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A Royal Conspiracy
First Kings 1: 11-31

A royal conspiracy DIG: Why did Nathan oppose Adonijah and his plan? How was Bathsheba's influence seen in the palace at this time? What's the risk of getting involved? What were Nathan and Bathsheba concerned about? What might happen to them if Adonijah came to power? How is Nathan's plan supposed to sway the king? How did Nathan's speech compare with Bathsheba's? How as Bathsheba's influence seen in the place at that time?

REFLECT: Where do you see this kind of jockeying for position today? Do you have a brother or sister who can't stand you? What happened? Is reconciliation possible? Desirable? In what ways do you need to "set your eyes upon your King" for direction at this point in your life? When you see a schemer at work, do you keep quiet and mind your own business or do you step in and try to make things right? What are you doing for the coming generation?

The right to rule as king has been the occasion of many bitter conflicts. Often brother has fought against brother to wear the crown, forcing members of the royal family and citizens of the realm to choose sides.

During the Third Crusade, King Richard I (also known as the Lion-hearted) waged war against the Muslim armies under the command of Saladin. But while Richard was fighting to regain Zion, his brother Prince John was busy trying to crown himself the king of England. Richard hurriedly made a treaty with Saladin and raced home to protect his royal rights. But as he made his way across Europe, the king was captured by Leopold V of Austria and held for a ransom equal to two or three times the amount of his kingdom's annual income.

Everyone in England was forced to choose sides. John offered Leopold half as much to keep Richard in prison for another couple of years, so he would have time to consolidate his power. Meanwhile, Richard's mother – Eleanor of Aquitaine – tried

(and eventually succeeded) to raise enough money to have her son rescued and restored to his rightful throne. It was a conflict for the kingdom, which Richard finally won. But while the throne was still in dispute, people had to decide which man they wanted to be king, and how much they would give to support his cause.

We face a similar choice when it comes to the Kingdom of God. Will we honor God's true and rightful King, or will we try to seize the crown for ourselves? Which Kingdom will we choose?
And how much will we sacrifice to see it established?

The people of **God** faced the same choice during the last days of **David**, when **the king** was on **his** deathbed and two of **his sons** were contesting for the crown. With the question of royal succession on everyone's mind, **David's** oldest living son, **Adonijah**, decided to take the throne, declaring: **I will be king** (**to see the clink Ak – King Me!**).[33] When **Nathan** became aware of the plot, **he** acted immediately. **He** was tactful and thoughtful, just as **he** had when **he** reprimanded **David** for **his** sin against **Bathsheba** and **Uriah (Second Samuel 12:1-14**). **The prophet** probably sought a secret meeting with **Bathsheba** somewhere in the palace. Though we haven't heard about **Bathsheba** since the birth of **Solomon**, it would be a mistake to think **she** was just a pretty face. Like **Esther** before **her**, this courageous woman saved **Isra'el** from disaster at a critical hour.

Nathan also knew what would happen if **Adonijah** proved to be successful: **Bathsheba** and **Solomon** would both be killed, for in ancient times it was customary for a king to put his rivals to death. The whole situation was a royal crisis. By trying to usurp the throne, **Adonijah** was threatening the royal succession, and with it all the promises that **ADONAI** had made to **the house of David** (see the commentary on **the Life of David Ct – The LORD's Covenant with David**). This was more than a power struggle; it was a life-and-death conflict for the Kingdom of **God**. Everyone had to make that destiny-deciding choice. Which **king** will I serve?

What **Adonijah** did *not* do – as the Bible is careful to show – was to let **God** decide what **he** was called to do, when and where **he** was called to do it. This is why **Adonijah** didn't consult with **the prophet (Nathan)**, or **the priest (Zadol)** that **ADONAI** had anointed over **Isra'el (First Kings 1:8)**, and why **he** very conspicuously left **his brother Solomon** off the guest list for **his** coronation party **(First Kings 1:10)**. It also explains why **he** never asked what **his father David** wanted **him** to do, even though **his father** was the true **king** of **Isra'el**.[34]



Scene one: **Adonijah's** coup party was in full swing when **Nathan** decided to take action. **He asked Bathsheba, "Have you not heard that Adonijah, the son of Haggith, has become king, and our lord David knows nothing about it?** The fact that **David** didn't **know anything about it** showed that **it** was a well-designed conspiracy. After sounding the alarm about **Adonijah**, **Nathan** then gave **Bathsheba her** lines to speak to **the king, "Now then, let me advise you how you can save your own life and the life of your son Solomon." Nathan** sent **Bathsheba** in to see **the king** first. **Her** status as favored **wife** would ensure a quick hearing, and immediate action was indeed necessary: **Go in to King David and** say: **My lord the king, did you not swear** an **oath to me your servant, "Surely Solomon your son shall be king after me, and he will sit on my throne?" This oath is mentioned here for the first time. David probably took it after the promise God made to him that Solomon would succeed him as king.** The mention of an **oath** is ironic because **Bathsheba** means *the daughter of an **oath***. Furthermore, **Nathan** advised **her** to ask: **When then has Adonijah become king?** Then **Nathan** explained the timing of **their** plan. **While you are still there talking to the king, I will come in and confirm my word to what you have said (First Kings 1:11-14).** That would make two witnesses, one of whom was **King David's wife**, and the other **his prophet**. Together **they** would act decisively for the Kingdom of **God**.

The plan was set.

Scene two: **So, because he was old and feeble, Bathsheba went to see the aged king in his** royal **bedroom where Abishag the Shunammite was attending him. Bathsheba** approached **David** with deference and humility **bowing** down, **prostrating herself** to give **him** honor. These actions showed that **she** was asking for an audience with **the king** to make a request. **"What is it that you want** (only two words in Hebrew)**?" the king asked (First Kings 1:15-16).**

Bathsheba got to the point, telling **him** bluntly what **he** needed to hear. But **she** made five changes in what **Nathan** told **her**. **My lord, you yourself swore** an **oath to me your servant by ADONAI your God, "Solomon your son shall be king after me, and he will sit on my throne."**

First, **she** made **David's "swear"** into **"You swore by ADONAI your God,"** which would make **David's** promise more binding.

Second, **she** changed **Nathan's** rhetorical question, **"Did you not swear,"** into a fact, **"My lord, you yourself swore."** The question had become a fact.

Third, **she** changed **Nathan's** question, **"Have you not heard that Adonijah has become king,"** into "**But now Adonijah has** actually proclaimed **himself king, and you, my lord the king, do not know about it" (First Kings 1:17-18).** Nor did **he** know who was and who wasn't, on **Adonijah's** "guest list."

Fourthly, on **her** own, **she** mentioned **Adonijah's** coronation banquet: **He has sacrificed great numbers of cattle, fattened calves, and sheep.**

Fifthly, **she** mentioned that the only one left off of the guest list was **Solomon**. **And Adonijah has invited all the king's sons, Abiathar the priest and Joab the commander of the army, but he has not invited Solomon your servant (First Kings 1:19).** This shows that **Adonijah** already knew that **Solomon** was **David's** choice to succeed **him**. The validity of **Solomon's** claim to **the throne** was not in question here. Both **Nathan** and **Bathsheba** knew **David's** feelings in the matter. The danger was that **Adonijah** would succeed to **the throne** through **David's** inaction.

So sixthly, **the queen** challenged **David** to take action: **My lord the king, the eyes of all Isra'el are on you, to learn from you who will sit on the throne of my lord the king after him**. **Otherwise, as soon as my lord the king is laid to rest with his ancestors, my son Solomon and I will be treated as criminals (First Kings 1:20-21). Bathsheba's** warning reflected reality. The omission of **Solomon** from the "guest list" was a sure sign that **she** and **her son** would be marked for death if **Adonijah** succeeded.[35]

The speech of **the queen** was a daring and imaginative one, creating a political crisis from which **David** could only extricate **himself** in only one way, for **he** dared not go back on **the oath he** had made to **her**! Like Eleanor of Aquitane,

Bathsheba was doing what she could to secure **her son's** claim to the royal throne.

Scene three: On cue, **while she was speaking with the king, Nathan the prophet arrived** at the palace**. And the king was told, "Nathan the prophet is here."** Like **Bathsheba, Nathan** entered **David's** presence with all due respect: **So, he went before the king in bed and bowed with his face to the ground (First Kings 1:22-23).** At that point **Bathsheba** apparently left **the bedroom** and was not present when **Nathan** spoke to **the king**.

With the **king's** permission, **Nathan** confirmed everything that **Bathsheba** had been saying: **Have you, my lord the king, declared that Adonijah shall be king after you, and that he will sit on your throne? Today he has gone down** from **Jerusalem** to **En Rogel and sacrificed great numbers of cattle, fattened calves, and sheep. He has invited all the king's sons, the commanders of the army and Abiathar the priest. Right now, they are eating and drinking with him saying, "Long live King Adonijah!" But me your servant, and Zadok the priest, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and your servant Solomon he did not invite. Is this something my lord the king has done without letting his servants know who should sit on the throne of my lord the king after him (First Kings 1:24-27)?**

Frankly, **the prophet** wanted to know whether any of this had been done under **David's** royal authority. If so, then why hadn't **his prophet** been informed? If not, when what was **David** going to do about it? **Nathan** was challenging **David** to disavow what **Adonijah** had done, knowing the proper succession to the throne could come about only with **the king's** royal consent. Whereas **Bathsheba** appealed to **David's** pity as a husband and father, **Nathan** appealed to **his** authority as **king**.

It's very likely that **Nathan's** recitation of these facts brought **David's** memory back to the terrible days of Absalom's rebellion, but **he** didn't want the nation to experience another civil war. **Solomon** was **a man of peace (1 Chron 22:9)**. Reared in the palace, **he** had no experience of war as did **his father**; and if there was another civil war, how could **he** build **the Temple**?[36] If only one person had come to warn **him**, perhaps **David** would have doubted the accuracy of the report **he** was given. But **Bathsheba** and **Nathan** came one right after the other, and with **two witnesses** – the biblical number for establishing any criminal matter in a court of law **(Deut 19:15)** – **the king** was fully persuaded. Now that **he** knew the

truth, **he** needed to act like a **king**.[37]

Scene four: After listening to **Nathan** and **Bathsheba, David's** blood began to rise. **He** understood that **Adonijah** was trying to seize the throne from **God's** chosen successor and what **his** wayward **son** had done was a direct challenge to **his** kingly authority. Therefore, **he** rose to the challenge, making one last decision for the glory of the Kingdom of **God**.

Up to this point, **the king** had barely spoken two words in this chapter **(First Kings 1:16)**. But rising from **his** bed, **King David** summoned **Bathsheba** back into **his royal chamber**. **She had evidently left the bedroom when Nathan's presence was announced. Similarly, in keeping with Near Eastern custom, Nathan left the room when the queen was recalled. It was part of their plan to appear independent of one another and to avoid the appearance of collusion. So, she came into the king's presence and stood before him.** The two were alone. **Then David took an oath,** strongly reaffirming the previous one, declaring: **As surely as ADONAI lives, who has delivered me out of every trouble, I will surely carry out today what I swore to you by ADONAI, the God of Isra'el, "Solomon your son shall be king after me, and he will sit on my throne in my place" (First Kings 1:28-30).** By making **Solomon his** co-regent immediately, **David** stayed in command and **Solomon** would do **his** bidding. **Solomon** was no longer merely **the prince** or even **his** heir apparent. **He** was then co-regent with **his** father and **the king of Isra'el**.[38] **Nathan's and Bathsheba's** double strategy had worked. **David** was still the key player, still master of **his** own house, still capable of an act of great authority. **Then she bowed low with her face to the ground and, kneeling before the** dying **king,** said: **May my lord King David** (the house of **David**) **live forever (First Kings 1:31)!**

What will you do for the Kingdom of **God**? Which side will you take when people exalt themselves and try to tear down **His** Kingdom? Do you see how your own eternal destiny is bound up with what **God** is doing in the world today? What will you do to make a Kingdom difference for the coming generation?

Since **Messiah** is **the King**, then we should do whatever we can for **His** Kingdom. After all, **Yeshua Himself** has done everything that **He** could do for the Kingdom. **He** has even done what no other king would dare to do: **He** has offered **His** own blood to save **His** people. Given what **He** has done for us, it is only right for us to do whatever we can for **Him** and for **His** Kingdom. As Matthew Henry (famous for his

six-volume *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments* in 1708-1710) said, "Whatever power, interest, or influence, people have – they ought to improve it to the utmost for the preservation and advancing of the Kingdom of **Messiah**." We should do this not only for our own people, in our own place, at our own time, but also for the coming generation.[39]

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, How wonderful **Your** gracious **love** and yet how sad that so many seek to take selfish advantage of **Your love** by living for themselves – yet thinking that since **God loves** all, everyone ends up in heaven! Not so! **You** are so gracious to make the path to heaven to be thru **the blood** of **Messiah** who adopts us into **His** family. **He predestined us for adoption as sons through Messiah Yeshua, in keeping with the good pleasure of His will – to the glorious praise of His grace, with which He favored us through the One He loves! In Him we have redemption through His blood – the removal of trespasses – in keeping with the richness of His grace (Ephesians 1:5-7).** Each of us has a choice as to who will be **the king** in their life. For the child of **God** that choice was made when he chose to follow **Messiah** as his **Lord** and **Savior**. **For if you confess with your mouth that Yeshua is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart it is believed for righteousness, and with the mouth it is confessed for salvation (Romans 10:9-10).** Thank **You** that **Your Spirit** lives inside of each one who **loves You (John 14:23)** to help, comfort and guide. In **Yeshua's** Holy name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*