

POTIPHAR'S WIFE IN DAVID'S LOOKING GLASS

READING 2 SAMUEL 11–12 AS A
REFLECTION STORY OF GENESIS 39

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Summary

Though the parallels between Joseph and David have been well noted, the numerous literary links between Joseph's exemplary behaviour with Potiphar's wife on the one hand and David's disgraceful behaviour with Bathsheba on the other has gone by largely unnoticed. In this article, we analyse 2 Samuel 11–12 as a reflection story of Genesis 39, noting the numerous parallels and striking contrasts. Given the many allusions to Joseph in 1 Samuel, the reader expects to see only Joseph's reflection in David's mirror in 2 Samuel 11–12, but finds Potiphar's wife looking back at David as well.

1. Introduction

The Joseph Narrative occupies a disproportionately large portion of the Patriarchal Narratives. Not only is Joseph's literary presence felt within the Pentateuchal Narrative,¹ but other OT books also contain allusions to the story of Jacob's beloved younger son. Notable examples include the books of Esther and Daniel, with allusions also noted in Jeremiah and Ezekiel.²

¹ Jon D. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: The Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993): 144 lists eight literary and thematic parallels between Moses and Joseph.

² Jonathan Grossman, "'Dynamic Analogies' in the Book of Esther", *VT* 59, no. 3 (2009): 394-414; Benno Jacob, *Das Buch Genesis* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 2000): 1048.

A wide-ranging body of biblical scholars has also noted a literary relationship between the Joseph story and the David Narrative.³ Both narratives share some words and phrases found nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible.⁴ Though much has been written about the strong literary parallels between David and Joseph, it appears that the literary connections between 2 Samuel 11–12 with Genesis 39 have gone largely unnoticed.⁵

In this article, I argue that the story of David's adultery with Bathsheba is a reflection story of Joseph's refusal to commit adultery with Potiphar's wife.⁶ The numerous similarities between David and Joseph in 1 Samuel set the literary stage for interpreting his fall in 2 Samuel. The parallels are drawn deliberately to emphasise key differences between these two biblical figures.

³ Jacob, *Das Buch Genesis*, 1048-49; Robert Alter, *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999): 267; James M. Hamilton, 'Was Joseph a Type of the Messiah? Tracing the Typological Identification between Joseph, David, and Jesus', *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 12, no. 4 (2008): 52-77; Craig Y. S. Ho, 'The Stories of the Family Troubles of Judah and David: A Study of Their Literary Links', *Vetus Testamentum* 49, no. 4 (1999): 514-31; Peter J. Link, Jr and Matthew Y. Emerson, 'Search for the Second Adam: Typological Connections between Adam, Joseph, Mordecai, and Daniel', *SBJT* 21, no. 1 (2017): 123-44; Gary A. Rendsburg, 'David and His Circle in Genesis XXXVIII', *VT* 36, no. 4 (1986): 438-46. Jacob, *Das Buch Genesis*, 1049 provides a comprehensive list of literary connections between Genesis and 2 Sam. 11–15. Hamilton, 'Was Joseph a Type', also offers a helpful list of parallels between David and Joseph.

⁴ A fairly comprehensive list of shared language and parallel plot structure is provided in the second section of this paper, 'Parallels Between the David and Joseph Narratives'.

⁵ Notable exceptions include Jacob, *Das Buch Genesis*, 1048-49; Rendsburg, 'David and His Circle', 439-40; Lothar Ruppert, *Die Josephserzählung der Genesis: Ein Beitrag zur Theologie der Pentateuchquellen* (München: Kösel, 1965): 215-16.

⁶ I am well aware of the difficulties in determining the directionality of literary influence, particularly in light of the arguments in favour of identifying the Joseph story as a novella from the Persian period. One might also argue the authors of both stories belonged to a common circle rather than for any specific literary dependence. Admittedly, it would be easier to avoid diachronic pitfalls through a synchronic intertextual reading, but I believe the diachronic approach offers a more satisfying interpretation of the data. In his discussion of the determination of the direction of influence, Jeffrey M. Leonard, 'Identifying Inner-Biblical Allusions: Psalm 78 as a Test Case', *JBL* no. 2 (2008): 260 notes the necessity of considering which text is capable of producing the other. While it is difficult to conceive of the invention of a story whose hero (Joseph) represents tribal affiliations (Ephraim and Manasseh) which were irrelevant to the exilic and post-exilic royal expectations (see Ezek. 37:19-24; Ps. 78:67-72) as an intentional foil to the stories about David in 1 and 2 Samuel, it makes more sense to suppose that David is being compared to a figure whose virtues were well known to the original readers. But even if my diachronic assumptions are rejected, a reversal in directionality and/or a synchronic reading still results in similar conclusions about David's adultery in light of Joseph's refusal to commit adultery.

I want to begin this paper by defining a reflection story since awareness of what this literary device is and how it works makes this particular reflection story all the more obvious and easier to analyse. In the second section, I briefly list the literary parallels between David and Joseph. In the third section, I offer evidence for identifying 2 Samuel 11–12 as a reflection story. In the fourth and final section, I offer some thoughts on the meaning of the inverted images.

2. Reflection Stories

Before we define a reflection story, it is important to say what it is not. A reflection story must not be mistaken for Robert Alter's concept of 'Type Scenes'.⁷ A type-scene in the biblical narrative is a recognised or expected pattern for various types of narrative events, such as a 'finding a wife at a well' or a 'lying about a wife in a foreign land.' Type-scenes in the biblical narrative are much like the expected literary components one would find in the various forms of Psalms (lament psalms, thanksgiving psalms, royal psalms, etc.) and help the reader identify conventional plot-structure patterns.

Reflection stories, part of a broader class of what some scholars call narrative analogies,⁸ literary analogies,⁹ narrative typology,¹⁰ and narrative patterning,¹¹ have received much attention.¹² All narrative

⁷ Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic, 1981): 47-62.

⁸ Joshua Berman, 'Establishing Narrative Analogy in Biblical Literature', *Beit Mikra* 53, no. 1 (2008): 31-46 (Hebrew).

⁹ Seth D. Postell, 'Abram as Israel, Israel as Abram: Literary Analogy as Macro-Structural Strategy in the Torah', *Tyndale Bulletin* 67, no. 2 (2016): 161-82.

¹⁰ John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1992): 37.

¹¹ Iain W. Provan, 'The Messiah in the Books of Kings' in *The Lord's Anointed: Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts*, ed. Philip Satterthwaite, Richard Hess, and Gordon Wenham (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995): 74.

¹² Yair Zakovitch, 'Between the Image of the Threshing Floor in the Scroll of Ruth and the Act of Lot's Daughters', *Annual for the Bible and for the Study of the Ancient Near East* 3 (1978/9): 28-33 (Hebrew); Yair Zakovitch, 'Reflection Story: Another Dimension for the Valuation of Characters in Biblical Narrative', *Tarbiz* 54 (1984/5): 165-76 (Hebrew); Yair Zakovitch, *Reader in the Land of Reflections* (Raanana: Hakibuts hameuhad, 2001) (Hebrew); Amnon Shapira, *Jewish Religious Anarchism*, Samaria district (Ariel: Ariel University Publishing, 2015): 139-68 (Hebrew); Roni Goldstein, *The Life of Jeremiah: The Course of the Tradition Concerning the Prophet of the Destruction until the End of the Biblical Era* (Jerusalem: Bialik, 2013): 228-29 (Hebrew); Amnon Bazak, 'The Choice of Jerusalem: "Mirror Narrative" Serving the Description of the Entering of the Land' in *On the Way of the Fathers: Thirty Years for*

analogies, including reflection stories, are stories which contain unique/common language and parallel plot-structure.¹³ Often, the meaning of a particular narrative analogy is to portray a biblical character or event as a ‘new so-and-so’ or a ‘new such-and-such’. For example, the account of Moses’ rescue from a watery death in an ark (Exod. 2:3; תִּבְרָה *tebā*) appears to portray Moses as a new Noah who,

the Yaakov Herzog College: A Collection of Articles in the Topics of Torah and Education (Alon Shvut: Tvunot, 2000/1) (Hebrew); Amnon Shapira, *Initial Democracy in the Bible: Early Foundations of Democratic Values* (Raanana: Hakibutz hameuhad, 2009): 219-39 (Hebrew); Sarah Ben-Reuven, ‘The Story of the Rape of Dina and its Reflections’, *Bet Hamikra* 43/3-4 (1997/8): 319-22 (Hebrew); Yeshayahu Leibovitz, ‘The Trial and the Fear of God in the Book of Job’ in *Job: In the Bible, in Contemplation and in Arts* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1995): 34-42 (Hebrew); Moshe Gan, ‘The Book of Esther in the Light of the Story of Joseph in Egypt’, *Tarbiz* 31 (1963/4): 144-47 (Hebrew); Yaira Amit, ‘And Why Were the Ancient Mothers Barren?’ in *From the Beginnings of Genesis* (Tel Aviv: Yediot Aharonot, 1999): 127-37 (Hebrew); Naftali H. Toqer, ‘Examination of a Few Composition Principles in the Biblical Narrative Work’, *Bet Mikra* 22/1 (1976/7): 46-63 (Hebrew); Jonathan D. Safren, ‘The Binding of Isaac and the Ass of Balaam’, *Bet Mikra* 38/4 (1992/3): 368-75 (Hebrew); Atalia Brenner, ‘Esther in the Land of Reflection: On the Symmetry and Doublings in the Scroll of Esther’, *Bet Mikra* 26/3 (1980/1): 267-78 (Hebrew); Israel Katz, *Between Two Kings: Double Stories in the Book of Samuel* (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2005) (Hebrew); Amnon Shapira, ‘On Inner-Biblical Exposition: The Story of the Sons of Gad and of the Sons of Ruben (in Numbers 32 and Joshua 22) as a Reflection Story’, *Studies in Scripture and Exposition* 8 (2007/8): 47-68 (Hebrew); Yehoshua Priel, ‘Joshua and Exodus: Reflection Stories’, *Morashtenu* 16 (2004/5): 37-58 (Hebrew); Amnon Shapira, ‘Reflection Story: The Esther Scroll as a Correction of the Amalek-Parasha’, *Annual for Jewish Studies* 14 (2003/4): 36-48 (Hebrew); Nissim Elyaqim, ‘Joseph: A Reflection of Solomon and His Wisdom Work’, *Moreshet Yaaqov* 6 (1991/2): 19-29 (Hebrew); Jonathan Milo, ‘Joseph’s Story and the Scroll of Esther as a “Reflection Story”’: Structure and Purpose’, *Kaet* 1 (2013/4): 38-47 (Hebrew). There has been very little published on reflection stories in English. Two notable exceptions, both by Israeli scholars, are Yair Zakovitch, ‘Through the Looking Glass: Reflections/Inversions of Genesis Stories in the Bible’, *Biblical Interpretation* 1 (1993): 139-52 and Yitzhak Peleg, *Going Up and Going Down: A Key to Interpreting Jacob’s Dream (Genesis 28:10-22)*, trans. Betty Rozen (London: Bloomsbury, 2015). In addition, Megan Warner, ‘What If They’re Foreign? Inner-Legal Exegesis in the Ancestral Narratives’, 68 in *The Politics of the Ancestors: Exegetical and Historical Perspectives on Genesis 12–36*, ed. Mark G. Brett and Jakob Wöhrle (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018) posits the use of reflection stories by biblical editors for cases of ‘legal clashes and conundrums in the ancestral narratives’.

¹³ For a list of criteria for literary analogies, see Moshe Garsiel, *The First Book of Samuel: A Literary Study of Comparative Structures, Analogies and Parallels* (Ramat-Gan: Revivim, 1985): 25. Relying on the work of the Russian structuralist Vladimir Propp, Berman, ‘Establishing Narrative Analogy in Biblical Literature’, 38-39 argues that shared language is not enough to establish a literary connection. Rather, the shared words must also serve identical functions in the corresponding stories. Berman, though generally affirming of Yair Zakovitch’s work on reflection stories, actually takes him to task for not providing explicit methodological criteria for establishing intertextual links. Berman’s refining of the criteria for identifying literary analogies provides a very helpful methodological safeguard.

like Moses, was also a covenant-mediator who was rescued from a watery death in an ark (Gen. 6–9; תִּבְיָה *tebâ*).

In his book *Through the Looking Glass*¹⁴ Yair Zakovitch provides a definition and in-depth analysis of reflection stories in the Bible and extracanonical literature. Reflection stories, according to Zakovitch, are ‘opposite stories, stories in which a situation, or the actions of a character, are crafted by way of contrast to the situation or the actions of a character from an already existing story’.¹⁵ Zakovitch explains:

The biblical author designs a situation or character as an antithesis to another situation or another figure and his actions. This new creation arouses in the reader unambiguous associations with its source; and with this, the similarity between the new story and its source is like the similarity which is between an image and its reflection in the looking glass. The reflection reverses the lines of the appearance of the original story. And now, the reader who pays attention to the intentional link between the two stories – the original and its reflection – will discern that the new situation or the new character are designed as an opposite to those which served for them as an example, and the reader will evaluate the new on the basis of its comparison to the old.¹⁶

While every reflection story is also narrative analogy, not every narrative analogy is reflection story. It is essential, therefore, to note when a narrative analogy is a reflection story since the primary point of a reflection story is directly tied to the inverted or opposite images highlighted employing the intended parallels. A failure to identify a particular narrative analogy as a reflection story leads interpreters astray since exegetical conclusions will be focused on the similarities rather than the inverted images. Thus far, interpreters have been so focused on the parallels between Joseph and David they may have missed the forest for the trees. The primary question, at least in the case

¹⁴ Yair Zakovitch, *Through the Looking Glass: Reflection Stories in the Bible* (Tel Aviv: HaKibbutz HaMeuhad, 1995). To the best of my knowledge, this Modern Hebrew book has not been translated into English.

¹⁵ Zakovitch, *Through the Looking Glass*, 9. Translation my own; all translations in this article are my own unless stated otherwise.

¹⁶ Zakovitch, *Through the Looking Glass*, 13. Zakovitch classifies reflection stories into three categories: (1) Punishment of the Reflected Character (e.g. Jacob being mistaken for Esau vs. mistaking Leah for Rachel; Gen. 27:35; 29:25); (2) Judgement in Favour of the Reflected Character (e.g. Ruth's behaviour toward Boaz vs. Lot's daughters' behaviour toward their father; Gen. 19:30-38; Ruth 3); and (3) Judgement Against the Reflected Character (e.g. Moses' intercession for Israel at Mount Horeb vs. Elijah's condemnation of Israel at Mount Horeb; Exod. 34:28; 1 Kgs 19:8). The story of David and Bathsheba falls under Zakovitch's third category: a judgement against the reflected character.

of the David and Bathsheba Narrative, is not ‘How is David like Joseph?’ but rather ‘How is David not like Joseph?’ Before we notice the differences, we must first begin with the parallels.

3. Parallels Between the David and Joseph Narratives

As noted earlier, a wide range of scholars recognises a literary relationship between the Joseph story and the David Narrative.¹⁷ The point of this section is not to unearth new connections per se, but rather to build a case for additional allusions to the Joseph story in 2 Samuel 11–12 based on the volume and recurrence of echoes to the Joseph Narrative elsewhere in the David Narrative.¹⁸ Scholars generally point to both shared language¹⁹ and parallel plot-structure.²⁰ For the sake of brevity and convenience, I will use a table of comparison which includes both shared language and parallel plot-structures.²¹

Joseph and David are young lads who shepherd flocks (Gen. 37:2, 12; 1 Sam. 16:11; 17:34). Genesis 37:2 and 1 Samuel 16:11, 17:34 are the only instances in the Hebrew Bible where the phrase ‘shepherding (masculine singular participle) the flock’ (with a *bet* preposition) is found.²² And though Genesis 37:12 refers to Joseph’s brothers shepherding their father’s

¹⁷ For an extensive list of connections between the Patriarchal Narratives and 2 Samuel 11–15, see Walter Brueggemann, ‘Life and Death in Tenth Century Israel’, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 40, no. 1 (1972): 96-109; David McLain Carr, *Reading the Fractures of Genesis: Historical and Literary Approaches* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996): 249-50; Hamilton, ‘Was Joseph a Type’; Ho, ‘Family Troubles’; Jacob, *Das Buch Genesis*, 1049; Alan T. Levenson, *Joseph: Portraits Through the Ages* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2016): 106; Jon D. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son*, 145; Rendsburg, ‘David and His Circle’, 438-46; Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation* (The JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989): 264; Fokkelen van Dijk-Hemmes, ‘Tamar and the Limits of Patriarchy: Between Rape and Seduction (2 Samuel 13 and Genesis 38)’ in *Anti-Covenant: Counter Reading Women’s Lives in the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Mieke Bal (Bible and Literature; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989): 135-56.

¹⁸ Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989): 30.

¹⁹ Hamilton, ‘Was Joseph a Type’, 54.

²⁰ Hamilton, ‘Was Joseph a Type’ prefers the phrase ‘sequential event correspondences’, though in exegetical terms we are dealing with texts and their plot-structures rather than the events themselves.

²¹ Though many of these parallels were discovered independently, Hamilton’s article is both thorough and enlightening.

²² Hamilton, ‘Was Joseph a Type’, 55.

flocks, the phrase ‘to shepherd the flock of his/their father’ in this verse and 1 Samuel 17:15 are almost identical with the sole exception of the pronominal suffix ending (‘their father’ vs ‘his father’), and this specific syntactical construction is found only in these two places.²³

Joseph, seventeen years old, was shepherding [הַיָּה רֹעֶה *hāyā rō‘ē*] with his brothers the sheep [בַּצֹּאֵן *baṣṣō‘n*]. And he was a lad [נֶעֱרַר *na‘ar*]. (Gen. 37:2)

And his brothers went [וַיֵּלְכוּ *wayyelkū*] to shepherd the flock of their father [לְרִעוֹת אֶת-צֹאֵן] in אֲבֵיהֶם *lir‘ōt ‘et-ṣō‘n ‘ābihem*] in Shechem. (Gen. 37:12)

Joseph and David, younger yet divinely chosen brothers (Gen. 37:5-11; 1 Sam. 16:6-13), are first addressed by and then sent out by their fathers to enquire of the *shalom* of their elder brothers (Gen. 37:13-14; 1 Sam. 17:17-18, 22).

And Israel said to Joseph, ‘Are not your brothers shepherding in Shechem. Go, and let me send you to them.’ And he said to him, ‘I am here.’ And he said to him, ‘Go please and see the *shalom* of your brothers [אֶחָיו שְׁלוֹם *‘aḥēkā*], and the *shalom* of the flock, and bring word back to me ...’ (Gen. 37:13-14)

And Samuel said to Jesse, ‘Is that all the lads [הַנְּעָרִים *hann‘ārim*]?’ And he said, there is yet another little one, and see he is shepherding the sheep [רֹעֶה בַּצֹּאֵן *rō‘ē baṣṣō‘n*].’ (1 Sam. 16:11)

And David said to Saul, ‘Your servant was shepherding [רֹעֶה הַיָּה *rō‘ē hāyā*] for his father the flocks [לְאָבִיו בַּצֹּאֵן *le‘ābiw baṣṣō‘n*]. (1 Sam. 17:34)

And David was going [וַיֵּלֶךְ *hōlek*] back and forth from Saul to shepherd the flock of his father [לְרִעוֹת אֶת-צֹאֵן אָבִיו *lir‘ōt ‘et-ṣō‘n ‘ābiw*]. (1 Sam. 17:15)

And Jesse said to David, his son, ‘Take please to your brothers ... and inspect the *shalom* of your brothers ...’ And he came and enquired regarding the *shalom* of his brothers [לְאָחָיו לְשָׁלוֹם *le‘əḥāyw lešālôm*]. (1 Sam. 17:17-18, 22)

²³ Hamilton, ‘Was Joseph a Type’, 55.

The older brothers, when they see their younger brother, speak of him with a very derogatory and depersonalised pronoun: ‘this one’ (Gen. 37:19; 1 Sam. 17:28). Though this pronoun is quite common, it serves identical functions in the corresponding stories, thereby strengthening the case of intentional allusion.²⁴

<p>And each man said to his brother, ‘Look, this [הַלְּזֶה <i>hallāzē</i>] possessor of dreams is coming.’ (Gen. 37:19)</p>	<p>And Eliab, his big brother, heard when he was speaking with the men, and Eliab burned with anger at David and said, ‘Why this [לְמַה־זֶּה <i>lommâ-zē</i>], you came down?’ (1 Sam. 17:28)</p>
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Joseph and David are chosen to serve a king (Pharaoh/Saul) because they are ‘discerning men’, the only individuals in the entire Hebrew Bible described this way (Gen. 41:33, 39; 1 Sam. 16:18). In this same verse describing David in terms reserved only for Joseph, we have also told that ‘the Lord is with him [David]’ (1 Sam. 16:18; 18:12), the very feature that also causes Joseph to prosper in Egypt supernaturally (Gen. 39:2-3, 21, 23).

<p>And now, let Pharaoh choose a discerning man [נְבוֹן אִישׁ <i>’iš nāḥōn</i>] and wise, and set him in authority over the land of Egypt. (Gen. 41:33)</p>	<p>And one of the young lads answered and said, ‘Behold, I saw that Jesse the Bethlehemite has a son, who knows to play and is a mighty man of strength and a man [אִישׁ <i>’iš</i>] of war and discerning [נְבוֹן <i>nāḥōn</i>] of word, and a man [אִישׁ] of form and the Lord is with him.’ (1 Sam. 16:18)</p>
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Joseph and David are described as ‘beautiful of appearance’, the only two men in the Hebrew Bible described this way (Gen. 39:6; 1 Sam. 17:42) since this is a description reserved elsewhere only for females (Gen. 12:11; 29:17; 41:2; 2 Sam. 14:27; Esth. 2:7).

<p>And Joseph was beautiful in form and beautiful in appearance [וַיְהִי מְרֵאָה <i>wipē mar’ē</i>]. (Gen. 39:6)</p>	<p>For he was a lad, and reddish with a beautiful appearance [וַיְהִי מְרֵאָה <i>y’pē mar’ē</i>]. (1 Sam. 17:42)</p>
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Joseph and David are the only two individuals in the Hebrew Bible who are

²⁴ See n.14.

singled out as being thirty years of age, and in both instances, it marks the start of their rule (Gen. 41:46; 2 Sam. 5:4).

<p>And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood [בְּן־שְׁלֹשִׁים שָׁנָה בָּ] <i>ben-š^elōšim šānā b^e]</i> before Pharaoh king of Egypt ... (Gen. 41:46)</p>	<p>And David was thirty years old when he reigned [בְּן־שְׁלֹשִׁים שָׁנָה בָּ] ... <i>ben-š^elōšim šānā ... b^e]</i>, he reigned forty years. (2 Sam. 5:4)</p>
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Joseph and David are hated by their kinsmen (brothers/king) who use foreigners (Ishmaelites/Philistines) to harm the personal object of their hatred so as not to lay a hand upon them (Gen. 37:27; 1 Sam. 18:17). Hamilton notes that these are the only occurrences of the phrase ‘let not our hands be upon him’ in the Hebrew Bible.²⁵

<p>Come let us sell him to the Ishmaelites and our hand let it not be upon him [וַיִּדְנֹנוּ אֶל־תְּהִי־בִּוֵי] <i>w^yādēnū ‘al-t^ehi-b^o]</i> ... (Gen. 37:27)</p>	<p>And Saul said, ‘Let not my hand be upon him [וְאֶל־תְּהִי יָדִי בּוֹ] <i>‘al-t^ehi yādi bō]</i>, and let the Philistines’ hand be upon him.’ (1 Sam. 18:17)</p>
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In addition to the textual links with a shared language and parallel plot-structures, there are also several parallels between Joseph and David lacking linguistic correspondences (shared language). For instance, both men are endowed with the Spirit (Gen. 41:38; 1 Sam. 16:13). Both men are successful because the Lord is with them (Gen. 39:2-3, 21, 23; 1 Sam. 16:18; 18:12). Both men are loved by Israel; in the former case by the patriarch Israel, and in the latter case by the nation Israel (Gen. 37:3; 1 Sam. 18:16).

Not only are there linguistic correspondences which include parallel plot structures linking David with Joseph, but there are some additional linguistic correspondences which appear only in the Joseph and David Narratives.

In the Joseph narrative, Jacob mourns many days for his son Joseph. In the David Narrative, David mourns all the days for his son Absalom (Gen. 37:34; 2 Sam. 13:37). These are the only two places in the Hebrew Bible where it says ‘and he mourned for his son’.

And Jacob tore his garments and And Absalom fled and went to

²⁵ Hamilton, ‘Was Joseph a Type’, 56-57.

put sack upon his waist, and he mourned for his son many days [וַיִּתְאַבֵּל עַל-בְּנוֹ יָמִים רַבִּים] wayyit'abbel 'al-b'no yānim rabbim]. (Gen. 37:34)

Talmi, son of Amihud, the king of Geshur. And he mourned for his son all the days. [וַיִּתְאַבֵּל עַל-בְּנוֹ כָּל-הַיָּמִים] wayyit'abbel 'al-b'no kol-hayyānim]. (2 Sam. 13:37)

Joseph and David's daughter Tamar are the only two people in the Hebrew Bible who don arm-length tunics (Gen. 37:3; 2 Sam. 13:18). And in both cases, the arm-length tunics are damaged because of crimes perpetrated by the siblings of those who wear the tunic (Gen. 37:31; 2 Sam. 13:14, 18).

And Israel loved Joseph more than all of his sons because he was a son from old age, and he made him an arm-length tunic [כְּתֹנֶת פָּטִים] k'etōnet passim]. (Gen. 37:3)

And upon her was an arm-length tunic [כְּתֹנֶת פָּטִים] k'etōnet passim] ... (2 Sam. 13:18)

Sexual indecency in the Joseph–Potiphar's wife and Amnon–Tamar narratives are described as 'this terrible evil'; in the former case it is used to describe an act of adultery that Joseph did not do and in the latter case to describe an act of incest that Amnon did do (Gen. 39:9; 2 Sam. 13:16).

There is no one greater than me in this house, and he did not withhold from me anything except you since you are his wife. And how can I do [אֶעֱשֶׂה] 'e'šē] this great evil and sin against God [הָרָעָה הַגְּדוֹלָה הַזֹּאת] hārā'ā haggēdōlā hazzō'it]? (Gen. 39:9)

And she said to him, 'Do not – this great evil [הָרָעָה הַגְּדוֹלָה הַזֹּאת] hārā'ā haggēdōlā hazzō'it] is worse than the other you did to me [עֲשִׂיתָ] 'āsītō] –send me away ...' (2 Sam. 13:16)

The Joseph and the David Narratives are the only two places in the Hebrew Bible where the character commands everyone, except for his siblings, to leave the room (Gen. 45:1; 2 Sam. 13:9). Both clauses are identical in Hebrew. In the former case, Joseph can no longer control his emotions for his brothers; in the latter case, Amnon can no longer control his passion for his sister.

And Joseph could no longer contain himself in front of all those standing before him, so he called out, 'Remove every man

And she took the pan and poured it out before him, and he refused to eat. And Amnon said, 'Remove every man from before me' [הוֹצִיאֵנִי]

from before me' [הוֹצִיאוּ כְּל־אִישׁ מִפְּנֵי מֶלֶךְ *hōši'û kol-'iš me'ālay*], and no one was standing with him from before him. (2 Sam. 13:9) when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. (Gen. 45:1)

There are only two places in the Hebrew Bible where it says, 'And he changed his garments, and he went': in the story of Joseph as he left the prison in Egypt and in the story of David after the death of his first child with Bathsheba (Gen. 41:14; 2 Sam. 12:20).

<p>And Pharaoh sent for and called Joseph, and they brought him quickly from the pit. And he shaved and changed his garments and went [וַיִּבְאֵם וַיַּחַלְףוּ שְׂמֹלֹתָיו וַיֵּצֵאוּ מִן הַבְּיֹרָה] to Pharaoh. (Gen. 41:14)</p>	<p>And David got up from the ground and washed and anointed himself and changed his garments and went [וַיִּבְאֵם וַיַּחַלְףוּ שְׂמֹלֹתָיו וַיֵּצֵאוּ מִן הַבְּיֹרָה] to the house of the Lord and worshipped ... (2 Sam. 12:20)</p>
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Before I present the evidence in favour of a literary relationship between 2 Samuel 11–12 and Genesis 39, it will strengthen my case by showing how Genesis 39 is used elsewhere in the Book of Samuel. In his analysis of 2 Samuel 13, Zakovitch makes a compelling case for reading the story of Amnon and Tamar as a reflection story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife.²⁶ Zakovitch offers the following parallels.

- Amnon orders everyone but his sister to leave the room with a verbatim allusion to the Joseph Narrative (Gen. 45:1; 2 Sam. 13:9).
- In both narratives, the victims are very beautiful (Gen. 39:7; 2 Sam. 13:1).
- In both narratives, the anti-hero commands the hero to 'lie with me' (Gen. 39:12; 2 Sam. 13:11). These are the only places in the Bible in which this particular verb is found in the imperative, though the forms are morphologically different because of the gender of the recipient of the command.
- In each case, the victim describes the sexual act as 'this great evil' (Gen. 39:9; 2 Sam. 13:16). In both stories, the victimised leaves the

²⁶ Zakovitch, *Through the Looking Glass*, 81-83. Grossman, "Dynamic Analogies", 397 similarly makes a good case for reading Mordecai's daily refusal to bow down to Haman in light of Joseph's refusal to lie with Potiphar's wife (cf. Gen. 39:10; Esth. 3:4).

house (Gen. 39:12; 2 Sam. 13:17), and there is a negative reference to the victim's garment (Gen. 39:13; 2 Sam. 13:18-19).²⁷

- In both stories, the victimisers are aided by their servants (Gen. 39:14-15; 2 Sam. 13:17-18).
- Finally, in both narratives, the victims' relative (husband/father) hears what happens and burns with anger (Gen. 39:19; 2 Sam. 13:21).

Having noted these parallels, Zakovitch contends that Amnon's sin against Tamar is intended to be read in the mirror of Joseph's refusal to lie with Potiphar's wife. When viewed through the reflection in the mirror, we see the following stark contrasts.²⁸

- In the Joseph Narrative, the tempter is a Gentile woman; in the Amnon–Tamar Narrative, the tempter is an Israelite male.
- The Genesis account is about a married woman and a single man who are not physically related; in the Samuel account, both people are single and related (brother and sister).
- In Genesis 39, the sexual encounter was spontaneous (Gen. 39:11); in 2 Samuel 13, the sexual encounter was planned well in advance (2 Sam. 13:9).
- In Genesis 39, the sexual sin is averted; in 2 Samuel 13, there is an incestuous rape.
- In Genesis 39, Joseph (a male) flees outside (Gen. 39:12); in 2 Samuel 13, Amnon (a male) throws the female victim outside (2 Sam. 13:17-18).
- In Genesis 39, Joseph's garment will be used against him even though he is innocent (Gen. 39:12-18); in 2 Samuel 13, Tamar's torn garment testifies against the victimiser (2 Sam. 13:18-19).
- In Genesis 39, the victimiser cries out (Gen. 39:14, 15, 18); in 2 Samuel 13, the victim cries out (2 Sam. 13:19).
- In Genesis 39, the innocent Joseph is punished immediately; in 2 Samuel 13, the guilty Amnon goes unpunished for some time.
- In the Genesis account, the victim is vindicated after two years (Gen. 41:1); in 2 Samuel, the victimiser is punished (put to death) after two years (2 Sam. 13:23).

²⁷ The reference to Tamar's arm-length (or variegated) tunic, used only here and in the Joseph Narrative (Gen. 37:3; 2 Sam. 13:18), lends strong support to the literary relationship.

²⁸ See Zakovitch, *Through the Looking Glass*, 81-83.

By suggesting that 2 Samuel 13 is a reflection story of Genesis 39, Zakovitch provides the infrastructure within which we find our new and significant contrast between David and Joseph in 2 Samuel 11–12. There is a multitude of references to Joseph throughout the David Narrative, and more than that, allusions to the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife shows up in a narrative directly related to the consequences of David's sin with Bathsheba (2 Sam. 12:10; 13:28-29).

4. Potiphar's Wife in David's Looking Glass

In her discussion of the four stages of the interpretation of allusion, Ziva ben-Porat notes that the recognition of an allusive marker (stage one) and the identification of the evoked text (stage two) not only leads to a modification in one's initial local interpretation (stage three) but also to the 'activation of the evoked text ... as a whole, and the attempt to form maximum intertextual patterns'.²⁹ The recurrence of allusions leaves little doubt for literary relationship and bolsters the reader's motivation to search in the David and Bathsheba story as well. We will now examine 2 Samuel 11–12 in the light of these David-like-Joseph parallels.

Considering the many parallels between the Joseph and David Narratives, it is more than a little surprising so few scholars – ancient³⁰ and modern³¹ – have noted similarities between the story of David and Bathsheba with the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife. We present the

²⁹ Ziva ben-Porat, 'The Poetics of Literary Allusion', *PTL: A Journal for Descriptive Poetics and Theology of Literature*, vol. 1 (1976): 111; see also Benjamin D. Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusion in Isaiah 40–66* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998): 11-12.

³⁰ After an extensive search, I was able to locate only one rabbinic source (*Midrash Aggudah* (*Leqet Aggudot*, thirteenth century) that compares Joseph's temptation with Potiphar's wife to David's affair with Bathsheba. See <http://beta.hebrewbooks.org/pdfpagefeed.aspx?req=47250&pgnum=251>, accessed 22 October 2018.

³¹ Ruppert, *Die Josephserzählung*, 214-16 posits several parallels between Genesis 39:7-12 and 2 Samuel 11–12 (cf. Gen. 39:9; 2 Sam. 12:13) and contends that one story functions as a counterpart (*Gegenstück*) to the other (p. 215). Ruppert goes so far as saying that the Joseph Story, which he deemed to be written later than the David Story, served as a mirror (*Spiegel*) for the Davidic kingdom. In his words, 'Jedenfalls hält J wohl sehr geschickt dem davidischen Königtum einen Spiegel vor' (pp. 215-16). Ruppert contends that Joseph is presented over against David as the ideal ruler (p. 216; while I agree with Ruppert's conclusions, I disagree with his diachronic understanding of literary dependence). Jacob, *Das Buch Genesis*, 1049 also includes a list of literary connections in Genesis 39 and 2 Samuel 11, the importance of which will be discussed in the final section of this paper (compare Gen. 39:7-9 with 2 Sam. 11:11).

evidence based on shared language (linguistic correspondence) and parallel plot-structure in the following chart.

In both narratives, an already married person with royal influence (an Egyptian commander's wife/a king) sees a very beautiful servant (a Hebrew servant/a wife of a Hittite soldier) and desires to lie with him/her (Gen. 39:6-7; 2 Sam. 11:2, 4). In both cases, the sexual advance is prompted by a situation in which an individual is alone in the house. While all the other servants are outside, Joseph (and Potiphar's wife) is alone in the house (Gen. 39:11). While all of David's soldiers are on the battlefield, David walks alone on his roof (2 Sam. 11:1-2).

And Joseph was beautiful in form and beautiful in appearance [וַיִּפְּהָ מְרֹאָהּ *wipê mar'ê*]. And after these things, the wife of his lord lifted her eyes to Joseph, and she said, 'Lie with me!' [שָׁכַבָה עִמִּי] *šikbâ 'immî*). (Gen. 39:6b-7)

And in the evening, David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the king's house, and he saw a woman bathing upon the roof. And the woman was very good in appearance [טוֹבַת מְרֹאָהּ *tôbat mar'ê*] ... And David sent messengers and took her, and she came into him, and he laid with her [וַיִּשְׁכַּב עִמָּהּ] *wayyiškab 'immah*] ... (2 Sam. 11:2, 4)

In both passages, the victimiser tries unsuccessfully over several days to persuade a servant who is very loyal to his lord to lie with a woman (Gen. 39:8, 10; 2 Sam. 11:11-13). These are the only two stories in the Hebrew Bible where the words 'to lie with' and 'his lord' appear, and in both cases, the words are being used in functionally identical ways.

And he refused, and he said to the wife of his lord [אָדֹנָי] *'adōnāy*] ... And as she spoke with Joseph day after day, he did not listen to her to lie [לְשָׁכַב] *liškab*] with her, to be with her. (Gen. 39:8, 10)

'... that I should go into my house to eat, and to drink, and to lie [וְלְשָׁכַב] *weliškab*] with my wife ...' And David said to Uriah, 'Stay here today, and tomorrow I will send you ...' And he went out in the evening to lie [לְשָׁכַב] *liškab*] in his bed with the servants of his lord [אָדֹנָי] *'adōnāy*] and into his house he did not go down. (2 Sam. 11:11-13)

In both accounts, the victim, extremely loyal to his lord, offers a speech to

the victimiser as to why it would be morally wrong to lie with the woman (Gen. 39:8-9; 2 Sam. 11:11, 13). In both cases, we find the first person singular verb 'I will do' (Gen. 39:9; 2 Sam. 11:11) serving functionally identical roles: How *can I do* this thing with a woman against my lord? (Gen. 39:8-9; 2 Sam. 11:11).

And Joseph refused and said to the wife of his lord [יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵשֶׁת אֲדֹנָי] *'ešet 'adōnāyw*], 'Behold, my lord [אֲדֹנָי] *'adōni*] does not know anything with me in the house and everything that belongs to him he has given into my hands. There is no one greater in this house than me, and he has not withheld anything from me except you because you are his wife [אֵשֶׁת אֲדֹנָי] *'išti*]. And how can I do [הַשְּׂוֹאָה] *'e 'šē*] this great evil and sin against God?' (Gen. 39:8-9)

And Uriah said to David, 'The ark and Israel and Judah are dwelling in tents, and my lord [אֲדֹנָי] *wa 'dōni*] Joab and the servants of my lord [אֲדֹנָי] *'adōni*] are camping in a field. And I will go into my house to eat, and to drink, and to lie down with my wife [אֵשֶׁת] *'išti*]. On your life and the life of your soul if I will do [הַשְּׂוֹאָה] *'e 'šē*] this thing.' (2 Sam. 11:11-12; see also the phrase יִשְׂרָאֵל [*'adōnāyw*] as in v. 13)

In both accounts, the victimiser punishes the innocent victim for their refusal to sleep with a woman. Potiphar's wife, though she knows Joseph is innocent, has him thrown in prison for his refusal to sleep with her (Gen. 39:20). David, though he knows Uriah is innocent, has him killed on the battlefield for his refusal to sleep with his wife (2 Sam. 11:17). In both cases, the individual directly responsible for meting out the punishment is the lord to whom the victim is extremely loyal: Potiphar in Joseph's case (Gen. 39:20); Joab in Uriah's case (2 Sam. 11:11, 14-17).

And Joseph's lord took him and put him into prison, a place where the king's prisoners were prisoners, and he was there in prison. (Gen. 39:20)

And in the morning, David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by Uriah's hand. And he wrote in the letter saying, 'Set Uriah in the front at the fiercest part of the battle, and then retreat behind him so that he will be struck and die.' (2 Sam. 11:14-15)

In the account of Judah and Tamar (Genesis 38), Tamar, who was mistaken for a cult prostitute (הַקְדִּישָׁה *haqq^odešā*, from the root קדש *qds*; Gen. 38:21), sends a messenger to her father-in-law to say 'I am pregnant' (Gen.

38:25). In the account of David and Bathsheba, Bathsheba, who had just been purified (מִתְקַדְּשֶׁת *mitqaddešet*, from the root קִדַּשׁ *qđš*) from her monthly period (2 Sam. 11:4), sends a messenger to the king to say ‘I am pregnant’ (2 Sam. 11:5). Regarding this parallel, Craig Y. S. Ho notes the following: ‘As a matter of fact, this sending of words and bringing the message of pregnancy is found only in these two stories in the whole Hebrew Bible.’³² Zakovitch, aware of the allusion, writes ‘David’s act with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11) is a reflection story, in which Judah’s act with Tamar is reflected (Genesis 38). Against the background of Judah and Tamar, the poor behaviour of king David stands out all the more.’³³

And the people of her place said, ‘Where is the cult prostitute [הַקְדִּישָׁה *haqqeḏešā*] ...?’ ... And she was brought out, and she sent [שְׁלָחָה *šolḥā*] to her father-in-law saying, ‘By the man to whom these things belong, I am pregnant [הָרָה אֲנֹכִי *hārā ’anōkī*].’ (Gen. 38:21,25)

And she was purifying herself [מִתְקַדְּשֶׁת *mitqaddešet*] from her impurity, and she returned to her home. And the woman conceived, and she sent [וַתִּשְׁלַח *wattišlah*] to tell David, and she said, ‘I am pregnant [הָרָה אֲנֹכִי *hārā ’anōkī*].’ (2 Sam. 11:4b-5)

In both narratives, an individual has been given responsibility over his ‘lord’s house’ (בֵּית אֲדֹנָיו *bet ’adōnāyw*; a phrase found only seven times in the Hebrew Bible with various pronominal suffix endings; Gen. 39:2; 40:7; 44:8; 2 Sam. 12:8; 2 Kgs 10:3; Isa. 22:18; Zeph. 1:9). That is, the lord’s possessions have been given into his hands, and therefore he ought not to take the one thing – a married woman – that belongs to his lord, since it is wicked and a sin against God/the Lord (Gen. 39:2, 8-9; 2 Sam. 12:8-9, 13).

And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a successful man, and he was in the house of his lord [בְּבֵית אֲדֹנָיו *bebet ’adōnāyw*] the Egyptian ... And he refused and said to the wife of his lord [אֶל-אִשְׁתּוֹ *el-’ešet* ’adōnāyw], ‘Behold, my lord does not know a single thing with me in

‘And I have given you the house of your lord [וְאֶתְנָה לְךָ אֶת-בֵּית אֲדֹנָי *wā’ettēnā lekā ’et-bet ’adōnekā*], and the wives of your lord [וְאֶת-נְשָׁי אֲדֹנָי *wē’et-nēše ’adōnekā*] into your embrace, and I have given you [וְאֶתְנָה לְךָ *wā’ettēnā lekā*] the house of Israel and Judah, and if that was too little, and I would

³² Ho, ‘The Stories of the Family Troubles’, 517.

³³ Zakovitch, *Through the Looking Glass*, 51.

the house, and everything which belongs to him he has put in my hands [נָתַן בְּיָדַי *nātan bayādī*]. There is no one greater than me in this house, and he has not withheld anything from me but you since you are his wife [אִשְׁתּוֹ *’išṭō*], and I can I do this great evil [אֲעֲשֶׂה הָרָעָה *e’šé hārā’ā*], and sin against God [וַחֲטָאתִי לְאֱלֹהִים *wəḥāṭā’ti le’lōhim*?] (Gen. 39:2, 8-9)

have added to you more and more of these. Why have you despised the word of the Lord to do this evil [לְעֵשׂוֹת הָרָעָה *la’šōt hārā’ā*] in my eyes? Uriah the Hittite you have struck down with the sword, and his wife you have taken for yourself to be your wife ...’ ... And David said to Nathan, ‘I have sinned against the Lord [חֲטָאתִי לַיהוָה *ḥāṭā’ti layhwh*].’ (2 Sam. 12:8-9, 13)

The linguistic correspondences and parallel plot-structure suggest that 2 Samuel 11–12 is a reflection story of Genesis 39. The allusions alert the reader to the intentionality of the connection, to compare the two stories and to recoil at the stark differences between these two men. Until this point in the David Narrative, the reader has grown accustomed to seeing the image of Joseph positively reflected in David’s story. This time, however, when we see David’s actions with Bathsheba in the mirror, we are startled to see Potiphar’s wife looking back at David. In the narrative of David and Bathsheba, David’s character has come to resemble the wife of Potiphar, while Uriah (the victim) appropriately resembles Joseph – the victim of Potiphar’s wife’s misconduct.

5. Analysis of the Reflected Image

What are the reflected images we see in the looking glass of David’s fall?

1. David, an Israelite king with many wives (2 Sam. 12:8), sees a very beautiful, yet already married woman, and desires to lie with her (2 Sam. 11:2). Reflected in the mirror of his actions is Potiphar’s wife, a pagan Gentile, who sees a very beautiful and unmarried Hebrew slave with whom she desires to lie (Gen. 39:6-7).
2. David, a powerful king, sends his messengers to take Bathsheba, and without delay, pressure, or persuasion brings his desire to fruition by lying with a married woman (2 Sam. 11:4). In David’s looking glass, we see Potiphar’s wife, who, in spite of her daily

- propositions and attempts to use force, fails to bring to fruition her desires to lie with Joseph, a single man (Gen. 39:7-8, 10; 2 Sam. 11:4).
3. David, the Israelite king, hears that Bathsheba is pregnant and attempts to cover his 'successful conquest' of a married woman with deceit, but he fails (2 Sam. 11:5-13). In David's mirror, we see Potiphar's wife's 'failed conquest' of a single man and her successful cover-up using deceit (Gen. 39:14).
 4. David tries for several days to persuade a loyal Hittite soldier to go into his *own* home and lie with his wife (2 Sam. 11:9, 11). The loyal Hittite offers a speech of how unethical it would be to lie with his wife while the ark of the covenant and the people of Israel are in a military camp. 'I will not do this thing!' (2 Sam. 11:11). In David's mirror, we see Potiphar's wife, daily trying to lie with Joseph, who in turn gives a speech of how unethical it would be to sleep with his lord's wife. We hear the echo of Joseph's words when Uriah says 'How can I do this thing?' (Gen. 39:7-9).
 5. Bathsheba, Uriah's wife, sends to David to tell him 'I am pregnant' (2 Sam. 11:4). We look yet again in David's mirror; this time Potiphar's wife steps aside, and suddenly we see David's tribal father, Judah, and we remember how he had received the very same word from his daughter-in-law, 'I am pregnant' (2 Sam. 11:4).³⁴
 6. David, a man who is now guilty of murder, is confronted by God through the prophet Nathan. God reminds David of how he had given him everything in his lord's house, including his lord's wives (2 Sam. 12:8-9, 13). God rebukes David for taking the one thing (or woman) that does not belong to him (2 Sam. 12:4). This time we see Joseph's image reflected in David's mirror, and the image in completely flipped. God's words of rebuke to David remind us of Joseph's words to Potiphar's wife: God has given me everything in my lord's house, except my lord's wife (Gen. 39:2).
 7. David, who has now been caught red-handed, confesses 'I have sinned against the Lord' (2 Sam. 12:13). Once again, we see Joseph's inverted reflection, as we recall the exemplary Hebrew

³⁴ Zakovitch, *Through the Looking Glass*, 53 writes 'This obvious comparison between two stories forces the reader to look at David over against the patriarch of his tribe, Judah. On the backdrop of this comparison, the terrible behavior of David stands out seven times more.'

say to Potiphar's wife 'How can I do this evil in God's eyes, and sin against God?' (Gen. 39:8-9). Joseph's statement of faith – 'How can I sin against God?' – becomes David's confession of failure: 'I have sinned against the Lord' (Gen. 39:9; 2 Sam. 12:13).

David's mirror does not lie. The image looking back at David cries out 'You are not the man like Joseph!' (2 Sam. 12:7). The gravity of David's sin with Bathsheba is magnified by the images the reader sees in the looking glass. The inverse images in Genesis 39 provide the literary context for evaluating David's failure in 2 Samuel 11–12. This story cannot be interpreted, at least not correctly, without the reflected story.