

Josh Mangelson 00:17

Welcome to the Project Zion Podcast. This podcast explores the unique spiritual and theological gifts Community of Christ offers for today's world.

Karin Peter 00:33

Welcome to He'Brew, the Project Zion series that reduces Old Testament bitterness through explanation, exploration, and experiencing the text. Our guides through the Old Testament, or Hebrew scriptures, are Tony and Charmaine Chvala-Smith. And I'm your host, Karin Peter. In today's episode, which we'd sort of titled, "The Davidic Monarchy: David, Bathsheba, and the Me Too Movement", our episode looks at the Davidic monarchy, specifically, David, Nathan, and of course, Bathsheba. So, we're in 2 Samuel. For those of you who are wanting to reread stretches of the Old Testament, and I have to tell you 2 Samuel, while about David, has a lot of stuff happening in there, much of it to women and none of it good. So, just be prepared when you read it. So, let's start in with this particular text. Tony and Charmaine, what do we need to know?

Tony Chvala-Smith 01:46

So, first of all, we're in the books of Samuel, and actually Kings too. And in our English Bibles, these are divided into two books, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings. That's an old tradition, goes back to the Septuagint, which was the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible. The Septuagint translators took these books of the Hebrew Bible when they were putting them into Greek, and divided them in two. And, except in Jewish circles, pretty much ever since then, those books have been divided. In a Hebrew Bible, it's Samuel, and Kings. So those are the books that we're in and Samuel and Kings together tell the story of the rise and fall of an Israelite monarchy. So, you start off in Samuel. It's the end of the period of the judges, when people of Israel are really this, kind of, loose confederation of tribes. And occasionally, when dire need emerges, Yahweh raises up a judge. And we talked about judges in our last podcast. Judges, the Hebrew word, shophet, a judge, was not so much a judicial figure, though they could do that, a judge is more, like a, you know, a charismatic, tribal military leader. And so, that whole episode in their story, kind of, spirals out of control by the time you get to the end of the book of Judges. And so, in the book, in the start of Samuel, the people of Israel start wondering about and asking for a king. And so, what you have in Samuel and Kings then, is a monarchy emerges. The monarchy passes, after one king, it passes to David. And then David and his son Solomon are the monarchy at its height. And then the rest of the story in the Hebrew Bible, going through the Book of Kings, is kind of a tragedy, almost a Greek tragedy, really, as the monarchy divides into two parts at the death of Solomon, a northern one, Israel, a southern one Judah, and then eventually the northern one is destroyed by the Assyrians. And then by the time we get to the end of the book of Kings, the Judean monarchy, the Davidic monarchy, is ending in Babylonian exile. So, it's kind of a wild ride through those two books. Going up, going down is pretty much how it happens here. So, that's the storyline of the books that we're in. And let's go to some contextual features about this monarchy. So, you might ask the question, so how did this loose collection of tribes, Israelite tribes, who shared some ancestors like Abram and Sarai, and shared a language, Hebrew, and shared some founding sacred stories and rituals, like the Passover in Exodus, how did they come to create a monarchy sometime, you know, late

in the 11th century BCE? The traditional date for Saul becoming King is 1020 BCE. So how did that happen? And the critical historian will give you a different answer from what the texts might give.

Karin Peter 05:09

Oh, well, this will be good.

Tony Chvala-Smith 05:10

Yeah, yeah. So, the historians answer would be something like this. So, as Israel is emerging in Canaan, something major is happening along the sea coast. A group of sea peoples who trace themselves back to the Aegean Sea, these people called the Philistines, are landing on the coast and setting up settlements. And so, they are a superior military and political power. They're really well organized. They have superior...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 05:42

Weapons.

Tony Chvala-Smith 05:43

Weapons, yeah, superior...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 05:44

Strategy.

Tony Chvala-Smith 05:44

Weaponry, strategy. They know how to fight well. And then you have these sheep herder people learning the ropes in Canaan, who have bronze weapons, not iron weapons, and who don't know what they're doing, actually. And so, one historically plausible answer for why a monarchy emerges is that as those Philistines settle the coast and begin moving inland and start running into Israelite tribes, the Israelites realize that they can't, that what's been working for them isn't working anymore, right? So, they need to have some kind of centralized authority, some kind of centralized way of creating an army that can withstand the Philistines. The other thing too, is you have to remember, Canaan is this little tiny neck of land that's sort of like the freeway between empires, Egypt to the south, and then Aram, or Syria, and then Assyria and Babylon to the north. And everybody wants this little strategic piece of land. So, tribes are just not going to be able to do it. So, you have to have some kind of centralized authority. And a king seems like a good idea.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 06:57

And everybody else has one, so...

Karin Peter 06:59

Well, heck yeah.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 07:00

So, we ought to have one too.

Tony Chvala-Smith 07:02

So, there are plausible, you know, historical, social, cultural, and economic reasons why a monarchy would develop. Now, the authors and editors of Samuel and Kings, and I'm using the words, authors and editors, because what we have here in Samuel and Kings are, these are like community writing projects, right? These books are created out of many different sources. Lots of hands have been involved in them. The authors and editors of Samuel and Kings are finishing their editorial work on these books in the Babylonian exile, when they're trying to answer the question, how in the heck did we lose it all? So, if the monarchies, beginning like around 1020 BCE, and these books are coming together in the form we're reading them in translation, sometime after 587 BCE, you know, almost 500 years going on there. The people in exile are trying to think, how, what did we do to deserve this? How did we get here? How did we lose everything? How did we lose this monarchy? How did we lose our homeland? Right? They're asking theodicy questions. Where is God? Why did this happen to us? One answer, not the only answer, but one answer was the Deuteronomists' answer. The Deuteronomists, another school of thought in ancient Israel, their answer was, because we were disobedient, and we had a monarch and we had, and we sinned, and we followed other gods. It's our fault we're here.

Karin Peter 08:29

So, that's not a happy answer.

Tony Chvala-Smith 08:34

No, it's not a happy answer. It's one of the answers. It's a theological interpretation of why they're in exile. And it's, sort of, overlaid throughout Samuel and Kings.

Karin Peter 08:46

Right. So, I have, I need to insert a question here when, because we have this through the whole situation, the Deuteronomist perspective, we sinned, we were disobedient, bad things happen to us, because that's what happens when you're just obedient to God. That's a narrative that's still out there. We hear it all the time.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 09:05

Yeah. After every natural disaster, you hear, well, this is God's punishment, because whatever the city was that experienced the disaster, they must be sinful, and this must be God's punishment of them for that.

Karin Peter 09:22

So that's a popular reason that we hear. What are the other perspectives on that?

Tony Chvala-Smith 09:28

I, it's popular because people don't read the Bible very well. That's one reason it's popular. It's also popular because it's simplistic and the people with whom it's popular never say it about themselves. Like they, it's always an explanation of others, right?

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 09:44

Those people had this thing happen to them because, unlike us...

Karin Peter 09:49

Right, right.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 09:50

They did something wrong or they think something wrong or they're for something in society that's, obviously God is against.

Tony Chvala-Smith 09:58

So, when I said they don't read the Bible well, they don't because here's the deal. The Hebrew Bible has other explanations. And the Hebrew Bible has text that push back on the Deuteronomist explanation for things. For example, the book of Ezekiel, chapter 18. Ezekiel basically says, you know, that idea we've had for, like, 1000 years, that if you sin, it'll be put on the generations after you. Ezekiel says, God says, "Stop saying that". That's dumb. You're responsible for your own stuff".

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 10:30

That might be a bit of a paraphrase.

Tony Chvala-Smith 10:31

As I'm, I'm paraphrasing, but it's...

Karin Peter 10:34

I like the paraphrase, "Stop saying that. That's dumb. Be responsible for your own behavior."

Tony Chvala-Smith 10:38

Exactly. And then the book of Job totally pushes back on the idea that somehow what has happened to us was deserved. That it's the just punishment for what happened, for what we did. So, there's other voices in the Hebrew Bible that say, I don't think so.

Karin Peter 10:57

And so, it helps to keep that in mind as we go through this particular.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 11:01

And this is important, even in this story, because that doesn't really fit on the David story. If you think of the David story. Here is David, who is doing all kinds of things wrong, and he's not cut off from God. Yes, there are some consequences for some of his behaviors. But God does not desert him. He, and you know, in fact, he's, even with all the stories and all the commandments that he breaks, God is still there with him and for him, and is a merciful God, and a God of grace, and a God who lives for love. And so, even within these stories, you've got both, you've got the Deuteronomistic kind of approach. If you're getting bad stuff in your life, you must have done bad. But you're also getting this God who is faithful to us, even when we fall to the very bottom of our embracing evil or desire or whatever inordinately. So, it's there too. These themes are there running side by side. And you know, always and we probably said this before, we always have to ask, what is it about you that chose this theological perspective, rather than this one, when...

Karin Peter 12:33

A judgmental, angry God.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 12:35

Right. Well, it's the same with like the creation stories back in Genesis. Why did you choose the second one as being normative for the relationship between men and women, instead of the first one where we are both representative of the image of God?

Tony Chvala-Smith 12:49

Our uses of the Bible often tell, say more about us, than they say about the Bible. So, that's why scholarship is really important, because it helps us get out of that loop. By the way, also, as Christian readers of a Bible as two testaments, we say, Jesus rejected the idea that what happens to you is a judgment, right? In Luke's Gospel, and in John's Gospel that comes up, and Jesus says, nope, don't think so, right? So, in other words, it's really important to see the Bible as sometimes a conversation, sometimes an argument around a seminar table, and not to simply get fixated on whatever simple answer helps you feel good about you and feel righteous about your enemies, right? So, it's pretty important. And so, the Deuteronomists, I'll say the Deuteronomists, their theology is overlaid more on Kings than on Samuel. But it's there. It's through it all, because they're the ones who were helping, kind of, collect the prophets, that is, the narrative books, starting with Joshua. They're the ones who are pulling that stuff all together during the exile. But it's really important to see it as an overlay. And, every once in a while in the text, you'll see a peekaboo of other traditions which say, nah, there's another way to look at this, right? So, one more thing in terms of explaining. The Hebrew Bible has a number of covenant traditions, right? God makes a covenant with Abram and Sarai. It's an unconditional covenant, you know, you just trust me. I'm going to make sure you have land and progeny, and that your, those who descend from you will be a blessing to the nations, right?

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 14:35

And there'll be a lot of them.

Tony Chvala-Smith 14:36

Right. And then there's the Mosaic covenant, which is more of a conditional covenant, I, you know, based on Hittite covenant treaties. I, Yahweh, your God, got you out of Egypt, and I've brought, you know, I'm going to bring you to a good land. And here's what I expect from you. And the Mosaic covenant is rendered differently in Exodus and then in Deuteronomy. But in both cases, it's kind of a conditional comment. Now, in 2 Samuel 7, there's a new covenant, God's covenant with David, God's pact, God's treaty, God's deal with David, where God says to David through Nathan, I'm gonna make a dynasty out of you, and if you're, if your children who serve as kings after you mess up, there'll be consequences, but I will never take my steadfast love from your house. There will always be a Davidic monarch. That's the unconditional nature of the Davidic covenant. That's articulated in chapter 7 of 2 Samuel. And one of the stories we're going to focus on here shortly, the David and Bathsheba story, put the covenant to the test. That covenant, though, turns out to have some disastrous moral consequences down the road, as Judean monarchs think, hey, we're, we're good. We're just good.

We're just good. And then they continue to perpetuate injustice in the land. That's a story for another podcast on the prophets, so.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 15:59

Well, and some of that, the promises, the implications, or chosen implications of that promise, are still at work in the world today, as far as the land of Israel and Palestine, and what was it that God promised to whom, when. So, it's still has reverberations today. So, we're going into the explore part, and we'll be starting to look at some of the specific stories. And, Karin, I'm glad you've been doing this wide reading, as painful as it's been for you. That's true. Samuels and Kings, and, you know, we're really looking forward to some of the insights that you have, and the questions, but also bringing to the surface some of the stories that are there that, you know, make us raise our eyebrows, and go, "Whaaaaat?" So, but before we do that, I just want to give us the reminder about what our goal is, in these He'brew sessions. And our job here is not to put makeup on the stories and give them an acceptable appearance. That's definitely not one of the things we're trying to do. Our goal here is first, to understand the time that these things were written, the dynamics, and the relationships. And I think that's one that we maybe haven't noted as much. But that's really what we're looking at quite often is, what about these relationships, especially relationships with God? So, our goal here is, it's not to judge the scripture using our own time, which is so enlightened, of course, as the primary way of determining its value. And it's not to defend it, like, oh, my goodness, it's, it's scripture, it must be right. Or to twist it into a happy story in some way. We're not, those aren't our goals. But it's also not to toss it, to just say, oh, this is unacceptable for us today, and so, we're going to, just out the window with this. So, we want to say, let's dig in, let's take a look at these human beings, who are trying to write about their experience with God, their understanding of God, the things that have been passed on to them about God. These are human writers using the language and the culture of their time to try and pass on these glimpses of God or God encounters that they've had. And they only have their time and language to work with. And they only have the way of being that they can see and know and it's been passed on to them. Yes, little changes happen over time. But they, they're not gonna think like we do, like, they couldn't. There's no way that they can. And so, we will see, as we're reading these things, blind spots, you know, that these writers had. You'll be looking at a culture where women are being passed around as, kind of like, a monetary object, or as flesh, you know, being used to gain power for one man to another man, all those kinds of things. But that's the reality of that time. And rather than just saying, oh, my gosh, that's awful. Let's see what else they know, besides the culture that they're a part of. So, that's what we're going to be, kind of, trying to look in and saying, you know, we have to check our desire to either judge these people in their time, or to skip over the ugly parts of the stories, because sometimes it's the ugly parts, where we really get to begin to see what is the nature of God in this story? So, scriptures are really not so much about the people or their cultures. It's what they're trying to point to, about what is the nature of this God? And there's some pieces that they're gonna say that we're gonna say, hmmm, doesn't sound like my God. And that's certainly something we need to be able to say is that there's some elements of their understandings of God, that, especially if we're using the Jesus lens to help us determine who God is, that we can just say, nope, that that doesn't fit. And we need to be okay with saying there's parts, there's some ideas in the Old Testament, my goodness, so much a product of their time, they just aren't translatable. But there may be some that are. So, we shouldn't be surprised if we actually find some things that they're saying, that may speak to us. And so that's our approach is, let's

listen to people's stories about what they think about God. Let's see if some of them fit for us. And if there's some things to, to dig out of their understandings that still have power and relevance for us.

Karin Peter 21:39

Feel we're gonna hear him out before we either dismiss or simply gloss over,

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 21:46

Right. Or accept wholeheartedly as though this is exactly how we should all be today, which there are people who do that. And so, we're not...

Karin Peter 21:55

Yes, they do. But again, read 2 Samuel, because that is not happening. So...

Tony Chvala-Smith 22:00

Well, it's really important for us to pay attention to the details in these stories, because if we don't, our own lenses, and biases and presuppositions will get quickly overlaid on the story. And we'll think we're reading the story when, in fact, we're just reading ourselves. So, when we get to this David and Bathsheba and Nathan story, it's like, it's almost like a drama in three acts in 2 Samuel 11 and 12. And so, this story is just really, oh my gosh, it's, it's so disturbing. And so gut wrenching to read what's happening here, especially if you pay attention to the details in the text.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 22:41

Right. And I'm afraid that these are stories that have been glossed over so much, that it's almost like people have taken the children's Bible version of it and just let that stand as good enough understanding of what's really happening here. And we have, we need to take it more seriously than that. So, do you want to tell us about what's in these chapters?

Tony Chvala-Smith 23:08

I'll start and we'll just go back and forth. So, here's the scene. David's kingdom is well established. He's, you know, he's, this covenant has been made. David's feeling really good. His men are out fighting somewhere on the front. He's taken a nap in the afternoon.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 23:25

It's springtime.

Tony Chvala-Smith 23:26

It's springtime. And lo and behold, he looks out and sees on the rooftop of a neighboring house the woman Bathsheba, and she's bathing. The text is very explicit. She's bathing. This is a purification right after her period. And she's very, very pretty. And oh, by the way, her husband, Uriah the Hittite, is one of David's elite soldiers, a group called the 30, and he's out at the front. Notice the name Uriah the Hittite. It's a bit peculiar because Uriah is a true Hebrew name. It means something, Yahweh is my light. But he's always called the Hittite. And so, let's think of him, let's think of him as a resident alien, because that will help us understand the levels of injustice in the story. He's a resident alien fighting for David. He's married to an Israelite woman named Bathsheba. He's out doing his duty at the front.

Bathsheba is doing her duty as was understood in priestly circles in terms of this purification. David sees her, and David wants her.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 24:34

So, there's one piece here that I want to throw in because it's one that is often twisted to say that somehow Bathsheba was seducing David, because there's this really bad tendency within Christianity, especially to, you know, blame women, whether it's a snake, or whether, you know, all kinds of things, to blame women and for the sexual desire of men, and to put it on women. And so, it's really important to understand that bathing on the rooftop was not an unusual thing. This is a normal thing to do, especially in the afternoon when the heat gets very, very built up in the homes. And so, if you're going to do anything, you're going to probably do it on the rooftops. And so, this was, this was not a culture in which any form of nudity was suggestive or provocative. And I think that's really essential to understand that Bathsheba is not doing anything that would have drawn attention, normally.

Tony Chvala-Smith 25:44

So, David has people check out to see whether there's any guys in the house over there, right? Because then she will be alone.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 25:53

Because he doesn't know who she is yet.

Tony Chvala-Smith 25:55

Right. So...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 25:57

So, he asks, well, who is she?

Tony Chvala-Smith 25:59

Yup, and she's this, and that she's Bathsheba. And so, David sends people, and the text says they went and got her. Now, I can't tell you, I see this in commentaries all the time, that describe what happens as an affair. No, there's not consent involved here. People from the Davidic monarch, the king, went and got her. The text says, "...And she came." Well, she had no choice, right there. So, in other words, you really have to see, there are elements of coercion all through the story, monarch, a, woman, male, woman, patriarchal culture, woman way down low. And so, this story needs to, what happens next, it needs to be seen as a rape.

Karin Peter 26:54

So, he, I think it's important to really make it clear what the text says. He didn't "summon her", and she responded to his summons. He said to people to...

Tony Chvala-Smith 27:04

Get her.

Karin Peter 27:04

...forcibly bring her to him.

Tony Chvala-Smith 27:06

They went to "get her" [inaudible] says, and in this part of the story...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 27:12

She says, in, okay, so here, so, David sent men, messengers to get her. And she came to him, and he lay with her.

Tony Chvala-Smith 27:21

Right. There's, yeah. Go ahead, Charmain.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 27:24

But you cannot...

Karin Peter 27:24

Not even dinner first? I mean, there's just. it's just appalling. No, I mean, I make light because it's just awful. And you have to kind of process that, because it's not the way the story is told, or even understood, generally.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 27:41

And this is one of the places where we want to fancy this up for today, and make David fit our appropriateness standards. But this probably was not unusual at all, in his day, that this kind of sounds...

Karin Peter 28:03

It's not unusual in this day.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 28:05

Good point, in the sense of entitlement, because he's a man. And you know, in this culture, as in many cultures today, women don't get to make choices. They don't get to say, "No." I mean, there's still a lot of cultures in our world where women don't get to say, "No", and have it heard as anything at all. So, this is a reality, we need to let this text describe to us, the culture of that time and place.

Tony Chvala-Smith 28:36

And need to be very aware of all of the digital recordings, I wanted to say tapes, that's old language, all the digital recordings that are playing, in especially white males' heads, when they read the story, and all kinds of assumptions that are made that the text does not bear out. And by the way, if you read this in the larger narrative of Samuel, there's an earlier story about one of David's wives named Michal, who is the youngest daughter of Saul. Michal is passed around as if she's a tradable commodity.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 29:07

This is one of the things that Karin had questions about as we were for...

Karin Peter 29:13

Yeah, we're gonna talk about Michal a little bit as we get to my question part because that's, that helps, for me, at least, and I think it will help our listeners, kind of, see this in its bigger context than just David and Bathsheba.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 29:28

I think that's really important. Sorry for interrupting.

Tony Chvala-Smith 29:30

No, no, it's fine.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 29:31

I just want to make sure we got that piece...started.

Tony Chvala-Smith 29:32

This is a class and we're just going back and forth. Yeah. So, then the story goes from bad to worse, right? So, in this part of the narrative, the only thing Bathsheba says is, I'm pregnant. And her...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 29:51

This is in 2 Samuel the only, the only actual thing we hear her say.

Tony Chvala-Smith 29:57

Right. So, her husband Uriah, the resident alien, with or without a green card, not sure. He's a resident alien with a Hebrew name. He's out fighting for David on the frontlines. And when Bathsheba is pregnant because of David, David now goes into cover up mode, right? And so, as we tell our students when we're working through the story, there is no 1-800-who's the father in this time and place? You can't do a DNA test, right? So, David sends a message to the frontlines for a special meeting with Uriah, very unusual to pull somebody off the front lines, come back to the king. And David basically tries to get Uriah to go home and sleep with Bathsheba.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 30:49

To have sex with his wife.

Tony Chvala-Smith 30:51

Right. David says, uses the euphemism, "Go home, wash your feet", which is euphemism in the Hebrew Bible for the feet are the, often the genitals, go home and have sex. And Uriah, the resident alien, is being faithful to his vow, his military vow, to not have sex as long as he's in combat. He refuses to do that. He sleeps outside, I think.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 31:16

Sleeps, yeah, we're

Karin Peter 31:17

Outside the door, I think is where he sleeps.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 31:20

And where his servants are, so he, so everybody knows. There is also this possibility that he senses that there's trickery about and he doesn't want to be tricked into being unfaithful to his vow. So, it may be that he's just a really honest person. But it may also be that he's like, wait a minute...

Karin Peter 31:42

Like you're testing my commitment to what I've agreed to do?

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 31:46

Exactly.

Tony Chvala-Smith 31:47

So, it's really important here, at this point in the story, Bathsheba, who has been coerced and raped, she's depicted as faithful to what she knows of the Mosaic covenant. She's doing this ritual bath. Uriah, the resident alien, either with or without a green card, we don't know, he's come back from the front, and he's being faithful to his vows. They are more faithful to Yahweh than David is. And David's like, I gotta do something else. This isn't working.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 32:17

Because he can't get Uriah to cover his mistake by having sex with his wife, and then we can say, yeah, this was his baby. So, Uriah's not cooperating. So, David, I would say, desperate, desperation creates all kinds of blindness. He's like, I've got to get rid of Uriah because he's going to know, and now all the servants in his household are going to know because they know he didn't have sex with his wife. So, he works it out that he sends a message with Uriah back to the front to give to the commander, which is basically, it's a sealed one, so, he doesn't know what it says. But it basically is his death, the plan for his death, which basically David says, yeah, you guys go into battle, and then all pull back, and, but don't let Uriah know. And, basically, set him up to be killed in battle.

Karin Peter 33:27

Yeah, send him to the front.

Tony Chvala-Smith 33:28

Right. Send him to the front with his death warrant in his hand. And that's what happens, right?

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 33:31

Death warrant, that's the word I was looking for. Good. Thank you.

Tony Chvala-Smith 33:34

So, then the word comes back that Uriah was killed. And David's like, eh, the sword takes one and now another. You know, it just happens, you know? So, he's responsible now for the murder, for setting up the murder, right? And so,

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 33:49

And he's also, he's also committed adultery. And he has also coveted his neighbor's wife. Well, let's see. So, he's at least on three commandments that he's...

Tony Chvala-Smith 34:00

Borne false witness. So, that he's on four. Yeah, he's working on all the big 10 here, basically. And I don't mean, football or basketball, right. So,

Karin Peter 34:11

But it's multiple layers of his behavior. It's not just one thing. We're talking multiple things.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 34:21

Exactly. And I think this is another thing we can identify within our time. And I might be jumping ahead a little bit here, but it's this sense that somehow this is a patriarchy issue, that men in power must worry more about their appearance, how they're seen, than about reality. And David is desperate for this to not be seen for what it is.

Tony Chvala-Smith 34:50

Yeah, and...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 34:52

And that's true today. I mean, we see it all...

Karin Peter 34:54

Oh, yeah.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 34:55

Especially men of privilege, doing whatever they think is necessary to keep their, the image of them the way they want it to be.

Tony Chvala-Smith 35:07

And, that men always just get what they want, right?

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 35:10

Well, and that it's okay if other people suffer in order for them to keep that thinking in front of people.

Tony Chvala-Smith 35:17

And so, notice when we pay attention to these, really like, difficult details of the text, how the text is now becoming a mirror, a magnifying glass, because we can begin to see our social, gender, sexual realities through the text too.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 35:32

And so, the whole Me Too Movement is, this is the kind of situations in which the necessity to speak is as real now, as it was in this time.

Tony Chvala-Smith 35:47

So, David takes Bathsheba into his harem, right? And it's so cool. I love this line at the end of chapter 11. The narrator of the story says, "But the thing that David did, displeased Yahweh", right? It's just like, so, this is a place where the commentary on the text, that's in the text, is reminding the reader, this was really messed up. This was really messed up.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 36:21

And that God isn't condoning this kind of behavior.

Tony Chvala-Smith 36:25

So, then the next, this is the, I guess we'll call it the third scene in the play, is the prophet Nathan. And, you know, in our next two podcasts we'll deal with prophets explicitly, but Nathan, Nathan is a prophet. The word prophet in Hebrew is navi'. That means somebody who's been called, who has a divine call. And he's, and many, many prophets in the Hebrew Bible are connected to kings. They're like the king's counselors and something like that, which led to constant abuse, because the Prophet could say, oh, King, whatever you do is what Yahweh wants. It's, you're so wonderful. You know, it's, it's, uh, you know,

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 37:01

A yes-man, kind of thing.

Tony Chvala-Smith 37:02

Yeah. Nathan is not that kind of prophet. So, then Nathan comes into David and says, I got a little story to tell you, David.

Karin Peter 37:12

Yes, this gets really interesting here with the mirror in front of David. Let's talk about Nathan's response to David. Before you tell the story, my question from what we just talked about, when you talked about David not wanting this to come out, to cover it. And it's not so much the fear what his colleagues will think of him, but it's what Nathan, and what Nathan represents, knowing this about him.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 37:42

And what the people, especially faithful people, faithful to God, will have to see.

Karin Peter 37:49

Yeah. Okay. So, let's talk about the story.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 37:52

Yes. Well, in a, here's one of the tricky parts about the monarchy as it's developing, is that it's not just seen as a political necessity. There's the implication, that somehow God is, well God may have anointed them, but also, that they speak for God in some ways, or they represent God in some ways. And that gets this, that makes this all very tricky, especially David's not wanting faithful people to see who he really is.

Tony Chvala-Smith 38:35

So, Nathan does the very prophetic job of calling out the king. And this is a, in ancient Near East, all kinds of monarchies had prophet figures, sage figures, attached to their courts, who were primarily yes-men, and sometimes yes-women, who were there to give the divine assurance, the assurance from the gods that whatever the monarch was doing was right. And Nathan is not going to do that. Nathan says, tells the story in which David condemns himself, and so...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 39:06

Not knowingly.

Tony Chvala-Smith 39:07

Not knowing, David, David,

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 39:08

I'll go ahead and read it.

Tony Chvala-Smith 39:09

Yeah, this is so cool. I love this.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 39:10

This is the beginning of chapter 12, and in 2 Samuel. So, "There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had very many flocks and herds, but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. He brought it up and it grew up with him, and with his children, it used to eat of his meager fare and drink from his cup and lie in his bosom, and it was like a daughter to him. Now, there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was loath to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared that for the guest who had come to him." This is a story that Nathan told David. "David's anger was greatly kindled against the man, he said to Nathan, 'As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die; he shall restore the lamb fourfold because he did this thing, and because he had no pity' and then, "Nathan says to David, 'You are the man.'"

Karin Peter 40:14

Ouch.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 40:16

Yeah, yeah. "Thus says the Lord God of Israel; 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..." He's saying, if you wanted something, ask for it, but to simply take this that does not belong to you. And you can interpret that in a lot of ways, whether the taking of Bathsheba or the taking of sex from Bathsheba, that this is not okay. This is not acceptable. So, and then there's some, kind of, curses on David, because of this.

Tony Chvala-Smith 41:01

It's, this is a story, not just a drama, it's a trauma.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 41:05

Yeah,

Tony Chvala-Smith 41:06

Right? And the trauma is Bathsheba's.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 41:08

Yes. Because, yeah. And because what happens later, one of the consequences of David's action is that the child that Bathsheba bears will, after its born, will die. And, but again, you recognize these are, these are books written by men. And you start adding up here. What is the trauma of Bathsheba? So, there's the trauma of being taken from the safety of her own home, and being raped by the king. And, you know, there's so much to go into here, but I think probably, well, maybe not all of us, but many of us, have heard women who have been raped who, after the fact say, well, I don't know if it was really a rape, because, you know, I kind of, you know, it kind of made...

Karin Peter 42:06

I've been drinking, and I don't know what I said.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 42:09

I felt, you know? His attention made me feel special. And so, you know, and that insecurity, that so many of us women have, that we aren't lovable, that we're not worthwhile, and that our worth is tied up in the attentions of a man. I mean, that's all going on here. And so, but, you know, she, her consent doesn't matter here, ultimately. And so, to say that this is rape, I think is very appropriate. That's one trauma. The next is admitting, letting David know, and acknowledging to herself that she's pregnant. And then there is the death of her husband. We don't really know whether she ever knew how or why he died. That's not really clear. But she has, she's in this mess. And her husband dies. And then she's taken into David's harem, which he might think is, like, a really good thing for her. But her freedoms have been constrained considerably. And then it's her child that dies, because of David's action. So, there's these ongoing traumas throughout. And I think we don't think about that nearly enough to recognize the injustice of all of that. And so, Nathan's comeuppance to David about how God sees this as an act of violence, as an act of stealing the poor man's lamb, that he loves, it is it is very powerful, I think. But it's only, the depth of it is only recognizable if we acknowledge the trauma that Bathsheba has experienced on all these different levels, simply because she's a woman. All of these things that make her vulnerable are because she's a woman.

Tony Chvala-Smith 44:28

And this will not be the last story of a woman traumatized by males in the narrative of Samuel and Kings. So, and that's just really. Here, that, if there's good news in this story...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 44:40

We're looking.

Tony Chvala-Smith 44:41

We're looking. If there's good news in this story, it's this, that the editors of Samuel didn't scrub the story.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 44:48

Scrub, scrub it clean.

Tony Chvala-Smith 44:50

Right?

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 44:51

You know, or are try to put a nice face on it.

Tony Chvala-Smith 44:54

What's interesting is that the book we call 1 and 2 Chronicles, which is a later book, it's from the post-exilic period, it's from, you know, 400-ish down to 300-ish or so.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 45:06

But it's still describing this same time period.

Tony Chvala-Smith 45:08

It uses Samuel and Kings as sources for its narrative, and it scrubs the story out, because Chronicles is very pro-David. And so, think of Chronicles as the news outlet that makes David always look good, right? And so,

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 45:26

There's news outlets, like that that make some people just look good?

Tony Chvala-Smith 45:28

Just saying. And so, we can at least be grateful to the Deuteronomistic editors. It's part of their plan to, they want to show that the monarchy was a bad idea. But they do not scrub the story. Even though they also keep that part of the story which says God made a covenant with David. And by the way, God stands by the covenant here. God says, here's the consequences, but there's still gonna be a Davidic monarchy after this. So, it's a little glimmer of what we will come to call God's unconditional love for us. But also have to be very careful and remember that the editors of the story think that the baby died because it was divine punishment on David. That that whole perspective is criticized by other books of the Hebrew Bible. So, we just have to be careful not to say, see, everything that happens is divine judgment. It's the narrator's overlay on the story,

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 46:28

But we shouldn't lose track of the fact that God sees David's actions as injustice.

Karin Peter 46:36

Well, I think there's also some hints about God's unconditional love, because just as when we talk about Michal in a little while, even here, the poor man loved the ewe. The poor man love, it was beloved as a daughter. So, the writer is making the hearer of the scripture aware that there is this kind of beloved essence, nature in this story...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 47:11

It's affirmed, yeah.

Karin Peter 47:14

...that's compared to David's behavior, and which casts David's behavior in shadow.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 47:22

Yes, yes. And that there is mutual love that is happening in this time, even though there is also love of power that then abuses people. So, yeah, that's a really important one. And I, and the Michal story has that as well.

Karin Peter 47:45

So, do you want to go there or do you want to do, or do you want to help us experience this text in a positive light? Or do you want me to get my venting out first, because I have several.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 47:55

I mean, I hope we can do both, but I know it's getting kind of long here, but we'd love to hear your questions and see if we can, and then the experience part will be some questions for people to take with them to journal with. So, that will be, we can just offer those at the end for people to think about in their own time. But yeah, I'd love to, for us to explore some of your questions, because we may not have answers, but they do, they'll no doubt shed light.

Karin Peter 48:28

So, my questions come from the broader reading of 2 Samuel. So, I had read 1 Samuel for our last podcast, so I had read ahead. But this time I read 2 Samuel just beginning to end. And a lot of things, kind of, came up and some of them, I think, speak to where we've just gone with this. So, in this particular narrative of David, Bathsheba gets all the attention. That's who has been lifted out of 2 Samuel as the story that illustrates a lot of different things. You can Google it and find all kinds of stuff out there that's not helpful about... But what's hidden in there are some other stories.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 49:11

Yes.

Karin Peter 49:12

And is it Mi-kal? Is that how we're gonna pronounce her name? Mi-kal? It looks like Michael?

Tony Chvala-Smith 49:17

Yeah, it's Mi-kal in Hebrew.

Karin Peter 49:19

Okay. So, Michal was one of David's first wives, as I read the story, given to him by Saul.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 49:28

One of Saul's daughters.

Karin Peter 49:30

Of Saul's daughter. So, again, it's the political alliances that are being made at different times. And when Saul got totally ticked off at David, for some other behaviors, as Saul went into his Macbeth kind of period, then we have him taking Michal back and giving her to someone else. And his name, if I look at it correctly, is Paltiel?

Tony Chvala-Smith 49:53

Right.

Karin Peter 49:54

Paltiel, which, when you begin to follow that storyline of Michal, and then this experience of being given back, given to somebody else. Later in the story when David is reconciling with Saul's heirs, one of the conditions he makes to reconcile is he wants her back. And it is, I think, both the most horrendous and saddest thing I've ever read in the Old Testament, and I've read all about Joshua killing all the people, taking the booty and going home. And this is sadder because of how it's written.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 50:37

It's so...

Karin Peter 50:39

He says, David sent a messenger, "Give me my wife Michal, to whom I became engaged at the price of 100 foreskins..." gentlemen, so, be happy about that, "...100 foreskins of the Philistines." Any, I'm not even get to pronounce his name, and so he, "took her from her husband Paltiel, the son of Laish. But her husband went with her weeping as he walked behind her all the way.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 51:11

Yup.

Tony Chvala-Smith 51:11

Yup.

Karin Peter 51:12

And then Abner said to him, "Go back home!" And, "So, he went back." Oh, that's just so sad. And so, my question isn't so much, why is that happening, and so sad. But, why was it included?

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 51:32

That's the perfect question.

Tony Chvala-Smith 51:33

That is a good question.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 51:35

And because it helps us to see some of the things that the author, authors want to raise up, they want us to see how cruel this act was, how there isn't consensus. There isn't any consideration of other people. But also, again, it points to there being a kind of mutuality. There is possible to have mutual love and to have, you know, this heartbroken man, who is, you know, pitifully following along and hoping that things will change. And, finally, being told that they're not. You might as well go home. Yeah, I think that's really important. It's doing one other thing, as well. And it's that whole argument about the monarchy, about, was it a good thing or a bad thing? Right from the beginning, one of the arguments is, if you get a king, here's what's gonna happen. He's gonna take your daughters to put into his harem or to serve him in his, you know, abodes, and he's gonna take your son to wars and have them killed.

Karin Peter 52:47

That was the warning. Yeah.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 52:48

And so, this is that part of that argument still going on. Look, what we, what we warned of is happening right here in front of us. I don't know if you read what happens later with Michal.

Karin Peter 53:01

So, that's the next part of this is, something happens later that we read, that we hear about as we're learning about the Bible growing up. We learn about David returning the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, and he dances before it in his loincloth, and his wife, clueless, if you just accept how you're taught this, his clueless wife, who obviously didn't understand the importance of this event, and didn't understand that David was dancing around naked 'cause he was worshiping God. She chastises him for it. Well, that's how it's kind of tossed out there.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 53:40

And if you don't know the facts...

Karin Peter 53:42

...till you realize that's Michal, and she has every right to think he's a Looney Tune and be totally ticked off at him, because this is what happened to her.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 53:52

Exactly. And she is disgusted with him for basically exposing himself in this dance of ecstasy. But she says, you know, you had no consideration for all the women who were there that you just exposed yourself to. And he said, oh, they loved it. Right?

Tony Chvala-Smith 54:15

She calls it, like, any vulgar fellow.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 54:18

And he says, oh, those handmaidens think, I think they think I'm amazing. And so, yes, and so yeah. And we, if we know the backstory, then we can start to see, 'cause in the very beginning, she loved him. She loved him. She wanted to be with him. And now she has seen all these other sides of him, so to speak. So, and she's disgusted, and if you, and I'm sure you have, you read what happens right after that, after she corrects him.

Karin Peter 54:53

So, it's not just Michal, though.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 54:57

No.

Karin Peter 54:57

It's not just Bathsheba and Michal. Then we have Tamar and what happens to Tamar in 2 Samuel. So, there's not just rape but it's incestual rape by David's son on his half-sister, Tamar, and David's behavior towards that. He's the one that commands her to go to his son. And then he forgives his son, I'm paraphrasing what I read, but because he loved him.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 55:29

Yeah.

Karin Peter 55:30

And it's...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 55:32

What does that say about how he felt towards his daughter, right?

Karin Peter 55:36

Or, just in general, about how we cover up other people's behavior and don't hold people accountable to behavior. So, we have Michal. We have Bathsheba. We have Tamar. And then towards the end of the story, we have David fleeing, as a army comes in. And he takes all his primary wives, his first-tier wives, with him, but he leaves behind what's called the secondary wives. And the leader of the incoming army enters the harem, and basically is allowed to have sex with the secondary wives. So, this, just layer after layer of this kind of behavior, which really mirrors David's behavior, if we're looking at what it is.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 56:23

And is behavior that is commonplace and accepted. I won't say acceptable, but accepted in that...

Karin Peter 56:34

Accepted. So, when we read this, we don't want to take it, as you said, our own lens, as women and hopefully, strong feminists, and just go, screw it, I'm not gonna read 2 Samuel. We don't want to do that. And we want to try to have some value in the content. But when we read through all that, it's pretty hard. But you know, by the time you're at the end of it, it's kind of like, I don't know how much more of this I can take.

Tony Chvala-Smith 57:05

Yeah. So, I think that's a totally necessary reaction to the text. And there's so many ways that the text is trying to show up the monarchy and monarchical power and male power and male privilege for what they are. That, the text does that. And we have to pay attention to that as readers, that the text is actually a Rorschach test on our own, it can be a Rorschach test on our own gender inequalities. And that's one place where the text can be helpful to us. It's like, oh, too bad, you know, I wish we could say, well, this is just the Iron Age. Oh, no, this is the 21st century. This is us. This is the United States. This is places like the Congo, where women are constantly used as, you know, they're raped as a way of diminishing them and others...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 58:07

And demoralizing their whole...yeah.

Tony Chvala-Smith 57:08

Right. So, it's, this is, this kind of stuff is constantly going on.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 58:12

And this is a piece that I was gonna say earlier, but I think it fits here too. And I said that all cultures have blind spots, right? We can't imagine where we haven't been yet so, we can't always see what the injustices are that are just built into our systems. And so, we can look back and we can see the blind spots that are here. But we can also see that some of the authors are trying to help people see these as blind spots too, you know, so there's...

Karin Peter 58:45

Well, and had warned us about them through Nathan and his...

Tony Chvala-Smith 58:48

Right.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 58:49

Exactly. So, there's that starting to help people imagine there's another way. There's another way of being, of respecting each other, of living. But I wanted to kind of just draw that back to us, and what are our blind spots? We have them too. We live in a culture where we've accepted how things are is how things are. And until things start to open our eyes to see that they could be another way, that's when we start to say, oh, my gosh, what have we been doing? And I think this is a moment when that's happening with George Floyd, with the pandemic and seeing all of the inequities. I mean, there's some people, some, many, many people of color, but you know, some white people too, who have been

saying, oh, my goodness, this is terrible, the system, this system that we're in. And we're all part of this systemic racism and systemic sexism. Well, you know, a big portion of the population didn't see that clearly until this last year. We're getting insights that help us to see what our blind spots have been. And so, this is this long, slow process. And it's a long slow process for the people who we're reading about, as it is for us, of slowly being able to see where change is necessary, and needed, and asking God to help us change our hearts and minds so that these changes can become reality, which, at this moment, we have more of a likelihood of some of these changes becoming reality than we did a year ago when so many of us could not see clearly, these blind spots that we've lived in and many of us benefited from for a very long time.

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:00:40

Yeah, and the church that uses these texts as canon has to decide, are we going to take the risk to be the Nathan's and call out sexism, call out racism, call out environmental degradation, call out the abuse of people? I mean, there's so many things. And, or are we going to be just, you know, a part of David's 30, part of his court, part of his chosen people, we're like, things are good for us, so, they must be good for everybody and, you know. So, we have a choice to make too and the text puts that choice before us as readers?

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:01:15

And just for going back to Michal and to Bathsheba. In this story, in their stories, to some degree, to this degree that they're able, they go from being acted upon to acting themselves and changing the directions of what will be. Michal, she speaks her mind. And she is disgusted with David. And yes, it's the text says, so he won't have sex with her because he doesn't want to have offspring by her because...

Karin Peter 1:01:48

Well, that's a big punishment on her perspective.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:01:53

Yeah, exactly.

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:01:54

She's like, woo-who. I'm free.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:01:58

So, depending on how she felt about all of that, yes, she might have been relieved. But she did what she could do. She was honest to herself. Bathsheba, later in the story, this is in 1 Kings 1, chapters 1 and 2, where, with again Nathan's help, so read here, God's help, she is, she's able to save herself and Solomon, her son, young son at this point, and put the monarchy back on track to a, with a king who loves God. And so, she goes to David, he's near the very end of his life. And she says, um, did you know that your son, what's his name? Abonijai...

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:02:48

Adonijah, sorry.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:02:50

Adonijah, there it is. That he's just proclaimed himself king. Is having a party and has all of David's army leaders and everybody on his side. He's off here having a party about this. David doesn't know. And so, Nathan and Bathsheba reveal this to him and said, what about your promise that Solomon would be the next king? Did you know, what it is? What's his name again? Adonijah is doing and David is sparked into action. His conscience is pricked some way, in other places. And he remembers his promise to God, his promise to Bathsheba, about Solomon, and gets right on it. And, you know, and Solomon is anointed and made king and the vast majority of the people recognize that. So, Bathsheba's willingness to speak on behalf of herself, and Solomon, and the promises that David had had made, she is now one who is acting instead of just being acted, act upon. So, I think that's another thing to take from these storylines.

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:04:13

And even within the severe constraints that are on Michal or on Bathsheba, I think certainly a feminist lens and liberation lens will look at these texts and say, these stories, even within constraints, we have to say the, whatever "No" we can say to the powers that be, we have to say it, right? Even if it doesn't seem to get us anything, the "No" to David, or the "No" to whatever that is oppressing, abusing, discarding people, whatever "No" we can say, there's a moral prophetic obligation to say it, regardless of what it gets. I think that's a really important theme in the story.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:05:00

That there's a cumulative change that happens?

Karin Peter 1:05:04

Well, it's not the last that we hear from Bathsheba or Tamar, for that matter, because when we get to Matthew they appear again.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:05:14

As people that God used in very, yeah, as important people in the storyline of Israel.

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:05:21

It's like that genealogy in Matthew's gospel that includes them. It's like Matthew saying, a, don't forget, they weren't just, you might have thought they were minor characters. No, they're part of a larger divine drama. So, I'm glad you brought that up, Karin. It's really an important...

Karin Peter 1:05:41

Yeah, they come back again for us. So, all the more reason to pay attention to them here in a, second.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:05:48

Their involvement in the story makes a difference.

Karin Peter 1:05:52

I do have one last comment on this and it was just something I noticed at the end of 2 Samuel. I call it feminine redemption. After all this crap that happens to all these women through 2 Samuel, at the very end, he goes and finds some wise women. What? Where did they come from? Who were they? In the commentaries it says, oh, they could have been like leftover from the tribal period. Nobody told them that they weren't important anymore. What's the deal? Are they like the crones, the herbal healers? Who are these wise women?

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:06:21

Probably they're in the, in the style of Deborah, who was the judge, who was a judge. She was a military leader. She was a prophet of sorts. And she was, you know, the early people came to her for advice, as well as for counsel. And so, I think it's probably that kind of, that sense of the, it was in the culture. There are these women who are recognized for these kinds of gifts of God, not just to them, but to the to the whole community,

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:07:00

Women prophets occasionally show up here in the narrative of Samuel and Kings. So, it sounds like they're their own kind of prophetic guild, right. So, and they may be keeping alive anti-monarchy traditions in their own way. So, it'd be interesting to pursue that with a number of feminist commentators on the text just to see where they would go with that. But, so...

Karin Peter 1:07:30

Right, right. I just found it interesting at the end of all this trauma for women, that we kind of conclude the women's perspective in the story with these wise women. I think that's an interesting editorial literary device, if you will...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:07:48

Exactly, again, why was this included?

Karin Peter 1:07:49

...for Samuel. Exactly, exactly. Okay, those are all of my observations, questions and venting that I had to do after reading about this.

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:08:02

It's gut-wrenching.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:08:02

All these texts, if we go there, and if we're willing to take them seriously, they're gonna touch us. They're gonna trigger us too. And they're going to challenge us to not flinch away. And I think that's, scripture should do that for us. So, we're going to go into the experience part. And if you haven't got something to write with, go get something to write with, and give you a little time to journal on a couple of questions, a few questions. So again, I just want to start where we start with what, how we're approaching scripture. So, in this part, in the experience part, it's to consider how the people in the story see and experience God in their lives. And if you can find something in their story that fits or

enhances your walk with Christ or understanding of God, great. But if nothing fits, that's okay too. Scripture is here as a servant to our faith, not as a dictator of faith. And so, if it's helpful, use it, if it gets in the way, go on to something else. Go on to another aspect of faith building. So, take a little time to journal about the following questions. And I'd ask you to do this prayerfully because our times of harm and hurt are sometimes hard to spend time with, and so, to be wise in that. But the question is, can you identify with Bathsheba as you remember times when choice was taken away from you, or where powers that you don't have any control over, hurt you or threw your life into chaos? And then to take time too to think how and where did healing and hope happen? And to make room for the realizations of those people, or times, or the presence of the Spirit, or another person reminding you of God's love, however it might happen. And maybe you're still in that process of trying to find healing and hope, and acknowledge that as well. Even the longing for that is part of the process. So, the next, and this is the part I was just telling you about in 1 Kings, where Bathsheba's speech to David opens his eyes in a way. And you know, God, through Nathan, shone a light on the evil acts of David toward Bathsheba and Uriah. And then later, the end of David's life, Nathan comes and warns Bathsheba that she and Solomon are in danger, and asks her to help him keep Adonijah from becoming the next king. And together, they convince David to act. And it's Bathsheba's speech to David that stirs him to remembrance and to action. And so, in some very real ways, she becomes God's voice to David, reminding him of his own integrity, or whatever is left of his integrity. And so, I want you to consider for yourself, when has God helped you speak or act for justice? Or how or through whom has God given you the courage, or the words to make a new path in your own life, as we think of Bathsheba, of Michal? So, take a bit of time with these questions, and see what it might reveal about what you know about God, about your story with God.

Karin Peter 1:12:07

Thank you, Charmain. We are coming to the close of what ended up being a rather long episode about Nathan and Bathsheba. But I do want to give you the opportunity if there's any last thoughts or comments that have come to you before we close out? Or maybe tell us where we're going in our next episode?

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:12:31

I think I would say that any action towards liberative justice, however small, matters. That's something I learned from these texts.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:12:45

And in the digging in and the going through all of those feelings, the question for me became, how do we get a changed and better world? And how do we get there? And I think in this story, you know, Nathan's words, brave, courageous actions by people, it's one step at a time. You know, change happens, one step at a time, as we realize, as our eyes are opened, as our hearts are broken. It's one realization at a time, one mistake at a time, one apology at a time, one epiphany at a time, one little success at a time. And that's how we move forward towards God's imagined world.

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:13:35

For next time, we will be considering the prophet known as Isaiah of Jerusalem, who's got a book named after him, but he's not the only author writing in that book. It's a big, it's like a big conglomeration of many, of words from several prophets. But we'll focus on Isaiah of Jerusalem for...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:13:54

Which is basically the chapters...

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:13:56

Isaiah of Jerusalem's oracles and roughly chapters 1 through 39, with some exceptions, right.

Karin Peter 1:14:04

Always exceptions, absolutely.

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:14:06

A whole lot of editing going on in them.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:14:08

Yeah, and we don't have to, you don't have to read all 39 chapters, but

Karin Peter 1:14:12

Oh, thank you.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:14:15

Also, just a reminder that Faunt's writings on many of these things are pretty concise, and he gives a really nice background. So, if you're using that text, take a quick look before you start reading. He'll give you some sense of the landscape.

Karin Peter 1:14:31

Excellent.

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:14:31

Reading Isaiah will help us deal with the question, a good Community of Christ question, so, what does it mean to be a prophetic people?

Karin Peter 1:14:39

Oh, this is good. I'm looking forward to that. Not to reading the 39 chapters, but definitely to the discussion. So, before we close out, I think this was Episode Six of He'Brews, so we're just rolling along here. Before we close that out, I want to give a shout out to my friend Reverend Rock Fremont. He's a UCC pastor down in Arizona, who when I told him what we were recording, he called my attention to an article out of *Christian Century*. So, listeners, if you're not familiar with *Christian Century*, it's a periodical of which you might want to be familiar. So, I would encourage you to Google that and look it up. But there was an article by Anna Carter Florence, titled, "Read the Rape of Tamar and Pay Attention to the Verbs". And in light of the closing thoughts that Tony and Charmaine just gave us, I'd

say that will be a really wonderful, painful and wonderful read, to help continue to make sense of some of the things that we encounter when we read scripture. So, between now and then, thank you, Tony and Charmaine Chvala-Smith, for guiding us through Hebrew scripture, what we call the Old Testament. I'm Karin Peter, this is Project Zion. Thanks so much for listening.

Josh Mangelson 1:16:11

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