

More than Just Naboth's Vineyard

Reflections on the Implications of the Community on Exploitation and Corruption in the Context of I Kings 21

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Abstract

There is an old saying that "A fish rots from the head." It means that when a society starts degrading, it must be the fault of the leadership or the government. The thesis of this paper is that this is not the case today, nor has it ever been. It is the community, the body of the fish, that must get the blame and take responsibility for its actions. This paper reflects largely on the effect the community has when partnering with the leadership to exploit and corrupt itself. The paper also offers a fresh reading of a well known passage, that of Naboth's Vineyard in 1 Kings 21. Through a number of analyses, the paper discovers the problem that faced Naboth's society, the nature of the problem which is that of exploitation and corruption, and extends the blame not only to the leadership, but to the community who voluntarily follows royal instructions to commit a major crime against Naboth, itself, and God. The paper concludes with the problem being resolved by human and divine intervention, and with a call for solidarity against such shameful actions that have paralyzed our communities, societies, countries, and world.

Introduction

Eugene Peterson writes, "A person has to get fed up with the ways of the world before he, before she, acquires an appetite for the world of grace" (Peterson, 2000, 25). The truth is that many people are comfortable with the reality. Some people tend to think that life is difficult, and there will be injustice and suffering for no

cause or for a good cause. For some, it even becomes second nature to go along with the reality, to be quiet and passive. Many say they do not have the power to confront, overlooking the legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, Gandhi, Mother Teresa, and many others who had the courage to say, "Enough". It is often forgotten that they also lacked resources, but nonetheless decided to take action and confront their own grievous situations. If we do not learn from history, we will continue to repeat the ugly past. The forgotten narrative of Naboth's vineyard screams from antiquity for justice. It shouts, "Enough! Something must be done."

There have been many commentaries written on 1 Kings 21, and which are quoted in this study, but many of them have overlooked the importance of an essential element of the story: that of "community". The purpose of this study is to bring the narrative into perspective for today by taking into consideration its communal implications. Thus, 1 Kings 21:1-16 has been explored using different methodologies in order to create a puzzle and provide a better understanding of the narrative. As one method leads to another and as they complement each other, together they reveal the problem and its nature, and reveal the responsible individuals. This undertaking answers the question: Is 1 Kings 21 only about Naboth's Vineyard?

Methodology

Before interpreting the text and making applications, a few words about the methodology must be said. This study uses different methods, not with the purpose of comparing them (as Walsh does),¹ but with the purpose of constructing the meaning of the text by looking at it from different perspectives. Although Walsh's work is used in this study, it is not limited only to his methodology, but incorporates other voices, such as Brueggemann's literal methodology of Testimony (Brueggemann, 1997, 224-228), his sociological approach (Brueggemann, 1994), and Marc Shoffren's literal humanistic approach to the text (Shoffren, 1999). By exploring a number of different methodologies, the reader will be able to assemble an interpretation of the account that is as faithful as possible to the original. I do not claim to have communicated the original meaning, for there are

1 Jerome Walsh has undertaken the task of reading the text by using different methods with the purpose of comparing the findings. For more, see Walsh, Jerome T. "Methods and Meanings: Multiple Studies of 1 Kings 21." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 111, no. 2 (June 1, 1992): 193-211.

elements of dispute within the story,² but I offer a fresh and new approach as will be apparent below. My analysis fits together like a puzzle in order to provide a logical and fuller understanding of the passage. Syntagmatic Analysis tackles the problem and provides the reader with an overview of the main issues, Humanistic Educational Analysis explores the nature of the problem and those involved, and Stylistic Analysis broadens the circle of those individuals implicated in the controversy.

A Short Overview

1 Kings 21:1-16 is a classic and essential story of confrontation and justice. It is required reading for anyone concerned with justice, according to Rice (Rice, 1991, 175). The story opens by introducing King Ahab and Naboth. The narrative revolves around Naboth's vineyard and the king's desire to buy it in order to extend the gardens around his palace (v. 2a). The king presents Naboth with a generous offer which Naboth rejects on the basis of ancestral inheritance (v. 3), which will be discussed below. The palace under discussion is not in Samaria, but in the same area as the vineyard, as Walsh (Walsh, 1992, 317-8) and Nelson (Nelson, 1973, 138) affirm. The transaction did not go well for the king. Rejected and angry, he travels back to his main palace in Samaria where he fasts and reflects. He could not cover the distress (v. 4), and was approached by the queen who started conversing with him (v. 5).

King Ahab responds, but his answer is not transparent and the facts are modified. Although he mentions his negotiations with Naboth and that he offered him a better land, he does not mention that Naboth's rejection was based on religious reasons. Walsh states that Ahab's answer speaks a great deal about the queen's character. "Perhaps for Jezebel, the desire to possess more land requires no explanation, and Ahab may not want to admit to his queen that he stooped to justifying himself to a mere commoner" (Nelson, 1973, 120). The omission of the religious reason as the basis for Naboth's rejection in the conversation with the queen has to do with the fact that she does not see it as a concern. Jezebel had a different land structure, as will be discussed later.

- 2 During long years of academia, Old Testament Theology saw the text from different viewpoints, but nevertheless, scholars were not able to settle every issue. I will only point to one. Scholars theorize on the fact of why the king was able to take the vineyard after the death of the legal owner. Some say that when the owner died and did not have descendents, his property belonged to the king; others say that the property of the criminal who was executed belonged to the king. For more, see Walsh, Jerome T. "Methods and Meanings: Multiple Studies of 1 Kings 21." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 111, no. 2 (June 1, 1992): 194.

Jezebel was not impressed by her husband's answer and reminds him of his superior status. "Is this how you act as king over Israel? Get up and eat! Cheer up," she says to him (v. 7a). She decides to take things into her own hands and settle the matter, saying "...I'll get you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite" (v. 7b).

Scholars observe that this is a turning point in the story. In the eyes of the queen, James Montgomery notices, Ahab becomes just a boy (Montgomery, 1951, 331). She decides to take matters into her own hands, writes a letter in the name of the king, and sends it to the community of nobles and elders in Naboth's city (v. 8-10) (Jones, 1984, 355). The fact that the community is involved has great importance for this study. This magnifies the importance of public opinion in Jewish culture and history.³ While keeping in mind the importance of public opinion, let us now turn to the intriguing actions of the queen.

In a letter addressed to the nobles and elders of the city, she included instructions and orders to undertake a fast and accuse Naboth of cursing God and the king (v. 9-10).⁴ According to the Deuteronomic law, blasphemy was considered the highest offense, deserving of capital punishment which was executed by stoning. Moreover, this story brings forth two essential elements. The first is the fact that Jezebel commands a fast (a religious ritual) to condemn a religious man, and the second is that the community of nobles and elders easily go along with the plan. The plan is executed; Naboth and his children (2 Kings 9: 26)⁵ are convicted of blasphemy and are stoned to death (v. 11-14). Ahab is now free to travel back to Naboth's town and claim the vineyard (v. 16b).

In the narrative, it appears that the problem is solved and the story has reached

- 3 To bring this into perspective I would like to quickly point to the crucifixion of Jesus in Matthew 27. It was the public opinion, stirred by the high priests, which crucified the Lord. When Pilate could not find anything to convict Jesus, he turned to the multitude and offered an exchange, "But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus executed" (Matthew 27:20). Pilate again, desiring to spare Jesus' life, appealed the second time, but they cried out, "Crucify him!" (Matthew 27:22). The final words of verse 25 makes the point very clear: "All the people answered, "His blood is on us and on our children!" Moreover, Jesus himself refers to the murderers as "Jerusalem" (Matthew 23:37) (Wright, 1992 and Storkey, 2005).
- 4 In the text, the word curse is not used because it was uncommon to use the word curse and God in the same sentence. Instead, the word blessed is used, but scholars agree that it means "curse". For more, see Brodie, Thomas L. "The Accusing and Stoning of Naboth (1 Kgs 21:8-13) as one Component of the Stephen Text (Acts 6:9-14, Acts 7:58a)." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 45, no. 3 (July 1, 1983): 426.
- 5 Naboth's death is also mentioned in 2 Kings 9:26: "Yesterday I saw the blood of Naboth and the blood of his sons, declares the LORD..." The text suggests that Naboth and his family were killed in the conspiracy. For more on the argument, see J. R. Mecduff, *Elijah, The Prophet of Fire*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books House, 1956), p. 236.

its finish, but as Brueggemann notes, that is not the case (Brueggemann, 1994, 140). There is more to come. This raises the questions: Why did God decide to intervene? What was at stake for Him? Is it only about Naboth's vineyard? The rest of the paper will attempt to answer the above questions and provide arguments as to why God had to intervene through Elijah. Before that, however, let us give attention to understanding the text itself. As mentioned, these analyses are like the pieces of a puzzle that complement each other for a better understanding of the issue.

Syntagmatic Analysis of the Text

This analysis looks at the text strictly as a story. Aristotle advised his student to have a plot in each tale. He states that the story must have a beginning, middle, and end in order to be called such. A good story is about difficulty and difficulty removed, a problem and problem solved (Brueggemann, 1994, 202).

The following chart provides an overview of the actions taken in the plot in discussion in order to tackle the problem, focus on it, and show its magnitude.

No	v. 1-16		v. 17-29
1	Naboth has a vineyard inherited from his fathers	Opening situation of equilibrium	Ahab is doomed to death
2	Law of nonalienation of patrimony	Bases of equilibrium	Law of talon
3	Jezebel (written message in Ahab's name)	Agent of disequilibrium	Elijah (Oral message in Yahweh's name)
4	Hypocritical fasting and penitential observance	Basis of new equilibrium	Sincere fasting and penitential observance
5	Naboth loses vineyard and life	Closing situation of equilibrium	Ahab reprieved to life; bequeaths death to his sons

Table 1 (Walsh, 1992, 202-203)

Through this outlook, the reader is also able to notice new elements and see the events through a different perspective. First, this reading of the text offers more information about Naboth and puts him at the center of first part. In the first part, he becomes the central figure, for all actions surround him. In other words, he is the main actor. Naboth's name is mentioned more often than that of Ahab and Jezebel combined (seventeen times). This testifies to the significance of Naboth

in the account of the story. Second, Ahab gains more relevance in the second part of the story, and a parallel can be drawn between Ahab and Naboth. Ahab moves from death to life and Naboth from life to death. Now Ahab becomes important and stands out to the audience. At first, he seemed to be innocent and Jezebel was the evil one who did all the dirty work, but this view shows him in control and more prominent than the reader might have thought. The queen's actions to provide Ahab's end result, supported by the king's silence and passivity, are a witness to the fact that Ahab was in control. Moreover, after the crime is committed Ahab is charged of murder, "This is what the LORD says: Have you not murdered a man and seized his property?" (v. 19). It could be that the king himself was playing along with his wife's idea and actions to take the vineyard. There seems to be a psychological game that he is playing. Third, The roles of social and religious systems are highlighted through this outlook: "the law of tradition" (No. 2 and 3 in Table 1) and "the law of the king". The meaning of land and religious rituals such as fasting and public gathering stand out in contrast to Ahab's system. It seems that the conflict of systems (Detronomic vs. Ahab's) is the main problem that plays out throughout the story. Another significant element of the story is the presentation of Elijah and Jezebel's words which are parallel but in contrast to each other (Walsh, 1992, 204). The passage in discussion provides a well defined problem which resulted in a confrontation between the king and Naboth. The story highlights mainly the two sides involved and the problem itself which would not be as apparent through a different analysis.

Humanistic Educational Analysis⁶

This section looks at the text as isolated material without taking into consideration the scriptural canonical implications, but only the socio-political, just as Shoffren has done (Shofren, 1999, 7). This reading is another piece of the puzzle. The plot and the problem within it have been identified. This section attempts to define the problem and elaborate on its nature.

The story of confrontation has a strong notion of oppression ingrained in it. The concept of oppressor and the oppressed is clearly outlined together with the notion of false witnesses (Matthews, 2001, 96) and the envying of one's brother's property. Here there is a powerful king who desires the property of the weak, and in order to please his desires, he corrupts the community. House also sees the

6 The title comes from Marc Shoffren in his article on the educational implications of 1 Kings 21. See Shoffren, Marc. "Educational Approaches to Naboth's Vineyard (1 Kings 21)." *Journal of Progressive Judaism* no. 13 (November 1, 1999): 7-18.

story as oppression by the powerful (House, 1995, 232). There is an abuse of power (Rice, 1991, 175) which Nelson takes even further to say that “power corrupts” (Nelson, 1973, 138). The king badly desires the ancestral property of one of his subjects, and does whatever it takes to get it. The nature of the problem is that of exploitation against the weak and corruption of the community involved. These are substantial reasons to call this transaction illegitimate and evil, but there is more to it. This will lead to the issue of the land and the social structure of the community where the event took place which will be discussed in the “Religious Implications” section.

Stylistic Analysis⁷ of the Text

The study done by Walsh in *Berit Olim* offers a common interpretation and a common division of the text. Walsh divides the text into two main parts: “Ahab obtains Naboth’s Vineyard: 21:1-16” and “Prophetic Condemnation” (Walsh, 1996, 316-41). The same division is given by Walter Brueggeman in his book *A Social Reading of the Old Testament* (Brueggemann, 1994), in Smyth and Smyth and Helwys *Bible Commentary* (Brueggemann, 2000), and in a considerable number of other commentaries such as *The American Commentary* (House, 1995), *Abingdon Old Testament Commentary* (Hens-Piazza, 2006), and *Interpretation Commentary* (Nelson 1973). There are other scholars who have used a different division of the text, such as *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Walvoord and Zuck, 1985), *Tyndale Old Testament Commentary* (Wiseman, 1993), *Commentary of the Whole Bible* (Jamieson, 1961), Terence E. Fretheim and others. The latter group of scholars does not do stylistic analysis of the text, but other scholarly work, and they see fit to construct a different division. For this study, I have tried to stick with the masters of stylistic analysis; therefore I have used the works of the first group of scholars.

1 Kings 21 is divided into two parts with the following stylistic forms. Part I, Ahab obtains Naboth’s Vineyard: 21:1-16, is constructed of six symmetrically arranged scenes:

- A. Ahab tries to buy Naboth’s vineyard (21:1-4a)
- B. Ahab and Jezebel in Ahab’s Chambers (21:4b-7)
- C. Jezebel’s letter details a plot (21:8-10)

7 The name of this title is taken from the Walsh study mentioned above, but the outline is taken from the commentary by the same author. Jerome T. Walsh, *Berit Olam, 1 Kings*, ed. David W. Cotter, (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1996).

- C'. Jezebel's plot succeeds (21:11-14)
- B'. Ahab and Jezebel in Ahab's Chambers (21:15)
- A' Ahab takes possession of Naboth's vineyard (21:16) (Walsh, 1996, 316-317).

This shows a clear picture of exploitation and injustice, but it also extends it to corruption which has penetrated into every circle of the society. The king is not alone in his exploitative actions, but involves the whole community.

The second part of the text has a similar division which has the same shape as above.

- A. Yahweh's words to Elijah (21:17-19)
- B. Elijah's words to Ahab (21:22-22)
- C. The punishment of Jezebel and Ahab's house (21:23-24)
- C'. The evil of Jezebel and Ahab (21:25-26)
- B'. Ahab's Reaction to Elijah's words (21:27)
- A' Yahweh's words to Elijah (21:28-29) (Walsh, 1996, 328).

Stylistic analysis reveals significant links between the two parts of the chapter. This division gives great insight concerning the main characters and their role in the story. Some observations are as follows: "First, in both parts strong emphasis is placed on Jezebel" (Walsh, 1996, 328). She is the prime mover, the designer of the plot, and the one who gives the order to execute the plot. In other words, she is in control. This section shows the queen's actions magnified and brought into perspective, but it does not excuse the king and his involvement. "Second, both parts broaden the circle of people implicated in the crime against Naboth..." (Walsh, 1992, 201). It reveals the involvement of the elders of the city and possibly the whole community, as well as the household of Ahab. The element of judgment on the household of Ahab is essential and is another indication that Jezebel was not the orchestrator of the fatal plot. "Third, both parts distance the reader from the action" (Walsh, 1992, 201). This effect happens because Jezebel's letter gives away what will happen to Naboth. By writing the plot in advance, what keeps the audience going is not curiosity to find out the outcome of the story, but curiosity to find out if the community would carry out Jezebel's plan. "Fourth, both parts use the distance created to introduce the idea of judgment." The idea of the phrase "good for nothing" with which Jezebel addresses her subjects introduces her judgment toward them as well as the judgment of the readers. For the queen and for the reader, the elders of the city were good for nothing. They seem to be a degraded community, full of corruption and exploitation. Finally, "...both parts use a blurring of the distinction between characters and narrator to achieve a special effect" (Walsh, 1992, 201). It appears to be difficult to distinguish who is mocking Jezebel's helpers. Is it the queen herself, the narrator, or both?

It is not of importance who is mocking the community, but that the community is being mocked, and its relevance in committing the murder is elevated. It is no longer about a personal vendetta between the king and Naboth, but of a degradation of the community whose exploitative and corrupt actions have not only committed a crime against Naboth, but against themselves, and against God. The crime against themselves is that they have positioned themselves in a decision-making situation and unfortunately allowed for the circle of exploitation and corruption to march anew in the society. They also committed murder against God.

Religious Implications

As noted earlier, Naboth's rejection of the king's offer was purely based on religious reasons. "Syntagmatic" and "Humanistic Educational" analysis have, to some degree, already introduced the notion of the religious implications in Naboth's answer. This section is going to put more meat to the bones, expanding and evaluating the importance of religion in this controversy. But, did Naboth have any right to reject the most powerful man in the land?

Brueggemann and Nelson side with Naboth and state that the king had no right to make such a proposal (Nelson 1973, 139 and Brueggemann, 2000, 275). Why not?

The issue of land for an Israelite is an issue of identity. This is due to the fact that the land and the occupants were inseparable, a tribal notion (Brueggemann, 2000, 258). Fritz states that the land is an inheritance from YHWH, and even the owner could not offer it for sale. This notion is clearly marked out in Deuteronomic law (Fritz, 2003, 211). Hens-Piazza takes it even further by stating that "Ahab's request is asking much more of Naboth than a mere plot of land. He is asking Naboth to violate his ancestral religious obligations [Emphasis mine]" (Hens-Piazza, 2006, 206). It is important to notice that even in extreme cases where the land was taken from the owner,⁸ it was not permanent, but had to be returned to the owner on the year of Jubilee (Fretheim, 1999, 118). Moreover, giving away the land meant to violate the law of the Lord that had governed the society since its beginnings. The matter was strictly religious. Such actions often led to major socio-political problems, like, for example, slavery. Since identity, the chance for survival and the well-being of an individual or community are related to the land,

8 Scholars note that the trading of the land happened very rarely and under strict control. Scholars disagree regarding the system or regulation the king had in mind concerning land transaction. For more, see Richard D. Nelson, *Interpretation, A Bible Commentary for Preaching and Teaching, First and Second Kings*, (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1973), pp. 140-1.

its trade would result in the individual or the community enslaving themselves to the new owner of the land. Shoffren affirms:

...for Naboth the land is regarded as a god-given covenant, and some commentators have even suggested that Naboth's family might be buried on the land. Certainly it is clear that by giving up the family ownership of the land, Naboth would have made his own descendants into royal dependents, with no legal rights and no position. (Shoffren, 1999, 11)

Fritz concurs with Shoffren by putting the issue of slavery into perspective when he repeatedly names Naboth a "free man," (Fritz, 2003, 211) and it is the first time that "free man" is used (Gray, 1970, 440). It seems likely that the appearance of this title is used to identify the problem of slavery.

The royal court, especially Jezebel, did not consider the trading or confiscation of the land an issue, for she operated on a different land system. Brueggemann asserts that Jezebel was a non-Israelite and viewed the land as a commodity to which the crown had special privileges. She saw the king as the owner of the land and the ruler of the empire (Brueggemann, 2000, 257). She found Naboth's answer to be a very rude excuse and Ahab's negotiations and actions unacceptable, for she believed that a king like her father, who was the king of Sidon, had absolute privileges to the land. Earlier it was argued that the king realized Jezebel's view of the land and actions and went along with her.

Another significant element is that Jezebel used a religious ritual to condemn a free religious man. As noted above, she ordered a fast and orchestrated Naboth's condemnation based on religious law (v. 8b). She understood the importance of religion and decided to use it in order to destroy it. After the death of Naboth, the socio-religious system, as Brueggemann⁹ and Fritz (Fritz, 2003, 211) declare, had no power, but was just a tool in royal hands to bring about royal results.

It is inevitable but to conclude that by confiscating the land, Ahab tried to override the religious and social status of Naboth. Ahab tried to destroy the law set by God to govern the society, and to replace it with his own law of exploitation and corruption. The implications of these actions are much greater than just the Naboth narrative.

9 Brueggemann states that the system was known to Ahab and it was this system that hindered Naboth from giving away his vineyard. See Walter Brueggemann, *A Social Reading of the Old Testament*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), p. 239.

More than just Naboth's Vineyard

The people of Israel were obligated to follow God and be His partners for the well being of the city, the nation, and the world. Bruegemann, in his book *The Theology of Old Testament*, writes about a God orchestrated system by which the social system was formed and operated. The Old Testament gives special attention to economics and the exploitation of the weak. The Israelites were obligated to do justice, protect the poor and the stranger, and make God's name known among the nations. This command was given to Israel as a nation according to Deuteronomic law (Bruegemann, 1997, 224-228).

It becomes more apparent that this story is not only about Naboth. A closer examination of the text sheds more light on the argument. In verse 8, the queen sends a letter to the nobles, the leaders of the city, where she includes the excursion (execution?). They do not hesitate, but carry it out even to the smallest detail. John Gray, commenting on the verse, states, "This indicates perhaps that the persons in question had been long accustomed to follow the lead of the family of Ahab" (Gray, 1970, 440). It seems that there had been a trace of evildoing in this community.

In verses 12 and 13, there is another communal meeting, what Brodie calls "the popular court" (Brodie, 1983, 421), and which is, in fact, the fast. Rice states that the purpose of the fast was to summon the community to repentance, to find out why God was displeased, and ask for forgiveness (Rice, 1991, 177).

The merit of Jezebel is that she involved the community and did not make the vineyard a personal matter, for she could have executed Naboth by royal troops. It seems that Jezebel wanted this plot to be low key. She involved the "good for nothing" community who would do anything and had no morals, and trusted them to assemble the people, design the stage, convict Naboth of murder, and execute him. The community acted as the legislative, judicial, and executive authorities in this major crime. As mentioned earlier, at first it seems that everything went according to plan, and the mission was completed, but it did not stop there. Now it is time to ask the question: Who killed Naboth? Shoffren deals with the same issue in his article. He states:

The question is then who is actually guilty of Naboth's death. Those who stone him to death, those who knowingly bear false witness against him, the elders who 'set up' Naboth, Jezebel who instigates the death, or Ahab, who whether knowingly or unknowingly is the cause of the murder and in whose name the act is carried out. Like the practices of idol worship which Elijah fights elsewhere in Kings, this is another instance of collective guilt [emphasis mine] through complicity and weakness (Shoffren, 1999, 9).

Considering the communal nature of the event, and the great importance

community played in committing this evil, the story is clearly not only about Naboth and his vineyard. With the death of Naboth, the laws instituted by God died. With the death of Naboth, justice died. With the death of Naboth, the religious system died, and with the death of Naboth, a new system ruled the society. That was the system of tyranny, exploitation, oppression and evil. With the death of Naboth, the work of God's hand died. With the death of Naboth, the community died.

That is why God sent Elijah to restore God's rule, law and justice in the empire. The land of Israel could not become like the neighboring nations. This is why this story is more than just Naboth's vineyard.

Conclusion

Seated in comfortable chairs in the XXI century, we get the impression and tell ourselves: Now it is done. But, is it done? Is it over yet? The tragic injustice did not stop with Naboth, nor with his town, nor crown, but,

...it happened of course throughout the spreading human family in the centuries and years, perhaps even months or days, preceding; and it has most assuredly continued to happen, in its significant essence, with persistence and always accompanying human carnage down to our own time and decade and, who knows, even day and hour (Napier, 1976, 4).

It is happening even today when helpless people stand for what is right and pay with their lives. It happens even to those who, realizing their doomed state, dare to say something. It happens to those who cannot stand under a corrupt system, get comfortable with paying favors, or exploit the weak. The story of Naboth's vineyard is not personal, and is not for his limited community, but it is global (Napier, 1976, 6). "Like the claim of the old British Empire, we too can say that the sun never sets on fields and lands, on kingdoms and governments, on men and women and children, on myriads of Naboths . . ." (Napier, 1976, 6). The story is not over; it is being written over and over again. But...what are you doing? What is your community doing? Is it getting comfortable by getting wealthy by paying favors to the crown and exploiting and corrupting itself? Is your community "good for nothing"?

I conclude with the words of Napier:

To whom are we, church people...preponderantly more analogous, Elijah or Ahab? ...Which is the more influential altar among us, that of Yahweh or Baal, God or mammon, Christ or possessions? . . . Is it not true that as a people we have in our whole history repeatedly and down to this present day murdered, in body but also spirit and psyche, in order to possess? ... Is it not true

that by and large we of the church have been in consent, if not always with our ballots, then by our silence? . . . Can we yet turn back the judgment that we too will die in our own blood where and because we have shed the innocent blood and seized the cherished human heritage of myriad, uncountable, unsung, powerless, and dispossessed Naboths – red, black, brown, yellow, and white? Can we revive and recreate Elijah among us: Can the church, and we of the church, be prophet as well as priest to king and nation and world? (Napier, 1976, 10-11).

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Ksenafu Akulli

**Ne samo Nabotov vinograd:
Osvrt na upletenost društva u eksploataciju i korupciju
u kontekstu Prve knjige o kraljevima 21**

Sažetak

Često sam slušao staru izreku: "Riba počinje smrdjeti od glave". To znači da kad se društvo počinje raspadati, sigurno je to krivnja vodstva ili vlasti. Moja je teza da to nije slučaj danas, i tvrdim da nikada nije ni bio. Upravo je društvo, tijelo ribe, koje mora preuzeti krivicu i snositi odgovornost za svoje postupke. Ovaj rad uglavnom razmatra zajednički učinak društva u partnerstvu s vodstvom na vlastito iskorištavanje i korupciju u sebi. Rad također nudi obnovljeno čitanje dobro poznatog odlomka – o Nabotovom vinogradu (1 Kr 21). Nizom analiza u radu se otkriva problem s kojim se suočavalo Nabotovo društvo, narav problema iskorištavanja i korupcije, te proširuje krivnju ne samo na vodstvo, već i na društvo koje svojevoljno slijedi kraljevske naputke za počinjenje velikoga zlodjela protiv Nabota, samoga sebe i Boga. Rad završava isticanjem da je rješenje problema u ljudskoj i božanskoj intervenciji, te pozivom na solidarnost protiv takvih sramotnih postupaka koji paraliziraju naše zajednice, društva, zemlje i svijet.