

# Re-Reading the Story of Bathsheba: A Mother or Murderer in the Royal Court of David

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## ABSTRACT

Available scholarly literatures on Bathsheba have viewed her from many angles as a famous woman in the royal court of David. At times she was labeled as a “weak, great influencer, domineering and resolute in whatever she wanted, which she must get it. However, little attention or not attention has been placed on her contradictory traits as a caring mother and at the same times a cunning murderer in the royal court. The Yahwist or Deuteronomist who had close relationship with the court in 2 Samuel 11-20:26 and 1 Kings 1-2 focused on power brokers in the narrative among who was Bathsheba. This study therefore, attempted to cross examine the dual traits of Bathsheba as a mother or she should be considered as a murderer, using critical and historical approaches and social-cultural practices of the day to interrogate the lifestyles of Bathsheba. It is our considered opinion to see which of the character took a leading prominence in her life and juxtapose this with some contemporary mothers through her lenses. The significance of the study lies in the fact that over-bearingness, jealousy and untamed ambitions and character could make someone a murderous mother at home. In conclusion, it is God that gives power and position and over ambitions to hold a position can endanger one’s life and any request or mission that can expose another man to life threatening situations should be avoided. It is therefore recommended that family tussles and crises are real but it should not strategically lead to plots that can terminate another human life as in the case of Bathsheba, Uriah, David and Adonijah in the royal court of David.

**Keywords:** Bathsheba, Mother, Murderer, David, Solomon, Adonijah and Royal Court

## INTRODUCTION

As a Jewess, Bathsheba did not bear a strange name but Jewish name that was notable and familiar with other Jewish counterparts. Giving daughters special names in the family settings could be meaningful, prophetic and projected in the ancient Jewish terrain. Such projected and meanings loaded names could be traced to the meaning of Bathsheba in Hebrew language. Words such as “covenant, “oath” and “swearing” are cognates that Jews are familiar with and well considered as beautiful names that fit Jewish damsels such as Bathsheba and others. Parents see the beauty of nature and gift of the Divine in their children and give them beautiful names. Her parents might have looked at her and saw in her a reflection of the faithfulness of Yahweh to His chosen race and named her “Bathsheba. The name “Bathsheba” is a Jewish name from two Hebrew compounded words: “bath” and “sheba, meaning, “daughter of the oath” or “daughter of an oath. Probably, her parents might have seen her as a reflection of hope, fulfillment and established covenant of Yahweh of Israel despite all the political threats of foreign nations especially the Philistines with their expansionist programme. Bath depicts her youngness, gender as a daughter, position in the family and the

nation at large while sheba or sheva in the Hebrew language, meaning, “oath” or “swear” by the seven depicts her faith or the faith of her parents in God of the covenant (cf. Gen 21:27-33). She was associated with a parental lineage that she was a daughter of Eliam in 2 Samuel 11:3 but also referred to as Bathshua the daughter of Ammiel according to 1 Chronicles 3:5. In a nutshell, Bathsheba bore both a historical and theological name of a “daughter of oath” and a Jewess among the chosen people of God, even among children of Abraham as they serve God of the Covenant. According to Sara Koenig, quoted by David A. Uribe (2021, 1) in spite of the complexity of her name and character, “Bathsheba survives” the odds.

Little introduction of Bathsheba or Bathshua shows that she was of marriageable age and she got married to Uriah, a proselyte to Yahwism; yet the origin of Uriah was not hidden by the Deuteronomistic writer that he was of the Hittite origin. The status of Bathsheba in ancient Israel placed her in a distinct matrimonial home. Whether she was captured in a war between the Hittites and the Israelites and she was eventually got married to Uriah the Hittite or she willingly married Uriah, the Hittite, the narrator is silent on this. As a prisoner of war, probably, her name was an expression of faith, future fulfillment, fortunes and hope that God would fulfill His covenant and perfect it in her and in Israel as a nation, we could not affirm either. This could also be said about her name: that it was religiously impinged on her as a Jewess that Yahweh would keep His covenant with His people for permanent inheritance of the Land of Promise and restoration and she epitomized this hope and faith.

### **Personality of Bathsheba and Uriah at Home**

The narrator must have had a motive before he traced the identity of Uriah as the “Hittite. Definitely, he was not a Jew but from another race. As the name connotes “urriya” or “arriyahu, meaning, “Yahweh is my light” might have had influence on his religious conversion from pantheistic religion of the Hittites or Canaanites to Yahweh and monotheism of ancient Israel (Baker, 1982). Whether he got a change of name after his proselytism to Yahwism, the narrator is silent on this. Whatever is responsible for the name that is associated with faith in Yahweh of Israel as his Light remains guessing ideas, which are subject to further discussions in the Old Testament studies among the biblical scholars. As a Jewess with the name of faith in God to fulfill His covenant or oath with the chosen race, it could be deduced that Bathsheba was probably not satisfied with the marriage with a Hittite. Or her father might take delight in the military prowess of Uriah and desired that his daughter got married to him to the dissatisfaction of the virgin damsel herself. Military prowess of Uriah might not satisfy the religious desire for unmixed blood of pure Jewishness in Bathsheba. With this, she could prefer her husband, Uriah, to always be in warfronts while she could look for other alternatives whenever the opportunity presented itself. The pages of the Succession Narrative in her episode do not suggest this position either.

Whether the marriage with Uriah produced any child in the narrative we are also not told. The truancy of Uriah at home could have led to sexual dissatisfaction of a young damsel who longed to have a husband always at home to satisfy her sexual longings as a biological being. Sending Uriah to the warfront without season and without any hope of returning from wars at times could be psychological tormenting, emotionally disturbing, destabilizing and provoked sexual need in young Bathsheba anytime the biological instinct and nature rose in her. It was evident that Bathsheba was still at the child-bearing age as the narrative displays. The thought, if the King, David, could send my husband to the warfront while he was supposed to be in the warfronts but was at home, and my emotional and sexual needs remained unsatisfied, something must be done to it. It could be that this thought always filled her heart while she suffered loneliness with emotional pains at home and she was looking for ways out.

The motherhood and issue of child bearing could be other concerns to Bathsheba with no husband to fulfill this role through cohabitation because Uriah was always absent at home. Child bearing in ancient Israel was

seeing as blessing from God and it was greatly cherished by every family. This was theologically believed that man was created by God to be “fruitful and multiply” according to Yahwist and the blessings in Genesis 1:26-28. Children bring continuity to the tribe and race and to the individual family on earth. Denial of this blessing could be likened to a curse or a divine punishment. In ancient Israel, giving birth to children was a strong desire to any woman and barrenness was seen as divine denial and prevention from having posterity among the chosen race. The cases of Abraham and Sarah (cf. Gen. 15:1-6; 16); Isaac and Rebekah (Gen. 25:21-24); Jacob and Rachel (Gen. 30:1-2) and Elkanah and Hannah 1 Sam. 1:1-18) readily come to mind to show how important the issue of child bearing was to the Jews among other nations.

Uriah who was always absent from home for the sake of national assignments was totally devoted to this national cause. Uriah could be held responsible for his inability to differentiate between home duties and national assignments. However, the affiliation he had with the king of a rising nation, Israel, especially, in the early years of monarchy in ancient Israel might enhance the devotion of Uriah. Besides, the law of holy war forbids a committed soldier to go for co-habitation during the fighting. This is to avoid uncleanness, ceremonial ostracism, body weakness and enhance more concentration according to the Deuteronomist.

When the army goes out against your enemies, then keep  
yourself from every wicked thing. If there is any man among  
you who becomes unclean by some occurrence in the night  
then he shall go outside the camp and he shall not come inside  
the camp-Deut 23:9.

Going inside for co-habitation, which was forbidden by law kept Uriah from mating with his wife for many days and times due to holy wars commanded by Yahweh of Israel. Anderson (1966, 147) supporting this situation rightly submits that the rules of purity that applied to a sanctified soldier during the holy war (2 Sam. 11:11) prevented Uriah from going inside for biological cohabitation during the war against the Ammonites. Not the delicacies of the king and the sweet wine, taken to a large extent would dampen the senses of a committed bodyguard and a prominent mercenary of the king at this time in person of Uriah. Uriah showed his loyalty and commitment to the nation and King David during this time but unfortunately, he was not justly rewarded for his total devotion to King David.

### **Nearness to the Palace, the Beginning of Seduction**

Kings in ancient times used to have their bodyguard very close to their palaces. This was for the purpose of protection, safety and defense against internal and external attacks from the forces of nations around them and for prompt response against the enemies. The bodyguards were the defenders of the kings and the royal courts in ancient times. Uriah was one of the bodyguards of David, who had access to the royal palace because he lived very close to the palace. The movement of King David was not hidden from the family of Uriah and his wife. Bathsheba could have noticed that David was at home instead of being at the warfront like her husband, Joab and others. After all, her husband was one of the foreign mercenaries and bodyguard of the king in case of any outbreak of attack against the king and the palace. Due to the fact that her house was very close to the royal court, she could monitor the movement of the king. She seized the opportunity of her personality and womanhood to attract the king in the evening bath in the absence of her husband. We could not deduce seduction per se here, and Bathsheba was not held responsible (Payne, 1982, 307), at the same time we could not rule it out because of the “open roof bath” that was strange and “targeted” for open

sight by anyone around from the top of a wall. The open bath of Bathsheba could have ultimate reasons and targeted at King David. It could be a retaliation or seduction or innate desire for sexual intimacy due to the absence of her husband.

She knew the charming power of nakedness of a beautiful woman in the sight of a biologically matured man. Whether she was taking her bath as a result of menstrual purification as we are pressurized to believe according to the narrator or not is subject to debate among the scholars. Bathsheba and her irresistible body to the sexual advances of King David could be as a result of her sense of motherhood, sexual need and quest for child-bearing, as we see later. She wanted children of her own. Taking for granted that her bath was a purification rite after her menstrual cycle and she wanted to purify herself as required by the Law from a decent and hygienic woman, she was also ready for pregnancy because it was her time of ovulation. Seeing chariots and horses with royal soldiers from the royal court could be intimidating and dazing to a lonely woman who has been suffering from emotional pains and sexual thirsts in the times of her ovulation. Can anyone doubt this? David could not have had sexual encounter with her for more than once. Or did she spend some days with David in the royal court? The text seems to indicate that David had sex with her for once or many times but on that day alone.

Then David sent messengers, and took her, and she came to him,  
and he lay with her, for she was cleansed from her impurity;  
and she returned to her house (2 Sam. 11:4).

The instinct of motherhood was here displayed by Bathsheba when King David sent for her. There was no iota of resistance according to the passage. The Deuteronomistic law demands that under such a situation the oppressed or the victim should shout aloud for rescue and safety (Deut. 22:27). Here, Bathsheba did not shout nor cry for protection as a married woman under the pressure of King David. It could be because of the dominance of man in the patriarchal society she found herself in ancient Israel or because of the imposing fame of the king over her or disparity in honour and age between her and the king. We could guess that she wanted her own children and any opportunity presented or open to her, she was ready to seize and utilize it.

Not sooner than later, the result of going to the royal court and secret sexual encounter was revealed to the public. According to the report, she was soon loaded with a "born to die child. The message of Bathsheba that showed the aftermaths of what transpired in the secret between her and David began to unfold. The sexy woman with absentee husband had been loaded with the seed of the king of the nation. She was bold to say that "oh king, you are responsible for this pregnant load. After all, her husband was not at home and the last sexual relationship she had was with the king of Israel, David. It is apparent that the marriage of Uriah with Bathsheba did not produce any child as we can read in 2 Samuel 11. Probably, there were fruits of the womb, the narrator failed to mention this and not his focus. Uriah, a faithful and patriotic soldier in Israel under King David could not mind the significance of bearing children through a Hebrew woman. If as a man, this did not border him, it was a major concern to Bathsheba to have children in her lifetime as a Jewish woman.

The reader notes that childlessness is unbearable to any Hebrew woman. Sarah (cf. Gen. 16:1-2) even a man in the case of Abraham (cf. Gen. 15:1-3); Leah and Rachel (cf. Gen. 29:31; 30:1-6); Rebekah (cf. Gen. 25:21-26) and Hannah (cf. 1 Sam. 1:2-18) among others showed their pains and agonies when they could not give birth to a child. The fear of death of Uriah in the warfront could have partly been responsible for the "open bath" of Bathsheba in order to attract sexual attention of David who was at home when he ought to be in the

warfront. Any way the deed has been done. What David wanted after his lust was sex with a woman taking an open bath while he saw her from the top of the wall.

Bathsheba was not afraid of accusation of sex and pregnancy outside her legal marriage, trusting that she was safe under the royal authority and power of the star of Israel, King David. By this, she violated the Torah that says, “You shall not commit adultery”- (Ex; 20:14). The instinct or desire to have children should not have driven Bathsheba to cohabitation outside her matrimonial home. This was the genesis of her journey from motherhood to a murderous woman.

The respect accorded kings and authority ascribed to them in the ancient near east and ancient Israel have substantial forces and power exertion on people. Though at times this power was arbitrarily abused and this made their subject to be totally submissive. Titles such as “prince” (cf. 1Sam.25:30); “my Lord” (cf. 1 Sam. 25:28, 31); “my lord my king”-2 Sam.18:31-32) that were used among others show the level of respect for the kings in ancient Israel (Jeong B. Kim and Human, D. J., 2008). According to Solvang, the sexual relationship with Bathsheba, impregnation, killing of Uriah and the final taking her as his wife could be deduced to be abuse of royal authority and power on the side of David (2003, p. 133). The implication of this singular act has national negative effects on the house of David and Israel as a whole (Solvang, 2003).

### **“I am pregnant”-Bathsheba’s Gladness to be a Mother**

The high sense of gladness to be a mother in Bathsheba could be claimed to have started with her open roof bathing. The narratological explanation of the story avoided the distance of her house to the royal palace of David (der Berg) for no reason given. This could be a plot to show that the house of Uriah was close and David knew that Uriah was not around and this could not be the first time Bathsheba would be taking her bath in an unroofed bathroom. What an exegete could deduce lies in the fact that it was a little distance from the palace where anyone on the roof or wall could commit sexual lucre. ... And from the roof he saw a woman bathing and the woman was very beautiful to behold-(2 Sam. 11:26). The war with the Ammonites could have lasted for many days. Uriah had not returned from the warfront, the wife at home had fulfilled the ritualistic purity from her monthly flow according to Leviticus 15:19-30. What next?

The time of ovulation and desire for co-habitation with her absentee husband might have set in for Bathsheba. She would have been counting the numbers of months she has been alone at home and waiting for the time to conceive. Noticing that the king was also at home and not in the warfront as expected (cf. 2Sam.11:1), the opportunity has come and she seized the moment. Probability was there that she might have noticed that king David usually come out in the evening moving around on the roof, looking around and longing to see if there was any messenger from the warfront coming with a message (2Sam. 11:2; cf. 18:24). The idleness of a leader is a bane for the success of the kingdom of any king. David was idle and he paid for this laxity. Bathsheba set the time for her “open bathing. Sitting at home till the last day of her flow would naturally call for her “evening” bath. With no resistance she went with the messengers of the king. With no argument also the king ... lay with her, for she was cleansed from her impurity and she returned to her house (2 Sam.11:4b). Whether this was strategically plotted and executed by Bathsheba against King David as a revenge for sending her husband to the warfront for days, leaving her at home to suffer from emotional loneliness, strong sexual desire and eventually be childless in Jewish community that cherished child-bearing were puzzles to be unraveled. The reader gets one idea from the passage that Bathsheba was at the period ready for sex and anything that surfaced would be meeting her need. After all, David would also not be unclean as a result of the relationship.

Further, the joy of being a mother in Bathsheba was gladly expressed in the choice of vocabulary she used to pass her message to David. Instead of using the Hebrew word for pregnancy, **בהריון** behheh rayon, she



used *היה אנוכ* transliterated as *hayah 'anoki*, meaning, “I have become pregnant, “I am with a child” or “I am pregnant. This is the only passage in 2 Samuel where the word “*hayahanoki*” are used. The verb used here is perfect, meaning “become pregnant, “*hayah*, Glaringly, she announced the joy of motherhood to David in two concise words in Hebrew, *היה אנוכ*, “I am with a child, literally she meant- “I have conceived” or “I am pregnant. Any woman could express the joy of being with a child with any possible choice of words as Bathsheba did. She could have been longing for test of her real womanhood through a protruded womb loaded with a fetus. Now she had achieved this long expected status of a true woman and nothing could restrain her from announcing to the man who was responsible for this.

Bathsheba delighted herself and showed a good portrait as a mother by informing David that “I am pregnant with a child. This shows that she cared for both her personality as a woman and for the child as a mother. It would only take a mother to have become pregnant outside her legal marriage or matrimonial home and still retain the pregnant without the option of abortion. As at that time, her husband was still alive and she did not hide it from the man that was responsible for the pregnancy. As a woman she could understand what it meant to be with a child in ancient Israel. She wanted to preserve her lineage in the family by child bearing. “I am with a child” was not foreign to her and it is crucial significance in the light of the experience of Sarah, Rebekah, Leah, Rachel, the wife of Manoah and Hannah among others in the neighboring nations around her. Peradventure, if her husband died as a result of war against the Ammonites and he did not return back home, “I am with a child” would be her definite consolation at the end.

Miscarriages and abortion might not have attained a sophisticated level among the urban vanguard of the past centuries during this period till twenty first century now. Ancient Israel knew something about stillbirth, miscarriages and death of pregnancies (cf. Job. 3:16, Psa. 58:8). Either by natural occurrence, whether influenced or induced or because of divine punishment, ancient Israel was not totally ignorant of stillbirth and miscarriages. As a young woman with different strategies of handling sexual aftermaths and “womanhood, Bathsheba demonstrated the sense of motherhood in her by preserving the pregnancy in her womb. Had she terminated the pregnancy, she would have become an abortionist pacesetter for the modern world and point of theological reference and ethical enquiry in the Scripture. In this she was a “faithful mother.

At the same time, Bathsheba could have equally announced this to David for safety sake and the security of her life due to the Law guiding sexual morality in ancient Israel. Pregnancy outside marriage is a suicide mission in ancient Israel. Remember cases of Tamar in Genesis 38:24 and Deuteronomistic law in Deuteronomy 22:22. Whatever may be the case, Bathsheba was pregnant and it was the king of the land that was responsible for it.

Here we see the quest for motherhood in her and the “concern” that she was impregnated by King David. This she might have done in order to arrest the attention of the king to care for and take responsibility of the child. Immediately, David started to pave way for the fatherhood of the pregnant but in unlawful ways (Payne, 1970). Uriah was removed out of the way in a gruesome way while his loyalty to the king and patriotism to the nation were not considered at all (cf. 2 Sam.11:6-24). Bathsheba still showed element of empathy and sympathy for her dead husband. Whether she knew that David, who just impregnated her was also responsible for the death of her husband was not stated by the narrator. It could have been later on as times went by that she was informed about the plot for the death of her husband was from the king, David.

When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead,

she mourned for her husband- 2 Sam.11:26.

Whether his death was natural or due to attacks of the war or plotted by David, she did not bother to enquire. After the time of mourning was over she was elevated to the royal court as a substantive wife with a pregnancy already. The expected joy of “I am with a child” was dashed as God struck the boy and he died. Her sorrow for the death of the first child showed the sense of motherhood in Bathsheba. She showed sorrowful concerns and care for the child. She could have considered it to be double tragedy: the loss of the first husband and loss of the first child, perhaps.

Cross examination of her sorrow for the death of her unnamed child show a good sense of mother-child attachment. Bathsheba was attached to her child right from the fetus level till he was born. The divine striking of the child was not because Bathsheba was impregnated by David but that David killed Uriah after the conception of Uriah’s wife and violation of the Torah and covenant (Solvang, 2003). Bathsheba decided not to kill the child and honored her “motherhood” in Israel” but the great man of the nation, king David decided to kill one of his generals due to illicit sex with his wife (cf. 2 Sam. 11:6-30). In this sense, Bathsheba was more righteous than David on life preservation. The comfort David gave her after this revived the joy of motherhood in her again as she hoped there would be another pregnancy. Great sense of motherhood in Bathsheba was brought to limelight when she gave birth to Solomon, a prince and the prospective king of Israel. Though after this, she disappeared from the scene only to reappear in the succession narrative of 1 Kings. 1-2.

Levenson<sup>14</sup>, Baron<sup>15</sup> and Koenig<sup>16</sup> view this episode on the sides of both David and Bathsheba in the light of Abigail preventing David from shedding of innocent blood; the effects of the sexuality of David with Bathsheba on the personality of David and nation and the theological damages Bathsheba done to the “lamp of Israel”, David as the supreme human ruler of Israel. It could be inferred that the innocence of Bathsheba was lightened by avoidance of divine punishment on her but on David and the child. It could be better for the young child to die at early stage as a divine punishment rather than Bathsheba, a mother with a womb who would still be a mother of a young future king that would be loved by Yahweh of Israel. Perhaps, Yahweh was applying the law in Deuteronomy 22:6-7 to Bathsheba and the child. Even the divine providence protected the motherhood of Bathsheba in this case of adultery in the face of Exodus 20:14 and Deuteronomy 5:18.

The conception, birth, nurturing the growth of the second child and the way she fought for his enthronement clearly displayed the motherliness in Bathsheba. Having being comforted for the death of the first child, Bathsheba conceived again. This time around it was the pregnancy of a prospective prince and eventual king of no other kind among the kings of the east in Israel. The prophetic message to the name of the child would have prompted Bathsheba to show endearment, sincere love, motherliness and being desperate to the succession of Solomon.

### **Intrigues of Succession and Murderous Character of Bathsheba**

The Succession Narrative on Bathsheba in 1 Kings 1 revealed that a woman, who was supposed to be an epitome of timidity, mean, irresistibility, submissiveness and the motherliness in 2 Samuel 11 has assumed new traits. As Koenig opines and submits, Bathsheba has become more mature, decisive, desperate, bold, and ready to have her ways and be able to manipulate the political power with religious influence even by conscripting a royal court prophet, Nathan, a long time prophet of the king. Having gained access to the family of David every other wife became “fizzled out” to secondary position. With the key of sex with the number of citizen of the royal court, she gained entrance to the envy of all na’ions’ palace. Now it was time to speak and do politics.<sup>17</sup> Cheryl You quotes Koenig who submits that Bathsheba, as a character has become mature and “developed over the course of time” in four major ways. She has become a woman of more “speech and action”; two, she has a growing level of maturity; three, she is no longer described by her

physical appearance and lastly she has now become “a mother”.<sup>18</sup> Building on this, Alter also observes the level of change in the character of Bathsheba, which has painted and pitched her against her formal image in 2Samuel 11. He rightly notes that a woman of few words “I am pregnant” *היה אנוכ* is ready to show herself as a “mistress of language (many words with the cord of her tongue loosed) shrewd, energetic, politically astute.”<sup>19</sup>

As a married woman she knows the law guiding the sexual life in Israel (cf. Dt. 22:22). What Bathsheba first did in order to explicitly show the murderous instinct in her was to violate this law. By submitting her body for sex with David could lead to the death of both of them if it was applied. It means that Bathsheba could have plotted the death of David while not minding her own life at the same time through this sexual act. If David has sent my husband to the warfront, not minding his life, I also would plot for his death at home through my charming and beautiful body. This thought could have crossed her mind and she was ready to execute this. Hence, the justification for her image being painted as seductress<sup>20</sup>. Here we can call her a murderer or a mother with murderous instinct in her. If the law in Deut. 22:22 were fully applied, David could have been killed through her refusal to resist the advances of David, and anyway, she was up to something.

Can someone exonerate Bathsheba from the death of her husband Uriah? Inferences from the passage could reveal a shock to Joab; why a letter from the king that Uriah, a loyal and patriotic soldier should be positioned helpless in the fiercest and hottest place in the warfront that he may die? Bellis<sup>21</sup> is of the view that the Joab’s allusion has something to do with his suspicion that a woman is involved in the orders he has received to have Uriah killed. The sexual act of the wife of a Hittite warrior with another man in the absence of the husband and the resultant pregnancy led to the prompt orchestration of the death of innocent and committed soldier of David. On this, one could not totally exonerate her from murderous acts. It could be that the love of Bathsheba, a Jewess, to Uriah, a Hittite was not total. In the absence of her husband at home, she betrayed him with the advances of a king. King David was better than a mercenary in the warfront, why resisting the sexual proposals of the king of the chosen nation? Living outside the palace no matter how close the distance is different from living inside the palace. Bathsheba could have considered her preference for palace to a tent around the palace. May be marital the relationship had gone sour with a foreigner or she realized the omission of breaking the deuteronomistic warning in Deuteronomy 7 that a Hebrew should not marry a Canaanite, much less a Hittite and she longed for a “marital transfer” to the palace.

Targeting an evening bath when the king would be on the roof waiting for a feedback from his soldiers in the warfront could not have been without ulterior motive on the side of Bathsheba. She fully knew that she was cleansed of her impurity and ovulation time has set in. The palace was close enough to her house for security reasons and safety of the king and the palace. The bathroom in her house did not have covering roof and anyone could see the person in the bathroom while on top of the roof. If she could get the king through her naked body, the deed is done. This way it was a temptation to the weak king on the ground of sighting a naked body. By this she was privy to the death of her husband through her nakedness through an open bath. The death of both Uriah and the child was an aftermath of a woman who did not resist the sexual advances of or we call her a “victimized woman”<sup>22</sup> according to Bellis in the narrative. Here we see the image of a murder carriage through her act.

The political maneuvers and power play of Bathsheba revealed her other side in the royal court. What the narrator wanted the reader to know was the prominence Bathsheba had gained in the royal court; the silence of the other wives of David and her role in the enthronement of Solomon with all the attachments to it. Amnon, the legitimate heir to the throne and the first born to have been killed by Absalom as a revenge for violating his sister, Tamar (cf. 2 Sam 13). Absalom another potential heir to the throne was dead under



complicity in the hand of Joab (cf 2 Sam. 15). The next competitor was Adonijah who has got the supports of the chief of army of the kingdom and the spiritual leader, the priest Abiathar (cf. 2 Kgs. 1:5-9).

The decisiveness and intrigues in Bathsheba arose. The palatial coup d'état started with the bedroom discussion that is never recorded in 2 Samuel. If it was true that there was ever a bedroom discussion between David and Bathsheba, she kept this to her chest till the last days of David. Due to what she wanted to achieve, she did not mention it to anyone in the palace except to a long friend of David, who has great influence on him, Prophet Nathan. By inviting the oath of the Lord to her speech in going to David may be a play on her name- "daughter of oath. Claiming the throne for her son, Solomon, instead of Adonijah, this portended a danger to the life of Adonijah should Solomon eventually become the king. With the aid of Nathan the prophet, Bathsheba convinced David to enthrone Solomon her son on the throne while David was still alive. Having arrested the total attention of David to herself, Bathsheba gained the control of the royal palace of David. She now projected Solomon for the throne under a subtle manner with the aids of strong religious and spiritual agent, Nathan. With a high understanding of royal court politics couple with religion, she displayed the idea that she has now become "a palatial politician. As she "seduces" David with her body in the first time with little words, she was ready to use religiously coated and charming words to make David bow to her desperate desire for the enthronement of Solomon. Charming words in religious tones as instructed. Telling David that .... You swore by the Lord your God.... "And the king took an oath.... Just as is sworn to you by the lord god of Israel..... (1kgs.1:17, 29, 30). We see her desperation for the throne for her son.

#### Bathsheba, Adonijah and Abishag in the Murderous Plot in the Royal Court

Now Solomon has been enthroned. Bathsheba has become the mother of the new king. Another young and virgin damsel was in the court. The relationship of Abishag, a young queen and senior queen mother was hidden till Adonijah violated her order of Solomon.

No one would want to stick his neck for the fact that Bathsheba did not know the idea of inheritance of the royal wives by the incumbent king as a means of further legitimacy of his kingship and the throne establishment. Having acquires the king's wives and concubine; ancient kings legitimated the legality to the throne. This was the first done in Israel by Absalom in his rebellion against his father. (2 Sam.15).

Adonijah was not satisfied with his quest for the throne and the enthronement of Solomon. He went further to devise a scheme involving an authoritative queen mother in the palace, he sought for Abishag. The coup of Absalom was not outside the knowledge of Bathsheba and the cultural practices attached to it. Bathsheba knew fully well that given Abishag to Adonijah was a subtle way of a claim to the throne beside the fact that he was a senior to Solomon in line to the throne

By agreeing to present the request of Adonijah before the new king contradicted the culture of the day and displayed a subtle murderous character of Bathsheba. The response of Solomon to what seemed "one small petition" to Bathsheba indicated the grievous consequences; a contradiction of the character and contribution of Bathsheba to the enthronement of Solomon; two, relationship between Abishag and Bathsheba in the palace; three, a possible way of dethroning Solomon by Adonijah; four, violation of the socio-cultural practice of the day and five, eventual death of Adonijah as the last rival of Solomon on the kingship.

Bathsheba here displayed her contradictory trait as a subtle murderer. Solomon response to his mother shows the relationship between marriage of the ousted king's wives and the kingship. Bathsheba did not recognize the seniority of Adonijah over Solomon when she was projecting Solomon for the kingship but in the case Abishag she was used that either to entice Solomon in order to grant the request or to remind him

that Adonijah claim to the throne was because he was older than Solomon, thereby reminding Solomon there is still a claimant to the throne- Adonijah to be removed for an end to the claim to the throne by other children of David. Bathsheba did not consider the possibility of Solomon rejecting the request for Abishag a wife and the Solomon showed that he understood sex and kingship of Adonijah to come to Bathsheba meant that he was in the palace unknown to Solomon, he has violated the order of 1Kgs. 1:52-53, he was still interested in the issue of the throne, hence death sentenced was decreed against him would be death penalty for him as a coup deta plotter. The way she did not consider the outcome of her sex with David which led to the death ofUriah; a matured married woman taking her bath for the first time in the evening when menstruating showed that she was a strategist. The instinct of intrigue in her manifested when she ought to have rejected the errand of Adonijah to Solomon, the new king. Bathsheba knew the culture marrying wives of the deceased kings as I ancient near east and Israel as a way of legitimization of the new king yet she went ahead to run a suicide mission for Adonijah.

She could not be exonerated for the death of Adonijah through her intermediary role between Adonijah and Solomon gave an order to Adonijah not to leave his home whether close or far from the place, the author was silent on this. Bathsheba a palacopolitician was aware of his, by coming to her; Bathsheba should have secretly sent him back and unknown to Solomon. Rather she went to Solomon to announce his coming to her, violating the king's order and his audacity to ask for the virgin damsel left for Solomon by David. Thereby, she plotted the death the death of Adonijah in the garb of asking for Abishag Adonijah had violated the order of Solomon-1Kgs. 1:52-53. Hence, he deserved to die. In this case, we did not hear Bathsheba pleading for Adonijah before Solomon. Solomon definitely understood the correlation of marriage of king's wives and he king's mother. Solomon mentioned two crucial issues; the kingship and the throne; final decision to sentence Adonijah to death, which he did. Bathsheba could be describes as a sinister murderer in this case

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