

# A BABY DIES BECAUSE HIS FATHER KILLED A MAN TO TAKE HIS WIFE

## NARRATIVE CRITICISM OF 2 SAMUEL 12, 1-15 ACCORDING TO THE METHOD PROPOSED BY MARGUERAT AND BOURQUIN

### FIRST APPROACH

The delimitation of the *pericope* is set by the visit of the prophet Nathan to King David as it is contained in 2 Samuel 12, 1-15. The narrative begins with a *heterodiegetic* narrator describing the initial action of the main character of the episode, which is Yahweh. Immediately a second narrator gives voice to the prophet Nathan as he starts delivering the first of three parts of the message to King David. The composition of the text is prose. The language changes to *intradiegetic* to accuse King David of his wrongdoing and the consequences of his actions. It uses an alternation of past tense and past perfect tense. This narrative seems to have been composed to have an effect on the reader to make clear who really is in charge, who rules the lives of those involved, who really has power to terminate a life and the responsibility the king had to behave in the eyes of Yahweh as it was expected (v.9).

The voice that relates the narrative comes at times with *extradiegetic* authority or at other times with *intradiegetic* authority. The narrator uses *extradiegetic* authority at the beginning of the *pericope* in v.1a "Yahweh sent the prophet Nathan to David." The narrator keeps the same relationship between him and the text for most of the *pericope*. However, to let the reader know the words used by King David as he reacts to the parable of the two men and the words from Yahweh to David, the narrator uses *intradiegetic* authority as in v. 5-6 and v.7 "You are the man!" and subsequent verses until v. 14. The use of an *intradiegetic* (secondary) is a narrative technique to produce a bigger, stronger effect in the reader as to the importance of the message transmitted.

Every narrative is made up of two elements: the story and the discourse.<sup>1</sup> The story in this *pericope* is the visit of Prophet Nathan to King David to deliver Yahweh's message to move the king to repentance of his sin and to inform him of the consequences of his actions. The way in which this story is told is its discourse. The discourse of this story states the following facts linked together in a temporal sequence:

- i. Yahweh calls Nathan
- ii. The Prophet Nathan goes to King David
- iii. King David listens to the prophet
- iv. Nathan delivers the 1<sup>st</sup> part of the message
- v. David's reaction to the message
- vi. Nathan delivers the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the message -the accusation
- vii. David expresses his repentance
- viii. The prophet delivers the 3<sup>rd</sup> part of the message

### CLOSURE OF THE TEXT

The story begins with Yahweh sending Nathan to deliver a message to King David. The story ends with Nathan going back home after delivering the message and the news that the baby is gravely ill (v. 1- v.15). The criteria to determine the closure is to focus this narrative in what happened during the visit of the prophet Nathan to King David. In this episode, very specific characters participate. It is a concrete visit with an expressed purpose in a specific place at a specific time. The narrative is contained in 2 Samuel 12, 1-15. In the Second Book of Samuel, the narrative uses v. 15 to start another episode. Before v.15, there is a break in the text, which could also serve as closure. Actually, most of the bibles do not include v. 15 as part of the same paragraph or as the last verse in the paragraph before breaking the text into a new paragraph. However, not using v.15 in my analysis would provide more questions as the

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel Marguerat and Yvan Bourquin, *How to Read Bible Stories* (SCM Press London, 1999), 18.

reader would not know when the visit ends or if it continues for a longer time, how much additional things could have happened.

There are nine scenes in this *pericope* as follows.

Scene 1 (v. 1a): Yahweh (calls and) sends Nathan to King David.

Scene 2 (v. 1b): Nathan before the presence of King David.

Scene 3 (vv. 1c – v.4): Nathan asks King David to judge a case, which is the first part of the message from God.

Scene 4 (vv. 5 – 6): David grew very angry.

Scene 5 (vv. 7 – 12): Nathan continues with the second part of the message.

Scene 6 (v. 13): David repents.

Scene 7 (vv.13 – 14): Nathan delivers the third part of God's message to King David.

Scene 8 (v. 15a): Nathan returns home.

Scene 9 (v. 15b): Yahweh struck the child and it fell gravely ill.

The narrative that we are analyzing has been prepared beforehand. This micro-narrative contains some narrative indications referring backward and forwards from the macro-narrative. In verses 7-16 the *intradiegetic* narrator reminds King David of details of his sin and after all the things Yahweh has made for him which were described in the previous chapter.

The visit of the prophet Nathan to King David takes place when the child of King David and Bathsheba has been born. The circumstances of conceiving that child were described in the previous micro-narrative. The end of the child is announced in this narrative and the beginning of the end of the baby is announced too (v.15b). This narrative is part of a narrative sequence started in 2 Samuel 11 and continued through the following chapters.

The theme linking the micro-narratives is the sin of King David and its consequences. King David had illicit sex with a woman who was not his wife (previous micro-narrative), and then he took his own wives, which will be described in following micro-narratives. King David killed a man (previous micro-narrative), and he suffered the death of four of his sons (following micro-narratives) as he himself had judged in v. 6. This micro-narrative is the basis for happenings in other subsequent micro-narratives.

## THE PLOT

The structure of the story is its plot. The plot is the "unifying structure which link the various happenings in the story and organizes them into a continuous account".<sup>2</sup> The *quinary* scheme is a structural model splitting up the plot of the narrative into five successive moments.<sup>3</sup> According to the *quinary* structure, these guidelines assure the coherences of the narrative scenario: Initial situation (or exposition), Complication, Transforming action, Denouement and Final situation. For the *pericope* in 2 Sam. 12, 1-15 can be visualized as follows.

1. **Initial Situation** (or exposition), "Yahweh sent the prophet Nathan to David." (v.1a). The initial situation is constituted by Yahweh sending Nathan to David, this brings Nathan into direct contact with what happens in the life of King David and his family. David had sinned, had not repented. The narrative will attempt to remove this lack of repentance.

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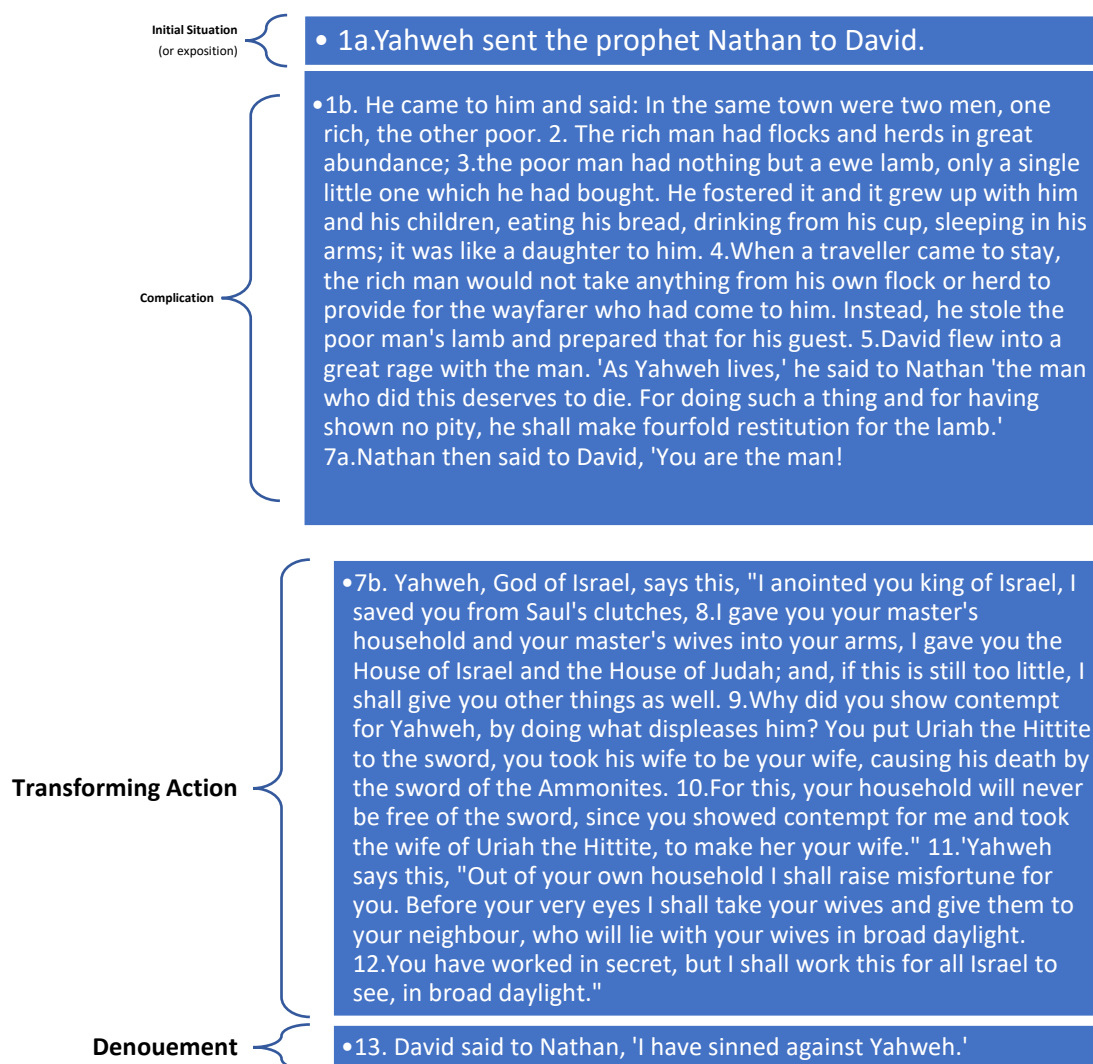
<sup>2</sup> Daniel Marguerat and Yvan Bourquin, *How to Read Bible Stories* (SCM Press London, 1999), 40.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 43-44.

2. **Complication.** Introduction of the disturbing factor. Nathan delivers the 1st part of his message. The case King David is asked to judge. The abuse of the rich man over the poor man and the angry reaction of King David stating his verdict: the man merits death and must do a four-fold restoration. King David is made aware that he is the abusive man. King David is confronted to his sin. Here the dramatic tension begins (vv.1b-7a).
3. **Transforming Action.** Here the difficulty (lack of repentance) is removed as King David listens to Prophet Nathan recalling what he had done, how he sinned and what Yahweh had done for him (v. 7b - 12).
4. **Denouement** – Arranges the resolution. The effects of the transforming action on King David is expressed on v.13a "David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against Yahweh.'
5. **Final Situation.** The final situation sets out the recognition and acceptance of what was to come of King David and his family as announced by the prophet (v.13b): "Nathan then said to David, 'Yahweh, for his part, forgives your sin; you are not to die.'" God is forgiving King David's sin but the consequences still must be announced. Then he simply and without opposition returns home (vv. 14-15).

There is a relationship between stages 1 and 5. The first part of v. 15 is the reversal of the initial situation; when Nathan comes to visit David, the king is not repentant and in danger of dying because of it (stage 1); when Nathan returns home, king David has repented, he won't die of his sin but his child must (stage 5). There is a relationship between stages 2 and 4 too. In the second stage, David is made aware that he is sinning against another man that he is behaving as the rich man stealing from the poor man (v.7). In stage 4, King David acknowledges what had been told to him. The king admits his sin (v.13).

Quinary scheme for 2 Samuel 12, 1-15:



## Final Situation

•Nathan then said to David, 'Yahweh, for his part, forgives your sin; you are not to die. 14.But, since you have outraged Yahweh by doing this, the child born to you will die.' 15.And Nathan went home. Yahweh struck the child which Uriah's wife had borne to David and it fell gravely ill."

Another approach to the plot is by modes of action, not looking at the movement of the story but in a deeper level of abstraction, an infra-textual level, in the formal structure the text relates. This narrative programme presents a scenario organized into six phases. The first and last phase match the last and first stages of the *quinary* scheme.<sup>4</sup> Application of this approach to 2 Sam. 12, 1-15:

- I. **Initial Situation:** an exposition of the circumstances of the action and statement of the stage shortage.  
The Lord sent Nathan to David (v.1a) because he has not shown any sign of repentance from his sins as the anointed of Yahweh. This initial situation is not inferred from the beginning of the text, but until v. 7 when he acknowledges his sin. Nathan exposes a case in v.1-4. It is an invitation to the king to see into himself before pronouncing judgment over another human being. Therefore the object-value to achieve being the king's repentance.
- II. **Manipulation** (ought to do, want to do)  
The second phase introduces the operative subject (the author of the transforming action). Unaware of his own shortcomings, but knowing the Law, in vv. 5-6 King David is quick to pronounce his verdict to what he ignores is just a parable to call him to repentance. It is a virtual way of manipulating him to bring him to see his sin as he could see the sin of another man. This manipulation produces in him a desire to do justice to correct a wrongdoing of another.
- III. **Competence** (know how to do, be able to do)  
v.7a "You are the man! "  
Actual  
All the work done in the previous verses is crowned here with these four words of Prophet Nathan to King David. In addition, the verdict just pronounced by the king came back to him with all its force against himself.
- IV. **Performance** (Do)  
Now the narrator is ready to foster more action in the part of King David reminding him of what Yahweh had done for him and how he displeased Yahweh with his actions vv. 7b-12.
- V. **Sanction** (know)  
David recognizes his fault; he realizes what he had done is wrong v.13. He repents and is assured of his forgiveness, but he also knows the same rules applied to other men will be applied to him (13b-14).
- VI. **Final Situation**  
King David accepts Yahweh's verdict and the prophet can come back home now as the king has repented and the beginning of the restitution had begun to take place (v.15).

There is a combination of plots in this narrative as the second narrator, the prophet Nathan, presents the story of the rich and the poor man. This first plot serves as an element to make King David realize the gravity of his offense. The ending of this episode triggers off the next, which is not part of this

<sup>4</sup> Daniel Marguerat and Yvan Bourquin, *How to Read Bible Stories* (SCM Press London, 1999), 49.

analysis. The overlapping of these two plots “together gives a new twist to the action in order to surprise the reader”<sup>5</sup>.

There is a relationship between episodic plot (micro-narrative) and unifying plot (macro-narrative) in this *pericope* as seen in some actions in the macro-narrative on the part of King David after this episode to attest his new awareness of his need of mercy from Yahweh.

The plot of the narrative is one of revelation since King David finally realizes he is a sinful man (v.13). The illness on his newborn child (15b) is an instrument to increase the awareness of his sinfulness.

## THE CHARACTERS

### List of Characters

Yahweh  
Prophet Nathan  
King David  
Uriah The Hittite  
The Ammonites  
David’s wives.  
The baby (which Uriah's wife had borne to David)  
The rich man  
The poor man  
Saul’s house  
The House of Israel  
The House of Judah.

### Hierarchy of characters:

**Protagonists:** Yahweh, Nathan, King David, the baby, the rich man, the poor man, the ewe lamb and Uriah the Hittite.

**Walk-ons:** Israel, Saul’s clutches, Saul’s house, Saul’s wives, the House of Israel, the House of Judah, Uriah’s wife, David’s household, David’s wives, and David’s neighbor.

**Agent:** The ewe lamb, Uriah the Hittite, Uriah’s wife.

**Flat characters:** Nathan, the children of the poor man, a traveler.

**Round characters:** Yahweh, David, the rich man, the poor man.

Some characters appear clearly, while others are hidden from the eyes of the reader. The actantial scheme is going to help us identify how the characters serve the plot.

Subject: Nathan  
Object: David’s repentance and awareness of the consequences of his sins.  
Despatcher: Yahweh  
Receiver: David  
Helper: Baby born to David before his repentance, Yahweh.

The prophet sent by Yahweh, Nathan leads the action, it is very clear. The narrator describes Nathan’s actions in the following verses:

v.1. "Yahweh sent the prophet Nathan to David. He came to him and said:"

v. 5. David said to Nathan

v. 7 “Nathan then said to David”

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<sup>5</sup> Daniel Marguerat and Yvan Bourquin, *How to Read Bible Stories* (SCM Press London, 1999), 53.

v. 13a. "David said to Nathan"

v. 13b "Nathan then said to David"

v. 15a "And Nathan went home."

King David just listens and reacts. David is the king of Israel and of Judah who disobeyed Yahweh's commandments who after hearing Nathan, repents.

Using the first pronoun, Nathan gives voice to describe all of Yahweh's deeds for David: his rescue from the hand of Saul. Yahweh's giving Saul's house and wives to David and also the house of Israel and of Judah including that He was willing to give more. The secondary narrator also puts in the voice of Nathan the recount of King David sin (v. 9): The killing of Uriah The Hittite, commanded by David. Yahweh forgives David but let the consequences of David's sin continue its course.

As the characters are constructed the reader can notice that the visit of the Prophet was not a reason of distrust or anxiety for King David. He received Nathan readily and heard him immediately (v.1). The actions of the prophet Nathan show he was trusted and respected by David. The actions of King David show that he had not come to realize the gravity of his actions as the anointed of the Lord to the point that Yahweh had to send His prophet to help him see the sinfulness of his actions. The identity of the character of King David is constructed first as someone willing and hard to judge the actions of others but not applying the same rules to himself. It is not until he hears the words of Nathan: "You are the man!" (v.7) that his identity is starting to change to one that is able to acknowledge his own sinfulness.

The narrative arouse some feelings in the readers. Feelings of antipathy towards David as he was so quick to judge the rich man over his stealing to the poor man but failed to recognize his sinful actions in the past. Feelings of sympathy towards the baby conceived out of wedlock who will have to die because of his father's actions. The readers who have to serve in their own lives as messengers of unhappy news may feel a sentiment of empathy towards Nathan. Those who have suffered abuse as the poor man of the story and Uriah the Hittite could feel empathy with those two characters.

The narrative does not give access to the feelings of the characters of the *intradiegetic* narrative. However, the narrative lets the reader know the reaction of King David to the case presented by Nathan: "David grew very angry..." (v. 5-6) is the only instance where the narrative gives access to the inner feelings of a character.

The narrator of this *pericope* has chosen to show the event from a perspective using internal focalization. Since the narrator says only what a character knows. From the point of view of knowing, the position of the reader is equal to that of the character.

## THE SETTING

The actions of the characters within the story serve as indicators of the time when this story takes place. The narrator gives no clue of the time passed between Yahweh sending Nathan to Nathan coming before the king. From the macro-narrative we know that King David had stayed in Jerusalem and the narrative starts with "Yahweh sent the prophet Nathan to David" (v. 1). Therefore, this story takes place in the residence of King David, which probably was the palace's royal court room, however, there is no indication of where in the palace the visit occurred. The narrative of the episode of the visit of Nathan to David takes place after King David did what was evil to the eyes of Yahweh. King David had already killed Uriah, had already taken Uriah's wife as his wife (v.9) and their baby had just been born (v.14). Since the narrative starts with Nathan giving the message to King David and ends with Nathan going back home we know the story unfolded in a single event from beginning to end; probably in the same place of the building. Nathan going back home (v.15) tell the reader it was during daytime where there was still light outside giving Nathan enough time to go back home wherever it was.

The social setting of the narrative includes the facts that David was the anointed king of Israel and Judah. Nathan was the prophet and he was delivering this message on behalf of Yahweh. From the macro-narrative we also know that it happened during the time when the king was in war with the Ammonites.

The pace of the narrative includes different types of narration. There is intercalated narration between the moments of the action.

<b>Ulterior</b>	1. Past. (12,1) Yahweh sent Nathan
<b>Simultaneous</b>	2. Past perfect. The story of the poor man and the rich man
<b>Simultaneous</b>	3. Present Tense. "Judge this case for me!"
<b>Simultaneous</b>	4. Present. "You are the man!" (v.7)
<b>Simultaneous</b>	5. Past. "I anointed you" (12, 7b-9).
<b>Anterior</b>	6. Future. "The sword shall never depart..." (12, 10-12).

There is one pause in the narrative, which is located after King David reacts to the story of the rich man stealing from the poor man. There is a second pause before announcing King David's repentance. Those two pauses provide for justification for David's reaction in the first instance and for Yahweh's announcement of punishment to David. Those two pauses seem to be there to give the reader more time to assimilate the narration and to try to appreciate the force of the story.<sup>6</sup>

There is one instance of analepsis in the narrative on vv. 7-9 when the second narrator reminds King David of the past actions of Yahweh on his favor. The narrator makes use of prolepsis in two places; first in vv. 10-19 anticipating the violence his family will endure and again in v. 14. "Those analepsis and prolepsis make for anachronism in the narrative creating a discord between the order of the narrative and that of the story".<sup>7</sup>

This is mostly a single narrative since there is no repetition in the narrative with the exception of mentioning the killing of Uriah twice in verse 9.

The story begins with an explicit commentary of the narrator on v.1 "Yahweh sent the prophet Nathan to David..." This is an explanatory gloss, an added commentary.<sup>8</sup> After that, the narrator limits himself to provide only short interventions to guide the reading like in v. 13 "Then David said to Nathan".

The narrator puts symbolic meaning to the words of King David as he reacts to the stealing of the rich man to the poor man (v. 16): "He shall restore the ewe lamb four-fold because he has done this and has had no pity".

The narrative contains a case of dramatic irony on vv. 1-4 as Nathan presents the case of the rich man stealing from the poor man. Since King David had a similar behavior with Uriah the Hittite (v.9).

In addition, the narrator leaves part of the narrative in the shade resorting to polyvalence. In v. 13 King David says, "I have sinned against Yahweh" but offers no explanations or desires to make up for his actions. It is up to the reader to imagine if King David added more words, or if he cried or if his face changed colors, went from red to pale. The narrator adds nothing more to that sentence. Another instance of polyvalence is in v. 15 "And Nathan went home. Yahweh struck the child which Uriah's wife had borne to David, and it fell gravely ill." What type of illness was this? Was it fever? Was the child not

<sup>6</sup> Daniel Marguerat and Yvan Bourquin, *How to Read Bible Stories* (SCM Press London, 1999), 88.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 90.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 104.

eating well? Was the baby not pooping? Was it jaundice? Which they could tell for the color of the baby's skin. There are no details of how the baby was sick.

#### THE TEXT AND ITS READER

The text does not begin with making the reader aware of the lack of repentance of King David. The reaction of King David to the rich man stealing from the poor man prepared the reader for an equal or similar end to King David sinful behavior in the past.

Verse 5 contains King David's reaction to Nathan's story of the rich man stealing from the poor man. King David decides that the rich man should die after paying four times back what he took. After writing about David's repentance (v.13), the narrator writes nothing of David's restitution, making up or paying back for Uriah's death. David faces the consequences of his sins as imposed by God, but the narrator does not tell the reader of an action taken by David to make reparation for his sins. The narrator chooses not to add more words to the declaration of repentance of King David. Leave it up to the imagination of the reader concerning King David penitential actions. In addition, the narrator does not explain why and innocent victim, a newborn child has to pay for the sinful behavior of his father.

#### **ANALYSIS OF THE MAJOR HISTORICAL ISSUES EMERGING FROM THE TEXT OF 2 SAMUEL 12, 1-15**

Chapter 9-20 of 2 Samuel are usually described as the "Succession Narrative" SN in reference to David's children and the problem of his succession. The question of the composition of this narrative is presently disputed affirms Romer, since some authors would consider it being a late (exilic or early postexilic) composition altogether. Some others consider it as an unlikely part of the Josianic library.<sup>9</sup> Since chapter 12 is a theologically and religio-historically important chapter, more hands have probably worked on it. Robinson considers it an independent tradition.<sup>10</sup>

The text does not declare that God revealed to Nathan any of the activities of the sinning king, something, of course, which God could have done. It appears to be far more likely that David's sins were public knowledge throughout Jerusalem.<sup>11</sup> For Barron, the king allowed himself to be drawn into the moral universe created by Nathan's parable hoping to find some catharsis<sup>12</sup> since Nathan and the King David had a good relationship before and after this encounter.<sup>13</sup>

This is one of the rare parables in the O.T.<sup>14</sup> Speaking in parables was an effective didactic method used by many prophets.<sup>15</sup> It was the general usage of instruction in the eastern world.<sup>16</sup> For the historian Josephus, the prophet Nathan opted to address the king in mild terms and keep silence about the threats made by God, assuming that when kings fall into passion they are more influenced by this than

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<sup>9</sup> Thomas Romer. *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History. A Sociological, Historical and Literary Introduction*. T&T Clark. New York. 2007, p.94-95.

<sup>10</sup> Gnana Robinson, *Let Us Be Like the Nations, A Commentary on the Books of 1 & 2 Samuel*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. Grand Rapids, 1993, p. 211.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Barron, *2 Samuel, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible*. Brazos Press. Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2019, p.108-109.

<sup>13</sup> Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel*, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1964, p. 313.

<sup>14</sup> Coffman, James Burton. "Commentary on 2 Samuel 12". "Coffman Commentaries on the Bible".

<https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/eng/bcc/2-samuel-12.html>. Abilene Christian University Press, Abilene, Texas, USA. 1983-1999.

<sup>15</sup> Robinson, p. 211.

<sup>16</sup> Hawker, Robert, D.D. "Commentary on 2 Samuel 12". "Hawker's Poor Man's Commentary". <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/eng/pmc/2-samuel-12.html>. 1828.

by a sense of justice.<sup>17</sup> According to Graeme Auld the Nathan's parable is brilliantly crafted. The words and terms used are to take the king and readers beyond the plot of the story. The formulation "Israel and Judah" is unusual in the Book of Samuel. David first heard it from the lips of Uriah (11,11) and again from Nathan in v. 8. The word "poor" (vv. 1-4) is relatively uncommon in most of HB. Is also the same word used by David to describe himself when he tries to marry Saul's daughter Michal in 1 Sam 18,23.<sup>18</sup>

It was common on those days to keep a lamb as a pet.<sup>19</sup> In presenting his story, Nathan appeals to the king's deep sense of moral responsibility for the weakest among his fellow Israelites. For McCarter, Nathan's "juridical parable" seems to be rooted in tribal custom and law; citing an account of the Bedouin tribes in the district of Beersheba for a practice by which was permissible for a member of a tribe to take a sheep or goat from his neighbor's flock to serve to an unexpected guest. This privilege was accorded, however, only when the host had no stock of his own available. Moreover, among the animals specifically excluded was a "sheep that once had been the pet lamb of the family. Seen in this light (and assuming that such customs were very ancient), Nathan's parable highlights David's crime not as an instance of theft but of the abuse of the poor and powerless by the rich and powerful. The rich man's crime is not a merely an instance of the theft of an animal, which in Israel was a simple tort that would hardly have needed to be brought before the king; it is an instance of taking; it is the abuse of the poor by the rich, of the powerless by the powerful. The king was supposed to uphold the cause of the powerless and prevent such abuse.<sup>20</sup>

The missing quality in David's heart that led to his shameful wickedness was that "he had no pity" (v.6). He had no pity for the beautiful young Bathsheba whom he ordered to his bed. He had no pity for Bathsheba's grandfather Ahithophel, David's trusted friend and adviser, who became the king's bitter enemy during Absalom's rebellion. He had no pity for Uriah, a brave and devoted soldier, who daily risked wounds and death for his beloved king. He had no pity for Joab whom he enlisted as an accomplice in the shameful murder of those eighteen men. He had no pity for the families of his slaughtered soldiers.<sup>21</sup>

Verse 6b-7 is the object of controversy as the D-group sums up retrospectively in vv. 6b – 7 "By Yahweh, the man who has done this is a son of death; and he shall restore the lamb sevenfold, because he did this thing and because he had no compassion". Some scholars consider v.6 a latter interpolation made in the spirit of later Torah piety (Gressman, SAT II:1, p.152 and Schulz, Die Bucher Samuel 2, p.129). While in the Masoretic text David is made to say, "he shall restore the lamb fourfold," which is in accordance with the Law. Those in favor of a seven-fold restoration present many arguments, including, that seven fits better with David's passionate reaction and the restoration in full measure for the coupling of robbery and adultery. A sevenfold retribution fits better too with the verdict of death of the king's son.<sup>22</sup>

The forthrightness of OT prophecy is evident in v. 7. The prophet as the messenger of God, comes with the authority of God. It does not matter for the prophet whether the man to who he prophesies is big or small, rich, or poor. Before God all are alike to the prophet.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> C T Begg Catholic University of America, 2 Samuel 12 as retold by Josephus. Washington, DC. URL: [https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/9690/561b1254cec092e2a63065545369079ff228.pdf?\\_ga=2.4370931.193700529.1625969836-1923258334.1625969836](https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/9690/561b1254cec092e2a63065545369079ff228.pdf?_ga=2.4370931.193700529.1625969836-1923258334.1625969836)

<sup>18</sup> Graeme Auld, I & II Samuel, A Commentary. Westminster John Knox Press. Louisville, KY. 2011., p.467-468.

<sup>19</sup> David Guzik, Enduring Word, 2018.

<sup>20</sup> Kylv McCarter, Jr. The Anchor Bible, A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary. Doubleday & Company, Inc. Garden City, New York, 1984, p.299.

<sup>21</sup> Coffman, James Burton. "Commentary on 2 Samuel 12". "Coffman Commentaries on the Bible".

<https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/eng/bcc/2-samuel-12.html>. Abilene Christian University Press, Abilene, Texas, USA. 1983-1999.

<sup>22</sup> R. A. Carlsson, David, the chosen King, Almqvist & Wiksell Boktryckeri AB. Uppsala, Stockholm, 1964.

<sup>23</sup> Gnana Robinson, Let Us Be Like the Nations, A Commentary on the Books of 1 & 2 Samuel. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. Grand Rapids, 1993, p. 213.

Verse 8 possess difficulties, given that this happening is not recorded elsewhere, and, in fact, the Bible mentions only one actual wife of Saul, i.e. "Ahinoam" (1 Sam 14,50).<sup>24</sup> "And your master's wives into your bosom" (2 Samuel 12:8). Some respected scholars suppose that "this may mean no more than that David was given absolute power over all that Saul possessed." However, the words "into thy bosom" deny any such explanation. Some have alleged that Saul had only one wife; but certainly, Ishbosheth had more than one; and the loose usage of possessive personal pronouns involving family relationships would include also the wives of Saul's son. Additionally, there is no certain information available on how many wives Saul had. Jamieson went so far as to say that "history furnishes conclusive evidence that David never actually married any of the wives of Saul." He did not document that statement; and such an opinion remains questionable. Willis suggests that "Ahinoam was a wife of Saul when David married her."<sup>25</sup>

Verse 10a operates in the sphere of act and consequence; ""For this, your household will never be free of the sword."<sup>26</sup> The sword of violence used against Uriah (v.9) will turn back against the house of David when three of the kings' sons are slain (Ammon, 13, 28-29; Absalom, 18,15; Adonijah, 1 Kings 2,24-25.<sup>27</sup> On the contrary vv. 11-12, operate within the sphere of divine causation.<sup>28</sup>

Verse 11 describes one of the consequences of David's sin: "Before your very eyes I shall take your wives and give them to your neighbor, who will lie with your wives in broad daylight." This was fulfilled in 2 Samuel 16, 21-22. "Absalom abused his father's concubines on the house-top: and haply on that same terrace from hence he first looked, liked and lusted after Bath-sheba." (Trapp)<sup>29</sup>

What troubles many readers is rather that while the sinful king lives, the innocent child dies. Casuistry must be at its mind-numbing worst to offer a justification for the death of the first child and the favor shown the second. Campbell does not give himself the right to declare v. 14 late because of disagreement with its content but praises a brave interpreter who could argue for its being demonstrably early. The suggestion that the dead child is a substitute for David may be morally objectionable; it is supported in the text -v.14 portrays punishment not substitution.<sup>30</sup>

## HERMENEUTICAL REFLECTION

Yahweh sent Nathan to the King (v.1), not the other way, David was not ready, the Lord was! God takes the initiative always. David was living his life without taking time to reflect on the fact that he was the anointed of Yahweh. A fact he had very present on his mind before when the anointed was not him. He forgot that he should continue caring for the anointed one even if it meant to protect him from himself.

Nathan came to David without rejecting Yahweh's commandment; without asking Him to send another one to deliver these awful news as I would have been tempted to do. Nathan obeyed God. He did not resist. Our baptismal anointing makes us sharers in Christ's offices of priest, king, and prophet. When we are on a God's mission, we can learn from Nathan to be ready to follow the Lord's call to act in our

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<sup>24</sup> Robinson, 213.

<sup>25</sup> Coffman, James Burton. "Commentary on 2 Samuel 12". "Coffman Commentaries on the Bible".

<https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/eng/bcc/2-samuel-12.html>. Abilene Christian University Press, Abilene, Texas, USA. 1983-1999.

<sup>26</sup> Anthony F. Campbell, S.J. 2 Samuel, The Forms of the Old Testament Literature, Volume VIII. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge U.K. 2005, p.117.

<sup>27</sup> Scott Hahn, The First and Second Books of Samuel with Introduction, Commentary and Notes. Ignatius Press. San Francisco, 2016, p.85.

<sup>28</sup> Campbell, p.117.

<sup>29</sup> Coffman.

<sup>30</sup> Campbell, p.118.

baptismal role of prophets. A prophet announces and denounces. Along with the call, the Lord God will give us the tools or instruments we would need to deliver God's message. If it is a brilliant story as the one Nathan used what we need to fulfill our mission, then the Holy Spirit will inspire such story. The Holy Spirit will also inspire us to know what words, language, or style use to help God produce in the receiver His desired effect. The Holy Spirit will also give us the courage and strength to our voice to transmit the message in a powerful way.

This *pericope* contains a call for us ministers to take time frequently to review our lives pondering what God has done for us throughout our lives and how we have responded. We can count what we have in abundance and how we have gotten to possess it. We can evaluate how quick we are to judge others and how close we are to what we expect from others. An examination of our conscience will help us see if we have made every restoration possible or if there are things which we must repair. It is not a good idea for us to wait for God to send someone to us to help us recognize our errors. God gave us the Holy Spirit who is our guide and Counselor. We may have ignored Him or not paid attention to His calls. We should pray to the Holy Spirit asking his guidance and revelation of what sins we still need to repent and repair.

The sentence that David receives (v. 10-11) will impact his life and the life of his family. In a similar manner to how David produced "violence against the household of Uriah and, indirectly, violence against his own family. Hence, he will be chastised through violence that will relentlessly arise within his intimate family circle: brother against sister, brother against brother, son against father. This is not divine vindictiveness; it is the playing out of the dreadful violence by its very nature begets violence, and betrayal by its very nature gives raise to betrayal. This is, if you will, the dark side of the metaphysics of communion. Since we are all connected to one another by coinherence that goes to the very roots of our being, our negative behavior necessarily has a ripple effect around us in all directions."<sup>31</sup>

"<You shall not die> (v.13). Some scholars refer this promise to the death which David had proposed for the rich man in the parable, which of course by his own admission he himself fully deserved; and others apply it to "eternal death." DeHoff applied it to the death due to an adulterer (Leviticus 20:10). It very likely applies to both. As Smith noted, "God took away the penalty of death that David did not die; but the sin rested upon him, and it wrought the death of the child." Thus, sin has a double effect, separating a man from God, and producing a chain of evil deeds in the world."<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Robert Barron, 2 Samuel, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible. Brazos Press. Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2019, p.111.

<sup>32</sup> Coffman, James Burton. "Commentary on 2 Samuel 12". "Coffman Commentaries on the Bible". <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/eng/bcc/2-samuel-12.html>. Abilene Christian University Press, Abilene, Texas, USA. 1983-1999.

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