**Research on: David and the ewe lamb**

**NATHAN** (Heb. “a giver”)

This Prophet was one of David’s most trusted advisers. It was he who interpreted God’s message to Davidl telling him that he must leave the building of the Jerusalem Teple to his son, Solomon. It was Nathan who severely reproached David for stealing another man’s wife. His famous parable of the “Rich Man and the Poor Man’s Ewe Lamb” may be found in II Samuel 1. In the battle for the succession, Nathan sided with Solomon against the Crown Prince Adonijah. David and Bathsheba named one of their sons Nathan. He was the ancestor of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Mary’s husband, Joseph, was a descendant of Solomon.

(Old Testament Made Easy/ Nathan, 284)

**II Samuel 12:1-7, 9, 13**

“David was also high court judge. It was therefore natural that he should be consulted about a difficult point of law. If we may believe the later denunciations of the prophets, such cases would not be uncommon matter for the king’s jurisdiction” (IB 1103).

1And the Lord sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor.

“*The Lord sent Nathan unto David —*When the ordinary means did not awaken David to repentance, God takes an extraordinary course. Thus the merciful Lord pities and prevents him who had so horribly forsaken God. *He said —*He prudently ushers in his reproof with a parable, after the manner of the eastern nations, that so he might surprise David, and cause him unawares to give sentence against himself” (Benson Commentary, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com)).

“Nathan came to David as if to ask his judicial decision on the case about to be submitted to him (compare [2 Samuel 14:2-11](http://biblehub.com/2_samuel/14-2.htm); [1 Kings 20:35-41](http://biblehub.com/1_kings/20-35.htm)). The circumstances of the story are exquisitely contrived to heighten the pity of David for the oppressed, and his indignation against the oppressor [1 Samuel 25:13](http://biblehub.com/1_samuel/25-13.htm), [1 Samuel 25:22](http://biblehub.com/1_samuel/25-22.htm)” (Barnes’ Notes, www.biblehub.com).

2 The rich *man* had exceeding many flocks and herds:

“*Many flocks and herds —*Denoting David’s many wives and concubines, with whom he might have been satisfied” (Benson Commentary, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com)).

3 But the poor *man* had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter.

“*One little ewe-lamb* — It appears by this that Uriah had but one wife, with whom he was well contented.*Which he had bought*— Or, *had procured.*Men frequently purchased their wives in those days, giving to their parents a sum of money for them. *It did eat of his meat,*&c. — These words express the exceeding care which the poor man took of his one sheep, and the value he put upon it, as being, in some manner, his chief substance, furnishing him with milk for food, and wool for clothing; and they are intended to signify how dear his wife was to Uriah, and the high estimation in which he held her” (Benson Commentary, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com)).

4 And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man’s lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him.

“ *There came a traveller unto the rich man —*This aptly signifies David’s roving affection, which he suffered to wander from his own home, and to covet another man’s wife. The Jewish doctors say it represents the evil disposition or desire that is in us, which must be carefully watched and resisted when we feel its motions. *But took the poor man’s lamb —*Nathan, in this parable, omits touching the murder committed to cover the adultery, perhaps in order that David might not readily apprehend his meaning, and so be induced, unawares, to pronounce sentence of condemnation upon himself” (Benson Commentary, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com)).

5 And David’s anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, *As* the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this *thing* shall surely die:

“**Was greatly kindled.**—David’s generous impulses had not been extinguished by his sin, nor his warm sense of justice; his naturally quick temper ([1Samuel 25:13](http://biblehub.com/1_samuel/25-13.htm);[1Samuel 25:22](http://biblehub.com/1_samuel/25-22.htm); [1Samuel 25:33](http://biblehub.com/1_samuel/25-33.htm)) at once roused his indignation to the utmost” (Benson Commentary, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com)).

“*The man shall surely die —*This seems more than the fact deserved, or than he had commission to inflict for it. But it is observable that David now, when he was most indulgent to himself, and to his own sin, was most severe, and even unjust, to others, as appears by this passage, and the following relation, ([2 Samuel 12:31](http://biblehub.com/2_samuel/12-31.htm),) which was done in the time of David’s impenitent continuance in his sin. *He shall restore the lamb four-fold*— This was agreeable to the law, [Exodus 22:1](http://biblehub.com/exodus/22-1.htm)” (Benson Commentary, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com)).

“5. the man that hath done this thing shall surely die—This punishment was more severe than the case deserved, or than was warranted by the divine statute (Ex 22:1). The sympathies of the king had been deeply enlisted, his indignation aroused, but his conscience was still asleep; and at the time when he was most fatally indulgent to his own sins, he was most ready to condemn the delinquencies and errors of others” (Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary, www.biblehub.com).

6 And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.

“Fourfold - The exact number prescribed by the Law (see the marginal references), and acted upon by Zaccheus” (Barnes Notes, www.biblehub.com).

7 And Nathan said to David, Thou *art* the man. Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul;

“Nathan’s apologue, so tenderly beautiful, takes the poet-king on the most susceptible side of his character. All his history shows him as a man of wonderfully sweet, chivalrous, generous, swiftly compassionate nature. And so, when he hears the story of a mean, heartless selfishness, all that is best in him kindles into a generous indignation, and flames out into instinctive condemnation. ‘The man that did this thing shall die because he had no pity.’

And then, on to that hot fervor of righteous wrath, comes this dash of cold water, ‘And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man.’ Like some keen spear-point, sharpened almost to invisibility, this short sentence {two words in the original} driven by a strong hand, goes right through the armor to the very heart. What a collapse there would be in the king when the pointed forefinger of the prophet emphasized and drove home the application!

**I.**This dramatic scene before us may be taken as suggesting first that we are all strangely blind to our own faults” (MacLaren’s Expositions, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com)).

“(7) **Thou art the man.**—The boldness and suddenness of this application bring a shock to David which at once aroused his slumbering conscience. This could not have been the case had David been essentially a bad man. He was a man whose main purpose in life was to do God’s will, but he had yielded to temptation, had been entangled in further and greater guilt in the effort to conceal his sin, and all the while his conscience had been stupefied by the delirium of prosperity and power. Now what he had done is suddenly brought before him in its true light” (Ellicott’s Commentary, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com)).

9 Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife *to be* thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon.

“*hou hast killed Uriah —*David’s contriving his death was as bad as if he had killed him with his own hand. *With the sword of the children of Ammon —*This was an aggravation of his crime, that he caused him to be slain by the professed enemies of God, who doubtless triumphed in the slaughter of so great a man. *Hast taken his wife,*&c. — To marry her whom he had defiled, and whose husband he had slain, was an affront upon the ordinance of marriage, making that not only to palliate, but in a manner to consecrate such villanies. In all this he*despised the word of the Lord;*(so it is in the Hebrew;) not only his commandment in general, but the particular word of promise, which God had before sent him by Nathan, that he would *build him a house:*which sacred promise if he had had a due value for, he would not have polluted his house with lust and blood” (Benson Commentary, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com)).

13 And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord.

“ **I have sinned.**—The same words were used by Saul ([1Samuel 15:24](http://biblehub.com/1_samuel/15-24.htm);[1Samuel 15:30](http://biblehub.com/1_samuel/15-30.htm)), but in a totally different spirit. Saul’s confession was a concession to the prophet for the purpose of securing his support, and with no real penitence; David, in these few words, pours out before God the confession of a broken heart” (Ellicott’s Commentary, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com)).

“Overwhelmed with shame, stung with remorse, and oppressed with a dreadful sense of the divine vengeance, impending, and ready to fall upon himself and his family, he could only give utterance to this short confession. How sincere and serious it was, what a deep sense he now had of his guilt, and from what a softened, penetrated, broken, and contrite heart, his acknowledgment proceeded, we may see in the psalms he penned on this occasion, especially the 1st” (Benson Commentary, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com)).

“David’s repentance secured the forgiveness of God, but it did not avert the punishment of his sin” (Dummelow 201).

There is something so appealing about David when he is expressing

genuine anguish, humility and repentance that we remember

this side of his character more than we do the other. His people

forgave him all his sins-he was loved and honored by almost

everyone; his reign was considered the Golden Age of Israel. The

nation did indeed prosper under him, for he opened up trade routes

and more territory was added as he defeated one enemy tribe after

another. This set the stage for the extravagant era of Solomon with

its overextension and unjust taxation, which culminated in the split

of the monarchy after his death. Eventually the two little kingdoms

were wiped out, proving the wisdom of the old adage "United we

stand, divided we fall." The Kings of Judah were all descendants

of David, but not one of them could hold a candle to the man who

established the Davidic Dynasty. However, in spite of chaos, turmoil,

ignominious defeat and exile, the line was not wiped out and

brought forth another kind of King in the New Testament who still

lives in the hearts of millions as the Son of David and the Son of

God. (Old Testament Made Easy, J. Tatham, 281).

Psalms 51 is said to be written after David’s repentance.