

## **Women’s Salvific Role in the Old Testament: Exegetical Study of 1 Samuel 25,23-28 and its Relevance to Women**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The Old Testament position about women depicts the origination of the human race and the institutionalization of gender in respect of roles and treatment given in the Jewish-predominated society. One of these significant roles is the salvific intervention of women in saving their families and the nation of Israel as a whole at precarious moments. Despite women’s relegation and alienation in Jewish society, they were still much more relevant to the growth and continuity of such society and their families in particular. This sheer understanding finds expression in the role of Abigail who carelessly threw herself to the approaching angry warriors, David and his men. Therefore this paper sets out to discuss the salvific role of Abigail in saving her family from impending destruction. The study adopted exegetical, historical, and descriptive methods. It was discovered that Abigail was the epitome of the proverbial wife who keeps her home from destruction. The findings also show that men can be insensitive with their actions, hence putting their lives and families in danger. The study recommended that women must wake-up to their responsibility of saving their homes and nation from various intricate challenges undermining its peace and progress.

### **KEYWORDS**

Salvific Role; Women; Old Testament; Exegetical.

### **Introduction**

A woman is a man’s completeness. The origin of women can be traced to the account creation in Genesis which depicts that the first woman was taken out of the rib of the first man –Adam, and further portrays the overwhelming joy expressed by the man at the sight of the woman (Gen. 2,21-23 NKJV). Women discourse has received wider engagements from scholars, feminists and the society in general in order to explore the strengths and weaknesses

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of women within the biblical world. Women are important figures in every society despite the socio-cultural practices which may undermine the value of women's participation in the socio-political and economic activities. Yet, there were women warriors such as Deborah, women prophet like Miriam, Huldah, Deborah, queens (Esther), matriarchs (Sarah, Rebekka, Rachael) among others that have proven women's contributions in the ancient Israelites community. Alice Bellis refers to these women and all the Hebrew women who stand out as acting independently or valiantly as "Heroes".<sup>3</sup>

The socio-cultural practices of the ancient Israelites community do not permit women to make independent decision regarding the home rather they are subjected to their husbands whose decision is regarded as *ultima arbitrium*.<sup>4</sup> Caroline Breyfogle cited Westermarck that women in the Old Testament are subject to the "Chinese rule of the three obedience. When young she must obey her father; when married, she must obey her husband; and when her husband is dead, she must obey her son."<sup>5</sup> Thus, it can be adduced that women's lives in the ancient Israelites community belong to the men who are seen as the "father figure" "lord" and or "master". John Thompson identifies that critics like Bal and Hampson wrote that the cruelty perpetrated upon these Old Testament women is a predictable manifestation of the patriarchy embedded in the Bible and in all the strands of tradition and ideology that draw on the Bible as a resource or authority.<sup>6</sup> Women as political figures are also restricted to certain jurisdictions. In Weidner's study of the palace life, he writes:

there is a distinction between the royal 'court' (comprised of the male officials and servants) and the 'harem' (the various ranks of women of the palace and their servants). He suggests that the women are not only physically segregated and restricted to 'the harem area' but also cut off from the 'outside world' and from the administrative and management spheres of the palace. He further envisions a 'deadly boredom' (*Langemveile*) among the women of the palace in which 'the most insignificant occasions must satisfy feminine curiosities' and which 'too often' gives rise to 'gossiping, squabbling and fighting'.<sup>7</sup>

Women were not part of the regular meetings of the assembly and also, there are times when women – Queens cannot visit their husbands – Kings (Esther 4,15 NIV).<sup>8</sup> Despite all these cultural practices, some women were distinguished due to their exceptionality in home, public life such as religious, economic and political spaces and were conferred with honour alongside their male contemporaries.

The narrative in 1 Samuel 25,23-27, showcases the story of a beautiful woman who transcended beyond the status quo of her society to save her family from the impending destruction which was necessitated by the imprudent acts of her husband – Nabal. Thus, the story

<sup>3</sup> BELLIS, Alice O. *Helpmates, Heroes and Harlots Women's Stories in the Hebrew Bible*. London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007, p. 31.

<sup>4</sup> *Ultima arbitrium* is a Latin expression of "Ultimate decision". The decision of a man is uncontestable.

<sup>5</sup> BREYFOGLE, Caroline. "The Social Status of Woman in the Old Testament", *The University of Chicago Press Journal*, <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/pdf/10.1086/474296>, accessed on 29<sup>th</sup> January, 2024.

<sup>6</sup> THOMPSON, John L. *Writing the Wrong Women of the Old Testament among Biblical Commentators from Philo through Reformation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> SOLVANG, Elna K. "A Woman's Place is in the House Royal Women of Judah and their Involvement in the House of David", in David, Clines & Philip, Davies, in *Journal for the Study of The Old Testament Supplement Series 349*. New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003.

<sup>8</sup> Esther 4,15 New International Version (NIV).

represented and repositioned the place and general view about women in the biblical time. Ken Mulzac cited John Otwell that in the Hebrew Bible, it is unusual to find the wife depicted as being superior to her husband; thus this story serves as a striking example of feminine superiority.<sup>9</sup> However, caution must be taken in the usage of the word “superiority” as used by Ken. Instead of “superiority”, the paper tends to advocate the use of “better” and “better” in the sense that Abigail had only applied wisdom in saving her family because the loom might have claimed her life too. Therefore the context of superiority and inferiority in the context of the passage cannot be established.

The thrust of the paper is not to rate the action of Abigail as being superior or not but to examine her insightful thought displayed in her commitment, deeds and words with the interest of saving her family. The paper is divided into historical background of 1 Samuel 25, Abigail: an epitome of wisdom, the Hebrew passage and its’ English translation, exegetical study of 1 Samuel 25,23-27, lessons for the Nigerian women, and conclusion.

### **Historical background of 1 Samuel 25**

Generally, the book of 1 Samuel was a pair to 2 Samuel which were at first one book. They were divided by the translators of the Septuagint. The title “First and Second Samuel” actually comes from the Hebrew which calls the book set “Samuel A and B”. The author of the book is debatable since of the known authors include Prophet like Samuel, Nathan, or Gad but the closest to this study was the incidence of Samuel’s death that took place before David’s reign (1011BC) in 1 Samuel 25 which rules out Samuel’s authorship of the rest part of 1 Samuel and or any part of the 2 Samuel.<sup>10</sup> The chapter 25 of 1 Samuel gave several remarkable accounts in the history of the ancient Israelites community. It recorded the death of Samuel and the monumental service held for him, the meeting of the wealthy but foolish man – Nabal, the anger of David, the prudent intervention of Abigail, the eventual salvation of Nabal and his household, and David’s proposal to Abigail. All these account happened within the short record in 1 Samuel 25. Peter Beale writes:

The chapters either side of Chapter 25 describe, in almost mirror image, the pursuing of David by Saul, David seeking protection through alliance with a Philistine king, David saving people from enemies, and David choosing to spare the life of Saul. They also describe the movement from Samuel to David as the one who speaks with and for Yahweh: Samuel’s death, Saul’s loss of all communication with Yahweh (except through a female medium), and David’s growing ability to consult directly with God before all battles. In chapters 24 and 26 David is declared more righteous and worthy of kingship than Saul because he spared Saul’s life when given the opportunity to take it.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> MULZAC, Ken. “The Role of Abigail in 1 Sam. 25”, *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 1, 2003, 45-53.

<sup>10</sup> McCAIN, Danny. *Notes on Old Testament Introduction*. Plateau: African Christian TextBooks, 2014, p. 159-160.

<sup>11</sup> BEALE, Peter. “David and Abigail –An Exegesis of 1 Samuel”, [https://www.academia.edu/10732156/David\\_and\\_Abigail\\_an\\_exegesis\\_of\\_1\\_Samuel\\_25](https://www.academia.edu/10732156/David_and_Abigail_an_exegesis_of_1_Samuel_25), accessed on 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2024.

Peter Beale viewed the chapter as a link chapter through its references of chapter 24 and the following passage (chapter 26). David has already been preordained before this time by Prophet Samuel. However, his enthronement into the leadership of Israel continues to be threatened by King Saul.

The story of the family of Nabal portrayed in 1 Samuel 25 depicted a display of folly and wisdom. Nabal whose name was foolish (25,25 NIV).<sup>12</sup> According to *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon* the name Nâbâl means fool. And it appears 22 times in the Bible.<sup>13</sup> Ken cited Jon Leveson that the Hebrew word *nabal* indicates more than a “harmless simpleton, but rather a vicious, materialistic, and egocentric misfit”.<sup>14</sup> Ken further writes:

Nabal was unruly and unkind in spite of David’s kindness to him (1 Sam 25,15-16). A “scornful loudmouth” (1 Sam 25,10-11), he heaped scorn on David and offered disingenuity for generosity (1 Sam 25,10-11), unkindness for kindness (1 Sam 25,15), and ingratitude for gratitude (1 Sam 25,21). Nabal was shameless. David provided protection for his flocks at no expense, and it would be expected that Nabal would have happily rewarded this kindness.<sup>15</sup>

The submission of Ken was apt as he portrays David’s faithfulness towards Nabal and the recompense he received from him (Nabal). Contrary to the name of Nabal, Abigail means “Father’s joy”<sup>16</sup> which may literarily be translated as one who brings joy to her father and or to her home. Unlike Nabal which appears frequently in the passage, the name Abigail appeared for 17 times of which 9 were used in the passage. Undeniably, Abigail brought joy to her home as she saves her husband, herself and the entire household which includes the slaves and particularly all male that be to Nabal. David is motivated by her words and quitted his plan to kill Nabal and all his men and boys. He even appreciated Abigail for diverting him from his reckless plan.<sup>17</sup> David’s appreciation speech was explicitly expressed in 1 Samuel:

May you be blessed for your good judgment and for keeping me from bloodshed this day and from avenging myself with my own hands. <sup>34</sup>Otherwise, as surely as the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, who has kept me from harming you, if you had not come quickly to meet me, not one male belonging to Nabal would have been left alive by daybreak.” (1 Sam. 25,33-34 NIV).<sup>18</sup>

### **Abigail: An Epitome of Wisdom**

The story of Abigail has helped to strike a balance in a society that has been conceived as patriarchal in nature. The display of wisdom by Abigail has helped to redefined wisdom in the

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<sup>12</sup> See 1 Samuel 25:25 *New International Version*.

<sup>13</sup> Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon, Greek/Hebrew Definitions: Nabal, <https://www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Lexicon.show/ID/H5037/Nabal.htm>, accessed on 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2024.

<sup>14</sup> MULZAC, 2003, p. 46.

<sup>15</sup> MULZAV, 2003, p. 48.

<sup>16</sup> Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon, Greek/Hebrew Definitions: Abigail, <https://www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Lexicon.show/ID/H5037/Nabal.htm>, accessed on 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2024.

<sup>17</sup> Theology of Works, “Abigail Defuses a Crisis between David and Nabal (1 Samuel 25)”, <https://www.theologyofwork.org/old-testament/samuel-kings-chronicles-and-work/from-tribal-confederation-to-monarchy-1-samuel/davids-rise-to-power-1-samuel-17-30/abigail-defuses-a-crisis-between-david-and-nabal-1-samuel-25/>, accessed on 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2024.

<sup>18</sup> 1 Samuel 25,33-34 *New International Version*.

context of male alone rather as an encompassing virtue that can be exhibited by the generality of the Israelites community. It is true that Solomon was depicted as being the wisest of all but in the regards of Abigail, no wisdom is small, thus, she is a “personified wisdom”. Phyllis Bird describes her as “intelligent, beautiful, discreet and loyal to her husband (despite his stupidity and boorish character). Prudent, quick-witted, and resourceful, she is capable of independent action.”<sup>19</sup> Abigail’s marriage to Nabal was aptly described in 1 Sam 25,2 NIV as a man who is wealthy but unruly and unwise.

The term wisdom is derived from the Hebrew “Chokmah”. The word ‘wisdom’ derives from the root word ‘wise’. The word wise is termed *Chokmah* in the Hebrew tongue. *Chokmah* means “to be wise, act wisely, make wise, show oneself wise.” It was used 39 times in singular form in various passages of the Bible such as Proverbs 1,2-3,7; and 3 times in the plural in Proverbs 1,20; 9,1; 24,7. *Chokmah* is the knowledge and ability to make the right choices at the opportune time. In fact, the consistency of making the right choices is an indication of maturity and development.<sup>20</sup> No doubt, Abigail’s display of wisdom put her in a better position to save her family from the impending bloodshed. In describing her wisdom act, Judette Gallares opines that Abigail was “a faithful conciliatory, an advocate of active non-violence and peace, who offers to her audience an alternative value system, another set of ideals, another approach to leadership that relies more on the power of peace and reconciliation than on the power of hate and vengeance.”<sup>21</sup> Abigail speaks a great deal in this story, more than her husband and more than David. She constantly speaks of herself in very lowly terms, calling herself maidservant (‘amhâ) and handmaid (siphâ). These terms stand in contrast to the power she wields through her words. She effectively prevents David from attacking her husband and his men, and she links herself with David.<sup>22</sup>

Ken given a sharp contrast between Abigail and Nabal’s speeches as he writes:

Abigail’s activity demonstrated wisdom and kindness (1 Sam 25,18- 19), inviting forgiveness, peace, reconciliation, and life. Everything that her foolish husband brought upon himself, she was able to reverse by her wise action. Nabal’s folly is unveiled in his speech (which also belies his action). His response was scornful and derisive: “Who is David? Who is the son of Jesse? These days there are many slaves who break away from their masters. Should I take my bread, my wine, and my meat which I have slaughtered for my shearers, and give it to men whose place of origin I do not know?” (1 Sam 25,10-11). This outburst is hardly surprising since it is characteristic of a fool, for “excellent speech does not come from a fool” Prov 17,7).<sup>23</sup>

As presented by Ken above, wisdom is present in the presentation of Abigail which can be seen in her humility, carefulness and orderly presentation, while Nabal was unconcerned about his speech to others, and while destruction is coming, he was still partying.

<sup>19</sup> BIRD, Phyllis. “Images of Women in the Old Testament”. In: *Religion and Sexism: Images of Women in the Jewish and Christian Traditions*, ed. Rosemary Radford Reuther. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974, p. 65.

<sup>20</sup> Cabiojinia, “Wisdom/Origin and Meaning of Wisdom”, <https://cabiojinia.com/wisdom-origin-and-meaning-of-wisdom/#:~:text=Chokmah,chakam%20in%20the%20Hebrew%20tongue>, accessed on 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2024.

<sup>21</sup> ONUH, Lazarus Ejike, “Women as Agents of Salvation in the Old Testament: An Appraisal of Hannah and Abigail in Israel’s Early Monarchy (1 Samuel 1-3, 25)” (2017). *Theology Graduate Theses*. 12. [https://digital-commons.providence.edu/theology\\_graduate\\_theses/12](https://digital-commons.providence.edu/theology_graduate_theses/12).

<sup>22</sup> BELLIS, 2007, p. 130.

<sup>23</sup> MULZAC, 2003, p. 48-49.

## Textual Analysis

### The Hebrew passage of 1 Samuel 25,23-28

23 וַתֵּרָא אַבִּיגַיִל אֶת־דָּוִד וַתַּמְהִיֵר וַתֵּרֵד מֵעַל הַחֲמֹר וַתִּפֹּל לְעַלְ-  
 רַגְלָיו וַתֵּאמֶר בִּי־אֲדֹנָי הֲעֵנֹן וַתְּדַבֵּר־נָא אֲמַתְּךָ בְּאָזְנוֹיךָ וּשְׁמַע אֶת דְּבָרַי אֲמַתְּךָ 25 אֶל־נָא יְשִׁים אֲדֹנָי  
 אֶת־לִבּוֹ אֶל־אִישׁ הַבְּלִיעַל הַזֶּה עַל־נָבָל כִּי כְשֵׁמוֹ כִּן־הוּא נָבָל שְׁמוֹ וּנְבָלָה עִמּוֹ וְנָא אֲמַתְּךָ לֹא רָאִיתִי  
 אֶת־נְעָרֵי אֲדֹנָי אֲשֶׁר שְׁלַחְתָּ: 26 וְעַתָּה אֲדֹנָי חַי־יְהוָה וְחַי־נַפְשְׁךָ אֲשֶׁר מִנְעָה יְהוָה מִבּוֹא בְדָמַיִם וְהוֹשַׁע  
 יָדְךָ לָּךְ וְעַתָּה יְהִי כְנָבֶל אִיְכִי וְהִמְבִקְשִׁים אֶל־אֲדֹנָי רַעַה: 27 וְעַתָּה הַבְּרִכָּה הַזֹּאת אֲשֶׁר־הֵבִיא שְׁפָתְךָ  
 לְאֲדֹנָי וְנִתְּנָה לְנְעָרַיִם הַמְתַּהַלְכִים בְּרַגְלֵי אֲדֹנָי: 28 שָׂא נָא לְפִשֶׁע אֲמַתְּךָ כִּי עָשָׂה־יַעֲשֶׂה יְהוָה לְאֲדֹנָי בְּיַת  
 נְאֻמּוֹ כִּי־מִלְחָמוֹת יְהוָה אֲדֹנָי נִלְחַם וְרַעַה לֹא־תִמָּצֵא בְּךָ מִיָּמֶיךָ:

### English Translations (1 Samuel 25,23-28 KJV)

23 And when Abigail saw David, she hastened, and lighted off the ass, and fell before David on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, 24 And fell at his feet, and said, Upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be: and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine audience, and hear the words of thine handmaid. 25 Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, even Nabal: for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him: but I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send. 26 Now therefore, my lord, as the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, seeing the Lord hath withholden thee from coming to shed blood, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand, now let thine enemies, and they that seek evil to my lord, be as Nabal.

27 And now this blessing which thine handmaid hath brought unto my lord, let it even be given unto the young men that follow my lord. 28 I pray thee, forgive the trespass of thine handmaid: for the Lord will certainly make my lord a sure house; because my lord fighteth the battles of the Lord, and evil hath not been found in thee all thy days.

### Exegetical Study of 1 Samuel 25,23-27

**Vv. 23-24:** The verses open with וַתֵּרָא אַבִּיגַיִל אֶת־דָּוִד וַתַּמְהִיֵר וַתֵּרֵד מֵעַל הַחֲמֹר which is translated as “And when Abigail saw David, she hastened, and lighted off the ass”. Prior to these verses Abigail had been informed by one her maid about David good deeds and his request to Nabal which has been declined (1 Samuel 25,14-17 KJV). It is important to note that Abigail’s reaction was necessitated by her willingness to listen. Abigail listen, saw, lighted off the ass and bowed herself to the ground. “*lighted off the ass*” i.e. got down from, an old form of alighted. The Heb. word is different from that similarly translated in Joshua 15,18, and simply means “to descend.”<sup>24</sup> While commenting on her attitude Jamieson-Fausset-Brown opines that dismounting in presence of a superior is the highest token of respect that can be given; and it is still an essential act of homage to the great.<sup>25</sup> Austin underscored that *shachah* means to bow down, to prostrate oneself, to crouch, to fall down, to humbly beseech, to do reverence, to worship.

<sup>24</sup> Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, “1 Samuel 25”, [https://biblehub.com/commentaries/camb\\_ridge/1\\_samuel/25.htm](https://biblehub.com/commentaries/camb_ridge/1_samuel/25.htm) accessed on 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2024.

<sup>25</sup> Jamieson-Fausset-Brown, “Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary” [https://biblehub.com/commentaries/1\\_samuel/25-23.htm](https://biblehub.com/commentaries/1_samuel/25-23.htm) accessed on 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2024.

The idea is to assume a prostrate position as would in paying homage to royalty (Ge 43,28) or to God (Ge 24,26, Ps 95,6).<sup>26</sup>

**V. 24** אֲדֹנָי (adonai) and אֲנִי עַבְדָּתְךָ (your maidservant/handmaid). The two prominent words in the passage to come into usage here as Abigail presented herself as a maidservant and David a lord figure. Austin cited Robert Vannoy that Abigail begins her appeal to David on an apologetic note (she is not taking on herself the blame for Nabal's action), as she does again when she begins the second half of her appeal (1SaM 25,28). Further citing Ray Pritchard, Austin viewed that when David halted before Abigail, she does something strange. Getting off her donkey, she bows down in the dust before David. She asks David to take revenge on her because she is Nabal's wife. David has never met a woman like her before. He's not about to do anything to her.<sup>27</sup> The shift in blame was Abigail's method to pacify the angry warrior.

**Vv. 25-26:** Abigail presented the case first by imputing Nabal's crime upon her head in the previous verse. She then went further to affirm that Nabal which means fool or foolishness has behaved just as his name implies. Gill affirmed that the character of her husband, though no doubt a just one, yet it would not have been right in her to have given it, whose folly she should rather have concealed, but that it was his well-known character; and she observes it not to reproach him with it, but to excuse his sin.<sup>28</sup> Notwithstanding Abigail comment about her husband received condemnation from different scholars such as Alice Bach who views that she called her husband fool and siding with the enemy, she does not mourn the death of her husband.<sup>29</sup> Ken observed that the servant of Nabal recognized the folly of his master's action, and his youthfulness further underscored Nabal's foolishness. He too places emphasis on Nabal's character by pointing out that Nabal is the "son of Belial," "a nasty fellow" 15 (I Sam 25,17).<sup>30</sup>

**V. 26:** יְהוָה יִשְׁמַרְךָ (YHWH was mentioned by Abigail as the one who prevented the bloodshed) אֲנִי עַבְדָּתְךָ (Yahweh mənā'ākā) translated as "Yahweh has withheld you back or the LORD has withholden". It is expedient to say that Abigail knew the escape history of David and how God had saved him from the hand of Saul, she regarded all these to the salvific work of Yahweh – God of Is: rael and as such, that same Yahweh made David to have a rethink about his bloodshed act. She further prays that יְהוָה יַעֲשֶׂה לְדָוִד כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁמַרְךָ. "Yahweh will make David's enemies "like Nabal."

**Vv. 27-28:** Abigail referred herself again as "maidservant". "Maidservant" speaks of her humble, submissive heart attitude. Her offer of a gift is to appease David's anger, which in theology and as it relates to God we would call making propitiation.<sup>31</sup> In Old Testament times a gift was customarily given for the price of a bride (Gen 34,12 NKJV). The gifts of all the wave

<sup>26</sup> Precept Austiin, "1 Samuel 25", <https://www.preceptaustin.org/1-samuel-25-commentary>. Accessed on 30th January, 2024.

<sup>27</sup> Precept Austiin, "1 Samuel 25", <https://www.preceptaustin.org/1-samuel-25-commentary>, accessed on 30th January, 2024.

<sup>28</sup> Gill Exposition to the Bible, "1 Samuel 25", [https://biblehub.com/commentaries/gill/1\\_samuel/25.htm](https://biblehub.com/commentaries/gill/1_samuel/25.htm), accessed on 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2024.

<sup>29</sup> BACH, Alice. "The Pleasure of Her Text." Article in *Ad Feminam*. USQR 43 (1989): 41–58. And chap. in *The Pleasure of Her Text: Feminist Readings of Biblical and Historical Texts*, 25–44. Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990. Also in Athalya Brenner, ed., *A Feminist Companion to Samuel and Kings*, p. 106-28. FCB 1/5. Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994.

<sup>30</sup> MULZAC, 2003, p. 48.

<sup>31</sup> Precept Austiin, "1 Samuel 25", <https://www.preceptaustin.org/1-samuel-25-commentary>, accessed on 30th January, 2024.

offerings of the Israelites were given by God to the priests and their families (Num 18,11 NKJV). Fathers gave gifts to sons before sending them away (Gen 25,6 NKJV); sons would receive inheritances from their fathers (2 Ch. 21,3 NKJV).<sup>32</sup> *Mattanah* is the Hebrew word for gift. A gift is also rendered *minchah*, an offering or present, used especially of the “meat offerings,” is translated “gift” (2 Samuel 8,2.6; 2 Chronicles 26,8 KJV).<sup>33</sup> **V. 28** She believed that Yahweh would give David an enduring dynasty because he fought the Lord’s battles (1 Samuel 25,28), not just Saul’s battles, and because David would do the Lord’s will. In this she again anticipated David’s proper response to her request. She believed God would preserve David alive, a blessing promised in the Mosaic Law for those who obeyed God (Deuteronomy 4,10; 8,1; 16,20 NKJV).<sup>34</sup> Abigail seeks נְיָצָה (śā) – forgiveness from David. She in effect takes full responsibility for Nabal’s rejection and reviling. Perhaps she does this because she is one flesh with Nabal, even though she did not commit the evil.<sup>35</sup>

## Lessons to Nigerian Women

The narrative of Abigail as found in 1 Samuel 25 serves as a foundation for the Nigerian women and the Nigerian society in general as prototype of women’s salvific role in the contemporary Nigerian society. In the struggle for independence in Nigeria, women such as Fumilayo Ransome-Kuti, Magret Ekpo, Elizabeth Adekogbe, Wuraola Esan, Hajiya Gambo Sawaba and Tanimowo Ogunlesi played prominent roles in the fight for liberation of Nigeria.<sup>36</sup> Abigail profound act saved her husband and household from David’s sword. Thus, it is safe to say that in a pluralistic society like Nigeria where diverse ideologies prevail, the need to emulate Abigail’s act becomes worthy for home, culture and nation’s preservation.

### 1. Thoughtfulness

The role of Abigail in the salvific process of her household was necessitated by her ability to be considerate, kind and thoughtful at the moment she heard of her husband misbehaviour. After the servant’s report, he commented thus: “therefore know and consider what thou wilt do; for evil is determined against our master, and against all his household: for he is such a son of Belial, that a man cannot speak to him (1 Samuel 25,17 NKJV). Abigail became thoughtful and she anticipated the possible action of David towards Nabal attitudes, and thus prepared to meet David on his way with presentable gifts. These gifts were carefully selected to include two hundred loaves, and two bottles of wine, and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched corn, and an hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs (1 Samuel 25,18).

<sup>32</sup> GOLDENBERG, Louis. “Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology – Gift“, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/gift/>, accessed on 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2024.

<sup>33</sup> ORR, James, General Editor. “Entry for ‘GIFT’“. “International Standard Bible Encyclopedia”. 1915.

<sup>34</sup> Constable’s Expository Notes, “1 Samuel 25”, <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/eng/dcc/1-samuel-25.html>, accessed 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2024.

<sup>35</sup> Precept Austin, “1 Samuel 25”, <https://www.preceptaustin.org/1-samuel-25-commentary>, accessed on 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2024.

<sup>36</sup> Bukola Amoboye, Nigeria @ 60: Unsung Heroines of Independence, <https://www.thisdaystyle.ng/nigeria-63-unsung-heroines-of-independence/> accessed on 31<sup>st</sup> January, 2024.



Abigail's act of peace was conceived in her thoughtfulness. Lazarus corroborated that her choice of gifts also shows a mark of perceptiveness and attentiveness to the situation. They were not random gifts but gifts carefully selected to address the immediate needs of David and his men at that existential moment.<sup>37</sup> The Nigerian women should take an understanding from the character of Abigail in navigating life intricate in their society. The home is also a place where thoughtfulness should be displayed as seen in the acts and deeds of Abigail. Some divorce issues among families occur due to lack of thoughtfulness between the couples. The gifts presented the aftermath of her thought which was put in her actions.

## **2. Effective Communication facilitated good Understanding**

Bumi Olujinmi and Olufolake Jegede opine that "Abigail was a trucebreaker and an astute communicator who used her feminine linguistic prowess to captivantly bring about an attitudinal change in David who purposed in his mind".<sup>38</sup> Ken asserted that her opening words were designed to blot out David's intentions to retaliate: "Upon me, my lord, let this iniquity be upon me... Accept this blessing which your maidservant brought for my lord" (1 Sam 25,24-25.27; 1 Sam 25,28.30 NKJV)<sup>39</sup> One thing that has been discovered over time is the attitudinal change in women in the Nigerian society. Contrary to Abigail's intervention as a good communicator, most Nigerian women are usually seen in loggerheads with their husbands and most times lead to combat and the eventual marital failure. These combats are as a result of lack of effective communication from the woman who is seen as a bad communicator of intents. The Nigerian women must realize that in maintaining a leadership position, at home or the society generally, they must be an effective communicator in order to foster understanding and acceptance of the ideas they have presented.

## **3. Wisdom is Profitable to Direct**

One of the remarkable indications of wisdom in the book of Ecclesiastes is the proclivity to direction in life (Eccl. 10,10). It is pertinent to commend the wisdom approach of Abigail in solving the existential issue which might have overcome her and her family. She is wise, prudent, and psychologically savvy.<sup>40</sup> Wisdom is the application of knowledge. Wisdom is life. The Nigerian women must show wisdom in all their dealings which is expected to first start from the home and then into the larger society. A woman of wisdom is one who guides and protects her home. Proverbs 14,1 writes: "the wise woman builds her house, but the foolish woman pulls it down with her hands (NKJV). There are several existential issues such as divorce and unhappy home fashioned from women's input by not applying wisdom to settle things amicably with their husbands. There are also women leaders who have become unbearable to their followers and as such caused retrogression to the organization. Therefore, Nigerian women should learn

<sup>37</sup> ONUH, Lazarus Ejike, "Women as Agents of Salvation in the Old Testament: An Appraisal of Hannah and Abigail in Israel's Early Monarchy (1 Samuel 1-3, 25)" (2017).

<sup>38</sup> BUMI, Olujinmi & OLUFOLAKE, Jegede, Women, Peace and Promotion and National Development: Portrait of Abigail a an Effective Communicator in the Bible, in Olabiyi, Adeniyi et al. (eds) Biblical Studies and Feminism in the African Context in Honour of the Late Dr. Dorcas Olubanke Akintunde, 2012, 296.

<sup>39</sup> MULZAC, 2003, p. 49.

<sup>40</sup> BELLIS, 2007, p. 130.

a great deal from the display of wisdom in the life of Abigail on how she was able to tackle the existential issue affecting her family.

#### 4. Peacemaker

A peacemaker is one who contributes to the comfort, solace, agreement, unity and serenity in a society. Abigail's systematic speech aided peace between David and Nabal. Abigail says:

Yet a man is risen to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul: but the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God; and the souls of thine enemies, them shall he sling out, as out of the middle of a sling. And it shall come to pass, when the Lord shall have done to my lord according to all the good that he hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel; that this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath avenged himself: but when the Lord shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid (1 Sam 25,29-31 *King James Version* (KJV)).

The narration continues as David says: "... Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me: and blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand". The statement indicated that peace was restored between David and Nabal. Nigerian women should take note that nothing is more virtues than making, building and keeping peace with the homes and the society in general.

#### 5. Humility

It is not far-fetched from the narrative of Abigail the substance of humility in her life. Humility is the bedrock of Abigail's character as exemplified in passage. Abigail's humble response turned David's heart. He saw the error he was about to make. He himself had just recently spared the life of King Saul, who sought to kill David (1 Sam. 24,4-13 NKJV). Yet David had been quick to exterminate the household of a man who had merely insulted him. His life of exile had angered him, and this anger had nearly driven him to seek vengeance against a man who was not the real enemy. He respected her for the great respect she showed her husband's household, despite his faulty character.<sup>41</sup> Epistle according to James writes: "...God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble."<sup>42</sup> To the humble where Abigail can be situated, she received favour from the angry warrior; He sent her away with a blessing, promising her safe return home and the preservation of the men of Nabal.<sup>43</sup> Women in the Nigerian society, should show the good trait of humility in their homes and society at large.

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<sup>41</sup> Abigail's Arm, "Story of Abigail", <https://abigailsarms.org/about-us/story-of-abigail/>, accessed on 31st January, 2024.

<sup>42</sup> See James 4,6 New International Version (NIV).

<sup>43</sup> Abigail's Arm, "Story of Abigail", <https://abigailsarms.org/about-us/story-of-abigail/>, accessed on 31st January, 2024.

## Conclusion

The role of women in the contemporary Nigerian society cannot be limited to the kitchen discourse. The kitchen has been used overtime to demeaning the value of women in the society. Thus, it was traditionally believed that a woman is not meant to overshadow the male in the society. However, far from it, this thought has been proven wrong by valiant women such as Olu-funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, Mary Slessor, Magret Ekpo, Elizabeth Adekogbe and Wuraola Esan among others who have break beyond the ban of this cultural belief to excel in the socio-political milieus. Women such as Deborah, Esther, Ruth, Huldah, Jael, Abigail and several others in the biblical world have proven that the bible is not only a patriarchal document but a document of gender equity where women are in the helm of affairs in the socio-political and religious milieus.

The narrative of Abigail in 1 Samuel 25,23-28 is a spotlight to women in the Nigerian society for sustainability, growth and development in the society. The character of Abigail is worth emulating as a woman who throws her positive best such as thoughtfulness, effective communication, peacemaking approach, humility and wisdom to avert the looming danger. Her action was purposeful and not accidental. The passage proves that Abigail's actions were not a pretense rather a genuinely character of a virtuous human who builds her home.

## Recommendations

1. Nigerian women must wake-up to their responsibility by saving their homes and nation from various intricate challenges undermining its peace and progress.
2. The Nigerian women must be determined to put in their best in doing going for their family and nations.
3. The study is not advocating for re-domineering of women but equity between the men and women in the society in order to enhance the societal growth.
4. Women must in all wise embrace wisdom, humility, patience, peace, and love to their husbands and society.
5. Women has roles to play in the world system and not neglect these roles, being one of this role to bring up godly children who out to be leaders like King Lemuel's mother (Prov. 31,1-9 NKJV).

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