The Interplay of Leadership Styles and Qualities: A Narrative Analysis of 2 Chronicles 32:1-23

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ABSTRACT—In the narrative of 2 Chro 32:1-23, the characters through different characterization, props, and plots are shown in their many roles as leaders. The leadership qualities of the characters are assessed, and the leadership styles and qualities of Sennacherib and Hezekiah, and God’s work with His people who call on Him are revealed. God’s deliverance of Jerusalem and His divine leadership shows the narrator’s point of view intended for the implied reader. This study shows that the story is a leadership story where God moves from a passive character to an active character who leads His people to victory. The story shows how God carefully watches and works through people to deliver His people. This article notes that one’s style of leadership plays a role in the empowerment and growth of the people he/she leads.

KEYWORDS: Spiritual Leadership, style, qualities, narrative analysis, service, deliverance, narrator, God, Sennacherib, Hezekiah, faithfulness, prayer

I. Introduction

Leadership is an Old Testament (OT) concept that is presented in varying and rich form in the Bible (Bell, 2014, pp. 11–13). Several concepts, narratives/stories, Hebrew words and expressions give
reference to leadership which portray God as the One who leads. This makes the issue in the OT recognized by several scholars (Bell, 2014, pp. 11–13; Routledge, 1992, pp. 181–183). While the concept emerges readily in the OT narrative, the nature of OT leadership appears multifaceted.

The qualities of leadership as portrayed in the narratives are epitomized by a resilient action of the characters in their characterizations in which the leader’s qualities are of crucial concern to his leading of the people. However, the notion of true qualities of leadership from a biblical perspective have their projection through stories and narratives. A look at the OT indicates that the concept of leadership and its qualities are at the center of God’s dealing with His people. This notion of biblical leadership is characterized by concepts and actions of people, leaders for that matter, exhibited through their prowess and qualities toward leading others. In the narrative of 2 Chro 32:1-23, this idea is conveyed by the author to highlight an important theological concept to the readers.

The narrator's use of the narrative devices in 2 Chro 32:1-23 seems to highlight the themes and mode of spirituality as a qualifying trait of one developing styles and qualities especially related to leadership. By virtue of the depiction of the narration in association with characterization, the narrator's depiction of Sennacherib and Hezekiah, in 2 Chro 32:1-23, contributes significantly to understanding the passage and the issue of leadership. Therefore the narratives in 2 Chro 32:1-23, “the alteration of word and deed and the division into scenes . . . the difference between the sentences of the narrator himself in which he reports or describes, and direct speech which is particularly dominant in certain sections” (Fokkelman, 1999, p. 8) of the passage makes it worth analyzing.

As highlighted above, the issue of leadership is a major OT theological theme. Yet in 2 Chronicles this theme has not received its due in scholarly discussion (Kelly, 1996, pp. 14–20). In view of this, a meaningful narrative analysis of 2 Chro 32:1-23, with emphasis of the characters and their characterization, is used to unearth the relevant meaning of the interplay of the styles and qualities of leadership. This article studies the interplay of leadership as central to the narrative of 2 Chro 32:1-23.

II. Analysis

This article argues that 2 Chro 32:1-23 is a tightly constructed narrative unit that portrays among other themes the issue of leadership qualities. The narrator achieves this harmony and thematic application by