make the child healthy again; however, now that the child is dead, it is not appropriate for a person to mourn more over him, for I cannot make him alive again, and the moaning and crying will be understood as if God had given him an unjust judgment, and all men must die in the end, so I will come to him in the world to come. So there, I will be able to be happy with him.'</p>
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<p>David consoled his wife Bathsheba; he went to her and lay with her. She bore a son and she named him Solomon.</p>	<p>(1306) The king comforted Bathsheba, and she now let herself be comforted. She conceived another son for King David. The child was born and was named Solomon. Among all the sons, he became well known.</p>	<p>see, then, how the late devout King David behaved.</p> <p>We must learn from this and leave everything in God's hands.</p>	<p>So you too can well learn from King David, that one should not mourn so much for dead people. And why would you want to understand these things better than King David understood them, he upon whom the holy spirit rested? Therefore, let your mourning come to an end and be consoled.</p>
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