

to give us a wonderful life that will really never end because He wants us to live with Him forever. When we come here, we come to worship God, to praise and thank Him for His wonderful gift of life. Do you like the beautiful music? The music is one of our thank-yous to God. We make it as beautiful as we can, because only the best is good enough to offer God. Do you like the special perfumy smell in church? They remind us how beautiful God's Kingdom is—the Kingdom that He has prepared for us to live in forever.”

If you were a child, which of the two answers would appeal to you more? There is little question that the Church's answers are far richer and more meaningful than those offered by Dr. Spock. Yet much of the world has closed its eyes to that truth. Much of the world simply finds it easier to minimize, and reduce to an indivisible spirit somewhere “out there”, the God who has in reality made Himself visible, present, and knowable to His creatures.

Christ called on all of us to “become as children.” Part of what He meant is that we should have a willingness to let ourselves—our whole selves, with all our senses—be drawn into His presence. That presence is what the Church rejoices about at every *Badarak*. It is the reason for our singing, with heartfelt thanks and acceptance, “Krisdos ee mech mer haydnetzav.”



## WOMEN WHO FOLLOWED THE LORD

### Bathsheba, the Mother of Solomon

Over the centuries, Bathsheba's name has become one of those that for many people conjures up the image of a temptress. This seductive woman, married to the valiant soldier Uriah, lured King David with her charms. He even had her husband killed in order to get her. Then she moved into the palace where she and

David lived as husband and wife, always under the shadow of their sin.

Is this a fair and complete picture? Considering Bathsheba's times and circumstances, no; it isn't. There is much more to this woman than seduction and wiles. She is, after all, the mother of the great Solomon, renowned for his wisdom. As far as her relationship with David goes, that didn't start by her will, but solely by his.

David first saw Bathsheba from the rooftop of the palace in Jerusalem, where he had gone to enjoy the cool evening air. He had a commanding view of the city, including Bathsheba's home. He noticed her when she was doing what was very common at the time: bathing on her rooftop. And David, no novice at savoring the charms of beautiful women, was entranced by her loveliness. He resolved to have her.

What happened next, it is important to notice, had little to do with what Bathsheba wanted or didn't want to happen. David “sent messages and took her”, we read in 2 Samuel 11:4, and it was just as matter-of-fact as those simple words. David was the king, and could have any woman he wanted. Bathsheba had no right to refuse him. In the next verse we read just as matter-of-factly that she informed David, after they had slept together that she was carrying his child.

David's reaction to this was not a particularly noble one. He tried every possible way to get Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, to return home and sleep with his wife. But Uriah followed the rules for a soldier consecrated to battle, which meant that he was not to take part in sexual activity. He said to the king, “The ark and Israel and Judah dwell in booths; and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord [David] are camping in the open field; shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife?”

The result of David's desperation is well-known. He could see that Uriah would be no help in his effort to escape responsibility for the child. So he did a terrible thing. He indirectly had Uriah murdered by putting him in the front lines of battle where he was almost sure to be killed, and that is exactly what happened.

Scripture tells us about Bathsheba's reaction only that she “made lamentation for her husband,” but we have no reason to feel that this was not sincere. Once again, events directly affecting her life went on without her consent or knowledge. She did go to the palace and become David's wife, and whether this was what she wanted we don't know. But she shared with him the severe disapproval of the prophet Nathan, who foretold the death of David and Bathsheba's child because of God's displeasure with David. Possibly that death may have brought the couple close together, for we are told that after their baby died David comforted his wife and slept with her, and then she soon became pregnant with Solomon.

Whatever people may think of Bathsheba, it is very

obvious that she gained great respect and influence within the court. We see her in the first book of Kings, asking David to let Solomon, and not Adonijah the son of Haggith, follow David on the throne. She receives assurance from him that Solomon will indeed be the next king. Some commentators have referred to this in a way to make Bathsheba look like a meddling woman, but it's also very possible to see her as a person using her influence for the good of the nation. What is most surprising, and most revealing, is that her ally in this appeal is none other than the prophet Nathan, who had so vehemently chastised her and David earlier. It doesn't seem likely that he would side with her unless she were an upright person and had been able to change his opinion about her quite radically.

We later see Bathsheba with her son Solomon, again making a request. He does not grant it, in this case, but the respect and love he has for her are obvious in the way he receives her at court. Along with the position she has gained for herself among David's courtiers, she has also deserved her son's affectionate and respectful attention; she has apparently been a good mother.

Bathsheba is one of the woman in the Church's history who deserves a second look. Like many others of her sex, she was thrown into situations not of her own choosing (though some would say that to become King David's wife was not all that bad a situation to be thrown into). It was up to her to make what she could of these situations. What did she do? She raised a son who became one of the great kings of the Old Testament and as having done so she is mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus Christ in Matthew's Gospel. She also gained the respect of those around King David, including the prophet who had denounced them both, to such an extent that she was able to influence the king's decisions.