mother (*Ant.* 8.1.1.7). She did not hesitate to criticize him and taught him to behave in a manner befitting his status and position. She admonished him for his inappropriate behavior when he drank too much and when he married Pharaoh's daughter (*WayR* 12:5; *bSan* 70b; Ibn Ezra on Prov 31:1). According to these sources, Bathsheba had come a long way. The former wife of Uriah the soldier had become a queen who conducted herself with honor and nobility. She was familiar with courtly manners all over the world and knew the consequences of the unrestrained behavior of young princes. Even as queen she does not forget that she is subject to divine law and she tries to convey this message to Solomon. It was thanks to the wisdom and instruction of Bathsheba that Solomon achieved his impressive accomplishments, and his wisdom became known to all the nations and their kings. The midrash tells that while Solomon was hearing the case of the prostitutes Bathsheba sat at his left and Ruth the Moabite at his right (*SZ Bem* 10:29). These two women were privileged to see Solomon at his best when he judged wisely and as a result the entire nation came to recognize his wisdom and accept his rule. To Bathsheba was applied the verse in Prov 31:22: "She made for herself coverlets, she is dressed in satin and purple," since her offspring was Solomon who was decorated in satin and purple and who ruled from one end of the earth to the other (*Midrash Eshet ḥayil* 31:22).

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Tamar Kadari

IV. Islam

The Qurʾān never mentions Bathsheba by name. Rather, in one of the many qurʾānic passages about David we find a brief story about two "litigants" (*khaṣm*) who exhort David to arbitrate between them:

> One said: 'This one, my brother, has ninety-nine ewe lambs, and I have only one; but he persuaded me to hand her over to his care.' David replied: 'He has wronged you by asking to add your ewe to his flock. Indeed, very many people transgress and wrong each other, except those who believe and do good works, though they are few.' Then David discerned that we were testing him, so he sought his Lord's pardon, fell to his knees, and repented… (38:23–25)

Western scholars have consistently identified this passage as an allusion to the Bathsheba affair, constructed as a recasting of Nathan's parable from 2 Sam 12. It fits into a larger literary pattern evident in sūra 38, inasmuch as the overarching leitmotif of the chapter is that of arrogance (or "arrogant self-reliance," as *istighnāʾ* is sometimes rendered): those who skeptically deny Muḥammad's message (vv. 2–8) are juxtaposed first with those who rejected earlier prophets (vv. 12–14); then with David and Solomon, who initially failed God's tests due to their arrogance, but then were exalted by him after they repented (vv. 17–26, 30–40); and finally with Iblīs, whose conceit led him to refuse to bow before Adam and to rebel against the direct command of God (vv. 71–85).

The most noteworthy aspect of the qurʾānic version of the Bathsheba story is the fact that it omits any direct reference to David's sin at all, preferring instead to hint at his transgression and then move directly to a description of his repentance; this reflects a wider tendency found in the Qurʾān, in which the faults and shortcomings of prophets are often acknowledged only in an oblique way. The text's reticence to depict David's sin more explicitly facilitated a wholesale denial of the affair by later Muslim tradition, a task that became more and more pressing with the establishment of the doctrine of *ʿiṣma*, or prophetic infallibility. This doctrine also seems to have motivated the gradual obliteration of references to the notorious Satanic Verses episode, in which Satan is supposed to have interfered with the revelation of the opening passage of what is now sūra 53 to Muḥammad. Intriguingly, another prophetic scandal affecting Muḥammad, namely his marriage to his adopted son's former wife, Zaynab bint Jaḥsh, appears to be deeply linked to the Bathsheba affair as well; as Maghen has recently shown, there are profound similarities between rabbinic accounts of the Bathsheba affair, Muslim adaptations of those accounts, and Muslim recollections of the Zaynab episode in biographical traditions about Muḥammad. Thus, the shifting debate over exegesis of the qurʾānic story of David and the litigants in sūra 38 vividly illustrates the development of one of the most important aspects of classical Muslim dogma.

Earlier collections of Muslim traditions on the episode display more candor in their handling of the affair, though even the oldest stratum of preserved material already reflects ambivalence about the allegation that David committed adultery and murder. For example, both the Qurʾān commentary and chronicle of al-Ṭabarī contain numerous traditions stating that David deliberately exposed Uriah to harm in order to marry Bathsheba, though none of them acknowledge that he might have actually copulated with her beforehand. Later exegetes would not admit even this much, construing David's offense as his seeking Bathsheba's hand when she was already *engaged* to Uriah, or else his marry-

ing her after she had already been divorced or widowed, this having been forbidden to prophets. As time passed, exegetes grew more and more insistent on exculpating David of any wrongdoing whatsoever, and by the 12th century or so, with the full establishment of the doctrine of infallibility, many Muslim authorities seem to have regarded the very suggestion that David had sinned at all as wholly scandalous. (The clearly anachronistic traditions claiming that Companions such as ʿUmar ibn al-Khāṭṭāb and ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib had sought to suppress the recollection of the story seem to have flourished at this time. The earliest sources in which such traditions are attested date only to the 11th century.)

Notably, with the decisive shift toward the wholesale denial of the Bathsheba episode on the part of Muslim spokesmen, the biblical story of David's crimes became one of a number of cases that Muslim polemicists could cite as proof of the corruption of the Jewish and Christian Bibles. Since the scriptures originally revealed by God to these communities could not possibly have contained such unseemly slanders against a holy prophet, the preservation of such stories in the canonical HB/OT was held as undeniable evidence that Jews and Christians had tampered with the texts sent down to their communities. Thus, one well-known polemicist of the 11th century states:

> By God, I have never seen a people which, while accepting the concept of prophethood, ascribes to its prophets what those infidels ascribe to theirs … Of David they say that he openly committed adultery with the virtuous wife of one of his soldiers, while her husband was still alive, and that she gave birth to an illegitimate son; however, this noble scion died. [David] ended up marrying her, and she gave birth to Solomon. (From Ibn Ḥazm's polemical treatise against the Jews, *Iẓhār tabdīl al-Yahūd*, now extant only in his *Kitāb al-fiṣal fī al-milal wa-al-ahwāʾ wa-al-niḥal*; quoted in Adang: 239–40)

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V. Literature

Throughout literary history, writers have been fascinated with David's adultery with Bathsheba. In works of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, David is a model of penitence: he sins with Bathsheba but then repents and suffers for his actions. Examples of such works include Thomas Wyatt's loose translation of the seven penitential psalms (*Certain Psalms*, 1549), George Peele's *David and Bethsabe* (1593), and Hans Sachs' *Comedia: David mit Bathseba im Ehebruch* (16th cent.). These works are less about Bathsheba and more about David. Bathsheba is only important as the means of the king's sin. She is the one who turns the strong and valiant ruler into "a frail stalk of grass" (Gottfried of Admont, *Homiliae dominicales aestivales*, 12th cent.). David and Bathsheba's relationship was also interpreted in the Renaissance as a passionate love affair, particularly in Ovidian erotic poetry. For example, Remy Belleau's *La Bergerie* (1565) portrays Bathsheba as both beautiful and chaste. In Nathanial Hawthorne's novel *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), Dimmesdale has a tapestry in his room representing the story of David and Bathsheba – one of the first hints that he is the adulterer and thus father of Hester Prinn's child. As in the Renaissance drama, this reference is more about the male figure, since Hester is not compared to Bathsheba. In English literature, Bathsheba appears in two works by Thomas Hardy. In *Far From the Madding Crowd* (1874), the main character is named Bathsheba. The novel seemingly bears little relationship to the biblical story since Hardy's Bathsheba is an independent agent whose interaction with three different suitors drives the plot. Yet, elements of the biblical story are fragmented and scattered throughout the novel: men's passionate response to Bathsheba's beauty, the death of an infant conceived out of wedlock, and the final marriage between Bathsheba and the shepherd Gabriel Oak. A different allusion to Bathsheba appears in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891) when Angel Clare regrets his quick abandonment of Tess because of her sexual history. He does so by reflecting on Bathsheba's lack of agency ("he asked himself why he had not judged Tess … by the will rather than by the deed."). Milly Jones, pretty and naive, is the Bathsheba figure in William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936). Even though she is the daughter and not the wife of a loyal servant, her seduction by Sutpen is a betrayal of that loyal servant. She is the object of Sutpen's attention because he is seeking a male heir to continue his dynasty. In *The King David Report* (1977), Stefan Heym uses the stories of the books of Samuel to explore the gap between official history and unheroic reality. Bathsheba is the victim of David's licentiousness and raw ambition. In his East German context, Heym's "unauthorized version" of the David and Bathsheba affair is a thinly veiled political satire.

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