

THE RUTHLESS דאָויד

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INTRODUCTION

The story of **David and Bathsheba** is one of the most well known stories in the Hebrew Bible (HB). It narrates David, the God-chosen king, taking Bathsheba, his own soldier's wife, and having him killed. However, Nathan's parable and the subsequent judgement that follows is often **misunderstood**, leaving confusion as to why David's monarchy fails. This project found that, through **hidden details** in the narrative, the careful reader is led to read **2 Samuel 11-12** with the book of **Ruth, the story of David's ancestors**.

METHODOLOGY

Framework: The HB has **different literary standards** than modern western literature (Samely, Teeter and Tooman). For instance, it employs **literary allusion**, or the purposeful connection of stories to each other using verbal or conceptual connections, thus forming **intertextual patterns** that influence the reader's understanding of the texts (Ben-Porat).

Process: 1) Examined 2 Samuel 11-12 as an **independent narrative**, 2) Searched for **similarity** within Ruth, and 3) Established the **purpose of the allusion** between the texts

STRUCTURE OF 2 SAMUEL 11-12

- The main narrative of 11-12 is **framed by the Ammonite War**, separating it from the rest of the Davidic story and warning the reader that **David may act like king Saul** (the only other king to battle the Ammonites in the books of Samuel).
- The panels are **extremely interconnected** through lexical, thematic, and plot parallels.
- The **center** of the narrative is **Nathan's Parable**, which interprets all aspects of the story using allusion.

Battle of Ammon Begins	Actions: David and Bathsheba and the death of Uriah	Nathan's Parable	Consequences: the death of the child and the birth of Solomon	Battle of Ammon Ends
10: 1-19	11: 1-27	12: 1-15a	12:15b-25	12:26-31

NATHAN'S PARABLE

Nathan's parable cleverly interprets David's actions using the same literary techniques that are deployed in the narrative's allusion to Ruth. For instance:

- The Lamb** is called a "daughter" (בת, bat) = **Bathsheba's** (bat-sheva) name means "daughter" (בת) of the oath.
- The Poor Man** has one "lamb" = **Uriah** has one wife. **Both** are described as "eating" (לקה) and "drinking" (שתה) and "lying" (שכב) with their lamb/wife (11:11; 12:3)
- The Rich Man** has many "sheep" = **David** has many wives and abundant wealth. Both are unsatisfied by what they have, so they "take" (לקה) what they want (11:3; 12:4).

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RUTH AND SAMUEL

Shared Hebrew words and phrases, plot points, and themes signal a textual allusion between Ruth and 2 Samuel 11-12. This is evident through robust **character similarities** (ex: Bathsheba and Ruth are gentile women who bathe [2 of the 3 in HB] and are called "good" and "daughter"), **plot-line parallels** (such as the existence of a failed "sex plan"), the allusion of **Boaz as the poor man** of Nathan's parable, and an abundance of **parallel scenes**.

BOAZ, THE POOR MAN

Boaz, despite his material possessions and servants, is lexically and thematically **connected** to the **poor man**. For instance, every thing that the poor man does for his lamb, Boaz does for Ruth. This is shown through unique Hebrew words and phrases:

2 SAMUEL 12	RUTH
"But the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb...she used to eat (אכל) of his morsel (פת) and drink (שתה) from his cup and lie (שכב) in his bosom (חיק), and she was like a daughter (בת) to him." (12:3)	At mealtime, Boaz said to her, "Come over here and partake of the meal, and dip your morsel (פת) in the vinegar...and she ate (אכל) her fill... (2:14) "And when you are thirsty, go to the jars and drink (שתה) some of the water that the men have drawn." (2:9) "And now, daughter (בת), have no fear. So, she lay (שכב) at his feet until dawn." (3:13) Naomi took the child and held it to her bosom (חיק) (4:18)

PARALLEL SCENES

Throughout this allusion, various scenes from both stories allude to each other. This is most often used to contrast David with Boaz/Ruth in order to further **demonstrate his loss of piety**. However, after David's son has died, **David's actions allude to the character of Ruth without inversion** in Ruth 3:3-4:

- Both characters** are described as "**bathing**," (רחץ) "**anointing**" (סך) themselves and changing their "**clothing**." (שמלת) This is the only time these words (רחץ, סך, שמלת) are used together in the entire HB.
- The words "**tell**" (גל) and "**do**" (עשה) are placed at the **beginning** of the 2 Samuel 12 section and the **end** of the Ruth section. Both use the word "**set**" (שום) (12:20; Ruth 3:3).

Crucially, these actions take place before the **birth of future kings**. Thus, while not necessarily redeeming David himself, the connection of David to Ruth before the threshing floor **invokes hope in the future of the Davidic line**.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that there is an intertextual relationship between Ruth and 2 Samuel 11-12. Read together, Ruth and 2 Samuel 11-12 combine to create a **multi-generational story** about decisions that lead to life and decisions that lead to death. Thus, the allusion establishes that, if the Davidic king can return to the ideals of his ancestors, then the **Davidic kingdom can be redeemed**.

REFERENCES AND ESSAYS

References and essay are available through the QR code:

