

## RE-READING 2 SAMUEL 13:3-5 AND EVIL COUNCIL *ʿĒṢāh* AMONG YOUTHS

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### Abstract

*Re-reading 2 Samuel 13:3-5 and evil council ʿĒṢāh is an expositional attempt to analyze the event of Jonadab's evil advice to Amnon and to see how its moral lesson could be used to address the issue of parental gap and delinquencies resulting from peer group influence among minors. The pericope exposes the evil council of Jonadab which was aided by parental gap between King David, his wife and his children. This evil advice explains that parents should pay a very close attention to their children and to understand their maturational growths as well as psychological dispositions. Evidently, the situation described in the study context reflects in our contemporary society. The shift in paradigm from conventional house-wife stereotype to women involvement in secular economic activities have made so many women to take up jobs which require more time outside the family circle. Added to this is the fact that men are ever busy looking for money to fend for their families. Unfortunately, these have resulted to lack of proper attention that parents give to their homes. Family is the first contact of the child and as such care must be taken to avoid exposing the children to delinquent threatening actions and information which in most case scenario, comes from peer groups. Narrative analysis especially the diachronic and synchronic aspect was used to provide a proper interpretation of the text. The choice of this method is because, the study text falls within the part composed of salvation stories. Again, secondary sources such as bible dictionaries, commentaries, Journal articles, and concordance were also used. The implication of the paper implies that parents must therefore learn to be the best friends to their children and to live a life of decorum in order to transfer the same to their offspring. They should also use the same medium to pursue decorum clothed lives among minors.*

**Keywords:** Evil Council 'ēṣāh, Delinquencies, Minors, Moral Lesson, Biblical Studies.

## **Introduction**

So many studies have argued for low influence of peer pressure on social behaviour, self-concept, gender and the parental rearing pattern of adolescents. See Adeniyi M A, V A Kolawole (2015). But the presupposition of this paper is that peer-group exerts a lot of influence on personality, social behaviour, gender development of adolescent. Those who have argued in favour of this presupposition include (Arnett, 1992; De Vries et al., 1995; Gifford-Smith et al., 2005; Allen et al., 2005; Clark & Loheac, 2007 and You, 2011). Peers influence an individual's behavioural development; hence, the influence of peers on personality and social behaviour is studied in the light of 2 Samuel 13: 3-5. The periscope shows a significant influence of peer pressure on social behaviour of Amnon, the son of King David in the raping of his half-sister Tamar. Amnon was in love with his half-sister Tamar but could not do anything to her because she is a virgin. Jonadab his friend was a wise man and he was able to use his wisdom to advise Amnon wrongly which resulted to the raping of Tamar.

Wisdom, according to Crenshaw (1998 p. 4), is "the reasoned search for specific ways to ensure personal well-being in everyday life, to make sense of extreme adversity and vexing anomalies, and to transmit this hard-earned ...so that generations will embody it". The Hebrew term of the English word wisdom is חָכָמָה (*hācām*) which is used in this study as adjective masculine singular absolute with the nuance, "wisdom". The wisdom under study has been identified as a "negative" Wisdom by Crenshaw, (1998). His reason is because wisdom was used to achieve an evil end. Again, the wisdom in Gen. 3; where serpent deceived the woman has been adjudged as evil wisdom because wisdom was also used to achieve a negative end. Therefore, wisdom especially the negative wisdom found in the study text is studied in this paper to investigate how peers can influence their neighbour's behavioural inclinations negatively.

For the method of this study, the researcher adopted narrative analysis. Narrative analysis is the exposition of the Biblical text in a way that brings out the real intent of the author. "Narrative exegesis offers a method of understanding and communicating the biblical message which corresponds to the form of story and personal testimony, something characteristic of Holy scripture and of course, a fundamental modality of communication between human person" (pontifical Bible commission, 1993. P. 22). Secondary data such as textbooks, Bible dictionaries and concordance, magazines, journals were also used

## **Context of 2 Samuel 13**

The second book of Samuel is concerned entirely with David's reign, telling of his military success, his family, his friends and the loyalties and disloyalties and flaws that showed up in David's life. The book of 2 Samuel 13; 1-22 is a narrative showing serious weaknesses in David's relationship with his family members. The event in chapter 13 suggests that there is no cordial relationship between David and his family members. Amnon was lusting for his half-sister Tamar and yet David and Ahinoam, Amnon's mother could not notice it from his countenance. Unfortunately, it was Jonadab, Amnon's friend that was able to notice this problem from Amnon's countenance.

Suffice this to say that David's adulterous act and the murder of Uriah led to David's fall as a King. In this line of thought, Butler et al (2004, p.60) argues that; "David's adulterous act with Bathsheba and the murdering of Uriah "marked the beginning of the decline of David's family".

Summarily, the writer of 2 Samuel in a straight context coined the story of David's adulterous act with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah together with the incestuous act of Amnon with Tamar and the revenge of Absalom on Amnon to show David's failure as a king.

### **Structure of the Study Text**

2 Samuel 13: 3-5 shows the power and influence of peer group pleasure. This is because Jonadab used his wisdom to demonstrate that peers when given a pocket of chance can advice and in most case scenario, they give evil advice. For convenience, change of character shall be used to indicate and signal a new scene. Bar-Efrat supports this line of thought when he opines that "character participating in a narrative can be used to determine the structure" (Bar-Efrat, 1989). Therefore, in v 3-5, the character remained Amnon and Jonadab. Again, theme shall be used to signal a new scene. Apparently, v 3 describes carefully the identity of Jonadab and his relationship with Amnon. According to the text, Jonadab is a very wise man. However, they were cousins and Jonadab comes to his house every morning. Therefore v 3 could be termed "Jonadab's relationship with Amnon". V 4 begins with Jonadab's inquiry to discover Amnon's problem. Amnon reveals the cause of his ill feelings which is his lost for his sister Tamar. So v 4 is "called Jonadab's discovery of Amnon's ill feelings". In v 5, one notices another scene. This is because Jonadab offers him his evil advice. Apparently, v 5 could be termed, "Jonadab's evil Council". Summarily, in vv.3-5, Jonadab advised Amnon to lie down on his bed and pretend to be sick so that the king can send Tamar his victim to him.

### **A Close Reading of the Study text**

A good exegesis of a biblical text starts with the record of the book that contains the text under study. This is to find out the context and the situation that informed such book and its Christian tradition that informed its canon and acceptance as a sacred scripture. The canonicity of every biblical text implies that the biblical record has significance in terms of moral knowledge it portrays. Okenyi (2012) supports this truth when he maintained that "every record especially the Biblical record is not just for only record keeping but has a message to preserve for the knowledge and consumption of the future generations" (p.14). Following the same thread of thought, Susan Estrich (1987) argues that the history of Israel as recorded in the two books of Samuel has been refashioned in the light of divine purpose.

#### *Jonadab's Relationship with Amnon*

Jonadab is transliterated *yo'wn'ada* which is transliterated to the name Jehova-yəhowah meaning self-existence or eternity. It is from the root word *ha'ya'h* meaning to exist, that is "be" or "become" "came to pass". Amnon is a personal name. It is transliterated 'Amnon. In Hebrew, it means faithful. Jones (2001) in Okenyi (2013) writes that

it is from the root word-*aman* meaning to build up, to support, to foster as a parent or nurse, to be firm, to trust, or believe. In some areas, *aman* stands to mean sure, establish, continuance, steadfast. Jones further said that it appears

in causative and passive stems. For instance, in passive stem, it indicates that the subject is 'lasting' or 'enduring'. But in causative stem, it means 'to stand fast' or 'be fixed' in a 'spot'. It also connotes mental psychological certainty (p.44).

The fact that Amnon was so troubled and could not do anything to Tamar explains the introduction of Jonadab the son of David's brother Shimeah in verse 3. The name Jonadab is abbreviated from Jehonadab which means "Jahveh has freely given", as Jonathan means "Jahveh has given". Jonadab was a very wise man *'š hākām me'ôd* hence, he was employed to use his wisdom in this situation to help Amnon achieve his selfish drive.

רֵעַ *rē'a* is a noun common masculine singular absolute homonym which means friend, companion, fellow. Literarily, it means that Jonadab is Amnon's friend, companion. This has led Eze, (2017) to say that "Jonadab was at least Amnon's daily companion. He comes every morning because it was his custom to come every morning to his house" (p. 64).

#### *Jonadab's Discovery of Amnon's Ill Feelings*

Jonadab needed to have a holistic knowledge of the situation before he could proffer his suggestion. The Hebrew phrase *maddū'a 'atāh* with the nuance "why" "what is wrong or matter with you or for what reason is the matter with you" is a question that must be answered in order to give Jonadab the proper knowledge of the situation at hand. The effectiveness of his suggestion will depend on his knowledge of what is wrong with the king's son Amnon, hence the use of the phrase *maddū'a 'atāh* in verse 4. The understanding of the reason why Amnon was troubled which was his burning love for his half-sister Tamar as was clothed in Amnon's answer now gave Jonadab the appropriate condition to make his suggestion. Jonadab's knowledge of the law in Lev18:7-18, 20:19-21, Deut 27, 20-22 which prohibits Amnon to either marry or have any carnal knowledge of his sister must have guided Jonadab's suggestion.

#### *Jonadab's Evil Council*

Jonadab was a wise man *'š hākām me'ôd*. Apparently, he was employed to use his wisdom in this situation to help Amnon achieve his selfish motive.

Amnon was younger than Jonadab. Providing the age fact of Amnon, Rudd (2016) argues that "since Amnon was the first born while David was king in Hebron (starting in 1010 BC), he was likely born in 1010 BC. Amnon was 18 years old in 990 BC and this is the best choice of time for when he raped Tamar his sister" (p.7). Arguing from this optic, one will understand the position that minors are more likely to act violently if not properly guided.

However, Jonadab now guided Amnon to gain his selfish intention through violence as that was the only way to satisfy his selfish desire. According to Lange (2004, p.72) "Amnon is not only strengthened in his lust desire but is shown a way whereby he may attain his end by guile and violence". The Hebrew hiphal verb *hithallô* which means to make oneself sick or to be weak describes Amnon's pretence in order to convince his father that he is sick. Therefore, Jonadab advised Amnon to make himself sick and lay down on his bed so that when the king comes to see him he will demand for Tamar to come and bake cake for him. The Hebrew common plural verb *veākalti* which means to cause somebody to eat, or to eat because of

somebody was employed by Jonadab to confuse David the King to send Tamar to Amnon's services. Jonadab's advice to feign himself sick is effective because David will not refuse his sick son such a request since it is meant to make him well. Jonadab pretended to be a good friend but failed in every aspect to live up to the expectation hence instead of using his subtlety to divert Amnon from this horrid wickedness, by recommending some other person to him, whom he might lawfully marry, he instead helped and provided the means by which this evil will be realized.

### **Contextualization of the Pericope**

Adolescent is variedly defined as "the transitory period the individual passes through in his/her growth from childhood to adulthood" (Adeniyi and Kolawole, 2015, par.1). During this period, we interact with so many stimuli within our immediate environment. Interestingly, those wide ranges of experiences go a long way in forming our abilities, feelings, attitudes to mention but a few. Of importance is that we start shifting from family bond and start embracing a wider range of learning which comes in most cases from peer groups. Peer groups are those people who surround us from adolescence till old age. And we interact with them more closely than close relations especially on esoteric and obscure issues which we cannot discuss with our parents or blood relation. In this line of thought, (Anne K. et al 2014. p3) argues that "we seek and maintain a number of dyadic relationship with peers, such as with a close friend, an acquaintance, a colleague, a fellow-student, or a neighbour".

Because this period is a transitory stage from family to peer group, it is a very important stage in determining what the child will be in life. (Adams 2006, & Schneider, 2010 in Adeniyi M A, V A Kolawole 2015, par.1) in their research on adolescent concluded that the period consists of pressure which may be either internal or external to the young adult... it is also a time of self-definition for the young individual.

At this transitional stage, the child is gradually leaving the family factor to embrace peer-group hegemony. Accordingly, Eze (2017) averred that: the family is the first social contact of a child and immediately after the family the child begins to form behavior that is acceptable to his age-group but in most cases socially not acceptable. Toeing on this line of thought, psychologists accept that the child is in danger at this stage because his brain is still maturing and the result is that he may make wrong judgments that may hurt him in future. This is in fact, the sentiment that Laurence, (1998) in National network for child care (2016.p.76) shares when he notes that:

the brain is still maturing during the ten years, with reasoning and judgment still developing into the early to mid 20s. This means that not only are teens susceptible to peer pressure because of their lack of social maturity, but it indicates a biological reason teens do not always make good choices where their friends are concerned. Even small amounts of negative peer pressure during these years when the brain is still developing can lead at-risk teenagers to delinquent behaviors.

However, "the role of peer groups and peer relationship in personality development are a pervasive aspect of our social life" (Anne K. et al, 2014 p.3). This is because; they influence our behavioural development to a great extent.

Socialization theory is one of the theories that explain the influence of peers in personality development. This theory posits “that with children’s advancing age, outside-the-home socialization that take place in peer groups becomes an increasingly important determinant of adolescents’ personality development” (Harris, 1995) in (Anne K et al, 2014 p.3).

In recent times, adolescents spend more time with their peer-group more than their family members. This is commonly attributed to the fact that mothers are more involved in take up jobs which limit their time with their children. Accordingly, (Adeniyi and Kolawole, 2015 par.2) opines that “changes in family roles that forced women into paid jobs have greatly reduced the quality time families spend together thus making peer groups a viable alternative for the young individuals”. They therefore conclude that “adolescent spend far more time in the exclusive company of their peers than their counter parts did in the past” (par.4). While (Arnet, 1992; De Vries et al., 1995; Allen et al., 2005; Clark & Loheac, 2007) in Adeniyi M A, V A Kolawole (2015), note that peer group influences have become increasingly pronounced and studies have shown that adolescents were more likely to increase behaviours that receives peer group approval. Peer group provides adaptation to adolescents. This is because, this stage concedes with other maturational characteristics like body changes. Adolescents often depend on their peer groups to understand such developments since their parents are not readily available and even when around are concerned with other issues or the children as a result of parental gap have developed better trust and confidence among their groups. Supportably, Schneider (2010) notes that becoming a peer group member meets many adolescents concerns about social expectations such as developing independence from their parents, learning, decision-making skills and acting on their own. Suffice this to say that parents also see peer influence as a myth hence they lazily conclude that they have little or nothing to do about it. In this line of thought, (Schneider, 2010), averred that parents perceive peer influence as a clog in the wheel of socializing their children desirably.

Others see peer influence positively and support that they can provide motivation to the youths. Among these are You (2011), who notes that support from peers gives adolescent students a sense of motivation which enables them to see the importance of pursuing academic success. This is because adolescents who are accepted by their peers are more likely to be psychologically healthier and self-confident than those rejected by their peers (Allen et al., 2005). In Amnon’s context, Amnon’s success in raping Tamar is attributed to two external factors. Namely; parental gap and evil council of Absalom vis a vis internal factor which is the beauty of Tamar, her virginity and Amnon’s lust. Kiran-Esen (2012), reports that; significantly negative relationship between peer pressure and self-efficacy expectation (social and moral) in adolescents and that academic self-efficacy was higher in adolescents who were experiencing low level of peer pressure.

In situations of broken homes or homes where there are parental gaps, children resort to peer-groups for succor. Teens that have difficult family situations often turn to their friends to replace lost relationships. Peer groups can give a teen a sense of belonging during times of family stress, like separation, divorce or death. If the group a teen becomes a part of is involved with drugs, alcohol or violence, he is more likely to take part in these activities. According to David (2001.p.13) in National Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (2016), a psychiatry professor at the University Of Vermont College Of Medicine opines that, “teens are more likely than adults to act impulsively or on instinct when they are confronted with stressful or emotional decisions, and are less likely to fully understand the consequences

of their actions". In reference to the context of 2 Samuel 13 verses 3, Jonadab quickly discovered Amnon's problem and found a gap between David and his children. He then went ahead to exploit the opportunity to repair the lost emotion wrongly. This means that peer group influence can lead the child into barbaric actions like rape and other related social vices. Supportably, Omotere (2011) finds out that as children grow and move to adulthood, involvement with and influence of peer identification increase as modeling value of the family decreases. In most cases peer tends to replace the modeling value of the family context during early childhood. "in peer group, most acceptance form, the peer groups in (sic) healthy in forming of age arbiter, by which children grasp negotiating skills and learn to live with hostility and to solve problems in a social context" (Harris, 1995, Hartyp, 1983).

Despite so much change in today's society, the fundamental task of growing up still endure to find a place in a sense of belonging to identify and solve tasks that are generally recognized as having values and therefore can earn respect by acquiring skills to cope with them to acquire a sense of worth as a person, and to develop reliable and predictable relationship with other people especially a few close friends and loved ones. They learn from peer on how to cooperate and socialize according to group norms and group-sanctioned modes of behaviour. Peer group can influence what the child values, know, wear, eat and learn (Selvam, 2018).

### **Application of the study text to family situations**

A close look at the study text reveals some affinity with family situation. The immediate context of the study text is King David's adulterous act with Beersheba and the subsequent murder of Uriah. This implies that children are more likely to repeat the same sin as their father. In this line of thought, Harmon (1939, p.1108) notes that "David's inability to discipline his own sons was vastly weakened by his own wrongdoing. He was no longer in a position to enforce the moral code without fear or favour". He could not condemn Amnon, he could neither condemn nor forgive Absalom. Harmon (1939, p.1109) explains that "this is because sin flows through the blood". In verse 21, it is explained that since David committed the same sin of adultery and murder against Beersheba and Uriah respectively he could no longer punish Amnon nor Absalom for their rape and murder.( Cf. 2 Samuel 12;11-12). It is probably that the sin of David is flowing through his blood as Prophet Nathan predicted that God would raise trouble within David's house.

David's inability to discover Amnon's countenance is vastly dictated by his commitment to the royal duty especially erecting a permanent home for God. He thought so much about building a house for Yahweh. He might have been so engrossed with this plan that he could not pay attention to his family. Rudd (2016) elaborates this argument thus:

During the entire 22 years, David appears to be pre-occupied with plans of building the temple to the neglect of the common everyday needs of the people he rules. Here we have a great spiritual king who, like some preachers, gets so focused on "spiritual things" that they neglect and lose their own families. David was building the Temple and so failed to pay attention to his children (p.5).

David lost contact and was completely out of touch with his people because he mistakenly thought that focusing all his time and attention hatching plans to build a temple was more important.

Suffice this to say that, David realized the prophecy of Nathan. This must have restrained him to discipline his children because he knows that what is happening to him is the fruition purpose of Nathan's prophecy.

All these parental flaws gave chance for Jonadab to come in and exploit the opportunity wrongly. It is on record that Jonadab had equal chance to stop Amnon from his evil intention but he decided to help him realize it through violent means.

### **Recommendations**

- The study text reveals that King David had priorities for his kingdom more than his family. It is therefore recommended that parents should dovetail their take up job's and parental responsibility.
- Parents should be very close to their children in order to learn their countenance. They should be in a better position to understand the maturational developments and characteristics in their children more than their peer groups and to move fast to advise and educate them rightly. It is part of their parental skills and responsibility.
- Parents should demonstrate more subtlety by knowing the type of friends their children go out with and to sanction or reject the bad ones if the need be.
- Minors should be more disciplined in choosing their friends. They should insist on confiding on their parents on issues difficult to them rather than relying on peer-group to repair their delinquencies.

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