

AMNON'S RAPE OF TAMAR IN 2 SAMUEL 13:1-22: IMPLICATION FOR THE NIGERIAN SOCIETY

OBED UCHENNA CHUKWUKA

Department of Religious Studies and Philosophy

Delta State University, Abraka

Email: ouchukwuka@delsu.edu.ng

Gsm: +2348(0)32936872

Abstract

Amnon's rape of Tamar is one of those events that marked the beginning of retrogressions in the reign of King David. Perhaps David's failure to bring Amnon to book may be because he was the heir apparent and would not want anything that will jeopardize the chances of Amnon ascending the throne after his father. Certainly Tamar was abandoned and made to bear the consequences of her brother's unbridled lust and her father's ineptitude to act. In Nigeria today, there is an increasing wave of rape and gender based violence against women and girls. Peter describes women as 'weaker vessels' (1 Peter 3:7), hence should be protected by the society against any form of sexual molestation. Unfortunately, sexual predators and rape perpetrators take advantage of vulnerable and innocent girls, women and minors. There are plausible reasons suggested for the perpetration of this evil act. They include intimidation, a show of impunity, mental malady, idleness, drug and substance abuse and alcoholism among others. The phenomenon has resulted in unwanted pregnancy, death of victims, psychological trauma, suicide, sexually transmitted diseases and stigmatization. The objective of this essay is to examine the effects of rape perpetration in the Nigerian society with a view to recommending measures of preventing by using the case of the rape of Tamar in 2 Samuel 13:1-22. The paper adopts the historical, exegetical and hermeneutical methods in addressing the phenomenon. The paper concludes by recommending aggressive campaign awareness, stiffer punishment for rapist and empathy for victims rather than stigmatization.

Keywords: Rape, Amnon, Tamar, Implications, Nigerian Society.

1. Introduction

One of the greatest negative aftermaths of Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria was an increase wave of sexual crimes. However, rape and sexual violence against women and girls are not new among the social ills bedeviling the Nigerian society. What has changed is the frequency of the occurrence (Olajide, 2020). The lockdown imposed by different tiers of government as measures in the containment of the spread of Corona Virus has resulted in many anti-social behaviours. Over one thousand cases of rape were reported in Nigeria between March and June, 2020 (Vanguard 13 June, 2020). Rape and sexual violence are crimes which reduce the sense of worth of victims and dehumanize them. Hence, no place should be reserved for rape perpetrators in Nigeria (Muhammed, 2020).

Sexual predators and rape perpetrators are men who have lost their sense of reasoning and self-control as a result employ illegitimate means to capture their prey. Rapists are men who

engage in sexual violence and all manners of abuses by simply deceiving and taking advantage of unprotected women and girls. Since they are most often stronger than their victims, they can go any length to make sure that they achieve their evil purposes (Phiri, 2006). Rape can be perpetrated by an individual rapist or a group with each taking his turn. Painfully, most rapists are related or familiar with their victims. It is said that the true measure of a society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members (Nwokeocha, 2009).

Nigeria, in the recent times has witnessed several cases of rape. For example an undergraduate of University of Benin, late Miss Vera Uwaila Omozuwa was gang-raped and murdered by her assailant right inside her church where she was studying for examination. The incidence was widely condemned by Nigerians with her fellow students calling for the immediate identification and prosecution of the perpetrators (Vanguard, June 16, 2020, pp. 5, 13). Thanks goodness that the NPF was able to arrest the suspects who are now facing trial. Another pathetic example of violent rape was that of a twelve years old girl in Dutse, Jigawa State who was raped severally by twelve men of which, one of the rapists was a 57 years old man. Also a 21 years old Charity Ngozi Eze was raped and murdered by her suspected attackers in the premises of Ogrute Primary School at Imufu, Igbo-Eze North LGA of Enugu State while attending extra-mural class for the 2019 UTME (Vanguard Tuesday August 18, 2020, pp. 32). Mrs Agnes Okekpe was also raped until she went into coma by suspected herdsmen at Ebenebe in Akwa North LGA, Anambra State but died in Ebonyi State few days later (Vanguard, Wednesday July 1, 2020). The upsurge in rape cases touches on the mental state of the average citizen. In fact, it has reached a crisis level. Reacting to this ugly trend, the minister for information and culture, Lai Mohammed described the action of rape perpetrators as cruel and barbaric which offends human sensibility and decency (Vanguard, June 3, 2020).

Many reasons have been advanced as responsible for this societal evil which include impunity, drug abuse, mental disorder, alcoholism, ritual purposes, drug and substance abuse on the part of the perpetrators. Similarly, ignorance, indecent dressing, naivety, lack of precaution are said to be responsible for rape on the part of the victims. Whatever is the reason, rape has resulted in sudden death of victims, suicide, injury, unwanted pregnancy, psychological trauma, sexually transmitted disease, loss of self-worth and stigmatization (Nnachi, 2011).

The objective of the paper therefore is to examine the factors responsible for the spate of rape in Nigeria with a view to recommending measures of curbing the menace. The implications of 2 Samuel 13:1-22 will be considered also. The paper adopts the historical, exegetical and hermeneutical methods in interpreting the text and addressing the phenomenon. The paper discovers that although there are existing laws in Nigeria that are meant to protect women and girls from sexual abuses, the laws are not properly domesticated and sufficient in deterring sexual offenders. Hence many women right groups have risen en-mass to seek and canvass for stiffer sanctions and the review of those existing laws.

The paper reviews some related literature on the menace of rape in Nigeria. The causes and consequences of rape are highlighted. Being theological, the paper did an exegesis (explanation) of the periscope. The implication of Tamar's rape for the Nigerian society was discussed. The paper concludes by providing some recommendations and the expected

outcome when such measures are experimented. We will now proceed to critically examine what rape is.

2. Definition of Rape

Originally, rape was understood to mean the act of taking or abducting a woman or a girl by force in order to have a carnal knowledge of her against her wish. However, rape has been redefined under various legal systems to include other things of forced sexual activity by person of either sex. That is to say, rape perpetrator could either be a male or a female who seizes by force the opposite sex with the mind to plunder, destroy or despoil his/her victim. This extrapolation of the concept of rape does not preclude homosexuality and lesbianism which are also growing phenomena. However, Fortune (1993) believed that rape of a man or boy is very rare in the Nigerian society. In this paper therefore, we shall limit our understanding of rape to mean sexual assault or violation against a woman or a girl child by a male counterpart.

Part 11, Section 1 of the Sexual Offences Acts (2006) states that a man commits the offences of rape if he has sexual intercourse with a woman without her consent and knowing that the woman does not consent to sexual intercourse or recklessly not caring whether the woman consents or not. Consent shall not be treated as existing where the apparent agreement to sexual intercourse is extorted by physical assault or threat or fear of physical assault to the complainant or to third person or obtained false or fraudulent representation as to the nature of the actor the identity of the offender. Penalty for rape is at least 15 years imprisonment or life imprisonment on conviction by a Circuit Court. In addition, any attempt to commit the offence of rape is liable on conviction in a Circuit Court where at the time of the attempt he was armed with a dangerous or offensive weapon or instrument, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding ten years. The Sexual Offences Act was promulgated by the Act of the National Assembly in 2006 but came into effect in 2011.

3. Literature Review on Rape in 2 Samuel 13:1-22

The rape of Tamar by her brother Amnon has been described by Tribble (1984) as “the royal rape of wisdom”. He states further that Amnon muffled Tamar’s voice and ignored her pleading: ‘Do not violate me’. The result of the violation was the hatred which he developed towards her. But unlike contemporary women, she took ashes upon her head, tore the long robe that was upon her, and putting her hands upon her head, she went out and wept. She did not keep it to herself (Akintunde & Labeodan, 2006). This attitude of Tamar to a violation of her virginity and right is a missing gap in the contemporary time. This paper is aimed at encouraging the raped to emulate Tamar and speak out for help.

There are several cases of rape in the Old Testament. They include the rape of Dinah in Genesis 34. Dinah was violated by Shechem, the son of Hamor, a Hivite prince. Even though Shechem was ready to marry Dinah having violated her, but he was killed in revenge by Dinah’s brothers. This action of taking laws into one’s hand should not be tolerated. Contrarily, the culture of silence which King David demonstrated over the rape of his princess by the crown prince is condemnable. This also is gap to be addressed in this paper. Judges 19:1-30 contains a story of a woman whose name was not mentioned. It is a sad story of violence against women, rape, murder, betrayal and dismemberment of rape victim. It simply amplifies male dominance and brutality against women (Tribble, 1984). Commenting on the dastardly act, Deidre (2014) & Akintunde (2002) agree that the story depicts an account of female

helplessness, abuse and annihilation. The woman was not only raped but was also killed and butchered.

Akintunde (2002) perceives rape as an infringement on the right of women and girls as a result, should not be trivialized. She adds that rape is a global challenge which is experienced among people of different races, colours and classes. Unfortunately, rape has not been given the global attention it deserves. This is a lacuna which this paper wishes to address. Nnachi (2008) decries the fact that sexual offences Act passed by the National Assembly since 2006 has not been rightly domesticated in most states in Nigeria. As a result, rapists have continued with their wicked acts unhindered. Nnachi (2011) in his book "Exploration in Sex and Gender Issues" defined rape as an act of seizing a person and forcing sexual intercourse on the person, especially a woman or a girl, to have sexual intercourse against the will of the person.

In describing rape, Iroleh (2006) opines that rape is a violation of the sexual right of the opposite sex. Corroborating this position of Iroleh, Nnachi further adds that rape is associated with violence and expression of wickedness devoid of the feeling of the opposite sexual partner. Because rape involves the use of force by the rapist, the raped most often is left with injury and in severe cases can lead to death. It is on these possible effects that Ridout (1974) challenged the modern society to collectively rise up to wage war against rapists who have destroyed the life of some women and girls.

4. Hermeneutical Analysis of Amnon's Rape of Tamar in 2 Samuel 13:1-22

Amnon's rape of Tamar represents a very crucial point in the reign of King David. It marks the beginning of the decline of the reign of David and the unity of Israel under King David. The first ten chapters of 2 Samuel record the beginning of the reign of King David. The rest chapters (11-24) records a steady decline and failures of King David resulting in the division of the Kingdom of Israel. Amnon's rape of Tamar is found in the centre of the book. Preceding it is the narrative of King David and Bathsheba and the murder of innocent Uriah (2 Samuel 12:10-11). King David reigned in Israel between 1010-970BC (Hayford, 2012; Scoffield, 1990).

Tamar happened to be the only daughter of King David whose name was mentioned alongside nineteen sons. Her mother was Maacah (2 Sam. 3:3; 13:4) and is mentioned after Ahinoam (mother of David's firstborn, Amnon) and Abigail (mother of David second born, Kileah). Maacah was a daughter of King Telmai of Geshur, a small Canaanite kingdom that Israel failed to conquer which is located at the eastern border of the sea of Galilee in the Bashan (2 Sam. 13:37; Deut. 3:14; Ps 18:50).

Culturally, sexual offences were considered not only offence against a girl but also against her father. According to Gen. 11:27-30, 20:2, marriage between half-siblings is viewed as lawful rather than incestuous. Tamar grew up in the Palace of Jerusalem and lived during Israel's golden years under the reign of her father, King David. Incest was punishable by death as it is equated with murder (Lev. 20:17). If a girl was raped before she was betrothed, the rape was regarded as establishing a marriage. The man must pay a fine to the father of the woman and must marry her without any option of divorce (Deut. 22:28-29). The ruling protected the woman and any child born as a result of the rape. As a prelude to the periscope, we undertook an examination of the socio-historical milieu of the text which shall now form the basis of our interpretation of the text.

Tamar was a very beautiful princess daughter of King David. She was about fifteen years old when she was raped by Amnon, the crown prince, who was about twenty-two years of age. King David was about fifty three years old while Absalom was twenty years old. Amnon developed an unreasonable love or attraction for his half-sister, Tamar which became a precursor for the disaster that came upon David's family. He was obsessed with Tamar to the point of illness but was aware that Tamar was still a virgin which made it impossible for him to do anything to her. He was unable to find opportunity to satisfy his infatuation. Tamar lived with other princesses in a separate apartment far removed from the princes and were looked after in a chaperones. The objective of this arrangement was to protect the princesses from any possible predator. As a way of helping Amnon to accomplish his evil plot, his friend and cousin, Jonadab who was the son of King David's brother, Shimeah advised him to pretend to be sick and request that Tamar should be sent to look after him. Amnon took this counsel, made the request that Tamar should come and look after him and immediately Tamar left for Amnon's house.

Immediately Tamar arrived, she began to bake and prepare meal for her sick half-brother. However, when Tamar presented the food, he refused to eat. Instead Tamar was asked to take the meal to his room where he would eat from her hands. When Tamar brought the food to him, he grabbed her and demanded to have sexual intercourse with her. Considering that Tamar was only 15yrs of age, Amnon or the King should have requested for the services of a nurse or an adult who has the expertise or experience to look after sick people. It was only a pretense and a snare that he had designed to trap his virgin sister. Unknown to the King, he granted Amnon's request. To him, the ruse worked and he seized the opportunity to satisfy his lustful desire. When he demanded that Tamar should ask every other person to leave, Tamar should have been able to discern that her brother was up to something sinister but gullibility and naivety dulled her suspicion.

"No, my brother, do not force me; for such a thing is not done in Israel; do not do anything so vile" (v. 12). Those were the words of Tamar to her lustful brother. She could not imagine the shame that will follow her and what people will say about a crown prince. Tamar offered to marry him, if only he could discuss his intention with the king. Tamar believed that the King will not object to such a request. Unfortunately, he was not interested in marriage; He was only driven by lust. Tamar was sexually violated despite her persistent plea for mercy. Amnon was stronger than Tamar as a result she was not able to defend herself from violation. According to Adeyemo (2006), his lust overrode all thoughts about family honour and concern for what would become of Tamar.

As soon as Amnon succeeded in raping his sister, he despised her and commanded her to leave his house. He decided to send Tamar away shamefully and empty-handed without paying to her father the prescribed 50 shekels of silver and making plans to take her as wife (Deut. 22:28-30). Tamar refused to leave instead advised her brother saying, "No, my brother; for this wrong in sending me away is greater than the other that you did to me, but he would not listen to her" (V. 16b). Rape is strictly forbidden by God. Why was sending Tamar away an even greater sin? By throwing her away, he made it look as if Tamar had made a shameful proposition to him, and there were witnesses on her behalf because he had sent the servants away. Amnon's crime destroyed Tamar's chances of marriage because she was no longer a virgin, she could no longer be given out in marriage. Rather than show remorse, he hated her

and did not want to see her any longer. As at the time his servant threw Tamar away from his house, she was still clothed in her virgin dress as one of the royal daughters.

Tamar eventually left Amnon's house with great mourning and lamentation, pouring ashes on herself and rending her robe. When Absalom saw his sister in such a pitiable state, he asked if Amnon had been with her. Thereafter, persuaded his sister not to allow herself be disturbed by what her brother had done to her. Subsequently, Tamar remained a desolate woman, in Absalom's house. When the news got to the king, he became angry but did not reprimand or prosecute his son for such an abominable act. According to Adeyemo (2006), David's confidence may have been shaken by the remembrance of his abduction of Bathsheba and the murder of her husband. Absalom hated Amnon for raping his sister and was not in talking terms with him but waited for a time to revenge. The failure of King David to decisively address the rape of Tamar forms a gap to be addressed in this paper. Let us look at the relevance of this to the Nigerian society.

5.1 The Problem of Rape in Nigerian

The Nigerian Communal Code, according to Aekermann (1999) refers to rape as an act of having unlawful carnal knowledge of a woman or girl without her consent, or with her consent, if the consent was obtained by force or by means of threat or intimidation of any kind or by fear or harm or by means of false and fraudulent representation as to the nature of the act, or in the case of a married woman, by impersonating her husband is guilty of an offence, which is called rape. Rape is classified as sacrilegious in many societies. It is conceived as violent social and sexual crime and may attract punishment by death or jail term (Akintunde, 2002 & Nnachi, 2011).

A sexual predator (rapist) hunts, attacks and plunders and sometimes kills for sexual satisfaction or gain. In other words, a rapist is someone who seeks to satisfy his sexual desire by unlawfully hunting down, attacking and plundering his victim. (Keefe, 1993). According to Olajide (2020), what is new today in Nigeria is that the various lockdown imposed on citizens by various levels of government has given rapists an unusual proximity to their prey (victims). He further states that rapists are everywhere including homes, sports arena, business premises, schools, cultural centres, etc. There are no special features to identify rapists (Edeh, 2020). They are usually ubiquitous and familiar with their victims.

Rape and similar gender-based offences remain threat to national development and family cohesion. Hardly does any day pass without cases of rape being reported in Nigeria. Aremu (2020) believes that rape incidence is usually under reported especially those involving family relations and close neighbours. The fear of stigmatization makes some victims to endure rape rather than report it to the law enforcement agents. Other factors that make the identification and prosecution of rape cases difficult include protection of rapist by the society, fear of the mother of victim being scolded by husband or husband's relatives, unwillingness to act without financial inducement by the law enforcement agents and outright blame of victim for improper conduct or dressing which may have attracted the rapists. Rape was on the increase as a result of COVID-19 lockdown. In fact, it has become another pandemic in Nigeria.

5.2 Causes of rape

There are many causes of rape in Nigeria but in this essay, we shall discuss the most important ones which include:

A show of impunity by the rapist. Sexual predators do not hunt and attack their victims because of offences neither do they rape as a revenge for an offence. They basically attack their victims as a show of impunity. Rapists seek for victims who are considered incapable to effectively resist or retaliate. Sexual offenders plunder their victims with the mind that nothing will happen in terms of retribution or prosecution. They feel secured from any reprisal attack or injurious consequences of their actions or behaviour. Unfortunately many rapists are allowed to move away with their evil actions. The government is slow in prosecuting sexual offenders. In fact, some law enforcement agents collect bribe from perpetrators and are assisted to evade the consequences of their actions (Nwaokeocha, 2009 & Nnachi, 2011).

Mental health crisis is another contributing factor to the incidence of rape. We live in such a time when cherished moral values of the society have been jettisoned by some individuals who have lost human sensibility. Modernity has adverse effects on the society to the extent that many people are no longer interested in knowing what is right or wrong. Adventure has made some modern youths to engage in all forms of senseless behaviours and crimes. Some individuals in the society do not see rape as a crime against humanity rather they see it as a mere adventure and curiosity which is a by product of mental health crisis (Aghahowa, 2018; Broner, 2014).

Most of the rapists apprehended during the act have been found to be under the influence of Drug and substance abuse. Drug and substance abuse is known to be the bedrock upon which all manner of crimes in the society rest. Most sexual offenders are known to be under the influence of drug which is meant to psyche them up. Rapists are themselves victims of drug or substance abuse. Drug or substance abuse is one of the signs of family failure. In fact, some are simply irresponsible (Aderigbe, 1996; Keefe, 1993).

Rape perpetration is also linked to alcoholism. Closely related to drug and substance abuse is excessive consumption of intoxicants such as alcoholic drinks and beverages. Some young people are addicted to alcohol thereby making them susceptible to criminal tendencies (Aghahowa, 2018; Broner, 2014).

Having dealt with the causes of rape, it is apt to consider some of the consequences.

5.3 Some Consequences of Rape

In many instances, violent rape has resulted in the death of victims. Some sexual predators and rape perpetrators rape their victims to death. Death associated with rape is common place in Nigeria. Recent examples include Miss Vera Uwaila Omozuwa of UNIBEN, Charity Ngozi Eze of Imofu, Igbo Eze North LGA of Enugu state, Mrs Agnes Okekpe raped at Ebenebe and died on 1st July, 2020.

Some armed assailants and sexual offenders do have forceful carnal knowledge of women and girls during their operations. Such sexual molestation, in some cases, results in unwanted pregnancy which places the victim in a dilemma.

Most rape and sexual violence victims do not want to speak out or report to the law enforcement agents for fear of stigmatization. The trepidation for stigmatization has made many victims of rape and sexual assaults to suffer in silence. Since most victims do not want to be tagged by the society, they tend to conceal sexual violence and rape against them (Trible, 1984, Deidre, 2014).

Sexual violence and rape do come with psychological torment and trauma. The remembrance of sexual violation or molestation by some victims leaves many of them psychologically disturbed. In some severe cases, they could lead to other health conditions that are detrimental to human existence.

Sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS, Syphilis, Gonorrhoea, etc. can be contracted by victims of rape. Some sexual predators deliberately rape their victims with the intention of transmitting deadly diseases.

Some victims of rape and sexual assault ended up committing suicide to permanently end the trauma. Some rape victims lack sufficient inner strength and the adversity quotient (AQ) to withstand the shock as a result they prefer to take their life. Indeed, the experience can be so traumatic to the extent that in the absence of adequate therapy, the victim can resort to ending her life. However, suicide is never an option as the survivors still have the opportunity of living a normal life (Phiri, 2006; Nwaokecha, 2009).

5.4 Biblical Remedy for Rape

In Leviticus 18:1ff, we find laws of sexual immorality. All manners of sexual misdemeanors are forbidden by God. In v.9, the Israeli men are warned by God never to uncover the nakedness of any woman who is not a wife, especially of a sister, the daughter of one's father, or the daughter of one's mother, whether born at home or elsewhere; their nakedness shall not be uncovered. Here, to "uncover" is used as euphemism for sexual intercourse. The Church in Corinth, at a time, was notorious for unwholesome sexual behavior. Apostle Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthians denounced persons who engage in illicit sexual relationship such as rape, sleeping with one's step-mother, etc(1 Cor. 1: 8).

The believer is commanded not to associate with any brother who is persistently engaged in sexual immorality which is not for punitive but redemptive purpose (1 Cor. 5:11). Indecent sexual behavior is as old as man. It is one of those sinful habits that comes from within a man, which also defies him (Matt.15:) but should not be tolerated. Any sexually immoral person who genuinely repents and turns a new live is promised forgiveness by God and acceptance by the Church.

The New Testament presents two effective remedies for rape and other sexual sins. They are: abstinence and self-control. The act of abstaining, refraining from indulging a desire or appetite is highly and strongly recommended by the Bible as a panacea against all manner of sexual immorality. Sexual instinct is inherent in man but the ability to put it under control is what distinguishes humans created in God's image from lower animals. Similarly, self-control plays a vital role in maintaining a sane society free from sexual harassment and violation. According to Pauline Theology, there are no laws for any believer who practices self-control (Gal.5:23). The ability to control one's sexual desire and impulses helps to prevent all manner

of embarrassment and illicit sexual acts. In social relationship, the Christian is expected to exercise restraints in dealing with others especially, the opposite sex. To be able to exercise self-control is to walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16). Victory over the desires of the flesh comes by avoiding the pull of the flesh. However, anyone who is unable to exercise self-control is admonished to marry or re-marry (Gal.5:9).

7. Conclusion

Every reasonable Nigerian should be concerned about the ascendancy of rape and sexual violence against women and girls. Covid-19 pandemic has brought serious challenges of how to manage sanity in the society in the midst of a flurry of bestialities that keep erupting from everywhere (Orunbon, 2020). Orunbon argues further that the orgy of violence perpetrated across all ages manifests the baloney of infecting the left over values we hold unto with spider web. The incidence of rape and sexual violence has increased following the emergence of Corona Virus pandemic. Those who live in concentrated settlement and camps are daily face to face with sexual perpetrators and sexual predators. Regrettably, relations now rape the members of their family.

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