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GENESIS 38: LITERARY DESIGN AND CONTEXT

by

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School of Graduate Studies
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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of Genesis 38 as a distinct literary unit which is intimately related to its literary context. The study concentrates on the literary dimensions of Genesis 38 as a architectonic unity and interconnected with the Joseph cycle. By using a narratological methodology, its parallel, surface, and plot structures are elucidated and shown to form a structural whole. Focusing upon the relationship between Genesis 38 and the surrounding Joseph cycle, it is shown that Genesis 38 is interconnected to the Joseph cycle by way of repeating motifs, key-words, themes, and narrative situation. The study, in sum, is a literary-critical interpretation of Genesis 38 which focuses upon its intricate and subtle narrative art.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to perform a literary study of Genesis 38 with a view to understanding it both as a distinct structural unit and also connected to its present literary context. The first chapter begins by focusing upon the way the traditional historical methods (source, form, and redaction criticism) have understood the narrative, and shows the need for a literary-critical method. A reading of the text focused through a literary-critical examination uncovers the literary dimensions of the text and its subtle narrative art. Chapter two details the literary-critical methodology that I will be employing in this study. This method incorporates both the critical orientations of text and the reader, and relies, therefore, largely upon the New-Criticism and Reader-Response Criticism. Reader-Response criticism will strengthen the position of the role of the reader as the questioner or critical reader, while New Criticism will strengthen the sharp focus upon the literary dimensions of the text. Chapter three begins the actual interpretation by focusing on the parallel and surface structure of the unit, and pays particular attention to overall structure through the use of Tzvetan Todorov's insights into plot. Chapter four gives a detailed account of the plot structure seen in its temporal or sequential ordering. It focuses on the story-world of the narrative (its settings, characters, and events) as it pertains to the plot, and, as well, reveals the key themes of the narrative

such as identity, justice, primogeniture, survival, and responsibility. The fifth and final chapter focuses upon the development of Judah's character as it spans both Genesis 38 and the Joseph cycle. I have analyzed the connection between Genesis 38 and the frame-story through the pattern of "departure-transition-return." It will be shown that Genesis 38 is crucial to understanding Judah's role in the Joseph story. Furthermore, Genesis 38 operates as a microcosm that alludes to themes such as survival, responsibility, justice, reconciliation, and identity that will be repeated by way of allusion and analogy in the Joseph story. In essence, the main emphasis of this study is to understand Genesis 38 through the questions that arise from the use of a literary-critical methodology.

CHAPTER 1

State of the Question

Introduction

The history of the interpretation of the Bible has been described as centering on four primary critical orientations: "history," "author," "text," and "reader".[1] As John Barton writes, "practically every theory that has been important in the history of criticism has as its distinctive characteristic a tendency to concentrate on either one as primary."[2] All critical methods have a primary focus to which a unique set of questions are addressed, thereby each method has circumscribed objectives.[3] Any literary theory can open the critic's "senses to aspects of a work which other theories with different focus, different categories of discrimination have

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[1] These differentiations are not to be taken as absolutes nor definitive, but, as a working paradigm for locating critical orientations within biblical criticism.

[2] John Barton, "Classifying Biblical Criticism," Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 29 (1984), p.20.

[3] M.H. Abrams gives the orientation of critical theories which focus on either universe, artist, work, or audience. The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), pp.3-29. See also John Barton, Reading the Old Testament: Method in the Study of the Old Testament (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1984), pp.198-207. Barton gives a schematic of Abrams' orientations and provides a parallel schematic that relates to the orientation of methods in the field of biblical interpretation. Historical events and theological ideas = universe; author, authors, or community = artist; text = work; and reader = audience.

on principle overlooked, underestimated, or obscured."[4] Only one of the orientations become the principle determinate for "defining, classifying, and analyzing a work of art."[5] What I intend to illustrate, therefore, in this chapter is: first, to focus upon the orientations of "history," "author," and "text" in critical theory and method;[6] second, to examine how each of the methods of historical criticism (source, form, and redaction criticism) treats the "text," (e.g. Genesis 38); third, to introduce the critical perspective of New Criticism.

Pre-critical to Critical Exegesis

The shift from "pre-critical" exegesis to critical exegesis (i.e., Higher Criticism) began with the newer historical-critical methods of biblical study. These methods arose in distinction to the older methods of the naturalists, super-naturalists, and philologists, and in direct response to those methods which were perceived as unscientific.[7] Pre-critical

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[4] M.H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), p.6.

[5] Ibid., p.6.

[6] The focus on the orientation of "reader" will be reserved for chapter two.

[7] An example of this revolution is perhaps best articulated in Benedict de Spinoza's A Theologico-Political Treatise: A Political Treatise published anonymously in 1670. See Hans Frei, The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), p.17.

methods understood the Bible to be referential inasmuch as it reported actual "history." The orientation of pre-critical exegesis, therefore, is what Abrams has called a "mimetic" understanding of a text. The text was a "mirror" which reflected the "external world" or universe.[8] Thus, the horizon in which pre-critical exegesis approached the text was based on a referential and revelatory understanding of it.[9] If the text was referential then the Bible was a source of information and history in the accurate portrayal of actual events and personages. As revelatory, pre-critical exegesis treated the text as a "medium through which God addresses the...reader" and a "book by which the church is to be built up in the faith."[10] Instead of questioning the text critically, the Bible was used as a "vehicle" of inspiration and source of information and wisdom of God's word to humankind.

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[8] John Barton, "Classifying Biblical Criticism," p.19.

[9] It is true that both Origen and Augustine saw that the text operated on levels other than the literal [ie., historical] level. These included the tropological, allegorical and anagogical levels. Those of the school of Antioch subordinated all others to the historical while Origen, and the school of Alexandria subordinated all others to the allegorical. Though some of these levels have an affinity with the literary aspect of the text, they are held within an understanding of a "universe" that was revelatory. That is, the text on all levels operated towards a reception of ontological disclosure of spiritual reality. For Origen, the Bible is first and foremost considered as revelatory, and having the purpose of revealing "intellectual truths." Duncan S. Ferguson writes "loyal to the ecclesiastical tradition of which he was part, Origen asserts that the Bible is the inspired Word of God and not merely human composition" (Biblical Hermeneutics: An Introduction [Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1986], p.141).

[10] Ibid., p.31.

This mimetic understanding of the text was that which distinguished pre-critical exegetes from those who practiced the historical-critical method. Certainly part of the movement towards a historical-critical method was motivated by a resistance to the mimetic pre-critical understanding of the biblical texts. There seemed to be a shift in seeing the Word of God as the "word of humans" and the "biblical tradition [as] an account of a human work."[11] With this understanding, it was unavoidable that a new horizon would be opened up or differentiated from that of "universe" to address questions dealing with the human "author" and human history.

In essence, the shift to historical-critical methods was prompted by a dissatisfaction with these older, less "critical" methods of biblical inquiry. Historical critics were most concerned with answering the questions, "What actually happened and why?"[12] Historical critics were interested, therefore, in recovering the world "behind" the text, and more precisely, on uncovering the truth of the actual history behind the text. Since problems and difficulties arose in a critical reading of the Bible, historical critics could not accept without question the claim that actual history was

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[11] James Barr, The Bible in the Modern World (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1973), p.120.

[12] Edgar Krentz, The Historical-Critical Method (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p.35.

contained therein.[13] Hence, there developed a more scientific and critical methodology to focus upon these problems and difficulties. As Hans Frei writes:

> Historical-critical method meant that putative claims of fact in the Bible were subjected to independent investigation to test their veracity and that it was not guaranteed by the authority of the Bible itself. It meant explaining the thoughts of the biblical authors and the origins and shape of the writings on the basis of the most likely, natural, and specific conditions of history, culture, and individual life out of which they arose. It meant applying these explanatory principles without supplementary appeal to (though also without necessary prejudice against) divine causation either of the biblical history or the biblical writings.[14]

The historical-critical method shifted its perspective from a pre-critical orientation or emphasis on "universe" to the critical orientation of the "author."[15] Source, form and

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[13] Robert Morgan and John Barton discuss the point that "historical questions were raised and answered in order to resolve difficulties in the text" (Biblical Interpretation [New York: Oxford University Press, 1988], p.206). The difficulties consist of textual aporias, repetitions, inconsistencies, contradictions, and discrepancies in arrangement. This also could include the problem of miracles and authorship.

[14] Hans Frei, The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), p.18.

[15] It should be pointed out quite clearly that this was not the end of a religious understanding of the Biblical text. The rise of biblical hermeneutics harnessed the historical methods to the moral and religious meanings (applicative) of the text. As Hans Frei writes concerning the second half of the eighteenth century: "that when general (non-theological) biblical hermeneutics developed rapidly in Germany, its principles of exegesis were pivoted between historical criticism and religious apologetics. The explicative meaning of the narrative texts came to be their ostensive or ideal reference. Their applicative meaning or religious meaningfulness was either a truth or revelation embodied in an indispensable historical event or universal spiritual truth known

redaction criticism asked questions that necessarily led to discerning information about the time, place, and historical circumstances which may have influenced the author(s).[16] In the case of the Pentateuch source criticism led to assigning sources to different groups of writers, whereas form criticism led to locating forms in a specific "community" or author. In redaction criticism scholarship focused directly on the intention of the author, or more particularly, on his theological point of view. In order to arrive at some indication of how these methods work and how they treat Genesis 38, it is essential at this point to examine closer these three methods.

Source Criticism

The higher critical study of the Bible began with source-critical study in the 18th century, reaching its zenith with the work of Julius Wellhausen in the late 19th century. Its approach to the text was quite different from that of the pre-critical exegetes. The text becomes a window in order to answer questions about "authorship, date, place of writing,

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independently of the texts but exemplified by them, or, finally, a compromise between the two positions amounting to the claim that while the historical fact is indispensable to revelation, the meaningfulness of revelation depends on its being set in a broader religious or moral context. No nonreferential explication existed until the mythical thesis was hesitantly applied to the biblical literature, but even "myth" as a critical-analytical category was not a complete change from meaning as ostensive reference. Almost everyone, a few of the Deist and Reimarus excepted, affirmed that explication harmonized with application" Ibid., p.124.

[16] John Barton, "Classifying Biblical Criticism," p.25.

recipients, style, sources, integrity, and purpose of any piece of writing."[17] The central task was more directly focused on dealing with the written text and elucidating the authors and the sources that went into its making. Since source critics assumed that an amalgamation of older texts were compiled into the Bible, it became the source critic's task to seek these out and the authors who wrote them.

Though these questions originated out of a unique understanding of the biblical text, source criticism was inevitably interested in the history and authorship behind the text. In this sense it is essentially archeological. Ultimately, questions lead to "discovering" the authors who were responsible for writing the heterogeneous traditions which were amalgamated together in the final form. In the case of Pentateuchal study these written traditions gave better clues to understanding the early history of Israel. The early source critics, therefore, aimed primarily to unearth the text's authors, its literary pre-history, and the actual history behind the text.

Source criticism focused specifically on inconsistencies, digressions, contradictions, duplications, aporias, theological differences, and other features in the text with the intention of finding the original source(s) and author(s).[18]

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[17] Carle Armerding, The Old Testament and Criticism (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub., Co, 1983), p.17.

[18] Norman Habel, Literary Criticism of the Old Testament (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), p.6.

The alleged existence of these features indicated that sources were used by the author or redactor in constructing a certain text. This is plainly seen in Wellhausen's groundbreaking "Documentary Hypothesis" which accounts for stylistic differences by attributing them to different strands or sources.[19] These sources are referred to as "J,E,D,P." J corresponds to the "Jahwist" writer who uses the name "Yahweh" (or Jehovah) to refer to the deity; the E writer prefers the divine name Elohim; D is responsible for the book of Deuteronomy; and P is so named because of its affinity with Priestly concerns. To enhance the reader's ability to recognize these sources there has accrued over the century a number of criteria that are thought to be more or less characteristic of each specific source.[20] Once the source(s) are identified with a certain author or group of authors they can be located within a certain socio-historical context. So constructed the answer to the fundamental question of what actually happened in a certain time and place is greatly increased. Here extrinsic data beyond the text can be used to help expand the historical knowledge of the text itself as well as contribute towards reconstructing the historical situation.

What has been described is particularly true of source-critical studies of Genesis 38. Some critics have, on the

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[19] Fritz Stolz, Interpreting the Old Testament (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1975), pp.9-14.

[20] See Lloyd R. Bailey, The Pentateuch (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981), p.40.

basis of style, theme, and linguistic differences, argued variously that the story belongs to either a "L", "S", "J(1)" or "J(2)" source, although most seem to favor the J(1) or the J source.[21] The "L" source refers to the Lay source[22] and the "S" source refers to the source allegedly from Seir.[23] Otto Eissfeldt, for instance, argues that Genesis 38 belongs to the L source, while Robert H. Pfeiffer argues it belongs to the S source. Though they name the sources differently both seem to be arguing about the same source. They both connect Genesis 38 with the "Leah tribes" in Genesis 34 and 35. They also find parallel attitudes in the stories. They claim that the view of the "narrator is critical of Judah's behavior, and that a similar attitude can be found elsewhere in the sources

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[21] J.A. Emerton, "Some Problems In Genesis XXXVIII," Vetus Testamentum 25 (1975), p.346-352.

[22] Otto Eissfeldt argues that the "L" or lay source is "particular crude and archaic, and although a powerful religious spirit also moves strongly through it, it is nevertheless the least touched by clerical or cultic interests" (The Old Testament: An Introduction [New York: Harper and Row, 1965], p.194).

[23] Robert H. Pfeiffer argues that the L" source so-named by Eissfeldt should be called the "S" source or Seir, its probable place of origin. He argues that there are two parts to the source; the first a "mythical account of the origin and early development of mankind" which includes Gensis 1-11, omitting P material. The second part is "the legendary account of the origin of the peoples of Southern Palestine and Transjordania, concluding with a summary of the history of Edom before the time of David" (Introduction to the Old Testament [New York: Harper and Row, 1948], pp.159-60). The second part also includes, according to Pfeiffer, the sections of material in Genesis 14-35, 38, and 36.

that they postulate."[24] Pfeiffer comments on the stories concerning the sons of Leah as an "unsavory collection of scandal." The hostile or "unfriendly attitude" towards Judah, must consist for Pfeiffer then, in the characterization of Judah who in deceiving Tamar was reciprocally "duped by Tamar in the guise of a harlot."[25] For Eissfeldt the hostility to Judah lies in the deeds "which led to the withdrawal of [his] birthright" and the "separation of Judah" from his brothers.[26] Because the story deals with Judah's conduct, it is more likely to belong to those sources which are notoriously Judah-centered sources L or S, than with the J source.[27]

The most cogent argument, however, favors the J source. This is based on certain criteria associated with the J writer. The criteria that are differentiated are: (a) the use of the divine name YHWH in verses 7 and 10; (b) the account of twins Zerah and Peretz which parallel the "J story" of Jacob and Esau; (c) the names given to the children by the mother; and, (d) the intrusion of Genesis 38 into the Joseph story.[28]

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[24] J. A. Emerton, "Some Problems in Genesis XXXVIII," p.351.

[25] Robert H. Pfeiffer, Introduction to the Old Testament, p.162.

[26] Otto Eissfeldt, The Old Testament: An Introduction, p.197.

[27] J. A. Emerton, "Some Problems in Genesis XXXVIII," p.351.

[28] Ibid., pp.346-348.

Emerton argues that J "drew on heterogenous traditions" which accounted for the diversity of "point of view" in the narrative.[29] Accordingly, he argues that since there is no problem seeing in J the "presence of heterogenous material" he concludes that Genesis 38 belongs to the J source.[30]

Source critics, as mentioned earlier, are also keenly interested in the question of the narrative's socio-historical context. The common answer to this question, with regards to Genesis 38, is that the story originates with the clan of Judah of eastern Shepelah, and concerns the question of Canaanite marriage and Levirate Law.[31] Speiser remarks that "because of the eventual pre-eminence of the tribe of Judah, the personalized history of that branch was of obvious interest to tradition."[32] Genesis 38 tells of the beginnings of the Judah tribe and its associations with Canaanites. Furthermore, this story, argues Speiser, corresponds historically to the time of Judges and of David, and to the growth of Judah by "absorbing various Canaanite practices."[33] Otto Eissfeldt argues that the story originates much earlier than

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[29] Ibid., p.350.

[30] Ibid., p.352.

[31] Claus Westermann, Genesis 37-50. A Commentary, trans. John J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986), pp.50-51.

[32] E.A. Speiser, Genesis (Garden City: Doubleday & Company: 1964), p.300.

[33] Ibid., p.300.

this. He writes that "the narratives which explain the decline of the tribes of Reuben, Simeon, and Levi and the isolation of Judah almost certainly refer to events of the pre-monarchial period, if not of pre-Canaanite times."[34] The narrative's "excursus" on the Levirate Law, however, expresses a family custom set down more clearly in Deut.25:5-10 which would link the story predominantly and continuous with the line of thought in Deuteronomy written much later.

Form Criticism

Form Criticism, an offspring of source criticism, moved from the source critic's interest in discerning sources to discerning genres. Form critics classify various forms as literary genres (Gattungen) and study small units of material to understand more clearly their oral pre-literary history. Accordingly, there is a noticeable shift in questioning and treatment of the text. The shift is from questions dealing with the text's sources to questions dealing with the text's internal organization or genre. Each form possesses an internal organization that consists of a distinctive structure, vocabulary patterns, and motifs that make it recognizable as a genre. These criteria are used as indicators towards identifying particular genres such as hymns, novellas,

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[34] Otto Eissfeldt, The Old Testament: An Introduction, p.198.

parables, sagas, proverbs, psalms, and folktales.[35] Through this process form critics argue that it is possible to distinguish an etiology from a genealogy, a folk tale from a novella, or a psalm from a narrative.[36] This insight was extended by form critics to conclude that each form was indigenous to certain 'settings in the life' of a community. Form critics focus on pericopae and look for the possibility of oral origins, whether cultic, nomadic, or liturgical, hoping to pinpoint a form's function and purpose in a certain socio-historical setting. Thus they ask such questions as: "Did the text, or portion thereof, once exist in oral form? Is the form discernable as a common oral mode of communication in the ancient world? What was the human situation that gave rise to the form in question?"[37]

According to form critics, source analysis did not necessarily go "behind" the written sources to probe the underlying oral tradition. In Old Testament form criticism, therefore, there was a more radical shift to get closer to the actual Israelite history by questioning more fully the oral or pre-literary history of the ancient texts. Form critics were interested in "oral communication," thus there was a "shift to oral genres, from the literary pre-history of the Old Testa-

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[35] George W. Coats, Genesis: With an Introduction to Narrative Literature (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1983), p.4.

[36] Ibid., p.4.

[37] Ibid., p.5.

ment text to the oral pre-history of even the earliest discernible literary strata."[38] It was assumed by form critics that these genres reflected a deeper oral history closer to the actual history of ancient Israel. A form was a unit of oral history that communicated the thoughts, perceptions, and feelings of a community at a particular time in a particular setting or its socio-historical context. Since these oral forms are the heart of the community, they express the community's life and history. The onus is to reach the heart of the "community" (representing the author) from which a specific form emerged and to expose its history.

As such, Hermann Gunkel, the innovator of the form-critical method detects certain folktale motifs such as "superstition" and the "sympathetic portrayal of women" in the background to Genesis 38.[39] These motifs are said to correspond to a certain "setting in the life" or Sitz im Leben where they would have been meaningful. Genesis 38 may have been meaningful, therefore, within a nomadic setting of an ancient people, possibly, Gunkel writes, "a class of wandering popular storytellers in Israel as in other peoples of the orient and occident."[40]

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[38] John Barton, Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1984), p.29.

[39] Hermann Gunkel, The Folktale in the Old Testament trans. Michael D. Rutter (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987), pp.90 and 142.

[40] Ibid., p.171.

Gunkel's analysis connects Genesis 38 with the genre of folktale. This is interesting in light of what he says about Genesis 38 in his monumental study, The Legends of Genesis: "It is plain that the legend of Tamar, which has no connection with Joseph, [was] not introduced until later."[41] There is a distinct inconsistency between the two works as to whether Gunkel understands the form of Genesis 38 to be a folktale or a legend. Like others he also thinks the story has no connection with the surrounding stories and is a later addition.

Another form critic who has paid close attention to Genesis 38 is George Coats. He maintains that "its artistic conception argues for categorizing it as Novella," but he later says that "even this position remains tentative."[42] The writer focuses on Tamar and depicts her using "motifs from the heroic tradition." An obvious novella-like motif for example is the heroine who is declared righteous after gaining freedom and justice.[43] But, according to Coats, the story also displays "ethnological characteristics." Two of these characteristics concern Tamar's ethnology being sustained through her sons Peretz and Zerah, and Judah's ethnology concerning how he left his family and lived among the Canaanites.[44] Coats also

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[41] Hermann Gunkel, The Legends of Genesis (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), p.129.

[42] George C. Coats, Genesis: With an Introduction to Narrative Literature, p.275.

[43] Ibid., p.275.

[44] Ibid., p.275.

argues that the narrative is a "firm unity" but "isolated" from the Joseph story; and, the "story intends to entertain by describing a basic injustice against a helpless widow, rectified by the heroic efforts of the widow herself."[45] It is clear from his study that, with regards to the questions of both its form and placement, Genesis 38 remains somewhat enigmatic. One might question the weight given to ethnological characteristics in determining a certain "literary" genre. From the literary standpoint, however, one may accept his insight that Genesis 38 is a unity.

Redaction Criticism

Redaction criticism is interested in how the biblical material was compiled, changed, and adapted to reflect the individual redactor's or editor's own concerns or intentions. Thus the method aims at understanding what occurred in the editorial process of compilation, with full view of exposing the individual editor's theological position. By looking at the seams in the work, or the "total design," the redaction critic hopes to pinpoint a particular theological concern or question, or to identify a certain historical setting from which this concern or question arose.[46]

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[45] Ibid., pp.273-76.

[46] Norman Perrin, What is Redaction Criticism? (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), p.39.

As we have seen, both source and from criticism have a disposition towards fragmenting the text. Redaction criticism, on the other hand, pulls these fragments together and sees them in light of the whole. Redaction criticism agrees with source critics that the text is collection of sources, but unlike source critics attention is paid to the whole or final form, and the final redactor who assembled them into a coherent point of view. As well, Norman Perrin asserts that:

> redaction is an extension of form criticism in that it deals with smaller units, but it is self-conscious in inquiring as to how these were shaped into larger structures, in the interest of the final form, and final redactor's point of view.[47]

Redaction critics are interested in the editorial additions and changes made by the redactor(s) and study both stylistic features and structure for indications of an overarching individual theological point of view. The shift is immediately away from the community and its oral forms to the intention of the individual final redactor.[48] This intention leads indirectly to a better understanding of "theological history" of the time of the author(s) and community.

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[47] Ibid., p.vi.

[48] An important point to make about redaction criticism is the differentiation made between the interest of the critic and that of the author of the text. John Barton writes that "redaction criticism, however, strikes students of the Bible as a more radical departure. Insofar as the redaction critic very consciously distinguishes his own interest in what the redactor of the text deals with, he is undoubtedly making a sharper break with pre-critical reading of the text than was in practice the case in source or form criticism" ("Classifying Biblical Criticism," p.26).

As was said earlier, both source and form criticism are interested in author(s) but redaction criticism is the "purest form of author-centered criticism."[49] With redaction criticism there is a shift which focuses "primarily" upon the writer's intention.[50] This means that questions deal with the "intended meaning" of the text, a meaning "not merely in the writer and extrinsic to the text; [but] precisely the text's main intrinsic determinant."[51] When it was understood that the redactors of the text were not merely compilers but authors, then an intention could be discerned.[52] Questions are focused on how the writer used sources to arrive at and create his own theology and takes the specific form of focusing on the text's structural composition. Thus G. A.

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[49] Ibid., p.26.

[50] The intention of the writer is of importance to some exponents in the literary-critical field. Works are seen as mirrors reflecting the mind or intention of the author. This is clear in the orientation towards the psychology of the writer. M.H. Abrams writes that the interest is focused on the writer's "natural genius, creative imagination, and emotional spontaneity" (The Mirror and the Lamp, p.21).

[51] Ben F. Meyer, Critical Realism and the New Testament (Allison Park, Penn: Pickwick Publications, 1989), p.25.

[52] John T. Willis writes that "special studies approaching the text from different viewpoints are building a strong case for the proposition that the final forms of OT books are much more coherent in their structure and much better organized in their thought patterns than was often thought previously," and furthermore, "redactors on the whole, were not passive, unthinking recipients and transmitters of ancient traditions, but theologians in their own right" ("Redaction Criticism and Historical Reconstruction," Encounter With the Text: Form and History in the Hebrew Bible [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979], pp.85-86).

Rendsburg argues that the final redactor of Genesis saw the need for a chiastic[53] structure (i.e. "abcdeedcba", except in the Primeval History which is "abcdeabcde").[54] He further argues that the final writer saw the demand for such a structure for either theological or literary reasons, that is:

> to show how God's relationship with man and his election of Israel are not haphazard occurrences but are in fact well-established and well-conceived by God himself. Or his goal may have been purely literary, that is, to merely construct a perfectly designed literary unit.[55]

It is possible that both of these features were conceived and generated simultaneously by the writer. In any case, redaction criticism's emphasis on the author's intention must come through an analysis of the text. Thus, for now it is important to observe how a redaction critic has treated Genesis 38.

The redaction critic, M.C. Astour, treats Genesis 38 as a story about the historical roots of the status of hierodule[56] and maintains there are two stages in the compilation of the tradition.[57] An "A stage" is based on the conjecture that the

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[53] A chiastic structure is an artistic device in which there is a "reversal of grammatical structures in successive phrases or clauses" (J.A. Cuddon, The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory [New York: Basil Black-well, 1991], p.138).

[54] Gary A. Rendsburg, The Redaction of Genesis (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1986), p.4.

[55] Ibid., pp.99-100.

[56] The word "hierodule" refers specifically to "cult prostitute."

[57] M.C. Astour, "Tamar the Hierodule: An Essay in the Method of Vestigal Motifs," Journal of Biblical Literature 85 (1966), pp.185-96.

conjecture that the Judah and Tamar story had roots in a story of incest between father and daughter. He compares Genesis 38 with the Greek myth of how Smyrna had intercourse with her father and turned into a tree which later bursts open to bear Adonis. He links the tree with Tamar's name, a name which means "palm tree" and Peretz's name which means "bursting forth".[58] He maintains that these "mythological vestiges" are, however, only "an attenuation of an earlier, much rougher tale of a real incest between father and daughter".[59]

In the "B stage" he argues that the word (qedēšā) can be linked with the Mesopotamian law that a hierodule was not permitted to have children. Thus the "contraceptive technique" practiced by Onan of spilling his semen reflects a practice performed with a prostitute. Astour asserts then that in the "original story Tamar was a prostitute."[60] The author by "justified substitution" changed the earlier version since the descendent of the tribe of Judah was David, and so it was "reinterpreted in the spirit of the author's religious, moral, or patristic views."[61] Furthermore, the reason for Judah's response towards Tamar (i.e. to burn her) was based on an Old Babylonian text, and also reflected in Lev.21:8-9. Astour explains that in the Old Babylonian text a priestess was

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[58] Ibid., p.193.

[59] Ibid., p.195.

[60] Ibid., p.192.

[61] Ibid., p.192.

burned for stealing property from the temple, and in Leviticus a priest's daughter was burned for committing fornication. He considers burning as being a "vestige of her belonging to cult personnel."[62] Finally, he argues at that time, this was the proper punishment for a pregnant hierodule.

Astour posits that Genesis 38 has mythic origins, and bases this on the keyword hierodule that he finds in other ancient, near eastern texts. He also asserts that the narrative has a kernel of historical truth. Astour does not discern any authorial theological position, nevertheless, he does exemplify the redaction critic's focus on the process of compilation, and moreover, redaction criticism's method of inquiry.

In Redaction Criticism there is another approach in which there is a more concentrated effort to study the literary phenomena of the text, and is, therefore, often called "composition criticism."[63] Although composition criticism is interested in historical questions, it first proceeds by examining the literary dimensions of the text such as plot, characterization, implicit commentary, narrator, implied reader and other literary features.[64] The composition critic,

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[62] Ibid., p.193.

[63] Wesley A. Kort, Story, Text, and Scripture: Literary Interests in Biblical Narrative (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988), pp.84-90.

[64] See R. Alan Culpepper, Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983).

though focused on the literary dimensions of the text, is also interested in authorial intention. As Wesley Kort writes, "composition criticism is oriented primarily to tone" and "takes the narrative as a whole to be a network of clues to the speaker's intention."[65] What is interesting to note for our purposes, however, is the movement towards a more holistic literary-critical method in approaching the text.[66] Consequently, there is a more concentrated effort on the features of the text itself. If redaction criticism sees the text "through a microscope" and its compositional history, composition criticism "pulls back the lens, and the wide-angle view results in a greater appreciation of how the literary creation works as a whole."[67] Accordingly, composition critics are more interested then in the whole or total literary design, and are clearly interested in a deeper understanding of the text's "literariness."

It is true that many of the newer methods of biblical study have gone further than composition criticism by treating the

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[65] Wesley A. Kort, Story, Text, and Scripture: Literary Interests in Biblical Narrative, p.85.

[66] It should be acknowledged that source criticism has been referred to as literary criticism by the traditional exegetes. There is a distinction, however, between modern literary and traditional literary (source) criticism. Modern literary-critical method focuses on the unity and wholeness of the text and seeks to understand the text through the relationships of the component parts, in contrast, source criticism breaks the text into fragments through its literary analysis with an interest in uncovering the sources and authors that went into the making of the text.

[67] Gary A. Rendsburg, The Redaction of Genesis, p.5.

Bible as literary unit. These methods are serious attempts to discern the meaning of Bible by paying attention to the text itself, or by studying the intrinsic features of the text. These newer methods, therefore, locate meaning in the text itself rather than in the intention of the author. In the general field of literary theory a literary-critical method which deals exclusively with the text-itself is known as "New Criticism," and it is to this method which we will turn.

New Criticism

The New Criticism began in the first half of the twentieth century with the study of secular literature in England and America. It is associated with such names as F.R. Leavis, I.A. Richards, T.S. Eliot, John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, and Robert Penn Warren.[68] Besides being innovators of a new critical method some of these individuals were all well-known writers. As a critical method New Criticism is:

> generally associated with doctrines of the text's objectivity, its self-sufficiency and 'organic unity'; with a formalist, 'intrinsic' approach to the text; with a resistance to paraphrase and to the separation of form and content; and above all else with a technique of 'close-reading'- a mode of exegesis that pays scrupulous attention to the rich complexity of textual meaning rendered through rhetorical devices of irony, ambiguity, and paradox.[69]

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[68] Rick Rylance, "The New Criticism," Encyclopedia of Literature and Criticism (London: Routledge, 1991), p.721.

[69] Elizabeth Freund, "New Criticism and the Avoidance of Reading," The Return of the Reader (New York: Metheun, 1987), pp.40-41.

One of the issues that New Criticism has minimized, and the pre-occupation of historical critics, was authorial intention. The New Critics argued that one could only understand the text by attending to its intrinsic properties without reference to the intention of the author. The text was invariably a self-sufficient whole which could be studied independently of the author and his or her historical circumstances. According to the New Critics, Wimsatt and Beardsley, authorial intention is:

> a confusion between the poem and its origins, a special case of what is known to philosophers as the Genetic Fallacy. It begins by trying to derive the standard of criticism from the psychological causes of the poem and ends in biography and relativism.[70]

The New Critics argued that asking questions concerning the author's intention would not reveal the intrinsic depth and richness of a text, and necessarily leads the critic towards the concern for the psychology of the writer and his "life-history."[71] Furthermore, questions concerning authorial intention necessarily impinged upon the ability of a text to be meaningful in differing contexts.[72] Because a text had a "surplus of meaning" it extended beyond the intention of the author. Morgan and Barton argue that the stamp of a great work of literature is:

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[70] W. K. Wimsatt, "The Affective Fallacy," The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1954), p.21.

[71] John Barton, Reading the Old Testament, p.148.

[72] Ibid., p.148.

> its capacity to illuminate and enlarge the experience of successive readers in new social contexts. It thus evokes interpretations which the author, writing in a quite different world, could not have had in mind.[73]

Without a 'norm' for interpretation like the author's intention, [except for the self-sufficient text itself] New Criticism raised the specter of relativism. Could the text become subject to any number of possible interpretations? For the New Critics this problem could be solved by understanding the text's structure and details as fully as possible. A rich interpretation is comprehensive and inclusive both in scope and depth. Thereby, the reader tries to understand the text in light of its total structure, is able to actualize as many details as possible, and account for the interrelationship of the details within the whole.[74] The text sets its own limits and an interpretation that is not based in the details of the text is less acceptable than one that accounts for details. Though many interpretations may issue from reading a particular text many do not account for textual details as others do.

The critical orientation of New Criticism was primarily the text. The New Critics, therefore, derived the 'standard of criticism' from the work itself, laying down a reading strategy based upon the immanent properties of literary works by which they could be understood. The New Critics were

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[73] Robert Morgan and John Barton, Biblical Interpretation, p.11.

[74] Rene Welleck and Austin Warren, Theory of Literature (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1942), p.129.

concerned with a holistic understanding of the text that could not be exhausted by dealing with author's intention, nor with the text's anchoring in its historical context. In fact the text was shaken loose of its authorial-historical moorings and considered an autonomous whole. The New Critics differentiated the text both from its historical context and the author's intention, opening up a new horizon in which questions could be addressed to the text itself.[75]

Conclusion

In the historical or diachronic approaches, as we have seen, there is a proclivity towards both atomism and "geneticism."[76] This proclivity is prevalent in historical criticism because the questions that are asked concern a text's authors, sources, pre-literary history and its specific socio-historical contexts. Though this is a legitimate way of reading texts, it has somewhat overshadowed the literary-critical approach. The acceptance of literary criticism in biblical studies, therefore, has been a movement slow to receive serious and worthy attention. Robert Alter writes:

> The critical historical investigation of scripture, in the process of providing genuine illumination for much

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[75] In the next chapter, this extreme focus on the "text in itself" is problematic and will be compensated by a reading strategy which accounts for the role of the reader.

[76] Geneticism refers to the research which seeks to understand the roots and evolution of the biblical text that now stands. See David J.A. Clines, The Theme of the Pentateuch (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1978), p.9.

> that was long obscure, has tacitly assumed a kind of Lockean distinction between primary and secondary qualities of the Bible. The former, deemed susceptible of scientific enquiry, include the philological constituents of the text, variously accessible through comparative Semitic studies; the sundry elements of historical context reflected in the text, often clarified by archeological and extrabiblical evidence; and the conjectured stages of evolving traditions that produced the text. The literary features of the text, on the other hand, have by and large been relegated to the status of secondary qualities, mainly suitable for discussion in the effusive appreciations of aesthetes and amateurs, but hardly worthy as objects of serious scholarship.[77]

Literary criticism is less concerned with such aspects of biblical study as authors, sources, forms, and compositional histories. The claim here is that serious academic scholarship consists in studying the literary dimensions or total literary design of a text to access its meaning. In this study it will be clear that what is offered will be a holistic reading of the narrative which focuses upon the literary dimension of the text. It begins with questions that emerge from the assumption of the text's unity. Thus, in what follows I will detail a method that tries to demonstrate the unity of Genesis 38.[78]

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[77] Robert Alter, "Biblical Imperatives and Literary Play," "Not in Heaven": Coherence and Complexity in Biblical Narrative Jason P. Rosenblatt and Joseph C. Sitterson Jr. eds. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), p.13.

[78] A question that must be dealt with to some degree, in this study, is the question of Genesis 38's relation to its literary context. Most historical critics have seen it as a blunt insertion into the Joseph story. On the basis of theme, motif, keywords, and structure, however, many perceptive insights have been made as to its interconnection with surrounding stories. This study will attempt to continue these insights and contribute to a greater understanding of this relation and interconnection.

CHAPTER 2

Methodology

Introduction

The reading or interpretive strategy in this study of Genesis 38 will be a literary-critical one. This method calls for an intrinsic, close reading of the details of the text. As intrinsic the method will focus upon the components immanent to and interacting within narrative. In addition to laying out a reading strategy known as a "close reading," however, I also want to address the problem of the role of the "reader." Thus in this chapter I will elaborate the critical orientations of "text" and "reader," alluded to earlier, paying particular attention to both methodological and theoretical concerns.

The Role of the Text

If, as Adele Berlin points out, "narrative is the predominant mode of expression in the Hebrew Bible,"[79] and since Genesis 38 is a narrative, it is imperative that I employ the findings of a relatively new science of "narratology" to gain insights into Genesis 38. This narratological method requires a knowledge of the components of narrative, and how they work to create meaning. What is of importance to the student of the Bible with narratological interests, therefore, is the

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[79] Adele Berlin, Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative (Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1983), p.13

narratological science of "poetics." But what is poetics? Berlin writes that:

> poetics describes the basic components of literature and the rules governing their use. Poetics strives to write a grammar, as it were of literature.[80]

Poetics confines itself to literature, that is, it defines principles and strategies that are found in literature itself.[81] According to Tzvetan Todorov, therefore, poetics is the science of literature, such that the relation between poetics and interpretation is a symbiotic one.[82] Todorov writes that "the relation between poetics and interpretation is one of complementarity par excellence" and that "interpretation both precedes and follows poetics."[83] We understand and discern the sense of narratives by attending to their poetics. In other words:

> poetics makes us aware of how texts achieve their meaning. Poetics aids interpretation. If we know how texts mean, we are in a better position to discover what a particular text means.[84]

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[80] Ibid., p.15.

[81] In the discussion of the poetics of literature, this principle is articulated in the first great work on tragedy and comedy, Aristotle's Poetics. His work will be useful later in my interpretation of the plot of Genesis 38.

[82] Tzvetan Todorov, Introduction to Poetics (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), p.7.

[83] Ibid., p.7.

[84] Adele Berlin, The Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative, p.17.

Thus the main thrust of interpretation comes through an inductive study emerging from a knowledge and analysis of a narrative's poetics.

An interpretation based on a study of poetics deals with narrative as a consciously crafted art. This leads the literary critic to asks a set of questions such as the ones posed by K.R.R. Gros Louis. To understand a narrative, the literary critic asks questions like:

> How is the story structured? What are the unifying narrative principles by which the storyteller has selected his material? How does the story unfold sequentially, and what is important about this ordering of events? What are the plot conflicts, and how are they resolved? How does the protagonist develop as the story progresses?... How is the thematic meaning of the story embodied in narrative form?[85]

These are all questions that aim to understand narrative design. The literary critic assumes the biblical writers were sophisticated writers who employed a number of artful strategies and techniques that were at their disposal to create an intricate and configural design.[86] The reader, therefore,

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[85] Gros Louis, Literary Interpretations of the Biblical Narratives Vol.2, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1982), p.28.

[86] It is true that some critics, especially historical critics, have assumed that the ancient writers were unsophisticated writers, even mere compilers who jumbled together a number of independent and problematic stories into a book. This view has been contended by Tzvetan Todorov. As Robert Alter writes: "Tzvetan Todorov has shrewdly argued that the whole notion of "primitive narrative" is a kind of mental image engendered by modern parochialism, for the more closely you look at the particular ancient narrative, the more you are compelled to recognize the complexity and subtlety with which it is formally organized and with which it renders its subjects, and the more you see how it is conscious of its necessary status as artful discourse. It is only by imposing

should pay particular attention to the narrative's complexity and literary craftsmanship. A knowledge of poetics offers the reader the categories of discrimination which describe how narratives work. Two key categories for those interested in poetics or how narratives work are "structure" and "texture," or, in New-Critical terms, "form and content." For the New Critics these categories are interdependent, content must be seen in light of its form.

The New Critics maintained that the "meaning" of a narrative is fashioned by the cohesion of both form and content. The form does not illustrate meaning but constitutes it.[87] This principle is of utmost importance to the literary critic. Since content is purposefully structured by means of artful techniques, interpretive activity involves discerning how content is patterned and structured into a rich and meaningful whole. The New Critic, Hans Frei, states that:

> ...the "meaning" of a story is located nowhere but in the narrative sequence itself. It is just this cohesiveness

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a naive and unexamined aesthetic of their own, Todorov proposes, that modern scholars are able to declare so confidently that certain parts of the ancient text could not belong with others: the supposedly primitive narrative is subjected by scholars to tacit laws like the law of stylistic unity, of noncontradiction, of nondigression, of nonrepetition, and by these dim but purportedly universal lights is found composite, deficient and incoherent" (The Art of Biblical Narrative [New York: Basic Books, 1981], p.21).

[87] Lynn Poland, Literary Criticism and Biblical Hermeneutics: A Critique of Formalist Approaches (Chico: Scholars Press, 1985), p.122.

> of meaning with narrative form that, in Frei's view, was eclipsed in modern biblical criticism.[88]

To separate form and content is to commit what C. Brooks calls the "heresy of paraphrase." Paraphrasing separates the unity of form and content and reduces the narrative to a moral or message.[89] The reader's task is not to seek out a statement of "truth" or "essential core" of the narrative,[90] but to concentrate on the work's "total pattern" or its poetic structure.[91] This involves understanding the meaning of a work by adhering to a its form and content as a unified structure.

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[88] Ibid., p.122.

[89] Ibid., p.81. Terry Eagleton also comments that the New Critic treated the poem as "self-enclosed object" which "could not be paraphrased, expressed in any language other than itself: each of its parts was folded in on others in a complex organic unity" (Literary Theory: An Introduction [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983], p.47).

[90] Cleanth Brooks, The Well Wrought Urn, (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1947), p.184. Rene Welleck also writes that "when Brooks combats the phrase (heresy of paraphrase) he objects to reducing the work of art to a statement of abstract propositions, or to a moral message, or to any literal verifiable truth. But this emphasis on the specific (fictionality) of all art, its world of illusion or semblance, cannot mean a lack of relation to reality or simple entrapment in language" ("The New Criticism," [Critical Inquiry 4 (1978)], p.617).

[91] Cleanth Brooks writes that poetic structure is "a structure of meanings, evaluations, and interpretations; and the principle of unity which informs it seems to be one of balancing and harmonizing connotations, attitudes and meanings" (The Well Wrought Urn [New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1947], p.178). See also Cleanth Brooks' essay "The Poetry of Tension," The Pratt Lecture (St.John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1971) which subsumes the above conditions within the property of "tension."

If, however, the intention of literary critical practice is to acquire a deeper and greater understanding of a narrative's "total design," a lucid and insightful analysis of both form and content cannot be overlooked. In other words, criticism aims at studying a narrative as an "organic unity,"[92] focusing on both the subtleties of a narrative's subject matter and its larger structural patterns. Because both the form and content are intimately united in any great literary work, the reader oscillates between both a text's details and the text's larger structures in an effort to understand the narrative as a whole. Understanding the narrative as a whole means attending to all its manifold strategies that create structure.

Shimon Bar-Efrat has argued that narrative structure can be constituted through a variety of narratological strategies.[93] He states that the literary critic can study a narrative's structural principles on: (a) the verbal level, (b) the level of narrative technique, (c) the level of narrative world, and

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[92] The metaphor of the organism has certain problems, especially its reference to the biological context, nevertheless, as Rene Welleck writes "there seems to me a simple truth in the old view that a successful work of art is a whole in which its parts collaborate and modify one another. Much of the (close reading) practiced by Cleanth Brooks and followers demonstrates this truth even on recalcitrant material. But this insight is grossly distorted if it is supposed to lead to the conclusion that poetry is cut off from reality, is merely self-reflexive, and that it is thus only inconsequential play of words" ("The New Criticism," [Critical Inquiry 4 (1978)], p.617).

[93] See Shimon Bar-Efrat, "Some Observations on the Analysis of Structure in Biblical Narrative," Vetus Testamentum 30 (1980), pp.157-173.

(d) the level of conceptual content. On the verbal level, structure is constituted by sound play, similes, metaphor, and other stylistic and linguistic features that are consummated in "words and phrases." The reader is interested in their various functions and effects. On the level of narrative technique, emphasis is placed upon the analysis of scenes and summary constructed by the narrator's account of description, explanation, or comment, or, by the character's account in dialogue. The level of narrative world creates coherence by the relationship between characters, events, and settings. Analysis seeks to understand closely the identity, nature and function of these relationships. On the level of conceptual content the reader seeks to understand the themes and ideas that run through the narrative which are interwoven into a unified, artful tapestry.

While form and content cannot ultimately be separated, the initial step in the understanding of a narrative can begin with an understanding of the narrative's overall structure or form. One aim in this study, therefore, will be to give a comprehensive reading of Genesis 38 as a unified, structured whole. This aim reflects the claim of R.G. Moulton who, as far back as 1908, pointed out that "if the foundation principle of literary study be true, [the] existing text cannot be truly interpreted until it has been read in the light of its exact

literary structure."[94] The contention here is that the foremost clue to the narrative's meaning is the understanding of its overarching structural configuration. This approach is also reflected in the view of Hans Frei:

> The correct way to read a narrative text is not as a source of information, but as a narrative. The meaning of a narrative is its narrative shape.... The true use of narrative is simply to read it, and to take seriously its 'narrativity'.[95]

What is, therefore, the narrative shape or exact literary structure of Genesis 38? This question can be addressed by paying particular attention to the insights of the Bulgarian structuralist Tzvetan Todorov. He offers a lens which enables the reader to view with clarity the structure of Genesis 38 and the beginning point of understanding the narrative as a whole.[96] The plot sequence of Genesis 38 will be shown to follow Todorov's five propositions and this corresponds to an "ideal narrative." He writes:

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[94] Cited in Lyle Eslinger, Into the Hands of the Living God, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1986), p.3.

[95] Hans Frei, The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics, pp.11-14, cited in John Barton, Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study, p.163.

[96] Naomi Steinberg has used the work of Todorov to analyze the structure of the narrative plot in the family stories of Genesis. Though her study is not an extensive analysis of all narratives, the stress is on seeing the purpose of "genealogy" and its relationship to narrative. The narrative is seen as resolving a "disequilibrium", which is mentioned in the genealogy preceding the story. See "The Genealogical Framework of the Family Stories in Genesis," Semeia 46 (1989), pp.41-50.

> An ideal narrative begins with a stable situation that some force will perturb. From which results a state of disequilibrium; by the action of a force directed in a converse direction, the equilibrium is re-established; the second equilibrium is quite similar to the first, but the two are not identical. Consequentially there are two types of episodes in a narrative: those that describe a state (of equilibrium or of disequilibrium) and those that describe a transition from one state to another.[97]

This structural configuration or shape encapsulates the entire narrative. It will prove to be the primary tool in the overall understanding of Genesis 38.

Three important formal properties that I will be using for the understanding of both broad and fine articulations of structure in biblical narrative are repetition, parallelism, and analogy. As part of Hebrew narrative art, repetitions display multiple functions and effects:

> These include the double cohesion (in terms of plot and parallelism) of the episode; the linkage of different points along a sequence; multiple views, variations in tempo, genre, sense; the manipulation of curiosity, suspense, and surprise; the filling out of internal processes; implicit commentary and thematic development; and of course, the enhancement of reading activity.[98]

Repetitions amplify and resonate intricate and usually pivotal meanings to the reader. As one of the strongest components of narrative coherence, they establish and reinforce the whole unity of narrative design. In the Bible, interestingly enough, the device of repetition is intricately related to various

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[97] Tzvetan Todorov, Introduction to Poetics, p.51. This structure will become more explicit in the next chapter which will deal with defining the unit.

[98] Meir Sternberg, The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), p.439.

forms of parallelism. And although parallelism is a constructive device of biblical poetry it is also employed in other literary forms. It is necessary here to quote Adele Berlin at length:

> In the Bible, one finds it [parallelism] also in legal passages, proverbs, prophetic speech, speculative thought (e.g., Ecclesiastes), and even some sections of narrative. It is not a question of forcing all of these texts into genre called "poetry," but rather that there may be several types of texts which are structured on relationships of equivalence or opposition. What all of these texts have in common is the dominance of the poetic function. These texts all focus the message on itself; they draw attention to the relationships which they impose on their linguistic signs. They organize, or reorganize, the world into equivalences and oppositions by their form of expression.[99]

Closely related to the property of parallelism in biblical narrative is analogy. This particular formal dynamic has been defined by Peter Miscall as "a feature of Hebrew narrative through which one part of the text provides oblique commentary on another."[100] This feature is an important tool for understanding links within cycles of stories, and also because "it increases the amount of Biblical material pertinent to the study of a given section. The added material raises and clarifies issues that might otherwise be underestimated or

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[99] Adele Berlin, The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), pp.139-40.

[100] Peter Miscall, "The Jacob and Joseph Stories as Analogies," Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 6 (1978), p.28.

even missed."[101] It is a characteristic of the Hebrew Bible that much of the richness and depth of any particular text or narrative is augmented by its affinities with other texts by way of repeating key-words, themes, plots, and motifs.[102] Part of this study of Genesis 38, as was noted earlier, will be to demonstrate the relevant connections between Genesis 38 and the larger Joseph frame-story.

The second category of narrative which the critic is concerned with is content. Here the reader is particularly interested in "story-world" of the narrative. The story-world is created through the characters, settings, and events that populate the narrative. Analysis therefore centers attention on: the character's actions, dialogue, relations and motives; the setting or where the story positions itself along its sequence, and to the events of the story. Events contain the "kernels" of the narrative. These are crucial points along the narrative sequence which supply directional clues pivotal to

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[101] Ibid., p.29.

[102] Miscall's understanding of narrative analogy is similar to Robert Alter's understanding of biblical allusion. Alter writes that "the Bible offers rich and varied evidence of the most purposeful allusions--not the recurrence of fixed formula or conventional stereotype but a pointed activation of one text by another, conveying a connection in difference or a difference in connection through some conspicuous similarity in phrasing, in motif, or in narrative situation" (The World of Biblical Literature [New York: Basic Books, 1992], pp.110-111).

the understanding of the narrative's structure and logic.[103] The reader is attentive to the interconnections between events, characters and settings, which are simultaneously interfused with key-words, motifs, ideas, and themes which create a network of meaningful relationships. For the literary critic, the understanding of a narrative entails a sharpened awareness of the nature and function of these relationships, which, by various means, may be characterized by tension through the establishment of irony, paradox and ambiguity. The reader is interested in how these elements are formed to produce meaning, and, in particular, how content is shaped into the overall plot structure. It is by the structure and patterns that the content or subject matter of the narrative is rendered coherent and intelligible to the reader.

The analysis of content also includes a detailed reading of the texture of the narrative. What the New Critics mean by texture is the "heterogeneous character of its detail" or the various kinds of detail in the design of narrative fabric which give the narrative its semantic depth and range.[104] The reader of Genesis 38, therefore, might be concerned with the relationship between the theme of continuity and the sub-themes of life and death. The reader may also concentrate on

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[103] Seymour Chatman, Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film (London: Cornell University Press, 1978), p.54.

[104] John Crowe Ransom, The New Criticism (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1941), p.163.

the motifs of deception and recognition, or the fine articulations of characterization of Judah and Tamar, or the interplay between the ideas of justice, law, duty, and knowledge, as well as other implicit details in the narrative. These various details contribute by interweaving the narrative into a meaningful, unified, and artful whole.

The necessity of focusing upon particular details becomes increasingly important. Because the reader assumes that each word is used with the utmost skill, both economically and strategically, the reader must try to focus on each detail and see how it contributes to the meaning of the whole. This examination reveals "additional subtler, and more precise meanings."[105] This method of reading the Bible recalls the method of interpretation practiced by medieval Jewish exegetes who, as Alan Cooper points out, aimed for the "realization of the vastly more rich and interesting implicit kinds of meanings" and strove "after nuances that represent hints or possibilities of meaning."[106] In essence, this method is grounded on a close, meticulous reading which demonstrates a

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[105] Shimon Bar-Efrat, Narrative Art in the Bible, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), p.11.

[106] Alan Cooper, "On Reading the Bible Critically and Otherwise," The Future of Biblical Studies: The Hebrew Scriptures (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), p.72.

"critical exactness based in the details of the text"[107] and involves:

> the manifold varieties of minutely discriminating attention to the artful use of language, to the shifting play of ideas, conventions, tone, sound, imagery, syntax, narrative viewpoint, compositional units, and much else.[108]

Literary analysis, as I have described it, involves scrupulous attention to the components of narrative which are subsumed under the categories of form and content. Such conscious narrative strategies as point of view, plot, characterization, and theme, as well as devices such as redundancy, dialogue, narrative time, and repetition serve the purpose of contributing to patterns of coherence, narrative design, and depth of meaning. The relationships formed by these narrative strategies contribute towards the total meaning of the text, a meaning which the literary critic is ultimately seeking. Attention to these and other narrative strategies means, in Hans Frei's words, taking "seriously its narrativity" and seeing content in terms of the form.

What has been so far described is similar to the New-Critical reading of the text-in-itself. Fundamentally, this text-centered approach is objective and gives primacy to the text over and above the historical situation from which it

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[107] John R. Willingham, "The New Criticism: Then and Now," Contemporary Literary Theory, (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1989), p.58.

[108] Robert Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative, (New York: Basic Books, 1981), p.12.

arose, or the reader who reads it.[109] In its extreme form, this reading strategy cultivates the:

> toughest, most hard-headed techniques of critical dissection. The same impulse which stirred them to insist on the 'objective' status of the work also stirred them to promote a strictly 'objective' way of analyzing it.[110]

It is in this form that New Criticism cuts the text off from the reader. This raises one of the criticisms and shortcomings of the New-Critical position. As Lynn Poland explains:

> By conceiving the task of criticism to be the understanding of the internal relationships within the text, the New Critics make it difficult to describe how literature does, in fact, extend and transform our perceptions of what it means to be human. The New Criticism, in short, provides us with a poetics, but not a hermeneutics.[111]

The value of New Criticism lies then its ability to provide a way of reading texts by appropriating their meaning by focusing on their intrinsic properties. Taken in its extreme form, however, it minimizes the role of the reader. This shortcoming is not irresolvable, however, if the reader can be

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[109] Objective types of criticism are text-centered, viewing the literary work as a world-in-itself. Evaluation of a works depends upon analysis of intrinsic criteria, such as the interrelationship of component parts. M.H. Abrams points out that "the early attempt at the analysis of an art form which is both objective and comprehensive occurs in the central portion of Aristotle's Poetics" (The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition [New York: Oxford University Press, 1953], pp.26-29).

[110] Terry Eagleton, Literary Theory: An Introduction, p.49.

[111] Lynn Poland, "Literary Criticism of New Testament Narrative: A Literary Critic's Perspective," cited in Calvin R. Mercer, Norman Perrin's Interpretation of the New Testament (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1986), p.53.

situated in a reading strategy similar to that of the text. It is true that most New-Critical practice is not so extreme and does give the reader a role, though this is not always acknowledged. The text, as most New Critics would agree in practice, is insufficient without a reader: for it is the reader who brings the lifeless text to life by reading and questioning it. What the next section is interested in then is to articulate the hermeneutical circle of reader and text.

The Role of the Reader

Thus far, I have dealt with a text-centered study of Genesis 38 which focuses upon its intrinsic properties. What is left to be included is an account of the reader's role or task. Since New Criticism greatly underestimated or minimized the reader's role in interpretation, I will try to compensate for it somewhat by laying out a reading strategy which incorporates the role of the reader.[112]

The reader-oriented critical position within literary circles has been aptly named reader-response criticism. As Jane P. Tompkins writes, reader-response criticism "has come to be associated with the work of critics who use the words

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[112] The New Critics were critical of the orientation of interpretation which focused on the reader rather than on the text itself and maintained that focusing on the reader led to what they called the "affective fallacy." In the words of Wimmsatt and Beardsley this was "a confusion between the poem and its results (what it is and what it does)...it begins by trying to derive the standard of criticism from the psychological effects of the poem and ends in impressionism and relativism" (The Verbal Icon, p.21).

reader, the reading process, and response to mark out an area of investigation."[113] In reader-response literary theory there are a number of descriptions that are reserved for the role that the readers play, and for the readers themselves. These terms include: the superreader, intended reader, informed reader, implied reader, and ideal reader.[114] Most reader-response criticism is 'primarily' interested in the reader or the process of reading itself. More specifically, reader-response criticism argues that it is the reader who creates meaning, or who actively produces meaning by the 'concretization' of a text's parts and by filling in the text's gaps and indeterminancies.[115]

In its extreme form, reader-response criticism borders on giving primacy to the 'reader's intention' to the exclusion of the text. In Northrop Frye's view this tendency reflects the narcissistic goal of reading the text as "a mirror of one-self."[116] Interpretation is threatened to become the mere reflection of the reader's subjectivity. Furthermore, since

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[113] Jane P. Tompkins, "An Introduction to Reader-Response Criticism," Jane P. Tompkins (ed.) Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1980), p.ix.

[114] Wolfgang Iser, The Act of Reading (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1978), pp.30 and 34.

[115] James L. Resseguie, "Reader-Response Criticism and the Synoptic Gospels," Journal of the American Academy of Religion 52 (1984), p.308.

[116] Northrop Frye, The Double Vision: Language and Meaning in Religion (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), p.77.

interpretation involves primarily the reader's response, that response may be the result of reading into the text that which cannot be readily supported by the text. In this case, the text seems to lose its intrinsic meaning and interpretation sinks into a nebulous affair leading to the subjective interpretations of each individual reader. Consequently it threatens the objectivity of the text and opens the possibility for its disappearance into the subjectivity of the reader. Thus, some reader-response critics, such as Iser, do not go this far but stress that the text sets limits upon interpretation by its formal properties. Lest the text disappear altogether, therefore, I will rely more heavily on reader-response theory which stresses the process of communication or dialogue between the reader and text, and also one which is attentive to the conventions and formal characteristics of texts. This does not in any way limit the kinds of implicit meanings that can be traced to the text during analysis, but shows how explicit formal restraints lessen the reader's subjectivity.[117] In essence, the role of the reader

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[117] Meir Sternberg writes that "the active role played by the reader in constructing the world of a literary work is by no means to imply that gap-filling is an arbitrary process. On the contrary, in this as in other operations of reading, literature is remarkable for its powers of control and validation. Of course, gap-filling may nevertheless be performed in a wild and misguided or tendentious fashion.... To gain cogency, a hypothesis must be legitimated by the text. Illegitimate gap-filling is one launched and sustained by the reader's subjective concerns (or dictated by more general preconceptions) rather than by the text's norms and directives" (The Poetics of Biblical Narrative, p.188).

that I intend to adopt will be that of a questioner of the text.

One can begin this study with the question: who exactly is the reader? The reader in this study will be considered the critical reader. The critical reader is a reader who is a compromise between two positions characterized by George Steiner. On the one hand, the reader is the one who "steps back from the text to strike a magisterial pose of critical, objectifying distance," and, on the other hand, the reader is the one who "tries to eliminate the distance between himself and the text" and thereby "enter into the text and to be entered into by the text."[118] In one case, the text is prominent, in the other the reader is prominent. Consequently, one or the other stands as a "tyrant" above the other.

The critical reader, therefore, is "both a reader and a critic of the Bible," that is, he or she questions it and is questioned by it. Thus the reader responds to the text through dialogue, or what has been called the hermeneutical circle of reader and text.[119] This circle expresses a dynamic interaction between the reader and the text. The phrase

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[118] Cited in Robert M. Fowler, "Who is 'the Reader' in Reader-Response Criticism?" Semeia 31 (1985), pp.6-7.

[119] Hans-Georg Gadamer has described the hermeneutical circle of reader and text as a conversation that results in the "fusion" of the horizon of the reader and the text. I am more satisfied to stress that a "conversation" occurs rather than a fusion. In other words, it is possible to understand the text and be questioned by it without a fusion of horizons. See Truth and Method (London: Sheed and Ward, 1975).

"hermeneutical circle," however, is misleading and unfortunate, as A. Thistleton writes:

> For although the center of gravity moves back and forth between the two poles of the interpreter and text, there is also an ongoing movement and progressive understanding which might have been better conveyed by some such image as the spiral.[120]

This understanding of the interaction of the reader and text is not a 'vicious' circle. Understanding is obtained piecemeal as "one construes a text progressively and cumulatively, by spiralling into its sense."[121] The critical reader addresses questions to the text, and in a sense, turns the "interpretive screw." Only by a deeper and broader understanding does the reader becomes aware of how each part of the text relates to the whole. There is a progressive expanding and deepening of understanding as the reader accumulates meaning in the process of interpretation.[122]

This understanding of the hermeneutical circle also acknowledges that the reader has a "preunderstanding" which he or she brings to the text. This can be defined as "a body of assumptions and attitudes which a person brings to the

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[120] Anthony C. Thistleton, The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), p.104.

[121] Ben F. Meyer, Critical Realism, p.20-21.

[122] Duncan S. Ferguson writes that "the movement in the interpretive task is from initial understanding (a naive grasp of the meaning of the text as a whole) to explanation (a study of the analytical structure of the text) to comprehension (a sophisticated mode of understanding)" (Biblical Hermeneutics: An Introduction, [Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1986], p.180).

perception and interpretation of reality or any part of it."[123] It is her or his "touchstone of reality" from which questions issue. The reader does not come to the text as a

> ...cultural virgin, immaculately free of previous social and literary entanglements [or a] supremely disinterested spirit...what the work 'says' to us will in turn depend on the kind of questions which we are able to address to it, from our own vantage point in history.[124]

The text is also a mirror which reflects its own world which may truly question our beliefs and assumptions or our social and literary entanglements.[125] Through interpretation the world of a text has the ability to question, illuminate, disrupt, transform or subvert the reader's self-understanding and perception of reality.[126] The text, therefore, "may return an unpredictable 'answer' to our 'questions.'"[127] Genesis 38 expresses a world embracing both order and disorder, life and death, wickedness and righteousness. A reader

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[123] Ibid., p.6.

[124] Terry Eagleton, Literary Theory: An Introduction, pp.71 and 89.

[125] One has to look no further than the placement of Genesis 38 to observe how there is a unique way of presenting narratives which subverts the reader's way of perceiving narrative ordering. Thus one might not want to read Chapter 37 to Chapter 39 chronologically, but analogously, thematically, or through motif and keywords.

[126] Mario J. Valdes writes that "it is not a question of imposing upon the text our finite understanding but of exposing ourselves to the text and receiving from the encounter an enriched self" (Phenomenological Hermeneutics and the Study of Literature [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987], p.39).

[127] Terry Eagleton, Literary Theory, p.79.

who comes to Genesis 38 will be confronted by a reality that is, in essence, two-sided. Thus, this world may spur the reader into a hermeneutical self-examination or self-criticism. One can see, therefore, that the hermeneutical circle is concerned with the process of putting questions to the text but also in the way the text puts questions to the reader. This is the nature of dialogue.

It is through questions that the reader strikes up a relation with the text in the first place. This is a joint venture. The critical reader is not passive but actively engaged in the asking of questions. This does not mean, however, that the reader creates the text. The text has a voice of its own which can be heard by sounding questions to it. The reader actualizes the text's possible meaning by asking relevant questions based on his or her knowledge of how a text works to achieve meaning. The text means what it can mean only in light of what questions are posed to it. In Wolfgang Iser's sense questions are "selective" inasmuch as the reader is interested in particular concerns which the text may answer. Initially the text is opaque, but this gradually diminishes as the reader analyzes the text, grasping its meaning by continually questioning it and receiving answers. The reader discovers through questions the "connections" or the interrelationships of component parts of the narrative whole, which in turn, enables the reader "to recreate the

world of the text."[128] Paul. B. Armstrong writes that Iser describes reading as a "process of 'consistency building'; an organic quest for patterns that establish coherence among the elements of the text."[129] It is through reading, according to Iser, that we uncover the text's "intention." This means that the reader's questions expose nothing that is not already in the text. In other words, "the text's intentions may be manifold, they may be infinite, but they are always present embryonically in the work itself, implied by it, circumscribed by it, and finally traceable to it."[130] In discussing Iser, Jane Tompkins states that:

> He does not grant the reader autonomy or even a partial independence from textual constraints. The reader's activity is only a fulfillment of what is already implicit in the structure of the work....[131]

One could argue that the meaning of a text is disclosed foremost, as the New Critics argue, through the questioning and analysis of its intrinsic properties. In every respect Iser gives a place to the reader in actualizing the potential of the text, however, the text remains at the center as the primary unit of meaning. In essence, potential meaning is

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[128] Wolfgang Iser, The Act of Reading, pp.277 and 279.

[129] Paul B. Armstrong, Conflicting Readings: Variety and Validity in Interpretation (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990), p.3.

[130] Jane Tompkins, Reader-Response Criticism, p.xv.

[131] Ibid., p.xv.

obtained by focusing questions upon the text's poetics or immanent properties.

The dialogue that occurs between the text and reader is ultimately a process of communication. Quite clearly this communication indicates a "relation" between the text and reader. Consequently, a question arises: Can objectivity be maintained through this relation? To answer this question one can rely upon the insights of Walter Wink.

Wink succeeds in defining clearly the meaning of the relation between reader and text. At the same time he describes a way of overcoming the problem of the subject-object dichotomy without losing the object and subject in the process, so that "a new type of objectivity is attainable." He writes that the subject-object dichotomy:

> ... must be transcended in a dialectical sense, not by its obliteration, to be sure, but by its transformation. The subject-object dichotomy gives way...to a subject-object relationship. Alienated distance is bridged so as to become relational distance, in which the integrity of each party is preserved by the reciprocity of dialogue. Subjects and objects remain, each as object of the other, each as subject to the other.[132]

What Wink ultimately describes is a "communion of horizons." This refers to an "encounter" of the reader's horizon and the horizon of the literary text.[133] In this particular study, it refers to the meeting of the modern horizon of the critical

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[132] Walter Wink, The Bible in Human Transformation: Towards a New Paradigm for Biblical Study (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), p.66.

[133] Alan Cooper, "On Reading the Bible Critically and Otherwise," p.65.

reader and the horizon of the ancient biblical text. The reader is not confining the text within the boundaries of his or her own horizon. The reader recognizes the communication between two whereby initial alienation between reader and text is overcome by a dialogue. The critical task, therefore, takes seriously the role of the reader but also acknowledges the text's facility to engage and question the reader through the world that opens up before the reader.[134]

It is clear that a world emerges from a work through analysis, dialogue, and understanding. With reference to Genesis 38, therefore, the critical task is to ask perceptive, pertinent, and penetrating questions like: What is the role of the protagonist Tamar in the narrative? How does this role reflect the narrative's depiction or image of women? How does the narrative embody the thematic meaning of continuity, and the related themes of life and death? How is the motif of deception used in Genesis 38? Through what means does the plot move from a state of equilibrium to disequilibrium to equilibrium once again? Is the characterization of Judah in Genesis 38 important in understanding his role as spokesperson in the Joseph story? These questions are directed at "bringing the text to life," reclaiming for the modern reader a rich

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[134] Alan Cooper writes that "the Bible opens up for me a world which I could never have perceived as a matter of course; it enables me to understand things which I could not have understood without it. But that world, and those things, are nothing but products of my engagement with the text" ("The Act of Reading the Bible," Proceedings From the Eighth World Congress of Jewish Studies [Jerusalem, 1983], p.64).

interpretation that connects together the parts of the text into a meaningful whole. To accomplish this task, the reader focuses a close reading on the narrative's "subtlety and inventiveness of detail, and in many cases instances of beautifully interwoven wholeness."[135]

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study is interested in demonstrating the literary unity of Genesis 38, and not concerned with the genetic and atomistic tendencies of historical criticism. Questions are neither aimed at the writer's intention, forms, units of tradition or compositional histories. Questions are focused on the unified narrative as it stands and how concepts and strategies basic to literary art are used to create structure and meaning, consequently, it is interested in its poetic unity and function. This study combines a reading or interpretive strategy based on the work of Todorov, the New Critical school, and Reader-Response criticism that provides an intrinsic, comprehensive, and close reading of the text and answers the fundamental questions: how does the narrative work or mean what it means? And, subsidiarily, how does it mean in its literary context?

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[135] Robert Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative, p.188.

CHAPTER 3

Structure of Genesis 38

Defining the Unit

As stated in chapter two, an initial investigation into the narrative will be through literary form. In any analysis of the literary form of the Bible, however, there is an additional problem of having to describe the unit under investigation. Since one cannot possible interpret the whole corpus of biblical literature, one must reduce its sizable volume to a working body of material.[136] This does not distort the interpretation, but is only the initial point at which one begins the process of interpretation. A practical concern emerges in which one has to focus upon a limited amount of material with the scope of a feasible thesis. Thus, in this study, the purpose is the focus upon the material contained within the narrative of Genesis 38. The justification for choosing this body of material will be the focus of this chapter.

The method outlined in the last chapter concentrated on a reading of the text as a whole. In the case of literary criticism of the Bible this would entail an exhaustive reading of the whole Bible. As noted above, reading the whole Bible is

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[136] Shimon Bar-Efrat, "Some Observations on the Analysis of Structure in Biblical Narrative," Vetus Testamentum 30 (1980), p.156.

not a realistic task although it has been attempted.[137] As Eslinger comments:

> A practical limitation...imposes itself on all biblical interpreters in their attempts to determine the correct literary context for interpretation. The time and writing space needed to write a good close reading of the text do impose real limitations on the amount of biblical text that can be encompassed in any single examination. Faced by such limitations one must be resigned to some measure of exhaustiveness.[138]

In conjunction with this practical limitation, one is faced with finding a solution to the problem which Eslinger elucidates in dealing with biblical narrative, that is "to determine the appropriate contextual boundaries within which to interpret the story that the reader wishes to read."[139] Deciding upon the limits of the unit of material or its contextual parameters is the reader's first interpretive response to the text in the process of interpretation.

In delimiting a body of material there has to be, first of all, some sense of a logical structure. The definition of a unit, therefore, depends ultimately on "the structural characteristics of the text."[140] Without some indication of

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[137] Northrop Frye has attempted such a holistic endeavor in his book The Great Code (Markham: Penguin Group, 1981). He focuses upon archetypal patterns which run throughout the whole Bible. Most literary critics would argue, however, that this still leaves vast amounts of biblical material from being analyzed very closely.

[138] L.M. Eslinger, Kingship of God in Crisis: A Close Reading of 1 Samuel 1-12 (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1985), p.46.

[139] Ibid., p.43.

[140] Ibid., p.45.

an internal organization, the body of material to be interpreted may be part of a larger whole which may be difficult to separate from its context and still make sense. When a body of material asserts itself as a structural whole, however, it becomes much easier for the reader to delimit its contextual boundaries. Bar-Efrat suggests, therefore, that "structure may be legitimately discerned and analyzed in both small sections and comprehensive units."[141] The reader's perception of one of these smaller structural wholes or sections is the hermeneutical doorway, so to speak, for the entrance into the process of interpretation. The assertion here is that Genesis 38 is one of these smaller structural wholes.

By defining Genesis 38 as a structural whole, however, I do not mean to imply that it is unrelated to its larger context. Quite the contrary, the unit operates on other levels of narrativity and connects with surrounding Genesis stories. As Bar-Efrat states: "the narrative books of the Bible are not mere compilations of unconnected stories but, as is well-known, are made of sequences of narratives, which combine to constitute wider structures."[142] For instance, Genesis 38 is one of a number of stories in a cycle of stories concerning the sons of Jacob. It employs themes and strategies similar to stories that precede and proceed it. These narratives, more

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[141] Shimon Bar-Efrat, "Some Observations on the Analysis of Structure in Biblical Narrative," Vetus Testamentum 30 (1980), p.156.

[142] Ibid., p.185.

particularly, resonate with each other by way of theme, motif, key-words, analogy, symbol and other means to create a web of interconnected meaning. In this study, it will be necessary at points to make reference to how these stories interconnect and nuance with each other. These interconnections will enhance the reader's grasp of the sense of my argument. On the whole, however, I will be concerned with reading Genesis 38 as a distinct unit with its own unique structure, internal coherence, and verbal patterns.

Here, however, my immediate concern is to determine questions which will provide insights into the contextual determinations of the body of material or literary unit. Thus the reader may well follow the insight of Eslinger who states that:

> The definition of the literary unit, then, is part of the question and part of the answer. The interpreter has a specific question in mind when seeking to determine what part of the text answers the question posed and text simultaneously begins to answer by presenting structural and semantic features that influence the interpreter's contextual determinations. The definition of the literary unit is the beginning of the interpretational dialectic and there is no set point of entrance into this hermeneutical circle.[143]

The reader enters the hermeneutical process by asking such questions as: does a theme unfold so as to create a meaningful pattern?; does this theme organize a group of episodes into a logical order so as to create a definite form or structure?; what are contributory themes, symbols, motifs that add depth

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[143] Eslinger, Kingship of God in Crisis, p.44.

and meaning and form a more elaborate narrative design?; what kinds of internal structuring exist which create patterns of coherence?; can this story be interpreted as a logical whole with its own narrative boundaries? Focused and relevant questions such as these will further the reader's ability to distinguish a unit with a definite structure.

As one sees relationships between component parts, a definitive unit emerges from the blur of surrounding narratives. In addition, the reader may ask subtler questions which furnish a deeper understanding of the narrative's internal organization or design. It is through this process that the reader becomes aware that the narrative exhibits its own internal logic or plot, structure and design. It is these features which differentiate Genesis 38 as a unit. As a clearly designed structural unit, therefore, it is worthy of an in-depth literary analysis. The decision then to treat Genesis 38 as a separate unit is not an arbitrary one, but one based on a prior decision to engage in a the dialogue between text and reader. As Eslinger states: "the contextual decision is determined by the question [or questions] that the interpreter puts to the text, which is in turn conditioned by the potential of the text to respond."[144]

One of the more explicit reasons for claiming Genesis 38 as a definite unit is its enigmatic location. Enigmas are suggestive, as Paul Ricoeur remarks, for "the enigma does not

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[144] Ibid., p.185.

block (hermeneutic) intelligence but provokes it: there is something to unfold."[145] One logical question that arises from a reading of the book of Genesis is: Does the placement of Genesis 38 between Chapters 37 and 39, give the reader any initial reason to consider it as a separate unit? In answering this question, the reader perceives something unusual concerning the placement of Genesis 38. We will recall that a number of historical critics have suggested that Genesis 38 is a unit which has been inserted into the frame-story of Joseph. E.A. Speiser, calls it, in fact, a "completely independent unit."[146] For Speiser, Genesis 38, being wedged between two chapters that deal specifically with Joseph, presents a puzzling intrusion. It interrupts the chronological logic of Genesis 37 and 39 creating a temporary eclipse from the Joseph story. In chapter 37, the narrative concerns the brother's abandonment of Joseph and their deception of their father. In chapter 39 the narrative deals Potiphar's wife's attempted rape of Joseph and his subsequent imprisonment. The story of Judah and Tamar is situated, therefore, between 37 and 39, two chapters which focus intimately upon the character and story of Joseph. In one way, then, I do agree with Speiser, that

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[145] Cited in Richard Kearney, "Paul Ricoeur and the Hermeneutic Imagination," The Narrative Path: The Later Works of Paul Ricoeur (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1989), p.26.

[146] E.A. Speiser, Genesis (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company Inc, 1964), p.299.

Genesis 38 offers by way of its interruption, strong evidence to suggest that it is a distinct and unique narrative whole.

Unlike Speiser, however, I want to argue that Genesis 38 constitutes an inner logic or form through which the events of the narrative are structured into a "plot." When the reader grasps the logic of this narrative's emplotment, a definite, overarching structure emerges. The definite structure controls the movement of the plot to its passionate conclusion. It is this overarching structure that makes it a "singular entity"[147] and reinforces the idea that the narrative is a distinct unit in the mind of the reader. It is the narrative's structure and plot which are, in fact, the "primary criterion for textual delimitation."[148] It is these criterion which has led to the conclusion that Genesis 38 constitutes a clear, well-defined, structural design. The assertion, therefore, made by this thesis is that Genesis 38 can be interpreted as a self-contained unit.

If, as I have alluded to in chapter two, narratives like Genesis 38 are consciously formalized structures, the reader should pay attention to motifs, theme, or plot, in order to identify patterns that will lead to an understanding of a narrative's design. Thus within the narrative spectrum the reader may discern a story that has: (a) a carefully unified structure; (b) a plot that has causal structural unity; (c)

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[147] Eslinger, Kingship of God in Crisis, p.40.

[148] Ibid., p.46.

and a story that makes use of such narrative forms as theme, character, foreshadowing, irony, climax, suspense, foils, images, symbolism and other devices.[149] These artful strategies give semantic clues in the initial reading which the reader can form into a grid of insights that confirm that the narrative is a structural unit.

As was indicated above, Genesis 38 suggests, through both its enigmatic location and structure, that it is a self-contained unit. First and foremost, however, the analysis of structure is the logical prerequisite to discussing the narrative's meaning and significance. In the next section, therefore, I will analyze the architectonic unity of Genesis 38 by examining the overarching structure (or parallel structure) of the whole and the surface structure of the five phases. The analysis of the plot structure will be examined in chapter four.

The overarching structure or plot sequence of Genesis 38, as mentioned in chapter two, follows the structural design based on the insights of Tzvetan Todorov and consists of five phases of development. There begins a state of equilibrium or stability which is followed by a movement from equilibrium to disequilibrium, and finally a movement from this disequilibrium to a new equilibrium or stability. There are two types of phases in this narrative, "those which describe a state (of

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[149] Leland Ryken, "II Literary Criticism of the Bible: Some Fallacies," Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives Vol.2 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1982), p.26.

equilibrium or of disequilibrium) and those which describe the passage from one state to another."[150] The first type is "relatively static" while the second type is dynamic.[151] The relatively static phases 1 and 5, and the dynamic phases 2 and 4, I consider to be parallel. The correspondence between the parallel phases are structured upon equivalences and contrasts that create symmetry and design. Investigation will consist, therefore, of a concentrated focus upon their parallel elements in an effort to elucidate structural symmetries and patterns.

Parallel Structure of Genesis 38

The overarching structure of Genesis 38 can be described as V-shaped. It expresses a pattern of descent and ascent which configures the entire narrative and covers the five phases of development as elucidated in Todorov's scheme of plot structure.[152] For example, verse 1 describes how Judah "went down" on a journey from his brothers. The word used is (yārad) which also means "to descend." In verse 12, which begins the ascent phase, the word used is (ʿālāh) which also means "to

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[150] Tzvetan Todorov, The Poetics of Prose, p.111.

[151] Ibid., p.111.

[152] The ascent\descent pattern is a frequent pattern in biblical literature. Regina M Schwartz remarks that "not only does Joseph endure a series of descents and ascents, he also makes his brothers repeat them" ("Joseph's Bones and the Resurrection of the Text: Remembering in the Bible," in [The Book and the Text: The Bible and Literary Theory Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1990], p.45).

ascend." There is a structural hint behind the phrase "went down" suggesting a movement downwards to death and instability, and a structural hint behind the phrase "went up" suggesting a movement upwards to life and stability. In other words, Judah's journeys structure the movement of the plot. The journeys create an inverted design consisting of two major divisions. These two major divisions consist of two subdivisions (phases) which pivot at phase 3. Phase 3 acts as the turning point or 'axis of symmetry' in the five-fold structure. The overall structure, therefore, is shaped and balanced by this bipartite descent/ascent pattern.[153] The world of Genesis 38, like much of the biblical world, is one in which the exigencies of life are in constant tension. The narrative's descent/ascent pattern may be indeed a reminder and illustration of this tensional world.

Finally, this descent/ascent pattern supports the dynamic movements of phases 2 and 4 of Todorov's scheme of the plot structure. Accordingly, the descent trajectory represents the "force" that disturbs the initial equilibrium and creates disequilibrium, while the ascent trajectory represents the "force" acting in the opposite direction which moves from disequilibrium to re-establish equilibrium. These forces form a structural dynamic or dialectical tension that reinforce each other to create a symmetrical design. It is these dynamic

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[153] See the direction of the arrows in the Schematic on the next page.

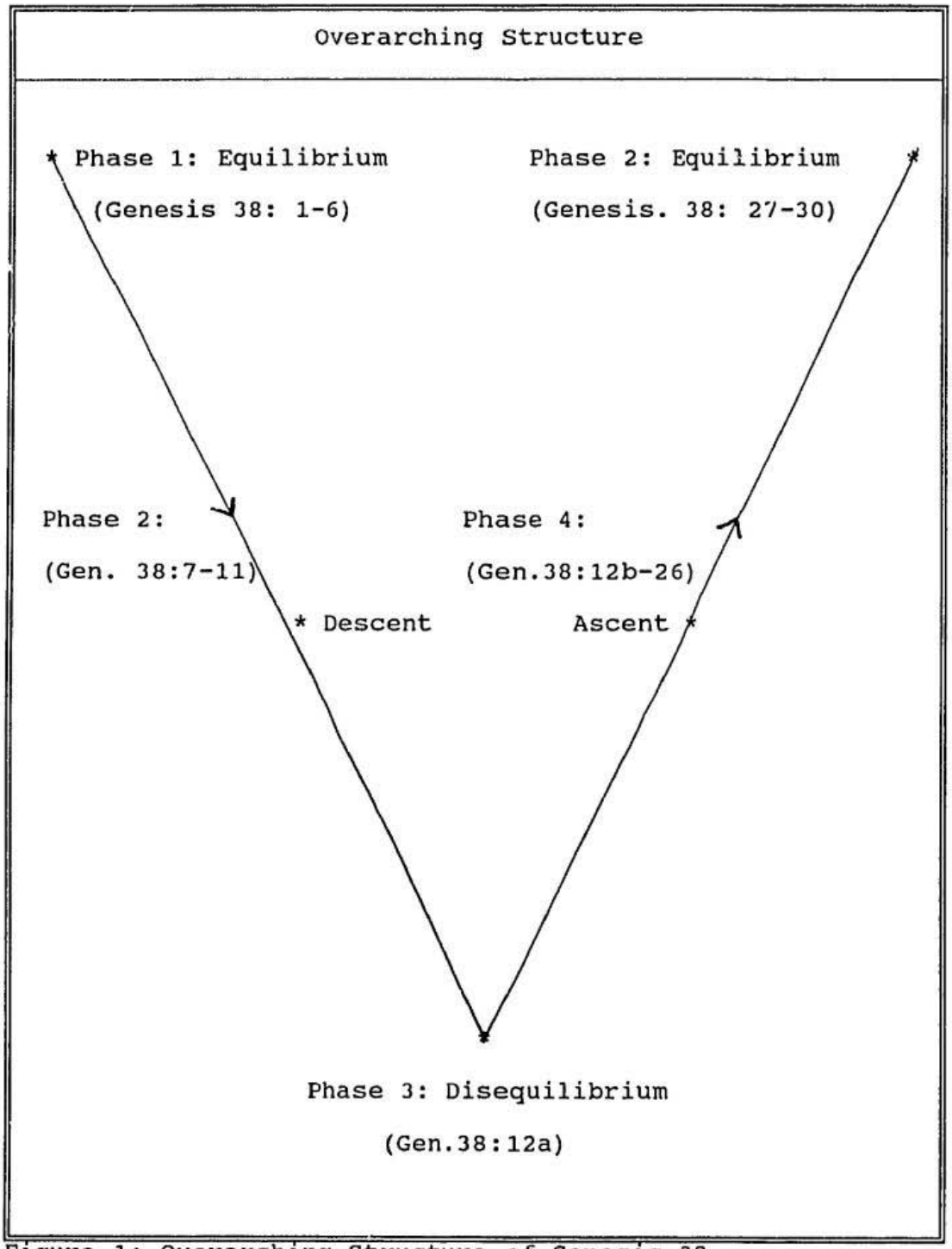

Figure 1: Overarching Structure of Genesis 38

phases of development that produce a sense of depth and immediate shape that organize the content into a unified structural whole.

An initial investigation of the overarching structure begins with an analysis of the parallels between the adjacent phases in an effort to elucidate their structural symmetries. This consists of a comparison and contrast of phases 1 and 5 (**A** and **A1**) and 2 and 4 (**B** and **B1**) of the five phases of the overarching structure. This analysis seeks to understand not only how the narrative is shaped, constructed, or designed, but how elements are repeated to form and clarify meaning. The patterning by repetition results in a combination of elements that create a network of both parallels and oppositions that exhibit a semantic connectedness.[154]

An analysis of phases 1 and 5 (**A** and **A1**) and 2 and 4 (**B** and **B1**), therefore, is a necessary attempt to elucidate structural parallels which clarify the key thematic concerns of the narrative.[155] When phases 1 and 5 are examined, parallel

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[154] Sternberg groups the symmetries or analogies between elements in a narrative under the rubric "structure of repetition." This rubric includes "every pattern of similarity" that is "by definition based on recurrence of at least one element--a sound, semantic feature, word, situation, theme, generic quality--that serves to link together the components of the pattern" (The Poetics of Biblical Narrative, p.367).

[155] Adele Berlin states that "parallelism...consists of a network of equivalences and /or contrasts involving many aspects and levels of language [semantic, lexical, phonological, grammatical]. Moreover, by means of these linguistic equivalences and contrasts, parallelism calls attention to itself and to the message which it bears. Parallelism embodies the poetic function, and the poetic function heightens the

linguistic phenomenon allude to the key ideas of the narrative. This is evident in the relationships created through the repetition of these words that are aligned in the columns. These will be analyzed and expressed not in the order as they appear in the narrative but in accordance with the logical and thematic sense they make. But it is necessary to list them in the order as they appear in the first phase with their parallel in the fifth phase.

The parallel relations between the word "bore" (yālad), "birth" (yālad), "labor" (yālad), and delivery (yālad) interconnect with the principal theme of the story, primogeniture. It is through conception, labor, and delivery--the actual creative process--that progeny are begotten and the line continued. In phase 1 it is Shua's daughter who gives birth, while in phase 5 it is Tamar. All children who are born, however, are Judah's offspring. Furthermore, it is the birth of progeny that establishes the stable condition of equilibrium in phases 1 and 5 (**A** and **A1**). These interlocking parallels between the phases cement in the mind of the reader that the condition of equilibrium is established primarily through the birth of children. In the analysis of the structure of the phases 2 and 4 (**B** and **B1**) we will see that the tensions in the plot are due to the threat to primogeniture. These tensions are ultimately overcome with the birth of progeny.

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focus on the message" (The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism, p.141).

Phase 1: Gen.38:1-6	Phase 5: Gen.38:27-30
"brothers" (ʾāḥîm)* (v.1)[156]	"brother" (ʾāḥ)* (vvs.29, 30)
"name" (šēm)* (vvs.1,2,3,4 5,6)	"name" (šēm)* (vvs.29,30)
"bore" (yālad)* (vvs.3,4,- 5,5)	"birth" (yālad)* (v.27) "delivery" (yālad)* (v.27) "labor" (yālad)* (v.28)
"firstborn" (bekôr) (v.6)	"this one came out first" (v.28) (zeh yāsāʾ rišonāh)
"take" (lāqah)* (vvs.2,6)	"take" (lāqah)* (v.28)

Table 1: Parallels Between Phases 1 and 5

The repetition of the word "name" (šēm) creates a lexical and semantic parallel which contains an important clue to the theme of identity that runs throughout the story. Furthermore, it has a special relationship to the main theme of primogeniture and related theme of the Levirate Law. The parallel words referring to the giving of the name in **A**, "she called his name" (referring to Er, Onan, and Shelah) and in **A'**, "he called his name" (referring to Peretz and Zerah) link the phases together and reinforce the theme of identity. A

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[156] The asterisk * represents words that do not appear in the Hebrew text in the form as they are written here, but nevertheless contain the root of the word.

contrast may also reveal a possible difference. The group of sons born to the unnamed Shua's daughter at the beginning, Er, Onan, and Shelah, are degenerate and fail to create offspring, their names are blotted out of existence. The twin sons born of Tamar, however, create offspring and their names continue the line. It is Peretz, in fact, that furthers the line that leads to David.

Furthermore, in biblical literature, it is the name that gives the person an identity, connecting him to the human order or to a family. More importantly, the "name" relates to primogeniture or continuity through progeny. According to the Levirate Law, introduced in phase 2, it is the name that is carried forward into future generations.[157] The name forms a marked identity that connects one to a common history and heritage and therefore connects one to a common past and future. The name encapsulates an identity that has, in connection with God, a sense of permanence, and, in most Genesis narratives, is intimately connected and continuous with an identity bound to a covenant, promise, blessing, and God's purpose for His people.

Another parallel between phases 1 and 5 is the birth of sons. In phase 1, Judah fathers three sons Er, Onan, and Shelah, in phase 5 he fathers a "twin" Zerah and Peretz. In

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[157] Abram's new name Abraham, and Jacob's new name, Israel, allude to the importance of the name. The change in name is significant for it reflects initiation into a covenantal relationship with God, a relationship borne out in the history between God and his covenanted people.

phase 1 the three sons are born one after the other in orderly procession, in phase 5 it is a twin birth and Peretz's supersedes Zerah in the womb. Thus we see the repetition of a commom biblical motif in the supersession of the younger brother over the elder for the birthright. The parallel rivalry reflects the importance of obtaining the birthright and the possible blessing for the responsibility and honor of continuing the family whose destiny is intimately connected to God's purpose for His people. A more important parallel related to the theme of primogeniture, and birth of sons, is the birth of the first son. It is the "firstborn" (A: v.6) or the one who "came out first" (A1: v.28) who has the responsibility to continue the family.[158] It is through the firstborn that the blessing (in the covenantal family) is fulfilled and the continuity of the line consummated. In accordance with

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[158] The motif of the firstborn (bekôr) is usually connected to the idea of the birthright (bekôrāh) and blessing (berākāh) which requires the firstborn to be "fruitful and multiply." There is an implicit link between the request for offspring and the blessing given to the patriarchal family throughout Genesis. The promise of descendants is part of the divine initiative in human world. David J. A. Clines lists explicit references to this promise of descendants or offspring: Gen. 12:2, 12:7, 13:15, 15:4f, 15:13,16, 15:18, 16:10, 17:2, 17:4-7, 17:16, 17:19f, 21:12f, 21:18, 22:16ff, 26:3f, 26:24, 28:13f, 35:11, 46:3. See Clines, The Theme of the Pentateuch, p.32. This divine initiative, however, depends on man's cooperation and responsibility. As a case in point, the Levirate Law can be seen as part of God's divine initiative in the human world, but because there is little cooperation and responsibility towards it in Genesis 38, disaster results. It takes the responsible initiative of Tamar to bring the family out of disaster.

Todorov's scheme, when continuity of the line through progeny is fulfilled then equilibrium is established.

Another parallel occurrence between these phases (**A** and **A1**) consists in the link between the words "brothers" or "brother." One of the more important relationships in the family stories of Genesis is the relations between brothers, usually entailing both discord and concord. Genesis 38 is a family story and the theme of brotherhood plays a prominent role, as it does in the remainder of the Joseph story. In phase 1, we learn that Judah goes down, marries, and with his wife creates their own family--three sons. In phase 5, Tamar, Judah's daughter-in-law, gives birth to twins sons, also Judah's sons, and brothers. In both phases the word "brother" or "brothers" acts to identify an important relationship that is at play in Genesis 38 and surrounding narratives and is closely connected with the theme of primogeniture.

Finally, the repetition of the verb "take" (lāqah) creates another parallel which relates intrinsically to the main theme. In phase 1 the verb "take" has the meaning of marriage (or betrothal), both in Judah taking the daughter of Shua as his wife and in his taking (or finding) a wife (i.e. Tamar) for Er for the purpose of continuing the family. The "take" in phase 5 alludes to the midwife's "taking" Zerah's hand to bind a scarlet thread upon it. Both uses of the word relate to a bond or connection which link Tamar and Judah to Zerah. The verb acts to connect Zerah to his parents but also furnishes

an irony: the wife that Judah's takes for Er, who is childless by Er, becomes the woman who bears his child Zerah.

In essence, phases 1 and 5 (**A** and **A1**) create coherence and symmetry through these semantic parallels and linguistic repetitions. This symmetry shows clearly how structure can illuminate the primary themes and ideas of the story. The parallels here show explicitly their connection and relation to the theme of primogeniture. Later through the examination of the plot, it will be much easier to see how the initial equilibrium in phase 1 is dismantled and how it is re-established again in phase 5. Furthermore, it will be clear that the threat to primogeniture causes the key tensions in the story and the birth of progeny resolves the tensions. For now, it is necessary to examine the parallel structure of phases 2 and 4 (**B** and **B1**).

Unlike the relatively static phases 1 and 5 which reflect the condition of equilibrium, phases 2 and 4 are antithetical and dynamic and therefore reflect a difference in movement. This is created primarily by the descent/ascent pattern, which in phases 2 and 4, creates a dialectical tension. Phase 2 reflects the transition of descent from equilibrium to disequilibrium, while phase 4 reflects the transition of ascent from disequilibrium to equilibrium, a movement which corroborates Todorov's ideal plot structure. The point of this next examination is to bring the subtle semantic differences of the phases, which exhibit these movements, into clear focus

by an analysis of the linkage of equivalence within contrast.[159]

The parallels between 2 and 4 are both linguistic and thematic, therefore, the columns will try to express this as clearly as possible. Like the discussion of the parallels between phases 1 and 5, I will discuss the parallels in 2 and 4 with a focus on their thematic and logical sense rather than in the order of their occurrence. The columns, however, will show their sequential appearance in the narrative and the corresponding parallels.

An explicit contrast exists between the change in Tamar's location, clothes, and role in phase 2 to phase 4. This is reflected in a clear repetition of verbs and actions. In phase 2 or (**B:** v.11), Tamar "went" (hālak)* to her "father's house in Adullam," but rather than "remain" (yāsab)* or "dwell" (yāsab)* there permanently as a "widow" ('alamānāh) as Judah commands and intends, Tamar chooses to leave. In phase 4 or (**B1:** v.14), she takes off her "widow's garments" (bigedê'alemenûtāh), assumes the role of a "harlot" (zōnâ), and sits (yāsab)* at the gate of Enaim towards Timnah--the strategic location where she deceives Judah into impregnating her. Immediately after this she "goes" (hālak)* (**B1:** v.19) away and resumes her prior role as a widow. The change of clothing,

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[159] Adele Berlin writes that "it is the idea of contrast, perceptible opposition, that is important in the poetic function, for it is not only the parallelism involves equivalence, but that within that equivalence there is an opposition" (The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism, p.11).

Phase 2: Gen.38:7-11	Phase 4: Gen.38:12b-26
God and Justice: retributive, overt and swift (vvs. 7-10)	God and Justice: creative, covert, and progressive (vvs.12b-30)
Tamar's and Onan's cohabitation: repetitious\no conception "went into" (bô') * (vvs.8,9)	Tamar's and Judah's cohabitation: single\conception (bô') * (vvs.16,19)
Onan "knew" (yāda') * (v.9)	Judah "knows" (yāda') * (v.16)
Onan's irresponsibility to the Levirate Law (v.10)	Tamar's responsibility to Levirate Law (vvs.12a-26)
Er and Onan are evil (ra') * (vvs.7,10)	Tamar is "righteous" (saddîq) * (v.26)
Judah's deception of Tamar (v.11)	Tamar's counter-deception (vvs.14-23)
Injustice to Tamar (v.11)	Justice for Tamar (v.26)

Table 2. Parallels Between Phases 2 and 4

from widow's garb to harlot's garb, reflects a change from a family role to a role that exists on the fringes of society, ironically a role that leads to rebuilding the family. Tamar leaves the celibate passivity of a widow at her father's house to the sexual activity of a harlot on the fringes of society.

Phase 2: Gen.38:7-11	Phase 4: Gen.38:12b-26
Tamar is dismissed to her father's house at Adullam as a "widow" (<u>'almānāh</u>)*. She is told by Judah to "remain" (<u>yāsab</u>)* there, so she "went" (<u>hālak</u>)* there and "dwelt" (<u>yāsab</u>)* (v.11)	Tamar "sits" (<u>yāsab</u>)* by the roadside at the gate of Enaim towards Timnah as a "harlot" (<u>zōnâ</u>)*. (v.14.) Later she "goes" (<u>hālak</u>)* away. (v.19)

Table 2. Parallels Between Phases 2 and 4

Accordingly, in phase 2, Tamar cannot conceive a child as a widow (or wife), in phase 4, as a harlot, however, she conceives. Through a successful plan, she gives birth to two sons that continue the family. The change of clothes, role, and shift in location between phase 2 and 4 is explicitly related to her change in character and destiny and demonstrates the antithetical structure and tension in the story, while at the same time creates a remarkable symmetry.

Other lexical and semantic parallels create equivalences and contrasts between the phases which revolve around the theme of primogeniture. In phase 2, Judah commands Onan to "go into" (<u>bô'</u>)* (B: v.8) Tamar, and later in phase 4 he asks Tamar if he can "come into" (<u>bô'</u>)* (B1: v.16) her. The contrast is between Judah's command (imperative form) to Onan to create progeny and to fulfill the duty of the Levir, while the

second is a request (polite form with the particle of entreaty--[nā]) merely asking for pleasure. The text states that Onan, "whenever he went into" (bô')* Tamar (B: v.9) "he destroyed his semen on the ground." In this case no offspring are created. However, when Judah "went into" (bô')* (B1: v.18) Tamar she "conceived" and offspring are created. Thus, a contrast exists between Onan's and Judah's sexual relations with Tamar. Judah's command to Onan to provide offspring for Er is never consummated, and is done merely for pleasure, but his polite request for pleasure leads to offspring. Furthermore, the sexual unions between Tamar and Onan are repetitive and always end without pregnancy, by contrast, the sexual union between Tamar and Judah occurs a single time and results in pregnancy. In the former, Tamar is the passive receptor of cohabitation, however, in the latter, she is the active member in cohabitation. This contrast draws out and clarifies the power behind Tamar's determination to become pregnant. Primogeniture left in the hands of the fearful father and "evil" (B: vvs.7, 10) sons is sterile and unproductive but in the hands of "righteous" (B1: v.26) Tamar it is fertile and productive. A negative response to the Levirate Law threatens primogeniture while a positive response fulfills primogeniture. In accordance with Todorov's scheme, the former leads to disequilibrium while the latter leads to equilibrium.

One of the clearest parallel strategies and motifs between the phases is the deception and counter-deception motif. Tamar

is deceived by Onan each time that he cohabitates with her, for Tamar expects Onan is being responsible to the Levirate Law (v.10). Against the interests of the family's future and primogeniture, Judah deceives Tamar for he does not give her to Shelah as he had maintained in accordance with the Levirate Law (B: v.11). In response to this explicit deception by Judah, Tamar follows suit with a counter-deception which results in her pregnancy (B1: v.23). Similarly, the place where Tamar realizes Judah has deceived her is at the gate of Enaim, which is the same place where she deceives Judah into impregnating her. The gate of Enaim thus acts as a symbolic axis. The "gate of Enaim" (bepetah 'ênayim) literally means the "opening of the eyes" (v.14) which suggest both Tamar's realization of Judah's deception, and, as a sexual euphemism, the means of deception that Tamar uses to deceive Judah into impregnating her. In essence, the deceptions of Onan and Judah kept Tamar from becoming pregnant and thereby from perpetuating the family into the next generation. To overcome this, however, Tamar deceives Judah into impregnating her and thereby perpetuates the family into the next generation.

It is clear that two forms of justice also surface through an analysis of phases 2 and 4. In phase 2 there is a clear form of retributive justice. God sees that Er is evil and that Onan's actions are evil. That both are killed indicates that God endorses the Levirate Law, or at least punishes "evil" with death. In other words, justice is meted out upon them in

the punitive form of death. In phase 4, however, justice occurs at a deeper level of the narrative fabric in the form of creative or transformative justice. It begins when Judah fails to give Tamar to Shelah in accordance with the Levirate Law and leaves her at her father's house as a widow (B: v.11) The injustice is heightened when she is brought out to be burned (B1: v.24). When Tamar carries out the intent of the Law and becomes pregnant Judah realizes his injustice and deems Tamar righteous (v.26). A sharp contrast is drawn between the sons and Tamar to reinforce the two forms of justice. Er and Onan are "evil" (ra')* (B: vvs.7 and 10) and Tamar is "righteous" (saddîq)* (B1: v.26), their justice is retribution and Tamar's justice is transformative and creative.

Another parallel arises out of this antithetical structure in connection with the theme of justice: the signification of God. In phase 2 God can see into the hearts of humans. In Er's and Onan's hearts God sees evil. Er is simply declared evil and Onan is evil because he eschews the responsibility of the Levir. For this, God takes away their lives. In phase 2, therefore, God is signified as omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient and his justice is overt, swift, direct, and retributive. In the fourth phase, however, God's presence is covert and his justice is progressive, indirect, and creative. His presence or agency can be seen working latently in Tamar's responsibility to the Levirate Law. According to the biblical

world-view, God's agency, presence, and purpose is actualized through the Law in history, but this agency is not manifested without a partner, here Tamar.[160] Tamar is no puppet or automaton, she freely responds to the intention of the Levirate Law and becomes pregnant and thereby continues the family.

In close connection with these two opposing forms of justice, therefore, are displayed two modes of God's revelation or action in the destiny of humans. What befalls the evil is divine retribution. Thus the fate of Er and Onan is death. What befalls the righteous is transformation and creative justice. Thus the destiny of Tamar is towards life and reconciliation. Judah realizes his evil and deems Tamar righteous, whereupon she is justified and reconciled to the family (v.26). She is reconciled not only through her righteousness, but through offspring, the ultimate bond between her and Judah and the crowning element of the plot. In essence, God's mediation is activated by Tamar through her responsibility to the Law. God, thereby, plays a role in her destiny, and in some subsidiary sense in the destiny of Judah. Tamar obtains the right of primogeniture and becomes "the channel of the seed of Judah."[161] She is the mother and progenitrix of

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[160] Robert Alter writes that "God's purposes are always entrammeled in history, dependent on the acts of individual men and women for their continuing realization" (The Art of Biblical Narrative, p.12).

[161] Robert Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative, p.9.

the line of Judah while Judah is the progenitor. God's purpose for humankind, or His people, is clearly the purpose mediated through the Law.

One final contrast is between Judah and Onan and hinges on the repetition of the verb to know (yāda')*. Onan's reason for not following the Levirate Law is because he "knew" (B: verse 9) that the offspring would not be his. The narrator qualifies Onan's motive by stating: "lest he should give offspring to his brother" (v.9). Onan's knowledge leads him to disrespect the Law, Er, and Tamar. Ironically, his "knowledge," (a knowledge which destroys Er's line) is a knowledge which causes him and his line to be destroyed. Judah, on the other, is depicted as a character who does not "know." He "did not know (yāda')* she [Tamar] was his daughter-in-law" (B1: v.16) before she deceived him into impregnating her. Furthermore, Judah later recognizes Tamar's righteous action for producing offspring, and the reader learns that he "did not know" (B1: v.26) her again. Although Judah does not know her again in the sexual sense, he does know her in a different way: he knows that she is righteous and that she has put the survival of the family above herself. His respect for her is suggested by words "did not know her," since they suggest the relaxation of his power over her and her subsequent independence and freedom (v.26). Even Judah's realization in the recognition scene uses the word (hakernā) which can mean "(ac)knowledge" (B1: v.26). The contrast between Onan and Judah reflects a deeper irony:

Judah ends up knowing his evil which leads to the reversal of his sentence of death upon Tamar. As well, Judah's knowledge leads him to a more fruitful "life," augmented by the birth of sons, while Onan's knowledge leads to the death of Er's line, himself, and the "death" of his line. A pattern emerges quite clearly: Onan-knowledge-death: Judah-knowledge-life.

In summary, the contrasts within equivalence between phases 2 and 4 show the tensional structure of the narrative. At the same time, however, they create a parallel symmetry which connect the phases of the narrative together and show a clear demarcated design, organized through an antithetical structure. In accordance with Todorov's scheme, the symmetrical combination of elements present two forces acting in opposition to each other, one descending and creating family disintegration and collapse (disequilibrium), and the other ascending and creating family integration and rehabilitation (equilibrium). As we have seen, a parallel symmetry exists between phases 1 and 5 and 2 and 4 which formulates motifs and themes into a web of interconnected meaning. Phase three, since it is the axis of symmetry does not have a parallel, logically, therefore, it is not included in the analysis of the parallel structure. Phase three, however, will be examined both in the analysis of the surface structure and plot structure. For now, the counterpart of the parallel structural analysis is an examination of the surface structure of each of the phases. Like the parallel analysis these phases are made

up of episodes and scenes that are shaped into a meaningful design of manifold patterns and symmetries.

Surface Structure of Phases

It is clear that the narrative's five phases are structured into patterns which create symmetry or networks of relations between the parts.[162] It is the repetition of certain narrative constituents that first of all create these structural patterns.[163] Focusing on the different kinds of structural patterns will elucidate the phases' inner organization. More specifically, they are designed to order, emphasize, intensify, condense, and focus on important thematic concerns, subtle manipulations of motivation and roles of characters, settings, and events in the story-world. The manner or way the individual units such as episodes and scenes within the phases are fashioned give insights into their meanings. In particular, it is clear that each unit is orchestrated with a view to making explicit the thematic concerns. Finally, these symmetrical arrangements are not arbitrary, but coincide with the

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[162] S. Bar-Efrat, labels various kinds of patterns as "parallel" (aa), "ring" (axa), "chiastic" (abba), "concentric" (abxba). These patterns are ways in which episodes, scenes, and dialogue are shaped and structured within biblical narrative. The use of these patterns will give some key insights into how the episodes and scenes in Genesis 38 are structured and shaped. See "Some Observations on the Analysis of Structure in Biblical Narrative," p.170.

[163] Ibid., p.170.

phases as I have shown to exist and correspond to Todorov's five-fold scheme of the plot structure.[164]

Phase 1: Gen.38:1-6

Introduction: 1. And at that time Judah went down from his brothers, and turned into a certain Adullamite whose name was Hirah.

A 2. There Judah saw the daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua; he took her and went into her

B 3. and she conceived and bore a son, and he called his name Er.

X 4. Again she conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Onan.

B1 5. Yet again she bore a son and called his name Shelah and she was in Chezib when she bore him

A1 6. And Judah took a wife for Er, his firstborn, and her name was Tamar.[165]

Phase 1 of the plot structure contains one episode arranged into a concentric pattern (**ABXBA**) and communicated entirely through narration. Although the introduction begins with

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[164] Many of the insights into the chiastic and concentric structuring of the episodes in the Genesis 38 have been elucidated by Martin O'Callaghan. See "Structure and Meaning in Genesis 38: Judah and Tamar," Proceeding of the Irish Biblical Association 5 (1981), pp.72-88. O'Callaghan tries to fit each episode of the narrative into a neat chiasm or concentric pattern to be consistent, with the effect, how-ever, that they seem to be forced. I have found a number of different patterns in the episodes of the narrative that reinforce the five-fold structure of the plot as I have elucidated.

[165] The Hebrew version of Genesis 38 in this study is based upon my own translation of the original text.

Judah's departure and journey down from the immediate family circle of the father and brothers to Adullam, it is the next five verses that reflect the concentric pattern. In **A** Judah immediately takes a wife, and in **A1**, as part of his patriarchal responsibility, he finds Er a wife. As the firstborn, the expectation seems to be that Er will carry on the family where Judah left off. Both **A** and **A1** are linked and balanced by the key idea of betrothal, which is the first step in the process of begetting progeny or offspring. The repetition of the word "take" makes the semantic connection, though a contrast also surfaces between these parallel segments. The nameless daughter of Shua or Judah's wife is contrasted with the named Tamar. Later we will see the difference between these two women first contrasted here as the named and nameless. In the next parallel, Judah and his wife begin the process of building a family and this building takes up the entire center portion of the pattern (**B**, **X**, **B1**). These structural parallels provide a certain thematic transparency. It indicates the main theme of the whole: the begetting of progeny for the continuity of the family into the next generation, or simply, primogeniture. The key theme comes to light through the location and verbal repetition of the words "conceived," "bore," and "called his name," used to describe the genealogical process which ends with the birth of sons. This verbal repetition in the combination **B** and **B1**, describe the births of Er and Shelah, the eldest and youngest sons of Judah. Their

births surround a description of Onan's birth, the middle born son. Onan's birth, however, is at the center **X** for a definite purpose. The focus upon Onan's birth alludes to and foreshadows the fact that he will be the chief character in the next phase of the narrative plot. Positioning him at the center gives the reader a initial notice that he is an important figure in the next scene. It will be Onan who fails to provide his brother with a heir, according to the Levirate responsibility, and, instead of continuing the family, threatens its survival. The verbal symmetry created through these parallels forms the content into meaningful patterns, while at the same time, through focusing, condensing, and shaping articulates the key thematic concern of the narrative.

Phase 2: Gen.38:7-11

A 7. But Er, Judah's firstborn, was evil in the eyes of the Lord; and the Lord killed him. (depth)

B 8. Then Judah said to Onan, "Go into your brother's wife and consummate the marriage of a brother-in-law to her, and raise up offspring for your brother." (surface)

X 9. But Onan knew that the offspring would not be his. (depth)

B1 So whenever he went in to his brother's wife he destroyed his seed on the ground, lest he should give offspring to his brother. (surface)

A1 10. And what he did was evil in the eyes of the Lord and the Lord killed him also. (depth)

Immediately following phase 1 the reader is confronted again with an episode in phase 2 which is shaped into a

concentric pattern (**ABXBA**). The combination **A** and **A1** of the episode is composed of narrations accounting God's omniscient view into the evil of Er and Onan and his subsequent retribution. The combination **B** and **B1** furnishes an example of equivalence within contrast which alternates between speech and narration and comprises Judah's command to Onan of the Levirate responsibility and Onan's failure of Levirate responsibility. The center **X** focuses through a form of telescoped inside view (interior speech) of the motivation behind Onan's recalcitrant actions. Furthermore, there are also some subtle structural differences and similarities between the parallel parts. There is a contrast between what happens from the perspective of God or "in the eyes of the Lord" in **A** and **A1** and the reported speech and actions of the characters in **B** and **B1**, and finally the telescoped interior view of the character's motivation at the center **X**. In other words, there is a movement from depth (thoughts) (**A** and **A1**) to surface (speech and actions) (**B** and **B1**) and to depth (thoughts) again in **X**. These reciprocal alternations create a subtle parallel symmetry.

Furthermore, in **B** Judah requests Onan to carry out the duty of the Levir and raise up offspring in his brother's name to produce an heir to carry on the line. In **B1** we are given the antithesis to Judah's request: rather than create a heir for Er, Onan destroys his seed on the ground, and as a result no offspring are produced. The reason for this action comes in

the center **X** of the concentric formation: Onan "knew" that the offspring would not be his. His responsibility as Levir to create offspring and save the line of Er from extinction is unfulfilled. The motivation behind his defiance of the Levirate responsibility is a deliberate defiance against the survival of his brother's line. In other words, the word "knew" reflects that Onan's evil actions were a deliberate defiance of the Levirate duty which subtlely suggests the motif of sibling rivalry. Furthermore, the repetitive destruction of his semen on the ground is a pre-meditated act which suggests a variation of the motif of fratricide, a motif that runs throughout Genesis.

The reader also remembers that just as Er's line is blotted out of existence in **A**, likewise in **A1**, Onan is slain by God for his evil actions. This parallelism gives the impression that Er has committed a similar crime as Onan. Though no explicit reference is given, we do know that he has not produced any offspring or descendants. This alone, like Onan's self-serving actions, threaten the continuity of the family. Furthermore, the root ('wr)*, from which Er is derived, can mean "to be exposed or bare."[166] This repeats the common biblical motif of "nakedness," a biblical motif that is often linked with pagan elements and abominable in the Lord's sight. The reader understands that the Lord's negative response

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[166] Sharon Pace Jeansonne, The Women of Genesis: From Sarah to Potiphar's Wife (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), p.100.

towards Er suggests a possible act of abomination, and is the reason, at least partially, behind his death. In essence, it is clear that the symmetry of this episode gives clues to the story's themes, motifs, and character motivation. Other subtle details give the episode its balanced weave and coherence.

11. Then Judah said to Tamar his daughter-in-Law,
A "Remain (yāsab)* a widow in your father's house till my son Shelah grows up," (surface)

X for he feared he would die, like his brothers. (depth)

A1 So Tamar went and dwelt (yāsab)* in her father's house. (surface)

The next and final episode in phase two is structured by means of a ring pattern (**AXA**) which frames Judah's dismissal of Tamar from his house and Tamar's departure to her father's house. Once again, the motivation behind a character's actions is placed at the center. The symmetry lies in the repetition of similar elements and also the sequence of the command and its execution. Judah dismisses Tamar to her father's house in **A**, and in **A1** she complies and goes and lives there. The two parts show a marked division: **A** reflects Judah's command and imperative and **A1** reflects Tamar's response or passive compliance. Additionally, there is a corresponding pattern of disclosure which alternates from direct speech to narration. Like the last episode there is a movement from the surface in the combination **A** and **A'** to depth in **X**. **A** consists in speech and **A1** consists in action. At the center **X** is the motivation

for Judah's command given through a form of a telescoped inside view or interior speech.[167] Judah is fearful that Shelah will die like his other two sons, assuming that it was Tamar who had caused their deaths. Tamar is sent to her father's house and assured that she will be given to Shelah when he matures to the age to accept the responsibility of the Levir. The crucial thematic point, however, is that Judah has sent away the womb from which potential progeny are to come. This clearly threatens continuity. Furthermore, the center portion reveals a purely subjective fear based on a perception rather than a reality. Unlike God who sees into the sons' evil hearts, Judah is ignorant of the nature of his own sons' evil and thereby fails to recognize the true reason for their deaths. This lack of insight into their natures leads him to dismiss Tamar from his household and thereby alienate her from the family. Judah's judgement at this point in the story, induced by subjective fear, is based on a simple ignorance of the facts. Judah's ignorance, consummate with the descent pattern in this phase, is developed later in the story, progressing to a crescendo where he realizes his ignorance and injustice to Tamar. In essence, the ring pattern is an effective means of focusing on Judah's motivation, while at the same time framing this motivation by a distinct symmetry between Judah's dismissal of Tamar and her leaving.

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[167] Robert Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative, p.7.

Phase 3: Gen.38:12a (axis)

12a. In the course of time, Shua's daughter, the wife of Judah, died.

Phase 3 of the narrative structure reflects the pivot point of the overall descent/ascent pattern shown as the vertex on the schematic. The plot reaches its nadir of descent [death and discontinuity] and immediately follows in phase 4 an ascent towards its zenith [life and continuity].

Phase 4: Gen.38: 12b-26

A 12b. And when Judah was consoled, he went up to Timnah to his sheepshearers, he and his friend the Adullamite.

A1 13. And Tamar was told, "your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep."

Phase four begins with Judah's journey to Timnah and the disclosure of this journey to Tamar. The repetition creates a parallel pattern (**A** and **A**) between Judah's actual movement and Tamar's knowledge of the movement with a corresponding alternation from narration to speech. This disclosure is a crucial precondition for Tamar's plan. It is on the journey that she plans to trick Judah into sexual intercourse. The reader is given the impression that Tamar has been watching the activities of her father-in-law and is told immediately of his journey. Subtle changes in the parallel sections are also meaningful, as is clear in the exchange of the pronoun "he" for the relational epithet "father-in-law" and noun "sheep-shearers" for the verbal phase "to shear his sheep." The

change from "he" to "father-in-law" shows a movement from a designation of a separate individual to a description of a relationship. The word "father-in-law" defines a relationship between Judah and Tamar which heightens the moral sense of their meeting. It also reflects that Judah is responsible for Tamar--a responsibility he fails to commit. The change from "sheepshearers" to "to shear his sheep" has the purpose of integrating Judah among the sheepshearers as one who is going up "to shear his sheep." It is an obvious reflection that Judah is ready to integrate with society after his mourning. Another difference lies in the change in the form of the verb that links this parallel pattern, "went up" and "going up." The former is a Qal imperfect and the latter is a Qal active participle. The imperfect form, announced by the omniscient narrator, reflects the whole event of the journey, while the participle, announced by an anonymous source, shows the continuous action of the journey just before Tamar acts in response to put her plan in action. The first part of this plan takes up the next episode of the narrative.

A 14. And she put off her widow's garments, and put on a veil, and wrapping herself up, and sat at the gate of Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah, for she saw that Shelah was grown up, and she had not been given to him in marriage.

B 15. When Judah saw her, he thought her to be a harlot, for she had covered her face and 16. he turned in to her at the roadside. And he said, "Come, let me come into you," for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law.

She said, "what will you give me, that you will
a may come in to me?" 17. He answered, "I will
send you a kid from the flock."

X x And she said, "Will you give me a pledge, till
you send it?"

18. And he said, "what pledge will I give you?"
a' She replied, "your signet, your cord, and
your staff that is in your hand."

B1 So he gave them to her, and he went into her and
she conceived by him.

A1 19. Then she arose and went away, and taking off her
veil she put on her widow's garments.

A more complex episode in phase 4 is structured through a concentric pattern (**ABXBA**). The key dialogue at the center X is sub-divided into a ring pattern and indicated by the lower case letters (**axa'**).[168] The highest point of intensity occurs at the center **X** where Tamar's plan focuses on the request for payment and pledge. The center focus is articulated through a dialogue between Judah and an anonymous Tamar in which Tamar secures Judah's insignia in her possession. This was prepared for by Judah's request in **B** for intercourse and Tamar's subsequent fulfillment of the request in **B1** after negotiations have been settled. The **A** and **A1** combination contains the actions of Tamar switching from widow to harlot and then a reverse switch from harlot to widow again indicated by the reverse repetition of synonymous verbs, clothing, and

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[168] See an identical concentric pattern Genesis 32:22-32 with a ring pattern of dialogue at the center and framed by narration, as elucidated by J.P. Fokkelman, "Genesis," The Literary Guide to the Bible, ed. Robert Alter and Frank Kermode (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), pp.51-52.

actions. In opposite and orderly succession these actions create symmetry. Alter comments that Tamar "suddenly races into purposeful action, expressed in a detonating series of verbs" and completes the action with "another chain of four verbs to indicate her brisk resumption of her former role and attire."[169] The switch reflects Tamar's movement from a role in the family sphere to one on the fringes of society and back to the role within the family again, all signified through changes of clothing. The request of Judah for pleasure in **B** is consummated in **B1**, but, in a reversal of expectations, Tamar becomes impregnated. The polite request (with the particle of entreaty-[nā]) in the first person Qal imperfect form of "come into" (bô') * in direct speech is contrasted with the narrator's account in the third person Qal imperfect form "went into" (bô') *.

The ring pattern is the heart of the concentric pattern, and as a whole, reflects a carefully constructed symmetry which reinforces a very carefully constructed deception. The whole pattern is a deception which later comes into the light through the use of the pledge. The business negotiations at the nucleus (**axa**) link the payment of the kid and the pledge to the next episode. The dialogue has the effect of decelerating the narrative speed with the purpose of reinforcing the importance of the center portion. At the center **x** of the ring pattern is the central question: "Will you give me a pledge?"

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[169] Robert Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative, p.8.

Tamar asks this question to arouse Judah into giving her his credentials--the verification of his identity. She requests the pledge for she knows that a kid will not be proof enough to identity the man by whom she is potentially to be impregnated. The combination **a** and **a'** comprises the question-response format of payment and pledge which also create symmetry. They are similar for they ask questions which lead to the reception of a promise of the kid as payment and the receipt of a pledge against it.

The narrative arrangement of this episode is also symmetrical in other ways. The combination **A** and **A1** creates an envelope of actions articulated through narration, **B** and **B1** creates an alternation of dialogue and actions, the former expressed in speech and the latter in narration. These combinations create an envelope around the center **X** which is consummated in speech (or dialogue). This whole section (**axa'**) is a pre-condition for the remainder of Tamar's plan. The next two episodes, as we will see, deal with the retrieval of the pledge (vvs. 20-23) and the recognition of the pledge (vvs. 24-26).

A 20. When Judah sent the kid by his friend the Adullamite, to receive the pledge from the woman's hand, he did not find her.

B 21. And he asked the men of the place, "where is the cult prostitute who was at Enaim by the wayside?"

X And they said, "No cult prostitute has been here."

B1 22. So he returned to Judah, and said, "No cult prostitute has been here."

A1 23. And Judah replied, "Let her keep the things as her own, lest we be a laughingstock; behold, I sent this kid, and you did not find her."

The third episode in phase 4 constitutes another concentric pattern (**ABXBA**). The key words "kid," "send," "give," and "pledge" connect with the nucleus (**axa'**) of the previous episode. The combination **A** and **A1** integrates the narrator's account of the failure of the Adullamite to find Tamar to give her the payment of the kid and receive the pledge and Judah's repetition of the fact that she is unfound and his subsequent conclusion to let her keep the pledge. Both the narrator's and Judah's accounts are summaries of what takes place in the middle portion. The alternation between narration and speech is consistent with the other patterns in the phases. The parallel **B** and **B1** reflects the Adullamite's question to the men of the place of where the "cult prostitute" is **B**, and the Adullamite's verbatim repetition of the answer to Judah in **B1**. The actual answer from the men to the Adullamite: "no cult prostitute has been here," comes at the center **X** of the concentric pattern. What the pattern essentially reflects is a play of perspectives dealing with the identity of Tamar. The narrator refers to Tamar as the "woman," and Judah refers to Tamar as simply "her," though he is responding to the Adullamite's designation "cult prostitute." The narrator seems to intimate both the womanly and "wifely" status of Tamar when he refers to her as "(<u>'iššā</u>)." This gives the scene a sense of

irony insofar as Judah looks for his "wife," though in fact it is his estranged, concealed, daughter-in-law, his son's wife. Earlier Judah had understood the woman to be a "harlot," for Judah had interpreted the veil as a sign of a harlot. From the Adullamite's perspective, however, she is a cult prostitute. The Adullamite interprets the veil as a sign of a cult prostitute. The perspective of the men of the place reply that "no cult prostitute was here." From their standpoint no cult prostitute exists or existed at the gate of Enaim. They reply in the negative: "no cult prostitute has been there" with a tone that reveals an absoluteness implying she has never been there. The reader's view, ironically, is the clearest, knowing that it is Tamar to whom they are referring and looking for. In essence, the narrative moves through a series of viewpoints: Judah: Adullamite: men of the place: Adullamite: Judah.[170] The shape of the episode corresponds to this set of viewpoints: **A** and **A1** reflects Judah's view, **B** and **B1** reflects the Adullamite's view, and the center **X** reflects the men of the place's view. One purpose of this play of perspectives, it seems, is to heighten the sense of the enigmatic identity and allusiveness of the woman. This brings into focus a sharp contrast between this episode and the next. In the

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[170] Martin O'Callaghan, "The Structure of Genesis 38: Judah and Tamar," p.84. O'Callaghan points out the play of perspectives here but fails to show any connection to scenes prior to or after this episode.

next scene, Tamar has no problem in identifying Judah, since she has in her possession the insignia of his identity.

The narrative is structured quite cleverly: the enigmatic designation "cult prostitute" comes between two episodes [(v.14-19) and (v.24-26)] in phase 4 which refer to Tamar as a "harlot." In essence, this episode heightens the sense of distance between the Hebraic and pagan cultures in the semantically loaded words (zŏnâ) and (qedēšā). Accordingly, a contrast between two horizons of meaning comes into view. The contrast is between what seems the world of the "harlot" from the Hebraic culture and identity and the "cult prostitute" of the pagan culture and identity. This kernel of the plot (v.20-23), therefore, obliquely announces a crucial difference between the harlot (zŏnâ) and the cult prostitute (qedēšā). The (zŏnâ) can be understood in the mundane sense with a role that is located on the fringe of society.[171] The (qedēšā), on the other hand, can be understood in the cultic sense, with a role located at the center of society in the cult or temple.[172] The former is Hebraic and the latter is pagan. Both words operate to support two different world-views or perspectives but it is in the biological or sexual sense that they connect. These perspectives highlight the different understandings of the two worlds and dramatize the fact that

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[171] Another translation of zŏnâ is "common whore."

[172] Another meaning or translation of qedĕšā is "consecrated person" or "holy one."

Judah stands for the most part on the thres-hold of these two worlds before crossing over into the pagan one.[173] Essentially, the two words express a play of perspectives which create ambiguity and tension, while on another level, the words amplify what seems to be the main intent of the episode: the extent of the deception, mysteriousness, and allusiveness of Tamar. In the next episode, however, ambiguity is overcome and tension resolved.

A 24. About three months later Judah was told, "Tamar your daughter-in-law has played the harlot; and is with child by harlotry." And Judah said, "Bring her out and let her be burned."

A1 25. As she was being brought out, she sent word to her father-in-law saying, "By the man whom these belong I am with child."

B And she said, "Recognize whose these are, the signet, the cord, and the staff." (surface)

B1 26. Then Judah recognized them and said, "She is righteous rather than I, inasmuch as I did not give her to my son Shelah." And he did not know her again. (depth)

The climax of the plot crystallizes with a double para-llel pattern (**AABB**) in tandem arrangement. The combination **A** and **A1** alternates between an anonymous source's speech and Tamar's speech while **B** and **B1** alternates between Tamar's speech and Judah's speech introduced by the narrator, which completes the episode. The two-fold pattern creates an equivalence of synonymous elements in continuous sequence. The key statement

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[173] More will be said about Judah's relationship to both the pagan and Hebraic identities in the next chapter.

of Tamar's pregnancy is repeated in **A** and **A1**. It is this detail that assures the reader of Tamar's pregnancy. The verb "brought out" describes her coming out into the open, while alluding to and foreshadowing her delivery of the twins.[174] Judah's command to burn Tamar (and the offspring in her womb) tacitly reflects a threat against the continuity of the line. Ironically, Judah is about to burn Tamar for her crime, but at the same time destroy the children who will propagate his line. In **A** and **A1** the contrast between the relational epithets father-in-law and daughter-in-law heightens the irony of the predicament, Judah is about to burn his children and daughter-in-law. In close connection with this is a deeper irony: these children are conceived, strictly, through an incestuous relationship. The whole situation dramatizes poignantly a deeper irony still: Judah's floundering ignorance and limited perception. Judah is blind to the fact that Tamar is carrying his children. It is not until **B** and **B1** that the identity of Tamar and the offspring's father come to light. The specter of "death" in **A** and **A1** is heightened through the juxtaposition of the recognition scene **B** and **B1**. Here Judah learns Tamar's identity and that she is carrying his offspring or "life" in her womb--life that he fathered. The link between the two parallels is based on the reversal from death to life.

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[174] The verb "bring" (yāsa') repeated twice here corresponds to the verb used to describe each of the son's births (vvs.29, 30).

It is at this point in the plot structure that the elements of (anagnorisis) (recognition) and (peripeteia) (reversal) occur.[175] The combination **A** and **A1** with the announcement of Tamar's pregnancy, and that she is to be burned for harlotry, are the preconditions for those developments in **B** and **B1**: Judah's recognition (anagnorisis) of Tamar as the harlot and recognition that she is carrying his offspring, and the reversal (peripeteia) of the death sentence and Tamar's vindication. This double-parallel structure evinces a strong symmetry but also at the same time manifests a clear focus on contiguity.

Phase 5: Gen.38:27-30

Introduction: 27. When the time came for her delivery, there were twins in her womb.

A 28. And when she was in labor, one put out a hand;

B and the midwife took it and tied on his hand a scarlet thread, 29. saying, "This one came out first," but he drew back his hand.

X And behold, his brother came out and she said, "What a breach you have breached (made) for yourself!" And he called his name Peretz.

B1 30. And afterwards his brother came out who had on his hand the scarlet thread;

A1 and he called his name Zerah.

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[175] Anagnorisis (recognition) and peripeteia (reversal) are elements of plot structure that will be elaborated in the next chapter when I deal specifically with the plot. These terms are taken from Aristotle's Poetics and subsequent theorists, who in dealing with poetics, follow in the line of development from Aristotle. See J.A. Cuddon, The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory 3rd ed. (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1992), pp.38 and 700-701.

It is clear that the final concentric pattern (**ABXBA**), not by coincidence, parallels the concentric pattern in the first phase, for it is these two phases which reflect the condition of equilibrium. The introductory birth announcement and the subsequent births make it clear that primogeniture is the main theme, as in phase 1, and brings the plot to a fitting conclusion. Here the birth of Peretz is at the center **X**. It is Peretz who will continue Judah's family and generate the line that leads to David. Interestingly, the reader can see that the birth of Zerah is interrupted. His hand comes out first and the midwife binds a scarlet thread upon it, the midwife then declares Zerah the firstborn, but it is Peretz the younger brother who supplants him in the womb. Thus the birth of Zerah comes in two stages represented by the combination **A** and **A1**. The combination **B** and **B1** indicates the scarlet thread bound on Zerah's hand to show that he was about to be born first before Peretz supplanted him for the birthright. The scarlet thread is what Zerah's identity is linked to, his name means "dawning" or "shining" which suggests not only the birth of a new day but also the scarlet-colored sky at dawn. The words "this came out first" are ironic in light of the fact that Peretz interrupts Zerah's coming out first, and in fact, Zerah ends up coming out second. Finally, the repetition of the word "name" (šēm) provides another link between the themes of primogeniture and identity. The name is that which identifies the line that progresses into the future. Both the

lines of Zerah and Peretz progress into the future, though precedence seems to be given to Peretz here. The reader is aware that the first phase and the fifth phase have the birth of the progeny at the center **X**.[176] Peretz's birth, however, is prefaced with the word "behold" (hinnēh) in the poetic form meaning "see" or "notice" which draws the reader's attention to an portentous moment in the story. The birth of Peretz who "bursts forth" and ousts his brother from the birthright is specifically the denouement of a plot. More generally, however, the fulfillment of the plot is the birth of progeny.

Conclusion

The structural analysis of the text reveals that balance, unity, coherence, and symmetry exist within the narrative of Genesis 38. Our investigation has led to showing how the relation of parts to the larger whole is not necessarily circular but that a critical reading leads to a movement of understanding from smaller elements to larger wholes and finally to the overarching structure. It is through its overarching structure that Genesis 38 is a unique structural whole. More importantly, this structural analysis of smaller elements has led to the essential meaning of the text. As we have already seen, the analysis of structure or "form" has

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[176] It should be noted that in the first phase Onan's birth is at the center; he is the character whose actions destroy and discontinue the family, in phase five it is Peretz whose birth is at the center and who continues the line that leads to David.

brought to light the "content." The theme of primogeniture is presented and corroborated not only by the symmetry indicated through the analysis of the parallel structure but also through the analysis of the surface structure of the phases. We have see both the broad patterns of linkage between phases and the close linkages within phases.

To elucidate how other composite elements are arranged into a motivational and causal sequence, we need to sharpen our focus and investigate linkage along the sequential axis or plot. This is a more illuminating avenue for revealing subtle meanings which have not been mentioned in the previous structural analysis. Following the scheme of Todorov this examination will consist in the analysis of the phases in their sequential development. The focus will fall mainly on the theme of primogeniture which acts as the unifying and integrating principle that interweaves the entire narrative together, but will also touch upon other motifs and themes interrelated to the main theme which enrich the story.[177] It is consummate with the linear sequence of the narrative to read it phase by phase commenting upon the plot structure and the way in which it develops and precipitates meaning.

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[177] The Russian Formalist critic Boris Tomashevsky writes that "to be coherent, a verbal structure must have a unifying theme running through it" ("Thematics," Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis, (eds.), Russian Formalist Criticism [Lincoln, Neb: University of Nebraska Press, 1965], p.63).

CHAPTER 4

Plot Structure

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is the analysis of plot or narrative configuration by unifying the elements that have been seen through the structural analysis.[178] The focus is upon how these elements flow together and exhibit a causal sequence of action and motivation. The narrative plot of Genesis 38 exhibits a dramatic structure that descends and ascends and reflects the five-fold structure elucidated by Todorov. Plot analysis, therefore, involves seeking out the narrative's "sequence, causality, unity, and affective power."[179] Furthermore, the analysis of plot aims to show how motifs, themes, and ideas are integrated and organized into the whole, while at the same time, focusing sharply upon the relationships between characters, events, and settings which make up the narrative's story-world.

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[178] Narrative configuration, according to Richard Kearney means "the temporal sequence of heterogenous elements--or to put it simply, the ability to create a plot which transforms a sequence of events into a story. This consists of "grasping together" the individual incidents, characters, and actions so as to produce the unity of the temporal whole" ("Paul Ricoeur and the Hermeneutic Imagination," The Narrative Path [Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989], p.18).

[179] R. Alan Culpepper, Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design, p.80.

Phase I: Gen.38:1-6

The first phase of the narrative, Genesis 38:1-6, describes or reflects a stable situation or state of equilibrium.[180] The story begins with the motif of a sojourn to a foreign land. Judah left his brothers and "went down" to Canaan. When his journey ends he takes a Canaanite wife, the daughter of Shua, and through their fertile union, they create a family. The narrator describes concisely that:

> There Judah saw the daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua; he took her, and went into her, and she conceived, and bore a son, and he called his name Er. Again she conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Onan. Yet again she bore a son, and she called his name Shelah (vvs.2-5a).

Through these verses, a newly created order comes into being--Judah's family. In an accelerated space, years of story are compressed into a few seconds of reading. The breathless and energetic pace reflects a sense of urgency in creating and continuing the family--the cornerstone of the human order in the Bible. As Robert Alter has commented so succinctly: "Judah sees, takes, lies with a woman; and she, responding appropriately, conceives, bears, and--the necessary completion of the genealogical process--gives the son a name."[181] The triad of verbs associated with Judah matches a triad of verbs associated with the woman and serves the narrative technique of establishing order stylistically as well as thematically. The

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[180] T. Todorov, The Poetics of Prose, p.111.

[181] Robert Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative, p.6.

verbs associated with Judah are all focused on seeking and procuring a woman or mate and could be said to be more active. The verbs associated with the woman are associated with the whole process of birth and progeny and could be said to be more passive. The verbs associated with Judah connect him and the woman, while the verbs associated with the woman connect her with the children. The woman is at the center of the process. The balanced repetition "conceived, bore, and named" associated with the woman, positions her as the one who continues the creative process and thus of establishing order. The genealogical process succeeds through the betrothal of a wife, to the birth of sons, and to their subsequent naming and establishes the family order and identity. Clearly the object of this first phase then is to establish and continue the family order.

In verse six the movement towards continuing the family order is intensified when Judah finds a wife for Er: it is this action that heightens the object of the whole phase-- the begetting of family and its continuity into the next generation through Er, the "firstborn" (bekôr). The motif of the firstborn resonates with other Genesis narratives and is similarly connected within the context of the blessing. As the firstborn, Er is required to fulfill the blessing, "to be fertile and increase," by raising up offspring. This, as Alter states, is the crux of the whole narrative; "here, as at other points in the episode, nothing is allowed to detract our

focused attention from the primary, problematic subject of the proper channel for the seed."[182] In the first phase the begetting of progeny and the continuing of the family order is fulfilled by Judah and his wife, Shua's daughter, the phase ends with the necessary request of Er to do likewise through his wife Tamar. From the opening exposition, stability and order is clearly signaled in the birth of sons and in Judah's actions to assure the continuity of the family.

Family stability and order is also emphasized by Judah's role in choosing a wife for Er to ensure family continuity (v.6). As the father, or patriarch, his responsibility is to ensure primogeniture by finding a suitable wife for his son. The impression is that Er and Tamar will create and continue the family in the same manner as that of Judah and his wife did in the preceding five verses of the story. Creating a family entails the building of new relationships, especially marriage, for it broadens and strengthens the family's foundation and order. In essence then, the narrator quickly relates the beginnings of Judah's family, established as an orderly, stable, family environment which as a whole reflects a state of equilibrium. The first phas -epeats the concatenation of the whole life-cycle and what J.P. Fokkelmann states as the "overriding concern" of Genesis: "life-survival-

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[182] Ibid., p.6.

offspring-fertility-continuity."[183] This thematic chain becomes the main concern of Genesis 38 in association with responsibility to the Law.

In conclusion, the first phase introduces and exposes the reader to the characters who will play roles in the remainder of the story. These characters are introduced in a way that furnishes the reader with information which concerns a series of family relationships: father, mother, sons, brothers, father-in-law, brother-in-law, mother-in-law, and daughter-in-law. In essence, therefore, the reader is firmly situated in a story about the establishment and continuity of a family and receives the impression that the family, the basic building block of the human order, reflects a set of stable relationships and a condition of equilibrium.

Phase 2: Gen.38:7-11

The second phase consists of a movement or a "transitional phase" and corresponds to Gen.38:7-11. Within this phase, a dynamic movement or "force" disturbs the initial state of equilibrium and corroborates Todorov's scheme of plot structure.[184] This force (or forces) comprise the actions and attitudes of Judah and his sons which have the effect of disrupting family order and equilibrium.

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[183] J.P. Fokkelmann, "Genesis," The Literary Guide to the Bible, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), p.41.

[184] Tzvetan Todorov, Poetics of Prose, p.111.

The phase begins with the narrator's report that "Er, Judah's firstborn was evil in the eyes of the Lord" and that God pronounces a judgement of death upon him (v.7). The repetition of the word "firstborn" creates the connective tissue between the first and second phases and reminds the reader of Judah's search for a wife for Er, the firstborn, in order to produce progeny to continue the family.[185] It is clear that Er has not produced any offspring with Tamar and this may be the reason for God's judgement of death upon him. In this story, his wickedness could be seen in light of his failure to produce progeny and carry out the responsibility of a "firstborn." After Er's death, Onan is required to carry on his deceased brother's name by marrying and impregnating Tamar in accordance with the Levirate Law. G.W. Coats writes that "according to the Levirate custom, a widow should not be left childless."[186] Onan does not fulfill his responsibility as

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[185] The request for progeny links up with the motif of fertility and therefore evokes the meaning of the blessing as articulated through the words "be fertile and increase." Er's failure to produce progeny intimates the sense of infertility and death. As Thomas Mann has remarked "the basic meaning of blessing had to do with fertility." Fertility means life, and "infertility therefore could be virtually synonymous with death" (The Book of the Torah, p.15).

[186] As Coats writes, "If a man who lives with his brothers in his father's family leaves a childless widow, his brothers have responsibility for producing a male heir (cf. Dt. 25: 5-10). The explicit purpose is to preserve the dead husbands name for future generations (Dt. 25:6)....Implicit in the custom is protection for the widow's inheritance rights within the father-in-law's family" ("Widow's Rights: A Crux in the Structure of Genesis 38," [Catholic Biblical Quarterly 34 (1972], p.462).

requested by Judah and spills or destroys his semen on the ground; for this action his life is taken by God. In fact, the act of destroying his life-fluid upon the ground prefigures symbolically his own death. As the text later reports:

> Then Judah said to Onan, "Go into your brother's wife and consummate the marriage of a brother-in-law to her and raise up offspring for your brother." But Onan knew that the offspring would not be his; so whenever he went into his brother's wife he destroyed the semen on the ground, lest he should give offspring to his brother. And what he did was evil in the sight of the Lord, and he killed him (vv.8-10).

At this point a tension or complication arises between the duty to 'God's Law' and Onan's choice to break the Law. The reader learns that God endorses the Levirate Law as evident in his punitive judgement upon Onan. For violating the Levirate Law God brings upon him a pronouncement of death, an exact duplication of the judgement on his brother Er.

Onan knows that the potential progeny or offspring that he and Tamar produce will be in Er's line and not his, this is why he does not fulfill Judah's instructions. The reader learns this from Onan's actions and the telescoped inside view which tells that "he knew that the offspring would not be his" (v.10). His self-centered actions are motivated against continuing the line of Er. In fact, the reader draws the conclusion that he values his own pleasure above the continuity of his brother's name into the future. Thus Onan is particularly culpable in the way he breaks the Law, for he uses Tamar's trust not to fulfill the Levirate duty but for sexual pleasure. As S. P. Jeansonne states:

> He exploits her trust and pretends to fulfill his duty. He repeatedly goes to her, takes advantage of her sexually, reaches sexual climax [but] whenever he went into his brother's wife, he destroyed (it, i.e., his semen) on the ground.[187]

Onan repeatedly goes into Tamar for sexual gratification and resists the more important duty of producing offspring in the name of Er and continuing the family.[188] As Jeansonne writes, "the choice of (šihēt) (destroyed) underscores Onan's selfish exploitation because it connotes corruption and ruin."[189] The word (šihēt) also reflects clearly the kind of self-determination that leads Onan, not to the fulfillment of the "life-enhancing" Law, but to deliberately destroy "life." In other words, rather than fulfilling the procreative possibilities of the Law, Onan's actions lead to the destruction of Er's line and the self-destruction of his own.

Like other earlier biblical figures such as Cain, Lemech, Eve, and Adam, Onan's actions reflect a "desire for autonomy," or a desire for "self-law."[190] In this story, these charac-

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[187] S.P. Jeansonne, The Women of Genesis: From Sarah to Potiphar's Wife (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), p.102.

[188] S. R. Driver points out that the construction: (ʾom-baʾ) should be understood as "whenever he went in" rather than "when he went in" (The Book of Genesis [New York: Edwin S. Gorham, 1905], p.328).

[189] Ibid., p.102.

[190] T. Mann mentions the errors of those characters in the primeval cycle of having a propensity of striving for a freedom or autonomy beyond their capabilities to control. Clearly, this propensity is active in Genesis 38, The Book of the Torah, p.26.

teristics lead the family into ruin and instability and threaten survival. As Levir or legal surrogate Onan acquires the responsibility to create an offspring or an heir for Er and thereby preserve and continue his brother's line into future generations. Onan, on the other hand, transforms this objective responsibility into personal gratification. He does not fulfill the Levirate duty and intensifies the threat to the survival of Er's line and the continuity of the larger family. Unless Shelah assumes the role of the Levir and responds to that duty, Er will not have a heir. As we will see, Shelah will not be allowed to do this. In the next episode Judah makes a decision that furthers the threat to the survival and continuity of the family.

The deaths of Judah's sons cause him to grow fearful, and this fear, the narrator informs us, motivates Judah to send Tamar to her father's house. This motivation is vented in a command to Tamar: "Remain a widow in your father's house, till Shelah my son grows up" (v.11). Judah seems to have made the connection, or assumption, that the deaths of Er and Onan are, if not directly caused by Tamar, then she may somehow be partially responsible. Furthermore, emerging from Judah's fear that "he (Shelah) would die like his brothers" (v.11) are actions which suggest a shielding or overprotectiveness of Shelah.[191] The use of the pronoun "my" (v.11) also gives a

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[191] Shelah remains throughout a passive and hidden character under the wing of his father. His name reinforces the sense of his father's protectiveness. As S.P. Jeansonne

subtle hint into Judah's possessiveness of his youngest son and thus the possible origin of the fear.[192] In any case, Tamar leaves without speaking a word and goes to her father's house where she is to remain a widow. She is assured, however, that when Shelah grows up she will be given to him in marriage (v.11).[193]

The act of sending Tamar to her father's house, for an unspecified time, suggests Judah's failure of responsibility and threatens the stability of the family. It dissevers bonds in the family, and reflects a potent disintegration of the unified family created in phase one. Tamar's place is with Er's family, rather than her own and "to return Tamar to her father's house was, in effect, to repudiate her."[194] Perhaps if Judah really intended to give her to Shelah, he would not have sent her away and taken the responsibility of protecting Tamar until Shelah was of the marriageable age. It is ironic

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remarks, "Shelah, which comes from the root slh meaning "to be quiet," remains a silent and inactive character in the narrative" (The Women of Genesis, p.100).

[192] This reminds one of the relationship between Jacob his father, and his brothers, Joseph and Benjamin.

[193] The earlier detail that Shelah was born in "Chezib," a word which means "falsehood" or "lie" may suggest that there will be some sort of deception associated with him. This deception is Judah's irresponsibility and disloyalty for not giving Tamar to Shelah. It also reinforces the sense of falsehood surrounding Judah's behavior occuring in an alien land. See David M. Gunn and Danna Nolan Fewell, "Tamar and Judah: Genesis 38," Narrative in the Hebrew Bible (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p.35.

[194] A.S. Herbert, Genesis 12-50: Abraham and His Heirs (London: SCM Press, 1962), p.127.

that although Judah sees Tamar's presence in the house or family as a threat, his ruthless act is perhaps the greater threat to family stability. Furthermore, this gesture is one of contempt and dishonor to Tamar's right as a member of the family. The Levirate Law, as Coats states, "not only honors the dead brother and continues his line, but also reaffirms the widow's place in the home of her husband's people."[195] The narrator's use of the relational epithets- daughter-in-law and father-in-law, even after the death of Tamar's husband, doubly heightens the irony, for on one level an intimate relation still exists between Judah and Tamar, but on another level this relation seems rejected by Judah. The narrator may want the reader to grasp that family ties still remain even though Judah has sent Tamar away from the immediate family circle. The intimacy created through the use of relational epithets also elevates the sense of injustice. As B. Jacob writes:

> ...in Hebrew both terms indicate the protection of the young wife by the house of her in-laws, it was uncharitable of Judah still to recognize her as his daughter-in-law and as the betrothed of Shelah, and nevertheless to send her to her father's house.[196]

In essence, Judah's command carries the potential threat to "life-survival-offspring-fertility-continuity," for Tamar is to become the womb from which the grandchildren of Judah are

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[195] G.W. Coats, Widow's Rights, p.272.

[196] B. Jacob, The First Book of the Bible: Genesis (New York: KTAV Publishing House Inc, 1974), p.258.

to be born. For the moment, however, Tamar's womb is sealed off; in effect, child-bearing is temporarily immobilized. The reader may infer from the extent of Judah's fear that he desires her stay to be a permanent one. Judah's imperative "remain a widow" suggests a finality and absoluteness that betrays Judah's true feeling or predisposition.[197] Phyllis A. Bird says "Judah in his anxiety has sealed her fate, for he intends her widowhood to be permanent."[198] The phase ends with a childless, potentially barren widow leaving Judah's family to go to her father's house. The steady erosion and disintegration of the family is distinct at this point. Tamar has been discharged from the immediate circle of the family and two sons have died. This breakdown progresses with intensifying sharpness and threatens the survival and continuity of Judah's family.

In this phase, the forces, therefore, that disrupt family stability and continuity are: (a) Er's wickedness and lack of responsibility; (b) Onan's lack of responsibility and self-centeredness, and (c) Judah's fear and ignorance for sending of Tamar to her father's house. These forces indicate a collective myopia or lack of foresight. The cumulative effect of wickedness, self-centeredness, irresponsibility, ignorance,

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[197] Robert Sacks comments that the word "dwell" (yāsaḇ) "usually has more permanent connotations" (A Commentary on Genesis [New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990], p.396).

[198] Phyllis A. Bird, "The Harlot as Heroine: Narrative Art and Social Presupposition in Three Old Testament Texts," Semeia 46 (1989), p.122.

and fear, therefore, create a dynamic of forces that upsets and threatens family continuity, order, and equilibrium. The result of these forces consequently change the condition of Judah's family situation. The change that has occurred in phase two is from an initial state of creation and fertility, which reflected a orderly, stable family to a descent or fall into destruction and sterility, which has led to disorder, death and instability. The reader, at the end of the second phase, is left with the impression of a disordered world whose future is "fraught with ambiguity and uncertainty."[199]

Phase 3: Gen.38:12a

The third phase of the narrative structure, Genesis 38:12a, reflects a state of disequilibrium, and is constituted by the accumulation of the results of the sons' and father's actions and attitudes stemming from the dynamic movement of phase two. To recall Todorov's views at this point: "an 'ideal' narrative begins with a stable situation which is disturbed by some power or force. There results a state of disequilibrium."[200] The order, stability and equilibrium of the first phase has been dismantled through the forces as described in the second phase. Contrasted with the first stage which is animated with fertility and the creation of family, the second phase can be characterized as one of sterility and the destruction of the

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[199] Robert Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative, p.9.

[200] Tzvetan Todorov, The Poetics of Prose, p.111.

family. The movement is from a beginning that is prolific and abundant with life to a phase of impoverishment and scarcity of life. In essence, the net result of the sons' and father's actions and attitudes are consummated in the third phase of the narrative structure as a condition of disintegration and disequilibrium.

In phase three, the family is threatened even further with the death of Judah's wife. The narrator states that, "in the course of time the wife of Judah, Shua's daughter, died" (v.12). The deaths of Judah's two sons are heightened by the death of his wife. Since there is now no womb in the family in which to plant fruitful seed, this clearly heightens and intensifies the threat to survival and continuity. At this point, the death of Judah's wife is more significant than the son's deaths, for it is the loss of the only womb left in the family by which offspring can be produced. The absence of offspring threatens the continuity of the family into the future.

Besides being a further development in the plot, the detail of the death of Judah's wife does two things: it reiterates the theme of death and the motif of loss of the womb characteristic of phase two. This artful technique, with its clever choice and economy of detail, not only has the effect of restating the results of the second phase, but also of unifying them with the condition of the third, bringing the pattern of descent to its final, artful conclusion. In support

of Todorov's scheme, these deaths and losses crystallize conclusively in the reader's mind as the precarious descent from initial equilibrium into a condition of disequilibrium. Here the arc of tension mounts as the future of Judah's family is in jeopardy and the reader becomes aware of a more radical need for progeny to ensure the family's survival.

To summarize, the cause of this state has been a failure of responsibility on the part of Er, Onan and Judah. Er, described as the firstborn, carries the responsibility of raising up offspring, but this responsibility is not fulfilled. Onan, as the brother of Er, is given the responsibility of the Levir, but he fails to fulfill the responsibility to raise a heir for Er. Finally, Judah has the responsibility of caring for Tamar in his house during the time that Shelah is maturing to age to respond to his duty as Levir. Judah, on the other hand, sends Tamar to her father's house and thereby takes away a potential womb within the family which may give birth to progeny. It is this irresponsibility which launched the movement into family disorder and in cutting the umbilical chord of continuity. These forces, coupled with the death of Judah's wife, and subsequently, the loss of the last womb in the family, are indicative of a development which has resulted from the force(s) in the second phase which dismantled the order, stability and equilibrium of the first phase and create or cause the state of disequilibrium in phase three.

These negative forces accumulate and form a grid of aspects which has led to a situation that reflects instability, disorder, and disequilibrium. The only family bond left is that of the father and son which, by itself, cannot lead towards the continuity of the family nor of sustaining stability. In contrast with the equilibrium of phase one, which reflects a condition characterized by the thematic chain: life-survival-offspring-fertility-continuity, phase three is characterized by death-extinction-childlessness-sterility-discontinuity. This phase, quite clearly, evolves into a condition quite antithetical to that of the first and can be described essentially as constituting disintegration and disequilibrium.

Phase 4: Gen.38:12a-26

The fourth phase constitutes the major portion of the narrative: Genesis 38:12b-26. It consists primarily of a seemingly pre-meditated plan or stratagem, concocted by Tamar which she puts into action. It is an strategic tour-de-force acting in the opposite direction of disequilibrium by which the condition of equilibrium is re-established.[201] In other words, it is the dramatic and dynamic force of the plot which motivates the action and movement towards stability. In this phase the narrator becomes very covert, almost to the point of virtual effacement, while the sustained dialogue of characters

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[201] Tzvetan Todorov, Poetics of Prose, p.111.

effectively decelerates the pace of the narrative. Each detail takes on more and more significance and draws the reader closer to the story and characters.

Immediately after the death of his wife, when Judah has been "consoled" (nāḥem)*, and emerges from his period of mourning, the narrator informs the reader that "he went up to Timnah to his sheepshearers, he and his friend the Adullamite" (v.12b). Sheepshearing is a time of "eating, drinking, and general festivities."[202] This indicates a decisive change or turn in the plot structure: an upward movement to a new location and state of affairs. Right after the pattern of precarious descent is completed, a pattern of propitious ascent begins. The detail of mourning acts as a threshold (or structural device) bridging descent and ascent. Mourning is a door, which, on one side, contains descent, disintegration, and death, and, on the other, contains ascent, integration, and life.

Immediately after being told that Judah is going up to Timnah (v.12b), Tamar too crosses the threshold of mourning and initiates a return to the world (v.14). The narrator informs the reader of Judah's journey, but Tamar is vouchsafed the crucial information by an unnamed source executed formally through reported speech: "Behold your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep." The use of the demonstrative

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[202] David M. Gunn and Danna Nolan Fewell, "Judah and Tamar: Genesis 38," p.38.

particle "behold" (hinnēh) alerts the reader to a crucial piece of information--information that prepares Tamar for an opportunity to act decisively. The relational epithet father-in-law stresses Judah's relation to Tamar his daughter-in-law "for whom he has responsibility--responsibility he has not yet fulfilled."[203] At this point there is no indication that Judah will fulfill that responsibility. In any case, the reader is given the sense that Tamar responds immediately: "she put off her widow's garments, and put on a veil, wrapping herself up, and sat at the entrance to Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah; for she saw that Shelah was grown up and she had not been given to him in marriage" (vv.12-14). We learn that Shelah has matured to the age which calls upon him to appropriate the responsibilities of the Levirate Law as Judah had promised. But when Tamar "saw" (rā'āh)* Shelah she realizes that Judah has failed in his responsibility to give her to Shelah. Having being sent to her father's house as a widow, Tamar is deprived of Shelah, in effect her rights to have a child have been suspended. This illuminates the reader to the crisis of the story. As Coats comments:

> The crisis of the story thus arises from a violation of basic justice. And the violation hinges on Tamar's rights within the Levirate custom, and Judah's determination not to fulfill those rights through the third son.[204]

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[203] Johanna W.H. Bos, "Out of the Shadows: Genesis 38; Judges 4:17; Ruth 3," Semeia 42 (1988), p.45.

[204] George W. Coats, "Widow's Rights," p.463.

It is interesting that Tamar realizes Judah's broken promise at (bepetah ʿênayim) (the gate of Enaim) which translated literally means the "opening of the eyes."[205] Tamar opens her eyes to the fact that she must take her destiny into her own hands. Motivated, therefore, by Judah's injustice and her right to have a child she devises an ingenious plan to rectify the situation.

The action is brought about by the two main characters who come out of mourning--a state of sexual abstinence and passivity--who move into a situation of sexual union and activity.[206] Tamar acts with determination once she knows that Judah is going to Timnah, for his journey gives her the perfect opportunity to enact the first stage of her plan. Tamar's maneuvering is quite clever for she may suspect that after Judah's mourning period, which involves sexual abstinence, that he may have a heightened sexual appetite and will be desiring sexual contact. She disguises herself as a harlot and sets herself up on the roadside at the gate to Enaim. Her fitting disguise draws his attention and invites him to fulfill his desire. In the process, however, Tamar hopes to get impregnated by Judah.

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[205] Johanna W. H. Bos, "Out of the Shadows: Genesis 38; Judges 4:17-22; Ruth:3," Semeia 42 (1988), p.42.

[206] For Tamar this is indicated by the change from her widow's garments for the harlot's garments, from sexually inert or inactive to sexually active.

The use of dramatic irony here intensifies the action and creates suspense. While the reader is aware of what is happening, and in the light, so to speak, Judah is in the dark. Judah is blind to the fact that Tamar is behind the veil, for "he thought her to be a harlot, for she had covered her face" (v.15). Tamar identifies Judah but Judah fails to recognize the identity of Tamar his "daughter-in-law," instead he sees a "harlot." The narrator stresses the relational epithet, to show ironically that the harlot, a figure supposedly outside the boundaries of family and on the fringes of society, is part of Judah's family. Judah is about to lie with Tamar, his "daughter-in-law," not a harlot, and the end of this consummation is not pleasure but offspring.

The beginning of the next scene, at a deeper level, gives the impression of mystery imbued with an atmosphere of secret, sexual enticement. On the surface, however, it bears the marks of a customary, objective, business-like negotiation. Before any transaction is to take place in the sexual sense, arrangements are made through formal negotiation. Once the business-like arrangements have taken place, sexual intercourse is allowed:

> He turned in to her at the road side, and said, "Come, let me come into you," for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. She said, "What will you give me, that you may come into me?" He answered, "I will send you a kid from the flock." And she said, "Will you give me a pledge, till you send it?" He said, "What pledge shall I give you?" She replied, "Your signet, and your chord and your staff that is in your hand." So he gave them to her, and he went into her, and she conceived by him (16-18).

Judah approaches the harlot and initiates dialogue asking cordially: "Come, let me come into you," which intimates sexual intercourse. The word "come" (hābāh-nā) contains the particle of entreaty--(nā), which gives Judah's request the tenor of politeness.[207] Previously, Judah sent Tamar to her father's house, a gesture of disrespect, here, ironically, he treats the harlot, a supposed stranger, courteously and with respect. As well, this politeness gives Tamar the impression that she has the advantage. Having Judah in this more vulnerable position gives her the latitude to make her "playing" all the more ensured. She gives Judah the impression, however, that it is he who is in control of the situation. As we see, Tamar does not initiate the first move, but subtlely and inconspicuously awaits Judah's move. When Judah sees the harlot's veil he does make the first move for the veil suggests to Judah's eyes sexual gratification. As part of the harlot's garb the veil reflects concealment but paradoxically the veil also represents invitation.[208]

In this scene (vvs.16-18) the reader learns that Tamar speaks for the first time. This is important for it suggests that Tamar has fully come to life. The use of speech gives her the necessary freedom to 'create' her own destiny. She articulates this speech through cunning questions which act to

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[207] George W. Coats, "Widows Rights," p.464.

[208] Phyllis A. Bird, "The Harlot as Heroine: Narrative Art and Social Presupposition in Three Old Testament Texts," Semeia 46 (1989), p.134.

lure Judah into her web. Tamar makes it clear that she will have intercourse with Judah, only after she knows what it is he will give her. The harlot expects something, a payment, in return for her services. For giving sexual pleasure or intercourse, and in keeping with the sheep-shearing festival to which he is sojourning, Judah offers to give a payment of a kid saying: "I will send you a kid from the flock." But it is only when Tamar is given (nātan)* a pledge, in receipt of the kid, that Judah is allowed to have intercourse with her. This pledge so happens to be Judah's seal, cord, and staff. The sound play in the description of the objects, (hōtāmekā ûpetîlekā ûmattekā 'aser beyādekā) (your signet, your cord, and your staff that are in your hand) link them into a single entity that point to Judah's identity. Furthermore, the term (matteh)* or staff acts as a sexual euphemism, but more significantly, is a "homonym of 'tribe'."[209] The suggestion contained in Tamar's language foreshadows the birth of progeny that will continue the line or tribe of Judah.

When Tamar shrewdly secures these possessions from Judah she has a larger design in mind. She will use them later as the indicators to verify the identity of the owner and therefore link the father to his progeny. In this scene, moreover, the reader notices the unreflective way in which Judah pursues the object of his desire and given the impres-

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[209] David M. Gunn and Danna Nolan Fewell, "Tamar and Judah: Genesis 38," p.40.

sion that because of his concupiscence he is easily stripped of his seal, chord, and staff. As J.P. Jeansonne comments "Judah appears indecisive and lustful and Tamar appears skillful and prudent."[210] This contrast between the two characters is drawn out to a greater extent in the proceeding episodes.

After the business proceedings have ended and a deal is closed, the narrator relates quickly the sexual union and the subsequent conception (v.18). Following her conception Tamar leaves the locus of her action and speedily changes back into her old clothes: "then she rose up and went away, and taking off her veil she put on her widow's garments" (v.19). The "widow" who was sent to her father's house, and who had played the harlot, now resumes her prior identity or role of "widowhood." The lively and quick succession of verbs: arose, went, taking off, and put on create a dynamic combination that gives the impression of the thrust of Tamar's determination and energy. The deed is done and now she must return to her prior identity or role as widow. It is ironic that Tamar is pregnant and full of life, but at the same time, wears widow's garments which are symbolic of death and sexual abstinence.

The reader is drawn further into the web of intrigue in the next episode: Judah's attempt to retrieve his pledge 38:20-23. This episode in the plot sequence builds on a strategy of ambiguity and prolonged denouement. In keeping with the

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[210] S.P. Jeansonne, The Women of Genesis, p.103.

bargain that he and Tamar had established beforehand, Judah sends his friend the Adullamite to redeem the insignia from the "woman's hand" and give her the pledged kid to close the business arrangement.[211] The reader is given the privilege of knowing that the Adullamite "could not find her" (v.20). Seeking to locate her, he approaches the "men of the place," a vague description of the men of that town, and asks: "Where is the cult ¬rostitute (qedēšā) who was at Enaim by the roadside?" And they reply laconically, "There has been no cult prostitute here." Hirah shuttles back to Judah without finding Tamar, repeating verbatim what the men of the place had said, "There has been no cult prostitute here." The repetition sharpens the irony, for it elevates the sense of mystery and concealment associated with Tamar. The reader assumes that Tamar is not ready to emerge from concealment until she knows and can prove her pregnancy. This follows sequentially into the next episode.

For the moment, however, Judah is delinquent on his promise to Tamar. His fear of becoming a "laughingstock" (lāḇûz) motivates him to let Tamar keep his seal, chord, and staff "as her own" (v.23). The relative ease at which Judah gives up his insignia reiterates a prior ease in which he gave them up. They seem, at this point, to carry little significance and

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[211] The synecdoche of the "hand" represents Tamar's full possession and implies ironically that Tamar has the status of Judah while possessing his insignia. Later he says "let her keep them as her own" which reinforces this irony.

meaning for him. Furthermore, his subjective fear once again rules over his better judgement, potential derision becoming the motivation for his disloyalty. Once again Judah acts irresponsibly and breaks his promise to Tamar, cheating her from rightful possession of something that he had the responsibility to give. In this way, Judah's injustice towards Tamar is sharpened by recalling an earlier injustice. If, previously he had withheld Shelah from her, and indirectly withholding from her the chance to get pregnant, now he withholds the payment of the kid for her sexual services. S. P. Jeansonne comments that "the newly born offspring of the goat or sheep reminds us of the injustice done to Tamar by Judah--the withholding of the offspring from her."[212] The two injustices nuance with each other, and in so doing, it has the effect of heightening the sense of Judah's miscarriage of justice to Tamar.

The next scene begins with the narration "about three months later" (v.24). The time reference reveals that Tamar has reached the end of the first trimester of her pregnancy, and her condition is not to be doubted. By now Tamar has realized she is pregnant and thus far her plan has worked. Judah is also told that his "daughter-in-law," [the relational epithet again] Tamar, has "played the harlot" and "is with child by harlotry" (v.24). The concealed cult prostitute (qedēšā) unseen by the men of the place, and unfound by Hirah,

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[212] S.P. Jeansonne, The Women of Genesis, p.104.

has come into the open and revealed her secret pregnancy publicly. She has not, however, appeared as the cult prostitute (qedēšā) but as the common harlot (zōnâ), the whore who had tricked Judah into intercourse. The successive repetition of the words harlot (zānetā) and harlotry (zenûnîm) imprints upon the mind of the reader the whole irony of this story. Tamar not only has to break the Law (adultery) to become pregnant but has to play the harlot to fulfill her plan. Tamar has to break the Law to fulfill the Law, ironically to receive justice.

After learning about Tamar's harlotry, and still ignorant of the fact that it was Tamar whom he had intercourse with, Judah remembers "the Law," (adultery) and without a formal hearing pronounces a death sentence upon her. Judah's ignorance of the facts makes his judgement all the more chilling. His words are: "Bring her out and let her be burned" hôsî'ûhā wetissārēp (v.24). This command is more stark and brutal in biblical Hebrew being compressed in just two words.[213] Furthermore, the forceful and rapid locution of this command reveals an unreflective, destructive impulse directed at Tamar and indirectly at the incubating children in the womb. We wonder if Judah is not committing the error of hubris here, or, in other words, playing the role of God. Earlier, it had been God who declared the death penalty upon Er and Onan, here it is Judah who declares death upon Tamar.

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[213] Robert Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative, p.9.

The extent of this judgement suggests in a concrete and disturbing sense not only the potential to wreck destruction upon Tamar's plan but also to jeopardize the potential continuity of the family.

At this point, suspense is created and the reader's interest is sharpened. Judah's progeny, inside Tamar's womb, are caught in a precarious situation: Tamar is about to take them into the flames.[214] But when Tamar is being brought out to be burned she says, "By the man to whom these belong, I am with child" (v.25). By sleight of hand she circumvents Judah's destructive intention by pulling out his insignia, and requests formal recognition of them: "Recognize please (hāker-nā), whose these are, the signet, the chord, the staff" (v.25). As directed Judah recognizes (v.26) his credentials and realizes his injustice. Tamar's resolute and critical action reverses Judah's death sentence and brings the scene to a dramatic and forceful conclusion: the decision of life over death. She saves not only her own life but the lives of Judah's progeny that she is carrying inside her womb.

One of the unique elements in this sequence is the meaningful use of the definite article. The durative effect created by the repetition of the definite article for each

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[214] Sometimes in the structure of the comedy, the plot leads to what Northrop Frye states as "a potentially tragic crisis near the end" (The Myth of Deliverance: Reflections on Shakespeare's Problem Comedies [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983], p.179). Genesis 38 evinces a V-shaped narrative similar to Frye's U-shape description of comedy, and in some respects, as the one above, is like a comedy.

object heightens and reinforces the item's significance. It decelerates narrative time and implies a lingering reflection, meditative gaze, or sustained perception upon the objects. This sustained perception heightens the sense of Judah's recognition or illumination. Judah not only recognizes the objects but experiences what they mean. The use of the protracted definite article reflects, in essence, the extent of Judah's discovery or insight into his own evil, his failure of responsibility, and his injustice to Tamar. The protracted definite article reinforces Judah's self-conscious meditation upon the object's meaning and the significance for him and the realization facilitated through them.

This 'recognition element' of the plot structure is given a precise definition by Aristotle as anagnorisis.[215] It is evident that Judah not only recognizes his error of irresponsibility but that he recognizes that it was Tamar who had played the harlot, and therefore, it was he who had laid with her. Consequently, it is an anagnorisis of identity. These recognitions lead to the 'reversal' of Judah's command to burn Tamar and this element of the plot Aristotle calls peripeteia,

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[215] A.J. Cuddon states that anagnorisis (Gk 'recognition') is a "term used by Aristotle in Poetics to describe the moment of recognition (of truth) when ignorance gives way to knowledge. According to Aristotle, the ideal moment of anagnorisis coincides with peripeteia (q.v.), or reversal of fortune" (Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory [New York: Penguin Books, 1991], p.38).

a reversal (of fortune) or reversal in the action.[216] The plot builds to this moment of high tension and comes to a fitting and dramatic closure when Judah reverses his judgement.[217] This reversal in judgement is motivated by Judah's realization and recognition of his injustice to Tamar. This is indicated by the words he uses to describe Tamar when he sees the objects. As the narrator relates: Then Judah recognized (vayakĕr) them and said: "She is righteous rather than I, inasmuch as I did not give her to my son Shelah" (v.26).[218] This recalls Judah's pledge of Tamar to Shelah in marriage on the condition of his maturing to the suitable age--a pledge that Judah did not fulfill. This failure, of course, caused Tamar to overcome her situation. She strives for her rights, fulfills the intention of the Levirate Law, and for this, Judah declares her righteous. Contrasted with the sons in phase two who are "evil" ra'* and self-serving, Tamar is "righteous" (saddîq)* and selfless. M.E. Andrew argues that

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[216] T.G.A. Nelson, Comedy: An Introduction to Comedy in Literature, Drama, and Cinema (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p.31. See also Stephen Halliwell, Aristotle's Poetics (London: Duckworth, 1986), pp.164 and 212.

[217] G. W. Coats writes that "the denouement in vss.24-26 is constructed like the denouement in the Joseph story, with the tension increased to the breaking point, then resolved at the last possible moment" "Widow's Rights," p.465.

[218] I am following Edwin M. Good's translation of Judah's recognition and speech in this scene. He translates Judah's admission as "she is righteous rather than I, inasmuch as I did not give her to my son Shelah," (Irony in the Old Testament [London: SPCK, 1965], p.108).

the usage of the word (saddîq)* in this context is "communal."[219] This assertion is accurate because Tamar's actions extend beyond a concern for herself and are directed towards her filial responsibility in the Levirate Law. Her unorthodox but cleverly wrought plan fulfills the primary intent of the Law, and leads importantly to the begetting of offspring and the survival of the family.

The final detail of this phase is given by the narrator: "And he did not know (yāda')* her again" (v.26). In the context of the narrative whole, this detail alludes to Tamar's independence and freedom, but more readily, it indicates that Judah did not have sexual intercourse with Tamar again. The verb to know (yāda')*, acts as a sexual euphemism, but implicitly it is a reflection of Judah's respect for Tamar and that he had no continuing right to her. The new Judah is reflective and thereafter sees or "knows" Tamar in a different light. This draws a fitting conclusion to Judah's enlightenment. Paradoxically, all along he did not know Tamar, nor showed her respect, her identity was concealed from him, though now, when the text says he did not know her, in fact, he knows her in a deeper sense. This deeper sense, as reflected upon earlier, is her righteousness or integrity.

The examination of this phase leads to the conclusion that the main conflicts of the story--injustice and threat to

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[219] M.E. Andrew, "Moving From Death to Life: Verbs of Motion in the Story of Judah and Tamar in Gen 38," Zeitschrift Fur Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 105, (1993), p.267.

continuity caused by irresponsibility and the breaking of the Law--are resolved. The preeminence of life over death is restored and supported by contributing themes of justice and responsibility. These main features all point to an overall ascent and rehabilitation of family continuity and order. As a consequence of Tamar's plan the total thematic chain mentioned at the beginning, life-survival-offspring-fertility-continuity, is re-established. It is at the moment of anagnorisis that these themes and others like identity, Law, justice, and responsibility converge and crystalize. They resonate and enrich each other and heighten the significance of Tamar's stratagem. The plan is both optimistic and constructive, ultimately creating a situation, which in phase five, completes the plot and re-constitutes the lost equilibrium of the first phase. In phase five, the plot and Tamar's plan are ultimately completed through the birth of progeny.

Phase 5: Gen.38:27-30

Phase five, Genesis 38: 27-30, is the culmination of the movement of ascent that began in phase 4. It is in this phase that equilibrium is brought to its ultimate fulfillment and closure. Consequently, the results of phase four culminate in phase five. Basically, such elements as Judah's acknowledgement of his injustice, his realization of his sense of responsibility towards family, and Tamar's reception of her rights (v.26) constitute the preconditions for equilibrium.

Tamar's plan, as responsible action, becomes inevitably the dynamic force diametrically opposed to the direction of phases two and three which in counterbalance brings a fitting closure to phase five and re-establishes the condition of equilibrium.[220]

At the beginning of phase four, in verse 13, we remember that Tamar's plan becomes the narrative's plot, there is no separation between them. The strategy of closure in the narrative's structure is, therefore, the consummation of Tamar's plan or the plot--which is childbirth. Ultimately, then, in phase five, equilibrium culminates with delivery and birth--the expectation and resolution of the rising action of the plot. The thematic thread that runs the length of the entire narrative is primogeniture and in this phase it is finally fulfilled. Like phase one, phase five reflects life and creation. Life, as it is actualized through the births of Zerah and Peretz (vv.28-30) connotes stability. The birth of twins replaces the deaths of Judah's other two sons, Er and Onan, and, in one sense, suggests the replacement of death by life.[221] In contrast to Onan and Er whose names are blotted out of existence, Zerah and Peretz names are continued. Both

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[220] Tzvetan Todorov, Poetics of Fiction, p.111.

[221] Leslie Brisman writes that "Tamar's children, Peretz and Zerah, "breakthrough" and "dawning," are the literal new lives representing the triumph of sexuality--of desire for children--over (Judah's) anxiety about death" (The Voice of Jacob: On the Composition of Genesis [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990], p.109).

Er and Onan eschew creation and therefore are blotted out of creation, but Peretz and Zerah participate in creation and continue into future generations.

In accordance with Todorov's scheme, the birth of twins plays a role in rehabilitating order and equilibrium.[222] The restitution of the two sons re-establishes the order reflected in phase one and lost in phase two, for it replaces the deaths of Er and Onan. More notable though, is the insinuation that in the birth of twins a divine hand has been at work. Like the births of Jacob and Esau, the sense is evoked that beneath the surface of this narrative a silent God was involved. The birth of twins, as an anomaly, reflects the sense of God's mysterious handiwork in creation and history. In a wider perspective, therefore, primogeniture connects with a covenantal past and a promised future. The birth of children or descendants is a human response to the divine initiative of the promise, and endorsed in the Levirate Law. In a sense, descendants "bind man to the future."[223] It is because of these births that we

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[222] Writing on Todorov's scheme Naomi Steinberg writes that "the restitution of disequilibrium" depends on the "true heir" finding a "chosen wife" to give "birth" and thereby resolving "the problem of generational continuity" ("The Genealogical Framework of the Family Stories in Genesis," [Semeia 46 (1989], pp.45-46). Genesis 38 is a variation of this structure, though it is Tamar who carves out her own destiny by having children and thereby restoring equilibrium, not the "true heir" that finds her. Judah, the supposed true heir in Genesis 38, is the one illuminated by Tamar's actions.

[223] The birth of progeny or descendants in Genesis 38 can be seen in respect to the larger Genesis whole as part of a larger divine initiative in the human world. Even the birth of twins suggests a divine hand beneath the surface. The motif of

see the quintessential fulfillment of the thematic chain: life-survival-offspring-fertility-continuity. It is through Tamar's tenacity to carry out the intention of the Levirate Law that life is finally victorious over death. The narrative's outcome drives home the importance of family continuity through the acceptance of responsibility to the Levirate Law, and, on another level, responsibility to the Law in general for the maintenance of order, stability, and equilibrium. In this enigmatic story we see that knowledge, equality, righteousness, justice, identity and Law are raised up as the foundations of family equilibrium.

Todorov mentions that the equilibrium that is re-established in a narrative is not the same as the first, but, is new.[224] The "newness" of this equilibrium is indicated by Judah's development and illumination through the recognition of the need for responsibility to the Law and family--a responsibility that ensures the survival of the family into the future. In the recognition scene Judah moves from a state of ignorance to a state of knowledge. His realization is not a surface knowledge but a deeper understanding of the importance of keeping the Law. He realizes that the Law is intertwined with the foundations of family and its identity. This identity traces like a scarlet thread into the past which

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"seed" or offspring is intimately connected to the promise of the blessing.

[224] Tzvetan Todorov, Poetics of Prose, p.111.

is intimately connected to the family name, origins, and Hebraic inheritance, and invariably connected to the future which is continued through progeny. Through Judah's experience the reader realizes that the past, present, and future are interconnected. Judah learns that one's destiny is intricately connected to the past, origins, name, and heritage, and to lose sight of these elements of experience is to lose sight of one's future and destiny. Judah had lost sight of this but in the crucial moment of anagnorisis he is illuminated and discovers himself, his identity, his place, and the insight into his destiny. As we will see in the next chapter this destiny is played out in his role as spokesman for the brothers.

There is also a new condition established for the female protagonist of the story. It is a heroic resolution whereby Tamar expresses her freedom and resilience, receives justice, and is declared righteous (v.26). As a woman in a patriarchal family and society she succeeds in receiving her rights and singular identity: womanhood and equality. She rejects the annihilation of her womanhood by being detained at her father's house for years as a childless woman, and affirms herself and destiny in the face of possible death and ridicule. Unlike her foil, the unnamed daughter of Shua, or Judah's wife, who marries, gives birth, and dies, completing a pre-determined role, Tamar claims the right to choose her own destiny. She courageously affirms her womanhood by a

serious intention and vitality to obtain her rights to have a child. Her connection to a divine purpose is seen through her responsibility to the Levirate Law making her a mediator in that purpose. By succeeding in her intention Tamar becomes the mother of the family line which gives birth to David, king of Judah's only monarchy. In this manner, Tamar reflects that individuality and integrity of character that makes her the apotheosis of womanhood. She stands in the line of Sarah and Rebecca, and other great female figures of the Genesis narratives who were also self-affirmative. As Robert Alter remarks:

> ...one need only recall the resounding evidence of subsequent biblical narrative, which includes a remarkable gallery of women- Rebekah, Tamar, Deborah, Ruth- who are not content with a vegetative existence in the corner of the house but, when thwarted by the male world or when they find it lacking in moral insight or practical initiative, do not hesitate to take their destiny, or the nation's, into their own hands.[225]

She breaks the conventional fixed role of a woman as reflected in the character of Shua's daughter. Tamar asserts herself in the face of considerable odds and triumphs, not only as mother, but as a (zōnâ), (gedēšâ), widow, and foremost as a righteous individual. And "to be righteous" Thomas W. Mann says "is to be genuinely human."[226]

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[225] Robert Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative, p.146.

[226] Thoman Mann, The Book of the Torah, p.29.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the exploration of Genesis 38 has led to the assertion that it is an ideal narrative which expresses a definite structural unity. Though the chief emphasis of this chapter was placed upon the plot and the five phases of the overarching structure, many of the themes and motifs and various strategies by which meaning is created have been discovered. Finally, the parallels and symmetries pointed out in the examination of the architectonics interact in a complex interplay of meaning and re-confirms the contention held at the beginning that Genesis 38, through both the dynamics of broad structural patterns and fine structural articulations, it is clearly an integrated literary whole.

CHAPTER 5

Literary Context of Genesis 38

Introduction

The concern of this chapter is the placement of Genesis 38 in its larger literary context.[227] To address this concern I will focus on the character and role of Judah as he spans Genesis 38 and the Joseph cycle. The link between Genesis 38 and the Joseph cycle can be seen through the pattern of departure-transition-return which explains the development or growth of Judah. First, it is clear that Judah separates or departs from his family in Genesis 38 and seems to alienate himself from his family and Hebraic heritage; second, this alienation culminates in a perspicacious moment of reversal in which he is re-initiated back into his heritage and undergoes a transformation; thirdly, this transformation is the pre-condition for his return to his brothers as spokesman. Some questions, therefore, will help focus on how Genesis 38 connects to the Joseph story through the role and characterization of Judah: Does Genesis 38, in fact, give the reader insights or an understanding of his character which bears upon his future role in the Joseph story? How are we prepared for this role as spokesman? How does the pattern of departure-transition-return help us understand the connection between

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[227] All biblical translations in this chapter have been based on the use of the Revised Standard Version.

Genesis 38 and the surrounding frame-story and the development of Judah's character?[228]

Departure

Judah's departure or separation begins with a descent into Adullam, which in the course of the narrative, develops into a greater alienation from his family, past, and heritage. In the development of the story there is a tension between Judah's loyalties to his Hebraic identity and an opposing pagan one. His separation or alienation begins with his journey down from his brothers after his brother Joseph is sold and his father is deceived (38:1). He leaves an environment which reflects a mood of rivalry and internecine strife between brothers (Gen. 37) and goes down to Adullam, severing ties with his family and furthering a rupture that was evident in Genesis 37. The verb (yārad) or "went down" used at the end of Genesis 37, when Jacob laments that he will "go down" to Sheol in mourning for Joseph, shows that the verb "can be used for a drastic family separation."[229] The sense of rivalry and tension is not long showing itself within Judah's newly

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[228] The pattern of departure-transition-return is similar to the pattern separation-transition-incorporation documented by Arnold Van Gennep so wonderfully in his book The Rites of Passage (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960) and could be easily used here to elucidate the movement of Judah's development.

[229] M.E. Andrew, "Moving From Death to Life: Verbs of Motion in the Story of Judah and Tamar in Gen 38," Zeitschrift Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 105, (1993), p.262.

created family. Er's failure to produce a son or progeny, as the firstborn, suggests a tension between his responsibility to tradition and his own self-will. Furthermore, Onan's failure to produce a heir in Er's name suggests the possibility of rivalry and his neglect for tradition. More significantly, Judah, unlike the omniscient God, is ignorant of his own son's evil natures. Furthermore, his alienation, within his own family, seems all the more pronounced based on the fact that it is never recorded that he mourns the deaths of Er and Onan. In sharp contrast, Jacob, his father, mourns fervently for his son Joseph. All this suggests that Judah is somewhat distant, unresponsive, and alienated from his elder sons. When they are destroyed by God for their evil, Judah does not understand that it is God's judgment upon them. He fears that his youngest and it seems favorite son will die like his brothers. Assuming Tamar as the cause he sends her back to her father's house thereby alienating her from Shelah. His favoritism suggests distance from the elder sons and his fear causes him to misjudge his priorities, choosing his son's supposed safety over his obligation to the Levirate Law. Shelah never does fulfill his responsibility to the Levirate Law and Tamar never receives her rights to have a child until she enacts a plan to reverse the situation.

Judah's alienation, more importantly, is also manifest in the sense of a larger deterioration of ties with his past

Hebraic heritage and identity.[230] First, Judah's marriage to a Canaanite woman suggests his severing of loyalties with Hebraic identity.[231] Marriage signals not only biological ties through progeny but also deeper social ties. In fact, as Sharon P. Jeansonne argues, the use of the word (wayyēt)* "turned into" (38:1, 16) "may also be used figuratively to indicate deviating from what is right or to indicate disloyalty."[232] Judah's disloyalty to what is right is evident in his lack of responsibility to the Levirate Law which he fails to consummate with Tamar and Shelah (v.11). It is also a deviation from the Hebraic heritage. It represents a failure of commitment to Tamar but also a failure of commitment to a tradition of his past heritage. Furthermore, he is associated twice with his "fellow citizen" (rēʿēhû)*, the Adullamite, which suggests a socio-political bond with the pagan world through the Adullamite. Judah's fellow citizen, the Adullamite, "acts as a go-between, indicating the alien sphere in which Judah has become quite comfortable."[233] The influence

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[230] We should remember a parallel here between Judah and Joseph. Joseph like Judah goes down from his family and becomes an Egyptian (pagan) in his practices. Judah gives away and accepts back his signet ring and Joseph accepts the signet ring and other raiments from the Pharoah (41:42) as a symbol of his ties with the Egyptian. Even more significant, however, Joseph receives a new name which is symbolic of a transformation into a new way of life.

[231] S.P. Jeansonne, The Women of Genesis, p.100.

[232] Ibid., p.100.

[233] M.E. Andrew, "Moving from Death to Life: Verbs of Motion in the Story of Judah and Tamar in Gen 38," p.264.

of this alien sphere upon Judah is also suggested by the connotation of the word (rē'ēhû)*. This "connotation" argues S.P. Jeansonne "is most appropriate here because Judah shuns his Israelite heritage by rejecting his obligations, to Tamar."[234]

In a larger context, the ambiguity created between the identity of Tamar as a (zônâ) and (gedēšâ) also reinforces the sense that Judah is caught between two worlds, respectively, the Hebraic and the pagan. From the Adullamite's point of view it is insinuated that Judah is connected intimately with the pagan heritage. As Jeansonne comments, the use of the word (gedēšâ), in the context of Judah's dealings with Tamar, "suggests that Hirah presumes that Judah was participating in a characteristic Canaanite ritual activity. Indeed, Judah was acting like a Canaanite in his relationship with Tamar."[235] The crucial detail of the narrative, however, which suggests that Judah has shifted loyalties to the pagan pole and is finally alienated from his Hebraic roots, is when he gives over his insignia to Tamar (v.23). The symbolic act of forfeiting his insignia represents a deeper alienation from his roots. The seal, cord, and staff, as the signs of his ties to his past, heritage, and identity seem to have lost their significance and meaning for Judah. In essence, his abandon-

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[234] S.P. Jeansonne, "The Women of Genesis," p.102.

[235] Ibid., p.104.

ment of the insignia represents a rejection of his heritage and identity and consummates a process of separation and alienation.

Judah's alienation from his brothers and father and within his own family is compounded by his irresponsibility, ignorance, and misunderstanding at crucial times in the sequence of events. At the beginning of the story Judah is portrayed as a responsible character. After leaving his brother he finds himself a wife, though a Canaanite one, and they create a family. Ensuing from his patriarchal responsibility he finds a wife for Er, his firstborn, to continue the family. When Er dies he commands Onan to take up his responsibility as the Levir. In these moments Judah is reflected as responsible, intelligent, and understands the needs of the family. This behavior, however, soon dissipates. As we saw earlier, when his elder sons Er and Onan die he grows fearful that Shelah, his youngest, may die too. Judah, unlike God, is ignorant of his son's evil natures, and because of this ignorance he subjectively finds the cause of their deaths in Tamar. His misjudgment in failing to fulfill the Levirate obligations with Shelah is intensified by his misplaced fear. This causes him to send Tamar to her father's house, which threatens the survival of the family. It is suggested that Judah intends Tamar's dismissal to be permanent. This elevates both the sense of threat to the family's survival, and an injustice to

Tamar whose right it is to have a child through the Levirate Law.

Tamar, however, does not accept her harsh situation. She deceives Judah into impregnating her and later reveals that Judah is the father. Furthermore, she receives recognition from Judah of her righteous act, and is reconciled to the family. The events that lead up to this, however, portray Judah as ignorant, destructive, and impulsive. This is heightened by dramatic irony which enlightens the reader to certain privileged knowledge, while Judah remains, so to speak, in the dark. First, Tamar's whole plan is based upon her ability to trick Judah and this she does quite intelligently by playing upon his weakest qualities. When Judah comes out of mourning and having a heightened sexual desire, Tamar, disguised as a harlot, attracts him quite easily. Once this occurs she is enabled to trick him into sexual intercourse and in impregnating her. While the reader knows that it is Tamar behind the veil deceiving him, Judah is completely ignorant. Judah thinks she is a "harlot" but the reader knows she is his "daughter-in-law," Tamar. Secondly, Judah's impulsive sexual desire allows him to be easily stripped of his seal, cord, and staff, which Tamar plans ingeniously to use to identify him as the father, if she so happens to get pregnant. Thirdly, Judah's ignorance and misunderstanding is enacted in the form of a destructive impulse when he finds out that Tamar is pregnant through harlotry. He does not know, unlike the

reader, that it was he who had impregnated her. His rash (mis)judgment to burn Tamar for her infidelity jeopardizes his own progeny in Tamar's womb, a situation overcome, however, in the nick of time by Tamar. In essence, his ignorance, misunderstanding, impulsiveness, and destructiveness reinforce the sense of the disintegration of Judah's moral fibre. His misuse of freedom and authority inevitably threatens the survival of the family.

Judah's alienation and ignorance lead up to the climax of the story: the recognition scene or anagnorisis. It is at this point that these developments crystallize and lead to a reversal and transformation in Judah's character and behavior. It is here that Judah's ignorance and alienation are overcome in a moment of enlightenment and self-discovery. This enlightenment reflects a crucial development in his character which foreshadows his future role as spokesman in the Joseph story. It is clear that four movements crystallize in this recognition scene: a) Judah's re-connection to his Hebraic heritage and identity facilitated through the recognition and reacceptance of his insignia; b) the realization of his lack of responsibility to the Law and his injustice to Tamar and their subsequent reconciliation; c) Judah's movement from ignorance of his evil to a knowledge of his evil; d) a realization of his deception of and injustice to his father and Joseph. Genesis 38, therefore, and especially the recognition scene is multisignificant and bears heavily upon the reader's under-

standing of Judah actions in the remainder of the Joseph frame-story.

Transition

Judah's alienation from his past, family, and heritage, as I have shown, is consummated at the point when he gives up his insignia. When, therefore, he recognizes and receives them back, he is symbolically re-initiated into the family and the larger Hebraic identity which they are part of and point to.[236] When Judah is confronted with the objects he symbolically confronts himself and realizes his identity reflected in them (v.26). In this sense, anagnorisis is self-revelation or a recognition of one's own identity.[237] Symbolically, by

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[236] Genesis 38 operates here in a similar way to what one short story theorist, Mordecai Marcus, calls an initiation story. He says that the definition of an initiation story falls into two groups: "the first group describes initiation as a passage of the young from ignorance about the external world to some vital knowledge. The second describes initiation as an important self-discovery and a resulting adjustment to life or society, but definitions within these vary considerably" ("What is an Initiation Story," Charles E. May (ed.) Short Story Theories [Columbus, Ohio University Pres, 1976], p.191). One precise definition of an initiation story in this book that is clearly related to Genesis 38 is from Brooks and Warren, they see "initiation as a discovery of evil" and that the "protagonist [or we presume antagonist] seeks to come to terms with this discovery" Ibid., p.191. All these definitions are particularly relevant to the development of Judah in Genesis 38 and his development in the Joseph story. The latter definition in particular is relevant in the later part of the Joseph story when Judah comes to terms with his past evil and he seeks atonement for it.

[237] "The problem of recognizing oneself is the problem of recovering the ability to recount one's own history..." (Paul Ricoeur, Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action, and Interpretation [Cambridge: Cambridge

recognizing and accepting the insignia back he accepts himself as part of a larger Hebraic identity and family. The overall effect shifts Judah from a lost identity to a new or regained identity.[238] In other words, he is effectively reconciled with a larger Hebraic identity and heritage. This reconciliation and re-initiation is a pre-requisite for a future reconciliation with his brothers and father and a precursor to his role as spokesman. As we shall see, Judah speaks out of his concern for the survival of Israel and therefore the survival of that heritage and identity.

When Judah receives his insignia back, the interplay between his deceptions of and disloyalty to Tamar and the Law surface. This interplay illuminates and defines the extent and content of Judah's realization. When he recognizes the insignia--"the signet, the cord, and the staff"-- he also recognizes and discovers his evil and error of injustice (v.25). For the first time Judah understands that he has failed his responsibility to the Law, that he has been unjust to Tamar and Shelah, and in doing so, has threatened the

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University Press, 1981], p.268).

[238] In the structure of comedy (which Genesis 38 seems to exhibit by its rising action) one of its movements reflects what Northrop Frye calls "a drive toward identity." In this narrative Judah is driven towards what Frye would call "individual identity, when a character comes to know himself [herself] in a way that he did not before." At the same time there is a movement from "alienation to a growing awareness of a regained identity" (A.C. Hamilton, Northrop Frye: Anatomy of his Criticism [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990], p.137).

survival of the family.[239] The gravity of this discovery of his own evil are declared in the words: "She is righteous rather than I, inasmuch as I did not give her to my son Shelah" (v.26). Tamar is righteous because she has overcome her predicament and fulfilled the intent of the Law. He not only recognizes Tamar's identity, but, in the face of her righteousness, he sees his own evil. As Mieke Bal writes "Judah looks into the mirror she holds up to him and he admits his fault" and "from then on, Judah respects her."[240] He "comes to know himself in a way he did not before" and thereby undergoes a transformation. He makes the transition from impulsive and destructive behavior to reflection and understanding. What is illuminating is that Judah has found or acquired the ability to look at himself objectively. This is a precondition for the responsibility he is to assume as spokesman for the brothers.

It is also suggested that Judah has another more profound insight in Genesis 38 which is entirely dependent on its allusion to Genesis 37. The parallel repetition of the

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[239] Judah, by his fear and favoritism, has hindered Shelah's development into manhood; and, by sending Tamar to her father's house has kept her from developing into womanhood. The Levirate Law, if fulfilled, would have consummated both of these developments. He realizes that favoritism, as he will lead Jacob to understand, is problematic to the survival and reconciliation of the family.

[240] Mieke Bal, "Tamar from Father to Son, or On Subversion," Lethal Love: Feminist Literary Readings of the Biblical Love Stories (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), p.102.

'recognition scenes' in both Genesis 37 and 38 link them together and have the effect of signaling to the reader that Judah's "realization" also entails a flickering memory of his prior deception of his father and injustice to Joseph. This allusion is activated by the deployment of synonymous terms.[241] In Genesis 37 Judah and his brothers deceive their father into thinking that Joseph was killed, bringing to him Joseph's coat dipped in the blood of a kid, and saying: "Recognize, please, whether this is your son's tunic or not..." (Gen.37:32). Compare the similar scene in Genesis 38 which involves the revelation of a deception: "Recognize, please, whose these are, the cord, the signet and the staff" (Gen.38:26). In the first scene, Judah, along with his brothers, are the speakers of the words, in the second, Judah is the receiver of the words. Judah is present in both scenes. Furthermore, the symbolic resonance of the clothes or attire also link the scenes. The coat is the symbol of Judah's victimization of Joseph and the insignia are symbols of Judah's victimization of Tamar, though there is an ironic twist in the justice of the second compared with the first. In Genesis 38, therefore, Judah not only realizes his deception, guilt, disloyalty, and evil toward's Tamar, but the dovetailing of patterns suggests obliquely that he also realizes his

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[241] The allusion here is reflected in its three aspects that are mentioned by Alter: "similarity in phrasing, in motif, or in narrative situation" (The World of Biblical Literature, [New York: Basic Books, 1992], pp.110-111).

evil, guilt, deception, and disloyalty to his brother and father. In essence, Judah consciously realizes the evil that he perpetrated in both episodes.[242]

What Judah has learned from his experiences in Genesis 38 is crucial for understanding his role as representative or spokesman for the family in Egypt. His realizes the value of tradition, and specifically the tradition of the Levirate Law and its main intention: the survival and preservation of the family. His re-initiation back into the Hebraic heritage is facilitated through the insignia but also through his acceptance of the value of his heritage. Judah can only be spokesman for the family insofar as he represents the Hebraic identity. This is what makes him an appropriate representative for his family in Egypt. This is not all that makes Judah the appropriate candidate for his role as spokesman for the family, it is the deeper change that is wrought in him through his

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[242] A Midrash on vvs.24-26 reflects upon Judah's change of heart and interconnects his overall realization with his evil doings in Chapter 37. As Gunther W. Plaut writes, "Tamar threw the pledges before the feet of the judges, with the words: by the man whose these are I am with child but, though I perish in flames, I will not betray him. I hope the Lord of the world that he will turn the heart of the man, so that he will make a confession thereof." Then Judah rose up, and said: "With your permission, my brethren, and ye men of my father's house, I make it known that with what measure a man metes it shall be measured unto him, be it good or for evil, but happy the man that acknowledgeth his sins. Because I took the coat of Joseph, and colored it in blood of a kid, and then laid it before the feet of my father, saying, 'know now whether it be thy son's coat or not, therefore must I now confess, before the court, unto whom belongeth this signet, this cord and this staff'" (The Torah: A Modern Commentary [New York: The Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1981], p.254).

experiences in Genesis 38. The irresponsible, impulsive, destructive, and self-centered Judah becomes, as we will see, responsible, reflective, creative, and sacrificial, characteristics required of a family representative. What is important to notice throughout, therefore, is that Judah's experience in Genesis 38 has a definite impact upon his development in the Joseph story. Genesis 38 is a transition or initiatory constellation of ordeals, sufferings, and realizations that prepare Judah for his role in the Joseph story. The performance of Judah in this new role, as we will see, is crucial for the reconciliation and survival of the family. The destiny of the family of Israel therefore, is intimately related to the role and destiny of Judah in the Joseph story.

Return

Judah returns from his experience as revealed in Genesis 38 with a new knowledge, a new self-understanding, and a new or regained identity. He has now taken upon himself the task of spokesman or representative of the family. His reconnection with his Hebraic identity and heritage is essential to his return as spokesman. Judah plays a major role in overcoming the problems faced by the family and through his creative and responsible action is able to facilitate a reconciliation between the brothers and help the family survive. The words of Robert Sacks are worthy of remembering here and throughout:

> He is now willing to accept the burden which he assumed in Canaan. His responsibility is that of a man. He makes

> no claim for any special relation to God; he has no magic and handles himself in a purely human way.[243]

With this quote in mind, then, it will be clear throughout that a distinct contrast exists between Judah and Joseph which heightens the drama and creates unexpected twists in the action.

The famine makes a fitting backdrop to the theme of survival of the family in physical terms, which in the course of the story, links up with the survival of the family in socio-political terms. Furthermore, it is necessary to keep in mind that the "principle crisis of the story is a break in the family."[244] In this section I will be concerned with four elements which are intimately connected to Judah's role: a) survival of the family; b) Judah's self-sacrifice as an atonement for past evil; c) reconciliation of the brothers; d) Judah's blessing. These four concerns all have a connection to Judah's experience in Genesis 38, therefore, it will be necessary throughout to trace or point out these connections where necessary.

The action begins when Jacob sends his sons down to Egypt to get grain because of a famine, saying to them "go down and buy grain for us there, that we may live, and not die" (42:2). These words suggest the theme of physical survival and on

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[243] Robert D. Sacks, A Commentary on the Book of Genesis (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), p.144.

[244] George W. Coats, From Canaan to Egypt: Structural and Theological Context for the Joseph Story (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic Biblical Association, 1976), p.15.

another level, as the story develops, their political survival as Israel, God's people. They depart on their journey and upon reaching Egypt they are recognized by Joseph their brother though they remain ignorant of his identity. Joseph conceals his identity and takes this as an opportunity to devise a plan to test the brothers.[245] When he questions them about the reason for their visit they reply they are in Egypt "to buy food." Joseph, however, accuses them of being "spies" who have come to "see the weakness of the land" (42:9). They argue their honesty, their subserviency, and that they are twelve brothers of a man in the land of Canaan. Joseph pretends to disbelieve them and intensifies his test. After putting them in prison for three days he proposes to them:

> Do this and you will live, for I fear God: if you are honest men, let one of your brothers remain confined in your prison, and let the rest go and carry grain for the famine of your households, and bring your youngest brother to me; so your words will be verified, and you shall not die (42:18-20).

Joseph's proposition reiterates the theme of survival and triggers the brother's guilt feelings with regards to their prior dealings with Joseph (42:21-22). They are reluctant to respond to Joseph but understand that they have no choice. They leave Simeon in prison and return to Canaan with their sacks full, along the way finding the money they had spent also inside their bags. In 42:28, fearful of this strange turn

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[245] Notice the similarity between the actions of Joseph as compared to Tamar in Genesis 38, both include concealment, a counter-deception, and a plan to create a better situation.

of events, they draw an ominous or foreboding conclusion saying: "What is it that God had done to us?"

They return and tell their father about the vizier's request, and, that he has taken Simeon and will release him and allow trade there only if Benjamin is taken down to Egypt. Jacob is overwhelmed and resists the request by saying "Joseph is no more, and Simeon is no more, and now you would take Benjamin" (42:36). His lamentation reflects that he is unwilling to let his youngest son go but also suggests that he distrusts the sons of Leah. Reuban steps in and suggests to his father that he will go there, and if he does not return with Benjamin that Jacob can slay two of his sons (42:37). Jacob rejects Reuban's suggestion, which in the context of the theme of survival, intensifies matters and triggers Jacob to remember his supposedly dead son Joseph. He says ironically: "My son shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead, and he only is left" (42:38). We learn that the famine is growing severe and that Jacob softens his stance, no doubt, in part, because of the threat of the situation, and requests that they go buy a "little food" (43:2). The stress on a "little food" nuances with Judah's later stress on the survival of the "little ones," both of which suggest a humble and sincere concern for the family. Judah's simple, humble, and honest words, as we will see, reflect a world that is in sharp contrast to the deceptive, magical, and enchanted world that Joseph weaves round the brothers in Egypt.

Judah is a man of plain sense and allows nothing to detract from the basic facts that the family are facing. Unlike Reuban's plan which threatens his own son's lives, and which appears to a misguided way of trying to mend a broken tie with his father, Judah enters the drama with a suggestion diametrically opposed to Reuban with a hope to save lives. Judah argues that unless Benjamin accompanies them on the second journey to Egypt that they would not be able to get food. He presents the bare facts to Jacob repeating twice Joseph's words, "You shall not see my face, unless your brother is with you" (43:3, 5). The reader is aware that these words foreshadow the later revelation of Joseph's identity, but for the moment, intimate the ordeal the brothers and father are faced with: the survival of Simeon's life and permission to trade for the survival of all their lives. Judah tries to convince his father of the necessity of letting Benjamin go by building on similar words that Jacob had uttered in an earlier statement (42:2): "Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go, that we might live and not die, also we, also you, also our little ones" (43:8).[246] Judah is aware that the overprotection of the youngest, favored son is a threat to the survival of his family. He learned this lesson in Genesis 38. In this episode, therefore, his concern is to protect the

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[246] It is ironic that later it is the Egyptians who come asking for Joseph to buy their land for food saying "and give us seed, that we may live and not die...." (47:19) repeating the words that Jacob and Judah had said earlier.

family's survival, even if it means risking the life of the youngest, favored son.[247] As James Ackerman points out:

> He sees clearly that the continuation of the family is at stake, and he is able to get this insight through his father by picking up and building on the same phrase Jacob had used in 42:2 to respond to the famine: "so that we might live and not die- also we, also you, also our offspring."... Judah emphasizes the necessity that the next generation must continue. He shows Jacob that Jacob's efforts to save the life of the younger, favored son are threatening the continuation of the entire line.[248]

With Jacob the old problem resurfaces, he is still trying to protect the youngest, favored son. Judah sees that this favoritism is problematic for the survival of the whole family. In sharp contrast to Reuban who will give up two sons for one (42:37), Judah convinces Jacob that protecting the youngest will threaten the survival of the family. Judah makes his father understand that the survival of the family is at stake and the Egyptian vizier's (i.e., Joseph) request for Benjamin is the only way that the family will survive. Jacob, though disappointed and fearful, agrees to let Benjamin go. Without delay the brothers leave on the request for grain, this time taking a gift to Joseph that includes balm, gum, and myrrh--items which the Ishmaelite traders were carrying when Joseph was sold in Genesis 37. In the face of a serious

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[247] Mieke Bal writes that Judah is an example of the overprotective father and "overprotective fathers paralyze their sons and thus...kill their own family and stop history" ("Tamar from Father to Son, or On Subversion," p.102).

[248] James S. Ackerman, "Joseph, Judah, and Jacob," Genesis Harold Bloom (ed.), (New York: Chelsea House Pub., 1986), p.101.

ordeal, as we have seen, Judah measures up to the task as spokesman. Out of his responsibility for the family he convinces his father of the importance of letting Benjamin go to Egypt, and by this means, heightens the chances of the survival of the family. His filial responsibility in the face of a harsh and painful reality motivates Judah to take his chosen course of action. Furthermore, the thematic concerns such as favoritism, paternity, responsibility, identity, deception, and survival resonate with Judah's experience in Genesis 38 and show the multi-layered character of this cycle of stories.

With Benjamin before him in the precincts of Egypt Joseph is now in the position to put the second part of his plan into action. Joseph creates an enchanted world full of "doubt and wonder" and "pain and delight," a world of strange and mysterious twists which "give rise to awe."[249] Joseph the dreamer weaves a web of 'deception' to test the brother's loyalty and to discern whether they have changed since they sold him into slavery. Thus while the brothers are together and are eating and having the opportunity to act decisively, Joseph has his steward fill their bags with food and at the same time plant his silver divining cup in Benjamin's bag. Joseph has time to plan this since he neither eats with the Egyptians nor his brothers. Joseph's place in the world is on

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[249] Robert D. Sacks, A Commentary on the Book of Genesis, pp.70-78.

a threshold, part of each but of neither, a place where the light and dark aspects of life meet. With this completed he directs the steward to follow them, overtake them, and accuse them of stealing the cup. At this point the arc of tension rises. When they are discovered, and unnerved by the seeming magic, they argue that the money that they had found earlier in their sacks was returned, and announce that it is unreasonable to think that they would now steal the cup (44:8). An irony is clear: why would the brothers even want to steal a cup that had no power for them? Their reality is strained relationships and struggling with a famine, a divining cup is powerless to them.[250] It simply shows, at least on one level, Joseph's misjudgment of his brothers. The cup which symbolizes the deceptive and enchanted world that Joseph weaves, and for the moment which intimidates the brothers, is imminently futile to them. As we will see later, Judah will shatter this enchanted world with his speech on the family's survival. At present though they claim that "with whomever of your servants it be found, let him die, and we will be my lord's slaves" (44:9). When the divining cup is found in Benjamin's bag, Judah says "God has found out the guilt of your servants; behold, we are my lord's slaves, both we and he also in whose hand the cup has been found" (44:16). It is clear that Judah changes the conditions of the statement said

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[250] The possession of the divining cup also hints at a future slavery of the family in Egypt--the Egyptians will enthrall (subjugate) the Israelites in slavery for 400 years.

earlier which stated that the one found out "let him die."[251] The brothers certainly did not understand the extent of their words. While the brothers are dismayed by the incident, Joseph declares that only the thief must remain a slave for his offense, clearly meant as a test of his brothers' loyalty.

At this crucial moment Judah enters the drama and shows himself the worthy representative of the family, taking responsible action by offering himself as a slave in place of Benjamin. The qualities of sacrifice and responsibility he learned from Tamar in Genesis 38. This proposition is significant for it shows Judah's loyalty to Benjamin and his father and shows explicitly his change of heart. This is quite a sharp contrast to the Judah of Genesis 37 who was ego-centric, irresponsible, and who articulated a plan to profit from his brother's suffering. The old Judah sold his youngest brother Joseph into slavery, now in a near identical position with Benjamin, he sacrifices himself. In the context of Judah's whole development, therefore, his proposition of sacrifice is understandable as "an atonement for past evil" that he had caused Jacob and Joseph in Genesis 37. In Egypt Judah seems to

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[251] James Ackerman argues that this guilt also entails their realization of the guilt incurred by their injustice to Joseph long ago, "the guilt that Judah acknowledges God has 'found out'--we and his brothers know--is for an incident that took place long ago" "Joseph, Judah, and Jacob," p.90. Judah realizes this guilt in Genesis 38 but now expresses it openly now as a collective guilt and the connotation that they realize it too--a condition for their true reconciliation.

act like Jacob, taking personal responsibility for Benjamin's life. Judah carries with him insights into the nature of the relationship between the father and the youngest son that he learned in Genesis 38. Judah's empathy for his father stems from an understanding of "paternal favoritism" that he himself had experienced when he chose not to give Shelah to Tamar. His proposition of sacrifice is done in the service of the family, proving that he is a responsible representative.

In the next stage of the story Joseph does not accept Judah's offer, stating that "only the man in whose hand the cup was found shall be my slave" (44:17). It is at this juncture that Judah's skill as spokesman becomes all the more important. He knows that the survival of the family depends also on the survival of Benjamin who is intimately connected to their father. In a simple and honest way he convinces Joseph of this by touching him very deeply. Of course Joseph has a vested interest in the whole affair. He creates a situation that is similar to Genesis 37, testing whether the brothers, if they had a second chance, would have sold him into slavery. Confronted therefore with this predicament, Judah gives a long, poignant, and impassioned speech which reiterates not only the core of the story but also clarifies the effect that the missing Benjamin would have on his father and the nature of their close relationship:

> My lord asked his servants, saying, 'Have you a father, or a brother?' And we said to my lord, 'We have a father, an old man, and a young brother, the child of his old age; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his

> mother's children; and his father loves him. Then you said to your servants, 'Bring him down to me, that I may set my eyes upon him.' We said to my lord, 'The lad cannot leave his father, for if he should leave his father, his father would die' (44:19-22).

In these words the reader notices that a change has occurred.[252] Judah switches emphasis from his brother Benjamin to his father and explains emphatically to Joseph how Benjamin's life is deeply tied to his father. He further argues that his father's "life is bound up to the lad's life" (44:30) and that he "fears to see the evil that would come upon [his] father" (44:34). In his address to the Joseph, therefore, Judah implicates his father's fragility and attachment to the youngest son. As Ackerman states:

> Whereas he told Jacob that not risking the life of the son will be the death of Israel as a continuing family, Judah now tells the supposed Egyptian that the life of the father is bound to the life of the youngest son, and that the loss of Benjamin will be the death of Israel, the family's progenitor. True, Judah is himself the pledge for Benjamin's safety, but his speech shows that

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[252] Robert Alter comments that Judah's "remarkable speech is a point-for-point undoing, morally and psychologically, of the brother's earlier violation of fraternal and filial bonds. A basic biblical perception about both human relations and relations between God and man is that love is unpredictable, arbitrary, at times seemingly unjust, and Judah now comes to an acceptance of that fact with all its consequences. His father, he states clearly to Joseph, has singled out Benjamin for a special love, as he singled out Rachel's other son before. It is a painful reality of favoritism with which Judah, in contrast to the earlier jealousy over Joseph, is here reconciled, out of filial love. His entire speech is motivated by the deepest empathy for his father, by a real understanding of what it means for the old man's very life to be bound up with the lad" (The Art of Biblical Narrative, p.175). I should add that Judah's understanding of his father's favoritism is based on a similar experience he has with Shelah in Genesis 38, and though he does not condone it, it certainly helps Judah understand his father's position.

> his father's life is more important to him. Thus he offers to remain in Egypt as slave so that Benjamin may go up with his brothers and so that Israel may live.[253]

In Judah's view what seems to be of utmost importance is the survival of the family and this can only occur on the condition that both his youngest brother and father remain alive. Earlier he stressed to his father that he must risk the life of the youngest son, here, ironically, Judah speaks in a paternalistic tone hoping to be powerful enough to move the vizier to change his mind and free the youngest son. He tells Joseph that "we have a father, an old man, and a young brother, the child of his old age; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother's children; and his father loves him" (44:20); and recapitulates Jacob's words: "you know that my wife bore two sons; one left me, and I said, surely he has been torn to pieces; and I have never seen him since" (44:27-28). Throughout Judah's speech are suggestions of the earlier violation of Joseph which heightens the irony, but it is Judah's simple stating of the facts that seems to have the most powerful impact upon Joseph. Overcome by Judah's speech he begins to weep (45:2). The tears represent symbolically the eruption of chaos and a new world coming into being, a shattering of Joseph's dreamworld and his coming down to earth, out of dreams to the plain sense of things. This is caused by Judah's plain sense world, a world he came to

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[253] James Ackerman, "Joseph, Judah, and Jacob," p.103.

understand through his experience in Genesis 38. Judah shakes Joseph loose of his self-centeredness, something he knew first hand from the Tamar affair, and points out the plain sense of the situation at hand--the threatened survival of the little ones. In drama-tic fashion, human feeling breaks through the magician's mask and he responds by revealing his identity: "I am Joseph; is my father still alive?" (45:3) He is no longer the Egyptian Zephenathpaneah, but is revealed as Joseph, the Israelite. Judah's brutal and simple honesty has the power to shatter and break through the world of enchantment that Joseph is encased. He is drawn back to the real world, a world in which his family is struggling to survive in. Once Joseph's identity is revealed, Joseph quickly changes the focus to his father. As in Judah's speech, Joseph's emphasis is placed upon the survival of his father. This alludes to the fact that Israel's (Jacob) life is essential for their survival and reconciliation.

In his new role as spokesman the tone of Judah's speech is sensitive, sincere, and conciliatory. Judah's speech and actions prove to Joseph his loyalty and goodness, but it is the naked honesty of his speech, in sharp contrast to Joseph's guile, which breaks through Joseph's cool exterior and causes him to reveal his identity. The uncovering of Joseph's identity makes survival and reconciliation of the family a concrete reality, both in physical terms from the famine and in political terms as the family Israel. The power that Joseph

has now is not magical but as vizier and "chief provisioner," he has the power to grant land and trade, the hard core facts of life.

Joseph, however, cannot give up totally the art of interpretation. He sees that the guiding force working below the surface that 'turns evil into good' is God's agency. He draws the conclusion, quite dramatically, that God was involved all along in the design of the whole situation, even to the extent of his being sold into slavery. Given these events, Coats states that "God's agency relates to intentions for the future" and since "God's purpose is the preservation of life...Joseph's move to Egypt provides a means for preserving the family."[254] As Joseph remarks, "God sent me before you to preserve life" (45:5) and "God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to keep alive for you many survivors" (45:6-8). The first statement encapsulates the survival of the family in physical terms in the face of the famine and the second the survival of the family of Israel in political terms in the face of disunity and slavery. Suggestive of God's promise, Joseph later on gives his family the 'land' of Goshen and says: "Do this: take wagons from the land of Egypt for your little ones and for your wives, and bring your father, and come" (45:19). The stress on the "little ones" repeats Judah's earlier words, and reflects the concern for the family's future generations. The giving of 'land' is

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[254] George W. Coats, From Canaan to Egypt, p.45.

a key pre-requisite for the family's move from Canaan to Egypt and their complete reconciliation. A quick glance would give the impression that it is Joseph's actions which are most intimately connected to the (hi)story of Israel's movement towards nationhood and part of God's providential plan. Joseph, as he rightly says himself, is guided by a divine power. Judah, on the other hand, has learned to carry out the providential plan in another way, through his responsibility for the family. Judah's performance in the scheme of things therefore must not be underestimated. Judah is the primary agent in effecting Joseph's revelation and reconciliation. He should be seen as the cause that moved Joseph into his taken course of action.[255] If we note Joseph's words it is clear that he interprets his role in the divine scheme and merely reiterates the core theme of Judah's speech: the need for survival of the family with a stress on the survival of his father. Thus, to revise the argument a little, it is Judah who has the key insight and role in the (hi)story of Israel's movement towards nationhood and Judah who is a part of God's

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[255] It should be stressed very strongly that it is from Joseph's viewpoint that the reader learns God has been working below the surface to establish and guide the family of Israel (Jacob), but, it is through Judah's concrete actions and speech that initiates Joseph to act. He but reiterates the concerns that Judah first of all emphasized as the most important for the family. It is clear that Joseph's role in the providential plan is his position as the vizier, he has the position of power to make certain events happen. It is Judah, however, who is the primary agent in bringing about reconciliation of the family and moving the family toward's its destiny. Joseph's actions are a consequence of Judah's insights and action.

providential plan. This makes perfect and logical sense in the context of Judah's development and suggests the reason why Judah is given the most intense and promising blessing.

The crystallization of Judah's development and destiny is his blessing, given to him by his father in the 49th chapter. In a crypto-prophetic form Jacob tells his sons to "Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you what shall befall you in the days to come" (49:1). At this juncture Jacob issues a series of blessings upon his sons, but the most important and extended blessing is reserved for Judah. There is one statement within the sequence that encapsulates Judah's blessing as a whole and at the same time resonates with Genesis 38: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet" (49:10). The mention of the sceptre or staff alludes to the staff that temporarily departed from Judah's hand in Genesis 38 before being returned. Jacob's words verify that it shall never depart again. The staff acts as a allusion which not only interconnects the stories but also suggests the preeminence of Judah's line as the blessed line who will survive and continue into the future. The staff, therefore, resonates the theme of survival and takes on a political connotation and significance.

The bestowal of the blessing consummates the most profound reconciliation of Judah with his family and integration into the Hebraic identity. The blessing acknowledges his place in the divine promise, God's providential plan, and the destiny

of God's people, both on the personal and political levels. In essence, Judah's whole development is one that has moved from punitive to redemptive irony. As Meir Sternberg states:

> The lesson Judah learns the hard way, by 'real life' analogy with the Tamar affair, is multifold and cumulative, indeed developing...from thematics to dramatics-from hidden commentary on the plot to the workings of hidden plot itself, from heavenly judgement to self-judgement, from punitive to redemptive irony, from the reader's eyes to Judah's.[256]

Judah's development resonates with the whole of Israel as presented in the Pentateuch which "lives out of the past, towards the future. It knows no future that does not arise from its past, that is, from its past as the arena of its encounter with the divine promise."[257] Judah, as the eponymous ancestor of king David, is linked to a pattern of fulfillment and promise.[258]

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[256] Meir Sternberg, "Time and Space in Biblical (Hi)story Telling: The Grand Chronology," The Book and the Text: The Bible and Literary Theory (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p.131-32.

[257] David J. Clines, The Theme of the Pentateuch, p.115.

[258] The story of Judah's experience comes closest to what Eric Auerbach says, in discussing biblical narrative, as "fraught with background." This expresses that "a biblical character stands in an ongoing narrative of tensions, precedents, and destinies. The sense of an ongoing story in which biblical characters take part grants... a sense of background" (Wesley A. Kort, Story, Text, and Scripture: Literary Interests in Biblical Narrative [University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988], p.87).

Conclusion

The development of Judah in the Joseph story is clearly interconnected with Genesis 38. Through the investigation of the pattern of departure-transition-return it has been shown how the story fits in its present literary context.[259] As we have seen throughout, the change in Judah's character is clearly dependent upon the psycho-dramatic experience that he underwent in Genesis 38 and serves to bridge the old and new Judah.[260] As Meir Sternberg comments:

> In retrospect, indeed, the old thematic analogy with Jacob not only comes to the fore but takes on psychic and causal force as well, sufficient to bridge the apparent discontinuity between the past and the present Judah. Before confronting Joseph again and offering to take Benjamin's place for the sake of Jacob, we infer, Judah had gone through an experience that forced him to consider and reconsider family tangles from the paternal viewpoint. It has opened his eyes and heart to the predicament of fatherhood--trials, injustices, suffering, and all. Nor is Judah, the role-reversal imposed by his conflict with Tamar behind him, now allowed to forget that chastening and enlarging experience.[261]

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[259] The characterization of Judah shows clearly "the biblical understanding of individual character as something which develops and is transformed by time--is a center of surprise" which makes characters inevitably "unpredictable" and possessing a "changing nature" (The Art of Biblical Narrative, p.126).

[260] One may be reminded of the comment of Gila Ramras-Rauch that "the reversal of one's lot, due to a deep conviction, is a frequent motif in the biblical narrative. The protagonist often begins in a position that is the diametric opposite to his or her designated place in the divine scheme" ("Fathers and Daughters: Two Biblical Narratives," Mappings of the Biblical Terrain: The Bible as Text [Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1990], p.166).

[261] Meir Sternberg, "Time and Space in Biblical (Hi)story: The Grand Chronology," p.131.

Judah's development, however, is not the only way by which Genesis 38 is connected to its literary context. Genesis 38 is also connected through a number of common motifs and themes that have arisen through analysis: parenthood, deception, favoritism, brotherly relationships, strife, reconciliation, survival, recognition, responsibility, justice, evil, family, progeny, continuity, and knowledge. These themes have the effect of joining Genesis 38 and the Joseph cycle into a network of interconnected meaning.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Some concluding remarks are in order. The study of Genesis 38 focused through the traditional historical-critical method has overlooked, it seems, one distinctive feature of biblical texts, its narrative art. The analysis and interpretation of narrative art depends for its understanding on a literary-critical strategy. This, as I have shown, can be provided by a combination of approaches such New Criticism and Reader-Response criticism. Here I have tried to combine a literary-critical method based on a theoretical and methodological foundation with the example of a concrete interpretation of Genesis 38. In this respect the study has been very productive and shows that literary-criticism is clearly relevant to the contemporary study of the Hebrew Bible. This study has shown through a literary-critical analysis, therefore, that Genesis 38 as a definite structural unit intimately related to its literary context is of high artistic achievement. By an artful enterprise of patterns, Genesis 38 evinces a parallel, surface, and plot structure that forms a five-fold structural unity. The story is animated with the artful manipulations of characterization, subtle interior views, and deviant actions. The story is built upon a tensional structure of descent and ascent and interfused with a high degree of irony and unexpected occurrences in the events. This creates suspense and surprise and makes the reading experience aesthetically rewarding.

The placement of Genesis 38 within its literary context is also clearly an artful strategy. The story acts as a microcosm of the key themes and concerns that will confront the reader in the Joseph cycle. As I have shown, these themes and concerns, in addition to Judah's role, connect Genesis 38 to the Joseph cycle. The themes and motifs of survival, identity, responsibility, blessing, evil, parenthood, reconciliation, justice, family, and continuity along with Judah's development and characterization, as reflected in the pattern of departure-transition-return, connect the stories together. One can conclude, therefore, that Genesis 38 is not only a self-contained structural unit in and of itself but by way of analogy and allusion interconnects with the Joseph cycle in which it is embedded. One would hope that continuing studies will discover other subtle connections between Genesis 38 and the surrounding Joseph cycle.

Since space only provides for a certain amount of analysis in the course of a given study, one theme that I gave little attention that should be mentioned as an important element of Genesis 38 is the role of women. Most studies that have dealt with this theme have not done justice to the role of Tamar in Genesis 38. The portrait of Tamar in Genesis 38 shows her to be very intense, independent, decisive, and intelligent. Tamar, unlike her foil, Shua's daughter or the unnamed wife of Judah, breaks the mold of the female as "womb only." The unnamed wife gets married, bears children, and dies. Her life,

purpose, and fate are fixed and cyclical. The named Tamar, after being accused obliquely of the deaths of Judah's sons, is dismissed to her father's house to wait for Shelah. At the beginning, while waiting to marry Shelah, she complies passively to this predicament. She realizes later, however, that her dismissal is one of permanent widowhood, and that Judah has no intention of having her marry Shelah. She devises a strategy, therefore, to overcome her harsh situation. Dressed as a harlot, she deceives Judah into impregnating her, later giving birth to twins. In the face of a threat to the family's survival Tamar continues the family. For this she is deemed righteous by Judah. These events show Tamar breaking the set codes and fixed roles of womanly behavior as is assumed in biblical ideology. She makes decisions from her own individual view-point which define her own destiny. This destiny, as we learn, achieves a larger purpose: she shows Judah the "way" to sacrifice, responsibility, and reflection for the survival of the family. Any forthwith discussion of the female figures or the role of women in the Hebrew Bible should, therefore, include Tamar. She stands in line with other great female figures in the biblical landscape, who, by way of maverick action, carries out the purpose of God.

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