

## CHAPTER 20

1 **A**nd Abraham journeyed onward from there to the Negeb region  
and dwelt between Kadesh and Shur, and he sojourned in Gerar.  
2 **A**nd Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister." And Abimelech  
3 the king of Gerar sent and took Sarah. And God came to Abimelech  
in a night-dream and said to him, "You are a dead man because  
4 of the woman you took, as she is another's wife." But Abimelech had  
not come near her, and he said, "My Lord, will you slay a nation even

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1. *And Abraham journeyed onward from there to the Negeb region.* This second instance of the sister-wife type-scene is in several ways fashioned to fit the particular narrative context in which it is inserted. The emphatic foreshadowing of the sojourn in Egypt of the episode in chapter 12 is deleted. Here there is no mention of a famine as the cause of the patriarch's migration, and the place he comes to is not Egypt but Gerar, a Canaanite city-state in the western Negeb.

3. *And God came to Abimelech.* This potentate is immediately given a higher moral status than Pharaoh in chapter 12: to Pharaoh God speaks only through plagues, whereas Abimelech is vouchsafed direct address from God in a night-vision.

*You are a dead man.* Or, "you are about to die." Abimelech's distressed response to this peremptory death sentence is understandable, and leads back to the preceding episodes in the narrative chain.

4. *will you slay a nation even if innocent?* This phrase, which might also be construed "slay a nation even with the innocent," sounds as peculiar in the Hebrew as in translation, and has led some critics to see the word "nation" (*goy*) as a scribal error. But the apparent deformation of idiom has a sharp thematic point. "Innocent" (*tsadiq*) is the very term Abraham insisted on in questioning God as to whether He would really slay the innocent together with the

if innocent? Did not he say to me, 'She is my sister'? and she, she, too, 5  
said, 'He is my brother.' With a pure heart and with clean hands I have  
done this." And God said to him in the dream, "Indeed, I know that 6  
with a pure heart you have done this, and I on My part have kept you  
from offending against Me, and so I have not allowed you to touch her.  
Now, send back the man's wife, for he is a prophet, and he will inter- 7  
cede for you, and you may live. And if you do not send her back, know  
that you are doomed to die, you and all that belongs to you."

And Abimelech rose early in the morning and called to all his servants, 8  
and he spoke these things in their hearing, and the men were terribly  
afraid. And Abimelech called to Abraham and said to him, "What have 9  
you done to us, and how have I offended you, that you should bring  
upon me and my kingdom so great an offense? Things that should not  
be done you have done to me." And Abimelech said to Abraham, "What 10  
did you imagine when you did this thing?" And Abraham said, "For I 11  
thought, there is surely no fear of God in this place and they will kill  
me because of my wife. And, in point of fact, she is my sister, my 12

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guilty in destroying the entire nation of Sodom. If the king of Gerar chooses, oddly, to refer to himself as "nation," leaning on the traditional identification of monarch with people, it is because he is, in effect, repeating Abraham's question to God: will not the Judge of all the earth do justice?

5. *and, she, she, too.* This repetitive splutter of indignation is vividly registered in the Hebrew, though the existing translations smooth it over.

6. *I have not allowed you to touch her.* The means by which consummation is prevented is intimated, cannily, only at the very end of the story.

9–10. *And Abimelech . . . said . . . and Abimelech said.* The repetition of the formula for introducing direct speech, with no intervening response from Abraham, is pointedly expressive. Abimelech vehemently castigates Abraham (with good reason), and Abraham stands silent, not knowing what to say. And so Abimelech repeats his upbraiding, in shorter form (verse 10).

11–12. When Abraham finally speaks up, his words have the ring of a speaker floundering for self-justification. Introducing the explanation of Sarah's half-sister status—there might be a Mesopotamian legal background to such a

13 father's daughter, though not my mother's daughter, and she became  
my wife. And it happened, when the gods made me a wanderer from  
my father's house, that I told her, "This is the kindness you can do for  
14 me: in every place to which we come, say of me, he is my brother." And  
Abimelech took sheep and cattle and male and female slaves and gave  
15 them to Abraham, and he sent back to him Sarah his wife. And Abimelech said, "Look, my land is before you. Settle wherever you want."

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semi-incestuous marriage—he uses a windy argumentative locution, *wegam 'omnah*, "and, in point of fact," that may hint at a note of special pleading.

*and they will kill me because of my wife.* What Abraham fears is that Gerar, without "fear of God," will prove to be another Sodom. In Sodom, two strangers came into town and immediately became objects of sexual assault for the whole male population. Here again, two strangers come into town, one male and one female, and Abraham assumes the latter will be an object of sexual appropriation, the former the target of murder. In the event, he is entirely wrong: Abimelech is a decent, even noble, man; and the category of "Sodom" is not to be projected onto everything that is not the seed of Abraham. On the contrary, later biblical writers will suggest how easily Israel turns itself into Sodom.

13. *the gods made me a wanderer.* The word *'elohim*, which normally takes a singular verb (though it has a plural suffix) when it refers to God, as everywhere else in this episode, is here linked with a plural verb. Conventional translation procedure renders this as "God," or "Heaven," but Abraham, after all, is addressing a pagan who knows nothing of this strange new idea of monotheism, and it is perfectly appropriate that he should choose his words accordingly, settling on a designation of the deity that ambiguously straddles polytheism and monotheism. It is also noteworthy that Abraham, far from suggesting that God has directed him to a promised land, stresses to the native king that the gods have imposed upon him a destiny of wandering.

*in every place to which we come.* The writer, quite aware that this episode approximately repeats the one in chapter 12, introduces into Abraham's dialogue a motivation for the repetition: this is what we must do (whatever the problematic consequences) in order to survive wherever we go.

14. *And Abimelech took sheep and cattle.* Unlike Pharaoh in chapter 12, who bestows gifts on Abraham as a kind of bride-price, the noble Abimelech offers all this bounty *after* Sarah leaves his harem, as an act of restitution.

And to Sarah he said, "Look, I have given a thousand pieces of silver to  
16 your brother. Let it hereby serve you as a shield against censorious eyes  
for everyone who is with you, and you are now publicly vindicated."  
And Abraham interceded with God, and God healed Abimelech and his  
17 wife and his slave-women, and they gave birth. For the LORD had shut  
18 fast every womb in the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife.

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16. *to your brother.* Surely there is an edge of irony in Abimelech's use of this term.

*a shield against censorious eyes.* The Hebrew, which has long puzzled scholars, is literally "a covering of the eyes." That phrase may mean "mask," but its idiomatic thrust seems to be: something that will ward off public disapproval.

18. *For the LORD had shut fast every womb.* Contrary to some textual critics who conjecture that this verse was inadvertently displaced from an earlier point in the story, it is a lovely piece of delayed narrative exposition. Shutting up the womb is a standard idiom for infertility, which ancient Hebrew culture, at least on the proverbial level, attributes to the woman, not to the man. But given the earlier reference to Abimelech's having been prevented from touching Sarah, this looks suspiciously like an epidemic of impotence that has struck Abimelech and his people—an idea not devoid of comic implications—from which the Gerarite women would then suffer as the languishing partners of the deflected sexual unions. (Nahmanides sees an allusion to impotence here.) It is noteworthy that only in this version of the sister-wife story is the motif of infertility introduced. Its presence nicely aligns the Abimelech episode with what precedes and what follows. That is, first we have the implausible promise of a son to the aged Sarah; then a whole people is wiped out; then the desperate act of procreation by Lot's daughters in a world seemingly emptied of men; and now an entire kingdom blighted with an interruption of procreation. The very next words of the story—one must remember that there were no chapter breaks in the original Hebrew text, for both chapter and verse divisions were introduced only in the late Middle Ages—are the fulfillment of the promise of progeny to Sarah: "And the LORD singled out Sarah as He had said." As several medieval Hebrew commentators note, the plague of infertility also guarantees that Abimelech cannot be imagined as the begetter of Isaac.

## CHAPTER 21

1 **A**nd the LORD singled out Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did  
2 for Sarah as He had spoken. And Sarah conceived and bore a son  
3 to Abraham in his old age at the set time that God had spoken to  
4 him. And Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him,  
5 whom Sarah bore him, Isaac. And Abraham circumcised Isaac his son  
6 when he was eight days old, as God had charged him. And Abraham  
was a hundred years old when Isaac his son was born to him. And Sarah  
said,

“Laughter has God made me,  
Whoever hears will laugh at me.”

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6. *Laughter has God made me.* The ambiguity of both the noun *tsehōq* (“laughter”) and the accompanying preposition *li* (“to” or “for” or “with” or “at” me) is wonderfully suited to the complexity of the moment. It may be laughter, triumphant joy, that Sarah experiences and that is the name of the child Isaac (“he-who-laugh”). But in her very exultation, she could well feel the absurdity (as Kafka noted in one of his parables) of a nonagenarian becoming a mother. *Tsehōq* also means “mockery,” and perhaps God is doing something *to* her as well as for her. (In poetry, the verb *tsahaq* is often linked in parallelism with *la’ag*, to scorn or mock, and it should be noted that *la’ag* is invariably followed by the preposition *le*, as *tsahaq* is here.) All who hear of it may laugh, rejoice, with Sarah, but the hint that they might also laugh at her is evident in her language.

And she said,

“Who would have uttered to Abraham—  
‘Sarah is suckling sons!’  
For I have borne a son in his old age.”

And the child grew and was weaned, and Abraham made a great feast 8  
on the day Isaac was weaned. And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the 9  
Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, laughing. And she said to 10  
Abraham, “Drive out this slavegirl and her son, for the slavegirl’s son 11  
shall not inherit with my son, with Isaac.” And the thing seemed evil in

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7. *uttered.* The Hebrew *milel* is a term that occurs only in poetic texts and is presumably high diction, perhaps archaic.

*for I have borne a son in his old age.* In a symmetrical reversal of God’s report in chapter 18 of Sarah’s interior monologue, where Abraham’s advanced age was suppressed, Sarah’s postpartem poem, like the narrator’s report that precedes it, mentions only *his* old age. Hers is implied by her marveling reference to herself as an old woman suckling infants, a pointed reversal of her own allusion in chapter 18 to her shriveled body.

9. *laughing.* Hebrew *metsaheq*. The same verb that meant “mocking” or “joking” in Lot’s encounter with his sons-in-law and that elsewhere in the Patriarchal narratives refers to sexual dalliance. It also means “to play.” (Although the conjugation here is *pi’el* and Sarah’s use of the same root in verse 6 is in the *qal* conjugation, attempts to establish a firm semantic differentiation between the deployment of the root in the two different conjugations do not stand up under analysis.) Some medieval Hebrew exegetes, trying to find a justification for Sarah’s harsh response, construe the verb as a reference to homosexual advances, though that seems far-fetched. Mocking laughter would surely suffice to trigger her outrage. Given the fact, moreover, that she is concerned lest Ishmael encroach on her son’s inheritance, and given the inscription of her son’s name in this crucial verb, we may also be invited to construe it as “Isaac-ing-it”—that is, Sarah sees Ishmael presuming to play the role of Isaac, child of laughter, presuming to be the legitimate heir.

10. *Drive out this slavegirl.* In language that nicely catches the indignation of the legitimate wife, Sarah refers to neither Hagar nor Ishmael by name, but instead insists on the designation of low social status.

- 12 Abraham's eyes because of his son. And God said to Abraham, "Let it not seem evil in your eyes on account of the lad and on account of your slavegirl. Whatever Sarah says to you, listen to her voice, for through  
13 Isaac shall your seed be acclaimed. But the slavegirl's son, too, I will make a nation, for he is your seed."
- 14 And Abraham rose early in the morning and took bread and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar, placing them on her shoulder, and he gave her the child, and sent her away, and she went wandering through  
15 the wilderness of Beersheba. And when the water in the skin was gone,  
16 she flung the child under one of the bushes and went off and sat down at a distance, a bowshot away, for she thought, "Let me not see when the child dies." And she sat at a distance and raised her voice and wept.

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12. *listen to her voice.* The Hebrew idiom has the obvious meaning "to obey," but the literal presence of hearing a voice is important because it resonates with the occurrence of the same verb and object at the heart of the wilderness scene that immediately follows.

*acclaimed.* The literal meaning of the Hebrew is "called."

14. *rose early in the morning.* This is precisely echoed in the story of the binding of Isaac (22:3), as part of an intricate network of correspondences between the two stories.

*and he gave her the child.* The Hebrew has only "the child," with an accusative prefix. This has led many commentators to imagine that Abraham is putting Ishmael on Hagar's shoulders together with the bread and water—a most unlikely act, since the boy would be about sixteen. But biblical syntax permits the use of a transitive verb ("gave [them] to Hagar") interrupted by a participial clause ("placing [them] on her shoulder"), which then controls a second object ("the child"). The only way to convey this in English is by repeating the verb.

16. *a bowshot away.* This particular indication of distance is carefully chosen, for it adumbrates the boy's vocation as bowman spelled out at the end of the story.

*when the child dies.* Like the narrator in verses 14 and 15, Hagar refers to her son as *yeled*, "child" (the etymology—"the one who is born"—is the same as *enfant* in French). This is the same term that is used for Isaac at the beginning of verse 8. From the moment the angel speaks in verse 17, Ishmael is consis-

And God heard the voice of the lad and God's messenger called out 17  
from the heavens and said to her, "What troubles you, Hagar? Fear not,  
for God has heard the lad's voice where he is.

Rise, lift up the lad 18  
and hold him by the hand,  
for a great nation will I make him."

And God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water, and she went 19  
and filled the skin with water and gave to the lad to drink. And God was 20  
with the lad, and he grew up and dwelled in the wilderness, and he  
became a seasoned Bowman. And he dwelled in the wilderness of Paran 21  
and his mother took him a wife from the land of Egypt.

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tently referred to as *na'ar*, "lad"—a more realistic indication of his adolescent status and also a term of tenderness, as in the story of the binding of Isaac in the next chapter.

17. *And God heard the voice of the lad.* The narrator had reported only Hagar's weeping. Now we learn that the boy has been weeping or crying out, and it is his anguish that elicits God's saving response. In the earlier version of the banishment of Hagar (chapter 16), the naming of her future son Ishmael stands at the center of the story. Here, as though the writer were ironically conspiring with Sarah's refusal to name the boy, Ishmael's name is suppressed to the very end. But the ghost of its etymology—"God will hear"—"God will hear"—hovers at the center of the story.

20. *a seasoned Bowman.* There is an odd doubling of the professional designation in the Hebrew (literally "archer-bowman"), which I construe as an indication of his confirmed dedication to this hunter's calling, or his skill in performing it.

11 And it happened at that time that Moses grew and went out to his  
brothers and saw their burdens. And he saw an Egyptian man striking  
12 a Hebrew man of his brothers. And he turned this way and that and saw  
that there was no man about, and he struck down the Egyptian and  
13 buried him in the sand. And he went out the next day, and, look, two  
Hebrew men were brawling, and he said to the one in the wrong, "Why  
14 should you strike your fellow?" And he said, "Who set you as a man  
prince and judge over us? Is it to kill me that you mean as you killed  
the Egyptian?" And Moses was afraid and he thought, "Surely, the thing

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and hence "son." The folk etymology relates it to the Hebrew verb *mashah*, "to draw out from water." Perhaps the active form of the verb used for the name *mosheh*, "he who draws out," is meant to align the naming with Moses's future destiny of rescuing his people from the water of the Sea of Reeds.

12. *and saw there was no man about.* Although the obvious meaning is that he wanted to be sure the violent intervention he intended would go unobserved, some interpreters have proposed, a little apologetically, that he first looked around to see if there was anyone else to step forward and help the beaten Hebrew slave. "About" is merely implied in the Hebrew. In any case, there is a pointed echoing of "man" (*'ish*)—an Egyptian man, a Hebrew man, and no man—that invites one to ponder the role and obligations of a man as one man victimizes another. When the fugitive Moses shows up in Midian, he will be identified, presumably because of his attire and speech, as "an Egyptian man."

13. *Why should you strike your fellow?* The first dialogue assigned to a character in biblical narrative typically defines the character. Moses's first speech is a reproof to a fellow Hebrew and an attempt to impose a standard of justice (*rasha'*, "the one in the wrong," is a legal term).

14. *Who set you as a man prince and judge over us?* These words of the brawler in the wrong not only preface the revelation that Moses's killing of the Egyptian is no secret but also adumbrate a long series of later incidents in which the Israelites will express resentment or rebelliousness toward Moses. Again, "man" is stressed. Later, "the man Moses" will become a kind of epithet for Israel's first leader.

*thing.* The Hebrew *davar* variously means "word," "thing," "matter," "affair," and much else.

has become known." And Pharaoh heard of this thing and he sought to 15  
kill Moses, and Moses fled from Pharaoh's presence and dwelled in the  
land of Midian, and he sat down by the well. And the priest of Midian 16  
had seven daughters, and they came and drew water and filled the  
troughs to water their father's flock. And the shepherds came and drove 17  
them off, and Moses rose and saved them and watered their  
flock. And they came to Reuel their father, and he said, "Why have you 18

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15. *Midian.* The geographical location of this land in different biblical references does not seem entirely fixed, perhaps because the Midianites were seminomads. Moses's country of refuge would appear to be a semidesert region bordering Egypt on the east, to the west by northwest of present-day Eilat.

*sat down by the well.* The verb *yashav*, "sat down," is identical with the previous verb in this sentence, where it reflects its other meaning, "to dwell" or "to settle." It makes sense for the wayfarer to pause to rest and refresh himself at an oasis as Moses does here. "The well" has the idiomatic force of "a certain well."

16. *seven daughters . . . came and drew water.* By this point, the ancient audience would have sufficient signals to recognize the narrative convention of the betrothal type-scene (compare Abraham's servant and Rebekah, Genesis 24, and Jacob and Rachel, Genesis 29): the future bridegroom, or his surrogate, encounters a nubile young woman, or women, at a well in a foreign land; water is drawn; the woman hurries to bring home news of the stranger's arrival; he is invited to a meal; the betrothal is agreed on. In keeping with the folktale stylization of the Moses story, the usual young woman is multiplied by the formulaic number seven.

17. *the shepherds came and drove them off.* Only in this version of the betrothal scene is there an actual struggle between hostile sides at the well. Moses's intervention to "save" (*hoshi'a*) the girls accords perfectly with his future role as commander of the Israelite forces in the wilderness and the liberator, *moshi'a*, of his people.

18. *Why have you hurried back today?* With great narrative economy, the expected betrothal-scene verb, "to hurry," *miher*, occurs not in the narrator's report but in Reuel's expression of surprise to his daughters.

- 19 hurried back today?” And they said, “An Egyptian man rescued us from  
the hands of the shepherds, and, what’s more, he even drew water for  
20 us and watered the flock.” And he said to his daughters, “And where is  
21 he? Why did you leave the man? Call him that he may eat bread.” And  
Moses agreed to dwell with the man, and he gave Zipporah his daugh-  
22 ter to Moses. And she bore a son, and he called his name Gershom, for  
he said, “A sojourner have I been in a foreign land.”
- 23 And it happened when a long time had passed that the king of Egypt  
died, and the Israelites groaned from the bondage and cried out, and

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19. *he even drew water for us and watered the flock.* Their report highlights the act of drawing water, the Hebrew stressing the verb by stating it in the infinitive before the conjugated form—*daloh dalah* (in this translation, “even drew”). The verb is different from *mashah*, the term associated with Moses’s name, because it is the proper verb for drawing water, whereas *mashah* is used for drawing something out of water. In any case, this version of the scene at the well underscores the story of a hero whose infancy and future career are intimately associated with water.

20. *Call him that he may eat bread.* “Call” here has its social sense of “invite,” and “bread” is the common biblical synecdoche for “food.” Reuel’s eagerness to show hospitality indicates that he is a civilized person, and in the logic of the type-scene, the feast offered the stranger will lead to the betrothal.

21. *Zipporah.* The name means “bird.”

22. *Gershom . . . A sojourner have I been.* In keeping with biblical practice, the naming-speech reflects folk etymology, breaking the name into *ger*, “sojourner,” and *sham*, “there,” though the verbal root of the name *g-r-sh* would appear to refer to banishment.

23. *bondage.* The Hebrew *‘avodah* is the same term rendered as “work” in chapter 1.

- their plea from the bondage went up to God. And God heard their 24  
moaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with  
Isaac, and with Jacob. And God saw the Israelites, and God knew. 25

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24. *moaning.* The Hebrew *na’aqah* is a phonetic cousin (through metathesis) to the word for groaning, *‘anahiah*, reflected in the previous verse, an effect this translation tries to simulate through rhyme.

24–25. Until this point, God has not been evident in the story. Now He is the subject of a string of significant verbs—hear, remember (which in the Hebrew has the strong force of “take to heart”), see, and know. The last of these terms marks the end of the narrative segment with a certain mystifying note—sufficiently mystifying that the ancient Greek translators sought to “correct” it—because it has no object. “God knew,” but what did He know? Presumably, the suffering of the Israelites, the cruel oppression of history in which they are now implicated, the obligations of the covenant with the patriarchs, and the plan He must undertake to liberate the enslaved people. And so the objectless verb prepares us for the divine address from the burning bush and the beginning of Moses’s mission.

3 charge you. Your own eyes have seen that which the LORD did at Baal  
Peor, for every man that went after Baal Peor did the LORD your God  
4 destroy from your midst. But you, the ones clinging to the LORD your  
5 God, are all of you alive today. See, I have taught you the statutes and  
the laws as the LORD my God has charged me, to do thus within the  
6 land into which you are about to come to take hold of it. And you shall  
keep and do, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the  
eyes of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and will say, 'Only  
7 a wise and understanding people is this great nation.' For what great  
nation is there that has gods close to it like the LORD our God when-  
8 ever we call to Him? And what great nation is there that has just  
statutes and laws like all this teaching that I am about to set before you  
9 today? Only be you on the watch and watch yourself closely lest you  
forget the things that your own eyes have seen and lest they swerve  
from your heart—all the days of your life, and you shall make them  
10 known to your sons and to your sons' sons: the day that you stood  
before the LORD your God at Horeb when the LORD said to me,  
'Assemble the people to Me that I may have them hear My words, so  
that they learn to fear Me all the days that they live on the soil, and

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4. *you, the ones clinging to the LORD your God, are all of you alive today.* The very physical existence of the audience for Moses's sermon is palpable proof of the principle he announced at the beginning of the sermon, "so you may live."

6. *Only a wise and understanding people is this great nation.* The primacy of wisdom in the worldview of Deuteronomy is sharply reflected here. Israel's greatness as the other nations come to recognize it is not in its fecundity and military might (as, for example, in Balaam's oracles in Numbers) but in its wisdom, demonstrated by its adherence to a set of just statutes and laws. The next lines (verses 7–8) are testimony to God's decision to be close to Israel through the statutes and teachings He reveals to them.

10. *the day that you stood before the LORD.* "The day" or "on the day" is an epic locution for "when." Having begun with a general exhortation to cling to God's laws, the sermon now focuses in on the defining moment four decades earlier when Israel stood at the foot of Mount Sinai and God revealed to them his law in thunder and lightning.

11 so that they teach their sons.' And you came forward and stood at the  
bottom of the mountain, and the mountain was burning with fire to the  
heart of the heavens—darkness, cloud, and dense fog. And the LORD  
12 spoke to you from the midst of the fire. The sound of words you did  
hear but no image did you see except the sound. And He told you His  
13 covenant that He charged you to do, the Ten Words, and He wrote  
them on two tablets of stone. And me did the LORD charge at that time  
14 to teach you statutes and laws for you to do in the land into which you  
are crossing over to take hold of it. And you shall be very watchful of  
15 yourselves, for you saw no image on the day the LORD spoke to you  
from the midst of the fire, lest you act ruinously and make you a  
16 sculpted image of any likeness, the form of male or of female, the form  
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12. *The sound of words you did hear but no image did you see.* The account of the Sinai epiphany in Exodus is less rigorous about excluding the aspect of sight. The Israelites there are enjoined to keep their distance precisely in order that they will see nothing, and then the seventy elders in the sacred feast on the mountain are vouchsafed a vision of the effulgence surrounding God. The Deuteronomist, by contrast, is sternly aniconic, in keeping with his steady polemic against all cults of divine images; he is a writer who insists on hearing the divine, and seeing only God's portentous acts in history.

*except the sound.* Abraham ibn Ezra ingeniously connects this slightly odd turn of phrase with the synesthetic "and all the people saw the sounds [i.e., the thunder]" (Exodus 20:18).

15. *be very watchful of yourselves.* It should be noted that the Hebrew freely swings between second-person plural and second-person singular, an oscillation perfectly idiomatic in biblical Hebrew and by no means to be attributed to a collation of different sources. It may be that the speaker on occasion switches to the singular form in order to emphasize the effect of imperative address to each individual, but that is not certain.

16. *a sculpted image of any likeness, the form.* Philologists have sought to draw technical differences among these terms, but the manifest point of their deployment here is the stylistic force of their synonymy: any manner or shape of image or icon will lead Israel on the path to ruin.

16–18. *the form of male or of female . . . of any beast . . . on the earth . . . of any winged bird . . . in the heavens . . . of anything that crawls on the ground . . . of any fish that is in the waters under the earth.* The ringing language of the ser-

of any beast that is on the earth, the form of any winged bird that flies  
18 in the heavens, the form of anything that crawls on the ground, the  
19 form of any fish that is in the waters under the earth, lest you raise  
your eyes to the heavens and see the sun and the moon and the stars,  
all the array of the heavens, and you be led astray and bow down to  
them and worship them, for the LORD your God allotted them to all the

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mon here is a grand evocation of the account of creation in Genesis 1, and the precise recapitulation of phrases compels the conclusion that that account, attributed to P, was familiar to the Deuteronomist in a textual form resembling the one we know. The hierarchy of creation was ordained by God for human's use and dominion, and man in turn was to recognize the single divine source of all creation. The elevation of any component of the created world to an object of worship is thus seen as a perversion of the whole plan of cosmogonic harmony and hierarchy.

18. *the waters under the earth.* In keeping with the picture of the cosmos in Genesis 1, water is imagined to be under the earth ("the great abyss"), beyond the perimeters of the dry land (the sea), and erupting from within the dry land itself in rivers and lakes.

19. *lest you raise your eyes to the heavens and see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the array of the heavens.* Once again, the language harks back to the first account of creation, which concludes with the completion of the earth and the heavens "and all their array." In a historical period rife with religious syncretism and cultural assimilation, the writer stresses the dangerous enchantment of the beauty of the natural world, which could easily lead people to deify and worship the various manifestations of that beauty.

for the LORD your God allotted them to all the peoples under the heavens. This notion, which will be picked up again in the Song of Moses (chapter 32), is a curious one by the lights of later monotheism. To Israel the worship of the one overmastering God was assigned, whereas the other nations were entrusted to the supervision of lesser celestial beings, *beney ha'elohim* ("the sons of God") and came to worship these intermediary beings as though they were autonomous deities. Polytheism, in this view, is a reflection of the fact that the sundry nations, unlike Israel, have not been chosen by the one God to serve Him.

peoples under the heavens. But you did the LORD take and He brought  
you out from the iron's forge, from Egypt, to become for Him a people  
in estate as this day. And the LORD was incensed with me because of  
21 your words and He swore not to let me cross the Jordan and not to let  
me come into the goodly land that the LORD your God is about to give  
you in estate. For I am about to die in this land, I am not to cross the  
22 Jordan, but you are to cross over and you will take hold of this goodly  
land. Be you on the watch, lest you forget the covenant of the LORD  
23 your God which He has sealed with you, and you make for yourselves  
a sculpted image of any sort, against which the LORD your God has  
charged you. For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous god.  
24 When you beget sons and sons of sons and are long in the land, and  
25 you act ruinously and make a sculpted image of any sort and do evil  
in the eyes of the LORD your God to anger Him, I have called to wit-  
26 ness against you the heavens and the earth that you shall surely perish  
quickly from upon the land into which you are about to cross the Jordan  
to take hold of it. You shall not long endure upon it, for you will

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20. *But you did the LORD take and He brought you out from the iron's forge.* The argument of the sermon now moves another step back in time, from Sinai to the Exodus. The origins of Israel as a people subject to another people in whose land it dwelled, rescued from the crucible of slavery by God, are adduced as further evidence of God's unique election of Israel.

*a people in estate.* Literally, a people-estate—God's special property.

21. *the LORD was incensed with me because of your words.* Again, the barring of Moses from the promised land is attributed not to any act or gesture of his—for here he is the impeccable leader, God's mouthpiece—but to the mistrustful words of the Israelites in the incident of the spies.

26. *I have called to witness against you the heavens and the earth.* It was conventional in ancient Near Eastern treaties to invoke heaven and earth as witnesses, but the word pair here also nicely echoes the allusions to the Creation story in previous verses. God's heaven and earth are everlasting, but Israel will be all too ephemeral if it worships images of the natural world.

27 surely be destroyed. And the LORD will scatter you among the peoples  
and you shall be left men few in number among the nations where the  
28 LORD will drive you. And you shall worship there their gods that are  
human handiwork, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat  
29 nor smell. And you shall search for the LORD your God from there, and  
you shall find him when you seek Him with all your heart and with all  
30 your being. When you are in straits and all these things find you in  
time to come, you shall turn back to the LORD your God and heed His  
31 voice. For the LORD your God is a merciful god. He will not let you go  
and will not destroy you and will not forget your fathers' covenant that

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27. *And the LORD will scatter you among the peoples.* This dire prospect, which is not within the purview of the Book of Exodus, haunts the Deuteronomist, writing in a period after the neo-Assyrian empire had instituted a policy of deporting substantial elements of subjugated populations in order to clear the conquered territory for colonization. Indeed, some sections of the book, including this one, may have been written in the Babylonian exile.

28. *And you shall worship there their gods that are human handiwork.* The ultimate catastrophe of exile is viewed as assimilation into the local pagan cults—the fate, one may reasonably surmise, of most of those exiled from the ten northern tribes after the neo-Assyrian conquest in 721 B.C.E. and some of those exiled in 586 by the Babylonians.

*wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell.* In the earlier books of the Torah, the gods worshipped by the other nations are imagined as lesser entities, impotent in the face of YHWH's overwhelming superiority and bound to be reduced to nullity in any competition with the God of Israel. In the antipagan polemic of Deuteronomy, as in some of the contemporaneous and slightly later Prophets, polytheism is jeeringly represented as imbecile fetishism.

29. *with all your heart and with all your being.* This phrase, with its revivalist fervor, is a recurrent one in the rhetoric of Deuteronomy.

30. *heed His voice.* The primary meaning of the verb, which has already appeared several times in this sermon, is “hear,” but the preposition *bē* that follows it requires the specific sense of “heed.”

He swore to them. For, pray, ask of the first days that were before you, 32  
from the day God created a human on the earth and from one end of  
the heavens to the other end of the heavens, has there been the like of  
this great thing or has its like been heard? Has a people heard God's 33  
voice speaking from the midst of the fire, as you yourself have heard,  
and still lived? Or has God tried to come to take Him a nation from 34  
within a nation in trials and signs and portents and in battle and with a  
strong hand and an outstretched arm and with great terrors, like all that  
the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? You yourself 35  
were shown to know that the LORD is God, there is none besides Him.  
From the heavens He made you hear His voice to reprove you, and on 36  
the earth He showed you His great fire, and His words you heard, from  
the midst of the fire. And since He did love your fathers He chose their 37  
seed after them and brought you out from Egypt through His presence  
with His great power, to dispossess nations greater and mightier than 38  
you from before you, to bring you to give to you their land in estate as

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32–33. *from the day God created a human on the earth . . . Has a people heard God's voice speaking from the midst of the fire.* These sentences bind together in a summarizing flourish the topics of creation and the Sinai epiphany that were underscored earlier in this speech.

33. *still lived.* The “still” is added in the translation for clarity. The obvious sense of the verb is “survived” but the level of diction of that English term would betray the monosyllabic plainness of the Hebrew. “Still lived,” it should be noted, takes us back to “so you may live” at the very beginning of the sermon.

34. *to take Him a nation from within a nation.* In the almost musical structure of this oratory, we now move back to the invocation of the Exodus as testimony in verse 20.

37. *their seed after them.* The Hebrew says literally “his seed after him,” but there is no real confusion because the usage has simply moved to a grammatical singular for a collective entity.

another. Battle all the more fiercely against the city and destroy it.' And so rouse his spirits."

26 And Uriah's wife heard that Uriah her man was dead, and she keened  
27 over her husband. And when the mourning was over, David sent and gathered her into his house and she became his wife. And she bore him a son, and the thing that David had done was evil in the eyes of the LORD.

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*battle all the more fiercely.* The Hebrew is literally "make fierce [or, strengthen] your battle." The phrase is an emphatic formal echo of "the fiercest battling" in verse 15.

*and so rouse his spirits.* Literally, "and strengthen him," that is, Joab. Some read this as part of the message to Joab, construing it as "strengthen it [i.e., the battle]," though the verb has a masculine pronominal object and the word for battle is feminine.

27. *when the mourning was over.* Normally, the mourning period would be seven days. Bathsheba, then, is even more precipitous than Gertrude after the death of Hamlet the elder in hastening to the bed of a new husband. She does, of course, want to become David's wife before her big belly shows.

*David sent and gathered her into his house and she became his wife.* Throughout this story, David is never seen anywhere but in his house. This sentence at the end strongly echoes verse 4: "David sent . . . and fetched her and she came to him and he lay with her."

*the thing that David had done was evil in the eyes of the LORD.* Only now, after the adultery, the murder, the remarriage, and the birth of the son, does the narrator make an explicit moral judgment of David's actions. The invocation of God's judgment is the introduction to the appearance of Nathan the prophet, delivering first a moral parable "wherein to catch the conscience of the king" and then God's grim curse on David and his house.

## CHAPTER 12

**A**nd the LORD sent Nathan to David, and he came to him and said to him: "Two men there were in a single town, one was rich and the other

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1. *And the LORD sent.* The second stage of the story of David and Bathsheba—the phase of accusation and retribution—begins with a virtual pun on a prominent thematic word of the first half of the story. David was seen repeatedly "sending" messengers, arranging for the satisfaction of his lust and the murder of his mistress's husband through the agency of others. By contrast, God here "sends" his prophet to David—not an act of bureaucratic manipulation but the use of a human vehicle to convey a divine message of conscience.

*Two men there were . . .* Nathan's parable, from its very first syllables, makes clear its own status as a traditional tale and a poetic construction. The way one begins a storyteller's tale in the Bible is with the formula "there was a man"—compare the beginning of Job, or the beginning of the story of Hannah and Elkanah in 1 Samuel 1. The Hebrew prose of the parable also is set off strongly from the language of the surrounding narrative by its emphatically rhythmic character, with a fondness for parallel pairs of terms—an effect this translation tries to reproduce. The vocabulary, moreover, includes several terms that are relatively rare in biblical prose narrative: *kivśah* (ewe), *raśh* (poor), *helekh* (wayfarer), *ʔoreah* (traveler). Finally the two "men" of the opening formula are at the end separated out into "rich man," "poor man," and "the man who had come" (in each of these cases, Hebrew *ʔish* is used). This formal repetition prepares the way, almost musically, for Nathan's two-word accusatory explosion, *ʔatah haʔish*, "You are the man!" Given the patently literary character of Nathan's tale, which would have been transparent to anyone native to ancient Hebrew culture, it is a little puzzling that David should so precipitously take the tale as a report of fact requiring judicial action. Nathan may be counting on the possibility that the obverse side of guilty conscience in a man like David is the anxious desire to do the right thing. As king, his first obligation is to protect his subjects and to dispense justice, especially to the disadvantaged. In the affair of Bathsheba and Uriah, he has done precisely the opposite. Now, as he listens to Nathan's tale, David's compensatory zeal to be a champion of jus-

2 poor. The rich man had sheep and cattle, in great abundance. And the  
3 poor man had nothing save one little ewe that he had bought. And he  
nurtured her and raised her with him together with his sons. From his  
crust she would eat and from his cup she would drink and in his lap  
4 she would lie, and she was to him like a daughter. And a wayfarer came  
to the rich man, and it seemed a pity to him to take from his own sheep  
and cattle to prepare for the traveler who had come to him, and he  
took the poor man's ewe and prepared it for the man who had come to  
5 him." And David's anger flared hot against the man, and he said to  
Nathan, "As the LORD lives, doomed is the man who has done this!

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3. *eat . . . drink . . . lie.* As Polzin observes, these terms effect full contact with the story of David and Bathsheba, being the three activities David sought to engage Uriah in with his wife (compare Uriah's words in 11:11). The parable begins to become a little fantastic here in the interest of drawing close to the relationships of conjugal intimacy and adultery to which it refers: the little lamb eats from her master's crust, drinks from his cup, and lies in his lap ("lap" as a biblical idiom has connotations not merely of parental sheltering but also of sexual intimacy: compare verse 8, "I gave . . . your master's wives in your lap").

4. *it seemed a pity to him.* The Hebrew uses an active verb, "he pitied," preparing for a literal ironic reversal in verse 6, "he had no pity"—or, "he did not pity." *to prepare.* The Hebrew is literally "to do" or "to make." When the verb has as its direct object a live edible animal, it means to slaughter and cook.

5. *David's anger flared hot against the man.* Nathan's rhetorical trap has now snapped shut. David, by his access of anger, condemns himself, and he is now the helpless target of the denunciation that Nathan will unleash.

*Doomed is the man.* Actually, according to biblical law someone who has illegally taken another's property would be subject to fourfold restitution (verse 6), not to the death penalty. (The Hebrew phrase is literally "son of death"—that is, deserving death, just as in 1 Samuel 26:16.) David pronounces this death sentence in his outburst of moral indignation, but it also reflects the way that the parable conflates the sexual "taking" of Bathsheba with the murder of Uriah: the addition of Bathsheba to the royal harem could have been intimated simply by the rich man's placing the ewe in his flock, but as the parable is told, the ewe must be slaughtered, blood must be shed. David himself will not be condemned to die, but death will hang over his house. As the Talmud (Yoma 22B) notes, the fourfold retribution for Uriah's death will be worked out in the death or violent fate of four of David's children: the

And the poor man's ewe he shall pay back fourfold, in as much as he  
6 has done this thing, and because he had no pity!" And Nathan said to  
7 David, "You are the man! Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'It is I who  
anointed you king over Israel and it is I Who saved you from the hand  
8 of Saul. And I gave you your master's house and your master's wives in  
9 your lap, and I gave you the house of Israel and of Judah. And if that be  
too little, I would give you even as much again. Why did you despise  
10 the word of the LORD, to do what is evil in His eyes? Uriah the Hittite  
you struck down with the sword, and his wife you took for yourself as  
wife, and him you have killed by the sword of the Ammonites! And so  
now, the sword shall not swerve from your house evermore, seeing you

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7. *Thus says the LORD God of Israel.* After the direct knife thrust of "You are the man!", Nathan hastens to produce the prophetic messenger formula in its extended form, in this way proclaiming divine authorization for the dire imprecation he pronounces against David and his house.

7.-8. *It is I who anointed you. . . . And if that be too little, I would give you even as much again.* In the first part of this speech, there are several ironic echoes of David's prayer in Chapter 7, in which David thanks God for all His benefactions and professes himself unworthy of them.

8. *and your master's wives in your lap.* At least in the account passed down to us, there is no mention elsewhere of David's having taken sexual possession of his predecessor's consorts, though this was a practice useful for its symbolic force in a transfer of power, as Absalom will later realize.

9. *Uriah the Hittite you struck down with the sword.* The obliquity of working through agents at a distance, as David did in contriving the murder of Uriah, is exploded by the brutal directness of the language: it is as though David himself had wielded the sword. Only at the end of the sentence are we given the explanatory qualification "by the sword of the Ammonites."

10. *the sword shall not swerve from your house evermore.* As Bar-Efrat notes, David's rather callous message to Joab, "the sword sometimes consumes one way and sometimes another," is now thrown back in his face. The story of David's sons, not to speak of his descendants in later generations, will in fact turn out to be a long tale of conspiracy, internecine struggle, and murder. One of the most extraordinary features of the whole David narrative is that this story of the founding of the great dynasty of Judah . . .

11 have despised Me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be  
your wife.' Thus says the LORD, 'I am about to raise up evil against you  
from your own house, and I will take your wives before your eyes and  
12 give them to your fellowman, and he shall lie with your wives in the  
sight of this sun. For you did it in secret but I will do this thing before  
13 all Israel and before the sun.' And David said to Nathan, "I have  
offended against the LORD." And Nathan said to David, "The LORD has  
14 also remitted your offense—you shall not die. But since you surely  
spurned the LORD in this thing, the son born to you is doomed to die."

15 And Nathan went to his house, and the LORD afflicted the child whom  
Bathsheba wife of Uriah the Hittite had born David, and he fell gravely  
16 ill. And David implored God for the sake of the lad, and David fasted,

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tragic paradox more profoundly than William Faulkner in his recasting of the story in *Absalom, Absalom!* The author of the David story continually exercises an unblinking vision of David and the institution of the monarchy that exposes their terrible flaws even as he accepts their divinely authorized legitimacy.

11. *I am about to raise up evil against you from your own house.* As befits a predictive curse, the agents of the evil are left unnamed. The disaster announced is clearly the rebellion of Absalom—as the reference to public cohabitation with David's wives makes clear—and the rape of Tamar and the murder of Amnon that lead up to it. But further "evil" from the house of David will persist to his deathbed, as Absalom's rebellion is followed by Adonijah's usurpation.

12. *For you did it in secret but I will do this thing before all Israel.* The calamitous misjudgments that defined David's dealings with Bathsheba and Uriah were a chain of bungled efforts at concealment. Now, in the retribution, all his crimes are to be revealed.

14. *spurned the LORD.* The Masoretic Text has "spurned the enemies of the LORD," a scribal euphemism to avoid making God the object of a harsh negative verb.

15. *Bathsheba wife of Uriah the Hittite.* At this point, she is still identified as wife of the husband she betrayed in conceiving this child.

and he came and spent the night lying on the ground. And the elders of  
his house rose over him to rouse him up from the ground, but he would  
not, nor did he partake of food with them. And it happened on the sev-  
1 enth day that the child died, and David's servants were afraid to tell  
him that the child was dead, for they said, "Look, while the child was  
alive, we spoke to him and he did not heed our voice, and how can  
we say to him, the child is dead? He will do some harm." And David  
15 saw that his servants were whispering to each other and David under-  
stood that the child was dead. And David said to his servants, "Is the  
child dead?" And they said, "He is dead." And David rose from the  
20 ground and bathed and rubbed himself with oil and changed his gar-  
ments and came into the house of the LORD and worshiped and came  
back to his house and asked that food be set out for him, and he ate.

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17. *fasted . . . and spent the night lying on the ground.* David's acts pointedly replicate those of the man he murdered, who refused to go home and eat but instead spent the night lying on the ground with the palace guard.

18. *on the seventh day.* Seven days were the customary period of mourning. In this instance, David enacts a regimen of mourning, in an effort to placate God, before the fact of death.

*He will do some harm.* Presumably, the courtiers fear that David will do harm to himself in a frenzy of grief.

19. *He is dead.* In Hebrew, this is a single syllable, *met* "dead"—a response corresponding to idiomatic usage because there is no word for "yes" in biblical Hebrew, and so the person questioned must respond by affirming the key term of the question. It should be noted, however, that the writer has contrived to repeat "dead" five times, together with one use of the verb "died," in these two verses: the ineluctable bleak fact of death is hammered home to us, just before David's grim acceptance of it.

20. *David rose . . . bathed . . . rubbed himself with oil . . . changed his garments . . . worshiped . . . ate.* This uninterrupted chain of verbs signifies David's brisk resumption of the activities of normal life, evidently without speech and certainly without explanation, as the courtiers' puzzlement makes clear. The entire episode powerfully manifests that human capacity for surprise, and for paradoxical behavior, that is one of the hallmarks of the great biblical characters. David here acts in a way that neither his courtiers nor the audience of the story could have anticipated.

21 And his servants said to him, "What is this thing that you have done?  
For the sake of the living child you fasted and wept, and when the  
22 child was dead, you arose and ate food?" And he said, "While the child  
was still alive I fasted and wept, for I thought, 'Who knows, the LORD  
23 may favor me and the child will live.' And now that he is dead, why  
should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I am going to him and he  
will not come back to me."  
24 And David consoled Bathsheba his wife, and he came to her and lay  
with her, and she bore a son and called his name Solomon, and the

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23. *Can I bring him back again? I am going to him and he will not come back to me.* If the episode of Bathsheba and Uriah is the great turning point of the David story, these haunting words are the pivotal moment in the turning point. As we have repeatedly seen, every instance of David's speech in the preceding narrative has been crafted to serve political ends, much of it evincing elaborately artful rhetoric. Now, after the dire curse pronounced by Nathan, the first stage of which is fulfilled in the death of the child, David speaks for the first time not out of political need but in his existential nakedness. The words he utters have a stark simplicity—there are no elegies now—and his recognition of the irreversibility of his son's death also makes him think of his own mortality. In place of David the seeker and wielder of power, we now see a vulnerable David, and this is how he will chiefly appear through the last half of his story.

24. *David consoled Bathsheba his wife.* Now, after the terrible price of the child's life has been paid for the murder of her husband, the narrator refers to her as David's wife, not Uriah's. A specific lapse of time is not mentioned, but one must assume that at least two or three months have passed, during which she recovers from the first childbirth.

*she . . . called his name Solomon, and the LORD loved him.* As a rule, it was the mother who exercised the privilege of naming the child. Despite some scholarly efforts to construe the name differently, its most plausible etymology remains the one that links it with the word for "peace" (the Hebrew term *Shelomoh* might simply mean "His peace"). The LORD's loving Solomon, who will disappear from the narrative until the struggle for the throne in 1 Kings 1, foreshadows his eventual destiny, and also harmonizes this name giving with the child's second name, Jedidiah, which means "God's friend."

LORD loved him. And He sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet and  
called his name Jedidiah, by the grace of the LORD. 25

And Joab battled against Rabbah of the Ammonites and he captured  
the royal city. And Joab sent messengers to David and said, 26  
27

"I have battled against Rabbah,  
Yes, I captured the Citadel of Waters.

And so now, assemble the rest of the troops and encamp against the  
city and capture it, lest it be I who capture the city and my name be 28

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25. *Jedidiah, by the grace of the LORD.* For the last phrase, this translation adopts a proposal by Kyle McCarter, Jr. The usual meaning of the preposition used, *ba'avur*, is "for the sake of." It remains something of a puzzlement that the child should be given two names, one by his mother and the other by God through His prophet. One common suggestion is that Jedidiah was Solomon's official throne name. But perhaps the second name, indicating special access to divine favor, reflects a political calculation on the part of Nathan: he is already aligning himself with Solomon (and with Bathsheba), figuring that in the long run it will be best to have a successor to David under some obligation to him. In the event, Nathan's intervention will prove crucial in securing the throne for Solomon.

26. *Joab battled against Rabbah.* It is possible, as many scholars have claimed, that the conquest of Rabbah, in the seige of which Uriah had perished, in fact occurs before the birth of Solomon, though sieges lasting two or more years were not unknown in the ancient world.

27. *I have battled against Rabbah.* . . . Joab is actually sending David a double message. As dutiful field commander, he urges David (verse 28) to hasten to the front so that the conquest of the Ammonite capital will be attributed to him. And yet, he proclaims the conquest in the triumphal formality of a little victory poem (one line, two parallel versets) in which it is he who figures unambiguously as conqueror. This coy and dangerous game Joab plays with David about who has the real power will persist in the story.

*the Citadel of Waters.* The reference is not entirely clear, but the narrative context indicates that Joab has occupied one vital part of the city—evidently, where the water supply is—while the rest of the town has not yet been taken.

*QOHELET Chapter One*

1. The words of Qohelet son of David, king in Jerusalem.
2. Merest breath, said Qohelet, merest breath. All is mere breath.
3. What gain is there for man in all his toil that he toils under the sun.
4. A generation goes and a generation comes, but the earth endures forever.
5. The sun rises and the sun sets, and to its place it glides, there it rises.
6. It goes to the south and swings round to the north, round and round goes the wind, and on its rounds the wind returns.
7. All the rivers go to the sea, and the sea is not full.  
To the place that the rivers go, there they return to go.
8. All things are weary. A man cannot speak. The eye is not sated with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.
9. That which was is that which will be, and that which was done is that which will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun.
10. There is a thing of which one would say, "See this, it is new." It already has been in the eons that were before us. 11. There is no remembrance of the first things nor of the last things that will be. They will have no remembrance with those who will be in the latter time.
12. I, Qohelet, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem. 13. And I set my heart to inquire and seek through wisdom of all that is done under the sun—it is an evil business that God gave to the sons of man to busy themselves with.
14. I have seen all the deeds that are done under the sun, and, look, all is mere breath.
15. The crooked cannot turn straight nor can the lack be made good. 16. I spoke to my heart, saying: As for me, look, I increased and added wisdom beyond all who were before me over Jerusalem, and my heart has seen much wisdom and knowledge. 17. And I set my heart to know wisdom and to know revelry and folly, for this, too, is herding the wind. 18. For in much wisdom is much worry, and he who adds wisdom adds pain.