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### Breaking the Davidic Covenant and the Rape of Zion

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GARDNER WEBB UNIVERSITY  
BOILING SPRINGS, NORTH CAROLINA

MA RELIGION THESIS:

BREAKING THE DAVIDIC COVENANT AND THE RAPE OF ZION

SUBMITTED TO DR. ANNA SIEGES-BEAL  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
RELI 695: THESIS II

BY  
HOLLY STROTHER-WALLER  
APRIL 7<sup>th</sup>, 2022

## CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	3
Introductory Summary	3
History of Scholarship	4
Methodology	13
Introduction of Chapters	14
CHAPTER TWO 2 SAMUEL 7: THE DAVIDIC COVENANT .....	18
What is a Covenant?	18
Types of Covenants	19
2 Samuel 7 as a Covenant	23
Theoretically Breaking the Covenant	31
CHAPTER THREE: 2 SAMUEL 11: DAVID TAKES .....	33
Breaking the Covenant: Taking Bathsheba	36
Dark Progression of the Narrative	42
Taking Uriah’s Life	46
CHAPTER FOUR: THE CONSEQUENCES OF DAVID’S TAKING.....	51
The Parable	52
2 Samuel 12:9–10	54
Ramifications of David’s Actions	55
CHAPTER FIVE: DAUGHTER ZION .....	61
Judah, Daughter Zion	63
Literary Connections to Zion	64
Continuation of the Narrative’s Dark Progression	73

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION .....	74
Future Scholarship	75
Final Thoughts	76
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	77

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This thesis will argue that David had a promissory covenant with God, and it required his faith and obedience, but it also required he trust that God would provide. David breaks the covenant with God when he takes Bathsheba and kills Uriah, and the negative consequences impact David, his lineage, and Daughter Zion (his kingdom). An intertextual comparison shows connections between the sexual violence in 2 Samuel and Daughter Zion. The language used to describe the city's fall is that of sexual violence, highlighting the horrors of rape within David's life and lineage after he breaks his covenant with God by taking Bathsheba.

### **Introductory Summary**

The book of 2 Samuel contains the Davidic narrative which carries the reader from David taking up the throne to his old age. The start of David's time as a king and the first ten chapters of 2 Samuel brought peace and prosperity to the kingdom, it was not until the later years of his life in chapters 11 and following that the narrative processes negatively. Second Samuel 7 lays out the extraordinary relationship between God and David through a covenant. David and his kingdom are in God's favor, and they will thrive as long as they depend on God.<sup>1</sup> David is thriving on the battlefield, and the kingdom and city are strong and established. David fights many battles in his position as king, and God grants

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Sam 7:10 establishes that God has caused and will cause the kingdom to thrive. "And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly." (NRSV) Because this is a part of a promissory covenant, this promise relies on obedience and trust in YHWH. (John Kessler. *Old Testament Theology: Divine Call and Human Response*. Waco, TX: Baylor Univ. Press, 2013, 277)  
(All Bible verses are from the New Revised Standard Version, NRSV unless otherwise noted.)

him success. He takes wives and concubines and builds up a royal court. As the reader approaches 2 Sam 11, David is truly in his golden years as king. In chapter 11, he sees a woman that the narrator describes as beautiful, discovers she is married, but still, he takes her and lies with her, and then, she returns home. She becomes pregnant, so David attempts to cover up his illicit behavior by bringing her husband (Uriah) home from battle. When Uriah's loyalty to David is stronger than his desire to go home and sleep with his wife, David has him killed.<sup>2</sup> The reader watches the golden age of David fade from this point in the narrative forward. The following consequences for David taking Bathsheba range from the death of his infant son to the rape of his daughter and his concubines. The long-term negative consequences impact the kingdom itself because it is also wrapped up in the covenant made with God in 2 Sam 7. The reader can see lines of parallel between the sexual violence that David's household experiences after he takes Bathsheba and the violence against Daughter Zion, David's city, in poetic expressions of her fall in the latter part of the canon.

## **History of Scholarship**

### Davidic Covenant

The history of scholarship on the Davidic covenant concludes that 2 Sam 7 lays out a covenant and promise between YHWH and David. Second Samuel 7 and the Davidic

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<sup>2</sup> Uriah's loyalty in 2 Sam 11 can be seen through his choice to stay at the gate of the palace. Whether he is being respectful to his fellow soldiers still at battle or respecting the time of war he is loyal to his job and his king. 2 Sam 11:11, Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah remain in booths; and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field; shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do such a thing." While David lives and war is still happening, Uriah claims that his life's devotion is to his king.

covenant have received plenty of attention from scholars, with most of their focus on the type of covenant found in 2 Samuel 7 and why God did not allow David to build a temple.<sup>3</sup> Scholars such as Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg, Antony F. Campbell, and Craig E. Morrison point out the promise of current and future provisions from YHWH to David, with John Kessler labeling this covenant: a promissory covenant.<sup>4</sup> A. A. Anderson states that while the text never states the word “covenant,” a relationship covenant is obvious.<sup>5</sup> “Although the word “covenant” does not occur in Nathan's oracle, it is presupposed, if not alluded to, in v 15 since “goodwill,” “covenant loyalty,” etc., may well denote the essence of a covenant.”<sup>6</sup>

Sunwoo Hwang takes scholarship further and argues that the covenant is both conditional and unconditional. “The Davidic covenant is conditional in the sense that the kingdom has been punished, destroyed, and has ceased to function. The covenant is

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<sup>3</sup> In 2 Sam 7:2-4, David claims he will build God a house, God response by refusing this claim and says that David’s future son will build YHWH’s temple.

“The king said to the prophet Nathan, “See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent.” Nathan said to the king, “Go, do all that you have in mind; for the Lord is with you.” But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan: Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the Lord: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? ...He (Solomon) shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.” (2 Sam 7:2–5, 13)

<sup>4</sup> Anthony F. Campbell. *2 Samuel*. Vol. 8;8.; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 2005, 70–2.

Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg. *I & II Samuel, A Commentary*. Translated by J.S. Bowden. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Old Testament Library. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964, 288.

Kessler, 178.

Morrison, Craig E. *Berit Olam: Studies in Hebrew Narrative & Poetry*. Edited by Jerome T. Walsh. 9. Vol. 9. 2 Samuel. Liturgical Press, 1996, 99.

<sup>5</sup> A.A. Anderson. *2 Samuel*. Vol. 11:11. Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1989, 122.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

unconditional because YHWH's [love] will not depart from David's kingdom even though the kingdom must now go through a time of chastisement due to unfaithfulness."<sup>7</sup> God promises David power, connection, and relationship, and God promises never to remove God's love and that David's throne will be established forever.

## Narrative

### *David and Bathsheba*

Agreement on the nature of the relationship between Bathsheba and David simply does not exist across scholarship.<sup>8</sup> Scholars such as A. Graeme Auld, Jo Ann Hackett, and Craig Morrison never go as far as to claim that David rapes Bathsheba, but they do point to the guilty party being David and seemly remove responsibility, agency, and consent

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<sup>7</sup> Sunwoo Hwang, "Coexistence of Unconditionality and Conditionality of the Davidic Covenant in Chronicles." *Heythrop Journal* 58, no. 2 2017, 242.

<sup>8</sup> "So-Called" Succession Narrative: Scholars such as Leonhard Rost argue that Bathsheba is in the narrative only to help the reader understand how Solomon comes to power. The most significant issue with 2 Samuel 11-12 being added in the text solely for succession narrative purposes breaks down when one realizes that Solomon is not present in this part of the narrative. While this might lead to his story, it is not for his sake alone. Furthermore, if the Bathsheba event had no impact on the Tamar/Amnon event or the Absalom rebellion, then it would have been easy enough to include them and show the chaos of the Davidic household and then introduce Solomon. His mother and her story would not be of consequences at all. "A primary criticism of Rost's account is the minimal role that the theme of succession, and indeed Solomon, plays in the narratives."

Rachelle Gilmour, Sex Scandal and the Politics of David's Throne. *Journal of Biblical Literature* 1 March 2022; 141 (1), 85.



from Bathsheba.<sup>9</sup> Jo Ann Hackett states, “The narrative does not seem to hold her responsible for her actions with David,” so why should the reader?<sup>10</sup>

David Janzen and Alexander Izuchukwu Abasili also do not conclude "rape" specifically, but take the argument further, arguing it could be understood as rape because of David's “taking” of Bathsheba.<sup>11</sup> J. D'Ror Chankin-Gould, does not believe that the terms “rape” or “adultery” are wholly accurate. However, he concludes his article by saying that the writers of Kings show through the rest of the narrative that Bathsheba is a “clean, sanctified, mother of Israel.”<sup>12</sup> Such a description does not belong to an adulterous woman. Similarly, Nathan's comparison of Bathsheba to a ewe-lamb does not indicate culpability, but rather, innocence.<sup>13</sup> Wilda Gafney demonstrates that God and

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<sup>9</sup> A. Graeme Auld, *I & II Samuel: A Commentary*. 1st ed. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press 2012, 454–55.

Jo Ann Hackett. *Women's Bible Commentary*. Edited by Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012, 159.

Morrison, 140.

<sup>10</sup> Jo Ann Hackett. *The Women's Bible Commentary*. Westminster John Knox Press, 1998, 159.

<sup>11</sup> David Janzen. “The Condemnation of David's "Taking" in 2 Samuel 12:1–14.” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 131, no. 2 2012.

Alexander Izuchukwu Abasili. "Was it Rape? the David and Bathsheba Pericope Re-Examined." *Vetus Testamentum* 61, no. 1 (2011): 1-15.

<sup>12</sup> J. D'Ror Chankin-Gould. "The Sanctified 'Adulteress' and Her Circumstantial Clause: Bathsheba's Bath and Self-Consecration in 2 Samuel 11." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 32, no. 3, 2008, 352.

<sup>13</sup> Janzen. “The Condemnation of David's ‘Taking’ in 2 Samuel 12:1–14.” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 131, no. 2 2012.

Nathan's treatment of Bathsheba parallels other women raped in the Torah statutes.<sup>14</sup> In all, the above scholars point to the culpability of David and the innocence of Bathsheba.

Sarah Koenig, Richard M. Davidson, and J. Cheryl Exum are all theologians and scholars who have claimed that the text does indicate that David rapes Bathsheba.<sup>15</sup> Kurt L. Noll argues that David did rape Bathsheba based on the literary proximity of the story with that of Tamar.<sup>16</sup> He continues that the rape must be identified for what it is. Noll focuses on various aspects of David's sin. Namely, its execution and the hypocrisy of David in attempting to conceal it.<sup>17</sup> Wendy Zierler suggests that even if David's transgression is only understood as rape in a modern context, the reader can still draw lines of correlation to modern definitions of rape.<sup>18</sup> The sexual encounter in 2 Samuel 11 is somewhat ambiguous, and modern interpreters refer to it in various ways, as shown above. Rhiannon Graybill argues that the narrative is intentional fuzzy on the matter of their sexual encounter "This fuzziness around sexual violence is not a failure to

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<sup>14</sup> Wilda Gafney. *Womanist Midrash: A Reintroduction to the Women of the Torah and the Throne*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017, 215.

<sup>15</sup> Cheryl J. Exum. *Plotted, Shot, and Painted: Cultural Representations of Biblical Women*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 1996, 20–23.

Richard M. Davidson, "Did King David Rape Bathsheba?: A Case Study in Narrative Theology." *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 17, no. 2, 88–89.

Sara M. Koenig. "Make War Not Love." *Biblical Interpretation* 23, no. 4-5, 2015, 507–8.

<sup>16</sup> Kurt Noll, *The Faces of David*, New York: Continuum, 1997, 59.

<sup>17</sup> Noll, 67.

<sup>18</sup> Wendy Zierler. "Looking and Listening Differently: Crimes and Misdemeanors, II Samuel 11–12 and #MeToo: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies & Gender Issues." *Nashim* no. 38 (Spring, 2021): 106.

understand the text clearly, but rather a key feature of the narrative.”<sup>19</sup> The majority of modern scholarship consulted for this paper interprets Bathsheba as innocent and David as culpable in their sexual relations. Some scholars are willing to go further and suggest that David’s interaction with Bathsheba amounted to sexual violence. These scholars use the modern definition of rape (which includes power dynamics, agency, and consent) to label David’s sexual encounter with Bathsheba.

### *Amnon and Tamar*

Unlike Bathsheba and David's sexual interaction, scholarship is not as divided by Amnon's rape of Tamar. Scholars do, however, question David's involvement or influence in the situation. Walter Brueggemann argues, “The narrative knows that David himself is so compromised by his own past actions he can do nothing” to chastise Amnon.<sup>20</sup> Paul Borgman points out the connection between the sexual sins of David when he raped Bathsheba, the rape of the concubines by Absalom, which Nathan prophesies, and the rape of Tamar by Amnon. “The sexual wrong of the father is reenacted in a horrific manner by the son, Amnon.”<sup>21</sup> P. Kyle McCarter argues that Amnon’s rape of Tamar threatens Israel because it undermines the “social unit, the family...and because this particular family is the royal family, the social fabric of all

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<sup>19</sup> Rhiannon Graybill. *Texts after Terror: Rape, Sexual Violence, and the Hebrew Bible*. Oxford University Press, 2021, 61.

<sup>20</sup> Gilmour, 85.

<sup>21</sup> Paul Borgman, *David, Saul, and God: Rediscovering an Ancient Story*. New York: Oxford University Press. 2008, 126.

Israel will finally be threatened.”<sup>22</sup> Thus, scholars routinely point to the connection between David and the rape of Tamar but to varying degrees. For Borgman there is a direct connection while for McCarter and Brueggemann, the connection is implied through the implications and affects the rape and inaction, on David’s part, had on the family dynamic.

### ***David’s Concubines***

The rape of David's concubines in 2 Sam 16:22 is often argued by scholarship to be connected to Nathan's rebuke of David in 2 Sam 12. Auld connects David and the concubines through Nathan's rebuke in 2 Sam 12 (in front of all of Israel) and 2 Sam 11 because Absalom's rape of the concubines happens on the same roof where David sees Bathsheba. He also argues that the concubines are referred to as objects.<sup>23</sup> Tony Cartledge agrees with Auld, arguing that Absalom sleeping with the concubines on the roof was what Nathan had been referencing in 2 Sam 12:12.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, scholars see a clear line of connection between the consequences that Nathan describes and the non-consensual union between Absalom and David’s concubines.

### The Corporate Nature of David’s Consequences

Scholarship on the corporate nature of David’s consequences focus on the rebuke from Nathan. Scholars like Darius Benton and David Janzen focuses on David's failure as a

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<sup>22</sup> P. Kyle McCarter. *II Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary*. Yale University Press, 2010, 328.

<sup>23</sup> Auld, 521.

<sup>24</sup> Tony Cartledge. *1 & 2 Samuel*. Macon, Georgia: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Inc, 2001, 583.

king when he takes Bathsheba. Janzen believes that the failure is not just David's sexual indiscretion, but that David was not grateful for his position and despised God in the taking of Bathsheba.<sup>25</sup> Benton writes about David's sin against Bathsheba as a failure of leadership: "Perpetrating an unethical act is a personal conscious choice on the part of the leader that frequently places a greater emphasis on personal gratification rather than on the organization's needs."<sup>26</sup> Because he fails as a king, and not simply a man, his actions bring about consequences of the whole of his kingdom. Flynn concludes that it is not the murder or the rape that directly affects the community of Judah, but David's incompetence as a king that leads to his punishment and impacts the nation. "A key question is why does the narrative focus the community back on David if his actions have nothing to do with the community of Israel?"<sup>27</sup> Flynn's response to 2 Samuel 12:12 is that God will do what David did to Bathsheba in the light of day before all of Jerusalem. The city of David, Zion, will be impacted by the fall of David.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Janzen, 214.

<sup>26</sup> Darius Benton, "Examining Dark Side Leadership and Impression Management of King David: A Social-Culture Texture Analysis of 2 Samuel 11." ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2016, 44.

<sup>27</sup> Flynn, 193.

<sup>28</sup> Though the Deuteronomistic History certainly provides other rationales for the exile (such as the insurmountable evil of Manasseh in 2 Kings 21; see especially 2 Kings 24:3), readers of the Deuteronomistic History in its final form can also trace the exile back to David. Notably, the Deuteronomistic History shows that Israel, even in her infancy, was doomed because of her king's misconduct. The prophetic literature to which this thesis refers can be found in Jeremiah 5 and Lamentation 4:12-13. The tradents of the Deuteronomistic history are looking at their history to understand why they are suffering. The proposed thesis will argue that David was the starting point for God's displeasure and that he had a direct connection to the fall of Judah, *not* that he was the only king responsible for exile. Baruch Halpern does an excellent job in his article, "Why Manasseh is Blamed for The Babylonian Exile: The Evolution of a Biblical Tradition," showing the monarchy's steady decline. The evil-doing of Manasseh was a continuation of a long line of disobedient kings, and the rape of Bathsheba was the beginning of the end.

Scholars are starting to make connections between Daughter Zion, David, and Tamar. Rachel Adelman argues that there are literary parallels between Tamar and Daughter Zion. “The personification of Zion as a daughter turns darkly upon itself in the poetry and prophecy of lament dating to the exilic period, when she (Jerusalem) is devastated, a victim of sexual violation at the hands of foreign nations (Isa 1:8; Lam 1:6, 2:1, 4, 8, 10, 13, 4:22).”<sup>29</sup>

### Continuation of Scholarship

The survey above has shown that scholarship largely accepts the relationship that God establishes with David in 2 Sam 7 as a covenant. The covenant is positive in nature, establishing good things for David and his family. Scholarship has also shown that as the narrative continues lines of parallel appear between David’s indiscretion with Bathsheba, the rape of Tamar, and the rape of David’s concubines. Scholars are divided on how to characterize David’s act with Bathsheba, but the conversation affirms Bathsheba’s innocence. Scholars have likewise shown that the consequences that David faces for his liaison with Bathsheba have a corporate effect. Thus, the attention of the reader turns from David alone to the nation as a whole. Adelman’s work draws parallels between the Tamar and Daughter Zion. The groundwork in scholarship has been laid to draw lines of comparison between David’s violation of Bathsheba and the corporate violation of Daughter Zion. This thesis builds on Adelman's work concerning the connection between Daughter Zion and Tamar. Adelman writes: “I would argue that the first of David’s

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<sup>29</sup> Rachel Adelman. “The Rape of Tamar as a Prefiguration for the Fate of Fair Zion.” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 37, no. 1 Spring, 2021, 97.

“women” to suffer the punishment for his sins is his daughter, Tamar....”<sup>30</sup> This thesis expands on Adelman’s observations in conjunction with scholars such as Susanne Scholz, who argues that Bathsheba was a victim of rape (and more specifically, power rape), to investigate the literary connections between Bathsheba, Tamar, the concubines, and Daughter Zion. The current scholarly conversation understands the relationship developed between God and David as a covenant, that David was culpable in his sexual relationship with Bathsheba, and that David’s failures affect the larger community. Building on these observations, this thesis will explore the Davidic covenant, David’s misconduct with Bathsheba, and the communal ramifications of that misconduct and ultimately show a literary link between the violation of Bathsheba and the violation of Zion.

### **Methodology**

The methodology of this thesis is a narrative approach to the biblical text that uses reader-response criticism while exploring the narrative of 2 Samuel 7, 11, and 12 and encompasses some intertextual comparisons within reader-response criticism.<sup>31</sup> This thesis understands that, “Reader-response criticism is yet another form of literary criticism; however, the focus is not on the 'text-as-it-is' but the reader and his/her reception of and reaction to the text.”<sup>32</sup> The narratological response looks to understand

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<sup>30</sup> Adelman, 92.

<sup>31</sup> Robert Alter. *The art of Biblical narrative*, Basic Books, New York, 1981.

<sup>32</sup> Gerda De Villiers. "Interpreting Texts and the Matter of Context: Examples from the Book of Ruth." *Verbum Et Ecclesia* 40, no. 1 (2019): 3.

the narrative from the reader's perspective. The response will become more intertextually comparative as the reader engages parallels in different texts. This thesis will maintain an interpretation style that values how a reader might understand multiple texts in the biblical narrative. It will consider the broader context of 2 Sam 7, 11, 12 while focusing on repeated words and potential literary connections in Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Isaiah.<sup>33</sup>

This form of reader-response criticism looks at the completed text as literature that imagines the text to have literary power.<sup>34</sup> This criticism draws on the understanding and experience of the reader and how the reader reacts to the text, allowing the reader to connect with the narrative. Reader-response can also consider historical, form, and source criticism, and use these tools to focus on the story and the and how the story creates power and meaning for the reader.<sup>35</sup> I am reading the texts associated with this thesis from my specific location as a feminist in the post “me too” era, and I allow historical-critical methods to play a role in my research. However, the primary mode of reader response is that I, as a reader, see these connections and demonstrate them.

## **Introduction of Chapters**

### Chapter Two: 2 Samuel 7 The Davidic Covenant

Chapter Two examines the covenant between YHWH and David. It breaks down what biblical covenants and examines the different forms of covenants present in the biblical

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<sup>33</sup> These literary connections and parallels do not speak specifically to the author's intent.

<sup>34</sup> Alter, 18.

<sup>35</sup> Alter, 11.



text. Chapter 2 argues that the covenant set forth to David by Nathan is a promissory covenant, and the covenant holds both conditional and unconditional properties. David's role in this covenant is to trust in God's current and future provision, and David must show his trust through his actions. The chapter goes on to demonstrate that the covenant does not simply impact David individually, but his lineage and his kingdom (the city of Zion) as well. Finally, Chapter 2 describes how David could potentially break the conditional portion of the covenant and how the consequences of breaking the covenant could unfold, impacting not only him, but his kingdom. These ideas lead to chapter three, where I argue that David breaks the covenant by "taking" Bathsheba.

### Chapter Three: 2 Samuel 11: David Takes

Chapter Three argues that David takes Bathsheba and breaks the covenant he has established with God. It breaks the covenant because God did not give Bathsheba. Instead, David took her, and in order to cover up his mistake, David has Bathsheba's husband murdered. A detailed literary analysis shows that the use of *laqah* in 2 Sam 11 indicates that David has gone beyond the boundaries of the 2 Sam 7 covenant. The chapter also breaks down the literary differences between David and Uriah and Abigail and Bathsheba, allowing the paper to follow the literary development happening in the narrative that shows an aggressive progression toward sexual violence and domination from David towards his subjects. Chapter Three argues that there is a temptation to indict Bathsheba in David's actions but warns the reader of the biblical text that the text does not indicate that she is guilty of any wrongdoing. David's taking of Bathsheba and his

taking of Uriah's life break the covenant leading to Chapter Four, discussing the consequences of David's actions.

#### Chapter Four: The Consequences of David's Taking

Chapter Four argues that when David took Bathsheba, he violated his covenant with YHWH, and Nathan comes to rebuke him for his actions. He lays out consequences that will impact David, his lineage, and then his kingdom, which is intertwined in the covenant made in 2 Sam 7. The parable Nathan tells David points the reader towards David's taking of Bathsheba as the crime. Consequently, David's wives will be taken by another in front of all of Israel. The reader observes how the consequences that Nathan delineates come to pass. The consequences of David's take place on both the near and the distant horizon. 1) His family will suffer from his actions via the death of his infant son, Tamar will be the victim of sexual violence at the hands of her brother Amnon, and David's concubines will be raped in front of the city by another one of his sons, Absalom. 2) The city will suffer because of David's actions and be violated and defiled by an invading army. This parallels to chapter five, which argues that like David's daughter, Tamar, Daughter Zion (his city) will suffer sexual violence at the hands of other nations.

#### Chapter Five: Daughter Zion

Chapter %5 argues that Daughter Zion was always a part of the covenant promise articulated in 2 Sam 7, and the peace and provision that the city enjoyed were a product of that covenant. The sexual violence present in the 2 Sam 11-16, literarily connects these women and their stories to the sexual violence of the exilic period written about in

Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Isaiah. In 2 Sam 7, God promises that the city and David's household will have peace and not be defiled. But, in 2 Sam 11 Bathsheba is taken, and then Tamar is defiled; the concubines are taken, and Daughter Zion is defiled. A reader examining Lamentations, Ezekiel, or Isaiah with the narrative of 2 Samuel in mind could connect them because of the parallels in language of sexual violence and the lack of consent that floods the images of Zion besieged. Chapter Five concludes that there is a literary connection between David's breaking of the covenant by taking Bathsheba, his daughter's rape, his concubines' rape, and the rape of Daughter Zion.

## CHAPTER TWO 2 SAMUEL 7: THE DAVIDIC COVENANT

### **Chapter Introduction**

In this chapter, I will argue that 2 Sam 7 is a promissory covenant that influences David's life, lineage, and kingdom. This chapter will also explore what it would take to break this covenant with God. The first step to understanding God's covenant with David is understanding what a covenant is. Second Samuel 7 explicates a covenant between David and God even though the word "covenant" never appears in the biblical text.

Understanding different covenants allows the reader of 2 Sam 7:8–16 to identify that these verses are a covenant and how that covenant is supposed to function between the different parties. Once the relationship and covenant type are established, it is vital to investigate what promises are made and the parties' responsibilities in the 2 Sam 7 covenant. An essential section of Chapter One comes at the end as this chapter explores what violations of the covenant terms could break the covenant between David and God.

### **What is a Covenant?**

In its most basic sense, a covenant creates oaths or bonds between individuals or groups that would not otherwise form a natural connection.<sup>36</sup> The Old Testament mentions several covenants between YHWH and individuals, YHWH and nations, nations and

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<sup>36</sup> Kessler, 179.

foreign nations, and kings and their kingdoms.<sup>37</sup> Covenants frequently insured land, food, protection, and loyalty. One party provided protection, and the other party was loyal to the first party in return for said protection. All parties involved had to hold to their part of the agreement for a covenant to work.<sup>38</sup> One of the most significant benefits of covenants with YHWH was that covenants, by nature, allowed for a unique relationship between the parties that entered them. Adam and Eve, Abraham, Moses, Israel, and David all had the privilege of a covenantal relationship with God. Covenantal relationships can be seen in the creation and garden narrative (Genesis 1–2), the Abrahamic narrative (Genesis 12), and Moses narrative (Exodus 24). Each covenant draws connections between God and humanity. Covenantal relationships apply stipulations to the parties involved. These stipulations are not simply assumed. Each party knows what is required of them and the potential consequences if they do not adhere to the stipulations. Once a covenant has been entered, both parties are responsible to each other. Each of the covenants mentioned above is different because of the expectations and conditional or unconditional aspects found within the relationship.

### **Types of Covenants**

John Kessler lays out multiple covenants present in the Old Testament. These different covenants are creation theology, Sinai covenant theology, and priestly theology. Creation theology shows the relationship between Creator and creation.<sup>39</sup> The Creator did not

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<sup>37</sup> Kessler, 213.

<sup>38</sup> Kessler, 179.

<sup>39</sup> Kessler, 110.

simply create the world but wished to care for and have a relationship with the creation. Sinai covenant is the covenantal relationship between YHWH and the people of Israel. This covenant deals with YHWH's selection and deliverance of the nation of Israel. Then, the nation is given a choice to enter a relationship with YHWH, which would require their obedience, and God would protect them in return.<sup>40</sup> Kessler also talks about Priest Theology which focuses on the cleanliness and holiness of the priests and the holy places. The covenant between God and the nation of Israel is managed and maintained by the priesthood.<sup>41</sup>

An examination of biblical and ancient Near Eastern covenants provides context for the ancient world's different types of covenants, including "bilateral parity covenants, bilateral suzerainty treaties, and promissory covenants." Kessler describes a bilateral parity covenant as an agreement between two parties of equal (or mostly equal) power, and both parties benefit mutually. Bilateral suzerainty treaties are covenants where the party with more power and resources promises to provide for the lesser party, and in return, the lesser party pledges loyalty. A promissory covenant is given to an individual often with a specific time frame and comes with directions.<sup>42</sup> A promissory covenant can be bilateral parity or bilateral suzerainty.

### The Promissory Covenant

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<sup>40</sup> Kessler, 197.

<sup>41</sup> Kessler, 321.

<sup>42</sup> Kessler, 178–9.

God spoke to David through Nathan, promising that God would never remove God's love from David or David's lineage. The promise is given to David in the present, but David must trust in a future component of the promise. Promise theology, or a promissory covenant, is full of expectant hope and carries an eschatological tone. The promise made may not be fulfilled immediately, and, in many cases, the promise is specifically future-oriented. This covenant relationship "prioritizes the human response of patient trust."<sup>43</sup> Kessler argues, "The person who receives the promise will wait patiently for its fulfillment and will orient his or her choices in light of it."<sup>44</sup> David's role, set forward by 2 Sam 7, is to be faithful and trust God for everything. The language used through chapter 7 is that "YHWH has provided" and "YHWH will provide." David confirms this in 2 Sam 7:25 when he says, "Do as you promised" regarding the kingdom and the household. Everything he has is to come from God.

God's Past Provisions and Future Promises to David					
2 Samuel 7:8	2 Samuel 7:9	2 Samuel 7:11	2 Samuel 7:12	2 Samuel 7:13	2 Samuel 7:14
"I (YHWH) took you (David) from shepherd to king	I (YHWH) have been with you (David) wherever you have gone and cut off your enemies and made you great.	I (YHWH) caused you (David) rest from your enemies and give you (David) a house	I (YHWH) will establish your heir and your kingdom	I (YHWH) will establish his (David's lineage) throne forever	My (YHWH) mercies will never depart from him (David's heir)
God's Past Provisions and Future Promises to the Nation					
2 Samuel 7:10	2 Samuel 7:12	2 Samuel 7:16			

<sup>43</sup> Kessler, 277.

<sup>44</sup> Kessler, 278.

I (YHWH) will anoint a place for my people where they can be rooted and have rest from foreign nations	I (YHWH) will establish your heir and your kingdom	Your (David's) house, your throne (in Judah) and your kingdom (the nation) will be established forever.			
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Furthermore, the covenant requires that God be worthy of this trust and that the promise is fulfilled in responding to David's deeds and actions and continuing this relationship with David's household forever. Obedience is still a necessary component of this covenant, but it differs from the Sinai covenant because obedience does not result in love being given or taken.<sup>45</sup> The blessings to David's household are given due to his life choices; the love and protection he receives are not dependent on those choices.

There is an obedience and punishment component in the covenant is explicitly laid out in 2 Sam 7:14 that refers to David's son, Solomon, but these components can also be understood as things that David would need to keep in mind. David is the recipient of the promissory covenant; Solomon is impacted because the covenant specifically includes the lineage and household of David. Therefore, any requirement laid out in the covenant can be understood for David and then Solomon. The lineage is expected to be obedient and can be punished because of the covenant but they will also be loved forever because of the covenant.<sup>46</sup> The most important thing for the reader to understand is that David, his

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<sup>45</sup> The Sinai covenant creates a covenant making the Hebrew nation YHWH's people based on their obedience. David and his lineage are God's chosen family regardless of their obedience. That said, provision and punishment within both covenants are reliant on actions of obedience.

<sup>46</sup> "Since Yahweh prevails and David must comply in both of these cases, apparently the author(s) of this narrative is a Yahwist (are Yahwists) who advocate(s) that Yahweh was responsible for David's success and that Yahweh chose and maintained David and his dynasty, but that Yahweh did not approve of all of David's ideas and actions and restricted or punished David when it was necessary to carry out Yahweh's purposes."



household (Solomon), and his kingdom (Zion) are all tied into the covenant together; both in God's love and the potential for punishment.

## 2 Samuel 7 as Covenant

In 2 Sam 7, God and David enter a covenant, and therefore, they become responsible for upholding the stipulations of that covenant. The text reads as follows.

Now then, tell my servant David, 'This is what the LORD Almighty says: I took you from the pasture, from tending the flock, and appointed you ruler over my people Israel. I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men on earth. And I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed. Wicked people will not oppress them anymore, as they did at the beginning and have done ever since the time I appointed leaders over my people Israel. I will also give you rest from all your enemies. The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you: When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with a rod wielded by men, with floggings inflicted by human hands. But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.' (2 Sam 7:8–16)

God promises specifically for the nation: provision in the land God has given, peace in that same land, and rest from other nations. God promises David an established kingdom and lineage with his heir on the throne. God promises that there will be consequences for David's lineage not being obedient, God's love will remain with David's household and kingdom forever. God's promise connects David and the nation in verse 16, "Your house *and* your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever." Kessler says that this is the foundational concept of promissory covenant,

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John T Willis. "David and Zion in the Theology of the Deuteronomistic History: Theological Ideas in 2 Samuel 5–7." In *David and Zion*, edited by Bernard F. Batto and Kathryn L. Roberts, 125. Penn State University Press, 2004, 133.

“Indeed, the one who has received the promise will make *decisions* and *life choices in the present* based on the assurance that what has been promised will one day be fulfilled.”<sup>47</sup>

According to Kessler, a promissory covenant begins with two things: (1) the promise of something one person desires, (2) being made by someone, or a being with the power to make that desire happen.<sup>48</sup> This language is used at the start of 2 Sam 7:8 and 9 “Thus says the Lord of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth.” Here the YHWH (the being with the power) promises something David desires. Another component that makes something fit the promissory model is that the fulfillment of the said promise is futuristic.<sup>49</sup> The recipient is to wait and trust expectantly. God promises a particular heir to David’s legacy; God’s promise makes sure that David must wait with faith as the promise has not yet been fulfilled. There may or may not be explicit obligations attached to the promise. However, whether or not obligations are present, the person receiving the promise is expected to live according to the expected promise, based on their relationship with the one who made the promise.<sup>50</sup>

This promissory covenant leads to a profound covenantal relationship that will affect both David and his descendants. Everything that David, David’s lineage, and the

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<sup>47</sup> Kessler, 277. (Kessler is not specifically speaking about David here, but he is referencing the recipient of a promissory covenant, which he does identify David as on page 296.)

<sup>48</sup> Kessler, 277.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Kessler, 278.

kingdom will have, is a direct blessing from YHWH. David's success relies on God's provision through trust and faithfulness. While 2 Sam 7:14 refers to David's future son, it shows the reader the longevity and impact that David's covenant will have. The longevity of the Davidic household means the longevity of the nation. Hans Hertzberg argues that "The promise that the house of David will be 'forever' corresponds to the choice of Israel to be the people of God 'forever': both together will magnify the holy name of God 'forever.' The house of David and the people of God are thus bound together eternally by the promise of Nathan."<sup>51</sup> The promise of God's continued love is an unconditional component of the covenant. However, the covenant is not wholly unconditional. The love of God will not be removed, but there are requirements in the form of faith that David needs to do. In the explanation that follows the promise, Nathan indicates that everything David has is from God and David's success is also from God. (2 Sam 7:8–11)<sup>52</sup> Nathan claims that God gave David all Saul had (including one of Saul's daughters and his wives, who is now David's wife).<sup>53</sup> According to the narrative, it is clear that David and Nathan know that this covenant will impact everyone, and yet, David alone answers God's words. David cries out that God should forever keep the promises that God made with "your servant and his house" in verse 25. David, his dynasty, and all of Judah are intertwined,

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<sup>51</sup> Hertzberg, 288.

<sup>52</sup> The language present in 2 Sam 7 makes it clear that the successes of David are from God. The narrative voice in these verses is Nathan telling David what God is saying, v.9: "*I have been with you wherever you have gone, I have cut off your enemies*"; v.10: "*I will provide*"; v.11: "*I will give you rest.*" In verses 19 and following, David's response acknowledges the covenant and asks YHWH to continue to uphold the YHWH's end and that David's household will work to please YHWH forever.

<sup>53</sup> Auld, 424–5.

and there is no throne and kingdom over which David will reign forever without the Davidic covenant.

### Comparison to the Mosaic Covenant

Second Samuel 7 begins with God denying David's request to build God a house (*bayit*) and moves quickly to God providing David with a house (*bayit*).

"Go and tell my servant, David, 'This is what the LORD says: Are you the one to build me a house to dwell in? I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have been moving from place to place with a tent as my dwelling. Wherever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of their rulers whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?"'"

The denial could be seen as a rejection. However, this denial centers the reader's focus on what God is doing for David. The primary focus of 2 Sam 7 is God's grace and provision. 2 Sam 7:8 has a strong literary connection to Moses' covenant, allowing the reader to surmise that this relationship has depth and importance for the narrative. In Deuteronomy 34:5, Exodus 14:31 and (2 Sam 7:5) Moses and David are addressed by YHWH as "my servant."<sup>54</sup>

"Now then, tell my servant David, 'This is what the LORD Almighty says: I took you from the pasture, from tending the flock, and appointed you ruler over my people Israel.'"

This literary connection provides insight into God and David's expectations within this agreement. Moses made a personal connection with YHWH, and the covenant created between David and God was for all the people of Israel. David's covenant was

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<sup>54</sup> Moses and David are not the only two characters in the Bible to be referred to as "my servant," but while making a covenant with YHWH, they stand as the model relationship and the bridge between God and God's people. In Exodus 19, Moses intercedes for the people of the Lord. As a servant of God, Moses brings the covenant to the people of Israel. God tells the people that their success and protection are from God and that they are to have no other gods before YHWH. In the same way, David is the servant with whom the direct covenant is made that impacts a nation. However, the Sinai covenant between God, Israel, and Moses was not dependent on Moses' actions. This is where the Davidic covenant becomes more problematic.

more personal but also had the potential to affect the entire nation just as the Mosaic covenant did. This becomes clear in 2 Sam 7: 10–11:

And I will provide a place for *my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed*. Wicked people will not oppress (or defile) them anymore, as they did at the beginning and have done ever since the time, I appointed leaders (judges) over my people Israel. I will also give you rest from all your enemies.

### *The Conditional and Unconditional Nature of the Covenant*

The covenantal language notes that the time of Judges brought about unrest for Israel.

Within the cycle of disobedience and obedience in the book of Judges, the people would do evil in the eyes of the Lord, God would punish them, and then, finally, bring a time of peace under a judge.<sup>55</sup> This cycle happens over seven times in the book of Judges. With the advent of the monarchy, the cycle is less clear, but the system remains. The Lord is rejected, the people suffer, and they would cry out to God, whose love remains as the unconditional portion of the Davidic covenant. The love remains, so when they cry out, God helps, but the conditional aspect still results in consequences via other nations.

Anderson argues that “The promise of peace is implicitly conditional for the oppressions during the period of the judges were, at least largely, due to Israel’s waywardness. This same cause-and-effect principle would be relevant also to the Davidic kings.”<sup>56</sup> Each time the people strayed in the period of the judges; God would not protect them from their enemies. The peace and protection that God promised David would work the same way

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<sup>55</sup> “Then the Israelites did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and worshiped the Baals; and they abandoned the Lord, the God of their ancestors, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; they followed other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were all around them, and bowed down to them; and they provoked the Lord to anger....Then the Lord raised up judges, who delivered them out of the power of those who plundered them.” (Judges 2:11–12, 16)

<sup>56</sup> Anderson, 121.

as it did in the time of the judges: conditional upon action. Just like in the time of the judges, when the people strayed from God, there was punishment because the Deuteronomic covenant requires punishment. Similarly, David will face the consequences of his failures. However, in the Davidic covenant, God promises never permanently to remove that love from David's lineage, unlike his predecessor, Saul.

But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.” (2 Sam 7:15–16)

The difference in the Davidic covenant is that God's love will remain with David and the Davidic lineage even in the punishment. The overarching ideology of Deuteronomistic History is a form of retribution theology in which God blesses those who obey the law and curses those who disobey.<sup>57</sup> Such ideology is dependent upon the Deuteronomic covenant. Second Samuel is at home within this ideological framework with one exception. In 2 Sam 7, the reader finds an overwhelming exception in the Davidic covenant. Within the Deuteronomistic History, conditional covenants, where God's blessings are depend on obedience, are the primary mode of relating to God. In these covenants, the love of God could be removed, and punishment would befall the people. In the case of David's predecessor, Saul, the favor and love of God were removed altogether. However, the Davidic covenant lays out something unique. David's descendants could be punished if disobedient, fitting the Deuteronomistic ideology. God states, “I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish

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<sup>57</sup> McCarter, 221–2.

him with a rod wielded by men, with floggings inflicted by human hands” (2 Sam 7:14) However, God also promises never to remove God's love (2 Sam 7:15).<sup>58</sup>

Even though the Davidic covenant has an unconditional element (2 Sam 7:15), obedience and faithfulness are still required (2 Sam 7:14).<sup>59</sup> The underlying idea is that the love given to David comes with expectations but that the expectations are not a requirement for that love.

### The National Impact of the Davidic Covenant

Additionally, the Davidic covenant impacts Judah as a whole (2 Sam 12:11). David's adherence to the covenant's stipulations, which will bring either blessing or a curse to all of Judah, and David's dynasty, is also in view. Kings from his line can and will be punished according to verse 14. Nevertheless, this punishment will come from YHWH through men, and God's love will always remain with the kingdom. The Sinai covenant and Deuteronomistic theology promote the same ideology of the promissory covenant created between God and David. The people are to be obedient and maintain a relationship with God through trust and faith. When they are faithful, God provides protection and land. God leaves them, punishes them, or brings about new leadership when they are not. God's love will be eternal in the Davidic covenant, and a Davidic king

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<sup>58</sup> Cartledge, 458–59.

The verses in 2 Sam 14–15 specifically reference Solomon, not David. However, they help the reader understand that this covenant, with its blessings and consequences, is not only tied to David but also his lineage.

<sup>59</sup> There is tension between whether the consequences of 2 Sam 7:14 apply to David and Solomon. Though the text indicates Solomon as the recipient of the punishments, the text also betrays a confluence between David and Solomon, and Solomon is an extension of David. Note that the promise to Solomon is that God's love will never be taken from his lineage, but that the very following sentence concerns David's eternal dynasty. Therefore, David and Solomon are both in view in 2 Sam 7:14–15.

will stay on the throne, but the covenant still maintains a cause-and-effect relationship. David must trust in God's promise to provide. Anderson notes that verse 15 mentions "goodwill", which, in the Hebrew language, alludes to an existing relationship and continuing good favor from YHWH to David *and the kingdom*.<sup>60</sup> The city of Zion, Judah's capital, depends on God's eternal love and David's trust and obedience.

God makes a covenant with David, but the promise and relationship are intricately connected to Jerusalem. God promises that David's royal bloodline will be on the throne forever and that the bloodline's actions directly affect the kingdom. Therefore, this covenant brings a sense of unconditional love to the city while also implying that the blessings or consequences of David's actions impact his people. Kessler observes, "The choice of Jerusalem/Zion and the promises to David are closely bound together."<sup>61</sup> The covenant as a whole speaks of YHWH's provisions in two ways. One being David's household and the other being the kingdom. The rise of David is the rise of the kingdom and vice versa. Because God went before him, the enemies that David defeats provide the rest promised for the nation in 2 Sam 7:10. God chooses David, but God also continues to choose the nation of Israel. "Thus, your name will be magnified forever in the saying, "The Lord of hosts is God over Israel; and the house of your servant David will be established before you" (2 Sam 7:26, NRSV).

As the reader continues to examine the text past the Davidic narrative, it may seem as though the covenant has failed altogether because the nation of Judah is sent into exile. Furthermore, the promise was not maintained because, at the time of the exile,

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<sup>60</sup> Anderson, 122.

<sup>61</sup> Kessler, 299.



Judah was no longer ruled by the bloodline of David.<sup>62</sup> Hayyim Angel argues that this potential problem could be understood as an issue with the word "everlasting" found in 2 Sam 7:16. This part of the promise leans heavily on David's lineage always being on the *throne*. Obviously, in the exilic period this seems problematic. However, it could also be that, since no one is on the throne of Judah, the promissory covenant remains open for restoration. Angel's argument fits within the boundaries of promise theology and reminds the reader that the continuation of said monarchy is contingent on the continued faithfulness and trust of Zion. It is not that the promise is fulfilled in the moment, but that the people hold out with hopefully anticipation trusting God's promises.

### **Theoretically Breaking the Covenant**

The basis of a promissory covenant is that David needs to trust in God's provision. Everything given to David and all God's future (everlasting) promises are dependent on David's actions. If the covenant were completely unconditional, David would have no responsibility and could not break it. However, his part in the agreement does require action and patient trust. Second Samuel 7 and the narrative leading up to it are clear that everything David has was given to him by YHWH. The peace in the kingdom is a gift from the YHWH. YHWH was generous and gave David more than he needed. Everything that David has up to this point in the narrative can be attributed to YHWH's blessing, his offspring, his house, and the peace of the kingdom. Bathsheba is an exception. David takes what God has not given when he takes Bathsheba in 2 Sam 11.

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<sup>62</sup> Reader-Response criticism is not primarily concerned with historical accuracy. However, in this case, the narrative is specific in its wording of "forever." It seems pertinent to explore the historical argument that God's unconditional aspect of the covenant (i.e., God's love would remain with David's lineage, and David's lineage would rule forever) could still be intact.

The covenant is based on David's hopeful expectation and trust in God's provision. When David makes a life choice that is not in line with the expected promise, he derails the future of his lineage and the kingdom. Obedience and choices that reflect trust are required of David per the covenant. David accepts the terms and the blessings that God will bestow on his kingdom. "And now, O Lord God, as for the word you have spoken concerning your servant and his house, confirm it forever; do as you have promised" (2 Sam 7:25, NRSV). YHWH's love will remain with David's lineage regardless of David's choices, but his choice to take Bathsheba in 2 Sam 11 breaks the trust in God's provision and proves to have lasting consequences for Zion.

CHAPTER THREE  
2 SAMUEL 11: DAVID TAKES

**Chapter Introduction**

In this chapter, I will argue that in 2 Sam 11, David takes Bathsheba for himself and thus breaks the covenant of 2 Sam 7. In taking Bathsheba, David uses his significant power against a powerless person. Thus, David's action can be defined as power rape. Despite the term's limited application in the ancient world, this thesis will use the term "rape" because it most nearly approximates what happened between David and Bathsheba through a modern understanding.<sup>63</sup> The narrative arch also points toward this conclusion through the darkening of David's activity. Following Bathsheba's rape, David takes Uriah's life, which is similarly an act of sexual control. The narrative darkens further as David's sons become sexual predators, much like their father. David's actions in the taking of Bathsheba violates the covenant made in 2 Sam 7. The covenant outlined in 2 Sam 7 requires both obedience and trust from David. All the success, wealth, and power David has gained up to 2 Sam 11 are part of YHWH's blessings. The chapter ends with a

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<sup>63</sup> My working definition of rape is the penetration of any kind to the vagina or anus with a foreign object or body part of another person without the victim's consent. Rape does not have to be brought about by physical force but can also happen via emotional or psychological stresses or domination. Consent cannot be given by someone who is underage, under duress, or unconscious. An unequal power dynamic constitutes duress as the victim either does not have the ability to say no or the victim does not feel they can say no or physically leave the situation. Rape is an abuse of power. In the case of David and Bathsheba, there is no textual evidence that suggests that Bathsheba gave consent or did not give consent. However, the power dynamic between king and subject as well as man and woman created such a situation that Bathsheba did not have the power to consent or not to consent. Bathsheba was taken from her home by David's order. In light of the #METOO movement and the 21<sup>st</sup> century, rape is being looked at differently, and victim shaming/blame narratives are no longer accepted.

Wendy Zierler questions whether we can say that Bathsheba consented to David laying with her simply because she came when David sent for her. "Seen through a #MeToo lens, what else can a woman in Bathsheba's position do in response to being summoned and taken by the king, other than come?"

comparison between 2 Sam 7 and 12, showing that parallels between the passages suggest that David's taking of Bathsheba led to the indictment.

### The Juxtaposition between David and Uriah

When the reader reaches 2 Sam 11, the narrative shows that David is not on the battlefield with his soldiers at the time when kings usually go to battle.<sup>64</sup> Starting the narrative in this way immediately notifies the reader that David's character is in question because he is doing the opposite of what a king in wartime should have been doing. It also clearly separates him from Uriah, who is in a battle and proves himself nobler than David as the story progresses. Uriah's character matters because it separates him from David and separates him from Abigail's husband who we meet in 1 Sam 25.<sup>65</sup> Uriah is not a fool or disrespectful, and the narrative cannot tarnish his character to help validate David's actions.

David's time away from battle leads to an evening stroll on his palace roof, where he sees Bathsheba, who is beautiful. David sends to find out who she is. David's messengers inform him that she is the wife of Uriah the Hittite. "So, David sent messengers to take (*laqah*) Bathsheba and she came to him" (2 Sam 11:4). In the

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<sup>64</sup> 2 Sam 11:1, "In springtime when kings go to war...David stayed in Jerusalem."

<sup>65</sup> The narrator separates Uriah's character from David's very clearly. David is at home sleeping with Uriah's wife and is actively disobeying the law of the land and therefore YHWH, while Uriah is honoring his God, his king, and his fellow soldiers by fighting in the battle. He only comes home when the king commands it but even then, does not abandon his post. He guards the gates of the palace instead of going home. Uriah is separated from Abigail's husband Nabal in two major ways: 1) The image of Nabal is a wicked one (1 Sam 25:25) and there is no indication that Uriah had done anything wrong to dishonor YHWH or David. 2) Nabal dies at the hands of YHWH according to David's claim in 1 Sam 25:39, and at the time of his death the text gives no indication that David has had sex with Abigail, whereas the reader knows that Uriah was alive when David took Bathsheba and Uriah dies at the hands of David, not YHWH.

narrative, David is not where he is supposed to be and takes what is not his.

Alternatively, Uriah is where he is supposed to be, at the battle.<sup>66</sup> When David sends for him and encourages Uriah to have intercourse with Bathsheba. Uriah replies with honor, “The ark and Israel and Judah remain in booths; and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field; shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do such a thing” (2 Sam 11:11). The juxtaposition of David’s dishonorable actions (staying home from battle and sleeping with another man's wife) with Uriah's honorable actions (going to battle and refusing to sleep with his wife) demonstrates to the reader the extent of David's folly. Far from the hero of this story, David is the villain without honor. Thus, the reader is primed to view David's other actions as dishonorable.

### Domination

David's lack of honor in staying home from battle is not what the text of 2 Sam 12 condemns. Instead, the prophet Nathan condemns David for taking Bathsheba.<sup>67</sup> The narrative progresses as David sees a woman he wants and takes her. David's desire for Bathsheba was not because he was just looking for sex or a woman's touch. David had plenty of wives and concubines to fulfill any craving or loneliness he felt. He did not need her specifically if it was purely a desire to lay with a woman or fulfill a sexual urge. McCarter notes that, "The size of a king's harem was a visible symbol of his power, and

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<sup>66</sup> Notably, Bathsheba is also where she is supposed to be when David sees her. She is bathing after her menstrual cycle. She is not on the roof as Leonard Cohen’s famous song “Hallelujah” suggests. David is on the roof.

<sup>67</sup> McCarter, 285.

none of his wives or concubines could refuse him."<sup>68</sup> As lust was not the only motivator, David appears to have been interested in "conquering" Bathsheba to promote his power. The narrative is straightforward: David knows who she is, but he does not care about her marital status or status as an individual.<sup>69</sup> He takes Bathsheba and after he lays with her, she returns home. She finds out she is pregnant from the rape and informs David, and David then has her husband killed so as not to complicate his life further.

## Breaking the Covenant

### Taking Bathsheba

Hebrew and English: 2 Samuel 11:3–4

וַיִּשְׁלַח דָּוִד וַיְדַרְשׁ לְאִשָּׁה וַיֹּאמֶר הֲלוֹא־זֹאת בַּת־שֶׁבַע בַּת־אֱלִיעֶזֶר אִשְׁתּוֹ אֲוִרְיָה הַחִתִּי: וַיִּשְׁלַח דָּוִד מַלְאָכִים וַיִּקְחֶהָ וַתָּבוֹא אֵלָיו וַיִּשְׁכַּב עִמָּהּ וְהָיָה מִתְקַדְּשֶׁת מִטְּמֵאַתָּה וַתָּשָׁב אֶל־בֵּיתָהּ:

David sent someone to inquire about the woman. It was reported, "This is Bathsheba daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite." So David sent messengers, and took her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she was purifying herself after her period.) Then she returned to her house.

Understanding the *Laqach* (לקח)

The Hebrew word *laqach* is found in 2 Sam 11:4 and shows up in its imperfect form. The word is understood simply as "to take," which is different from the term used for rape in 2 Sam 13 when Amnon rapes Tamar.<sup>70</sup> The wording in 2 Sam 13 makes physically forced

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> In 2 Sam 11:3–4, David sends out a message to learn about Bathsheba's background and status as a woman. Finding out both her father and her husband's name, he still pursues her.

<sup>70</sup> The most common and simplistic version of the term *laqach* is "to take," but the word is also understood to mean "to take for oneself" or "seize." It is a subject acting upon an object. Her passive nature continues to be clarified through 2 Sam 12, when Bathsheba is again understood as a possession.

Francis Brown. *The Brown, Driver, Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon: With an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic: Coded with the Numbering System from Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2015, 542.

sex clear.<sup>71</sup> Word choices are vastly important, but the reader also must pay attention to context. The word used is "take," as if Bathsheba were an item, but furthermore, David is the active one, the aggressor.<sup>72</sup> Bathsheba remains passive, which is noteworthy as one tries to understand the context of their relationship. From the beginning of chapter 11, David is an active character. David did not go to war. He was on his roof, he saw Bathsheba, he sent for her, he took her, and he laid with her. The word rape is not present in Hebrew, nor is it translated as such in Bibles in our modern context, but readers must look at the surrounding context, not just the words used to describe it. If Bathsheba was passive and had no control over her situation after being taken from her house to the king, then the question of consent already appears flimsy. While *laqach* is not used in the biblical text to describe forced sexual interactions, it is crucial to recognize that the word is frequently used for objects and women. It is used for wives taken by men, animals taken for sacrifice, and possessions.<sup>73</sup> None of the items or beings taken have agency in the matter.

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<sup>71</sup> 2 Sam 13:14 uses the Hebrew word *anah*, which means to defile and is translated as "forced," "violated," or "raped." One might say that the wording involved in the Tamar story makes more sense and gives a better understanding of the relational context based on textual criticism. However, any theory that textual criticism allows one to understand Amnon and Tamar's situation missed the earlier issue of the Hebrew word, *ahab*, which means "to love." The word is for lust could have been used since it becomes apparent that Amnon did not love her but desired her sexually. The word "take" was used, but just as a reader understands Amnon lusted, it can be recognized that David raped.

<sup>72</sup> Also, Morrison noted a textual and literary difference between Bathsheba being taken as David's wife and Abigail being taken as his wife specifically, that the word "laqach" is not used to describe that relationship at all.  
Morrison, 139.

<sup>73</sup> Of the seven times *laqach* (in the form found in 2 Sam 11:4), it is used in the Hebrew Bible as the object of the taking is a woman five times and an object two times, and the object is a man in two cases. However, in both cases where the man is laid with he was passive in the laying. In Genesis Lot is drunk and unable to consent when his daughters laid with him. When Ruth uncovers Boaz's feet (which never specifically states "laid with") he is passive and unable to consent because he was asleep. In general, the word *laqach* is found in Strong's concordance 965 times in various forms; it most frequently references objects and women. When it references a man, God is the one doing the taking (Genesis 2:22) or a father/son relationship.

It was David's "taking" and "laying with" of Bathsheba that equates to rape. The fact that she is taken like an object and the power position difference between them creates her inability to consent and his abuse. He takes and lays with her, she is taken and is laid with and therefore a reader could understand this as a woman without agency, whom the narrator gives no consent being forced or manipulated into sexual actions.

David's taking of Bathsheba precedes everything that she does. Within the narrative, Bathsheba "came" (*bo'*) and returned (*šûb*). David orchestrated the whole event by taking Bathsheba and laying (*shawkab'*) with her. Notably, in the Hebrew Bible, the subject is always a man whenever the verb "to lay" is used to connote a sexual union. A man can "lie" with a woman but not the other way around.<sup>74</sup> Therefore, sexual intercourse required the man to be the active party in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>75</sup> As a consequence of their sexual union, Bathsheba conceived (*hawraw'*), sent (*shawlakh'*), told, and said (*aw-mar'*). Each of Bathsheba's actions results from David's action of taking her, and she reacts to his agency and does not appear to have any of her own.

#### "Taking" Bathsheba as Primary Offense of the Covenant

David, not at war with his men, looks out from his rooftop and sees a beautiful woman. The text does not indicate that Bathsheba is aware of the king's presence, nor does it say

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Strong, James. *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. Abingdon Press, 1890.

<sup>74</sup> *The Brown, Driver, Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon: With an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic: Coded with the Numbering System from Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, 542.

<sup>75</sup> Perhaps this can account for the Levitical admonition against men lying with men, but silence on the matter of women lying with women.



she enticed him. David gets background information about this woman and knows she is married to one of his officers currently fighting in the war. This is disregarded, and David sends his men to take Bathsheba. Then, David lays with her, and she returns home after he is satisfied. Before this point in the narrative, the reader knows nothing of Bathsheba, but the reader is very familiar with David. Everything David has is from God until 2 Sam 11; God is only mentioned once in this chapter. The chapter ends in verse 27, "But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD." The covenant is broken because David took Bathsheba and as the reader continues into 2 Sam 12, they see that YHWH's would have given if David had asked.<sup>76</sup> According to the promissory covenant model actions such as taking Bathsheba are a direct violation of the trust and faithful decision making that David was supposed to make in light of YHWH's promise.

#### Power Rape of Bathsheba

Bathsheba was a subject of David's kingdom and a woman in a society that gave little to no agency or power of consent to women. From Bathsheba position in society, she was likely duty bound to answer the king's call and as a woman would have had little control over their interaction. Interpreters like George Nichol, who claims Bathsheba was seducing David or that there is no clear textual cry of rape, such as in 2 Sam 13, understand rape in a particular context.<sup>77</sup> Rape could be understand as a sexual act where the woman or man is physically forced and there is a verbal "no," such as the reader gets

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<sup>76</sup> 2 Sam 12:8–11 gives the reader insight into the anger of God towards David. His lack of trust in God leads him to take without asking, and Nathan exclaims that God would have given him more of anything he wanted. God despised that he took a woman and a life, not his to take.

<sup>77</sup> George G. Nicol, "The Alleged Rape of Bathsheba: Some Observations on Ambiguity in Biblical Narrative." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, no. 73 March 1997, 44.

with Tamar. However, rape is also sexual actions under verbal threat, coercion, and intimidation (whether in form or power position).<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, to assume that a woman's lack of verbal objection means she wants it would be to discount many victims whose flight, fight or freeze response is; indeed, freeze to survive.<sup>79</sup> The text does not contain forcible language, but neither does it portray Bathsheba's willingness. Instead, as noted above, Bathsheba is taken and lain with, and she merely responds to David's actions. In addition to David's active role, David's status as the king removed Bathsheba's agency. Scholz has observed, "Yet does it not matter that Bathsheba's consent is irrelevant? The power differential between her and the king is obvious. He is the king, whom she has to obey if she does not want to risk her life."<sup>80</sup>

Rape is about power and position, both historically and in a modern context. David took a power position over Bathsheba. His sexual actions with her did not diminish his placement in society, but her power and position is stripped away.<sup>81</sup> Throughout 2 Sam 11, Bathsheba is defined in the text in relation to other men. She is the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah, a man in battle (2 Sam 11: 3). Bathsheba being identified in terms of her male relations reinforces her lack of agency. In a stark contrast, David is a

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<sup>78</sup> "Sexual Violence Definitions." Sexual Violence Definitions | Center for Survivors | Michigan State University. Michigan State University. Accessed April 22, 2022.

<https://centerforsurvivors.msu.edu/education-resources/sexual-violence-educational-information/sexual-violence-definitions.html>.

<sup>79</sup> Sonia D. Ferencik, and Rachel Ramirez-Hammond. "Trauma-Informed Approaches - ODVN." TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE. The Ohio Department of Mental Health. Accessed April 23, 2022.

[https://www.odvn.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/ODVN\\_Trauma-Informed-Care-Manual\\_2020.pdf](https://www.odvn.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/ODVN_Trauma-Informed-Care-Manual_2020.pdf).

<sup>80</sup> Susanne Scholz. *Sacred Witness: Rape in the Hebrew Bible*. Augsburg Fortress Press, 2014, 101.

<sup>81</sup> Koenig, 504–6.

king. He is a man with an abundance of agency, and Bathsheba is a woman with no agency. He is identified by his relationship with YHWH and his status as head of the kingdom. Therefore, their sexual relationship betrays a vast power discrepancy. It is because of this power imbalance that the reader can conclude that Bathsheba is a victim of power rape. Richard Davidson states, "...the best modern expression to describe David's action is "power rape," in which a person in a position of authority abuses that "power" to victimize a subservient and vulnerable person sexually, whether or not the victim appears to give "consent."<sup>82</sup> One could argue that Bathsheba's narrative does not have words like "defiled" or "forced" as are found in other rape narratives, but no two rapes are the same. To conclude that Bathsheba was not raped because the narrative does not voice her "no" does not mean she said "yes." There is no explicit term that suggests that Bathsheba was raped, such as is used with Tamar later in chapter 13, and this thesis does acknowledge the difference. The power rape of Bathsheba is more subtle, and the rape of Tamar was expressed through more violent and explicit terminology. Mark Gray argues that there are "undeniable parallels" between Bathsheba and Tamar but that the language used in Tamar shows an escalation in horror.<sup>83</sup> As the reader moves through the narrative, the parallels between Bathsheba and Tamar cannot be ignored. David and Amnon see what they want, and they take it. Bathsheba is silent while Tamar is vocal, but both are taken as the object of a man's desire.

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<sup>82</sup> Davidson, 89.

<sup>83</sup> Mark Gray. "Amnon: A Chip off the Old Block? Rhetorical Strategy in 2 Samuel 13:7–15 the Rape of Tamar and the Humiliation of the Poor." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, no. 77 1998, 40.

David held the highest form of power position in the kingdom at this time. His taking of Bathsheba was less about stealing power from her (simply because she had none) than it was challenging a greater power than his own. The power dynamic that David challenged was God's power over David.<sup>84</sup> As a male and king, David did not gain status by raping a married woman. By taking something that was not given to him by God, David challenged the trust and provision established by God through the covenant. David takes Bathsheba, and by doing so, he makes a power play that shows he no longer depends on God's blessings.

### **Violent Progression of the Narrative**

The taking of Bathsheba is not as straightforward as the sexual violence seen in Tamar's story later in the narrative. In 2 Sam 13:14, the text says that Amnon defiled (*anah*) her, and the reader does not find that explicit language in 2 Sam 11. However, a progression within the Davidic narrative moves from consent to "taking" to forced sexual actions. When David is introduced to the narrative in 1 Samuel, he is a boy and everything he receives up to the point where he sees Bathsheba has been graciously given to him by God.<sup>85</sup> David's success starts the narrative of 2 Sam. Saul is dead, and David will be king. He wins many battles and is successful in his endeavors. He is given women and wealthy freely or he earns it on the battlefield or from God's grace. The narrative darkens

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<sup>84</sup> Many in both scholarship and society are willing to say that the sexual encounter was a mistake but not go as far as to claim that it was rape. Paul Borgman labels David's sexual action "an indulgence and an affair," but he does not label it rape. The real problem, he claims, was that Bathsheba got pregnant, so David had to kill Uriah. To them, the murder of Uriah that follows the pregnancy of Bathsheba is a crime, but not David's misconduct with Bathsheba. (Borgman, 147.)

<sup>85</sup> This is not to discount the obvious struggles David enduring while Saul was hunting him.

following David's early success. Morrison points the reader to an earlier interaction and marriage that David participates in: Abigail.<sup>86</sup>

	1 Samuel 25:39b	2 Samuel 11:4	2 Samuel 13:14
Hebrew	<sup>87</sup> וַיִּשְׁלַח דָּוִד וַיְדַבֵּר בְּאַבִּיגַיִל לְקַחְתָּהּ לְאִשָּׁה:	וַיִּשְׁלַח דָּוִד מַלְאָכִים וַיִּקְחֶהָ וַתָּבוֹא אֵלָיו וַיִּשְׁכַּב עִמָּה וְהִיא מִתְקַדְּשֶׁת מִשְׂמֵאתָהּ וַתָּשָׁב אֶל-בֵּיתָהּ:	וְלֹא אָבָה לְשָׁמֹעַ בְּקוֹלָהּ וַיִּתְּזֶק מִמֶּנָּה וַיַּעֲזֶהָ וַיִּשְׁכַּב אִתָּהּ:
English Translation	Then David sent and <b>asked</b> Abigail to take her as his wife.  *In verse 42, she "becomes" his wife	And David sent messengers and <b>took</b> her, and she came to him, and <b>he lay</b> with her. (Now she was purifying herself after her period.) Then she returned to her house.	But he would not listen to her; and being stronger than she, he forced her and <b>lay</b> with her. <sup>88</sup>

The story of Abigail is found in 1 Sam 25. David finds and likes her, and once her husband passes away, David takes (*laqach*) or her to be his wife. What is present in this portion of the story that is not found later is that before he takes Abigail, David asks and Abigail consents. Some scholars translate *dbr* in 1 Sam 25:39 as speaks to, asks, or he proposes for Abigail to be his wife. The term *dbr* is common in Hebrew and it is difficult to catch the nuance of the word without examining the context of the interaction. Notably, the servants that David sends to Abigail actually have a conversation with her. Such a conversation is not recorded when David sends for Bathsheba. The servants announce David's intention and Abigail agrees saying, "She rose and bowed down, with her face to the ground, and said, 'Your servant is a slave to wash the feet of the servants

<sup>86</sup> Morrison, 139.

<sup>87</sup> This word is *dvr* which gets translated many different ways, but here it shows David had a conversation before he *laqach* (took) her, which is in red.

<sup>88</sup> I made "lay with" red as well, to note that the word used for what David and Amnon with Bathsheba and Tamar are described with the same root word in Hebrew *shakab*, to lie down. There is a considerable textual difference between this part of the narrative and Tamar's story, but I also want to call attention to the similarities.

of my lord'." Therefore, the reader sees two essential qualities to this interaction: asking for consent and receiving consent. David still "takes" her, but Abigail agrees to go. Once the reader gets to 2 Sam 11, David is no longer asking. Bathsheba is taken from her home, and so she comes to David. No discussion or consent is present in the text, like with Abigail. Morrison also points out that the sexual activity when David "takes" Bathsheba is much more aggressive than when he "gathers" her for marriage. However, neither echo the choice that Abigail seems to carry in her section of the narrative.<sup>89</sup>

While Bathsheba does not say "no," she is not asked like Abigail. David has changed whom he gets and how he gets them. Another important distinction to make between Abigail and Bathsheba's situation is the death of their husbands. Abigail's husband dies, and David thanks God for "*pleading his cause*," and then he asks to marry Abigail. The taking comes first in Bathsheba's story, and when her husband dies, God is not praised because of what was taken in the rape of Bathsheba and Uriah's life was not given by YHWH. As the reader examines the narrative from Abigail to Bathsheba, the aggressive nature of David and the abuses of power are evident. Darker still, the narrative continues, Tamar is not asked nor taken, but forcibly laid with, and the text give voice to her refusal.

#### A Reader's Temptation

The authors of the narrative may have intentionally left the sexual interaction between David and Bathsheba ambiguous. She has no voice in the text, and therefore, readers are left to decide for themselves. Bathsheba's character has been attacked by scholars like

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<sup>89</sup> Morrison, 139.

Lillian Klein, who suggests she wanted an upgrade in society.<sup>90</sup> In this kind of understanding of the narrative, David is weak as he falls to the temptation of a wiley woman.<sup>91</sup> Scholz notes that Cheryl Exum argues that the text in and of itself rapes Bathsheba in another way by making her side of the interaction disappear.

Exum uses the 'the rape of Bathsheba' as a metaphor to describe Bathsheba's treatment at the hands of the androcentric biblical narrator, whose violation of her character consists both in depriving her of voice and in portraying her in an ambiguous light that leaves her vulnerable, not simply to assault by characters in the story but also by later commentators on the story.<sup>92</sup>

Many in both scholarship and society are willing to say that the sexual encounter was a mistake but not go as far as to claim that it was rape. Nevertheless, as shown above, the power imbalance between David and Bathsheba clearly demonstrates how one can rightfully make a claim of sexual abuse. Thus, it is not without merit to characterize David's taking of Bathsheba as rape.

In the world of the narrative, the text suggests David's guilt as a matter of breaking the Davidic covenant rather than as transgressing the law of Moses. David acts outside of and against the covenant of 2 Sam 7 by taking what God did not give him.<sup>93</sup> David went beyond the covenant boundary by taking Bathsheba, and his actions led to further transgressions. Because of Bathsheba's resulting pregnancy and Uriah's refusal to sleep with his wife, David orders Uriah's death.

### **Taking Uriah's Life**

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<sup>90</sup> Susanne Scholz. *Feminist Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Retrospect*. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2017, 127.

<sup>91</sup> Similar interpretations of the Genesis narrative of the fall persist despite there being no textual evidence for Eve's role in tempting Adam.

<sup>92</sup> Scholz, *Feminist Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Retrospect*, 127.

<sup>93</sup> In the LXX, David took all initiative in the verses: he sent for her, came to her, and lay with her. Bathsheba is not the subject of the verb "to come," she is merely the (or an) object... See Koenig, 506.

The murder of Uriah does not happen in a vacuum; it is a part of a much larger literary passage. Second Samuel shows God's provision, and chapter 12 watches David step outside of that promise, off a physical battlefield and into a moral war. He is not with his army on a battlefield, but as he finds out Bathsheba is pregnant, he is again given a chance to do the right thing. David could have confessed and repented. His first moral mistake snowballs as he moves from rape to manipulation to murder. David raped and impregnated Uriah's wife, Bathsheba, and the mistake needed to be covered up. Acting in self-preservation, David first tries to get Uriah to sleep with his wife, but "Uriah seems to possess self-control, a quality all the more heightened in contrast with David. Even when Uriah is drunk, he is more self-controlled than David."<sup>94</sup> In 2 Sam 11:10–11, David asks Uriah why Uriah did not go home and sleep with Bathsheba? "You have just come from a journey. Why did you not go down to your house?" Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah remain in booths; and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field; shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do such a thing." The reader can feel the distinction between Uriah's loyalty to David and David's disloyalty to the Lord. David was not at war. David was not thinking of his covenant with the Lord. In stark contrast, Uriah's mind remains steadfast on his loyalty to his fellow soldiers and his king's loyalty. Uriah is not led astray by his desires. Uriah stays faithful to his king; David is disloyal to his God.

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<sup>94</sup> Koenig, 510.



## Domination of Uriah

Interpreters of the David and Bathsheba narrative routinely discuss whether David's greater sin was the rape of Bathsheba or the murder of Uriah. The two transgressions appear to be separate. However, the perceptive reader can see that Bathsheba's rape and Uriah's murder are about sexual control, and therefore, the two are intrinsically bound together.

The juxtaposition between David's position of power over Bathsheba's lack of power can be seen through the lens of power rape. Men had significant power over women in the ancient world, and a king had unlimited power over a female subject. Uriah is a soldier in David's army. The narrative depicts Uriah as strong, loyal, and a man of self-control. These are all excellent qualities to possess, though they will not save him from a privileged king. By the end of Uriah's life, he and Bathsheba will have shared in David's violent domination.<sup>95</sup>

David wants Uriah to do something, and Uriah does not follow through with it and is killed for his "no" this should show the reader that Uriah thought he had the freedom but did not. Uriah thought he had the power and the consent to have sex with his wife when he wanted to, and he died for saying "no." Bathsheba knew she had no freedom or the ability to consent and acted accordingly, and she was not murdered and had sex without consent. David had everything provided by God, and he had spent his time on the throne covered by the covenant set up between himself and God. When Uriah elected not to do something that David wanted, his refusal should be another red flag for the reader that God was not a part of what David was trying to gain, conquer, and control.

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<sup>95</sup> Koenig, 510–11.

David's order to draw back from Uriah in battle is another power move. Unable to gain sexual consent from Uriah (for Uriah to sleep with Bathsheba), David has Uriah killed. "David could not control Uriah. That is, David's murderous act was a response to David's lack of ability to coerce Uriah into having sex with Bathsheba."<sup>96</sup> One wonders if the same fate would have befallen Bathsheba if she had failed to succumb to David's sexual whims. The reader will understand the mortal danger of David not getting his way.

### The Language of 2 Samuel 7 versus 2 Samuel 11

David's rape or taking of Bathsheba matters significantly to the covenant; even though the covenant did not specifically say that David could not rape or kill, it set forth a guideline on God's gifts. As a reader explores the covenant in 2 Sam 7:8 and following uses language "I (God) cut off your enemies," "I (God) will make your name great," "I (God) gave Israel rest."<sup>97</sup> However, this stands in stark contrast to 2 Samuel 11, which has moved from God's action in David's life to David's actions. 2 Sam 11:1 and following, "David remained in Jerusalem," "David saw Bathsheba...took Bathsheba...laid with Bathsheba...had Uriah killed."<sup>98</sup> This movement of will challenges and breaks the covenant because God is no longer the one providing. David is not making decisions with God's promise in mind, which is the entire structure of a promissory covenant.<sup>99</sup> Even more convincing is the language used at the beginning of chapter 12, "I (God) gave you your master's house, and your master's wives into your bosom, and gave

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<sup>96</sup> Koenig, 510.

<sup>97</sup> 2 Sam 7:8–10.

<sup>98</sup> 2 Sam 11:1–15.

<sup>99</sup> Kessler, 289.

you the house of Israel and Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added as much more." (2 Sam 12:8). Comparing the covenant language in chapter 7 with the indictment language of chapter 12 will shed more light.

Covenant	I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; and I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth.
Indictment	I gave you your master's house, and your master's wives into your bosom, and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added as much more.

The language of the covenant and the indictment language have three things in common: God speaks through the prophet in both, God is the active party, and God provides what David has. God speaks through the prophet to David in both 2 Sam 7 and 12 in the narrative but nowhere else, linking the two sections. In both 2 Sam 7 and 12, God contends that nothing David has is his own but orchestrated by God. The difference between the two sections is that in the indictment of 2 Sam 12, David has sought more than God has provided. While David's prayer following the covenant of 2 Sam 7 shows David as accepting of God's provision, the 2 Sam 11 narrative of David's taking of Bathsheba shows that he is willing to go beyond God's provision. Notably, the indictment mentions God's provision of wives to David, and Bathsheba is not among them. Therefore, these parallel passages clearly show that David's taking of a woman beyond God's provision is what brings the indictment of 2 Sam 12:8. David acted of his own accord without God in mind, and that was the only condition of the covenant, to act in hopeful anticipation of the promise of God. God's love is not removed, but David and his lineage will pay the price.

From the moment David decided to take Bathsheba and rape her, he broke a pattern of relying on YHWH's provision established in 2 Sam 7: 8–9 and 12:8

Thus says the LORD, "I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth... I anointed you king over Israel, and I rescued you from the hand of Saul; I gave you your master's house, and your master's wives into your bosom, and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added as much more.

Bathsheba was not a part of God's provision of wives, concubines, or land, yet David still dominated her.<sup>100</sup>

The text does not use the word "rape," but literarily and in a modern context, it is not difficult to recognize the force behind the sexual interaction between David and Bathsheba. The power dynamic made consent impossible. David strips everyone in 2 Sam 11 of their consent as he scrambles to cover his mistakes. His responsibility to make choices that honor God and uphold his end of the covenant is not at the forefront of his mind. 2 Sam 12 will further vindicate Bathsheba and display the consequences that will impact David and his lineage.

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<sup>100</sup> Noll notices this structure that sandwiches the rape of Bathsheba between two mentions of Uriah's murder. Noll holds that the second mention of Uriah's murder accentuates David's guilt by adding hypocrisy to David's sins. 2 Sam 12:9–10 creates a chiasm in which taking Bathsheba is the main focus.

"The dual reference to Uriah's murder in v. 9, sandwiching as it does the taking of Uriah's wife, might be interpreted as Yahweh's further delineation of the third punishment: First, David sinned in the murder of Uriah (v. 9a); secondly, he sinned in the rape of Bathsheba (v. 9a), for which two punishments are announced in vv. 10–12); thirdly, he sinned in the murder of Uriah at the hands of Ammonites, thus creating an alibi, and concealing his culpability (v. 9b). The third punishment (v. 14b) exacts divine vengeance for murder and hypocrisy. This goes hand in hand with David's hypocrisy in attempting to conceal the rape by means of murder."

Noll, 67.

## CHAPTER FOUR THE CONSEQUENCES OF DAVID'S TAKING

### Chapter Introduction

This chapter will argue that 2 Sam 12 lays out that David broke the covenant by raping Bathsheba, and then, by murdering Uriah because he did not trust the provisions of God. The consequences will not remove God's love, but David, his family, and his kingdom will suffer as a result. Second Samuel 7 is clear concerning the covenant between God and David, indicating that the covenant directly benefits both David's offspring and the kingdom.<sup>101</sup> David's kingdom and family were given to him by God and could be impacted by David's actions. The impact of David's actions is presented in 2 Sam 12 when, following his rape of Bathsheba, the prophet Nathan brings David a parable and punishment from God. "I gave you your master's house, and your master's wives into your bosom, and gave you the house of Israel and Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added as much more. Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight?" (2 Sam 12:9, NRSV). Concerning this passage, Carthage comments:

The author details how Nathan spoke in the very name of Yahweh, using a striking combination of first-person and second-person verbs to remind David (who seems to have forgotten) of the shocking nature of his sin: "I anointed you. . . . I rescued you. . . . I gave you. . . . I would have added as much more" (vv. 7-8). In contrast, you despised the word of the LORD. . . . You have struck down Uriah. . . . You have taken his wife. . . . You have killed him<sup>102</sup>

Second Samuel 12:9 shows that the entirety of the promissory covenant is based upon David's trust in YHWH's provisions. God gave David a kingdom, his enemies fell to his

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<sup>101</sup> 2 Sam 7:8–16

<sup>102</sup> Cartledge, 516.

sword, and God provided many wives. David's selfish and dominating actions lead to punishments within David's household and long-term ramifications for the kingdom. However, because of the unconditional aspect of the covenant, David will remain unharmed, and God's love will remain upon him and his lineage. Nevertheless, David's abuses of power and breaking of the covenant will also remain as a plague on the city.

### **The Parable**

Second Samuel 12 opens with Nathan telling a parable concerning a rich man, a poor man, a traveler, and a lamb. The rich man takes the poor man's beloved lamb to feed the traveler despite having many other lambs at his disposal. From the reader's perspective, it seems clear that David is the rich man. The rich man has many lambs to choose from but steals from the man who only had one. The parallel, between David's many wives and the rich man's many lambs, is clear, when Nathan declares to David, "You are the man." Uriah parallels the poor man who, to our knowledge, only had Bathsheba who parallels the "one ewe lamb."<sup>103</sup> However, based on the narrative, David may not have found Nathan's parable immediately relatable to his life. David's reaction to the story leads the reader to believe that David is in the dark about how the parable parallels his actions. The reader is left to wonder how David could have missed the point. This parable is often understood as a juridical parable designed for David to condemn himself as he would not

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<sup>103</sup> There is a literary parallel that one sees in the texts that Uriah is the poor man, having only one wife, in comparison to the many wives David had to choose from when he took Bathsheba. However, there is further indication that leads the reader to compare the ewe-lamb to Bathsheba. Morrison notes that the lamb is the subject of most of parable and all the verbs are feminine as to direct the reader to think of Bathsheba.

Morrison, 151.

understand that it applied to him at first.<sup>104</sup> Alternatively, Jeremy Schipper suggests David likely recognized Nathan's words as a parable and not a legal case between two men.<sup>105</sup> Schipper argues that David shows his guilt and haplessness in his over-interpretation of Nathan's parable. He claims David believed himself to be the traveler for which the lamb was slaughtered, but Nathan corrects him by saying David is the rich man.<sup>106</sup>

Another point of interest for the reader of 2 Sam 11–12 is that the parable does not focus on the rich man hurting the poor man, but instead on the taking of the lamb. As the reader searches for meaning from the parable, just as David would have, they read that the rich man is at fault for stealing the precious belonging of another. Nathan is purely focused on the abuse of power shown by the rich man. David found the theft alone to be worth the rich man's punishment unto death. David's reaction causes the reader to wonder whether David's taking and raping of Bathsheba, Uriah's wife, or killing of Uriah is worthy of death in this time and society. Nathan's parable focuses on David taking Bathsheba and not on the ensuing murder of Uriah. The prophet's emphasis was not a murder, but instead a theft (that included sexual violence).<sup>107</sup>

## 2 Samuel 12:9–10

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<sup>104</sup> Cartledge, 514.

<sup>105</sup> Jeremy Schipper. "Did David Overinterpret Nathan's Parable in 2 Samuel 12:1-6?" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 126, no. 2. 2007, 385.

<sup>106</sup> Schipper, 391.

<sup>107</sup> Campbell, 117.

The issue of David's murder of Uriah comes into sight following the parable. 2 Sam 12:9 reads:

Why have you despised the word of the LORD, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites.

The thing David did was "evil in the Lord's eyes," and the reader is not left to wonder whether that evil was the rape, the murder, or both. David's murder of Uriah surrounds his rape of Bathsheba in the structure of the indictment, and therefore, the answer is "both". However, verse 10 brings more clarity when it reiterates the rape of Bathsheba as the offense leading to the consequence of the sword in David's household, "Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, for you have despised me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife." Therefore, saying that David took (*laqah*) her is unambiguously discussing the very same taking (*laqah*) the reader read about in 2 Sam 11:4. The lexical similarity should draw the reader's mind back to the original event. Bathsheba, like the lamb, was a possession who suffered at the hands of David's greed.

God contends that David has despised (*bazah*) the word of YHWH by taking Bathsheba. God is angry because of the covenant in 2 Sam 7. In 2 Sam 12:8; YHWH declares that he has given David everything and would give him more if David would ask. The repetition and structure of verses 9 and 10 lays out God's grievances with David:

Why did you despise the word of the Lord by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. 2 Sam 12:9

YHWH despised David taking Bathsheba and because YHWH did not *give* Bathsheba, David had to *take* further and kill Uriah. The extreme lengths David went to and



ultimately having Uriah killed was a result of David's actions with Bathsheba not being endorsed by YHWH. (See verse 8). David despised YHWH when he *took* Bathsheba. He despised YHWH by striking down Uriah. The sword will remain a curse in his house because David rejected the blessing of YHWH and decided he would take Bathsheba without consent from God or Bathsheba. Reading through 2 Sam 12:1–9 might have left the reader confused as to what YHWH was specifically upset about. However, verse 10 is clear, YHWH is upset with David for action outside of the promises of the covenant. The murder of Uriah was a consequence of the taking of Bathsheba which demonstrates just how far David had to go to obtain things without God's provision. The promise of 2 Sam 12 is clear, but the "why" behind it is just as much so: *because* David took Bathsheba.<sup>108</sup>

## **Ramifications of David's Actions**

### **Immediate Ramifications**

As the reader moves to 2 Sam 12:11, Nathan starts describing the consequences for David and his immediate family. It does not take long to see that David's entire family will be affected. Jonathan Kruschwitz observes that Nathan's parable has two horizons. It looks back at David's misconduct and forward to the consequences in his own household.

The story echoes David's actions toward Uriah's family. However, beyond these echoes, it also prefigures the collapse of David's own family. As Nathan's words indicate, David's house will fall prey to perfidy and infighting. Across the fabric of David's life weaves a coarse thread of family disjunction. Nathan's story serves as a window into this reality, both its history and future.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> 2 Sam 12:10, "Now, therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, for you have despised me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife." (NRSV)

<sup>109</sup> Jonathan A. Kruschwitz. "2 Samuel 12:1–15: How (Not) to Read a Parable." Review and Expositor (Berne) 109, no. 2. 2012, 256.

The disjunction in David's family continues to unravel throughout the course of the following chapters. Just as David undoes Bathsheba and Uriah's family, so it is with his own family. In chapter 12, the baby that Bathsheba was carrying dies. The reader experiences the second death in the wake of David's taking. This son, unlike the other sons whose own deaths will follow, was innocent. Unfortunately, he is neither the first, nor the last victim in the devastation of David's taking.

### Ramifications to David's Lineage

In chapter 13, David's son, Amnon, rapes David's daughter, Tamar. For David to punish Amnon for his actions would be hypocritical.<sup>110</sup>

There is an icky implied logic of "like father, like son," as David's actions with Bathsheba are followed, two chapters later, by his son, Amnon's rape of Tamar—a repetition of trauma at suggests an uneasy logic of inevitability.<sup>111</sup>

Amnon's rape of Tamar and lack of punishment he receives start an internal war between Amnon and Absalom (one of David's other sons and full brother of Tamar). As conflict rises in 2 Samuel, it would be negligent to ignore the connections to 2 Sam 12. "I will raise up trouble against you from within your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this very sun." (2 Sam 12:11, NRSV) David's son, Absalom, ends up sleeping with David's concubines in chapter 16 as a fulfillment of this prophecy.<sup>112</sup> Absalom takes

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<sup>110</sup> Scholars such as Paul Borgman point out the connection between the sexual sins of David when he raped Bathsheba, the rape of the concubines by Absalom, which Nathan prophesies, and the rape of Tamar by Amnon. "The sexual wrong of the father is reenacted in a horrific manner by the son, Amnon." Borgman, 126.

<sup>111</sup> Graybill, 63.

<sup>112</sup> 2 Sam 16:22, "So they pitched a tent for Absalom upon the roof; and Absalom went into his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel." (NRSV) It would be remiss of me not to point out the parallel between David on his rooftop seeing Bathsheba for the first time before he rapes her. Neither Bathsheba

David's concubines in a display of power in the light of day in front of the entire nation. Noll observes, "The king (David) displayed no compassion nor concern for his own culpability in the violation of his concubines, even adding to their misery by placing them in a life sentence of exclusion."<sup>113</sup>

The connection between David's actions and his household was established in 2 Sam 7:10–16 and now becomes a relevant part of the unfolding story.<sup>114</sup> David's house was a great blessing as a part of the covenant (2 Sam 7:11) and now dividing it forever is the sword that killed Uriah. Amnon is killed by the sword (2 Sam 14:23–29), a sword or spear kills Absalom in his rebellion against David (2 Sam 18:15), and a third son, Adonijah, dies by the sword as well in 1 Kings 2:25.<sup>115</sup>

#### The Wider Impact: Daughter Zion

David's family is immediately affected by his decision to take Bathsheba and despise YHWH. The first part of the consequences that fall on David impacts his unborn son privately and personally. The nation is not yet involved when the child Bathsheba carried dies. David is not on the run and his kingdom is not divided. The narrative takes the reader to a private mourning session, even the servants do not seem to be aware of what is happening.<sup>116</sup>

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nor the concubines are considered by the text to as raped, but 2 Sam 11 and following seems to be a tragic story of women paying with their bodies for the greed, lust, and anger of royal men.

<sup>113</sup> Noll, 173.

<sup>114</sup> McCarter, 300.

<sup>115</sup> McCarter writes, "David's own sanctimonious words of reassurance to Joab in 11:25 have come back to haunt him: "sometimes the sword devours one way, sometimes another." McCarter, 300.

<sup>116</sup> 2 Sam 12:21–22, Then his servants said to him, "What is this thing that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child while it was alive; but when the child died, you rose and ate food." 22 He said,

Following the infant's death, the consequences also involve David's grown children, and it becomes impossible for the instability to remain private. His daughter, Tamar's, rape and shame, his son, Amnon, being murdered by his other son, Absalom, could not be as private as the mourning for a baby. The rebellion that Absalom led that divided the kingdom for a time also affected the city. The rape of David's concubines by Absalom where the city could watch was not secluded from the kingdom. Shawn Flynn notes the continual focus on the community in the Davidic narrative. Flynn concludes that David's primary sin is that of poor leadership.<sup>117</sup> It is, however, the rape of Bathsheba that directly shows the reader, for the first time, David's poor decision making skills as a leader. The biblical text that precedes this narrative does not indicate that David has led the kingdom or his household poorly. The incident with Bathsheba is the turning point and the fallout from the incident leads to the communal nature of the consequences.

#### The Longevity of the Covenantal Consequences

Flynn is right to ask, what does this have to do with the nation of Judah? Readers of the Deuteronomistic History can see that the punishment that follows David's actions will not rest on David alone. Instead, the consequences immediately impact Bathsheba, Uriah, and the infant son, who will die. Nathan speaks of a sword in the house of David forever, and scholars, such as those previously mentioned, point out how these actions impact the longevity of David's kingdom. Absalom's rebellion was not separate from the people, and neither were the concubines that were raped as a result. When it comes time for Solomon

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"While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who knows? The Lord may be gracious to me, and the child may live.'

<sup>117</sup> Flynn, 193.

to take the throne, there comes another fracture in the kingdom's stability. Flynn states that, "David's failure is not merely private but has consequences for his public life in relation to his covenantal obligations."<sup>118</sup> From his bedroom to his sons' deaths to a nation caught up in rebellion, when David decided to take Bathsheba, he disregarded the covenant that would protect his family. Furthermore, he did not think about the consequences that his people would pay because of his sin. Flynn concludes that David's incompetence impacts more than just his private life but leads to wider public relation, but he misses that the clear origin of that fall is David's first misstep: the rape of Bathsheba.<sup>119</sup>

The language of rape and sexual violence that the reader encounters with Tamar specifically but also the implied violence surrounding Bathsheba, and the concubines becomes the fate of Daughter Zion, Jerusalem. Gray's haunting words describe the wider reach of David's taking of Bathsheba, moving the reader to Tamar's rape, and the nation at large. He says, "In a broad canonical context, they [sexually violent narratives and terms] are invested with associates which, like pebbles dropped in a pool, ripple outwards, pushing us, in one direction, towards pondering the possibility of the absence of God (in exile?)"<sup>120</sup> A prudent reader cannot separate one event from the next, but instead, when faced with stories that create a domino effect, they must investigate the fall out. Thus, one understands that David's violation of the covenant, by taking something that God had not given, affects the entire nation for years to come.

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<sup>118</sup> Flynn, 195.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Gray, 53. The "(in exile?)" is a part of Gray quote from page 53 of his article

CHAPTER FIVE:  
DAUGHTER ZION

**Chapter Introduction**

In this chapter, I will argue that David's "taking" and breaking of the covenant impacts Zion. More specifically, a literary connection is present between Bathsheba, Tamar, the concubines, and Daughter Zion. The connection between these four involves the Davidic covenant, the language used to describe their experiences, and the consequences of the exile. Zion becomes the city of David in 2 Sam 5:6–7. The terminology behind daughter, of course, refers to human women but is often traced to land and cities. Hence, the reader comes to texts such as Jeremiah 6:2, which reads: "I will destroy the Daughter of Zion, so beautiful and delicate." Daughter Zion is the city of Jerusalem personified. Daughter Zion references Jerusalem, the city of David. Because Jerusalem was considered the city of David, there is an automatic connection for the reader.

The Davidic Covenant's Ties to Israel

The covenant in 2 Sam 7 is immediately brought to focus as one thinks of David's house and the kingdom of Judah, his city of Zion.<sup>121</sup>

Positive Correlation between Davidic Covenant and Israel	Negative Correlation impacting Israel
And I will appoint a place for <i>my people Israel</i> and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover,	For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun." (2 Sam 12:12)

<sup>121</sup> Notably, the language in the 2 Sam 7 covenant concerns "Israel" and not "Judah". The language of "Israel" harkens to the united kingdom under David and Solomon. Following the division of the kingdom, the North is frequently Israel and the South, Judah. Because the Davidic tribe (Judah), Davidic city (Jerusalem), and Davidic throne remain united after the division of the kingdom, I will refer to "Judah" and not "Israel" in the paragraphs that follow.

the Lord declares to you that the Lord <i>will make you a house.</i> (2 Sam 7:10–11, NRSV)	
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The promise of national peace, the very land that Judah is on, is because God gave it to them. They keep that peace because of God's love and covenant with David. God protects David; God protects Judah. The line of David will continue on the throne of Judah as long as Judah exists, and peace will exist based on the covenant. "Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever." (2 Samuel 7:16) David's house is intrinsically tied up in the kingdom.

Therefore, when the reader gets to the consequences laid before David in chapter 12, a sense of dread for Zion naturally follows.<sup>122</sup> David's house would have a sword in it forever, which means the kingdom of Judah would also suffer because of David's transgression of the covenantal terms. From 2 Sam 5 when David conquers Zion the city is his home. The covenant establishes David in his kingdom and household both of which reside in Zion, his city. Zion is David's home, and the established nation was given to him by YHWH. In 2 Sam 7, YHWH declares that he will build David a dynasty in the city of David, Zion and there YHWH would establish David forever. The peace and consequences promised to plague David will happen in the capital of Judah: Zion.

The question is not *if* David's actions impact Judah, but instead, to what *extent* will they experience the backlash of the covenantal rift. The immediate impact of David's covenantal transgression is experienced by Uriah, Bathsheba, and the unborn baby. "Tragically, David was never able to control fully the centrifugal and centripetal forces unleashed by his "grasping" and "giving" as the "scandal sheet" reporting the humiliation

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<sup>122</sup> Even though 2 Sam 12:10–11 does not say "Judah will also suffer," with the kingdom so wrapped up in the covenant with the household of David and some of the consequences directly involving rebellion in the nation, it is hard to imagine that the people could avoid backlash.

of Tamar, Bathsheba, and the ten concubines...so soberly attest.”<sup>123</sup> These three members of the kingdom feel the weight of David’s actions, but the impact spreads from this group like wildfire.

### **Judah, “Daughter Zion”**

As has been demonstrated above, the covenant created in 2 Sam 7 tied the household of David to the kingdom of Judah.<sup>124</sup> The punishment laid out for David in 2 Sam 12 also has the nation in view. Therefore, with David's rise, also the rise of the nation; with the fall of David, such is the fall of the kingdom.

#### *David’s connection to Zion*

Second Samuel 5:6 and following allows the reader to start understanding the connection David has with Jerusalem. “They thought, “David cannot get in here.” Nevertheless, David captured the fortress of Zion—which is the City of David.” (2 Sam 5:6–7). Following the defeat of the Jebusites, David honors God with dancing and praise as he brings the ark of the covenant to this new place of rest. Zion is where David makes a home and a life. Furthermore, David’s capture of the city creates political stronghold and allows for his rise to power.

Zion or Jerusalem is located geographically between Israel and Judah but belongs to neither. David is dealing with a very delicate and complex political situation at this point. The ten tribes of North Israel and the tribe of Judah have been hostile to each other for a long time, and Jerusalem has been in foreign hands. David seeks to unite these three entities by ruling each of them personally simultaneously.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Andrew E. Hill, "On David's "Taking" and "Leaving" Concubines (2 Samuel 5:13; 15:16)." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 125, no. 1 2006, 138–9.

<sup>124</sup> 2 Sam 7:8–11, 16, and 24.

<sup>125</sup> Willis, 138.



The well-being and prosperity of the city symbolize David's power and David's relational status with God. This city is where David's children are born. The kingdom and house (*bayit*) that God promises is in this city that is to be David's legacy. David is YHWH's anointed one to rule over this city and God's people.<sup>126</sup> The success of David and the city's legacy matters tremendously and are not mutually exclusive.

### **Literary Connections to Zion**

#### Literary Connection to Davidic Covenant

The covenantal promise that someone from David's line would always be on the throne is broken with the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem. The last Davidic king, Zedekiah, is taken to Babylon in chains after watching his sons be killed. At the same time, Jerusalem and Judah are metaphorically stripped naked and violated by the Babylonian forces; Daughter Zion is penetrated without her consent. Adelman observes, "The personification of Zion as a daughter turns darkly upon itself in the poetry and prophecy of lament dating to the exilic period, when she (Jerusalem) is devastated, a victim of sexual violation at the hands of foreign nations (Isa 1:8; Lam 1:6, 2:1, 4, 8, 10, 13, 4:22)."<sup>127</sup> Lamentations 2:1 speaks of the humiliation that befalls Daughter Zion: "How the Lord in his anger has caused a cloud to cover (sometimes translated, humiliated) daughter Zion!" (Lam 2:1).

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<sup>126</sup> Willis, 136.

<sup>127</sup> Adelman, 97.

Many texts describe Daughter Zion as being left in exile, exposed, and violated.<sup>128</sup>

The literary line that echoes the rape and devastations of Bathsheba, Tamar, and the concubines continues to devastate David's city. Second Samuel 12:12 promises that what David did in secret will be done in the light of day before all of Israel. The secret rape of Bathsheba becomes the public and violent sexual assault, not only of David's literal daughter and concubines in 2 Sam 16 but also of Daughter Zion, his city. Bathsheba was the first woman in the narrative's series of unfortunate events to feel the impacts of David's violation of the covenant. From her rape to the exilic period, sexual violence fills the pages of the biblical text.

#### Literary Connection through Sexual Violence

The rape of Bathsheba is *the* misstep in David's narrative that leads to the wreckage of the kingdom. Robert Polzin suggests that the Bathsheba episode is not only the turning point of the David story, but the Deuteronomistic History as a whole.<sup>129</sup> Adelman notes of the Deuteronomistic History, "It is the daughters—by name, Bathsheba, and by legacy, Tamar—that lie, both literally and figuratively, in the fault line."<sup>130</sup> The rape of Bathsheba changes the fate of the covenant relationship. What starts within David's house through in-fighting quickly involves the rest of the nation. Rebellions and unrest, division, and violence await the chapters that follow 2 Sam 11–12. A reader could

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<sup>128</sup> The verses mentioned above from Lamentations, Amos 5, Jeremiah 31 are just a few verses that speak of the nation as a woman without respect.

<sup>129</sup> Robert Polzin. *David and the Deuteronomist: 2 Samuel*. Vol. pt. 3. Bloomington: IN University Press, 1993, 119.

<sup>130</sup> Adelman, 91.

understand that the rest and peace from enemies that the city had enjoyed was a direct blessing from the Davidic covenant, and that now David had fractured that covenant.<sup>131</sup> The fate of Bathsheba, Tamar, and David's concubines will be shared literarily in the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem. Bathsheba is stripped of power and consent. Tamar is stripped of her clothes and her reputation.<sup>132</sup> Daughter Zion is stripped naked; "Jerusalem sinned grievously, so she has become a mockery all who honored her despise her, for they have seen her nakedness; she herself groans and turns her face away." (Lam 1:8).<sup>133</sup>

### Literary Connection to Tamar

The impact that David's rape of Bathsheba has on Tamar is vital to understand. David's rape destroys Bathsheba's family dynamic.<sup>134</sup> Her husband is taken from her, and then her baby. In the same way, the Tamar and Amnon's situation wreck the internal royal family dynamic, which becomes even more explosive through David's decision not to (or inability to) punish Amnon because he had no moral high ground. Kurtis Peters observes:

Even when Amnon's dastardly deed is known, David is angered but refuses to punish Amnon. David's inability to control his own house and his unwillingness to root out the festering sin once it is known only serve to seal his condemnation.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> 2 Sam 7:11.

<sup>132</sup> In 2 Sam 13:19 and 20b Tamar tears her robe and remains desolate in Absalom's house.

<sup>133</sup> Graybill notes that just like Bathsheba, Daughter Zion's story is fraught with a nature of fuzziness, yet again they are connected through their similarities of not being an "ideal victim/survivor." Graybill, 62 and 121. I point this out because victims of rape and rape itself is not ideal. The victims and stories are not always clear cut, but that does not change the fact that it is rape.

<sup>134</sup> 2 Sam 16:21 mentions that Ahithophel (who is arguably Bathsheba's grandpa according to 23:34b) is the one who advised Absalom to sleep with David's concubines on the roof. Another way the family dynamic is impacted.

<sup>135</sup> Kurtis Peters. "Together in Guilt: David, Jonadab, and The Rape of Tamar." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 45, no. 3. 2021, 315.

Amnon's actions with Tamar are placed in the narrative immediately following the rape of Bathsheba and Nathan's warning that the Davidic household would become unhinged. This helps the reader connect David and Amnon and Bathsheba and Tamar. The reader may recall Nathan's words to David, "God has put away your sin, you will not die" (2 Sam 12:13). David did not die for his rape, his infant son did. Similarly, David does not call for Amnon's death when Amnon commits a very similar transgression. However, Amnon will still eventually die at the hands of Absalom.

The narrative does not indict David for the rape of Tamar or the concubines, but the verses in 2 Sam 12 echo through readers' minds—specifically, the sexual nature of the consequence. David's wives will be defiled in the same way he defiled Bathsheba. The sexual violence that starts when David takes Bathsheba is punished by chaos within the household with a sexual component, "I will raise up trouble against you from within your own house." The example set forth by David becomes the model for his sons' (both Amnon and Absalom) treatment of women. First, with Amnon raping Tamar, then Absalom raping David's concubines on the same roof where it all started. The astute reader cannot help but hear the words of 2 Sam 12:11 as they move through these narratives of sexual assault: "And I will take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this very sun." This is a part of the reckoning for David's rape of Bathsheba. As promised, the sexual sins of David have a sort of ripple effect, as his sons, much like their father, become rapists, and David's daughter and wives become the victims of sexual assault.

Furthermore, the aftermath of Tamar's rape leaves her in a state much like the women of Zion described in Isa 3:

The LORD says, "The women of Zion are haughty, walking along with outstretched necks, flirting with their eyes, tripping along with mincing steps, with ornaments jingling on their ankles. Therefore, the Lord will bring sores on the heads of the women of Zion; the LORD will make their scalps bald." In that day the Lord will snatch away their finery: the bangles and headbands and crescent necklaces,<sup>19</sup> the earrings and bracelets and veils, the headdresses and ankle chains and sashes, the perfume bottles and charms, the signet rings and nose rings, the fine robes and the capes and cloaks, the purses<sup>23</sup> and mirrors, and the linen garments and tiaras and shawls. Instead of fragrance there will be a stench; instead of a sash, a rope; instead of well-dressed hair, baldness; instead of fine clothing, sackcloth; instead of beauty, branding. (Isaiah 3:16–26)

These words eerily echo Tamar's actions post-Amnon raping her:

So, his servant put her out and bolted the door after her. She was wearing an ornate robe, for this was the kind of garment the virgin daughters of the king wore.<sup>19</sup> Tamar put ashes on her head and tore the ornate robe she was wearing. She put her hands on her head and went away, weeping aloud as she went.  
(2 Sam 13:18–9)

The jewelry and finery of the women of Zion parallel the ornate robe that Tamar wears.

The tiaras and shawls are items that one would associate with royalty. Perhaps Tamar herself had a tiara that she donned on occasion. Additionally, by raping Tamar, Amnon brands her and she cannot return to society. Tamar, like the women of Zion, has her beauty taken away, replacing it with the brand of a violated women who lives the rest of her days unmarried. The ashes on her head are signs of her pain and shame; the same would be true of a shaved head. The mind of the reader is drawn to the image of the ornate robes that Tamar's tore in her desolate state, just as the fine robes mentioned in Isaiah 3 turn to sackcloth.

### The Symbolic and Literary Purpose of the Concubines and Zion

The literary connection between 2 Sam 12 and the city is hard to ignore when at least one of the consequences happens in front of the city. "You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel." To say that the nation will not feel the weight of David's actions would be to separate his household from his kingdom. Absalom has run David out of the kingdom and is found on the rooftop that the reader is first introduced to

in 2 Sam 11, and it would be hard to miss the irony. On the rooftop where David saw Bathsheba, Absalom pitches a tent and has sex with David's concubines.

	2 Samuel 11:2	2 Samuel 12:11	2 Samuel 16:22
Hebrew	<p>וַיְהִי לַעֲרֵב וַיִּקָּם  דָּוִד מֵעַל מִשְׁכְּבוֹ וַיִּתְהַלֵּךְ  עַל-גֹּגֶג בַּיִת-הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיִּרְא  אִשָּׁה רֹחֶצֶת מֵעַל הַגֹּג  וַהֲאִשָּׁה טוֹבַת מְרֹאָה  מְאֹד:</p>	<p>כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה הַנְּגִי  מִקִּיָּם עָלֶיךָ רָעָה מִבֵּיתְךָ  וְלִמְחֻתֶי אֶת-נְשֵׂיךָ לְעֵינֶיךָ  וְנִתְּתֵי לְרַעֲיָה וְשָׁכַב עִם-  נְשֵׂיךָ לְעֵינֵי הַשָּׁמֶשׁ  הַזֹּאת:</p>	<p>וַיִּטְּוּ לְאַבְשָׁלוֹם הָאֱהָל  עַל-הַגֹּג וַיָּבֵא אֲבִשָׁלוֹם  אֶל-פְּלִגְשֵׁי אָבִיו לְעֵינֵי  כָּל-יִשְׂרָאֵל:</p>
English Translation	<p>It happened, late one afternoon, when David rose from his couch and was walking about on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; the woman was very beautiful.</p>	<p>Thus says the Lord: I will raise up trouble against you from within your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this very sun.</p>	<p>So they pitched a tent for Absalom upon the roof; and Absalom went in to his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel.</p>

Similar to David's rape of Bathsheba, the text does not explicitly call 2 Sam 13 rape, nor does it give attention the consent for the concubines. The literary connection between 2 Sam 11, 13, and 16 is strong. The royal men of the Davidic line take what they want from three sets of women. In 2 Sam 16, David leaves the kingdom in the wake of Absalom's rebellion. He leaves behind ten women from his harem that are meant to look after his household and as a symbol to the city he plans to return.<sup>136</sup> The rebellion was centrally located in the city of Zion. The entire city looked on as David retreated. The entire city was an audience as Absalom raped those ten wives David left behind as a power move against his father. In raping these women and hosting such a public and sexually violent

<sup>136</sup> Campbell, 146.

rebellion, he fulfills the words of Nathan and the promises of God from 2 Sam 12.

Daughter Zion suffers along with David's household and throne.

#### Literary Connection: Defiled

The covenant set forth for David and the reader in 2 Samuel 7 describes the protection and stability of Israel. Specifically, the Davidic lineage and throne will rest, which means Daughter Zion is included. 2 Sam 7:10 states that God's people will be settled and not defiled by other nations. Nevertheless, once David takes Bathsheba and breaks his end of the covenant, Tamar is defiled (2 Sam 13:14), then the concubines are defiled (2 Sam 16:22). Finally, Daughter Zion, the city of David, is defiled. Lamentations 5:11 describes the gruesome affairs that come with the siege of a city in the ancient world. Much like the violated city, the women of the city were often defiled. Hence Lamentations 5:11 describes the fate of the women of Jerusalem after the Babylonian siege. The invading soldiers defile these women. In parallel, the virgins of all Judah are defiled.

Thus, as the city itself is penetrated by the Babylonian forces, the women of the city are penetrated as well. Daughter Zion's fall stands in direct opposition to the promise given from God to David in 2 Sam 7:10, and the reader is left to wonder how one gets from point A (2 Sam 7) to Point B (Lam 5:11). At first, the reader could feel as though she or he is left with a God who does not keep God's side of the covenant. However, the reader knows that 2 Samuel 7 is contingent on David's trust in God's provision.

Furthermore, in 2 Sam 11, the reader sees that David took Bathsheba when God did not give her. The punishment that follows will impact David and his lineage, per the covenant of 2 Sam 7 and the consequences presented in 2 Sam 12. Therefore,

Lamentations and the defiling of the women of Zion can be understood through the lens of 2 Sam 12: as the consequences of David taking Bathsheba, not the unfaithfulness of God.

	2 Samuel 7:10	2 Samuel 13:14	Lamentations 5:11
Hebrew:	<p>וְשָׂמְתִי מָקוֹם לְעַמִּי לְיִשְׂרָאֵל  וְנִטְעַתִּיר וְשָׁכַן תִּהְיֶינָה וְלֹא יִרְגְּזוּ  עוֹד וְלֹא יִסְיִפוּ בְּגִי' עוֹלָה לְעִבּוֹתָיו  כְּאֲשֶׁר בְּרֵאשׁוֹנָה</p>	<p>וְלֹא אָבָה לִשְׁמָע  בְּקוֹלָהּ וַיִּתְזַק מִמֶּנָּה  וַיִּשְׁכַּב אִתָּהּ וַיַּעֲבֹדָהּ</p>	<p>נָשִׁים בְּצִיּוֹן עָבְרוּ בְּתֵלֹת בְּעָרֵי  יְהוּדָה</p>
English Translation:	<p>And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall <b>defile</b> them no more, as formerly.</p>	<p>And he would not listen to her; and being stronger than her, he <b>defiled</b> her and lay with her.</p>	<p>Women are <b>defiled</b> in Zion, virgins in the towns of Judah.</p>

Bathsheba is taken, and the covenant is broken. The aftermath is the defilement of women and cities.

### Literary Connection: Desolate

Then the reader also finds Daughter Zion and Tamar left desolate. In 2 Sam 13:20b, Tamar is *shamem*, or desolate. “So, Tamar remained, a desolate woman, in her brother Absalom’s house.” In Ezekiel 36:4,<sup>137</sup> Lamentations 1:13, and Jeremiah 12:11,<sup>138</sup> Daughter Zion is also considered desolate.

Ezekiel 36:4	Lamentations 1:13	Jeremiah 12:11
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<sup>137</sup> This passage speaks interchangeably of Israel, the hills of Israel, and Israel’s hill. Though it does not reference Zion particularly, Zion is in view when all Israel is considered. Additionally, in general when Ezekiel speaks of Israel’s hills, he has in mind the ridge route that runs through Israel’s center from Shechem down to Hebron. Jerusalem sits as the midpoint of this ridge route (See Ezek 6:1-10).

<sup>138</sup> This passage does not mention Zion by name but there are many allusions to the holy city. For instance, Jer 12:7 declares that YHWH has abandoned his “house” which is the temple, located in Jerusalem. Additionally, Jer 12:10 references the shepherds that have destroyed YHWH’s vineyard. These shepherds are the descendants of David who ruled from Jerusalem.



Thus says the Lord God: Because they made you <b>desolate</b> indeed, and crushed you from all sides, so that you became the possession of the rest of the nations, and you became an object of gossip and slander among the people.	From on high he sent fire; it went deep into my bones; he spread a net for my feet; he turned me back; he has left me <b>desolate</b> , faint all day long.	They have made it a desolation; <b>desolate</b> , it mourns to me. The whole land is made desolate, but no one lays it to heart.
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Adelman shows that only twice in the biblical narrative is *shamem* used to describe a woman, but instead, it is most often used to describe "the devastation of a home, city, or land."<sup>139</sup> However, the aftermath of David's taking of Bathsheba, David's daughter is desolate. Her desolation is mirrored in the desolation of Zion.

Once placed side by side, terms such as desolate and defiled connect the story of Tamar and Daughter Zion.<sup>140</sup> An informed reader could draw a line literarily from David's promised kingdom and household to the exile of Zion. David took Bathsheba, and his daughter and his concubines are defiled and left desolate (all three groups of women are used as a show of toxic masculine power). Finally, Daughter Zion, David's promised city, ends up defiled and made desolate in the wake of a broken covenant. David's legacy was so tied to the city's future that the siege of Zion was not only foreshadowed, but the imaginary of sexual violence fits David's legacy in Zion perfectly. Daughter Zion was David's crowning glory, and she is reduced to a desolate land remarked about in the same graphic terms that were used to explain the devastation of his household.

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<sup>139</sup> Adelman, 96.

<sup>140</sup> The term *anah*, or defiled, occurs eighty-three times in the Hebrew Bible in multiple forms. The term *shamem*, or desolate, occurs eight times in the Hebrew text in multiple forms. The importance of the connection between the covenant and the devastation of Zion is that in the case of *anah*, the people were not supposed to experience defilement from other nations, and yet Zion did. Furthermore, *anah* and *shamem* are not positively used throughout the Hebrew Bible. They are harsh words in the narrative of 2 Samuel, and Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Isaiah are used in similar manners to express great shame and pain.

### **The Continuation of the Narratives Violent Progression**

The narrative has darkened from the covenant to the exilic period. The impact of David's sexual violence immediately hurts Bathsheba and her baby son, but quickly hurts his daughter, his wives, and then Daughter Zion his city as a whole. This thesis is not arguing that one rape is worse than any other rape but instead shows the growth in aggressive language and the broader impact from one woman's sexual assault to the reader understanding a whole city as women defiled and disgraced. The reader examines David conquering his city of Zion with praise and dancing as he brings in the ark. The city is thriving as Zion became a central location of power politically but now would house the simply of God's presence through the ark. However, that same thanksgiving is lost in the desolation of Daughter Zion. The city is defiled through literal sexual violence but also figuratively by other nations with their gods and idols. A reader sees the text move from praise to devastation. The violation of the covenant and with it, Bathsheba, wrecks the peace promised by YHWH. A reader could argue that the city's fate was sealed when David took Bathsheba and the impact of that violation rippled from YHWH to his family, and finally that violation defiled his kingdom.

## CHAPTER SIX CONCLUSION

Through reader response criticism, this thesis makes a connection between the covenant God makes with David and the sexually violent fallout that extends to his lineage and household. One can also see how the texts written in Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Isaiah echoes the sexual violence within David's narrative. When David takes Bathsheba, he violates her and the covenant agreement he has with God. The fallout spelled out by Nathan in 2 Sam 12 tells of the ramifications for David's household and city. His baby dies, and his daughter and concubines are raped as the narrative parallels David's actions with Bathsheba. The narrative grows darker. The taking of Bathsheba is followed by the graphic and violent rape of David's daughter, Tamar, by his own son. Then, David's concubines are raped by another son on the same roof where David first sees Bathsheba. The city watches. Finally, sexual violence makes its way into the poetry of the devastated Zion; the city is greatly impacted. Daughter Zion, the city of David, falls to sexual violence on a massive level and stands in a desolate state that draws parallels between the city and the sexual violence found in 2 Samuel. When David took Bathsheba, he broke his covenant. He sets the course of sexual violence and separation from God throughout the narrative and the kingdom. 2 Sam 7:10 says that the city of David will find peace and provision. In other words, foreign nations would not defile them. David was to be obedient and trust in God, but instead, he took. In his power rape of Bathsheba, he left his daughter, his wives, and his city open to sexual violence from within his own family and from other nations.

## **Future Scholarship**

Scholarship has started connecting the sexual violence of Tamar and the concubines to the personification of Daughter Zion and the abuse she endures. Scholars such as Graybill and Adelman already read the horrors of what happens to Bathsheba, Tamar, the concubines, and Daughter Zion as rape; I suggest that future readers consider that these traumas do not exist in a vacuum and that they are interconnected in multiple ways. This paper continues a feminist post-modern critique of the 2 Samuel narrative by adding Bathsheba to the list of women whose sexual violent narrative can be connected to the language of the fall of Daughter Zion. Furthermore, this research shows that a reader can associate David's taking of Bathsheba with the fall of his city considering the covenant he made with God, which included his kingdom and the accusations and consequences presented to him by Nathan in 2 Sam 12.

This could prompt future scholarship to look additionally at each of David's sons as well as the wreckage of the household of David, not only during his life but in 1 and 2 Kings. The covenant and the consequences laid out may also have literary connections to the split and fall of the kingdom. Further study with the covenant connections seen in this paper might find a way to connect the covenant and David's taking of Bathsheba more directly with the books of 1 and 2 Kings. Scholarship might also continue the conversation concerning David's domination of his subjects (both male and female) and study the relationships he built prior to his reign over Zion and compare them to his actions after he takes the throne.

## **Final Thoughts**

David breaks the covenant with God when he takes Bathsheba and kills Uriah, and the consequences impact David, his lineage, and Daughter Zion. The reckoning of his sexual violence plagues his narrative, his household, his actual daughter, and Daughter Zion. 2 Samuel 7 sets up a promissory covenant that requires David's faith, trust, and obedience. This covenant is between God and David, but by proximity, his household and kingdom are impacted.

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