

David's Son Dies

Second Samuel 12: 15-25

DIG: What was God trying to teach David (and us) by the death of David's son? What other purpose is ultimately accomplished by this severe mercy (Second Samuel 12:24-25)? What should we think when ADONAI disciplines us? Why do bad things happen to good people? To innocent children? Where should we look for comfort when dealing with the death of an infant?

REFLECT: When was the last time you suffered the consequences of your sin? Did you fess up, or were you found out? Is there a difference? If so, what is it? Do you have idle time on your hands? How can you use it wisely? If there were no painful consequences to sin or subsequent discipline from the hand of God, what kind of an irresponsible world would we be living in?

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David had kept his silence for at least six months. He had hardened his heart and refused to acknowledge his sin until Nathan had confronted him. But it was only after the child was born that he eventually came to understand the full weight of his actions. Do you wonder what those months were like for him? Well, David tells us: **When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer (Psalm 32:3-4).**

Discipline is not punishment meted out by an angry judge who wants to uphold the law; rather, it's difficulty permitted by a loving heavenly Father who wants His children to submit to His will and develop godly character. **Discipline** is an expression of **God's love**. **My son [daughter], do not despise ADONAI's discipline or resent His reproof; for ADONAI corrects those He loves like a father who delights in His son [daughter] (Prov. 3:11-12).**

The Death of David's son: After Nathan had gone home, his prophetic announcement was fulfilled, the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife had borne to David, and he became ill (Second Samuel 12:15). This was the child he tried to pawn off on Uriah, but now David pleaded with God for the child's life. He fasted and spent the nights lying in sackcloth on the ground. He knew his child was dying because of his own sin. **The senior officials of the royal court** stood beside him to get him up from the ground, but he refused, and he would not eat any food with them (Second Samuel 12:16-17).

Why would a loving and just **God** not answer a grieving and repentant father's prayers and heal the child? After all, it wasn't **the baby's** fault that **his father** and **mother** had sinned against **Ha'Shem**. For that matter, why did **YHVH** allow **Uriah** and some fellow soldiers to die at Rabbah just so **David** could marry **Bathsheba**? Keep asking similar questions and you will end up the ultimate question, "Why does **the LORD** permit evil in the world? Eventually **David** looked back and saw this painful experience as **ADONAI's goodness and mercy (Psalm 23:6)** both to **him** and to **the baby**. **Abraham** asked: **Will not the Judge of all the earth do right (Genesis 18:15)?** When **he** heard the bad news of **God's discipline** on his family, even the backslidden **Eli** confessed: **He is the LORD; let Him do what is good in His eyes (1 Sam 3:18)**. There are no easy answers to settle our minds, but there are plenty of dependable promises to heal our hearts, and faith is nurtured on promises, not expectations.³⁴⁰

On the seventh day since the child became ill, he died. The parents weren't able to circumcise or name **their son** on the eighth day (see commentary on **Genesis En - For Generations to Come Every Male Who is Eight Days Old Must be Circumcised**). The death of the child - son of **Bathsheba**, *daughter of seven*; son of **David**, chosen above his seven brothers (**First Samuel 16:10**) - takes place on the seventh day.³⁴¹

Solomon got two names (see below), this baby didn't even get one. **David's attendants** were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, for they thought, "While the child was still living, he wouldn't listen to us when we spoke to him. How can we now tell him the child is dead? If **David** treated himself so badly when the child was alive, what will **he** do if he finds out the child is dead. He may do something desperate" (**Second Samuel 12:18**).

While **YHVH** has not chosen to reveal to us the eternal state of those who die in infancy, there is comfort in knowing that **YHVH** is incomprehensively good, righteous, loving and just. We may have confidence that **He** will do what is right. Our comfort in a time of sorrow is in the character of our sovereign **God**. Our Lord **Jesus** has a great love for **children**. When some women brought their children to **Jesus** so that **He** might lay hands on them and pray, the apostles rebuked them. But **Messiah** said: **Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these (Matthew 19:14)**. The character of **ADONAI**, and the love of **Yeshua** for **little ones**, leads me to believe that those who have died in infancy are in heaven with **Jesus**.³⁴²

David noticed that his attendants were whispering among themselves, and he realized the child was dead. "Is the child dead?" he asked. "Yes," they replied, "he is dead." Then **David** got up from the ground. After he had washed, put on lotions and new clothes, he went into the house of **YHVH** and worshiped in the tent where the ark of **God** had been installed (**Second Samuel 6:17**).

In Scripture, **washing oneself and putting on new clothes** symbolizes making a new beginning (**Genesis 35:1-2, 41:14, 45:22; Exodus 19:10; Leviticus 14:8-9; Jeremiah 52:33; Revelation 3:18**). No matter how long ADONAI chastens us, **He will not always accuse, nor will He harbor His anger forever (Psalm 103:9)**. Because of **God's grace** (giving us what we don't deserve) and **mercy** (not giving us what we do deserve), we can always make a new beginning.³⁴³

Then he went to his own house, and at his request they served him food, and he ate. Understandably, **David's servants** were confused. They asked him, **"Why are you acting this way? While the child was alive, you fasted and wept, but now that the child is dead, you get up and eat!"** David's actions were the exact opposite of what one would have expected. **He answered, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept because I had hope. He was counting on the open door of the divine "perhaps." I thought, 'Who knows? The LORD may be gracious to me and let the child live' even though Nathan had prophesied otherwise. ADONAI has blessings for those who ask, and David was not going to miss them because he failed to do so (James 4:2). But now that he is dead, why should I go on fasting? Can I bring him back again? I will be with him in sh'ol when I die, but he will not return to me now."** David had accepted the will of **God** and there was no reason to wrestle with His will any more (**Second Samuel 12:19-23**).

The Birth of Solomon: After at least nine months went by, **David comforted his wife Bathsheba**. No matter how devastated the **discipline** at the hand of our loving heavenly **Father** makes us feel, there is **comfort** available from ADONAI (see commentary **Isaiah Hc - Comfort, Comfort My People Says Your God**). Before **her son** died, the **LORD** called Bathsheba **"Uriah's wife"** (**Second Samuel 12:15**), possibly because that's who **she** was when the **boy** was conceived. But now **she** is referred to as **"David's wife"** which suggests that **she**, like **David**, was also making a new beginning.³⁴⁴

And he went in to her and made love to her. She gave birth to a son, and they named him Solomon (Hebrew: *Shelomoh* meaning *peaceable*, coming from the more well known word *shalom* or *peace*). **ADONAI loved him**, and in an ironic touch, **He sent word through Nathan the prophet to name him Jedidiah** (Hebrew: *Y'didiah* meaning *loved by God*). This was a pledge to **David** that this **son of Bathsheba** would not suffer the same fate as **his brother**. The placement of **Solomon's birth** in the story is stunning. **Solomon is born** so close to all the sinfulness, and still within the echo of the prophetic lawsuit (see **Dd - Nathan Rebukes David**). Nonetheless, life begins again for this family.

At this point YHVH chose **Solomon** to succeed **David** as **King of Isra'el** (**Second Samuel 12:24-25**). **God** had told **David** that this **son** would be born and that **he** would **build the Temple** (**Second Samuel 7:12-13; First Chronicles 22:6-10**). And **He** is the **Promise Keeper**. Every time **David** and **Bathsheba** looked at **Solomon**, his very presence would remind **them** that **ADONAI** had forgiven **their** past and guaranteed **their** plans for the future.³⁴⁵