

A Biblical, Psychological and Moral Analysis of the Rape of Tamar in 2 Samuel 13: A Pastoral Response

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Abstract

Violence in any form, including rape, has a corrosive effect on the psychological, moral, spiritual and social lives of people. The high incidence of rape in South Africa has led to its being dubbed the 'Rape Capital' of the world, and violence against women has become the new 'normal'. To help understand, explain and prevent this phenomenon, this paper presents a biblical analysis of the narrative of the rape of Tamar in 2 Samuel 13, and identifies the contributing factors that led to rape. It then offers a biblical analysis of human passions, with special reference to sexual lust, to help us to understand a person's character. A contemporary psychological and moral profile of Amnon, the rapist, is then presented. Finally, a six-fold pastoral response to a contemporary rape situation is proposed, based on the biblical, psychological and moral analysis of the rape of Tamar by Amnon.

Keywords

Lust
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1. Introduction

Violence in whatever form, including rape, should never be tolerated by any nation of the world. The insidious presence of rape, understood as the sexual assault of another person, has nothing less than a corrosive effect on the psychological, moral, spiritual and social lives of all people. Although rape is not something new, there is something new about rape in South Africa.

The truth is that rape in South Africa has increased in epidemic proportions, especially against women, since the 1980s. According to official statistics (Vogelman 1990:96), rape occurred 16 000 times annually during the 1980s. By 1988, the official annual figure of rape rose to 19 368. Unofficially, based on the assumption that only 5% ‘(one in twenty) rapes is reported’, the figure was estimated to be about 380 000 a year. This means that 1 000 women could be expected to be raped a day or close to one woman every minute or so. But, according to Professor Julie Claassens from the Faculty of Theology at the University of Stellenbosch, new estimates indicate that ‘a woman is [now] raped every 17 seconds in this country’ (Basson 2016). This brings the total number of rapes to almost 900 000 per year, which is an increase of close to 240%. It has led to South Africa being dubbed the ‘Rape Capital’ of the world. In a ‘rape culture’, such as ours, rape against women has become the new ‘normal’ (Basson 2016), meaning that it is now accepted as part of our everyday lives.

The question is, therefore, how should the phenomenon of rape be understood and explained, and how can it be prevented? What is the essence of rape and what are the causes of reasons for its persistence? How can these questions be answered?

2. Two Dominant Theoretical Perspectives of Rape

There are two dominant theoretical perspectives for understanding and explaining rape. The first is the social constructionist view. In this view, ‘human conduct is largely socially constructed’ (Vogelman 1990:100), meaning that what is right or wrong and good or bad is whatever society decides it is. Although proponents of this view correctly identify the causes of reasons for rape in, for example, sexist ideologies, pornography and prostitution that help encourage rape, they are often unable to tell us what it is that makes rape wrong in itself. For instance, if our society were to vote tomorrow and the majority decide rape is acceptable, it would still be wrong. In this regard, the dominant view is that rape is ‘primarily an act of power’ and ‘the rapist’s

desire to assert his power' (ibid, p. 101). That is, however, what rape involves, but it is not the essence of rape. Rape, just as the killing of innocent people is first and foremost an offence against God who created human beings in His image and with a dignity that needs to be respected (cf. Gen. 9:6; Jas. 3:9).

Over against the social constructionist understanding and explanation of rape is biological reductionism. In this view, rape is understood and explained in terms of faulty biological development and 'dysfunction' of the brain, understood as a 'chemical imbalance' or 'faulty circuits' in the brain (Insel 2010; Insel and Cuthbert 2015). The problem with this view is that it is based on highly contentious scientific evidence and the presuppositions of a worldview known as biomedical materialism in psychiatry and neuroscience, or physicalism in philosophy (Joubert 2015:188–190; Zachar 2000:21ff). More problematic is the underlying logic of this view: If the 'circuits' in the brain of a rape victim function properly, then the person would not experience posttrauma memories, flashbacks, sleepless nights, fear reactions, and so forth. There would be no post-traumatic experiences if 'brain circuits' of rape victims do not malfunction, even though the victim underwent a rape experience.

The authors believe that there is an alternative way to understand and explain rape. This belief has led to the launch of the Tamar Campaign in Kenya in 2005, which focuses on sexual and domestic violence in African societies. Its point of departure is the scriptures and the Church because of its moral authority and capacity to minister to those who have been abused, as well as deal with offenders (Nyabera and Montgomery 2007:6).

It is to this end that this paper wishes to make a pastoral contribution. To help understand, explain and prevent sexual assault, the paper will begin with a biblical analysis of the narrative of the rape of Tamar in 2 Samuel 13. The critical factors that contributed towards the rape will then be identified. To gain a deeper understanding of a person's character, a biblical analysis of human passions, with special reference to sexual lust, will be conducted, followed by a contemporary psychological and moral profile of Amnon. Finally, the insights gleaned from the preceding analyses will be used to propose six key pastoral responses to rape.

3. A Biblical Analysis of the Narrative of the Rape of Tamar

3.1. Three phases of 2 Samuel 13

The tragedy in 2 Samuel 13:1–29 can be divided into three phases: the phase antecedent to the rape, the rape itself and the phase after the rape. Each phase will be dealt with in turn.

3.1.1. Phase 1: The phase before the rape (vv. 1–7)

In verse 1, the writer (Samuel) does two things. First, he says, ‘Now it was after this’.² With these words, he makes his reader aware that what will be narrated next is in some way connected with events recorded in the previous chapters. Among other things, King David's adultery with Bathsheba, his plan to have her husband killed, and the prophet Nathan confronting David about his transgressions. He then introduces three persons; two half-brothers, Absalom and Amnon, as both sons of David, and Absalom's beautiful sister, Tamar. We are told that Amnon ‘loved her’, but as we shall see, we have reason to believe that he confused his ‘love’ with sexual desire or lust. But Amnon faces a serious problem (v. 2). There were at least three obstacles that frustrate his desire to have her and his ability to act at will to satisfy that desire: (1) she was a virgin, meaning she is unmarried; (2) because she was a virgin, she was most probably never alone, since it was the custom among the Israelites to keep young unmarried women protected; and (3) the Law of Moses which forbids incest (cf. Lev. 18:6–18; 20:11–14, 17). These obstacles frustrated him to the point that ‘he made himself ill’. That ‘illness’, referred to in verse 4 as depression, was something Jonadab, Amnon's shrewd friend, could observe ‘morning after morning’ in Amnon's demeanour and behaviour—he refused to eat. However, Jonadab uses his intelligence and knowledge of deception to suggest a plan to Amnon, how he could get Tamar alone to satisfy his sexual appetite: he must ‘pretend to be ill’³ and request permission from King David that Tamar prepare his food (vv. 5–6). As it happens, the king paid Amnon a visit and wanting to make his son happy, grants Amnon his request and unknowingly hands his daughter into the devious hands of a rapist (v. 7).

3.1.2. Phase 2: The rape (vv. 8–14)

Most obediently, Tamar goes to Amnon's house and prepares cakes for him while under his close observation. But Amnon refuses to eat with other people around (vv. 8–9). Being alone, Tamar enters his bedroom to feed him only to find that ‘he took hold of her’ and demanded that she lay with him (vv. 10–11). Tamar's emphatic answer is no, and she provides him with three reasons why his

² All references are from the New American Standard Bible (NASB) unless otherwise indicated.

³ The fact that Jonadab suggested to Amnon to ‘pretend to be ill’ (v. 5) and that Amnon then ‘pretend[s] to be ill’ (v. 6) makes it impossible to believe that he was ‘really ill’. Logically speaking, it is only a healthy person that can pretend to be ill. By contrast, an ill person is ill, therefore, and can only pretend not to be ill.

intended actions would be wrong: personal and public shame for her, he would be considered a fool by all of Israel, and if he requested her hand in marriage, the king would probably grant him his request. Despite her protestations and attempts to reason with him, he uses his superior physical strength and violates her (vv. 12–14).

3.1.3. Phase 3: After the rape (vv. 15-29)

After committing his detestable act and crime, Amnon is immediately overcome with hate for Tamar and kicks her out of his room and house, again despite her protestations (vv. 15–17). Tamar seeks consolation from her brother, Absalom, and finds refuge in his home, the safest place she could think of immediately after the crime, and she dresses in clothes of mourning. Absalom comforts her, but he tells her not to speak about what happened (vv. 18–20). When King David hears what happened, he gets ‘very angry’ (v. 21), but without taking any action whatsoever. Yet Absalom now hates Amnon. Two years later, Absalom decides that it is time to take revenge. Amnon is killed by the command of Absalom, at a sheep-shearing festival (vv. 22–28).

By way of summary, the narrative of the rape of Tamar can be described as follows (Montgomery 2014):

A selfish brother, blinded by lust, horrifyingly violates his sister; a wicked friend helps plot the incestuous transgression; a father passively lets a crime done to his daughter go unpunished; a brother takes justice into his own hands committing murder on behalf of his sister; and a girl, once beautiful and pure, is now scarred and scorned for the rest of her life.

3.2. Analysis of the critical factors in the rape of Tamar

3.2.1. The use and abuse of power and authority

People in positions of power and authority often think they have rights that they can exercise without considering the rights of others. In other words, they seem to think that someone else is not allowed to say no to them. It is probable that Amnon, as David’s first-born son and heir to the throne, took some lessons from his father on how to deal with women. He could have thought that, just as David used his power and authority to satisfy his sexual desires with Bathsheba, he could do the same with Tamar, and consequently thought that it would be morally right and good, or even that he could get away with it. This being the case, it is easy to see why Jonadab asked Amnon, ‘O son of the king, why are you so depressed morning after morning?’ (v. 4). To paraphrase Jonadab’s words: ‘What is up with you Amnon? Do you not realise

your authority and rights as a prince? Enough of this!'. This kind of thinking is also found elsewhere in scripture. 1 Kings 21 documents that King Ahab desired to have Naboth's vineyard. Unable to obtain it on his terms (vv. 1–3), he got 'sullen and vexed' (depressed), laid down on his bed, and just as Amnon, he refused to eat (v. 4). What did Jezebel say to him? 'Do you now reign over Israel? Arise, eat bread, and let your heart be joyful. I will get you the vineyard of Naboth' (v. 7). The most amazing thing is, when the king heard that Naboth was dead, he immediately got up from his 'sickbed' and took possession of what he desired. It thus appears that people have the tendency to become 'ill' when their desires are frustrated or when their wills are crossed.

3.2.2. A father's bad example and lack of moral and spiritual leadership

The parallel between David and Amnon should be obvious. David had set a bad example when he yielded to his lustful appetite for Bathsheba and plotted ways to cover up his sins. Amnon repeated this same act of self-gratification and thought, as David did, that since no one said anything about it, he could get away with it (cf. Eccl. 8:11). But King David also demonstrated in another way his lack of responsible fatherhood. Although he got 'very angry' (v. 21) when he heard what had happened to Tamar, which clearly indicates that he understood the nature of Amnon's act, he did nothing about it. He neither provided Tamar with protection, either before or after her violation, nor confronted Amnon with the nature and the consequences of his act. The fact that God, through the prophet Nathan (2 Sam. 11:27–12:15), confronted David about his wrongs done to Bathsheba and her husband, and showed him that no sins 'go unpunished', should have been a lesson to David: 'he should not have allowed the rape to go unpunished, no matter how much he loved Amnon. Had he acted against Amnon', he would have demonstrated his love for Tamar and the important role of a father in the life of a daughter (Montgomery 2014).

3.2.3. Most rapes are not spontaneous, but planned; the rapist is deceptive and is often known to the victim

Contrary to popular opinion, rape is not always a spontaneous act; most rapes are planned and premeditated. Furthermore, in most rapes, the victim is acquainted with the perpetrator, and rape happens in all families (Vogelman 1990:106). Amnon, with the help of his evil friend decided to deceive Tamar into thinking that Amnon needed her special care, only to discover that, as in all instances of deception, the deceiver is far from what he appears to be, albeit too late. There are at least two factors that make

deception an evil act. On the one hand, it is impossible to plan to deceive another person without knowing what one is doing. It implies that a plea of ignorance can never be accepted. On the other hand, the deceiver causes the victim to believe something false. Amnon knew that he sexually desired a virgin, and Tamar believed that her brother was a sincere person who was 'really ill'.

3.2.4. Rape happens in all families

How could she have known that her violator would be her own brother, the royal prince who would succeed King David on the throne? How could the beautiful royal princess Tamar foresee that she would be an abused victim? And who would have thought that sexual abuse happens in a royal family?

Research has shown that sexual abuse happens in all families, among all races, and sadly, churches. In fact, sexual abuse does not just happen in non-Christian families (Tracy 2006:2). Although it is to be expected that rape occurs in familiar places, such as the victim's or rapist's house, it also happens in open spaces such as in the veld or parks (Vogelman 1990:109). The challenge for the rapist is to be alone with the victim and not to be interrupted (Newheiser 2016). Amnon clearly manipulated circumstances so that Tamar could be alone with him in his house.

3.2.5. Uncontrolled and sinful passions

The love Amnon felt for Tamar was not the love of a brother for a sister. The text shows that his 'love' for Tamar can more accurately be described in terms of a selfish, consuming lust for her. Instead of exercising self-control or self-restraint, he gave vent to his sinful appetite and desire. After sexually abusing Tamar, Amnon's 'heart was filled with a great hatred for her' (v. 15), and 'true to fashion, the rapist is now done with his prey and no longer wants his victim to be in front of him' (Montgomery 2014).

By way of summary, rape has nothing to do with love or affection; it is about uncontrolled sinful passions and self-satisfaction. Because it is not always clearly understood, in the next section an attempt will be made to clarify what is meant by appetites, their connection with the passions, desires and moral character.

4. A Biblical Analysis of Human Passions with Special Reference to Sexual Lust

Studying what the Bible teaches about human passions quickly leads to an all-important question: Are your passions a problem for you, others and for God? There are several reasons why they are so, among other things, because they reveal a person's character,

namely, what a person cares for, and what a person regards as important or not important to him or her.

4.1. The ability to experience feelings

Among the multitude of abilities or powers that human beings possess, is the ability to experience feelings. These are conceptually connected to perceptions (i.e., the use of our sense organs), sensations and passions. Sensations, in the sense of bodily feelings can be divided into those that can be physically localised in the body, and those of overall bodily condition. They are characterised by degrees of intensity (waxing and waning over time, intolerable, mildly irritating, severe, unbearable or only slight). It is their felt features that are typically characterised as burning (Job 30:30), stinging (Prov. 23:32; Rev. 9:10), stabbing and sensations of pressure, release or relief (Job 5:18; Ps 4:1). Examples of overall bodily conditions include feeling well or sick, fit or weak, sleepy or wide awake, exhausted or weary (2 Sam. 17:2; 21:15; Judg. 4:21; 8:4–5, 15).

4.2. An appetite is a mix or combination of sensation and desire

An appetite⁴ is a mix or combination of sensation and desire, and we can distinguish between natural appetites (hunger, thirst and – with certain qualifications—those of a sexual nature) that are innate or inborn, and non-natural appetites such as addictions (cf. 1 Tim. 3:1–3). The concept of appetite belongs to the following word-group: coveting,⁵ desire,⁶ longing for,⁷ lust⁸ and passions.⁹ The appetites are logically connected to human needs, and consequently involve the wants, pleasures, beliefs, knowledge and the character of people. Sensations characteristic of the appetites that have a bodily location (hunger in one's belly) are forms of unease and dispose a person to action to satisfy his or her desire. They are typically caused by bodily needs; some are recurrent in the sense that their satisfaction leads only to temporary satiation and the disappearance of the appetitive sensation (Prov. 16:26; Eccl. 6:7).

4.3. A desire is a felt inclination

A desire can be defined as a felt inclination to do, have, avoid or experience certain things, and it is either conscious or such that it can be made conscious through, for example, touch, looking at or talking about certain things, reflection on what one has seen or heard and experienced in the past.¹⁰ A desire is not a motive; it furnishes a person with a motive to do something.¹¹ For example, shame is bound up with the desire to conceal, hide oneself or to

4 'Appetite' (n. *koilia*) has the basic meaning of 'body-cavity', meaning something to be filled. In Num. 11:4 ('the rabble ... had greedy desires', lit. 'desired a desire'; see also vv. 5, 8, 12, 20); 11:6, 34 (the place was named 'Kibroth-hattaavah', meaning 'the graves of greediness'); Rom. 16:18 ('slaves ... of their own appetites' [lit. belly]); Phil. 3:19. 'Belly' (*gastēr*) is used in Titus 1:12 as figure of speech to denote gluttons (cf. Deut. 21:20–21; Matt. 11:19).

5 'Covet' means to fix one's desire upon something or someone (*epi*, upon, and *thymos*, passion). It is used in a good sense (1 Cor. 12:13 [v. *zēlōō*]; 14:39) or bad sense (Exod. 20:17; Deut. 5:21; Rom. 7:7–8; 13:9; 1 Cor. 10:6 [n. *plonexia*, from *pleon*, more, and *echō*, to have]; 1 Tim. 6:10 [v. *oregō*]). 'Coveting' in Mark 7:22 is 'covetings' in the original, meaning various ways of coveting. In Rom. 1:29 the word is 'greed' (cf. Luke 12:15; Eph. 4:19; 5:3; 1 Thess. 2:5; 2 Pet. 2:3, 14) which is idolatry (Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5). The adjective, *pleonektēs*, literally means eager to have more, to have what belongs to others or greedy (1 Cor. 5: 10–11; 6:10; Eph. 5:5). See *philarguros* (lit. money-loving) in Luke 16:14 and 2 Tim. 3:2.

6 The noun (*epithymia*) is the more comprehensive term of the word group; it includes all manner of lusts and desires. *Epithymia* is based on the root word *thymos* meaning 'an urge or passion'. See Mounce (2006:172). It is used of hunger (Luke 15:16), in a good sense of intense longing (Luke 22:15; Phil. 1:23; 1 Thess. 2:17) and wrong sensual and sexual desires/lusts (Rom. 1:24).

7 1 Tim. 6:10

8 'Lust' (*epithymia*, denotes strong desire of any kind) in a good sense (Luke 22:15; Phil. 1:23; 1 Thess. 2:17) and mostly in a bad sense (Rom. 6:12; 13:14; Gal. 5:16, 24; Eph. 2:3; Col. 3:5; 1 Thess. 4:5; 1 Tim. 6:9; 2 Tim. 2:22; 3:6; 4:3; Titus 2:11; 3:3; James 1:14; 1 Pet. 1:4; 2:11; 4:2; 2 Pet. 2:18; 3:3; 1 John 2:16–17; Jude 16, 18; Rev. 18:14; 1 Cor. 10:6 (*epithymētēs*, 'a luster after'));

Rom. 1:27 (*orexis*, 'a reaching or stretching after'). In Gal. 5:17 and Luke 22:15, 'lust' can be predicated neither of the Spirit nor of Jesus. Is best translated as desire, since it is also predicated of angels (1 Pet. 1:12) and of good things and people (Matt. 13:7; 1 Tim. 3:1; Heb. 6:11; Luke 15:16; 16:21; 17:22; Rev. 9:6).

9 'Passion' or 'urge' (*thymos*) can refer to an evil feeling (*pathos*), desire or pleasure. Cf. Num. 5:14; Prov. 6:34; 14:30 (it suggests that a passion can be detrimental to one's health); Rom. 1:26; Col. 3:5; 1 Thess. 4:5; in Rom. 7:5 and Gal. 5:24 passion is associated with the 'flesh' (sinful nature). See Vine (1984:28-30).

10 A good example, are the Israelites in the OT (Num. 11:1-35; 15:39; Ps 78:17-18, 29-31; 1 Cor. 10:1-6, 11); cf. Judg. 14:1-3; 2 Sam. 11:2.

11 Cf. 'You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures' (James 4:3).

12 Pleasure (*hēdonē*) is linked with natural or sinful desires; cf. Luke 8:14; Titus 3:3; James 4:1, 3; 'good pleasure' (*eudokia*) in Eph. 1:5, 9; Phil. 2:13; 2 Thess. 1:11; Heb. 11:25; *philēdonos* in 2 Tim. 3:4 ('lovers of pleasure'); 1 Tim. 5:6; James 5:5.

13 Num. 12:3; Judg. 9:4; 11:3; 19:22; 20:13; Prov. 9:13; 29:22; Matt. 8:26; 2 Tim. 1:6; Rev. 21:8.

14 Titus 1:8; an alternative meaning of 'reasonable' in James 4:17 may be 'willing to yield'.

15 The context of Jer. 6:15 and 8:12 makes it sufficiently clear.

escape from the scrutiny of those who disapprove of oneself (cf. Gen. 3:7-13).

4.4. The combination of sensations and desires has a hedonic character

The combination of sensations and desires also has a hedonic character.¹² Pleasures are typically things we desire to prolong (if enjoyable) and unpleasant things we want to cease or go away (if they cause suffering). Pleasure is not a sensation, but the quality of an experience a person undergoes, for instance, when in pain or at the sight of certain things. The felt quality or character of experiences can be described as agreeable, awesome, boring, charming, delightful, detestable, disgusting, dreadful, enjoyable, fascinating, horrible, interesting, overwhelming, pleasant, repulsive, revolting, terrifying or wonderful. These descriptions may also be the expression of an attitude, since an attitude is bound up with what a person likes and dislikes, approval and disapproval of experiences, and what pleases and displeases a person.

4.5. Passions are qualities of character

The passions referred to as affections are also qualities of character; we describe someone as boisterous, courageous, a coward, glutton, hot-tempered, humble, irascible, kind, sensible, lazy, timid or trustworthy.¹³ A sensible person has an affective sensitivity or responsiveness to people, objects, situations and reasons.¹⁴ A person who overreacts may lack judgement, and one who indulges in his or her agitations, desires and passions lacks self-control (cf. Esth. 5:9-10; Acts 24:25; Gal. 5:23). Among the reasons why a person feels a certain way about something are facts (his friend lied to him), values (friendship), norms (it is wrong to lie) and obligations (it is our duty to speak the truth; Eph. 4:25; James 3:9-10). This suggests that witnessing a moral wrong and recognising it as such is one thing, and quite another to be outraged or do something about it (cf. David in 2 Sam. 13:21). To simply notice moral wrongness without experiencing, for example, moral indignation indicates that there was a failure of understanding the moral importance of the act, let alone what morality requires.¹⁵ Such explanations allow us to judge the person, his or her actions and character.

4.6. Self-regarding feelings presuppose self-consciousness, consciousness of one's own character qualities

Self-regarding feelings presuppose self-consciousness, consciousness of one's own character qualities, virtues, vices and

follies, and the ability to reflect on them.¹⁶ A person may suddenly, or over time, realise with dismay that what he or she has said or done was wrong (2 Sam. 24:1–10). If someone is aware of his or her feelings either regarding him or herself, others or about something, then the person is conscious of how he or she feels—angry, cheerful, envious, frustrated, in love, irritated, jealous, joyful, sad, and so on. Self-regarding feelings involve moral standards, moral conduct and pangs of conscience (Rom. 2:14–15; 1 Tim. 1:19). Although these feelings, for example, shame, guilt and remorse may overlap, their features show that they are experienced because of something that is wrong, that needs to be attended to and made right. What ashamed people are ashamed of is themselves (i.e., character) and what causes shame is the disapproval of other persons. To feel guilty is to recognise and acknowledge that one's actions were wrong and what a remorseful person deeply regrets are the badness of his or her actions and the harm they inflicted on others (Matt. 27:3–5). It implies that feelings of moral self-appraisal are rational; people experience them for a reason. The reason is straightforward: self-conscious feelings presuppose a person's capacity for self-awareness, including the ability to evaluate themselves, their actions as right or wrong and their effects on other people, whether good or bad.

16 2 Sam. 24:10; Titus 3:3. For a list of excellences, see Phil. 4:8, Gal. 5:22–23 and 2 Pet. 1:5–10.

4.7. A comparative analysis of sexual lust

To summarise, as indicated earlier, an appetite is a combination of sensation and desire, and desire has been defined as a felt inclination to do, have or experience certain things. A different way of saying the same thing is to say that felt desires range from appetites and cravings to urges and obsessive preoccupations with the lack of something. Firstly, this allows one to draw a few important distinctions between needs and wants, such as thirst and hunger, on the one hand, and lust, on the other hand.

4.7.1. Distinctions between needs/wants and lust

Firstly, a person can have a reason for wanting something or to do something but not a reason for needing something, although a need may be the reason for wanting something. Secondly, a person needs water and food, as opposed to sex, to survive. And thirdly, a person has reasons for wanting sex, which may be good or bad, but cannot have reasons for being thirsty or hungry (these are caused). These differences explain why what a person wants or wants to do, reflects on his or her character. From a biblical perspective, there is no such thing as a commitment to oneself without commitment to others (Matt. 7:12; 22:36–39). It suffices to say, if the rapist allows his selfish sexual desires to override his power of self-restraint, the probability that he will rape someone is extremely

17 Although the context is different, Samson is a paradigm case of someone who was indifferent to self-control (Judg. 16:4-21).

high. It seems, therefore, that it would be a mistake to conclude that the rapist, just as the glutton or deceiver, rejects self-control. It would be more accurate to say that he is indifferent to self-control.¹⁷ This connects to the next important point: the idea that ‘rape is all about power’ (Vogelman 1990:101, 105ff.) is no longer tenable. Researchers have shown that rape can be explained in multiple ways, but what cannot be doubted is that the rapist rapes because he wants sex; hence, that it is an act of self-gratification (Pieter-James 2018; Shpancer 2016). It is as true today as it was in the days of Amnon.

Secondly, it is important to point out the key differences between love and lust.

4.7.2. Difference between love and lust

‘The story of Amnon in the Old Testament is an example of lustful selfish desire. After he raped his half-sister, his "love" turned to hate. Although he had claimed to be in love, he was ... overcome by lust. You can read about the characteristics of real love in 1 Corinthians 13:1–13’ (Tagactac 2011).

A comparison of love and lust reveals a few core differences:

- Love, as opposed to lust, has no bodily location. This implies that love is an attribute of the whole person and not just present in the parts of oneself.
- Love requires patience—it takes time - but sinful lust requires immediate gratification or relief.
- Love, as opposed to lust, cannot enslave a person (Rom. 6:6, 12; Titus 3:3).
- The nature of love is serving and giving (John 3:16; 15:13; Gal. 5:13; 1 John 4:10); sinful lust demands to be served and takes. Put differently, love involves selflessness and self-denial, but sinful lust insists on its own way.
- To love another person is not a sin, but to lust after another is (Matt. 5:28; 1 Pet. 2:11).

Bearing in mind the biblical analysis of human passions, especially sexual lust, a contemporary psychological and moral profile of Amnon will now be discussed.

5. A Contemporary Psychological and Moral Profile of Amnon

The psychological and moral profile of Amnon is still very contemporary. A first reading of 2 Samuel 13 might lead one to

believe that Amnon was a psychopath, a disorder that is nowadays referred to in the DSM-5 (*Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders*; APA 2013) as an ‘antisocial personality disorder’ (Dziegielewski 2015:477). Although that is precisely how Amnon would be diagnosed today, there is also another possibility.

According to the DSM-5, an individual must have just three of the seven characteristics of the antisocial personality disorder (Dziegielewski 2015:476–478). The person, (1) repeatedly has difficulties with the law and engages in risky behaviours without regard for the legal consequences; (2) has little regard to the feelings or rights of others and often puts his/her wishes first, conning others into doing what he or she wants, regardless of the benefit to other individuals; (3) is impulsive and often acts before any thought is given to the consequences that result; (4) wants his or her own way and thinks little of hurting others, resulting in fights or assaultive behaviour to secure what he or she wants from others; (5) has a wanton disregard for the safety or security of others; (6) is consistently self-rewarding and often maintains financial or occupational responsibilities; and (7) has a clear lack of remorse and often rationalises his or her behaviour as necessary to obtain what is needed. It is obvious that Amnon clearly fits this profile.

There is another possible profile for Amnon to consider: narcissistic personality disorder. According to the DSM-5, an individual must have a minimum of five of the nine characteristic symptoms to fit the profile: (1) exhibits a pompous sense of worth, for instance, expecting to be viewed as exceptional without commensurate accomplishments; (2) is preoccupied with notions of great success, power, genius, physical attractiveness and love; (3) believes that one should associate with prominent people (or institutions) because of being special and exceptional; (4) insists on disproportionate admiration; (5) exhibits a feeling of entitlement (e.g., overinflated expectations of positive treatment or reflexive compliance with personal expectations); (6) exploits others to accomplish own ends; (7) lacks the ability to empathise with others; (8) exhibits envy of others and believes others are envious of him or her; and (9) demonstrates arrogant, conceited behaviours or viewpoints (Dziegielewski 2015:480–481).

It is interesting that more and more professional people increasingly realise that the DSM medicalised people’s vices and personal and interpersonal problems (Joubert 2014; Moncrieff 2014a, 2014b; Moncrieff and Middleton 2015), and that the so-called ‘personality disorders’ are actually character disorders (Charland 2005, 2010; Martin 2006; Seeskin 2008). The latter is at

least compatible with what the Bible (NASB) teaches about hedonists or egoists:

- ‘But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and lie against the truth ... For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing’ (James 3:14, 16).
- ‘What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures ... [Y]ou lust and do not have; so you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel’ (James 4:1–2; see also 2 Tim. 3:1–5).
- ‘For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another’ (Titus 3:3).

These texts suggest that we should first seek for the reasons for personal and interpersonal problems in the human heart (Mark 7:21–23) as opposed to environment or society. To care about something is to value it; not to care is to be indifferent to it. Human beings who are deficient in emotional responses are deemed to be cold, heartless, detached, aloof or stony. This is a fault of character, for it indicates that one is not caring about what one should care about. Whichever profile we prefer to label Amnon with, 2 Samuel 13 shows us a person who gave way to his sensual desires, got entangled in perpetual frustration to the point of making himself ill, and as someone who showed no signs of any emotion of moral self-appraisal; neither shame or humiliation nor guilt or remorse. Thus, if emotions are indicators of what a person cares or does not care about, of what is important and not important and what matters or does not matter to the person, then Amnon only cared about how he felt and what he desired. Sinful appetites and passions, we conclude, destroy the soul of those they hold in their grip.

6. A Pastoral Response to Rape

A six-fold pastoral response to a contemporary rape situation is presented, based on the biblical, psychological and moral analysis of the rape of Tamar by Amnon.

6.1. Treat rape as a sin against the image of God

Amnon did not want to hear or see his victim, so he had her removed from his house like a disposable item rather than a woman created in the image of God (vv. 16–17). God intended

humankind to 'be fruitful and multiply' (Gen. 1:28), spreading divine image-bearers throughout his good world. The essence of rape is, therefore, first and foremost, 'a sin against God because it violates His most sacred creation—human beings made in his image'. It is also an assault against God not only 'because the blessing of sexuality is used to destroy instead of build intimacy, but also because it is an attack against His image in his image-bearers' (Holcomb 2013).

6.2. Treat rape as a sin against all people

Amnon violated the Mosaic Law. Leviticus 18:11 reads: 'Do not have sexual relations with your stepsister ...' (NLT). It is evident in 'the Bible that sexual assault is also a sin against another person, involving a physical, psychological and emotionally violation'. But it also affects the whole community. Marie Fortune describes sexual assault in four different ways (Holcomb 2013):

- 'It is a bodily sin. Sexual assault is a violation of bodily boundaries and distorts one's sense of body image'.
- 'It is a sin against relationship in the sense that it destroys and violates the command to love one's neighbour as oneself'.
- 'The consequence of this sin is that it can create barriers of distrust between victims in their future relationships'.
- 'It is a sin not only against the victims but the community surrounding that victim'.

6.3. Young people should 'cry out'

Tamar refused strongly, saying 'No my brother. Do not violate me, for such a thing is not done in Israel' (v. 12). Although Tamar lived in a man's world, she refused to cover up Amnon's sin. She tears her fancy clothes that signified that she was a virgin and puts ashes on her head (vv. 18–19). This sign of mourning is a sign that her innocence has cruelly been taken from her (Jones 2008:64). 'Because sexual predators are masters of manipulation, girls need to be prepared at a very young age to know exactly what to do if someone tries to take advantage of them. Unfortunately, many victims are naïve and vulnerable' (Newheiser 2016).

6.4. Refuse to cover up sexual sins

After Tamar was raped by Amnon, her father, King David, was very angry but did nothing about it (v. 21). Her brother, Absalom said to her, 'But now, keep silent, my sister; he is your brother' (v. 20). 'Many victims are told to keep silent to avoid disrupting the family or the church community. But Scripture teaches that we should reflect on God's special care for the weak and the

oppressed.’ If a Christian becomes aware of a rape, he or she should respond immediately by reporting the matter to the legal authorities, otherwise the pattern of evil will continue (Newheiser 2016).

6.5. Victims need help to deal with the past biblically

How should sexual victims respond? They might want to seek revenge. They may harbour feelings of bitterness toward all people of the same sex as their abuser. They may refuse to forgive, or they may begin to abuse others sexually. Like Tamar, they need to understand that they have ‘been sinned against by a person who abused his position of power’ and authority (Newheiser 2016). And pastors need to utilise the Word of God with people who have been abused. Through biblical counselling and prayer, pastors can help the abused depend on God’s grace and power to enable them to forgive their abusers. This is essential for people to be ultimately freed from the emotional and spiritual pain of abuse. The power of the Holy Spirit can heal the soul, mind and feelings of a person who has been abused (Palm 2017).

6.6. Rape victims should study the appetites and passions of their abusers to understand their emotional history and personal character

Rape victims should be encouraged to reflect on the appetites and passions of their abusers, since it helps us to understand something about their personal character. We are purposive, self-conscious and goals-seeking creatures. We get frustrated, therefore, when our goals are thwarted; we respond affectively to what happens to us or those we care for or to the loss of what we value. We are, therefore, subject to anger, grief, sorrow, and so on. The short of it all is that human beings are either masters of their passions and emotions or in bondage to them. But more important than reflecting on human passions in general, is to pay attention to the emotional history of the rapist. Such histories are narratives involving all kinds of things, from reactions, thoughts, intentions, goals and actions to what keeps a person awake at night and is torturing or tormenting his or her soul. Such information tells one much about a person’s character.

7. Conclusion

South Africa, as a nation, should be ashamed of itself for having a rape culture. This paper presented a biblical, psychological and moral analysis of the rape of Tamar. To help understand, explain and prevent sexual assault, the paper began with a biblical

analysis of the narrative of the rape of Tamar in 2 Samuel 13. The critical factors that contributed towards the rape were then identified. To gain a deeper understanding of a person's character, a biblical analysis of human passions, with special reference to sexual lust, was conducted. The analysis of human passions revealed the following key aspects about a person's character: sinful appetites and passions destroy the soul of those they hold in their grip. This was followed by a contemporary psychological and moral profile of Amnon, the rapist. It showed that the information gleaned about rapists is still very contemporary. For example, it revealed that the rapist has no regard for his victim but is preoccupied with his sensual desires and shows no signs of the emotions typical of moral self-appraisal. Finally, the insights gleaned from the preceding analyses were used to propose six key pastoral responses to rape; it is the hope of the authors that the following six pastoral responses will be used to help fellow South Africans to break out of the spiral of sexual violence: (1) to treat rape as sin against the image of God, and (2) as a sin against all people; (3) to encourage victims to cry out; (4) not to cover up sexual sins; (5) to deal with the past in a biblical way; and (6) to study the appetites and passions of their abusers to learn more about their emotional history and personal character.

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