

A LITERARY READING OF THE EXODUS STORY

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tripping over gravity
missing logic
tripping over gravity

-Sam Phillips, *Cruel Invention*

forget that fear of gravity
get a little savagery in your life

-Max Webster, *High Class in Borrowed Shoes*

Out yonder there was this huge world, which exists independently of us human beings and which stands before us like a great eternal riddle The contemplation of this world beckoned like a liberation.

-Albert Einstein

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis has been composed by myself and that the work contained herein is my own.

ABSTRACT

The present work offers an explication of Exodus 1-14 in the Masoretic text from a literary perspective and questions the methodological relationship between Narrative Criticism and traditional Historical Criticism.

Chapter One outlines a set of theoretical assumptions upon which the reading of Exodus is based with regard to history, referentiality, the diachronic/synchronic relationship, intentionality and ideology. Along with theory, the method being utilised is discussed, particularly with respect to its role in a pluralistic methodological sphere and also in relation to the stance of the interpreter along emic and etic lines of discussion.

Chapter Two interacts with a selection of approaches through which the Exodus story has been read and evaluates their usefulness for Narrative Criticism.

Chapters Three to Five contain the Narrative Criticism proper as applied to Exodus 1-14: Chapter Three examines the plot of the entire story in a descriptive manner. After an initial survey and consideration of plot from Aristotle onwards, the plot of Exodus 1-14 is subdivided into four main parts: Section I: Exod 1:1-2:25 (*Introduction*), Section II: Exod 3:1-7:7 (*Ascent*), Section III: Exod 7:8-13:16 (*Complication*) and Section IV: Exod 13:17-14:31 (*Conclusion*).

Chapter Four deals with the characterisation of the story's *Introduction* (Section I: Exod 1:1-2:25), focusing initially on the diverse characterisation techniques and character types found within its seven pericopae. Then a major section on etiology opens the methodological dialogue between Narrative Criticism and traditional Historical Criticism (with the issue of etiology—Form Criticism) and intimates a positive interrelationship.

Chapter Five offers a close reading of the Prologue and initial Plagues triad (Exod 7:8-8:15) from a narrative-critical perspective, and then continues the literary/historical dialogue concerning method, with the entire Plagues narratives (Section III: Exod 7:8-13:16) as primary data. Whereas the narratological function of these narratives is that they offer links with previous and future story-elements through resonances and foreshadowing, at a historical-compositional level they can be seen to represent two separate tradition-complexes.

The thesis locates the method of Narrative Criticism within a context of certain issues that are relevant to literary theory. It samples this method by treating the plot of the whole story, the characterisation of the *Introduction* and the narratology of the Plagues. Finally, the thesis discusses the relationship between Narrative Criticism and issues (like etiology and the compositional development of the story) long discussed by more historical types of criticism.

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INTRODUCTION

The variety of hermeneutical methods currently available for the analysis of biblical texts can have a staggering effect on the individual interpreter. An increased focus on the role of the reader within the hermeneutical process, coupled with a seeming lack of fixed reference points, makes this effect more pronounced. Also, preoccupation with the burgeoning 'new' often assumes an unfortunate yet forthright rejection of the old, and any semblance of balanced treatment appears unattainable.

These are also exciting times for those involved in interpretative endeavours. The new wave of method options has produced a fresh battery of studies; the torch of the discipline, passed down from its patriarchs—WELLHAUSEN and GUNKEL, ALT and NOTH—is bringing new light. Consideration of narrative intricacies and the interplay between subtle story-elements has grown in studies of the past decade or so, as in R. W. L. MOBERLY'S *At the Mountain of God: Story and Theology in Exodus 32-34*,¹ GORDON F. DAVIES *Israel in Egypt: Reading Exodus 1-22*² and JOE MELVIN SPRINKLE'S *A Literary Approach to Biblical Law: Exodus 20:22-23:19*.³ Along similar lines, TERENCE E. FRETHEIM has recently produced what is essentially a literary commentary on Exodus,⁴ contributing to an increasingly popular sub-genre of commentary.⁵

¹JSOTSup 22 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1983).

²JSOTSup 135 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992).

³Ph.D. thesis, Hebrew Union College—Jewish Institute of Religion (Ohio), 1991; now published as JSOTSup 174 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994).

⁴*Exodus*, in *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1991), 6-7, *passim*.

Admittedly, the term 'literary' encompasses many different interests that rest upon varying theoretical assumptions which will be discussed in Chapter One (*Theory and Method in Reading the Exodus Story*).

The present work attempts a literary reading of the Exodus story, with close observation limited to chapters 1 to 14. As many commentators on Exodus acknowledge,⁶ these chapters represent a largely self-contained prose narrative, although certain of their elements point elsewhere in the book. For example, at the early stage of Exod 3:2-4, the use of *הַסֵּנֶה* intimates by assonance the significant Sinai experience of chapters 19ff. in the present shape of the story; also, the return to 'this mountain' (3:12) as a sign of Yahweh's commission takes place outwith these chapters. Because chapter 15 rehearses the story with differences in form and nuance, the present work will examine chapters 1 to 14 in the Masoretic Hebrew Text with tools supplied by the literary approach becoming known as Narrative Criticism.

This thesis is subdivided into two main areas of interest. First, it offers an explication of Exodus 1-14 in the Masoretic text from a literary perspective. The governing interests here are not primarily historical (archaeological, redaction-, source-, text-critical), ideological (feminist, liberationist, new historicist) or

⁵Cf. ROBERT POLZIN, *Samuel and the Deuteronomist: A Literary Study of the Deuteronomistic History*, Pt. 2: 1 Samuel (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), companion volume to *Moses and the Deuteronomist: A Literary Study of the Deuteronomistic History*, Pt. 1: Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges (New York: Seabury Press, 1980); also, IAIN W. PROVAN, *1-2 Kings*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, publication forthcoming, 1995).

⁶See MARTIN NOTH's discussion of the exodus from Egypt as a main topic of the book (*Exodus: A Commentary*, OTL, trans. J. S. Bowden [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962], 10-11) which is to be exegeted in its final form (18). He includes the poem of 15:1-21 at the end of this main section as a Thanksgiving for deliverance (120-26). WILLIAM JOHNSTONE (*Exodus*, Old Testament Guides, gen. ed. R. N. WHYBRAY [Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990], 11-12) also includes the poem and divides 1:1-15:21 as the first of three clear sections (the other two are 15:22-18:27 and 19:1-40:38).

theological (christological, dogmatic, or whatever) but literary. Obviously, these various interests intersect at points; the notion of pure, non-ideologically affected research is an illusion. But if one is able to draw up ideal lines of intent, it is the narrative aspects of Exodus 1-14 which are sought here. This initial section attempts to read the Exodus story as a corrective to the problem long ago described by CASSUTO:

The commentaries written in our generation on any book of the Pentateuch are, in most instances, chiefly devoted to investigating the sources and to determining the process by which they have been fitted together. They annotate the documentary fragments that they discern in the book rather than the book itself. The great importance attached by exegetes to the question of the sources diverts their attention from the study of the work that has grown out of these documents. In their opinion, the study of the sources takes precedence over that of the book as we have it. To my mind, the reverse view is the more reasonable.⁷

A second key interest is the attempt to discuss the methodological relationship between Narrative Criticism and traditional Historical Criticism. With consideration of specific issues like etiology and the redactional structure of the Plagues, the limitations of literary approaches are emphasised and a balance is sought between the old and the new.

All abbreviations follow the format prescribed by the *Journal of Biblical Literature* Instructions for Contributors; the Hebrew versification is used and translations are my own except where otherwise noted. Unfortunately, CEES HOUTMAN'S thorough treatment of Exodus⁸ appeared too late for usage in the present work.

⁷UMBERTO CASSUTO, preface to *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1967), 1.

⁸*Exodus* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1994).

CHAPTER ONE

THEORY AND METHOD IN READING THE EXODUS STORY

INTRODUCTION: THE CREATION OF THE WORLD

Reading the opening chapters of Genesis—which support both the Hebrew and Christian Bibles as introductory pillars—enables the extraction of an important literary principle which cannot be found in the generically-similar accounts of origins from other ancient Near Eastern cultural writings. Words create worlds. Unlike Egypt, where Shu and Tefnut are produced as a result of the sole deity Atum's masturbational efforts and then they continue the creation process,¹ or Mesopotamia, where Marduk generates the assemblage of the universe through conflict with Tiamat,² Genesis depicts the construction of a cosmological reality effected by verbal discourse.

¹See J. ZANDEE, 'The Birth-Giving Creator-God in Ancient Egypt', in *Studies in Pharaonic Religion and Society in Honour of J. Gwyn Griffiths*, ed. ALAN B. LLOYD, Occasional Publications 8 (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1992), 169-85. The standard text of this Egyptian creation account can be found in JAMES B. PRITCHARD, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), 3-4.

²*Enuma Elish*, Tablet 4, Lines 89-104, 128-46 and Tablet 6 Lines 1-28; in S. LANGDON, *The Babylonian Epic of Creation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), 139-41, 147-49, 165-71. Also, PRITCHARD, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 60-72 with additions to Tablets V-VII in idem, *The Ancient Near East: Supplementary Texts and Pictures Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 65-67; WALTER BEYERLIN, ed., *Near Eastern Religious Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1978), 83-84; and STEPHANIE DALLEY, *Myths from Mesopotamia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 253-55, 260-61.

The notion of the inherent value within words to construct worlds remains a useful *terminus a quo* for the analysis of literary texts. Further elucidation is required, however, specifically relating to the location of the constructed world both with reference to the text and also to the adjacent world of historical reality and its spatio-temporal confines. Where does the world constructed by the text reside? *Within* the fabric of the text itself? *Underneath* or *behind* the text as forms of Structuralism or Ideological Criticism might inevitably suggest? *Interconnected* with other texts, as Deconstruction would presume? Or perhaps somewhere further back—*before* the text and in the reading strategy and/or mind of the interpreter, as Reader-response Criticism would advocate? Regarding the relationship between text and history in this world-analogy, is it possible to interlock this constructed world within the contours of documentable and potentially reconstructable history? Or is it better to deem such a relationship an unnecessary correlate, preferring instead to think along functional lines of a textual ‘parallel universe syndrome’?

The adjectival attributing of ‘literary’ to a methodology intent on analysing texts is anything but self-explanatory and requires explanation not only of the methodological means by which the data in question will be examined, but also of the theory behind the method and the assumptions it both contains and contributes to the whole process. The following chapter represents an attempt to outline a basic literary methodology for working with the Exodus story and to describe the theoretical assumptions which underlie this method.

THEORY

Development

Far from being an ethereal or transcendent matter, safely isolated from the contingencies of human existence, theory is mottled through and through with history, context, and personal preferences and prejudice. Theory is, in short, a matter of practice.³

The growth of methodological variation in approaches to biblical texts has remained largely a question of *method* in the subsequent discussion which it has provoked. From the dissemination of information via academic papers, colloquia, journal articles and monographs, the discourse of criticism has often shortchanged the discussion in restricting its terms merely to method. AS DAVID CLINES has clearly stated, 'Methods are a means to an end'⁴ and must be viewed as separate from the prevailing set of assumptions upon which they operate. A method exemplifies the active reading strategy that arises out of a predecided theoretical foundation of literary interests and decisions, of assumptions and conclusions pertaining not only to literary texts but also to their function within and reference to reality itself. The above block quote reveals by negative example with its Marxist overtones that the idea of method is not as neutralised as it should be in the discourse of the academy and, furthermore, that any inquiry into methodological variegation can only achieve a surer

³G. DOUGLAS ATKINS, preface to *Contemporary Literary Theory*, ed. G. DOUGLAS ATKINS and LAURA MORROW (n.p.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1989), x-xi.

⁴DAVID J. A. CLINES, 'Methods in Old Testament Study', in *Beginning Old Testament Study*, ed. JOHN ROGERSON (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982), 27.

result when the theoretical assumptions which underlie a particular method are addressed.

Not only is the promulgation of various methods a widespread feature of literary research but so is the introduction of *theory* into the subdiscipline. Within literary criticism, such volumes as *Literary Theory: An Introduction*,⁵ *After Strange Texts: The Role of Theory in the Study of Literature*⁶ and *Contemporary Literary Theory*⁷ document the rise of theory and illustrate its manifold expressions.⁸ In fact, HOWARD FELPERIN speaks of a paradigm-shift towards theory as a common denominator in literary studies,⁹ a leaning which goes so far as to invite the observation that theory may actually become literature, comprised of its own fictitiousness and style.¹⁰ Note G. DOUGLAS ATKINS'S comment,

I insist that . . . criticism and theory may be read *as literature* and *for enjoyment*. Teasing metaphors, attending closely to structure, rhetorical patterns, and textual dynamics, we linger over style, brooding upon the letter, rather than rush to penetrate the text . . . and to transcend language in favor of spirit, idea, or meaning. But even as

⁵TERRY EAGLETON (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983).

⁶Ed. GREGORY S. JAY and DAVID L. MILLER (n.p.: University of Alabama Press, 1985).

⁷Ed. G. DOUGLAS ATKINS and LAURA MORROW (n.p.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1989).

⁸See also WILLIAM E. CAIN, *The Crisis in Criticism: Theory, Literature, and Reform in English Studies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), ROBERT SCHOLES, *Textual Power: Literary Theory and the Teaching of English* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985) and PAUL A. BOVÉ, *Intellectuals in Power: A Genealogy of Critical Humanism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).

⁹*Beyond Deconstruction: The Uses and Abuses of Literary Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 1, 200, 211.

¹⁰ELIZABETH W. BRUSS, *Beautiful Theories: The Spectacle of Discourse in Contemporary Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982).

I teach the literary nature of theoretical texts, I stress the theoretical and critical implications of literary texts. . . .¹¹

The concern over adequate coverage of theoretical assumptions has entered the biblical studies arena as well. In his 1985 paper entitled 'The Role of Theory in Biblical Criticism', EDWARD L. GREENSTEIN informed the participants in the ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies of the relativity of the exegetical enterprise with his comments that,

Different theories will perform different exegeses, and one can get nowhere by criticizing a theory for using its own conceptual framework and its own methods. If we have different models, and then of necessity different methods—and we do—we can only understand each other in the terms of each other's theories.¹²

Because the field of biblical studies is not built upon a single theoretical foundation, as GREENSTEIN emphasises,¹³ it is important to engage in dialogue about the nature of particular theories and their practical exposition through various defined methods in biblical researches.¹⁴

¹¹'Introduction: Literary Theory, Critical Practice, and the Classroom', in *Contemporary Literary Theory*, 20.

¹²EDWARD L. GREENSTEIN, 'The Role of Theory in Biblical Criticism', in *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies; Division A: The Period of the Bible* (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1986), 173.

¹³*Ibid.*, 167.

¹⁴An example of the attempt at a cross-fertilisation of differing interpretative interests is the recently begun *Biblical Interpretation: A Journal of Contemporary Approaches* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993), part of whose mandate is to 'provide both a forum for fresh interpretation of particular texts and a forum for theoretical debate'. Another interesting illustration of the significant effect of a defined theory upon the exegetical results of its chosen method is the first-person reflections of ROLF RENDTORFF on 'How to Approach Leviticus' (in *Proceedings of the Tenth World Congress of Jewish Studies; Division A: The Bible and its World* [Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1990], 13-20), wherein PROFESSOR RENDTORFF surveys the prior agenda

Not surprisingly, however, various dissenters have attempted to dam the flow of theoretical expansion, resulting in what the late American deconstructionist PAUL DE MAN described as *The Resistance to Theory*.¹⁵ Within the field of literary criticism proper, for example, scholars within the American pragmatist tradition have argued for an anti-theoretical stance, describing the idea of theory as an illusion that thinks it can bypass the issue of intentionality with the safe assumption that various methods of interpretation are possible.¹⁶ Amongst textual practitioners with vested biblical interests, ROBERT ALTER has recently promoted like anti-theoretical notions in his recent book, *The Pleasures of Reading in an Ideological Age*.¹⁷ ALTER identifies a ‘tide of peculiarity’¹⁸ and laments what he calls ‘the disappearance of reading’ in his contention that theoretical and ideological approaches to the criticism of literature are so prominent that the actual reading of literary works themselves has become rare.¹⁹ The main problem which ALTER wants to address is the purported tendency of

of the *Biblischer Kommentar* series under the founding editorship of MARTIN NOTH and GERHARD VON RAD and then outlines his own perspective on the task of a commentary for the third book of the Pentateuch. Whereas the original series sought to divulge information relating to traditional critical interests, RENDTORFF instead trod his own path: ‘... it has become fully clear that I am no longer sailing in the framework of the old German fleet which is still dedicated to the old-fashioned *Literarkritik*’ (‘How to Approach Leviticus’, 20).

¹⁵(Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), published posthumously.

¹⁶STEVEN KNAPP and WALTER BENN MICHAELS, ‘Against Theory’, *Critical Inquiry* 8 (1982): 723-42. For these critics, the notions of meaning and authorial intention are completely inseparable.

¹⁷(New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989).

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁹See particularly his initial chapter, ‘Introduction: The Disappearance of Reading’ and the sweeping criticisms of its polemic.

deconstructionists and other ideologically-concerned readers to de-canonise texts and to 'read' texts 'extra-textually' without recognising the important distinction between literary and non-literary texts. Although ALTER'S method is not without its problems, the somewhat scathing criticisms of BURKE O. LONG in 'The "New" Biblical Poetics of Alter and Sternberg'²⁰—that ALTER essentially claims a methodological priority for his own reading strategy and attempts to virtually 'absolutise' and universalise his approach—are not entirely justified in the light of the important distinction which ALTER makes between 'interpretive pluralism' and 'interpretive anarchy'.²¹

Definition

The definition of 'theory' is an important starting-point for attempting to distinguish between theory and method in analytic terms. Connected etymologically with the Greek words θεωρέω ('to look at, behold') and θεωρός ('a spectator'), the word is defined in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* as a 'Supposition or system of ideas explaining something, esp. one based on general principles independent of the facts, phenomena, etc. to be explained,²² while *A Dictionary of Literary, Dramatic, and Cinematic Terms* simply states that 'The *theoretical critic* is concerned with principles rather than with particular works, though like Aristotle he may touch on particular works'²³ with the purpose of this kind of criticism being 'to formulate

²⁰*JSOT* 51 (1992): 71-84.

²¹*Pleasures of Reading*, 19.

²²(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), s.v. 'theory', 1201.

²³Ed. SYLVAN BARNET, MORTON BERMAN and WILLIAM BURTO, 2d ed. (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1971), s.v. 'criticism', 30-32.

inclusive and enduring aesthetic and critical tenets'.²⁴ Theory has been defined in negative terms as '... the attempt to *govern* interpretations of particular texts by appealing to an account of interpretation in general';²⁵ in practical terms as 'the critique of established practice and the beliefs and values (usually concealed) that justify this practice, and second, the inspection of new theories and forms of practice that get proposed as substitutes for what has formerly been in place'²⁶; and in terms which distinguish it from method,

There is a difference, in other words, between *theory*, understood as 'an extremely sophisticated and powerful set of procedures' for opening assumptions up for scrutiny, and *a theory* functioning as a particular and competitive reading strategy (even if not necessarily a set of directions for the better 'processing' of texts).²⁷

If the statement of GREENSTEIN is true that in our making of literary or other sorts of observations on the Bible we 'use the models with which we are familiar to identify and classify that which we observe',²⁸ it is imperative that the system of principles or assumptions upon which the present reading of Exodus 1-14 operates is outlined and discussed.

²⁴C. HUGH HOLMAN and WILLIAM HARMON, *A Handbook to Literature*, 5th ed. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1986), s.v. 'theoretical criticism', 502; also JACK MYERS and MICHAEL SIMMS, *The Longman Dictionary of Poetic Terms*, Longman English and Humanities Series, ed. LEE JACOBUS (London: Longman, 1989), s.v. 'theoretical criticism', 308.

²⁵KNAPP and MICHAELS, 'Against Theory', 723 (emphasis mine).

²⁶CAIN, *Crisis in Criticism*, 221.

²⁷ATKINS, 'Introduction: Literary Theory', in *Contemporary Literary Theory*, 10; quoting ROBERT SCHOLES, *Textual Power*, xi.

²⁸'The Role of Theory in Biblical Criticism', 169.

Delineation

There are five identifiable and largely related areas to be considered as important facets in the literary sphere which contribute to the theoretical substructure of this thesis: history, referentiality, synchronicity, intentionality and ideology.

The Attitude to History

Accusations have been hurled against practitioners of the new literary approach which insinuate that they either do not take the concept of history seriously enough in their inquiry or that they bypass it altogether. History in this discussion can refer not only to the historicity of particular events but also to the historical development of the text—its composition and transmission, along with its surrounding social context. Lack of clarity regarding the limits and extent of the approach also raises questions about the validity of substantiating historical claims at this compositional level with stylistic and other literary-based observations.

To begin, it must be clearly stated that a literary approach is not automatically anti-historical or opposed to diachronic exegesis in any sense of the term. Exponents of literary criticism for biblical-studies applications have emphasised this point. For example, BRIGID CURTIN FREIN, addressing the topic of 'Fundamentalism and Narrative Approaches to the Gospels',²⁹ argues that Protestant fundamentalists cannot replace historical-critical methods (which they reject) with narrative approaches because the assumptions which underlie Narrative Criticism are unacceptable to them—assumptions relating specifically to the nature of the text under study.³⁰ Instead of

²⁹*Biblical Theology Bulletin*, 22, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 12-18.

³⁰Note YAIR ZAKOVITCH'S helpful elucidation of some of these thorny issues in 'Story Versus History', in *Proceedings of the Eighth World Congress of Jewish Studies; Panel Sessions: Bible Studies and Hebrew Language* (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1983), 47-60.

forthrightly *rejecting* historical criticism, narrative critics move beyond it and consider each text as being open to multiple interpretations which can be gained from a variety of hermeneutical strategies. Consider MARK ALLEN POWELL'S comment in the context of providing an overview of the development of narrative-critical strategies out of a New Testament discipline dominated by the historical-critical method;

The desire for a more literary approach to the Gospels, then, was first expressed by historical critics themselves, in recognition of the limitations of an exclusively historical approach. The prevailing sense was not that historical criticism had failed or that its goals were invalid, but that something else should also be done.³¹

In a recent article, ADELE BERLIN detects problems which lie behind many new contributions offered under the literary approach, which she refers to as 'literary exegesis'.³² As the burgeoning field still remains young, proper theoretical guidelines and important distinctions have not yet been collectively accepted. BERLIN outlines

³¹*What is Narrative Criticism? A New Approach to the Bible*, Guides to Biblical Scholarship, New Testament Series, ed. DAN O. VIA, Jr. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1990), 3. ROSENBLATT and SITTESON ('Introduction', chap. in *Not in Heaven: Coherence and Complexity in Biblical Narrative*, Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature, ed. HERBERT MARKS and ROBERT POLZIN [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991], 1) discuss a reciprocal relationship along slightly different lines with their statement,

Many centuries ago biblical exegesis generated the secular discipline of literary analysis, and today the child repays the parent, applying the insights and methods of that derived discipline to its original source, the Bible.

³²'Literary Exegesis of Biblical Narrative: Between Poetics and Hermeneutics', chap. in *Not in Heaven: Coherence and Complexity in Biblical Narrative*, Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature, ed. HERBERT MARKS and ROBERT POLZIN (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 120-28.

two discernible *modi operandi* which various scholars advocate in their literary treatment of biblical texts: (1) observations relating to *thematic* similarities between two distant narratives, with the similarities forming a basis for comparison between them; and, (2) observations relating to *verbal* similarities between a selection of narratives.³³ Whether these similarities are described as ‘mirror-images’,³⁴ ‘allusions/analogies’³⁵ or ‘allegories’,³⁶ BERLIN faults them as misinterpreted due to the tendency of these observers to process the significance of the comparisons in the light of compositional assumptions rather than as they relate to predecided reading strategies.

FOR BERLIN, the problem remains at the dictional level for failure to distinguish appropriately between the terms ‘poetics’ and ‘hermeneutics’.³⁷ Poetics is defined as,

³³For example, comparisons drawn between Michal and Rachel in the works of ROBERT ALTER (*The Art of Biblical Narrative* [New York: Basic Books, 1981], 120), J. P. FOKKELMAN (*Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel*, vol. 2 [Assen: Van Gorcum, 1986], 274-76) and PETER D. MISCALL (*The Workings of Old Testament Narrative* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983], 87-88).

³⁴YAIR ZAKOVITCH, ‘Mirror-Image Story—An Additional Criterion for the Evaluation of Characters in Biblical Narrative’, *Tarbiz* 54, no. 2 (1985): 165-76.

³⁵MOSHE GARSIEL, *The First Book of Samuel: A Literary Study of Comparative Structures, Analogies, and Parallels* (Ramat Gan, 1983), 131-32.

³⁶JOEL ROSENBERG, *King and Kin: Political Allegory in the Hebrew Bible* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), xii-xiii.

³⁷‘Literary Exegesis of Biblical Narrative’, 120, 123, 126. BERLIN (126) suggests that using literary analysis for reconstructing compositional history is a hermeneutical circle wherein dating is based on the analysis of texts, and the analysis of texts is based upon the assumed dating, although her comments within the same topic area are much more modified in the earlier *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1983 [especially chapter 5, ‘Poetic Interpretation and Historical-Critical Methods’]) with the distinction she makes there between *synchronic* poetics and *diachronic* poetics (111, 134). Even the chapter title sounds like a fusion of both domains and an earlier statement of hers there suggests that she is thinking out loud in the present article: ‘Knowledge of poetics can, at the very least, provide some limit and control on diachronic study. It prevents the

The general principles of poetry or of literature in general, or the theoretical study of these principles. As a body of theory, poetics is concerned with the distinctive features of poetry (or literature as a whole), with its languages, forms, genres, and modes of composition.³⁸

While poetics relates to composition, hermeneutics is concerned more with the interpretative aspect of the handling of texts and the quest for their meaning. ABRAMS says the following of interpretation and hermeneutics: 'In the narrow sense, to interpret a work of literature is to specify the meanings of its language by analysis, paraphrase, and commentary'³⁹ and is helpfully supplemented by BALDICK'S definition of hermeneutics—'the theory of interpretation, concerned with general problems of understanding the meanings of texts'.⁴⁰ BERLIN'S general distinctions between the *how* and the *what* of a text's meaning and also between meaning and function are instructive.⁴¹ Clarification of terms is absolutely necessary for the new literary movement; POWELL'S statement,

mistaking of certain features of the present text's discourse for evidence of earlier sources.' (*Poetics and Interpretation*, 20-21) .

³⁸CHRIS BALDICK, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), s.v. 'poetics', 172. Compare the general definition offered in *A Dictionary of Modern Critical Terms* (ROGER FOWLER, ed., rev. and enl. [London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987], s.v. 'poetics', 184-186) which refers to the study of 'literariness' rather than of existing works of 'literature', and the comical one of HOLMAN and HARMON (*Handbook to Literature*, s.v. 'poetics', 384) who say, 'In a large sense, justified by its supposed etymology, a *poetics* is the science of any activity that produces a product, whether a set of sonnets or a set of dentures.'

³⁹*A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 5th ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1988), s.v. 'interpretation and hermeneutics', 85. CLINES, 'Methods in Old Testament Study', 27, views interpretation as a formulation of one's own understanding, particularly of the Old Testament in this case.

⁴⁰*Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, s.v. 'hermeneutics', 97.

⁴¹*Poetics and Interpretation*, 17, 19.

Literary criticism . . . deals with the poetic function of a text, whereas historical criticism deals with its referential function. This means that literary critics are able to appreciate the story of a narrative apart from consideration of the extent to which it reflects reality.⁴²

is true according to a loose adjectival usage of the term ‘poetic’ but further qualification might assist terminological precision. For example, here ‘poetic function’ has nothing to do with poetics as composition but instead connects with the Russian Formalist idea of self-referentiality.

Two key points must be emphasised to conclude the present subsection: (1) Literary approaches should not denigrate traditional historical approaches but should acknowledge a reoriented line of inquiry in the asking of different questions; and, (2) Literary approaches, as other approaches, are important only insofar as they reach towards their intended ends and do not profess to have achieved more results than they are capable of. Literary and historically-tempered interests represent different planes of reading and operate with their own questions and assumptions on separate levels of analysis. For example, YAIR ZAKOVITCH wants to uncover both overt and covert rationale to answer the question ‘Why were the Israelites in Egypt?’,⁴³ while others like BIMSON and RENDSBURG are more concerned with the ‘when/where’ facets which arise out of a historical matrix.⁴⁴ An approach relating literary questions to

⁴²*What is Narrative Criticism?*, 8.

⁴³‘*And You Shall Tell Your Son . . .*’: *The Concept of the Exodus in the Bible* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1991), particularly Chapter One—‘Why Were the Israelites Enslaved in Egypt? A Chapter in Inner-biblical Interpretation’, 15-45.

⁴⁴See, in this regard, JOHN J. BIMSON, *Redating the Exodus and Conquest*, first published as JSOTSup 5 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1978), 2d ed. (New Format), 1981 and the abbreviated version, JOHN J. BIMSON with DAVID LIVINGSTON, ‘Redating the Exodus’, *Biblical Archaeology Review* 13, no. 5 (1987), 40-53, 66-68. Also, GARY A. RENDSBURG, ‘The Date of the Exodus and the Conquest/Settlement: The Case for the 1100’s’, *VT* 42 (1992): 510-27.

biblical texts should not manifest anti-historical sentiments but instead, can be described as possessing aims which are anterior to historical ones. Sometimes the historical and narrative lines cross over and mutually inform each other, as will be seen in the second half of Chapter Five (*Narratology and the Exodus Story*) below.

The Role of Referentiality

A prominent question among literary critics relates to the status of a text with respect to reference.⁴⁵ In his early primer introducing literary criticism to Old Testament texts, DAVID ROBERTSON described the Bible as imaginative, non-utilitarian literature which ‘does not claim to describe reality itself but rather is a secondary reconstruction, an imitation of reality’.⁴⁶ This notion of the self-referential status of literature is similar to the New Critics’ idea of *autotelicism* which distinguished literature and art as self-referential entities from works which referred to things and/or reality outside of themselves.⁴⁷ BALDICK highlights the critical distinction which has

⁴⁵A helpful discussion of reference which considers both mimetic and ‘textual world’ issues is provided by WENDELL V. HARRIS, *Dictionary of Concepts in Literary Criticism and Theory*, Reference Sources for the Social Sciences and Humanities, no. 12, Raymond G. McInnis, ed. (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1992), s.v. ‘reference’, 330-37.

⁴⁶*The Old Testament and the Literary Critic*, Guides to Biblical Scholarship, Old Testament Series, ed. GENE M. TUCKER (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 5.

⁴⁷BALDICK, *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, s.v. ‘autotelic’, 19. The New Critics were a group of American writers in the 1930’s and 1940’s who opposed critical efforts that were associated with Romanticism and nineteenth-century Realism. The term was popularized by JOHN CROWE RANSOM’S *The New Criticism* (1941) which ordered a new approach to the study of literature described as ‘ontological’, against traditional criticism which was connected firmly with the intention of the writer, along with his or her biographical details and influences. Instead, the New Critics encouraged a close reading of the text as a self-contained work. See *The Cambridge Guide to Literature in English*, ed. IAN OUSBY (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), s.v. ‘new criticism’, 674; *Bloomsbury Guide to English Literature*, ed. MARION WYNNE-DAVIES (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1989), s.v. ‘new criticism’,

been made between poetry's *emotive* language and *referential* language which relates to factual information and indicates something which exists beyond the world of language.⁴⁸ Literature, according to the autotelic perspective, is not meant to be biographical, critical, didactic, moral or philosophical in its aims but its main purpose is simply to *be*.⁴⁹

The perspective on narrative reference which this thesis advocates adheres to the above position, although it stresses the point that one's working notion of referentiality in interpretation can be a relative stance, relative to the method which is being employed and to the aims and goals of that method. Obviously, a reading employing *Ideologiekritik* that attempts to uncover the values and norms of the ruling elite which are suffused within the text will grasp beyond the text because of its theoretical assumptions that the literature itself provides reference to governing structures of power and hierarchy. A literary reading, however, asks questions about the inner workings of literature and so—granted that a pluralistic context of reading strategies is assumed—can be rightly accused in breach of its own aims with the '*referential fallacy* of interpreting literary elements in terms of supposed antecedents in the real world'⁵⁰ when it reverts to historical statements rather than observations of

744; *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, 5th edition, ed. MARGARET DRABBLE (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), s.v. 'new criticism', 693; and the more exhaustive overview, 'The New Criticism: Then and Now' by JOHN R. WILLINGHAM, chap. in *Contemporary Literary Theory*, 24-41. For a helpful integration with biblical studies, see JOHN BARTON, *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1984), particularly chapter 10, 'The "New Criticism"', 140-57.

⁴⁸*Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, s.v. 'referent', 186.

⁴⁹J. A. CUDDON, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, 3d ed. (London: Penguin Books, 1991), s.v. 'autotelic', 73. The relationship is direct between this view and subsequent notions of 'art for art's sake'.

⁵⁰POWELL, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, 58.

a literary sort.⁵¹ The nature of literary criticism is that 'it is a disciplined investigation of written matter considered to be of its very nature *metaphoric*'.⁵² It is instructive to recall the criticism of HANS FREI in *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*⁵³ that nineteenth-century biblical interpreters misread the text and assumed that it had a historical nature instead of a history-like nature. The statement that 'we should not confuse a historical individual with his narrative representation'⁵⁴ reinforces the principle that the literary approach is a text-centered reading strategy which draws its data from the text itself without necessarily addressing questions of reference between the text and the real world.⁵⁵ Comparable to structuralism as a mode of inquiry into texts, Narrative Criticism stresses the role of the text in determining the reader's response rather than the reader's own role as a primary factor in this process.⁵⁶

POWELL outlines four principles for reading the biblical text under the literary-oriented approach that he refers to as Narrative Criticism:

⁵¹A similar sort of distinction in the study of Exodus can be seen in JOHNSTONE'S comments which caution against the historical misreading of religious and theological material (*Exodus*, Old Testament Guides, gen. ed. R. N. WHYBRAY [Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990], 31-36), the genre of which is '... confession of faith expressed in a narrative of origins' (39).

⁵²ROBERTSON, *Old Testament and the Literary Critic*, 6 (emphasis mine).

⁵³(New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).

⁵⁴BERLIN, *Poetics and Interpretation*, 13.

⁵⁵It must be mentioned, however, as recent reviews by BERLIN have stressed (for example, in 'The Role of the Text in the Reading Process', *Semeia* 62, *Textual Determinacy: Part One*, ed. ROBERT C. CULLEY and ROBERT B. ROBINSON [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993]: 144), that current literary-critical practitioners are now including considerations of historical and social context in their textual enquiry.

⁵⁶POWELL, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, 18.

1. Literary criticism focuses on the finished form of the text.
2. Literary criticism emphasizes the unity of the text as a whole.
3. Literary criticism views the text as an end in itself.
4. Literary criticism is based on communication models of speech-act theory.⁵⁷

This fourth principle is extremely significant because, unlike historical and other approaches which are concerned with the identification of actual authors and historical audiences, the analogy of ROMAN JAKOBSON'S model involving a sender, message and receiver shows a complete communication transaction occurring within the text that contains both author and reader in the 'implied' sense. These four principles are reminiscent of ROBERTSON'S earlier call to read the Old Testament as literature, wherein he suggested that the critic works with the text as a whole and that the integral relationship between its constituent parts and the whole text is accepted.⁵⁸ This relationship is described by ROBERTSON as the principle of synecdoche 'according to which a part stands for or equals the whole'. As a language, says ROBERTSON, literary criticism is more *agglutinative* than *analytic*, and ultimately aims at assimilation and inclusion.⁵⁹

⁵⁷Ibid., 7-9. Along with 'Narrative Criticism', other terms describe the literary approach such as 'literary exegesis' (as in BERLIN, 'Literary Exegesis of Biblical Narrative', 120-28) and 'literary theology' (in, for example, the recent essay by STEPHEN A. GELLER, 'Blood Cult: Toward a Literary Theology of the Priestly Work of the Pentateuch', *Prooftexts: A Journal of Jewish Literary History*, 12, no. 2 [May 1992]: 97-124; GELLER uses a literary method in this article).

⁵⁸*Old Testament and the Literary Critic*, 6.

⁵⁹Ibid., 7. SHIMON BAR-EFRAT (*Narrative Art in the Bible*, JSOTSup 70, Bible and Literature Series 17 [Sheffield: Almond Press, 1989], 93) echoes this principle, viewing the construction of a narrative's plot as a meaningful chain of interconnected events, and says that 'an isolated incident receives its significance from its position and role in the system as a whole'.

The Relationship Between Diachronic and Synchronic Categories

Another important distinction which must be stated as a theoretical postulate is a proper understanding of the relationship between diachronic and synchronic means of investigation. This classic distinction arose out of FERDINAND DE SAUSSURE'S innovative lectures given at the University of Geneva between 1906 and 1911—published from his students' notes as the *Cours de linguistique générale*—whose effect was to grant him status as the founder of modern linguistics and the overarching science of semiology of which linguistics was only one branch.⁶⁰ After describing three phases of linguistic development—(1) grammar; (2) philology; and, (3) comparative philology (also called comparative grammar)⁶¹—SAUSSURE classified his post-philological approach according to *diachronic* and *synchronic* aims.⁶²

Diachronic study, described as 'evolutionary linguistics', set out to document features indicating historical changes which occurred in a language or languages over a period of time,⁶³ examining their origins, development and history.⁶⁴ Diachronic

⁶⁰Published in English as *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. ROY HARRIS, ed. CHARLES BALLY and ALBERT SECHEHAYE with the collaboration of ALBERT RIEDLINGER (London: Duckworth, 1983).

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 1-5.

⁶²*Ibid.*, 89-98.

⁶³*Ibid.*, 81, 89-90, 98, 139; BALDICK, *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, s.v. 'diachronic', 55.

⁶⁴CUDDON, *Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Theory*, s.v. 'diachronic/synchronic', 237. SAUSSURE (*Course in General Linguistics*, 89, 211-13) subdivided diachronic linguistics into two further perspectives: that of *prospective* (involving examination of phenomena through the course of time) and *retrospective* (involving examination of phenomena in the opposite direction). MARK G. BRETT, ('Four or Five Things to Do with Texts: A Taxonomy of Interpretative Interests', in *The Bible in Three Dimensions: Essays in Celebration of Forty Years of Biblical Studies in the University of Sheffield*, JSOTSup 87, ed. DAVID J. A. CLINES, STEPHEN E.

linguistics was 'concerned with connections between sequences of items not perceived by the same collective consciousness, which replace one another without themselves constituting a system'.⁶⁵ *Synchronic* study, referred to as 'static linguistics', attempted to investigate the linguistic state of the phenomenon under question at a given time and not its diachronic development which had occurred through the historical process.⁶⁶ Synchronic linguistics was 'concerned with logical and psychological connections between coexisting items constituting a system, as perceived by the same collective consciousness'.⁶⁷ The evolutionary/static dichotomy was referred to as the 'internal duality' of linguistic science, centring on the issue of time; as a general principle, SAUSSURE referred to the language act as an interrelationship between the *langue* (comprised of linguistic structure and speech), the effects of social reality brought about by the *linguistic community*, and the influence of *time*.⁶⁸ SAUSSURE faulted the nineteenth-century philological enterprise as embodying a too narrow concern with diachronic questions in its historical approach to language and preferred synchronic approaches over diachronic ones,

It is clear that the synchronic point of view takes precedence over the diachronic, since for the community of language users that is the one and only reality. The same is true for the linguist. If he takes a

FOWL and STANLEY E. PORTER, 357-77 [Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990], 371) also draws a further distinction between emic and etic diachronic interests.

⁶⁵SAUSSURE, *Course in General Linguistics*, 98.

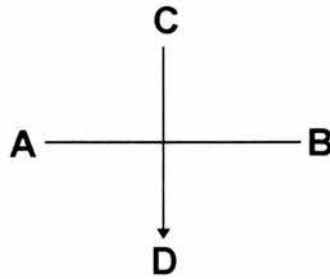
⁶⁶Ibid., 81, 89-90, 98-100; BALDICK, *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, s.v. 'synchronic', 221.

⁶⁷SAUSSURE, *Course in General Linguistics*, 98.

⁶⁸Ibid., 77-78.

diachronic point of view, he is no longer examining the language, but a series of events which modify it.⁶⁹

Unfortunately, however, a lack of clarity and precision surrounding the common mishandling of these terms has led some to the incorrect conclusion that synchronic approaches are automatically anti-historical in nature. To distinguish between the two approaches, SAUSSURE used the concept of two axes, seen as follows:⁷⁰



The *axis of simultaneity* (AB) referred to relationships between things which coexisted apart from the inclusion of the passage of time, while the *axis of succession* (CD) referred to the things which were on the first axis, considered with regard to the changes they underwent.⁷¹ SAUSSURE used this illustration to demonstrate the obligation of scholars to account for these two axes and 'to distinguish between the system of values considered in itself, and these same values considered over a period of time'.⁷² Both approaches were viewed as being autonomous and independent.⁷³

⁶⁹Ibid., 89. An example of SAUSSURE'S syntagmatic interests applied to the Hebrew Bible is ELLEN VAN WOLDE, 'A Text-Semantic Study of the Hebrew Bible, Illustrated with Noah and Job', *JBL* 113, no. 1 (1994): 19-35.

⁷⁰SAUSSURE, *Course in General Linguistics*, 80.

⁷¹Ibid., 80.

⁷²Ibid., 80.

⁷³Ibid., 87.

As with the above section regarding the attitude to history in the literary approach, it must be indicated that the literary aims of a synchronic approach to narrative are focused upon close *reading* of the text, while the historical aims of a diachronic approach to narrative concern themselves with some type of careful *reconstruction* of or from the text. Neither aim is better or worse and both necessarily intersect at points but the key point is that each represents different interests which are brought to the same text, resulting in the collection of differing results.⁷⁴ MARK BRETT explains, 'If there is a conflict between synchronic and diachronic interests it is not because one is "historical" and the other is not; synchronic studies focus on serial slices of history, treating each slice as a systemic whole.'⁷⁵ The notion of separate interpretative planes is useful in this regard, one interested in the universe of the real world and the other interested in the parallel universe of the world of the imagination; the assumption that synchronic methods are uninterested in and even hostile towards history does not follow from a correct understanding of the diachronic and synchronic methodological axes. Perhaps the analogy of interconnecting circles rather than separate planes reinforces this point more appropriately.

One recent approach which demonstrates that synchronic study should not be automatically assumed to be anti-historical is the volume by JONATHAN COHEN entitled, *The Origins and Evolution of the Moses Nativity Story*.⁷⁶ COHEN begins with questions about the composition of the birth story of Moses, accepting GRESSMAN'S conclusion from *Mose und seine Zeit*⁷⁷ that the nativity story has been combined with

⁷⁴See on this BRETT, 'Four or Five Things to Do with Texts', particularly 365-73.

⁷⁵Ibid., 368.

⁷⁶Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993.

⁷⁷*FRLANT* 18, Göttingen, 1913, 1-16.

separate traditions which were not originally related. This largely diachronic examination is then extended to a sweeping synchronic type of analysis through COHEN'S survey of the development and use of the story in the literature of later communities. Various post-biblical sources are considered, along with the features and role of the story in the Midrash and later Christian Sources amongst others. It is important to observe the development of the text in relation to the differing needs and assumptions of the communities within which it functioned.

The Issue of Intentionality

During the middle of the present century, important debates took place among literary critics; one of these centred on the issue of intentionality—that the meaning of texts was closely linked either to the mind of the interpreter or to the intention, whether explicit or implicit, of the author. Because of their strong orientation towards the text and its critical role in the determination of meaning, the New Critics dismissed both 'extrinsic' perspectives on the locus of meaning for literary texts as insufficient and fallacious. In an article entitled 'The Affective Fallacy',⁷⁸ New Critic W. K. WIMSATT addressed the former perspective as 'a confusion between the poem and its *results* (what it *is* and what it *does*)' and rejected its tendency towards the psychological effects of literature (based on Romantic notions and an expressive theory of art), resulting in impressionism and relativism.⁷⁹

⁷⁸Chap. in *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry*, written in collaboration with MONROE C. BEARDSLEY (London: Methuen & Co., 1954), 21-39.

⁷⁹See HOLMAN and HARMON, *Handbook to Literature*, s.v. 'new criticism', 331-32, and the useful essay of ABRAMS, *Glossary of Literary Terms*, s.v. 'new criticism', 223-24.

In another essay also co-written with BEARDSLEY called 'The Intentional Fallacy',⁸⁰ WIMSATT sought to eradicate the notion of authorial intention from the language of criticism, or at least to redefine it. 'Intention' had rigidly been defined as 'what he intended' (with respect to the author),⁸¹ oriented towards the specific intention of a work's historical author; this interpretative goal has been attributed to the aims of traditional historical-grammatical exegesis.⁸² WIMSATT AND BEARDSLEY attempted to reorient this common understanding towards a view of the *intention of the text* due to a belief that 'a literary work, once published, belongs in the public realm of language, which gives it an objective existence distinct from the author's original idea of it',⁸³ hence the idea of the text as a somewhat closed system requiring explication through a close reading.⁸⁴ New Critics have referred to the idea of the 'total intention' of a text—encompassing the total meaning and organization of a work, including both form and content.⁸⁵

The idea of the intention of the author appears illusive to some, yet continues to be defended by others. E. D. HIRSCH represents a classic example of a so-called 'intentionalist', one who believes that a reader is able to gain an objective

⁸⁰Chap. in *The Verbal Icon*, 3-18.

⁸¹WIMSATT and BEARDSLEY, *The Verbal Icon*, 4; FOWLER, *Dictionary of Modern Critical Terms*, s.v. 'intention', 127-28.

⁸²CLINES, 'Methods in Old Testament Study', 28-30.

⁸³BALDICK, *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, s.v. 'intentional fallacy', 110-11. Anyone who uses SAUSSURE'S terms of diachronic/synchronic categories beyond his original linguistic meaning for them (which most or all do) agrees with this statement, whether admittedly or not.

⁸⁴Note WIMSATT'S comments on 'Explication as Criticism', chap. in *The Verbal Icon*, 235-51.

⁸⁵For example, New Critics like CLEANTH BROOKS and JOHN CROWE RANSOM.

interpretation of the expressed meaning of an author. This position of HIRSCH is clear in his *Validity in Interpretation*.⁸⁶ Consider the sample quote addressing what HIRSCH considered to be an erroneous principle,

The most valid reading of a text is the 'best' reading. But even if we assumed that a critic did have access to the divine criteria by which he could determine the best reading, he would still be left with two equally compelling normative ideals—the best meaning and the author's meaning. Moreover, if the best meaning were not the author's, then it would have to be the critic's—in which case the critic would be the author of the best meaning. Whenever meaning is attached to a sequence of words it is impossible to escape an author.⁸⁷

Although the earlier HIRSCH adhered to a strong view of authorial intention, his perspective has been modified somewhat in more recent writings in that he accounts for the fact that authors expect their texts to have future applications which do not directly arise out of the author's consciousness, yet he still maintains that the author is intimately connected with the meaning of texts.⁸⁸

Recently, MARK BRETT has supported this understanding of the separation of an author from his/her literary work in his study of BREVARD CHILDS'S canonical method with readings from the philosophy of science, particularly those of KARL POPPER and his idea of 'knowledge without a knowing subject'—the view 'that objective knowledge exists independently of any particular knower, indeed, that it exists in texts and

⁸⁶(New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), particularly chapter one, 'In Defense of the Author', 1-23.

⁸⁷*Validity in Interpretation*, 5.

⁸⁸Idem, 'Meaning and Significance Reinterpreted', *Critical Inquiry* 2 (1986): 627-30. See also his *The Aims of Interpretation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), especially 74-92.

computers rather than in human minds'.⁸⁹ POPPER distinguishes between three worlds: (1) the world of physical objects or states; (2) the world of states of consciousness or mental states, behavioural dispositions to act etc.; and, (3) the world of objective contents of thought, particularly scientific, poetic and works of art.⁹⁰ It is world three with its 'relative autonomy' which POPPER uses to defend his position on the objectivity of science, a position that BRETT applies to the notion of separateness between an author and his/her literary creation.⁹¹

The present work embodies a reading of the Exodus story from a literary perspective which is concerned with the intention of the text, a particular 'intentionalist' position which can be defended but must be understood as merely one of a variety of possible reading strategies. POWELL outlines the benefit of a narrative-critical approach in this regard, stating,

... literary critics may speak of the intentions of the implied author without violating the basic principle that narratives should be interpreted on their own terms. When hermeneutical preference is given to a work's implied author over its real, historical author, the narrative is allowed to speak for itself. The interpretive key no longer lies in background information, but within the text itself.⁹²

⁸⁹MARK G. BRETT, *Biblical Criticism in Crisis? The Impact of the Canonical Approach on Old Testament Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 125.

⁹⁰KARL POPPER, *Objective Knowledge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972).

⁹¹*Biblical Criticism in Crisis?*, 126.

⁹²*What is Narrative Criticism?*, 5.

The emphasis here is that the interpretative focus rests upon the intricate features of the text, which can be described in POWELL'S terms as revering the intentions of the Implied Author.⁹³

The Critique of Ideology

A final theoretical position must be taken with respect to the role of ideology in relation to the text. 'Ideology' has been defined in various ways as outlined by ROBERT P. CARROLL,⁹⁴ from the somewhat esoteric definition of PAUL DE MAN—'the confusion of linguistic with natural reality'⁹⁵—to the politically-conscious view of MARX and ENGELS. They focused on the distortion which was caused by the dominant ideology in the context of the class struggle, its formation of false consciousness in the perception of social reality of those living under it.⁹⁶ Recently, JONATHAN E. DYCK has proposed a more positive notion of ideology which aims at getting beyond social distortion in order to reach understanding.⁹⁷ A definition which is sufficient for the present purpose is something like the following: ideology relates to the norms, values

⁹³For more details of the 'implied' sense of authorship adhered to in the present work, see the comments in Chapter Four under the subsection entitled Narratological Structure, below.

⁹⁴In *A Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, ed. R. J. COGGINS and J. L. HOULDEN (London: SCM Press, 1990), s.v. 'ideology', 309-311. CARROLL provides a helpful overview of the ideological discussion and its impact on biblical studies.

⁹⁵*The Resistance to Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 11; cited in CARROLL, above.

⁹⁶*Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels: Collected Works* (Moscow: 1976); cited in CARROLL, above.

⁹⁷'The Purpose of Chronicles and the Critique of Ideology' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Sheffield, 1994), 90-91, 211-12. DYCK discusses RICOEUR'S theory of ideology and concept of utopia as well as HABERMAS'S social theory with his goal of emancipation.

and ideas proffered through various media as the canonised consciousness of the ruling elite.

Obviously, texts contain signs which signify conceptually and otherwise beyond themselves. Hierarchical structures of power and values betraying political and religious interests (amongst others) contribute to the configuration of texts. Examples of these types of interests can be seen in the various hermeneutical approaches which are brought to these texts like feminism,⁹⁸ deconstruction and varieties of liberationist approaches.⁹⁹ Pursuit of ideological influences, however, assumes a different function for the text than that being advocated here. Whereas ideological approaches reach beyond the text in their 'new-historical' reconstruction of what underlies it, the present work will, as has already been stated under other categories of discussion, restrict its terms as much as possible to the text itself and explicate the text in a treatment reminiscent of New Critical practice, to discern and describe the detailed narrative interplay which exists there.

METHOD:

As already stated, a method represents a neutral, active reading strategy which rests upon specific theoretical assumptions. Instead of debating the validity of certain

⁹⁸As an example in Exodus, see the 'de-patriarchalising' programme of ESTHER FUCHS, evident in 'Structure and Patriarchal Functions in the Biblical Betrothal Type-Scene: Some Preliminary Notes', *JFSR* 3, no. 1 (Spring 1987): 7-13. Also relevant in this regard is DIANNE BERGANT, 'Exodus as a Paradigm in Feminist Theology', chapter in *Exodus—A Lasting Paradigm*, Concilium, ed. BAS VAN IERSEL and ANTON WEILER (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1987), 100-106.

⁹⁹See the important essays on this theme: 'Exodus as a Paradigm in Liberation Theology' by ENRIQUE DUSSEL (83-92), 'Exodus as a Paradigm for Black Theology' by JOSIAH YOUNG (93-99), and 'The Socio-historical and Hermeneutical Relevance of the Exodus' by JOSE SEVERINO CROATTO (125-33) in *Exodus—A Lasting Paradigm*, cited above.

methods, it is more precise to address the issues surrounding the underlying theoretical foundation which undergirds a particular method. In other words, questions directed towards the validation or non-validation of specific methods may be somewhat misguided, and it may be more constructive and precise to examine the contribution which a certain methodological approach makes with respect to the self-consistency that it maintains in relation to the theory it assumes. PHYLLIS TRIBLE concludes her reading of Genesis 22,

To be faithful to the story no interpretation can become an idol. And so the essay concludes with a disorienting homily. After we perceive the sacrifice of Sarah and move to free the narrative from attachment to patriarchy, after and only after all these things, will we hear God testing us: 'Take your interpretation of this story, your only interpretation, the one which you love, and sacrifice it on the mount of hermeneutics.' If we withhold not our cherished reading from God, then we too will come down from the mountain nonattached. In such an event, we and the story will merge. Interpretation will become appropriation. Testing and attachment will disappear, and the worship of God will be all in all.¹⁰⁰

The previous section along with the above paragraph clarifies and reinforces the emphasis that methodological pluriformity surrounding the interpretation of texts is acceptable and indeed to be welcomed.

Two main observations must be mentioned in the following discussion of method. One relates to the critical requisite of adopting a pluralist interpretative stance. The other concerns the issue of vantage point when considering data foreign to the stance of the interpreter, discussed along emic and etic lines.

¹⁰⁰'Genesis 22: The Sacrifice of Sarah', chap. in *Not in Heaven: Coherence and Complexity in Biblical Narrative*, 191.

Pluralist Criticism

Any quest into method has to acknowledge the multifaceted nature of the issue. Even a discussion of methodological types arising only in the present century must include such diverse approaches as Archetypal Criticism, Deconstruction, Feminist Criticism, Influence and the Anxiety of Influence, Linguistics in Modern Criticism, Marxist Criticism, Phenomenology and Criticism, Psychological and Psychoanalytic Criticism, Reader-Response Criticism, Reception-Theory, Russian Formalism, Semiotics, Speech Act Theory, Structuralist Criticism, Stylistics and Text and Writing (*Ecriture*).¹⁰¹ The move towards a growing awareness and acceptance of pluralism which embodies, at least to a degree, methodological relativism is definitely being achieved by the enterprise of modern biblical studies, and is saluted in the present effort. Methods should not be examined in a vacuum but instead should be assessed according to criteria relating to their internal consistency and the relationship that they hold with their governing theoretical assumptions. As GREENSTEIN argues, methods move toward goals in the service of theories.¹⁰² Theory can be likened to a model with methods proceeding out of its assumptions, although GREENSTEIN thinks that a method is far from neutral but is developed specifically to advance a particular theory.

MARK BRETT suggests that discussion of method requires a pre-discussion of what he terms 'interpretative interests' due to the fact that 'a "method" will only be coherent if it is guided by a clearly articulated question or *goal*'.¹⁰³ Biblical research has been marked by intense conflicts because of methodological differences, coupled

¹⁰¹See M. H. ABRAMS'S excellent comprehensive essay in *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 5th ed., entitled 'Modern Theories of Literature and Criticism', 201-47.

¹⁰²'The Role of Theory in Biblical Criticism', 167.

¹⁰³'Four or Five Things to Do with Texts', 357.

with non-discussion of the questions and aims which guide a particular methodological inquiry. Distinguishing between various interpretative interests according to vantage point (emics and the intentions of authors, along with etics),¹⁰⁴ history and time (synchronic interests and diachronic interests) and literary interests, BRETT'S advice is as follows:

Conflicts inevitably arise when critics believe that they have discovered the only valid method of biblical study, but the discipline would be better served if we pursued our interests in relative independence and compared our results in a spirit of openness.¹⁰⁵

Similar comments have been offered recently by WALTER MOBERLY, who discusses a variety of approaches to pentateuchal issues and concludes that what guides the choice of method is not so much an issue of the hermeneutical *how* but rather the hermeneutical *why*, stating,

... the crucial question, which is prior to questions of method and sets the context for them, is that of purpose and goal. To put it simply, *how we use the Bible depends on why we use the Bible*. In practice, many of the disagreements about how are, in effect, disagreements about why, and failure to recognize this leads to endless confusion.¹⁰⁶

The term 'method' relates specifically to procedure and in the present instance, to the procedure involved in the pursuit of knowledge which occurs on the basis of certain presuppositions held on a theoretical plane. JOHN RICHES suggests that

¹⁰⁴For a fuller discussion of the emic/etic distinction, see the next section below.

¹⁰⁵'Four or Five Things to Do with Texts', 377.

¹⁰⁶*The Old Testament of the Old Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 2, also 182.

‘Methodology refers to the way or ways which, in a particular field of enquiry, scholars agree to adopt in order to solve problems, resolve disputes and achieve a measure of consensus.’¹⁰⁷ Although the feature of standardisation is an important part of method, the aspect of ‘consensus’ under RICHES’S definition is debatable because of its unfounded assumption that all methods move or at least should move towards a similar end.¹⁰⁸

In his monograph on CHILDS’S canonical method, BRETT challenges this assumption.¹⁰⁹ For analytical purposes, BRETT offers the useful distinction between hermeneutical *pluralism* and hermeneutical *monism*. Hermeneutical pluralism advocates a plurality of methods, the choice of which depends upon the goals of the interpreter, whether diachronic or synchronic. Hermeneutical monism, as a more narrow entity, assumes that similar interpretative goals are intended by all inquirers and that an ultimate integration of findings should result in the final ‘consensus’ RICHES appears to advocate above; readings of the final form of the text must harmonize with historical-critical findings and vice versa.¹¹⁰ BRETT outlines several examples of statements of CHILDS wherein the latter operates both as pluralist and monist, but suggests that CHILDS operates more frequently as a hermeneutical monist which essentially turns CHILDS against himself—the ‘historical’ CHILDS counters the ‘canonical’ CHILDS.¹¹¹ Of the hermeneutical strategy behind the pluralist stance, BRETT

¹⁰⁷*A Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, s.v. ‘methodology’, 449.

¹⁰⁸RICHES later subdivides historical-critical strategies into sub-strands of religio-historical, sociological, phenomenological, cultural anthropological and literary types of enquiry, again reinforcing the idea that each different type ‘should in principle be mutually supportive’ (ibid, 450).

¹⁰⁹*Biblical Criticism in Crisis?*, cited above.

¹¹⁰Ibid., 41-42.

¹¹¹Ibid., 42.

warns, '... we should take care not to conflate interpretative interests that are logically separable'.¹¹²

Although many interpreters have embraced new methods because of perceived flaws with previous approaches like Historical Criticism with its stereotyped tendency to subdivide sources into an infinite number of literary strands, there is an urgent need not to replicate the atomisation of sources with the atomisation of methodologies, which is sometimes exhibited in the current offer of available approaches. As mentioned above, pluralist criticism embraces a relativistic perspective on method but does not invoke pluralist anarchy and, as with all things academic, assumes the need for appropriate checks and controls resulting in something which approximates balance. Instead, it invites the appropriate application of suitable methods towards intended interpretative goals. Methodological pluralism does not advocate a 'free-for-all' mode of hermeneutics and clarification of terms can serve to bound the interchange between pluralism and method. Pluralist criticism has been described as follows,

This entails a critical approach to literature by which a text is studied with an open mind and thus without any necessary or apparent commitment to an ideological position or stance. Most importantly it expresses the willingness to hold more than one position.¹¹³

HARRIS supplements this perspective with a definition that distinguishes between *variation* ('The principle that readers' interpretations and responses will necessarily vary within certain limits)¹¹⁴ and *limitation* ('The principle that no one set of

¹¹²Ibid., 5-6.

¹¹³J. A. CUDDON, *Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Theory*, s.v. 'pluralist criticism', 720.

¹¹⁴WENDELL V. HARRIS, *Dictionary of Concepts in Literary Criticism and Theory*, s.v. 'pluralism (literary critical)', 283.

theoretical assumptions or methodological approaches and no one critical vocabulary can adequately describe a text or exhaust its possible meanings or significances').¹¹⁵ It is important, in keeping with the theoretical assumption of text as literary world, to advocate hermeneutical principles and methodological strategies which are in keeping with a spirit of globalism rather than of fragmentation within this literary universe. The constituent features of the literary world are able to be examined from a variety of angles which brings forth varying results and justifies the use of different methods.

Emic and Etic Considerations

Along with acknowledgement of a pluralist stance, the issue of vantage point must also be addressed in a discussion of method. It is important for one's hermeneutical pre-understanding to recognise that every narrative system is bound to the literary conventions of the culture in question and that the facile imposition of Western or other foreign philosophical and literary canons upon the ancient non-western text as an interpretative grid must be acknowledged and avoided where possible. The role of hermeneutics in method is conditioned by factors of subject/object perception and cognition as well as by considerations of time discussed above along diachronic and synchronic lines.

In *Language in Relation to a Unified Theory of the Structure of Human Behavior*,¹¹⁶ KENNETH L. PIKE examined these cultural determinants within the broader context of exploring the structure of human behaviour in his attempt to devise one

¹¹⁵Ibid., 283.

¹¹⁶(2d rev. ed., The Hague: Mouton, 1967). A synopsis of PIKE's thesis can be found in his article 'Towards a Theory of the Structure of Human Behaviour' in *Language in Culture and Society*, ed. DELL HYMES (New York: Harper & Row, 1964) although the 'etic' category is not discussed there.

basic theory of structure which could be potentially applied to every perceivable structure of behaviour, whether cognitive, linguistic, religious, sports-related or whatever.¹¹⁷ PIKE categorised linguistic and cultural data by distinguishing between *emic* and *etic* approaches.¹¹⁸

The *emic* approach described the attempt to make classifications according to distinctions which would be understood by a native of the social system (or here, language and literature) under study. The notion of *emic* was derived from the suffix of 'phoneme' or 'phonemic'¹¹⁹ and was defined as follows: '... the *emic* analysis of the *emic* units of human behavior must analyse that behavior in reference to the manner in which native participants in that behavior react to their own behavior and to the behavior of their colleagues'.¹²⁰ More simply stated, 'The *emic* viewpoint results from studying behavior as from inside the system.'¹²¹ The *etic* approach, on the other hand, described the contrasting imposition of a non-native scheme of classification onto the data for its categorisation, the term 'etic' derived from the suffix of 'phonetic'.¹²² Concerning this perspective, PIKE stated, 'The *etic* viewpoint studies behavior as from outside of a particular system, and as an essential initial approach to an alien system.'¹²³

¹¹⁷'Towards a Theory', 54. The term 'unified' was used in the title because his approach sought to integrate both verbal and non-verbal events (see especially 26-30 of *Language in Relation to a Unified Theory*).

¹¹⁸*Language in Relation to a Unified Theory*, particularly 37-72.

¹¹⁹PIKE spoke of the 'eme' or 'emic unit', with the *emic* units relating to behaviour described as 'behavioremes'.

¹²⁰PIKE, 'Towards a Theory', 55.

¹²¹Idem, *Language in Relation to a Unified Theory*, 37.

¹²²Ibid., 37.

¹²³Ibid., 37.

MOSHE GREENBERG highlights the importance of properly distinguishing between *emic* and *etic* approaches in his portrayal of two past approaches to the legal material of Exodus which compared Mesopotamian parallels from the law code of Hammurabi.¹²⁴ GREENBERG reviews the 1931 findings of SAN NICOLÒ¹²⁵ who concluded from his study of the legal taxonomy of Hammurabi's code that the discovery of any semblance of organization based upon logical principles was impossible.¹²⁶ In contrast, H. PETSCHOW¹²⁷ one generation later demonstrated that the basis of arrangement could not be discerned along modern lines of juristic principle but according to topic.¹²⁸ SAN NICOLÒ had been guided by principles derived from the study of Roman law and utilized an *etic* approach that was unsuccessful at recovering any ordered logic within the code of Hammurabi. PETSCHOW, on the other hand, suspended the application of modern canons of legal judgment and instead arrived at the *emic* principles of classification which were embedded within the text. GREENBERG poignantly states,

¹²⁴'What are Valid Criteria for Determining Inauthentic Matter in Ezekiel?', in *Ezekiel and His Book: Textual and Literary Criticism and their Interrelation*, BETL 74, ed. J. LUST (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1986), 123-35. For similar comments see also HANS JOCHEN BOECKER, *Law and the Administration of Justice in the Old Testament and Ancient East*, trans. JEREMY MOISER (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1980), 79.

¹²⁵M. SAN NICOLÒ, *Beiträge zur Rechtsgeschichte im Bereiche der Keilschriftlichen Rechtsquellen* (Oslo: n.p., 1931).

¹²⁶GREENBERG, 'Valid Criteria', 124.

¹²⁷'Zur Systematik und Gesetzetechnik im Codex Hammurabi', *ZA* 57 (1965): 146-72.

¹²⁸GREENBERG, 'Valid Criteria', 124. BOECKER, *Law and the Administration of Justice* (79), says 'Petschow deals thoroughly with these questions where earlier research had almost unanimously deplored the lack of system and logic in the construction of the code.'

... if they [i.e. standards of literary judgment] derive from alien experience and are applied without first ascertaining their appropriateness to the ancient texts, they cannot do justice to the data but must distort them beyond what a native would recognize as his manner of thinking or expression.¹²⁹

TZVETAN TODOROV has stated,

Every work is rewritten by its reader, who imposes upon it a new grid of interpretation for which he is not generally responsible but which comes to him from his culture, from his time, in short from another discourse; all comprehension is the encounter of two discourses: a dialogue.¹³⁰

Subsequent to an examination of a selection of approaches which have been brought to the Exodus story, the process of this 'elision of worlds'¹³¹ will begin with the text of this tale.

¹²⁹'Valid Criteria', 125.

¹³⁰*Introduction to Poetics*, trans. R. Howard (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), xxx.

¹³¹TERENCE E. FRETHEIM, *Exodus*, in *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1991), 4.

CHAPTER TWO

APPROACHES TO THE EXODUS STORY

INTRODUCTION

Having outlined a set of theoretical assumptions and discussed features of the method which will be brought to the Exodus story in Chapters Three to Five, the present chapter will interact with a selection of approaches through which the Exodus story has been read, commenting on their usefulness for Narrative Criticism. These efforts will receive comment under two categories: (1) *Proemic* approaches which deal with a particular section of the story as a proem or preface; and, (2) *Story* approaches which treat the narrative of the entire Exodus story in some way.

PROEMIC APPROACHES

Fishbane

The short essay of MICHAEL FISHBANE, entitled 'Exodus 1-4: The Prologue to the Exodus Cycle',¹ offers a synchronic explication of the biblical text. FISHBANE defines Exodus 1-19 as a literary construct which fuses saga and history and describes both the genre and texture of the narrative as follows:

Only the saga form would do, focusing selectively on specific events and people, endowing the encounters between the principal actors with

¹Chap. in *Text and Texture: Close Readings of Selected Biblical Texts* (New York: Schocken Books, 1979), 63-76.

a paradigmatic cast, and infusing historical process with the wonder of supernatural events. . . . Factual details become secondary to a dramatization of the inner conviction that with the exodus-event the God of the patriarchs has fulfilled His ancient promises. The narrative style is cast in a rhythm of alternating plagues and dialogues, so that the pace of events has a liturgical, climactic effect. The mystery and forms of divine providence are ever present, foreshadowing events to come.²

His thesis is that the first four chapters of Exodus anticipate chapters 5-19 with various interconnecting points.

Prior to examining the relationship between the prologue of chapters 1-4 and the subsequent chapters which it foreshadows, FISHBANE contextualises the Exodus story within the patriarchal narratives, offering a series of ethnic and thematic links between the two. *Ethnic* links can be seen in the connections that reinforce the transformation of the sons of Jacob/Israel (Gen 35:23-26; 46:8-27)³ into the nation of Israel, such as: (1) the repetition of Jacob's family genealogy (Gen 46:8-27) in Exod 1:1-5; (2) the recapitulation of the last verse of Genesis (50:26) in Exod 1:6 which structurally emphasises the genealogy's transitional function by envelopment; and, (3) explicit reference to the 'sons of Israel' (Exod 1:7) as 'the *nation* of the sons of Israel' (1:9). *Thematic* links can be observed as well with: (1) the fact of Elohim's 'remembering', present both in Joseph's deathbed speech (Gen 50:25) and also during the Israelite oppression (Exod 2:24);⁴ and, (2) the Abrahamic oracle from Gen 15:13-15 and its use of key roots גר, עבד and ענה, also used early in Exodus (גר in 2:22,

²Ibid., 64-65.

³'Sons of Israel' is FISHBANE'S term. The present work will use the English translation 'descendants of Israel' for the Hebrew phrase בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.

⁴The verb 'to remember' (זכר) is also used elsewhere in the early chapters of Exodus. FISHBANE draws comparisons between Exod 3:16-17 and Gen 50:25, as well as Exod 6:3-5 and 2:23-26.

עֲבַד in 1:13 and עֲנֶה in 1:11) ‘as if to alert the reader that the preconditions set by the Genesis oracle are now being realized’.⁵

After exploring aspects of Moses as hero, his development and commission, FISHBANE focuses on the issue of ‘signs’ and suggests that they manifest a clear structural pattern within the text. His main argument here is that the three-plus-one pattern in 4:1-9 (three signs *plus* a climactic fourth in the killing of the firstborn) foreshadows the impending cycle of Plagues (7:8-12:36) which are composed of three triads plus the climax wherein firstborn males are killed. As support for the presence and deliberate use of this structure, FISHBANE notes that two shorter versions of this pattern (i.e. two triads with climactic fourth parts in which firstborn are killed) can be seen in the historical liturgies of Pss. 78:43-51 and 105:27-36.⁶ On the basis of these parallels, he suggests that Exod 4:21b-23 is a variation on a set structural form. The signs of 4:1-9 are given both for the Israelites as well as for the Egyptians seen in 4:21b-23, following Moses’ recommission in 4:10-16. Similarly, the signs of the Plagues are also given for both the Israelites and the Egyptians—for the Israelites so that they will communicate what Yahweh did in Egypt to future Israelite generations in order that they too will ‘know’ that he is Yahweh (10:1-2), and for the Egyptians so they will come to ‘know’ the power of Yahweh (7:3-5). The sign-structure of three-plus-one means that the fourth sign for the Egyptians is the death of their firstborn according to 4:21b-23 and it appears as if the Israelites lack a fourth sign, but FISHBANE connects the enigmatic 4:24-26 and the circumcision of Moses’ firstborn as a fourth sign for the Israelites, signalling the salvation which that blood has procured.

⁵FISHBANE, ‘Exodus 1-4: The Prologue to the Exodus Cycle’, 64.

⁶Ibid., 70.

For FISHBANE, Exodus 5 begins a new narrative phase because of differences from chapter 4 and links with chapter 6.⁷ The narrative artist responsible for the final arrangement and composition was concerned to preserve diverse traditions and transform them into one continuous narrative, which he did by creating links between the initial unit of chapters 1-4 and the succeeding material in chapters 5-19. FISHBANE closes with a selection of specific links that connect these two sections of Exodus: (1) forced labour due to Israelite increase (כַּב, 1:7 and 5:5); (2) the drowning of male firstborn (1:22) and salvation of Moses (2:1-6) with the drowning of the Egyptians and salvation of Israel (chaps. 14-15); (3) the סִנְיָה bush of Moses' commission (3:2) adjacent to the mountain of God (3:1) with all Israel standing at *Sinai*, the mountain of God, after the exodus (24:13); (4) the commission and complaint of Moses (3:6-11; cf. 6:12, 30), appointment of Aaron (4:14-17; cf. 7:1-2) and revelation of the God of the fathers (3:6, 16; cf. 6:2); (5) the divine bestowal upon Moses of three signs plus a fourth (4:1-9, 24-26), reappearing as ten Plagues/signs in the second part in the form of three plus three plus three plus one; (6) the fourth sign of the first sequence (chap. 4) and tenth sign of the second sequence (chaps. 11-12) involving the killing of firstborn Egyptians and redemption of the Israelites, with the power of blood protecting the Israelites (Moses in 4:24-26 and the Israelites in 12:7-13); and, (7) the 'trusting' (אָמַן) of the Israelites after Moses' initial signs with the 'trusting' (אָמַן) of the Israelites in God and Moses (14:31) after the final conflict.

FISHBANE'S essay is refreshing to read, and many of his structural observations move beyond mere creativity to substantial comment. His awareness that the Exodus story, particularly its prologue, is laden with Genesis imagery and motifs, provides a helpful filter through which Exodus might be observed at this narrative level, not to mention offering possible hints of its compositional priority. It is with respect to

⁷Ibid., 72.

compositional issues, however, that FISHBANE becomes confusing. Instead of acknowledging a reading strategy which operates at a literary level on a separate plane from historical and compositional issues, or, alternatively seeking the interrelationship between literary-structural observations and the composition of the text, he presents a somewhat conflated perspective. He speaks of the ‘narrator’⁸ and ‘author’⁹ but does not elaborate on the role or identity of this person, nor whether they are the same or separate; one assumes, however, that he is not a fictitious entity in the ‘implied’ sense. FISHBANE is not entirely clear on how this ‘narrator’ or ‘author’ relates to the ‘arranger-composer’ of the following quote,

... it was precisely in the process of weaving together a continuous narrative from multiple oral and literary traditions that the final arranger-composer stylized his materials typologically, so that the opening narrative (in Exodus 1-4) linguistically and thematically foreshadows or balances that which follows (in Exodus 5-19).¹⁰

At what point in the redactional process did distinct traditions become carefully edited into such a literary masterpiece? Discussing the new phase begun at chapter 5, FISHBANE writes,

To be sure, such an analytic estimation, based as it is on literary-typological considerations, is a meta-analysis arising from the received narrative tradition. For from the viewpoint of the distinguishable sources or traditions which comprise the narrative, Exodus 6:2ff. is linguistically distinct from—and even thematically contradictory to—chapter 5.¹¹

⁸Ibid., 71.

⁹Ibid., 75.

¹⁰Ibid., 72-73.

¹¹Ibid., 72.

FISHBANE probably could have distinguished more clearly between the three separate processes involved in composition, redaction and the subsequent reading of this story. His observations are useful, however, and healthily contribute to the reading of Exodus 1-14 as a synchronic narrative.

Hepner

MARK HEPNER'S article, 'Some Observations on the Structure and Poetics of Exodus 1 and 2',¹² provides an interesting analysis of the discourse structure of these prefacing chapters with literary sensitivity. His thesis is that Exodus 1 and 2 have been intentionally constructed around a recurring structural motif which contains the elements of: (1) Proposal; (2) Execution; (3) Outcome; and, (4) Situation Continues Unresolved. This structural feature, along with certain poetic ones, facilitates movement in the story through its cycle of events towards the peak of its conclusion.

In Exodus 1, after the antagonist is introduced (1:8) and the problem clarified (1:9), the structural motif occurs three times in 1:10-14, 1:15-21; and 1:22. In its ascending order of development, the structure creates suspense in its rise to a climax; 1:10-14 depicts the collective oppression, a non-life-threatening situation which continues unresolved without deliverance; 1:15-21 develops into a life-threatening situation (the threat of annihilation—a threat to national survival) which is temporarily resolved with deliverance by human agents; and 1:22 embodies a life-threatening situation (an immediate threat of annihilation as a threat to national survival) for which a divine deliverer is required.¹³

¹²*Occasional Papers in Translation and Text Linguistics* 2, no. 2 (1988): 39-52.

¹³HEPNER seems to be 'reading backwards' here from the perspective of a readerly knowledge of the outcome of the story. The requisite 'second naivete' called for by PAUL RICOEUR (*The Symbolism of Evil*, trans. E. Buchanan [New York: Harper

Exodus 2 employs the structural formula with some variation over a larger set of verses, with the Proposal and Execution assumed from chapter 1, the Outcome in 2:1-22, and the subsequent Situation Continuing Unresolved. The chapter's closing verses (2:23-25) are considered significant in that they depict Israel 'crying out' to God who then enters the story, signalling that the Israelite oppression will end. With the entry of this character, the 'author' uses important verbs like שמע ('to hear'), זכר ('to remember'), ראה ('to see') and ידע ('to know').

HEPNER also examines the poetics of these chapters. Details arising from a study of their direct speech, *Leitwörter*, characterisation, use of type-scene, foreshadowing, and use of the particle הִנֵּה reveal a conscious objective of the writer to highlight the Israelites as a nation with Moses as an ideal deliverer, the antagonistic character of Pharaoh, and the exodus out of Egypt as an impending event. Qualifying his discussion with comments about the subjective and speculative nature of identifying features of foreshadowing, HEPNER suggests the following:¹⁴

1. Pharaoh's words about 'going up from the land' (1:10) foreshadow the exodus event;
2. the two midwives (1:15-21) foreshadow Moses and Aaron; and,
3. descriptions like 'swarming' and 'filling the land' (1:7) foreshadow the Plagues.

Other foreshadowing occurs with Moses':

1. defending the weak and powerless from the oppressor (2:11-15);
2. delivering Reuel's seven daughters—anticipating the delivery of the entire nation of Israel;
3. drawing water—as one who later provides water in the wilderness;

and Row, 1967], 351) should avoid such informed reading with this type of method as much as possible.

¹⁴Some Observations on the Structure and Poetics of Exodus 1 and 2', 44-45.

- and,
 4. naming Gershom—‘an alien, stranger there’—depicting Moses as
 ‘. . . the prototype of Israel—a kind of firstfruits of the exodus’.¹⁵

Arguing that the above structure along with its attendant poetic devices serves to provide insight for the reader into the historical significance of Moses, HEPNER concludes by offering a proposal that this discourse structure may prove a useful tool for a better understanding of the Plagues account and the Exodus story at large. Although these observations may appear helpful from both a structural and a poetics perspective, certain clarifications of method and terms have been neglected. Who brought about this clear structure in this introductory segment of the story, and by what process did it come into being? Or is this an exercise in reading a text on a separate level of hermeneutical strategy, because it can be seen to read well? If so, who is the ‘narrator’,¹⁶ and how does this person relate to the ‘author’¹⁷ or ‘writer’?¹⁸ HEPNER uses the terms ‘author’ and ‘narrator’ interchangeably, along with the ‘inspired narrator’,¹⁹ and there results a somewhat confused picture of the narratological voice structure and its relationship if any to the historical authorship of the text. HEPNER’S approach and observations are helpful, but both his method and terms require clarification.

¹⁵Ibid., 50.

¹⁶Ibid., 47.

¹⁷Ibid., 39, *passim*.

¹⁸Ibid., 51.

¹⁹Ibid., 52.

Willi-Plein

Another approach to the introduction of the Exodus story which views it as anticipating subsequent material is INA WILLI-PLEIN'S recent article, 'Ort und Literarische Funktion der Geburtsgeschichte des Mose'.²⁰ Concerned with literary-critical and traditio-historical concerns, WILLI-PLEIN'S core argument is that the birth story of Moses (Exod 2:1-10) functions to facilitate the transition between the patriarchal history and the history of the nation. For Israel, this transition moves from her *Vorgeschichte* as described in Genesis, to her *Volksgeschichte*,²¹ and is a product of 'J', defined as the oldest literary narrative layer but not the classical 'J' source.²²

After establishing 1:15-2:10 as a section (with 1:8-12 presenting the exposition to the Exodus story), WILLI-PLEIN subdivides the section on formal grounds into the three subgroups of (1) 1:15-20, 22;²³ (2) 2:1-4; and, (3) 2:5-9, 10. Her main observation is that each subsection contains various forms of the root יָלַד as a leitmotif,²⁴ with the cumulative function of emphasising 2:1-10 as a *birth* story and not a childhood-of-Moses story. The three subsections, then, correspond to a woman-story, a child-story, and a birth-story. The Implied Author was aware of the significance of the name מִשְׁפָּח in connection with the Egyptian element *ms/msj* relating to 'born' and used this wordplay as a prologue to the story of the exodus from Egypt;²⁵ *'Noch einmal wird mit dieser Geburt eine Familiengeschichte erzählt wie in*

²⁰VT 41 (1991): 110-18.

²¹Ibid., 110.

²²Instead, WILLI-PLEIN understands 'J' along the lines of recent perspectives advanced by RENDTORFF and BLUM (110, n. 3).

²³For her (114), 1:21 is a later explanation of 1:20.

²⁴Ibid., 115.

²⁵Ibid., 117-18.

*der Genesis, aber sie führt in die Volksgeschichte ein.*²⁶ WILLI-PLEIN provides a careful comment on the birth motif, which functions on a literary level to colour the characterisation of Moses in the story and highlight the narratological portrayal of the tale of his birth.

STORY APPROACHES

Robertson

ROBERTSON'S essay, 'Comedy and Tragedy: Exodus 1-15 and the *Bacchae*', compares the folk story of Exodus 1-15 as a comedy with Euripides' Greek tragedy *The Bacchae*, in a volume which sought to introduce the application of literary criticism to various Old Testament texts.²⁷ Comedy and tragedy are distinguished in that the former manifests 'a work in which the hero is in the end incorporated into the society to which he properly belongs', whereas the latter embodies 'a work in which the hero is in the end cast out of the society to which he properly belongs'.²⁸ The hero is 'the person from whose point of view we primarily view and understand the action',²⁹ who in this story is twofold: the invisible Yahweh and the visible Moses. Exodus 1-15 is a comedy because its two heroes—the visible, immediate one, Moses,

²⁶Ibid., 118.

²⁷DAVID ROBERTSON, *The Old Testament and the Literary Critic*, Guides to Biblical Scholarship, Old Testament Series, ed. GENE M. TUCKER (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 16-32.

²⁸Ibid., 16.

²⁹Ibid., 26.

and the invisible, ultimate one, Yahweh—both become integrated into the societies to which they belong.³⁰

The story begins with estrangement, both physical (Yahweh is in Midian and his people in Egypt) and social/religious (Pharaoh is their king whereas Yahweh should be), and ends with reunion. The means by which the two heroes are integrated with their proper societies is the *agon* [*sic*], or contest between Moses and Pharaoh.³¹

The integration depicts, as is common with comedy, the establishment of a new community—characterised by social freedom and moral justice—which replaces an old unjust community. ROBERTSON exhibits sensitivity in observing both the prominent role of characterisation in the movement of the story's plot, and the narratological portrayal of the characters within the story. He defines the 'essential plot' as follows: 'Both *The Bacchae* and Exodus 1-15 tell the story of how a strange and little known god authenticates his claim to godhood by unleashing (*sic*) his divine power against a proud and stubborn unbeliever.'³² The aim of the plot is that Pharaoh recognise that Yahweh is the most powerful god in Egypt as well as in Midian, and the Plagues are a mechanism which serve this plot by setting the stage for Moses' negotiating encounters with Pharaoh.³³ The story is an *agon*, a contest between the protagonist and the *alazon* Pharaoh.³⁴

³⁰Ibid., 16, 25.

³¹Ibid., 26.

³²Ibid., 17.

³³Ibid., 22. The same intention lies behind EURIPIDES' tragedy. For example, cf. line 48, where Dionysus determines to show Pentheus, 'Therefore I shall prove to him and every man in Thebes that I am god indeed'; DAVID GRENE and RICHMOND LATTIMORE, ed., *The Complete Greek Tragedies*, trans. WILLIAM ARROWSMITH (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), vol. 5, *The Bacchae*; text printed in ROBERTSON, 18. In the same way, Yahweh's name is unknown to the people, and both his opponents and his own people need to become convinced of his identity (ibid., 19).

The Narrator of Exodus 1-15 carefully ensures that the reader will identify with Yahweh, not with Pharaoh. Yahweh is presented as good, defending the poor and oppressed (chapter 3), and Pharaoh is depicted as unquestionably bad. ROBERTSON views Pharaoh's request to Moses to 'Bless me also' (12:32) as significant for his character-development within the plot:

This request is the final in a series of confessions by Pharaoh, and the series taken together describes the course of his acknowledgment of Yahweh as a god to whom worship is properly due. First he requests intercession, then he confesses his sin, and finally he asks for a blessing.³⁵

While the characters in *The Bacchae* retain a certain ambiguity, the Exodus story is not at all ambiguous according to ROBERTSON because 'ambiguity obfuscates moral clarity'.³⁶ The moral ambiguity of *The Bacchae* enables the reader to experience adult emotions, such as that every person is somewhat bad and somewhat good.³⁷ In contrast, however, the plot structure of Exodus 1-15 encourages the reader to experience childlike emotions in its moral clarity and clear discerning

³⁴Common to Greek literature, the *alazon* is a boaster who thinks he knows more than he does know, thus assuming a higher place in the overall hierarchy of things than he should (ROBERTSON, *Old Testament and the Literary Critic*, 21); he often obstructs the path of the hero (ibid., 26). See BALDICK, *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, s.v. 'braggadocio', 26.

³⁵Ibid., 25.

³⁶Ibid., 28. Pentheus, in *The Bacchae*, is somewhat good but also evil, and this character-ambiguity fosters an ambivalent reader-response (ROBERTSON, *Old Testament and the Literary Critic*, 27).

³⁷Ibid., 30.



between good and evil.³⁸ The Exodus story is a clear moral tale which, leaning heavily on its characterisation, serves to promote a certain rhetoric regarding Yahweh and his role as king in socio-political issues of land and boundary and religio-theological issues of divine kingship and exclusivity. ROBERTSON'S synchronic essay, which suspends discussion of issues like referentiality and the historical authorship of the text, is an excellent study in method, and also reveals an important facet of the Exodus story's plot by identifying its emphasis on 'recognition', a plot-feature which is pronounced through the motif of 'knowledge' as will be seen in the following chapter.³⁹

Clines

DAVID J. A. CLINES'S literary understanding of the meaning and significance of the Exodus story is set within the broader framework of his understanding of the synchronic theme of the first five Old Testament books.⁴⁰ For CLINES,

The theme of the Pentateuch is the partial fulfilment—which implies also the partial non-fulfilment—of the promise to or blessing of the patriarchs.⁴¹

³⁸Ibid., 29; ' . . . whereas the effectiveness of *The Bacchae* depends upon its capacity to absorb ambiguity and irony, the effectiveness of Exodus 1-15 depends upon its ability to exclude them'.

³⁹Note the brief comparison with elements of tragedy and comedy in Chapter Three's analysis of Section IV under the heading 'Resolution of Plot: The Illusory Conclusion'. See also J. CHERYL EXUM, *Tragedy and Biblical Narrative: Arrows of the Almighty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) for similar readings in this regard.

⁴⁰*The Theme of the Pentateuch*, JSOTSup 10 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1978).

⁴¹Ibid., 29.

This theme, possessing isolated elements like the promises of a son, of descendants, of God's presence, of God's blessing, of the covenant, of new pasture, and of a cultivated land,⁴² can be subdivided into three facets: the promise of posterity, the promise of a relationship with God, and the promise of land.⁴³ These facets appear sequentially throughout the Pentateuch, with descendants in Genesis 12-50,⁴⁴ the divine-human relationship in Exodus and Leviticus,⁴⁵ and land in Numbers and Deuteronomy.⁴⁶ Exodus 1-15 fits by implication within the general framework of promise, and the specific facet of the divine-human relationship according to the structure which CLINES has detected.

CLINES does not directly elucidate the plot of the Exodus story as such, but is more concerned to present this synchronic scheme and to comment on its later theological function within the exilic community as a final-form text.⁴⁷ Certain plot-features, however, inevitably emerge. The two focal points of Exodus and Leviticus

⁴²AS CLAUS WESTERMANN, *Die Verheissungen an die Väter: Studien zur Vätergeschichte*, *FRLANT* 116 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1976), 123-49; cited in CLINES, *Theme of the Pentateuch*, 122 n. 5.

⁴³CLINES, *Theme of the Pentateuch*, 29.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 45-47.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 47-51.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 25-27, 53-58. Within the Pentateuch, CLINES locates nineteen references that indicate the promise of descendants (32-33), nineteen references that designate the promise of relationship (33-36), eighteen references which mention the promise of land (36-37), and one hundred and twenty-six specific references bearing allusion to the promise (37-43).

⁴⁷Having undergone its final redaction in Babylon, the Pentateuch served the exiles as an exilic work by interpreting their history and summoning them to obedience in their present situation. For them, the 'bondage' of the oppressed Hebrews under their Egyptian taskmasters was the bondage of Israel in Babylon, and 'the exodus past becomes the exodus that is yet to be' (CLINES, *Theme of the Pentateuch*, 99).

are, according to CLINES, the exodus event and the Sinai revelation.⁴⁸ The narrative of the exodus from Egypt was initiated by acts springing from the divine-human relationship, like God remembering his patriarchal covenant (2:24) and the commission of Moses from the God of the fathers (3:6).⁴⁹ The primary concern of the Moses/Pharaoh encounters in chapters 5-11 is that Pharaoh allow the Hebrews to 'formalize' the divine-human relationship with cultic and sacrificial offerings in the wilderness.⁵⁰ Exodus establishes the relationship between God and his people, and then Leviticus meticulously outlines how this relationship will be maintained.⁵¹

This monograph provides a useful synchronic and theological background to the Exodus story. CLINES'S focus on the 'divine-human' relationship proves advantageous for an analysis of the characters and characterisation within the story. Two points must be noted, however. First, at the level of plot, it is debatable whether or not the concern of the Moses/Pharaoh encounters retains focus on wilderness offerings as CLINES suggests; a broader scheme of plot can be discovered, as outlined in the next chapter below. Second, CLINES'S focus on the exilic function of the Exodus (and broader pentateuchal) story must be expanded to include the curious metaphorical portrayal of Pharaoh, as suggested in Chapter Five (*Narratology and the Exodus Story*), below.⁵²

⁴⁸Ibid., 47.

⁴⁹Ibid., 47.

⁵⁰Ibid., 48. See Chapter Three (*Plot Directions in the Exodus Story*) and the discussion in Section I under *Introduction of Characters* for an alternative interpretation of this character conflict.

⁵¹In Leviticus, almost solely by ritual worship (CLINES, *Theme of the Pentateuch*, 50).

⁵²See the subsection 'The Plagues Proper' in the section entitled 'The Fabric of the Text'.

Gunn

Another approach to the Exodus story which primarily appreciates the merits of its characterisation is the article by DAVID M. GUNN, 'The "Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart": Plot, Character and Theology in Exodus 1-14'.⁵³ Responding to the argument of ROBERTSON above—that Exodus avoids features like ambiguity and irony in depicting its characters—GUNN outlines the developments of the story's key characters within the plot in an attempt to disengage ROBERTSON'S argument. Examining the characters of Pharaoh, Yahweh, Moses, and the people, GUNN suggests that their respective developments influence the plot and evidence an underlying narratological concern; tensions evident in the difficult juxtaposition of freedom and servitude are explored and notions of divine causality are promulgated in this 'narrative which explores the ambiguous nature of human "freedom" in a theist world'.⁵⁴

Pharaoh is an ambiguous character at the beginning, because the reader does not know whether he hardens his own heart, or if Yahweh is hardening it.⁵⁵ Although God says he will harden Pharaoh's heart in passages like 4:21 and 7:2-4, ambiguity is fostered in that Pharaoh seems to exhibit control over his destiny and maintain freewill in his decisions until the end of the narrative, when it becomes clear that he remains under the strict control of Yahweh's sovereignty.⁵⁶

⁵³In *Art and Meaning: Rhetoric in Biblical Literature*, JSOTSup 19, ed. DAVID J. A. CLINES, DAVID M. GUNN and ALAN J. HAUSER (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1982), 72-96.

⁵⁴GUNN, 'The "Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart"', 90.

⁵⁵It is important to recognise along with GUNN that both Pharaohs (of birth and Plague episodes) merge as characters in the story (74), and can therefore be understood as one character for purposes of the present analysis.

⁵⁶GUNN, 'The "Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart"', 74-75.

Yahweh responds to the suffering and oppression of his people with action that is bound up in his covenant with the patriarchs (2:23-25). GUNN observes that Yahweh's response to the suffering is not primarily concerned with its alleviation but, contrasting CLINES's analysis, with the covenantal promise of land (3:6-8; 15-17 etc.).⁵⁷ This enables the depiction of Yahweh's character as 'Providence, the Provider of a future, a future that has already been promised in the past'.⁵⁸ The purpose of the exodus is as follows:

Yahweh delivers Israel, as obliged by his covenant promise to see them in a land which may be called their own. By the simple act of deliverance out of Egypt he re-activates that promise—and demonstrates his mastery; by effecting the deliverance with repeated signs and wonders he elevates the belittling of Pharaoh into an event of cosmic proportions, doubly so in the climactic crossing of the sea where we see the world revert to chaos and then become dry land once again—and thereby demonstrates his mastery.⁵⁹

Yahweh's character also undergoes development. On the ambiguity theme, GUNN detects a hint of insecurity in Yahweh himself and suggests that there is a need for Yahweh to secure his identity.⁶⁰ Questions of his identity which occur early in the story (3:13; 4:1; 6:1-7) become settled at the final demonstration of his mighty power over the Egyptians.

Moses also develops as a character through the course of the narrative, eventually rising to a position of self-initiated leadership.⁶¹ Taking several initiatives

⁵⁷Ibid., 82.

⁵⁸Ibid., 82.

⁵⁹Ibid., 83.

⁶⁰Ibid., 95 n. 33.

⁶¹Moses speaks without a commission in Exodus 11, and Aaron virtually disappears from then on.

in the beginning chapters, Moses becomes stilled at the burning bush, from which point on Yahweh dictates the action. Although Moses—like Pharaoh—retains puppet characteristics throughout much of the story, he sheds this character-less form and becomes a man of independence as the story concludes, a leader of the people who expresses initiative and issues directives towards the people.

The people are not as easily controlled as Pharaoh (eventually) and Moses (initially) are, demonstrating to GUNN the truth of the uneasy coexistence between freedom and servitude. God forcing faith from puppets is one thing; but to allow human beings the capacity of freewill will always involve risk and the potential for relational dissonance. It is with respect to the ‘people’ or characters of the Exodus story that GUNN makes his greatest contribution. GUNN brings an informative psychological aspect to his elucidation of Yahweh’s character with the idea of divine insecurity requiring recognition, an interesting supplement to the ‘knowledge’ motif suggested in the outline of the plot in Chapter Three, below. Also, GUNN highlights an important feature of the story’s characterisation with his observation that the primary conflict does not occur between Moses and Pharaoh but remains with Yahweh and Pharaoh,⁶² supporting the opinion advanced in Chapter Three that the Exodus story contains a conflict between perceived deities—not humans.

Thompson

THOMAS L. THOMPSON’S monograph, *The Origin Tradition of Ancient Israel: I. The Literary Formation of Genesis and Exodus 1-23*,⁶³ provides another approach to the narrative of the Exodus story, albeit one that is largely concerned with diachronic

⁶²Ibid., 85.

⁶³JSOTSup 55 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987).

origins. THOMPSON separates fictive historiography from factual historicity (history)⁶⁴ and assigns the pentateuchal literature to the former category.⁶⁵ Because of this dichotomy, the writing of Israel's historical origins remains a separate task from the literary recovery of them as they are presented in the Bible. His book attempts to recover the latter, although with constant dialogue between diachronic and synchronic issues.⁶⁶

THOMPSON'S analysis of the Exodus story, subsumed under the headings: (a) Moses and the Sojourn in Egypt; and, (b) Moses and the Wandering in the Wilderness, contains detailed observations which are helpful for a literary approach.

⁶⁴THOMPSON, *The Origin Tradition of Ancient Israel*, 31, 41.

⁶⁵Although a history of Israel can be written through the results of Syro-Palestinian archaeology, according to THOMPSON, the biblical historiography remains ideological and not useful for this purpose (27). THOMPSON'S attempt at this history of Israel can be seen in his *Early History of the Israelite People: From Written and Archaeological Sources* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992).

⁶⁶Regarding compositional issues, THOMPSON suggests the 7th Century B.C.E. for the earliest redaction of what later resulted in the Pentateuch (51, 156, 193). Instead of stratified sources or documents, the patriarchal and Exodus narratives were introduced *en bloc* as the first major tradition of the Pentateuch, within which neither J nor P exist (66). The hypothetical 'J-tradition' is redefined by him as the 'ideology of a redactional framework' which holds various disparate stories in a unified stream—although stories and traditions which arose separately from this present framework (67). THOMPSON outlines the literary stages through which the pentateuchal material developed *en route* to its present form, which are: (1) Smaller Units and Tales; to (2) Larger, Compound Tales; to (3) Traditional Complex-Chain Narratives; and finally, to (4) The Toledoth Structure (62-65). He also mentions a Past (*sic*, Post? [*ExpTim* 99, (May 1988): 225]) Toledoth Redaction as a fifth and latest stage (65), situating the pentateuchal material in the narrative tradition that extends into 2 Kings. THOMPSON identifies six chains in the Pentateuch from which the origin tradition of Genesis 1-Exodus 23 was shaped: those of Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Passover/Exodus (two chains merged into a single narrative block) and the Torah in Exodus, and Genesis 1-11. He suggests that their existence refutes the Documentary Hypothesis, but has been criticised for not demonstrating the purported genre of Traditional Complex-Chain Narrative with parallels from the ancient world, as the reviews of PHYLLIS TRIBLE (*CBQ* 52 [1990]: 545) and BURKE O. LONG (*JBL* 108 [1989]: 330) observe.

He divides the story into four major sections: (1) 1:1-4:31; (2) 5:1-13:16; (3) 13:17-14:31; and, (4) the poem of 15:1-21. The initial section is characterised by the recurring use of the number three.⁶⁷ Three plot episodes are given within the initial section: (1) 1:7-14, Israel's filling the land and the contrasting Egyptians' attempts to thwart both the increase and their exodus from the land; (2) 1:15-21, the king of Egypt's second attempt to suppress the Israelites; and, (3) the 'plot-entry episode' of 1:22-2:10, with the birth story of Moses,⁶⁸ based upon the pattern of problem and response. The governing theme with which the entire plot of the Exodus story must deal is presented in Exod 1:7—the fact of the Israelite increase.⁶⁹ The three episodes are an introduction to Moses.

This folktale serves as a plot-entry into the chain narrative of the Exodus, by concentrating the attention of the audience on the child, Moses, as its center. The plot-line of the larger narrative follows from this as a life of Moses, proceeding linearly and historiographically.⁷⁰

⁶⁷THOMPSON suggests that a common feature of his identified traditional complex-chain narrative is that they begin with three episodes and exhibit tripling of scenes (common in folk-tales to intensify the emphasis of their prevailing themes), usually with the third being the most important (158). For example, the individual stories of the Jacob-Esau complex-chain are concentrically linked, dealing with the three respective conflicts of: (1) Jacob/Esau; (2) Jacob/Laban; and, (3) Rachel/Leah (104-6). The introduction of this complex-chain also contains three episodes: (1) the prediction of conflict between Jacob and Esau (Gen 25:22f.); (2) the parallel episode (Gen 25:24-28) which confirms the theme in its descriptions of Jacob and Esau; and, (3) the conflict-issue of birthright, addressed with the etiology of Edom's name (25:29-34) (161-62).

⁶⁸THOMPSON, *The Origin Tradition of Ancient Israel*, 133-34, 173-74.

⁶⁹Ibid., 133.

⁷⁰Ibid., 174.

Within this initial section, a second independent variant of the beginning of Moses' story can be seen in the theophany episode of 3:1ff., which begins at 2:23 in its present shape according to him.⁷¹ Instead of a Moses of Levitical ancestry and Egyptian upbringing, this variant depicts Moses as a shepherd and son-in-law of the Midianite priest. Discoursing with God at the theophany,⁷² Moses is instructed to go to Egypt but responds three times that he will be disbelieved, each time predicting a later element of the story; (1) 3:11-12 predicts the later serving of God on the mountain; (2) 3:18-22 predicts the king of Egypt's refusal of Moses' request (to sacrifice in the wilderness for *three* days!) and the eventual exodus; and, (3) 4:21-23 predicts the death of Egyptian firstborn, culminating in chapter 12.⁷³

The second section (5:1-13:16) is a lengthy narrative which, THOMPSON suggests, appears fragmented because its origins are in variant sources. Seemingly replete with doublets, the section also manifests 'tripling' tendencies, like the threefold presentation of the tale of oppression: (1) the orders of the Pharaoh; (2) the fulfilment of these orders; and, (3) the Israelite foremen's complaints.⁷⁴ Instead of a single plot, the narrative displays several plots, preserved by the redactor out of

⁷¹Ibid., 135-36.

⁷²Significantly, the God of the *three* patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (2:24; 3:6).

⁷³THOMPSON, *The Origin Tradition of Ancient Israel*, 136-37, 175-76. In 4:1-9, Yahweh gives Moses three signs (rod to snake, leprous hand, blood to water) which differs from the above three 'prophetic' stories which anticipate fulfilment, as a variation 'in the form of a threefold instruction looking forward to a threefold wonder story' (137). THOMPSON suggests that this may represent a third variant beginning of Moses' story in Egypt, which anticipates signs and wonders rather than plagues; 'The prophecies of this introduction are very consciously patterned in a tripartite form, fully comparable to the tripartite story of the oppression in the variant introduction of Exodus 1-2.' (136).

⁷⁴Ibid., 139-40.

numerous motifs, themes and episodes arising from independent sources.⁷⁵ After the initial question of the identity of Aaron and Moses is answered with the 'intruded' genealogy in 6:14-25,⁷⁶ the main plot-line is laid out for 7:8-11:10: the divine hardening of Pharaoh's heart so the Egyptians will come to know Yahweh.⁷⁷

The third section (13:17-14:31) is a narrative about the crossing of the Sea and is tied to the Passover story by means of 13:20-22—Israel at the edge of the wilderness led by Yahweh with the pillars of cloud and fire. The account begins with an entrapment motif in 14:1-4 which has undergone a redactional expansion along the traditional lines of the cry of distress that is answered by the salvation of God in response; THOMPSON identifies the expansion in 14:5-7, 11-14, 19f., 21a β -b α , 24f., 27a β -b α , and possibly 31.⁷⁸ The entrapment material remains secondary to the main

⁷⁵Ibid., 140.

⁷⁶Confirmed by 6:26-27; *ibid.*, 140.

⁷⁷Ibid., 141. These Plague chapters betray composite earlier sources, primarily altered with the additional themes of: (1) the despoiling of the Egyptians (predicted in 3:21-22, fulfilled in 12:36); (2) the cultic dehistoricisation of the final Plague for Israelite Passover festival interests; and, (3) the concluding annihilation of Pharaoh and the Egyptians (143). THOMPSON views 12:1-27, 43-50 as a redactionally central narrative that weaves together these traditions, saying,

It is a cultic interpretation, in narrative form, of Israel being saved from the oppression. It understands the story of Israel coming out of Egypt as a story whose center is the celebration of the passover feast. For this redactor of the pentateuch, Israel finds its origin as a nation in the celebration of the Passover. This commemorative recitation creates Israel, giving an historiographic form to an essentially mythical and constitutional reality. (144)

THOMPSON thinks that 13:1-16 also expands the tradition, etiologically addressing the consecration of firstborn (as an agricultural cultic practice) and ascribing a memorial interpretation to the feast of unleavened bread.

⁷⁸Ibid., 144-45.

narrative, whose basis can be found in 14:1-4, 8-10, depicting the hardening of Pharaoh's heart and the chase. Also in this section, the murmuring motif resurfaces which was introduced in 13:17 and, according to THOMPSON, remains a leitmotif within the Moses traditions at large.

The fourth and final section of the relevant segment (Moses and the Sojourn in Egypt) is 15:1-21, viewed as a poetic rendering of chapter fourteen's expanded narrative. For THOMPSON, the song is probably late in the growth of the Exodus tradition and is based on traditional materials which are similar to those of the narrative in chapter 14.⁷⁹

The Exodus story, which contributes to the origin tradition of Israel, was primarily shaped from two traditional complex-chain narratives: the Exodus chain narrative⁸⁰—an historiographic and Moses-centred work, and the Passover chain narrative⁸¹—focusing on Pharaoh's hardened heart and the Plagues, climaxing in the Passover.⁸² This process was complex, according to THOMPSON,

The bewildering multiplicity of narration variants and the historiographical orientation of many of its story lines cause great difficulty for an analysis of its narrative structure. Moreover, the revisions which the central stories of plague and wonder have undergone make it exceedingly difficult to trace the plot-lines of the variant components of the greater stories. Finally, the fact that there are at least two long complex chains of narrative, which have been brought together in the final redaction of the tradition, one centering on the exodus from Egypt and the other on the Passover festival, one

⁷⁹Ibid., 147-48.

⁸⁰1:7-2:22; 4:1-20; 5:4-6:30; 10:28f.; 12:42-15:21.

⁸¹2:23-3:22; 4:21-5:3; 7:1-10:27; 11:1-12:41.

⁸²THOMPSON, *The Origin Tradition of Ancient Israel*, 175. The Torah chain narrative (15:22-23:33) also contributes to the origin tradition, etiologically explaining how Israel came to follow the Torah as obedience to God (ibid., 150-53, 181-89).

dealing historiographically and the other ideologically with the origin of Israel, means that the tradition has far greater depth, but also far greater opacity, than is found in any of the other major narrative blocks of the origin tradition.⁸³

Ancient Israel perceived her historiographic origin to reside more in the Passover than in the exodus, and her national self-understanding influenced by the present Passover festival and Torah-observance determined her construction of the past, guiding the selection of materials which confirmed this point of view.⁸⁴

THOMPSON'S book is not only creative and well-written, but also contains a wealth of useful observations for the attempt at reading the Exodus story from a literary perspective which arise out of his attention to features like motifs and plot-lines. His emphasis on etiological function is also helpful, as are his stylistic remarks on devices like the use of the number three. THOMPSON remains unclear, however, on various matters. To begin, his work remains more an effort at *Literarkritik* than a contemporary literary analysis—the latter of which his title and second chapter ('The Pentateuchal Tradition as Narrative')⁸⁵ lead the reader to expect. Also, at times THOMPSON does not provide clear enough distinctions between or definitions of the literary facets under discussion; for example, a careful definition of plot would be beneficial. With respect to plot, THOMPSON suggests in one place that the governing motif of the Exodus story's plot-line remains with Exod 1:7 and the growth of the nation,⁸⁶ while in another place, he argues that one of several plots (here discussing

⁸³Ibid., 148.

⁸⁴Ibid., 194-95. The centrality of the Passover festival in the origin tradition's formulation suggests to THOMPSON (193) a date no earlier than the end of the seventh century B.C.E., subsequent to the Josianic reforms when the Passover festival became observed in Israel.

⁸⁵Ibid., 41-59.

⁸⁶Ibid., 133f.

Exod 5:1-13:16) can be seen in the divine hardening of Pharaoh's heart in order that the Egyptians will gain knowledge of Yahweh.⁸⁷ These aspects are, admittedly, related, but THOMPSON does not lay out with clarity the plot structure of the story, or speak in terms of a double plot as in Chapter Three, below. From a narrative-critical point of view, THOMPSON lacks sufficient explanation of matters literary, and would benefit either from offering his unique suggestions from a confessed older-style literary-critical perspective, or bolstering his literary theory and commenting on diachronic matters only as they inform a synchronic literary explication.

Eslinger

LYLE ESLINGER'S recent piece, 'Freedom or Knowledge? Perspective and Purpose in the Exodus Narrative (Exodus 1-15)',⁸⁸ focuses on the narratological voice-structure of Exodus 1-15. Lamenting that interpreters of the Exodus narrative have missed its theological message and literary meaning because of their failure to recognise its narrative voice structure, ESLINGER attempts to supply a corrective by outlining the three disparate epistemological layers within the narrative which create and sustain the implicit message of the narrative: (1) the *predominant* level of the Narrator and the reader; (2) the *dominant* level of God and Moses; and, (3) the *subdominant* level of the human characters. These refer to the,

. . . hierarchy of ontology and epistemology from the level of the narrator, who is external to the story world, untouched and unconditioned by it, down to the level of the characters, including God, who are stuck fast and firm within the limitations of their respective positions in their story environment. Evaluation of events

⁸⁷Ibid., 140-41.

⁸⁸*JSOT* 52 (1991): 43-60.

from the subordinate level of the characters is relative to the conditions of their existence within the story, whereas assessment from the external, unconditioned narrator is relative only to the situation from which the narrator speaks.⁸⁹

Central to ESLINGER's thesis is the assumption that the message of the author is communicated primarily through the Narrator. He describes the distinct narrative voice-structures of the 'classic' mode of narration, in which readers are addressed by the author through the 'external, unconditioned narrator'; and, the 'polyphonic' mode of narration, wherein character voices are not subordinate to the Narrator's and 'the meaning of a polyphonic narrative is constituted by a combination of the voices of character and narrator', deeming the former normative to biblical narrative.⁹⁰

Past interpreters have failed to understand the authorial message of the Exodus story because they have not recognised that the implicit statements of the Narrator,⁹¹ narrated via the 'classic' mode, represent this message. Instead, readers have equated the perspectives of individual, predominant characters like God and Moses with the intended message and meaning of the text, resulting in misperceptions. The misinterpretation of Exodus 1-15 that ESLINGER refutes is the so-called 'Triumphalist' reading of the tradition, which reads the exodus as a great event that Yahweh staged in order to deliver the descendants of Israel from slavery into a people of his own possession. This view, that Exodus 1-15 is a triumphal celebration of the 'great work' of Deut 11:7 that Yahweh did for Israel, is held by several Old

⁸⁹ESLINGER, 'Freedom or Knowledge? Perspective and Purpose in the Exodus Narrative', 48.

⁹⁰Ibid., 48, n. 2. This 'polyphonic' structure has been defended by M. BAKHTIN (*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984]) with reference to the novels of FEODOR DOSTOEVSKY, against the assumption that the 'classic' mode of narration is a universal mode.

⁹¹ESLINGER's predominant epistemological layer, as above.

Testament scholars and also by inner-biblical assessments like Psalm 105 and even the song itself in Exodus 15. ESLINGER's alternative reading to this approach understands God as the ultimate cause of Israel's fate for the purpose of knowledge—in order that people will know that he is Yahweh, explained in Exod 10:1-2 and 14:4, 17-18.

ESLINGER criticises BREVARD CHILDS for missing the narrative's voice structure because CHILDS thinks that Exodus 15 'in its present setting offers an important interpretation of the event itself'⁹² which affects one's reading of the preceding Exodus prose material. CHILDS obviously concerns himself with issues of tradition- and redaction-history, and considers the poem to have arisen independently of the prose account.⁹³ The present position of the poem, then, reflects a rhetorical placement at a further stage of the text's overall development, and by qualifying 'in its present setting', this diachronic model of textual development can be seen to inform CHILDS's understanding of the narrative's voice structure. To say, 'When CHILDS assumes that Miriam's point of view is that of the narrative, all that his reading reveals is his own preference for the theological mindset expressed by Miriam'⁹⁴ is to misread CHILDS's foundational perspective of the historical and compositional development of the text. Nowhere in CHILDS's discussion of the Old Testament context of the poem⁹⁵ does he even mention Miriam, never mind argue that 'Miriam's point of view is that of the narrative'; he merely suggests that Exodus 15 'offers an important interpretation of the event'.⁹⁶ The supposed identification of a 'theological

⁹²*The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), 249.

⁹³*Ibid.*, 245.

⁹⁴ESLINGER, 'Freedom or Knowledge? Perspective and Purpose in the Exodus Narrative', 49.

⁹⁵*Exodus*, 248-53.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, 249.

preference' in CHILDS is a straw man which ESLINGER hacks down to replace with his own reading of the Exodus story which also could be construed as 'theological', an unfair process which skirts the real synchronic/diachronic issues like what actually constitutes the 'narrative', at what level are features such as 'authorship' and 'intention' being discussed, and at what stage of the narrative's development did this facet of narratological intention come to exist. CHILDS's reading—a diachronic pursuit guided by source- and form-critical interests—cannot be attacked for failing to line up with certain literary assumptions that ESLINGER holds and CHILDS does not.

Nugent

The comparative-religion paper by TONY NUGENT entitled 'Transformations of the *Atrahasis Epic* in Exodus'⁹⁷ illumines the Exodus story from the vantage point of *Religionsgeschichte*.⁹⁸ NUGENT is concerned with the general question of relations between biblical and other ancient Near Eastern traditions. More specifically, he wants to understand the relationship between the *Atrahasis Epic* and the epic of the

⁹⁷Paper presented at the 1991 Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Anaheim, California.

⁹⁸See also WILLIAM W. HALLO, 'Exodus and Ancient Near Eastern Literature', chap. in *Torah: A Modern Commentary*, ed. W. GUNTHER PLAUT and BERNARD T. BAMBERGER (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1987), 367-77 for a short but detailed analysis of the entire book of Exodus along similar comparative lines. HALLO differs from NUGENT, however, in that while NUGENT examines comparative religious and mythological phenomena ('history *and* the text') with implications for the crossover into the 'history *of* the text' interest (i.e. compositional suggestions based on structural comparisons), HALLO remains concerned to situate various features of Exodus in antiquity as demonstration of the historicity of these events. HALLO's article is both informative and illuminating but the basic premise of the presence of close inter-literary parallels as substantiating the historical authenticity of described events is questionable.

emancipation of Israel from Egypt in the book of Exodus.⁹⁹ NUGENT proposes that Exodus contains structural, thematic and theological connections with *Atrahasis* which exist at a deeper level than direct literary borrowing. Instead, following a distinction made by MILLER,¹⁰⁰ he says that Israel did not borrow the story but 'may have inherited the mythos which lies behind the story and which also finds expression in *Atrahasis*'.¹⁰¹

With respect to literary structure, both Exodus and *Atrahasis* contain two isomorphic narrative phases. Citing MORAN for support,¹⁰² NUGENT notes that *Atrahasis* tells (1) the Igigu-myth which is both an independent story and also a preface to (2) the Deluge-myth.¹⁰³ In line with FISHBANE'S observations noted above,¹⁰⁴ Exodus also can be read as having a two-part narrative structure; (1) Exodus 1-4 is a story of Moses and Yahweh which anticipates (2) Exodus 5-19, a story of Moses, the Israelites, and Yahweh. Also of interest to NUGENT is the structural center of both Exodus and *Atrahasis*. Within the matrix of the above

⁹⁹For the standard edition of the former, see W. G. LAMBERT and A. R. MILLARD, *Atrahasis: The Babylonian Story of the Flood*, with 'The Sumerian Flood Story', by M. CIVIL (Oxford: Clarendon, 1966).

¹⁰⁰PATRICK D. MILLER, 'Israelite Religion', chap. in *The Hebrew Bible and its Modern Interpreters*, ed. DOUGLAS A. KNIGHT and GENE M. TUCKER (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), 201-38.

¹⁰¹NUGENT, 'Transformations of the *Atrahasis Epic* in Exodus', 2.

¹⁰²WILLIAM L. MORAN, 'Some Considerations of Form and Interpretation in *Atrahasis*', chap. in *Language, Literature, and History: Erica Reiner Festschrift*, ed. FRANCESCA ROCHBERG-HALTON, American Oriental Series 67 (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1987), 245.

¹⁰³Each story begins with a crisis, has the god Enlil responding violently to the crisis, presents the god Ea limiting or opposing Enlil's action and then portrays Ea and the goddess Mami acting together to resolve the crisis.

¹⁰⁴MICHAEL FISHBANE, 'Exodus 1-4: The Prologue to the Exodus Cycle', 63-76.

geographical structuring, the structural center is 4:24-26 which speaks of an attempted killing by Yahweh and subsequent circumcision. As for *Atrahasis*, its center is formed by the story of the creation of humanity, done with the flesh and blood of a slain god. NUGENT suggests that thematic as well as structural interrelations may be observed here.¹⁰⁵

After commenting on structural similarities, NUGENT discusses two themes which receive comparable development in both stories. The oppression and liberation of corvée workers can be found in the first narrative phase of *Atrahasis* and in both phases of the Exodus story. While in Exodus the primary characters are a group of human workers labouring in lower Egypt under Pharaoh and his taskmasters, in *Atrahasis* there are a group of divine workers (worker-gods) labouring in lower Mesopotamia under the god Enlil and his divine henchmen.¹⁰⁶ Both stories contain a nocturnal revolt and an ordering of the death of the leader of the revolt. Other detailed themes like liberation through the forming of a new creation,¹⁰⁷ the completion of liberation through the establishment of regulations,¹⁰⁸ and the

¹⁰⁵‘Transformations of the *Atrahasis Epic* in Exodus’, 3.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 4.

¹⁰⁷Enlil and Mami create human beings out of the flesh and blood of the slain god so they can do the work of the gods. Yahweh forms Israel into a post-liberated new creation.

¹⁰⁸Mami establishes regulations which provide for human procreation and birth in *Atrahasis* (end of Part II). Yahweh provides regulations and institutes the Sabbath, which ‘may be viewed as an institutionalised worker’s strike action’, NUGENT, ‘Transformations of the *Atrahasis Epic* in Exodus’, 5.

‘Just as Yahweh’s Sabbath requirement is meant to prevent a recurrence of the oppression suffered in Egypt, Ea and Mami’s birth control regulations may be designed to prevent a recurrence of the original crisis, the human overpopulation and noise which disturbed Enlil’s sleep and provoked his wrath.’ (ibid., 7).

importance of ritual to memorialise the respective events¹⁰⁹ attest to strong thematic parallels between both stories.

Both the creation of humanity in *Atrahasis* and the Night of Deliverance in Exodus, the occasions for the establishment of these rituals, involve the slaughter of a victim and the manipulation of the victim's blood, in the one case a manipulation which *creates* human life, and in the case of smearing the blood of the Passover lamb on the doorposts, a manipulation which *preserves* human life.¹¹⁰

Another common theme found in Exodus and the second narrative phase of *Atrahasis* is a series of Plagues followed by a flood. In *Atrahasis*, the newly-created humans disturb Enlil's sleep with the excessive noise of their procreation and multiplication and in Exodus the multiplication also disturbs Pharaoh. While Enlil delivers a series of Plagues and eventually attempts to drown humanity in a flood, Pharaoh increases the Israelite workload and orders the drowning of Hebrew males in the Nile. The parallel is slightly modified in Exodus with the Plagues coming from Yahweh and Moses against Pharaoh. Subsequent to the Plagues episodes, each set of narratives refers to battles that take place by waters, both mentioning 'chariots'¹¹¹ and both concluding with reference to a song.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹Ea declares a ritual for the first, seventh, and fourteenth days of the month. Yahweh initiates the Passover, falling on the fourteenth day of the year's first month, followed by the week-long Feast of Unleavened Bread.

¹¹⁰NUGENT, 'Transformations of the *Atrahasis Epic* in Exodus', 5.

¹¹¹'Chariots of the Egyptians' in Exodus and 'chariots of the gods' in *Atrahasis*.

¹¹²The Songs of Moses and Miriam in Exodus 15 and the concluding words of *Atrahasis*, 'I have sung of the Flood to all peoples. Hear it!' (LAMBERT and MILLARD, *Atrahasis*, 105).

NUGENT'S approach works with the Exodus story at a synchronic level, although merges diachronic interests as well. The parallel features of both tales are not examined by NUGENT merely as a comparative exercise, but in search of answers to questions about the ideological (relating to conceptual) and compositional interrelationships between the two. At the close of his paper, NUGENT suggests that the continuities would be more observable if earlier literary forms of the Exodus story could be compared (because of his assumption that 'the *Atrahasis* mythos lies deeply embedded in the Exodus tradition'),¹¹³ offering a preliminary observation that the Plagues narrative of Exodus directly connects with the Sea of Reeds episode just as the Plagues in *Atrahasis* lead into the account of the Great Flood. Also, the location of the Passover in the present shape of Exodus—celebrated before the event at the Sea—is comparable to the community banquet held by *Atrahasis* and his people on the boat before they experience the Great Flood. In NUGENT'S essay, a pluralist critical interest is at work, an interest which crosses between narrative appreciation and compositional historical concern. Such an approach contributes to the discussion of issues like the literary imagery and conceptual background to the story as illustrated by a comparison with another story from the ancient world.

Miscall

PETER MISCALL, respected for his observations on the narrative intricacies of the Hebrew Bible in *The Workings of Old Testament Narrative*¹¹⁴, has recently reread the story of the Plagues and Exodus in the light of current literary discussion about the genre of fantasy in his essay 'Biblical Narrative and Categories of the Fantastic'.¹¹⁵

¹¹³'Transformations of the *Atrahasis Epic* in Exodus', 8.

¹¹⁴Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983.

¹¹⁵*Semeia* 60: *Fantasy and the Bible* (1992): 39-51.

One problematic issue with fantasy theory in the study of narrative has been the failure of writers to distinguish between fantasy as a mental or psychological phenomenon and fantasy as a narrative structure.¹¹⁶ MISCALL adopts the ‘literary genre’ option over the ‘cognitive experience’ one and offers a synchronic reading of the Exodus story in its final form as a potential example of fantastic literature. His main argument is that the narrative of the exodus contains both supernatural and human elements. Although various signs and wonders are presented to the people, their effects are always shortlived. Contrary to the little immediate lasting effect of these signs and wonders, however, is the effect of ‘hearing’: ‘seeing’ the signs and wonders is not as effective as ‘hearing’ accounts of them. Examples are given of Jethro hearing of Yahweh’s deeds (18:8-11) and the people of Israel hearing the words given by Yahweh to Moses at Sinai through the *reading* of the Book of the Covenant (24:4-7).¹¹⁷ MISCALL says, ‘Miracles may occur and be impressive, but they have little staying power. A story of miracles, a fantasy, is another matter entirely’.¹¹⁸ This idea is connected with the fact that the rite of Passover is a sign (13:9) and also that the stipulation to keep the rite assumes that in the keeping, the Exodus story will be told.

Working under guidelines offered by TZVETAN TODOROV in *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*,¹¹⁹ MISCALL provides an etic reading with sensitivity towards emic observations. His reading is etic in that it brings concerns of fantasy theory and literary criticism to the text—hardly defensible as an interest of the

¹¹⁶See GEORGE AICHELE and TINA PIPPIN, ‘Introduction: Why the Fantastic?’, *Semeia* 60: *Fantasy and the Bible* (1992): 2.

¹¹⁷The people also hear the words given to Moses in 19:7-8 and 24:3.

¹¹⁸‘Categories of the Fantastic’, 48.

¹¹⁹Trans. RICHARD HOWARD (Cleveland: Case Western Reserve University Press, 1973).

ancient Israelite. His reading is emic, however, because he is guided by concerns to understand the story in its own internal context and to glean possible contributions from it for the topic of fantasy.¹²⁰ MISCALL'S method is drawn by principles consistent with his selected reading strategy towards an articulated goal, and provides useful observations about the fabric of the story at a synchronic level. Pluralist criticism welcomes such attempts.

The following three chapters offer an explication of Exodus 1-14 in the Masoretic text from a literary perspective, according to the theoretical and methodological observations outlined in Chapter One. Chapter Three examines the plot of the entire story in a descriptive manner. Chapter Four deals with the characterisation of the story's *Introduction* (Section I: Exod 1:1-2:25), and Chapter Five offers a close reading of the Prologue (Exod 7:8-13) and initial Plagues triad (Exod 7:14-8:15).

¹²⁰MISCALL is more interested in 'The Bible and Fantasy' than 'The Bible as Fantasy' ('Categories of the Fantastic', 42) and says that he is not attempting to force the narratives into any particular genre or category ('Categories of the Fantastic', 50, n. 3).

CHAPTER THREE

PLOT DIRECTIONS IN THE EXODUS STORY

INTRODUCTION

This chapter adopts the theoretical and methodological statements which were offered in Chapter One for its narrative-critical reading of the plot of Exodus 1-14. As a descriptive pursuit, the reading will address first the definition of plot and will then propose a delimitation of plot-parameters for the story, followed by a discussion and analysis of the content which fits upon this frame. To begin, a few problems inherent in an examination of plot must be mentioned.

First, plot has been a neglected literary facet in works concerned with narrative. ELIZABETH DIPPLE summarised the matter with her succinct statement that 'Plot currently has no strong place in the pantheon of acceptable literary terms'.¹ The standard literary handbooks for biblical studies like ROBERT ALTER'S *The Art of Biblical Narrative*,² ADELE BERLIN'S *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*³ and MEIR STERNBERG'S monolithic book *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading*⁴ contain little if any reference to this important feature of narrative discourse. Even HARRIS'S *Dictionary of Concepts in Literary*

¹*Plot*, *The Critical Idiom*, ed. JOHN D. JUMP, no. 12 (London: Methuen & Co., 1970), 1.

²New York: Basic Books, 1981.

³Sheffield: Almond Press, 1983.

⁴Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985.

Criticism and Theory,⁵ reputed for its thoroughly-written and heavily-documented articles, has no entry on plot.

More positively, recent literary guides like SHIMON BAR-EFRAT'S *Narrative Art in the Bible*⁶ along with DAVID GUNN and DANNA NOLAN FEWELL'S *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*⁷ now include discussions of plot. Recent exegetical treatments of Exodus have also become more sensitive to literary matters like plot, such as GORDON F. DAVIES'S *Israel in Egypt: Reading Exodus 1-2*⁸ along with ERHARD BLUM'S *Studien zur Komposition des Pentateuch*.⁹

Second, where consideration of plot has been acknowledged as important, lack of articulation at the denotational level continues to impede this redress. Admittedly, interrelationships exist between narrative features. DAVID GUNN writes, 'Plot implies action, action by characters and actions impinging on characters. Character depiction is thus closely tied up with plot.'¹⁰ However, narrative-critical

⁵WENDELL V. HARRIS, *Dictionary of Concepts in Literary Criticism and Theory*, Reference Sources for the Social Sciences and Humanities, no. 12, Raymond G. McInnis, ed. (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1992).

⁶JSOTSup 70, Bible and Literature Series, no. 17 (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1989), 93-140.

⁷Oxford Bible Series (Oxford University Press, 1993), 101-28.

⁸JSOTSup 135 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), especially 26-28 with his attention to Proppian formal structures and discussion of PROPP'S distinction between 'plot' and 'basic composition'.

⁹BZAW 189 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1990), particularly 9-17 wherein BLUM considers the various *Handlung*-features of the story using a method which values the mutual exchange of diachronic and synchronic questions. Note also the important discussion of narrative sequences in ROBERT C. CULLEY, *Themes and Variations: A Study of Action in Biblical Narrative*, Society of Biblical Literature Semeia Studies, ed. EDWARD L. GREENSTEIN (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 146-56.

¹⁰'The "Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart": Plot, Character and Theology in Exodus 1-14', in *Art and Meaning: Rhetoric in Biblical Literature*, JSOTSup 19, ed. DAVID J. A. CLINES, DAVID M. GUNN and ALAN J. HAUSER (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1982), 74.

distinctions must be maintained between plot, characterisation and narratology and a definition and understanding of the unique role of plot within narrative remains a priority. The first problem of neglect will be addressed in the reading of the Exodus story offered below. The second problem of definition will now be considered.

DEFINITION OF PLOT

The usual *terminus a quo* amongst literary critics for the definition of plot remains ARISTOTLE'S classic discussion from *The Poetics* which addressed the 'plot' of tragedy—its $\mu\acute{\upsilon}\theta\omicron\varsigma$ —stated as follows:

A whole is what has a beginning and middle and end. A beginning is that which is not a necessary consequent of anything else but after which something else exists or happens as a natural result. An end on the contrary is that which is inevitably or, as a rule, the natural result of something else but from which nothing else follows; a middle follows something else and something follows from it. Well constructed plots must not therefore begin and end at random, but must embody the formulae we have stated.¹¹

ARISTOTLE divided the plot into three parts: *Beginning* (or *Introduction*), *Middle* (or *Complication*) and *End* (or *Conclusion*). Although ARISTOTLE provides a helpful grid for plot-analysis, this grid retains certain difficulties for delineating the plot of the Exodus story because the delimitation of Exodus 1-14 as a narrative unit for literary analysis is somewhat imposed and defies ARISTOTLE'S requirements. For example, the *Introduction* (outlined as Section I: 1:1-2:25, *infra*) does not appear as a beginning that 'is not a necessary consequent of anything else'. Even the initial word אֵלֶּכָּה

¹¹*Aristotle in Twenty-three Volumes*, The Loeb Classical Library, ed. G.P. GOOLD, vol. 23, *The Poetics*, 'Longinus' *on the Sublime*, *Demetrius on Style* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1982), 27.

betrays a causal and conceptual connection from the outset, manifesting self-conscious ties with Genesis.¹² The ‘plot’ of the Exodus story launches—as with epic—in *medias res*.

Subsequent to ARISTOTLE, important developments in the understanding of plot have transpired. Structurally, unity of action through an ordered and clear direction without extraneous incidents was viewed by ARISTOTLE as the embodiment of a good plot and he regarded plot as holding the highest function in a drama, subordinating other elements like characterisation.¹³ Modern literary critics, however, often emphasise character over plot, ‘. . . the *plot* being merely a mechanical means by which a structure designed to display characters is arranged. . . . The function of *plot*, from this point of view, is to translate character into action.’¹⁴ M. H. ABRAMS refers to plot and character as ‘interdependent critical concepts.’¹⁵

Another problem with ARISTOTLE’S perspective concerns his rigid ascription of unity to plots based on causality when in fact many plots, especially in biblical narratives, are episodic—relating a sequence of episodes which have been collated

¹²BAR-EFRAT, *Narrative Art*, 132, discusses the use of ׀ as a Hebrew technique for externally connecting individual narratives. THOMAS L. THOMPSON (*The Origin Tradition of Ancient Israel: I. The Literary Formation of Genesis and Exodus 1-23*, JSOTSup 55 [Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987], 167) comments on the significant fact that neither the book of Exodus nor its first major narrative (the Exodus/Passover story) show a clear beginning and, therefore, that the narratological function of the transitional 1:1-6, 8 is to clear up what remained from the Genesis narratives in order that a beginning might become possible.

¹³C. HUGH HOLMAN and WILLIAM HARMON, *A Handbook to Literature*, 5th ed. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1986), s.v. ‘plot’, 377; CHRIS BALDICK, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), s.v. ‘plot’, 171.

¹⁴HOLMAN and HARMON, *Handbook to Literature*, s.v. ‘plot’, 378-79.

¹⁵*A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 5th ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1988), s.v. ‘plot’, 139.

because a single character unites them—or preserve other relationships between their constituent parts than causal ones.¹⁶ A corrective model for plot-analysis can be found in BAR-EFRAT'S *Narrative Art in the Bible*. Perceiving the plot of a narrative as a series of differently-sized units which combine to produce larger units in a process of building the narrative system or structure of the plot, BAR-EFRAT understands the relationship between these various units to be one either of: (1) *cause and effect*; (2) *parallelism*; and/or, (3) *contrast*.¹⁷ For him,

The plot develops from an initial situation through a chain of events to a central occurrence, which is the prime factor of change, and thence by means of varying incidents to a final situation . . . the plot line ascends from a calm point of departure through the stage of involvement to the climax of conflict and tension, and from there rapidly to the finishing point and tranquillity.¹⁸

Similar to ARISTOTLE'S grid in essentials, BAR-EFRAT'S structural perception of plot as a built entity—having a clear beginning and end, with certain development in between via the line of ascent to the climax and then the line of descent to a state of relaxation¹⁹—is well suited for analysing the plot of the Exodus story.

¹⁶ABRAMS, *Glossary of Literary Terms*, s.v. 'plot', 140; BALDICK, *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, s.v. 'episodic', 72; HOLMAN and HARMON, *Handbook to Literature*, s.v. 'plot', 377-78. On episodic plots in biblical narrative, see ZVI ADAR, *The Biblical Narrative* (Jerusalem: Department of Education and Culture of the World Zionist Organisation, 1959) with his distinction between: (1) The Isolated Tale (pp. 9-57) and (2) The Story Cycle (pp. 59-139); the latter is composed of an accumulation of various isolated tales which centre on a single personality.

¹⁷*Narrative Art*, 93, 95. The smallest unit contains only one incident, although that incident may be either an *action* or an *event*. BAR-EFRAT defines an *action* as an incident wherein the character is subject and an *event* wherein the character is object.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, *Narrative Art*, 121.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, *Narrative Art*, 94.

One important structural complement to BAR-EFRAT'S analysis of plot is a model proposed by GUSTAV FREYTAG in his mid-nineteenth century volume entitled *Die Technik des Dramas*²⁰ now referred to as Freytag's Pyramid.²¹ FREYTAG considered the structure of a well-crafted five-act play as analogous to a pyramid, embodying the six features of: (1) Introduction; (2) Inciting Moment; (3) Rising Action; (4) Climax, (5) Falling Action;²² and, (6) Catastrophe, with the Climax forming the apex of the pyramid.

Plot must be distinguished from other entities like 'story' and 'theme'. E. M. FORSTER'S oft-quoted differentiation between plot and story, 'The king died and then the queen died' (=story) and 'The king died and then the queen died of grief' (=plot),²³ highlights the causal aspect of plot. Story relates to the raw materials of action in time which are utilised by plot;²⁴

Plot takes a *story*, selects its materials in terms not of time but of causality; gives it a beginning, a middle, and an end; and makes it serve

²⁰Leipzig: 1863.

²¹See ABRAMS, *Glossary of Literary Terms*, s.v. 'plot', 141; J. A. CUDDON, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms*, rev. ed. (London: André Deutsch Limited, 1979), s.v. 'Freytag's Pyramid', 280-81; HOLMAN and HARMON, *Handbook to Literature*, s.v. 'Freytag's Pyramid', 216; A. F. SCOTT, *Current Literary Terms: A Concise Dictionary of their Origin and Use* (London: Macmillan Press Limited, 1965), s.v. 'Freytag's Pyramid', 112.

²²The French term *denouement* ('unknotting') is commonly applied to the falling action that unravels the complication to which the plot has given rise.

²³*Aspects of the Novel*, ed. OLIVER STALLYBRASS (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1962; originally published, 1927), 93f.

²⁴BALDICK, *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, s.v. 'plot', 170; *ibid.*, s.v. 'story', 212; HOLMAN and HARMON, *Handbook to Literature*, s.v. 'story', 483.

to elucidate or develop character, embody a theme, express an idea, incite to an action, or express an abstract concept.²⁵

Modern narratology distinguishes between plot and story with derivations from the Russian Formalists and their opposing terms *fabula* (story) and *sjuzet* (plot), the former being the complete content and sequence of events and the latter being the plot's selecting and rearranging of them.²⁶ These two entities—story and plot—are thought by some to reside under the broader category of the 'narrative'²⁷ which is bifurcated into aspects of content and mode of discourse.²⁸

'Theme' also differs from plot. For DAVID CLINES, plot relates to the essential action and movement of the story, while theme represents a conceptualisation of the plot that attempts to cull its meaning.²⁹ 'Theme' is usually understood to be a central

²⁵HOLMAN and HARMON, *Handbook to Literature*, s.v. 'story', 483. Although this perception of plot is obviously influenced by Aristotelian features which were criticised above—particularly relating to the causality aspect—its description of the relationship between plot and story is useful.

²⁶This parallels the *histoire* (story)/*récit* (account) distinction used in French narratological discourse. See ABRAMS, *Glossary of Literary Terms*, s.v. 'fiction and narratology', 62; BALDICK, *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, s.v. '*fabula*', 80; *ibid.*, s.v. '*sjuzet*', 206; *ibid.*, s.v. 'story', 211-12; PETER BROOKS, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1984), 12-14.

²⁷BALDICK, *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, s.v. 'narrative', 145-46; ROGER FOWLER, ed., *A Dictionary of Modern Critical Terms*, rev. and enl. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987), s.v. 'narrative', 156-58; MARK ALLAN POWELL, *What is Narrative Criticism? A New Approach to the Bible*, Guides to Biblical Scholarship, New Testament Series, ed. DAN O. VIA, JR. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1990), 23.

²⁸POWELL, *What is Narrative Criticism?* (23) refers to 'content' as the interaction of features like events, characters, and settings, comprising plot, and 'mode of discourse' as how the story is told through its rhetoric.

²⁹CLINES, *The Theme of the Pentateuch*, JSOTSup 10 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), 17-20.

and often abstract dominating idea of a work,³⁰ the paraphrasable idea/s as opposed to the unparaphrasable one/s,³¹ interestingly termed 'the rationale of the images and symbols.'³² Contributing to theme as an important constituent is 'motif'—a recurrent element of incident, device, character, image, verbal pattern etc. which enhances the design of a work and reinforces its theme.³³

As a functional definition for plot, then, distinct from story and theme: 'The plot in a dramatic or narrative work is the structure of its actions as these are rendered and ordered toward achieving particular emotional and artistic effects.'³⁴ Or, according to PETER BROOKS: 'Plot . . . is the design and intention of narrative, what shapes a story and gives it a certain direction or intent of meaning'.³⁵ Returning to

³⁰ABRAMS, *Glossary of Literary Terms*, s.v. 'theme', 111; BALDICK, *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, s.v. 'theme', 225; CUDDON, *Dictionary of Literary Terms*, s.v. 'theme', 695; HOLMAN and HARMON, *Handbook to Literature*, s.v. 'theme', 502; SCOTT, *Current Literary Terms*, s.v. 'theme', 291; JOSEPH T. SHIPLEY, ed., *Dictionary of World Literary Terms: Criticism, Forms, Technique* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1955), s.v. 'theme', 583-84.

³¹This distinction was made by the so-called New Critics (mentioned in Chapter One), who refer to unparaphrasable elements like imagery, irony, metre and rhyme as *texture* (JACK MYERS and MICHAEL SIMMS, *The Longman Dictionary of Poetic Terms*, Longman English and Humanities Series, ed. LEE JACOBUS [London: Longman, 1989], s.v. 'texture', 307; *ibid.*, s.v. 'theme', 308).

³²FOWLER, *Dictionary of Modern Critical Terms*, s.v. 'theme', 248.

³³ABRAMS, *Glossary of Literary Terms*, s.v. 'motif', 110-11; BALDICK, *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, s.v. 'motif', 142; *ibid.*, s.v. 'theme', 225; CUDDON, *Dictionary of Literary Terms*, s.v. 'motif', 405; MYERS and SIMMS, *Dictionary of Poetic Terms*, s.v. 'motif', 195; SCOTT, *Current Literary Terms*, s.v. 'motif', 186; SHIPLEY, *Dictionary of World Literary Terms*, s.v. 'motif', 385. Other terms used for this feature are the Greek *topos* and German *Leitmotiv*, which derives from the music criticism of Wagner and indicates the frequent depiction of images, incidents, or other elements (ABRAMS, *Glossary of Literary Terms*, s.v. 'motif', 110-11; BALDICK, *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, s.v. 'leitmotiv', 121).

³⁴ABRAMS, *Glossary of Literary Terms*, s.v. 'plot', 139.

³⁵*Reading for the Plot*, xi.

the above-mentioned necessity for careful articulation of narrative-critical terms, plot describes ‘*what* story is being told?’ while characterisation asks ‘*who* are the main players or agents within this story?’ and narratology examines ‘*how* is this story told?’.

ANALYSIS OF THE EXODUS STORY

The following represents an outline of the plot of the Exodus narrative upon which the present discussion and subsequent analysis of its prevailing Characterisation (Chapter Four) and Narratology (Chapter Five) will be based. The delimitation of the plot of the Exodus story is as follows:

- (a) Section I: Exod 1:1-2:25: *Introduction*
- (b) Section II: Exod 3:1-7:7: *Ascent*
- (c) Section III: Exod 7:8-13:16: *Complication*
- (d) Section IV: Exod 13:17-14:31: *Conclusion*

Section I: Exod 1:1-2:25: Introduction

Section I (Exod 1:1-2:25), as an *Introduction* or the *Initial Situation* of BAR-EFRAT’S construction (*supra*) primarily serves the plot by introducing to the narrative the three important features of: (1) the primary characters; (2) the ensuing conflict between them; and, (3) a social and political context for the story. In terms of plot-analysis, the section operates as an *Exposition*, which presents the situation that exists at the beginning of the action and serves the introductory function of providing background information and details about characters in order that the story will be understood.³⁶

³⁶BAR-EFRAT, *Narrative Art*, 111-16. THOMPSON, *The Origin Tradition of Ancient Israel* (173) argues that the first episode of the tripartite introduction of the

Introduction of Characters

First, the section introduces the *dramatis personae* of the Exodus story who can be subdivided into protagonistic characters and antagonistic characters. BAR-EFRAT has outlined the two basic methods encountered in biblical narration for communicating expositional information to the reader: (1) a preliminary discussion at the beginning of the narrative; and, (2) a gradual revealing during the course of the narrative.³⁷ He explains,

This method of presenting characters is similar to the way we get to know people in real life. We sometimes obtain preliminary information about people before we actually meet them (corresponding to the exposition at the *beginning* of the narrative), but in most cases we learn about them through having direct contact with them. The biblical narrator frequently makes use of this technique of introducing people and mentioning background details *in their proper place*, that is, at the point when they are discerned by the chief characters or become important as regards the development of the plot.³⁸

Before these characters are introduced, however, links are offered between them and the patriarch Jacob with his sons in the historicising subsection of 1:1-6.

1:1-6 depicts the literal בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל (the בְּנֵי יַעֲקֹב) as the ancestors of the collective entity of the rapidly expanding nation—the new בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל (1:7)—who are anchored in the former by divine promise. This narratological strategy sets both an immediate theological context for and concern in the reader to understand the plight of this new group of בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל as a tension relating to the fulfilment of the

Exodus/Passover Complex-Chain Narratives (1:7-14; 1:15-21; 1:22-2:10) is not a self-sufficient tale and therefore ‘functions essentially as introduction’.

³⁷*Narrative Art*, 112.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 117-18.

patriarchal promise. The literary movement of the first subsection (1:1-7) with its individual emphasis on Jacob and his sons for rhetorically-motivated historiographical purposes on the part of the Implied Author extends to a collective emphasis in the second (1:8-14) and third (1:15-21, 22) subsections,³⁹ charting the numerical increase of the new **בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל** who are seemingly synonymous with the **עִבְרִים** in the story.

After this patriarchal connection has been made, the protagonistic character of **מֹשֶׁה** (although not the actual protagonist but a representative, as will be seen) is introduced to the narrative (2:1-10) who is one of the **עִבְרִים** previously mentioned (2:6). Although the minor characters of the midwives **שִׁפְרָה** and **פּוּעָה** (1:15-21) play an important role, as does Pharaoh's daughter who foils the antagonist (2:5-10), the narrative focuses mainly upon Moses as the protagonistic hero who will later represent Yahweh, the God of these Hebrews and true protagonist. Other characters in the section like the fighting Hebrews (2:11-14) and even Reuel and his daughters (2:16-22) are introduced, but seem to remain significant only to the extent that they develop the character of Moses and assist his spatio-temporal relocation to Midian. This character development will be examined in detail in the next chapter.

A second literary movement runs through a synchronic reading of this narrative. After developing from a focus on the individual **בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל** in 1:1-6 to the collective entity of the nation—**עַם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל**—in 1:7, 8-14 and 1:15-22, the focal point returns to the individual **מֹשֶׁה** (2:1-10, 11-22), who as a character will represent Yahweh amongst this collective nation mentioned earlier.

The main antagonist **פַּרְעֹה** is also introduced to the narrative in this initial section. It is important to contextualise his character within a framework of his nature and role within Egyptian cosmology; there, the Pharaoh was perceived as a divine

³⁹Albeit with individual attention paid to the midwives who are specifically named.

being—a god.⁴⁰ The implications of this feature for the present narrative-analysis are that the antagonist must not be viewed as human but divine, a contrastive character who directly contests Yahweh.⁴¹ Tensions mount from the outset with Pharaoh's attempts to curb the Israelite increase by: (1) intensifying labour (1:9-14); (2) instructing the midwives to dispose of Hebrew male children (1:15-21); and, (3) commanding his people to throw all male children⁴² into the Nile (1:22); but his merciless designs repeatedly fail to meet their intentions.

Introduction of Conflict

Second, the section introduces conflict to the story, primarily through its explication of the theme of 'increase'. The increase of the **בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל** threatens a

⁴⁰E. A. SPEISER, 'The Biblical Idea of History in Its Common Near Eastern Setting', in *Oriental and Biblical Studies: Collected Writings of E. A. Speiser*, ed. and with an Introduction by J. J. FINKELSTEIN and MOSHE GREENBERG (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1967), 193; idem, 'Early Law and Civilization', in *Oriental and Biblical Studies*, 548; idem, 'Religion and Government in the Ancient Near East', in *Oriental and Biblical Studies*, 562; ROLAND DE VAUX, *Ancient Israel*, vol. 1, *Social Institutions* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961), 144-45. For a more recent treatment of this idea, see DAVID P. SILVERMAN, 'Divinity and Deities in Ancient Egypt', chap. in *Religion in Ancient Egypt: Gods, Myths, and Personal Practice*, ed. BYRON E. SHAFER (London: Routledge, 1991), 55-57, 58-72.

⁴¹GUNN, 'The "Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart"', 91-92, n. 12, thinks that Pharaoh's human sovereignty is being challenged by God's supreme sovereignty, but it seems more fruitful to view this as a contest between purported equals, i.e. Pharaoh as deity. CHARLES ISBELL, 'Exodus 1-2 in the Context of Exodus 1-14: Story Lines and Key Words', in *Art and Meaning: Rhetoric in Biblical Literature*, JSOTSup 19, ed. DAVID J. A. CLINES, DAVID M. GUNN and ALAN J. HAUSER (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1982), 50, speaks of the transference of Israel from Pharaoh's hand into Yahweh's hand, but does not elaborate any further on the divine status of the former.

⁴²Although **וְ** indicates that any son who is born (**כָּל־הַבֶּן הַיְלֹוֹד**) shall be thrown into the Nile, the obvious assumption in the flow of the story is that Hebrew sons are meant, and the additional 'to the Hebrews' of the Samaritan Pentateuch, Septuagint, Targums and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan is rather superfluous.

paranoid Pharaoh and drives him to ruthless measures in attempts to stop it, but the increase continues, with important narrative purposes: (1) to substantiate the historiographical connection between the figurative *בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל* and their previous ethnic and literal counterparts, rooting their growth in a creation-based theology; (2) to construct the articulate tension between the respective *עַם* and *בְּרִית* who represent both protagonist and antagonist; and, (3) to prepare for the birth story of Moses by advancing a careful birth/life motif.

The historiographical connection between the literal *בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל* and figurative *בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל* is established through the use of key words in the Narrator's careful depiction. BAR-EFRAT suggests that one method of connecting individual narratives is the repetition of key words,⁴³ 'whose reiteration hints at a substantive connection between the various narratives, at a unifying line and at the significance of the overall plot'.⁴⁴ Beginning with Exod 1:7, a string of verbs is employed which resonate with language from the early chapters of Genesis and offer an interpretation for the expansion of the new *בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל* as a fulfilment of the creation mandate.⁴⁵ The Implied Author promotes this perspective by 'telling' through direct narration in verses like Exod 1:7, 12,⁴⁶ and 20,⁴⁷ and then confirms what he has told by

⁴³*Narrative Art*, 135-36, 212-15.

⁴⁴*Narrative Art*, 135-36.

⁴⁵*פָּרָה*, *שָׂרַץ*, *רָבַח*, *עָצַם* and *מָלֵא*. For example, Gen 1:28 uses these verbs relating to the creation of man and woman (*פָּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ*). They are also used in Gen 8:17, relating to the re-creation subsequent to the flood involving Noah and his family (*וְשָׂרְצוּ בָאָרֶץ וּפָרוּ וּרְבוּ עַל-הָאָרֶץ*); in Gen 9:1, relating once more to the re-creation subsequent to the flood as a divine direct speech to Noah and his sons, which is a verbatim quote of Gen 1:28 (*פָּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ*); and in Gen 9:7, which is similarly worded with Gen 9:1 and seems to operate along with it as a thematic frame around the enclosed section (*פָּרוּ וּרְבוּ שָׂרְצוּ בָאָרֶץ וּרְבוּ-בָהּ*).

‘showing’⁴⁸ through the direct speech of Pharaoh in Exod 1:9-10.⁴⁹ This literary strategy of placing verbal roots into the mouth of the foreign king is a common means of legitimating a narratorial perspective. The king clearly observes the increase in progeny but does not identify any theological basis for it. In it all, the protagonistic *בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל* are portrayed as a flourishing people which, the attentive reader should recognise, is in continuity with traditions of the past.

The conflict between protagonist and antagonist which the theme of increase brings to the narrative is also evident in the story’s use of the terms *עַם* and *בְּיַת*. As mentioned, the Implied Author’s ‘showing’ of the new king’s paranoia through direct speech in 1:9-10 sets the conflict as between the *עַם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל* and the *עַם* represented by Pharaoh—the Egyptians. In 1:12, the Narrator also ‘tells’ of fear (*יִקְצוּ*) in the people because of the descendants of Israel and their increase, intensifying a sense of their imminent threat. The root *עַם* (‘people’) is used of the Israelites in 1:9,⁵⁰ 20⁵¹ and of the Egyptians in 1:9,⁵² 22.⁵³ In 1:9, 22, the Narrator

⁴⁶Wherein the Narrator uses the root *רָבָה* once more to denote the increase, suggesting the irony that the effects of the king’s efforts are directly opposite to their intentions.

⁴⁷Using *רָבָה* and *עָצַם*, the Narrator again verifies that this further increase correlates with the creation mandate and fulfils a divine plan for procreation.

⁴⁸On the ‘telling’/‘showing’ distinction, see the introductory material of Chapter Four (*Characterisation in the Exodus Story*).

⁴⁹Verse 9 maintains the ‘increase’ theme by using *רָב* and *עָצוּם* and verse 10 uses *רָבָה* again.

⁵⁰Here recognised as such by Pharaoh in his speech and therefore ‘shown’ to be a collective entity by the Narrator.

⁵¹Describing the prosperous increase of the people after the success of the midwives in preserving life.

⁵²Where the Narrator has the *מִלִּי־יְהוָה* speaking to ‘his people’.

acknowledges the Egyptians as a ‘people’; in 1:20, the Narrator portrays the rapidly expanding Hebrews/descendants of Israel as a ‘people’; and then in 1:9, the Implied Author depicts Pharaoh as recognising that the Israelites are a ‘people’ to corroborate once more the previous ‘telling’ of the Narrator’s perspective. This tension between peoples is highlighted with a series of third-person singular verbs and suffixes which appear instead of the expected third-person plural ones,⁵⁴ which function, as MOSHE GREENBERG suggests, to accent the **עַם** of verse 9, a collective-singular noun referring to the Israelites as ‘a people’.⁵⁵ TERENCE FRETHEIM observes that ‘Peoplehood is the presupposition of these events, not the result.’⁵⁶ Thus the theme of ‘increase’ also develops intense character-conflict between the opposing **עַם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל** and the **עַם פְּרַעְמִי**—the Egyptians.

A series of wordplays reinforces this tension, as **פְּרַעְמִי** (which means the ‘great house’ in Egyptian⁵⁷) and his people are not increasing at a comparable rate with Jacob’s ‘house’—the **בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל**. Although the ‘great house’ can force the

⁵³Here *Pharaoh* speaks to ‘his people’.

⁵⁴**וַיַּעַל** in 1:10; **וַיִּבְנֶה** in 1:11 (with the difficult **וַיִּבְנֶה** in 1:11a); **וַיִּבְנֶה** and **וַיִּבְנֶה** in 1:12; and **וַיִּבְנֶה** in 1:20.

⁵⁵MOSHE GREENBERG, *Understanding Exodus* (New York: Behrman House, 1969), 20.

⁵⁶*Exodus*, in *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1991), 22.

⁵⁷**פְּרַעְמִי** transliterates the Egyptian word *Pr-‘o* which originally referred to the royal palace or king’s court in the third millennium but became a respectful royal title by the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasty (GARDINER, *Egyptian Grammar*, 3d ed. rev. [London: Oxford University Press, 1957], 75); cited by JOHN I. DURHAM (*Exodus*, WBC [Waco, Texas: Word, 1987], 90-91), 8. J. P. HYATT, *Exodus*, New Century Bible (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1971), 58, mentions that by the ninth century it was prefixed to the royal name as in Pharaoh Shishak.

building of impressive ‘storehouses’ like פָּתָם and רֵעִמָּס,⁵⁸ he cannot maintain the same rate of procreation as his threatening rivals. The narration in 1:21 that the midwives are given ‘houses’ because they fear God fortifies this tension between rivalling ‘houses’.⁵⁹ Later on in the story, the Narrator furnishes a large body of evidence in the form of a genealogy (6:14-25; supplying the ‘heads of the *house* of their fathers’, 6:14) to bolster this point that the Israelite increase only continues.

The conflict of the ‘increase’ also occasions the narrative’s anticipating of the birth story of Moses by advancing a preparatory birth/life motif. This preparation for Moses can be seen in the use of several key roots like יָלַד,⁶⁰ בָּן,⁶¹ and חָיָה⁶² which will soon play important roles in his story.⁶³ As the internal plot-lines, *Leitwörter* and

⁵⁸The Septuagint even includes ‘On, which is Heliopolis’ as well!

⁵⁹Maybe the description ‘the man from the house of Levi’ (2:1) does not only provide background information but may also continue the ‘house’ motif to further the portrayal of tension between the two opposing sides who are intent on increase. The Narrator’s naming of בַּת־פְּרִיעָה, a ‘daughter of the “great house”’, is appropriate to the wordplay considering the ironic outcome that Pharaoh’s own offspring enables the Israelite ‘house’ to flourish. Later reference to the ‘house of slavery’ (בֵּית עֲבָדִים, 13:3; 20:2) might, in fact, offer a clever wordplay on the name of Pharaoh.

⁶⁰Used as ‘male children’ in 1:17, 18; as the adjective ‘born’ in 1:22; as a verb for ‘giving birth’ in 1:19; as a Piel verb for ‘assisting in giving birth’ in 1:16; and as the word for ‘midwives’ in 1:15, 17, 18, 19 (2x), 20, 21.

⁶¹Indicating who will bear the brunt of Pharaoh’s second and third drastic measures in 1:16 and 1:22, with the impending irony that Moses becomes a ‘son’ (בֶּן) to the daughter of Pharaoh in 2:10. This noun also occurs *passim* in a construct chain as the collective identification for בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, for example in 1:1, 7, 9, 12, 13. In 1:1, 7, this term contributes to the framing of that section as a discrete unit.

⁶²In 1:14 (as a substantive), 16, 17, 18, 19, 22.

⁶³יָלַד is used as ‘male child’ in 2:3, 6 (2x), 7, 8, 9 (2x), 10, and also as the verb ‘to bear’ in 2:2 and later in 2:22. בָּן is used in 2:2, 10, 22, with the בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל enveloping the section in 2:23, 25 (working together with 1:1, 7); the people whom Moses represents are described as a ‘firstborn son’ (4:22, בְּכֹרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל). The

thematic content of Exod 2:1-10 uniformly direct the reader's expectation towards the Egyptian word *ms* (from root *msi*—'to bear, give birth') for the etiological explanation of Moses' name, the Implied Author's unexpected crafting of a Hebrew derivation for מֹשֶׁה in the mouth of Pharaoh's daughter which offers a proleptic statement on his future career is, therefore, much more effective.⁶⁴ Because Moses remains crucial to the narrative as a character who will represent Yahweh the protagonist before the descendants of Israel and eventually resolve the plot conflict by ushering the antagonist into nemesis, his heroic introduction is preceded with this premonitory motif of birth/life.⁶⁵

Introduction of Context

Third, the section introduces a social and political background to the Exodus story within which the *dramatis personae* can be contextualised. The framed prologue of 1:1-7, which manifests not only theological but also spatio-temporal purposes to explain the 'Israelite'/Hebrew presence in Egypt, pronounces the transitional statement that a new era has dawned. Features like the notice of the death of Joseph and his entire generation,⁶⁶ along with the report that a 'new' king⁶⁷ of

root חיה does not appear in the narrative of Moses' introduction but the theme of life and its continuance is prominent.

⁶⁴See the detailed analysis of this phenomenon in the section on Etiology in Chapter Four (*Characterisation in the Exodus Story*).

⁶⁵See INA WILLI-PLEIN, 'Ort und Literarische Funktion der Geburtsgeschichte des Mose', *VT* 41 (1991): 110-18.

⁶⁶1:6 (וַיָּמָת יוֹסֵף וְכָל־אֶחָיו וְכָל־הָדֹר הַהוּא), after יוֹסֵף's statement that Joseph was in Egypt already (וַיֹּסֵף הָיָה בְּמִצְרַיִם) and against the Septuagint's placing of this phrase with the list of brothers after וַאֲשֶׁר at the end of v. 4.

⁶⁷Referred to anarthrously as מֶלֶךְ־חָדָשׁ to enhance the transition into this new social context.

Egypt has now been installed⁶⁸ who lacks knowledge of Joseph or of what went on during his day reinforces the notion that a transition from a past, more positive era has occurred.

A prominent motif which depicts this socio-political context is that of 'servitude'. After the king's initial plan of intimidation and growth-stagnation through oppression (1:10-11) proves ineffective (1:12), the Narrator describes its ruthlessness as 'servitude' (עֲבָדָה) characterised by 'violence' (פָּרַךְ, in 1:13 and 1:14).⁶⁹ The bitterness of this servitude is reaffirmed in 1:14 with the root עֲבַד used four times. Later, when the Narrator identifies Moses with his Hebrew brothers, he describes his observing of their 'forced labour' (2:11); here the word סִבְלוֹת is used which echoes the סִבְלוֹת of 1:11. The description of the period subsequent to the demise of this Egyptian king (2:23) indicates that 'servitude' (עֲבָדָה, 2x) remains the social norm for Egyptian-Israelite relations.

Because of the servitude, Egyptian-Israelite relations remain tense, a macroscopic situation which is illustrated microscopically in 2:11b-12. Moses' attempted mediation remains both ineffective and incorrectly perceived, to the degree that Pharaoh seeks his death, a fourth attempt at killing the most important בֶּן of the story.⁷⁰ This small tale serves the flow of the narrative both by developing anonymity

⁶⁸BERLIN (*Poetics and Interpretation*, 104) comments on the use of קָם in the perfect at the beginning of a verse as a device to introduce the main action into the narrative. She cites Gen 23:3, Exod 1:8 and 1 Sam 1:9 where in all three examples the verb follows the notice that someone has died.

⁶⁹As intimated above, it must be noted that conflict exists from the outset between the two collective entities of the Egyptians and the 'descendants of Israel'. Conflict between the *nation* Israel and the nation of Egypt seems to be assumed.

⁷⁰Pharaoh 'seeks' (נִיבַקֵּשׁ) to take Moses' life, and it is only after 'all the men who are seeking his life' (כָּל-הָאֲנָשִׁים הַמְבַקְשִׁים אֶת-נַפְשׁוֹ, 4:19) have died that Moses can return to Egypt from Midian. The root בַּקֵּשׁ is also used rather obscurely

within Moses' characterisation and also by providing a rationale for the geographic transition to Midian wherein two significant events for the story—the birth of Moses' son with his symbolic etiology and the introduction of Yahweh, the primary protagonist—will soon occur. The fact that the priest of Midian is a 'friend of God' (רַעֲוֹאֵל) who has the perfect sum of seven daughters suggests that Moses has found something very good here.⁷¹

The closing verses (2:23-25) frame the entire section along patriarchal lines and present another transition to a new era with the 'new' king of 1:8 now dying.⁷² In case the reader inadvertently assumes that matters will revert to the pro-Israelite norms of Joseph's era, anti-Israelite policy is reaffirmed. This policy will soon be challenged in the next section of the story as the Implied Author introduces the protagonist to the narrative.

Section II: Exod 3:1-7:7: Ascent

Section II (Exod 3:1-7:7), as an *Ascent* which begins the *Rising Action* of the plot suggested by Freytag's Pyramid (*supra*), serves the story by providing: (1) an introduction to the protagonist; (2) development of characters previously introduced;

of Yahweh's action towards Moses in the enigmatic episode which transpires on the return to Egypt from Midian (4:24).

⁷¹If ALBRIGHT'S proposal ('Jethro, Hobab and Reuel in Early Hebrew Tradition', *CBQ* 25 [1963]: 1-11) on the name of Reuel/Jethro is correct—that Reuel is a clan name and Jethro is his proper name, with the seeming reference to the same person in Num 10:29-32 attributed to a mis-vocalisation (ALBRIGHT reads קָתָן, 'son-in-law of Moses', instead of קָתָן, 'father-in-law of Moses')—the use of רַעֲוֹאֵל here brings an important thematic statement to the narrative.

⁷²וַיָּמָת מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם (2:23), a parallel transitional statement to the וַיָּמָת יוֹסֵף of 1:6 and וַיָּקָם מֶלֶךְ-חָדָשׁ עַל-מִצְרַיִם of 1:8.

(3) development of conflict; and, (4) further description of the context.⁷³ Whereas Section I (Exod 1:1-2:25) primarily functioned as an *Exposition*, Section II now shapes that material with *Development*.

Introduction of Protagonist

The section begins with a subtle introduction to the protagonist, although his entrance to the story remains indirect because it is embedded within a large segment of dialogue which takes the form of a call- and commissioning-narrative of Moses.⁷⁴ Moses is commanded to ‘Go!’ (הלך) specifically to Pharaoh (3:10), to the elders of Israel (3:16), and generally back down to Egypt (4:12; 18).⁷⁵ Akin to the prophetic call-narratives, this one (3:1-4:17) also contains standard features like resistance to the divinely-appointed task, seen in Moses’ various objections: (1) doubting his own qualifications, 3:11;⁷⁶ (2) requesting the divine name, 3:13; (3) projecting disbelief in the descendants of Israel, 4:1; (4) feigning inhibition and impediment, 4:10; and, (5) requesting a replacement, 4:13. It is significant for the story that Yahweh’s introduction as protagonist is intertwined so closely with Moses’ call and

⁷³Section III (Exod 7:8-13:16) continues the rising action of this *Ascent* section to full *Complication* and brings the narrative to the pinnacle of plot-climax.

⁷⁴BLUM, *Studien zur Komposition des Pentateuch* (10), mentions the absence of God yet awareness of his presence in these stories which are to be interpreted as having God as their subject.

⁷⁵From a narratological point of view, the Implied Author’s use of הלך in the mouth of Jethro at Moses’ request to return to Egypt (4:18) ‘shows’ Jethro as confirming Yahweh’s commission of Moses.

⁷⁶This objection embodies the clear irony that Moses is probably the most qualified person there is to do the job, having earlier been adopted into the Pharaonic household and subsequently receiving an Egyptian education.

commission,⁷⁷ because this establishes the latter's mediatorial office and status of representative of this protagonist.⁷⁸

The introduction of Yahweh must be connected with the narrated comments of 2:23-25. In those verses, the Implied Author communicates through a Narrator by 'telling' that the descendants of Israel 'cried out' (זעק) to God⁷⁹ because of their intensive labour, and that he 'heard' (שמע) them, 'remembered' (זכר) his covenant, 'saw' (ראה) them, and 'knew' (ידע).⁸⁰ As Yahweh is introduced here, the Implied Author now identifies him with the 'God' of 2:23-25, and confirms what he has stated about him there by placing the same words into his mouth. The 'cry' (צַעֲקָה, 3:7, 9) of the people has been 'heard' (שמע, 3:7; again in 6:5),⁸¹ the covenant has been 'remembered' (זכר, 6:5), the affliction has been 'seen' (ראה, 3:7, 9), and Yahweh 'knows' (ידע, 3:7, 19). The root ראה maintains a governing motif which is played

⁷⁷Along with his 'recommission' in 6:6-8 (to speak to the descendants of Israel) and 6:11 (to speak to Pharaoh).

⁷⁸Further alignment between Yahweh and Moses can be seen in the use of the Hiphil term יצא to describe the exodus from Egypt. Moses is to *bring* the people *out* in 3:10 (reading a second-person masculine singular ending which has dropped due to haplography because of *homoioteleuton* with the particle אֶת), 11, 12; 6:13, 26, 27 (along with Aaron), even getting blamed by the people for doing so in 14:11, while Yahweh promises to and is remembered for *bringing* them *out* in 6:6, 7; 7:4, 5; 12:17, 42, 51; 13:3, 9, 14, 16.

⁷⁹אלהים used five times here.

⁸⁰D. WINTON THOMAS ('A Note on ידע אלהים in Exod 2:25', *JTS* 49 [1948]: 143-44), in an affective rendering, parallels the verb ראה at the beginning of Exod 2:25 with ידע at the end on the basis of Ps 31:8, and translates ידע as 'cared for, kept in mind' (i.e. '. . . and God cared for [them], kept [them] in mind'). Note the respective discussions of THOMAS'S understanding of this root by Professors JOHNSTONE ('ידע II, "be humbled, humiliated"?', *VT* 41 [1991]: 49-62) and EMERTON ('A Further Consideration of D. W. THOMAS'S theories about ידע', *VT* 41 [1991]: 145-63).

⁸¹Although in 6:5, it is the 'groaning' (נִצְעָקָה) of Exod 2:24 that is heard.

upon in this subsection, used at least 15 times in various ways both as a verb⁸² and also as a derivative noun.⁸³ The Narrator confirms once again that Yahweh ‘saw’ (הִרְאָה) the people’s affliction in his statement immediately preceding the initial encounter of Moses and Aaron with Pharaoh (4:31).⁸⁴

Another character introduced in the second section is Aaron, who is mentioned in 4:14-16 when Moses requests a replacement as a fifth objection, and then reappears in 4:27 after the enigmatic ‘bridegroom of blood’ incident. Aaron assists Moses in representing Yahweh the protagonist, with the chain of command issuing down from Yahweh, then Moses as ‘God’, and finally Aaron as mouth and prophet (4:16; 7:1). At his introduction, Aaron seems to parallel Moses as a character and also receives a ‘commission’ in 4:27 to ‘Go!’ (הֵלֵךְ) and meet Moses. Several features demonstrate the importance of Aaron to the Implied Author. Both his and Moses’ ages are given in 7:7. In 6:14-25, the Narrator inserts a genealogy into the story which refers back to 1:1-2 (focusing on Reuben, Simeon and Levi) and connects Moses and Aaron with their Israelite lineage (the literal ‘sons of Israel’ of the historicised prologue of 1:1-7) and also roots them—especially Aaron—into the

⁸²(1) Qal, ‘to see’ in 3:2, 3, 4 [2x], 7 [2x], 9; 4:14, 18 (although 4:14, 18 are both somewhat outside the episode of the Yahweh-Moses encounter), 21, 31; and, (2) Niphal, ‘to appear’ in 3:2, 16; 4:1, 5. The verbal form is also used within the broader section of 3:1-7:7, with the Qal sense in 5:19 (describing the foremen ‘seeing’ the descendants of Israel in their plight); 6:1 (when Yahweh tells Moses he will ‘see’ what will be done to Pharaoh); 7:1 (more in the sense of ‘observe’ that Yahweh has made Moses a ‘God’ to Pharaoh), and the Niphal sense in 5:21 (the foremen’s imprecation that Yahweh will ‘appear’ to judge Moses and Aaron) and 6:3 (where Yahweh reaffirms Moses with the fact of his ‘appearance’ to the patriarchs).

⁸³מֵרֵאֵרָא, ‘appearance, sight’ in 3:2, 3.

⁸⁴JONATHAN MAGONET has perceptively outlined several structural features of this passage and its use of verbal roots like הִרְאָה in ‘The Bush that Never Burnt (Narrative Techniques in Exodus 3 and 6)’, *The Heythrop Journal* 16, no 3 (July 1975): 304-11. See also his ‘The Rhetoric of God: Exodus 6:2-8’, *JSOT* 27 (1983): 56-67.

significant ancestry of Levitical parentage. Initially an important figure alongside Moses, Aaron gradually recedes from the story as it progresses.

Although the ‘elders of Israel’ (זְקֵנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל) become introduced to the story as well at this point (3:16, 18 etc.), the primary focus falls upon the entrance of Yahweh the protagonist; with him in place, the action proper can now begin.

Development of Characters

The section also serves the plot by providing a character-development of the story’s players who were introduced in the initial section. Moses’ role as the protagonist’s representative is confirmed both in the fact that the report of his commission is combined with the introduction of Yahweh as a character, and also that he delivers the speeches of Yahweh as spokesperson,⁸⁵ functioning himself as a ‘God’ (4:16, 7:1) who speaks in Yahweh’s name (5:23). Irony prevails in the depiction of Moses’ character: a survey of points of view in 2:11-22 of Section I reveals that apparently everyone except the Narrator thinks that Moses is an Egyptian; this prevailing opinion of Moses’ ethnic status is ironic because of the development in these chapters of the ‘Israelites’ as a collective entity with Moses as their leader.

In response to Moses’ third objection of 4:1—that the descendants of Israel would disbelieve Yahweh’s appearance to him—three signs are set up with which Moses will validate his divine commission: (1) the transformation of Moses’ staff into a serpent, 4:2-5; (2) the transformation of Moses’ healthy hand into a diseased one and subsequent return to normal, 4:6-8; and, (3) the transformation of the waters of

⁸⁵As instructed in 3:14, 15, 16-17, 18; 4:22-23; 6:6-8, and carried out, for example, in 4:29-31 (to the elders and descendants of Israel), in 6:6-8 (to the descendants of Israel), and in 5:1 (to Pharaoh) in this section.

the Nile into blood, 4:9.⁸⁶ The water image is interesting here, because the Nile that once posed a threat to Moses' life in 1:22; 2:1-10 now functions to legitimate his authority. Before Moses and Aaron can petition Pharaoh to let them celebrate a festival in the wilderness (נגג, 5:1) and sacrifice to him (זבח, 5:3), it must be clarified to the reader not only that Moses is Israelite and not Egyptian, but especially that he is a ritually prepared one, which, in the Israelite sense, means that both he and his son are circumcised (12:43-49). Although the literary placement of this tale seems rather disjointed, the Implied Author clarifies Moses' identity to his audience through the ironic actions of Zipporah; Moses is not an Egyptian and, as becomes important later in the story, is prepared for Passover.⁸⁷

BAR-EFRAT discusses dramatic irony relating both to characters as well as to events.⁸⁸ Here, the prevailing irony remains that, although Zipporah is a Midianite, she seems more concerned about Israelite ritual than Moses. The reading of the Septuagint is even more loquacious in preserving the Midianite Zipporah as upholding

⁸⁶Extended discussion of the 'signs' will not be undertaken here. Note their treatment in Chapter Five (*Narratology and the Exodus Story*) and the distinctions between sign-types in Appendix Three: *Signs, Wonders & Related Miscellanea in the Exodus Story*.

⁸⁷4:24-26 has been inserted here for a variety of reasons. There is a *conceptual* link between the 'firstborn' mentioned in 4:22-23 and the 'firstborn' of this story, assumed to be Gershom. A *verbal* link is evident due to the occurrence of the root פגש in 4:24 with reference to Yahweh (mitigated to 'the angel of the Lord' in the Greek and Targums) and פגש also in 4:27 used of Aaron meeting Moses. The root בקש signals an important resonance; immediately previous to leaving Egypt and in another context of unclear identity, Pharaoh 'sought' (בקש) to kill Moses (2:15). Now, immediately previous to re-entering Egypt, Yahweh 'seeks' (בקש) to kill Moses and is only assuaged when the latter's identity becomes clear.

⁸⁸*Narrative Art*, 125-29.

Israelite circumcision, stating, ‘. . . it stands, the blood of my son’s circumcision’. The interpretation of PAMELA TAMARKIN REIS that ‘the Lord met him and sought to kill him’ relates to Moses being overcome with suicidal depression is probably over-accomodating.⁸⁹ However, her comments on the conflict between Moses’ Egyptian/Midianite/Hebrew identity are helpful, though not from the perspective of Moses’ internal dilemma as a psychological identity crisis but rather from the vantage point of how his character is portrayed within the narrative.

Another feature of Section II relating to the development of characters is its further elaboration of Yahweh and Pharaoh as protagonist and antagonist. Because this feature is presented against a background of conflict, it will be discussed below.

Development of Conflict

The development of conflict within this section is obvious, common to the *Middle* part of any story.⁹⁰ Now the contrast between ‘people’ (אֲמָר) has heightened, with the pitting of the people dominated by the antagonist Pharaoh—the Egyptians—against the ‘people’ of Yahweh the protagonist, who have received the personal name of ‘Israel’⁹¹ and are described in the favoured terms of ‘firstborn’ status (4:22).⁹²

⁸⁹‘The Bridegroom of Blood: A New Reading’, *Judaism* 40 (Summer 1991): 324-31.

⁹⁰BAR-EFRAT, *Narrative Art*, 94, suggests that as a norm for biblical narration, the centre of the plot invariably depicts the collision of opposing forces through conflict.

⁹¹Ascribed by Yahweh in 4:22 and also used by Pharaoh in his mimicry of Moses and Aaron’s request in 5:2.

⁹²The words of Yahweh refer to ‘my people’ in 3:7, 10; 5:1; 6:7 and 7:4 (the fuller ‘my hosts, my people, the descendants of Israel’). Moses speaks to Yahweh of ‘your people’ in 5:23b. General reference is also made to the descendants of Israel as ‘the people’ in various verses; by Yahweh (3:12; 4:16, 21), Moses (5:22, 23a), Pharaoh (5:4, 5, 7), and the Narrator (4:30, 31; 5:6, 10 [2x], 12). The curious

Correspondingly, the possessive pronouns applied to God also enforce the depiction of these 'people' as an organic unity, referring to him as 'our God',⁹³ 'your God',⁹⁴ and the genitival 'Yahweh, the God of Israel',⁹⁵ 'the God of the Hebrews',⁹⁶ and 'the God of your fathers',⁹⁷ listing in this regard Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (except for 3:13).⁹⁸

Not only has the conflict increased between opposing 'peoples', but Pharaoh's reference to the descendants of Israel in 5:5 as the 'people of the land' (עַם הָאָרֶץ) offers a hint that this conflict has widened to include the 'people' getting to their 'land',⁹⁹ against the wishes of a Pharaoh who determines them a 'people' of *his*

reference made by the Israelite foremen to the descendants of Israel before Pharaoh as 'your people' (5:15) and 'your servants' (5:15, 16) enhances the tension.

⁹³3:18, in Yahweh's instructions for Moses' speech to Pharaoh; 5:3, Moses and Aaron refer to 'Yahweh, our God' before Pharaoh (although the Greek omits 'Yahweh'); 5:8, by Pharaoh to the taskmasters and foremen, quoting Moses and Aaron from 5:3 (but omitting 'Yahweh').

⁹⁴6:7, wherein Yahweh says to Moses, 'I am Yahweh, your God'.

⁹⁵5:1, in Moses and Aaron's preface to their message for Pharaoh.

⁹⁶3:18, Yahweh to Moses (with the fuller, 'Yahweh, the God . . . '); 5:3, Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh.

⁹⁷3:6, Yahweh to Moses (with the textual problem of singular 'your father' in **מ** and plural 'your fathers' in the Samaritan Pentateuch, manuscripts of the Septuagint and Acts 7:32); 3:13, Moses asking for God's name and quoting God's words of 3:6; 3:15, Yahweh to Moses for the descendants of Israel (with the fuller 'Yahweh, the God of . . . '); 3:16, Yahweh to Moses for the elders of Israel (again with the fuller 'Yahweh the God of . . . '); and 4:5, Yahweh speaking to Moses (with the slight variation, 'Yahweh the God of *their* fathers').

⁹⁸The expression אָדֹנָי used three times by Moses in conversation with Yahweh (4:10, 13; 5:22) is a polite formulaic manner of speaking and not significant here.

⁹⁹This phrase does not refer, as some have postulated, either to a rising from the ground (i.e. from their 'wretched position') [*The Torah: The Five Books of*

'land'—resonating with his proleptic statement of fear that the 'people of the descendants of Israel' (1:9) would 'go up from the *land*' (עָלָה מִן הָאָרֶץ, 1:10). The 'land' of Egypt is mentioned in this section in 3:8; 4:20; 5:5, 12; 6:1, 11, 13, 26, 28; 7:2, 3, 4. The other 'land' relating to the descendants of Israel is mentioned in 3:8 (2x), 17 (2x); 6:4 (2x), 8. In 3:8 and 3:17, the 'land' of Egypt is directly set against the other 'land', with אֶרֶץ used five times (although Egypt receives the euphemistic designation in 3:17 of 'the affliction of Egypt'). Further emphasis can be seen with 'his land' (i.e. Pharaoh's) referring to the land of Egypt in 6:1, 11; 7:2. This tension relating to the 'land' has been evident from the outset of the story with the Narrator's statement in its *Introduction* that 'the *land* was filled with them' (1:7), and the literary significance of the etiology given to Gershom (2:22) intimates that Moses as representative will bring the people out from that land. CLINES has downplayed the role of 'land' in Exodus and Leviticus in favour of the 'divine-human relationship' facet of the promise;¹⁰⁰ however, it seems that evidence furnished from the lack of quantitative occurrence of אֶרֶץ cannot deny its conceptual significance within the story's plot-conflict. His comment that 'The promise of the *land*, though more prominent [than progeny], nevertheless appears only in scattered allusions throughout Exodus and Leviticus'¹⁰¹ seems to neglect the role that the 'land' plays both within the conflict and also as a potential for authenticating the resolution of this tension,

Moses: A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures according to the Masoretic Text (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2d ed., 1967)], a rising from the underworld in order to gain a resurrection (W. L. HOLLADAY, 'Ereṣ—Underworld: Two More Suggestions', *VT* 19 [1969]: 123-24), or a gaining ascendancy over the land (M. LAMBERT, 'Notes Exégétiques III: Exode, I, 10 et Osée, II.2', *Revue des études juives* 39 [1899]: 300), cited in DAVIES, *Israel in Egypt: Reading Exodus 1-2*, *JSOTSup* 135 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 40-41.

¹⁰⁰*Theme of the Pentateuch*, 51-53.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, 52.

reinforced by the significant statement that inhabitation in another land has been promised by the protagonist (Exod 6:8).

Conflict is most prominently portrayed with the employment of a series of verbs applied both to Yahweh and also to Pharaoh for purposes of extending this antagonist-protagonist rift. One device in this regard is the rhetorical use of the prophetic formula *כֹּה אָמַר*, a common introduction to the words of God elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. Just before returning to Egypt from Midian, Moses is instructed to deliver the message to Pharaoh that 'Israel is my firstborn son', prefaced by *כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה* (4:22). In 5:1, Moses and Aaron speak for Yahweh to Pharaoh, again with *כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה*.¹⁰² After their request has been refused, Pharaoh intensifies the labour of the people a second time and assigns his taskmasters and foremen to communicate this to the people. They preface his words with *כֹּה אָמַר פְּרַעֲזָה* (5:10).

Another verbal root which develops the conflict is *צוּחַ*. Observing the four instances of Pharaoh's direct speech from Section I, he 'says' (*אָמַר*) in his first (1:9), second (1:15, 16) and third (1:18) speeches to his people and the midwives, but in his fourth speech (1:22) the verbal idea has been strengthened in emphasis and there he 'commands' (*צוּחַ*). Again in 5:6, Pharaoh 'commands' his taskmasters and foremen to intensify the people's labour with *צוּחַ*. As a protagonistic contestant in the conflict of the plot, Yahweh 'commands' many times throughout the story; *צוּחַ* is used with *יְהוָה* as subject in 4:28; 6:13; 7:2, 6, 10; 12:28, 50.

This tension between conflicting perceived deities is also highlighted with the use of key words which offer critical conceptual links within the story. For example, the Narrator's statement in 2:25 that God 'knew'—an occasion of 'telling' which he then confirms by 'showing' in Yahweh's speech of 3:7 ('I know their *sufferings*'),

¹⁰² *כֹּה אָמַר* is also used in the Exodus story with *יְהוָה* as subject in 7:17, 26; 8:16; 9:1, 13; 10:3; and 11:4.

מִכָּאֵב)—prepares the reader for the impending motif of ‘knowledge’, centred in Pharaoh’s question ‘Who is Yahweh?’ and comment ‘I do not know Yahweh’ (5:2) to Moses and Aaron. Not only does Pharaoh not ‘know’ who Yahweh is, but further on in the story he also does not ‘know’ that Egypt is being destroyed as a result of his ignorance (10:7).

Development of Context

Section II escalates the sense of oppression introduced in the initial section through its further description of the harsh context of servitude, resulting from the social and political subjugation of the בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל under Pharaoh’s despotic rule. Not only does the ‘servitude’ (עֲבָדָה; 5:9, 11; 6:6, 9)¹⁰³ and ‘forced labour’ (סִבְלֹת; 5:4, 5; 6:6, 7) continue, but now the portrayal of difficulty is expanded with terms like עָנִי (‘affliction, misery’ in 3:7, 17; 4:31), מִכָּאֵב (‘pain, suffering’ in 3:7), צַעֲקָה (‘cry’ in 3:7, 9), לָחֵץ (verb ‘to oppress’ with the corresponding noun ‘oppression’ in 3:9), הָעֲשׂוּי (‘things being done’ in 3:16)¹⁰⁴ and מַעֲשֵׂה (‘work’ in 5:4, 13), invoking קִצְרֵר (‘despondency’ in 6:9).¹⁰⁵ This sense of cruelty is depicted not only by a catalogue of terms but also by the Implied Author’s portrayal of the actions of Pharaoh. Subsequent to Moses and Aaron’s encounter with Pharaoh requesting release from the land (5:1-5), the Implied Author ‘shows’ Pharaoh intensifying Israelite labour in a direct speech wherein he commands them to continue their daily

¹⁰³The same root is used in 6:5 as a Hiphil participle which refers to forced service.

¹⁰⁴It is clear that these ‘things being done’ (Qal passive participle) are negative.

¹⁰⁵Here, Moses cannot gain the people’s ear after his second meeting with Yahweh due to their ‘despondency of spirit’ (קִצְרֵר רוּחַ) and ‘difficult servitude’ (עֲבָדָה קָשָׁה).

quota but, unlike before, now they must gather their own straw (5:6-9). This is deemed 'evil' in Moses' speech to Yahweh (5:23) and he attributes the source of this 'evil' to Yahweh in 5:22.

As the plot-line rises in complexity with its complication becoming more pronounced, a hint of hope is offered within this harsh context in the Implied Author's use of significant geographic symbolism. The 'mountain of God' (הַר הָאֱלֹהִים), which has set the immediate stage for the call and commission of Moses (3:1) as well as the meeting place of Moses and Aaron (4:27), also stylistically foreshadows the future event upon Sinai (chs. 19ff.) with the assonant use of הַסֵּנִי.¹⁰⁶ The significance of this locale for the story is given in 3:12—the return to 'this mountain' will confirm Moses' authenticity and legitimise the divine origin of his commission to bring the people out from Egypt. Ascending and descending geographical symbolism is utilised by the Narrator in 4:19; Moses had gone from Egypt (negative) to Midian (neutral) to Horeb, the mountain of God (positive), and has now returned to Midian (neutral) and is told to go back to Egypt (negative).¹⁰⁷ The mountain also operates as a powerful theological symbol with the implicit ancient Near Eastern assumption of the mountain as the abode of the gods—seen, for example, in Mount Zaphon as the home of Baal or Mount Zion with its temple.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶Used in 3:2 (3x), 3, and 4, only used elsewhere in Deut 33:16 with reference to Joseph.

¹⁰⁷Geographical symbolism has been employed as an interpretative tool by others in pentateuchal study; notably NICOLAS WYATT, 'There and Back Again: The Significance of Movement in the Priestly Work', *Scandinavian Journal of Theology* 1 (1990): 61-80 and YAIR ZAKOVITCH, 'And You Shall Tell Your Son . . .': *The Concept of the Exodus in the Bible* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1991), 48. BAR-EFRAT discusses this structure as it relates to scenes in the plot in *Narrative Art*, 98-105.

¹⁰⁸S. TALMON, 'הַר' *TDOT*; RICHARD J. CLIFFORD, *The Cosmic Mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament*, HSM 4 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 107-23.

Section III: Exod 7:8-13:16: Complication

Section III (Exod 7:8-13:16), which ascends toward the *Complication* and eventual climax of the plot—the *Central Occurrence* within BAR-EFRAT'S framework discussed above—serves the plot of the story by: (1) intensifying the plot by introducing the distinct feature of the Double Plot; (2) introducing attendants of the antagonist; (3) portraying an intensification of conflict; and, (4) depicting the context once again, yet this time with an ironic twist. Whereas Section I (Exod 1:1-2:25) primarily functioned as an *Exposition*, and Section II (Exod 3:1-7:7) shaped that material with *Development*, this section brings the plot to its climax with an *Intensification* of its contours.

Intensification of Plot: The Double Plot

An important feature of this section is the broadening of the story's parameters through the introduction of a double plot, commonly referred to as a subplot. Common in Elizabethan drama, the subplot represents a second story that is internally complete, usefully termed by SHIPLEY as 'a representation on another plane of the main conflict'.¹⁰⁹ The subplot affects the reader's perception of the main plot, and can exhibit relationships parallel to it as an analogy, work in contrast as a counterplot, or be entirely separate from it as in a comic subplot, which serves to relieve tension in the main plot.¹¹⁰ When referring to a secondary plot in narrative, precision of terms is necessary because different levels of subordination by the main

¹⁰⁹*Dictionary of World Literary Terms*, s.v. 'subplot', 559.

¹¹⁰ ABRAMS, *Glossary of Literary Terms*, s.v. 'plot', 140; BALDICK, *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, s.v. 'subplot', 215; HOLMAN and HARMON, *Handbook to Literature*, s.v. 'subplot', 489-90; MYERS and SIMMS, *Dictionary of Poetic Terms*, s.v. 'subplot', 293.

plot are indicated by 'subplot' and 'counterplot'. SHIPLEY'S term 'double plot'¹¹¹ which describes the interweaving of two stories is most useful for understanding the dual plot structure of the Exodus story.

Until now, the main conflict of the plot has revolved around the requests of Moses and Aaron to gain permission from Pharaoh to leave his land. The oppressive socio-political context of the introductory narratives precipitated this, and now, as soon as the descendants of Israel leave Egypt this facet of plot conflict will be resolved. Moses and Aaron request dispensation from Pharaoh to leave Egypt with the Israelite hordes and Pharaoh repeatedly refuses, so they initiate the series of ten Plagues which Yahweh has predetermined: (1) Water to Blood, 7:14-25; (2) Frogs, 7:26-8:11; (3) Gnats, 8:12-15; (4) Insects, 8:16-28; (5) Death of Livestock, 9:1-7; (6) Boils, 9:8-12; (7) Hail, 9:13-35; (8) Locusts, 10:1-20; (9) Darkness, 10:21-29; and finally, (10) Death of Firstborn, beginning in 11:1-10 and carrying over into 12:29-41.¹¹² During the course of these Plagues the eventual resolution of the plot is anticipated and seems imminent: (1) in 8:21, Pharaoh grants permission to the descendants of Israel to sacrifice, but requires that they remain within the land; (2) in 8:24, he says they can go but must remain nearby; (3) in 10:10-11, he allows the men to go as long as the children are left behind; and, (4) in 10:24, he commands them to leave—even with the children—but their flocks and herds must be kept behind. Finally, (5) in 12:31-32, the Implied Author has Pharaoh expelling all of the descendants of Israel with their animals from the land of Egypt after the devastating effects of the final Plague, confirmed by the Narrator in 12:41, 51.

¹¹¹*Dictionary of World Literary Terms*, s.v. 'subplot', 559.

¹¹²The material describing the Death of Firstborn Plague has become merged with regulations regarding the Passover (12:1-13, 21-28, 42-51) and Feast of Unleavened Bread (12:14-20). Provisions for the Feast of Unleavened Bread spill over into the next chapter (13:3-10), and the Israelite dedication of the firstborn is also discussed in the catechetical 13:11-16.

Another plot conflict continues on a different plane, however, which runs in tandem with the plot of the ‘release from Egypt’ and brings them to a mutual climax. Although the attempt to gain deliverance from the land appears prominent on a visible level, this second plot develops at a more abstract level and revolves around the expressed intention that knowledge of Yahweh become evident to all. As in Section II, the verbal root ידע plays an important role in reinforcing this double plot which was anticipated by Pharaoh’s question ‘Who is Yahweh?’ and statement ‘I do not know Yahweh’ (5:2). When Yahweh ‘becomes known’, the tension of this second plot will be resolved; in scope, Yahweh will ‘become known’ to Pharaoh (ידע, 7:17; 8:6; 8:18; 9:14, 29; 11:7), to the Egyptians (ידע, 7:5; 14:4, 18), and also to the descendants of Israel and their subsequent generations (ידע, 6:7; 10:2). The exodus out of Egypt¹¹³ will confirm the people’s ‘knowledge’ of Yahweh (6:7; 10:2); in 6:6-7, the chain of events is described as follows: Yahweh will ‘bring’ (יצא), ‘deliver’ (נצל), ‘redeem’ (גאל), ‘take’ (לקח) and ‘be’ (היה) so that the descendants of Israel will ‘know’ (ידע).¹¹⁴

This double plot becomes clearly illumined in the Plagues narratives with explicitly stated dual intentions: the intention to leave the land (Plagues #1, 7:16; #2, 7:26; #4, 8:16; #5, 9:1; #7, 9:13; #8, 10:3) and the intention that knowledge of

¹¹³Several verbs are used to describe this movement in the story: נצל (3:8; 5:23 [2x]; 6:6), עלה ([1] Qal: 1:10; 13:18; [2] Hiphil: 3:8, 17) יצא ([1] Qal: 11:4; [2] Hiphil: 3:10, 11, 12; 6:6, 7, 13, 26, 27; 7:4, 5; 12:17, 42, 51; 13:3, 9, 14, 16; 14:11) שלח (5:1; 7:2) גרש (6:1; 11:1 [2x]) גאל (6:6; 15:13), and בא ([1] Qal: 12:25; [2] Hiphil: 6:8; 13:5, 11).

¹¹⁴LYLE ESLINGER, (‘Freedom or Knowledge? Perspective and Purpose in the Exodus Narrative [Exodus 1-15]’, *JSOT* 52 [1991]: 43-60) considers the ‘triumphalist’ reading of the exodus as a great event a misreading of the story; instead, the ‘right’ reading—comprehended when the narratological voice structure of the story is properly understood—indicates that the motif of knowledge is primary. These facets are not mutually exclusive, and the plot of the Exodus story incorporates them both in a double plot.

Yahweh become evident (Plagues #1, 7:17; #2, 8:6; #4, 8:18; #7, 9:14, 29; #8, 10:2). The specific knowledge about Yahweh which is to become known is that 'I am Yahweh' (7:17; 10:2), that 'there is no one like Yahweh our God' (8:6),¹¹⁵ that 'I am Yahweh in the midst of the land' (8:18), that 'there is no one like me in all the earth' (9:14), and that 'to Yahweh [belongs] the earth' (9:29). The Exodus story cannot end until this second plot is resolved. CLINES's suggestion that the main concern of the Moses/Pharaoh encounters in chapters 5-11 is that Pharaoh allow the Hebrews to 'formalise' the divine-human relationship with cultic and sacrificial offerings in the wilderness works nicely with his thematic-theological structure of the promise but overlooks elements of the plot directions of the story.¹¹⁶

Introduction of Antagonist's Attendants

The *Complication* also facilitates movement towards the climax of the plot by introducing the attendants of Pharaoh the antagonist in the 'magicians of Egypt' (מְצַדִּיקִים), who appear in 7:11, 22; 8:3, 14, 15, and 9:11 (2x). These characters are to be understood as fulfilling a particular function within a broader structure that MOSHE GREENBERG has outlined.¹¹⁷ For him, the distinctive motif of the first triplet of Plagues is the superiority of God to Egypt's magicians, supported by the phrase 'that you may know that I am Yahweh' (7:17).¹¹⁸ In the prologue to the Plagues, the magicians are able to reproduce the sign of changing the staff into a

¹¹⁵The Septuagint reads 'that there is no other except Yahweh'.

¹¹⁶*Theme of the Pentateuch*, 48.

¹¹⁷GREENBERG, 'The Redaction of the Plague Narrative in Exodus', in *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William Foxwell Albright*, ed. HANS GOEDICKE (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1971): 243-52.

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*, 244f..

serpent (7:11-12), and during the course of the Plagues proper they also reproduce the first (7:22) and second (8:3) ones, but are unable to duplicate the third (8:14) and therefore confess to Pharaoh that 'this is the finger of God' (8:15). Subsequent to the sixth Plague, the magicians are unable even to stand before Moses because they are covered in boils (9:11).

Intensification of Conflict

This third section also intensifies the conflict of the plot and gradually carries it to the pinnacle of its climax, primarily through the unfolding episodes of the Plagues narratives. From the redactional study of GREENBERG already mentioned, it can be seen that in their present form the Plagues give evidence of a structural balance which promotes a powerful rhetoric of Yahweh's supremacy in the context of a divine contest between Yahweh and Pharaoh. GREENBERG observes that the Plagues narratives manifest three triplets of Plagues which escalate in their development and are finally completed by a tenth Plague which lies outside the structural framework of these triplets.¹¹⁹ Three introductory formulas characterise the triplets: the first has God commissioning Moses to warn Pharaoh by the Nile in the morning (7:15; 8:16; 9:13); the second has God directing Moses to warn Pharaoh in his palace (7:26; 9:1; 10:1); and the third has God instructing Moses and Aaron to initiate the Plague without warning (8:12; 9:8; 10:21). Three distinctive motifs also can be found within these triplets, according to GREENBERG: as stated above, the first triplet of Plagues bears the motif of the superiority of God and his agents to the magicians of Egypt, supported by the phrase 'that you may know that I am Yahweh' (7:17); the second triplet of Plagues carries the motif of God's presence within Egypt, evidenced by the Plagues which separate between Israel and the Egyptians (8:18f.; 9:4, 6) and is

¹¹⁹Ibid., 244.

supported by the phrase ‘that you may know that I am Yahweh in the midst of the land’ (8:18); the third triplet of Plagues bears the motif of the incomparability of God, this incomparability demonstrated by the intensity of the Plagues and supported by the phrase ‘that you may know that there is none like me in all the earth’ (9:14).¹²⁰ In this study, GREENBERG is interested in tracing the redaction of this story (which, for him, consists of the two tradition-complexes of JE and P, each with an original seven-part Plague story and unique intention—JE conceiving the Plagues as punishment and P perceiving them to be demonstrations of God’s power), yet his structural observations also contribute to an elucidation of its plot.

The conflict between Yahweh and Pharaoh is also manifested specifically through the motif of the so-called ‘hardening’ of Pharaoh’s heart. Different verbs are used to describe this obduracy: קשה is used once in 7:3, Hiphil; חזק is used in Plagues # 1 (7:22, Qal), 3 (8:15, Qal), 6 (9:12, Piel), 7 (9:35, Qal), 8 (10:20, Piel), 9 (10:27, Piel), and 10 (11:10, Piel); and כבד is used in Plagues #2 (8:11, Hiphil), 4 (8:28, Hiphil), 5 (9:7, Qal), 7 (9:34, Hiphil) and 8 (10:1, Hiphil), along with a description of the hardness with the adjective כָּבֵד in Plague #1 (7:14). These verbs are also used in both previous¹²¹ and subsequent¹²² sections of the story, and the climax of the plot which pertains to the recognition of the ‘knowledge’ of Yahweh will be reached during the final ‘hardening’ (חזק, 14:4, 8, 17) and ‘honouring’ (כבד, 14:4, 17, 18) at the Sea. As GUNN has observed, the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart is

¹²⁰Ibid., 244-45.

¹²¹חזק (Piel) in 4:21 and (Qal) in 7:13 relating to the theme of hardening, and possibly in a wordplay with the Hiphil participle in 9:2. כבד in 5:9, although unrelated to this theme.

¹²²חזק (Piel) in 14:4, 8 and 17 relating to the theme of hardening; the Qal verb in 12:33 may attempt to play on the hardening. כבד (Niphal) in 14:4, 17 and 18 with the sense of ‘being honoured’.

central to the plot of the story and the fact that he continues to remain hardened even after the intensity of the Plagues makes sense only when it is assumed that Yahweh is fully in control, a perspective that the Narrator fully supports.¹²³

The rift between the people of Pharaoh and the people of Yahweh is further developed within this section as an illustration of the intensified conflict. This polarisation is mentioned in various places: the use of **עַם** for the Egyptians in 7:28, 29 (2x); 8:4, 5, 7, 17, 19, 25 (2x), 27; 9:14, 15, 27; 11:2; 12:31 is set against the use of **עַם** for the Israelites in 7:4, 14, 16, 26; 8:4, 16, 17, 18, 19, 25, 28; 9:1, 7, 13, 17; 10:3, 4; 11:3 (2x), 8; 12:27, 33, 34, 36. The significant verbal root **פָּלַח** is employed to emphasise the distinction between the Israelites and their Egyptian oppressors in Plagues #4 and #5. The descendants of Israel are not affected by the swarms of insects (Plague #4) because Yahweh has ‘separated’ the land of Goshen (8:18), and again, the cattle of Israel remain alive (Plague #5) because Yahweh has ‘separated’ them from the cattle of the Egyptians (9:4). The final Plague depicts the death of all Egyptian firstborn males (12:29-30) with stated purposes to make a ‘distinction’ (**פָּלַח**) between them and the descendants of Israel. The collective group of the ‘Egyptians’¹²⁴ is set against the people singularly described as ‘Israel’ in 9:4, 7; 11:7

¹²³GUNN, ‘The ‘Hardening of Pharaoh’s Heart’, 74-78. Regarding the usual source-distinctions with **חָזַק** attributed to P and **כָּבַד** to J, GUNN (79) traces the development of Pharaoh’s character in the story and suggests that he hardens his own heart in the early stages of the story (indicating a legacy of J) but then it soon becomes evident that God is the ultimate source of the hardening (as a legacy of P). BREVARD S. CHILDS, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), 174, connects these terms related to ‘hardening’ with the giving of signs; hardening in J (**כָּבַד**) prevents knowledge of God from being revealed in the signs, while hardening in P (**חָזַק**) results in the signs being multiplied as judgment.

¹²⁴Mentioned *passim*, for example, in 7:18, 21, 24; 8:22 (2x); 9:4, 6, 11; 10:2, 6.

and 12:15.¹²⁵ The final Plague climaxes with a solemn distinction between the Egyptians and Israel, and the subsequent exodus and journey through the Sea is remembered as the salvation of ‘Israel’ from the ‘Egyptians’ (14:30, 31).

Intensification of Context

This third section provides for the plot an intensification of the context within which the story is told, although now with a slight reversal. Whereas the initial difficulties—described with terms like עֲבָדָה (‘servitude’), פָּרֶךְ (‘violence’) and סִבְלוֹת (‘forced labour’) in Section I and יָצַח (‘affliction, misery’), מְכָאִיב (‘pain, suffering’), צָעֲקָה (‘cry’), לָחֵץ (‘to oppress/oppression’), הַעֲשִׂי (‘things being done’) and מַעֲשֵׂה (‘deeds’) in Section II—depicted an oppressive context for the Israelites, the ironic truth begins to emerge that the closer the descendants of Israel get to departing from Egypt, the worse things get for the Egyptians.¹²⁶

This reversal is supported by the obvious distinctions already mentioned which are made between Israel and Egypt during the course of the Plagues. In Plague #3, the magicians are unable to reproduce the sign as they were in the preceding two (8:14-15). Plagues #4, #5 and #10 use the Hiphil theme of פָּלַח with negative corollaries for the Egyptians; in Plague #4, their land is spoiled by the insects (8:20) during the course of a Plague whose stated purpose is that Yahweh be known ‘in the midst of the land’ (8:18); in Plague #5 all of their cattle die (9:6); Plague #10 narrates the death of Egyptian firstborn (12:29-30). In Plague #7, no hail reaches the land of Goshen where the descendants of Israel are (9:26) but the hail strikes hard upon the

¹²⁵Described previously in 4:22 and 5:2 (2x), and subsequently in 14:5, 20, 30 (2x), and 31.

¹²⁶For example, in 11:6, Yahweh speaks to Moses of the great ‘cry’ (צָעֲקָה) that will be heard in the land of Egypt because of the death of their firstborn (fulfilled in 12:30), a term which describes the Israelites’ plight in Section II (3:7, 9).

land of Egypt (9:25). Another distinction arises here within Pharaoh's camp in that some of his servants fear the word of Yahweh and therefore get their own servants and cattle to safety prior to the arrival of the hail (9:20). Again in Plague #8, Pharaoh's servants ask him to release the 'men' to go and serve Yahweh their God due to the obvious urgency evident in the poignant question 'Do you not yet know (עדין) that Egypt is becoming destroyed?' (10:7), and Plague #9 portrays the descendants of Israel as having light while Egypt experiences darkness (10:23).

The *Complication* closes with what seems to be a resolution of the plot. The conflict has been intense but the Plagues have eventually enabled all of the people to leave Egypt, an event which is memorialised forever in the Passover. Exod 12:41, 51 suggest that the gradual denouement can now begin, but this resolution is not yet complete, however, because one more conflict of the double plot still remains to be resolved.

Section IV: Exod 13:17-14:31: Conclusion

Section IV (Exod 13:17-14:31) carries the plot into full resolution and *Conclusion*—the *Final Situation* of BAR-EFRAT's grid for analysis—by: (1) temporarily suspending resolution of the plot with an Illusory Conclusion; (2) resolving the conflict; and, (3) fully reversing the context. Whereas Section I (Exod 1:1-2:25) primarily functioned as an *Exposition*, Section II (Exod 3:1-7:7) shaped that material with *Development*, and Section III (Exod 7:8-13:16) brought the plot to climax with *Intensification*, this closing section completes the plot through a full and final *Resolution*.

Resolution of Plot: The Illusory Conclusion

Section IV begins with a description of the people being led by God out of Egypt (13:17-22) and a sense of resolution is prominent, reinforced along ‘patriarchal promise’ lines by the framing narrative about the bones of Joseph (Exod 13:19; cf. Gen 50:24-25). Although it seems that denouement is close and that the plot of the Exodus story can now fall into a state of final tranquillity, this will not occur yet due to the fact that only the plot-facet of ‘release from Egypt’ has been fulfilled and the second element of the double plot still remains unresolved. While the first plot retains a conflict of action, the second embodies a conflict of characters. BAR-EFRAT, in his discussion of types of conclusion within the plots of Hebrew narratives, describes the structural feature of the illusory conclusion.¹²⁷ Contrasting the type of plot which descends to a settled end after its climax, the plot of the illusory conclusion rises once more to a final peak and then falls to a full and complete resolution. In effect, this amounts to a surprise ending for the reader, yet a surprise which is founded upon earlier aspects of the story’s characterisation and events, as ABRAMS writes,

The interplay of suspense and surprise is a prime source of the vitality in a traditional plot. The most effective surprise, especially in realistic narratives, is one which turns out, in retrospect, to have been grounded in what has gone before, even though we have hitherto made the wrong inference from the given facts of circumstance and character.¹²⁸

¹²⁷*Narrative Art*, 124-25.

¹²⁸*Glossary of Literary Terms*, s.v. ‘plot’, 140. ABRAMS continues by distinguishing between this and the notion of the ‘surprise ending’ as a pejorative description, which closes the plot without adequate grounding in earlier features of the story, often using the device of coincidence.

The conclusion has not yet arrived here because the resolution is only an illusion; the plot-facet of recognition of the ‘knowledge’ of Yahweh still needs to be resolved.

Now the significance of the ‘hardening’ motif becomes apparent because the specific verbs used to describe this state of Pharaoh (קָזַק and כָּבַד) are placed alongside the only two uses in this final section of the verbal root which serves the plot of ‘knowledge’—יָדַע. As intimated in Section III, according to the Implied Author’s ‘showing’ of Yahweh’s words (14:4, 17) and confirmation of them through the Narrator’s ‘telling’ (14:8), Yahweh directly instigates Pharaoh and the Egyptians to pursue Israel after they have been granted leave from Egypt. Yahweh’s ultimate control of them is aimed at the propagation of knowledge: he will ‘harden’ the hearts of Pharaoh (קָזַק, 14:4; confirmed in 14:8) and the Egyptians (קָזַק, 14:17), which will result in Yahweh ‘being honoured’ (כָּבַד, 14:4, 17, 18) so that it will become ‘known’ (יָדַע) that ‘I am Yahweh’. It is only after Yahweh’s mighty act of bringing the Israelites through the Sea¹²⁹ and destroying the Egyptians¹³⁰ that this second plot becomes resolved and the story ends. BAR-EFRAT suggests that biblical narratives are marked by various forms of conclusion, such as: (1) a key person returning home, indicating to the reader that the incident is over; (2) a key person being sent off; (3) the separation of two characters or groups who had met during the course of the narrative; and, (4) a notice of the death of the protagonist.¹³¹ Here, with the death of Pharaoh and his forces, the plot of the Exodus story is finished.

Parallels from salient features of tragedy and comedy usefully elucidate the function of Pharaoh within the plot at this point of closure. ARISTOTLE’S analysis of

¹²⁹Instructed to Moses by Yahweh in 14:15-18, carried out by Moses in 14:21-23, and recollected in 14:29-30.

¹³⁰14:24-28, recollected in 14:30-31.

¹³¹*Narrative Art*, 130-32.

plot in *The Poetics* was based upon the Greek writings of the tragedians AESCHYLUS, EURIPIDES and SOPHOCLES.¹³² The genre of tragedy depicted the eventual nemesis of a protagonist who had fallen into misfortune by some form of error (ἀμαρτία),¹³³ often associated with excessive pride (ὑβρις). Closing the plot, the denouement moved from a reversal in the hero's fortune (which ARISTOTLE called a περιπέτεια)¹³⁴ to either a calamitous end in tragedy or success and restoration in comedy.¹³⁵ The reversal often occurred as a result of some discovery (ἀναγνώρισις) by the protagonist of something previously unknown.¹³⁶ In tragedy, events follow from complication (due to conflict between opposing forces)¹³⁷ through to crisis¹³⁸ and eventual catastrophe.¹³⁹ General comparative features with tragedy are evident, like the nemesis of Pharaoh, his *hamartia* and obvious *hubris*, although Pharaoh is the antagonist of the Exodus story and not its protagonist, so these analogues should not be pressed too far.¹⁴⁰

¹³²*The Poetics*, 17-21. BALDICK, *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, s.v. 'tragedy', 226.

¹³³*Ibid.*, s.v. 'hamartia', 95-96.

¹³⁴*The Poetics*, 41.

¹³⁵ ABRAMS, *Glossary of Literary Terms*, s.v. 'plot', 141; *ibid.*, s.v. 'tragedy', 189-92; BALDICK, *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, s.v. 'tragedy', 226-27; *ibid.*, s.v. 'peripeteia/peripety', 165.

¹³⁶*The Poetics*, 41. ABRAMS, *Glossary of Literary Terms*, s.v. 'plot', 141.

¹³⁷HOLMAN and HARMON, *Handbook to Literature*, s.v. 'complication', 105.

¹³⁸BALDICK, *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, s.v. 'crisis', 48.

¹³⁹ ABRAMS, *Glossary of Literary Terms*, s.v. 'tragedy', 189-92.

¹⁴⁰Note J. CHERYL EXUM's recent work along these lines, *Tragedy and Biblical Narrative: Arrows of the Almighty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), particularly applied to narratives within the Deuteronomistic History.

Resolution of Conflict

Section IV rounds off the plot of the Exodus story by resolving the conflict which has mounted up to this point. Again, the ‘Egyptians’¹⁴¹ are set against ‘Israel’,¹⁴² and the root **עצ** continues to set these two collective groups apart (referring to the Egyptians in 14:6 and the descendants of Israel in 13:17 [2x], 18, 22, 14:5 [2x], 13, 31; 15:13, 16 [2x]). Reminiscent of the Plagues, a distinction is made between Israel and Egypt with the motif of the pillars of cloud by day and fire by night (13:21-22). Exod 14:19-20 develops this image with a simultaneous divide between darkness in the Egyptian camp and light amongst the Israelites, resonating with Plague #9 (10:21-29) and the light that the descendants of Israel experienced when all else was darkness. Although the descendants of Israel ‘fear’ (**ירא**) Pharaoh and the Egyptians temporarily in the latter’s pursuit of them (14:10; rebuked by Moses for their fear in 14:13), this soon becomes reoriented to a ‘fear’ (**ירא**) of Yahweh after his mighty deed of salvation is accomplished (14:31), coupled with a ‘believing’ (**אמן**) in Yahweh and Moses.

The greatest character-conflict to be resolved is not between these two entities but between Yahweh and Pharaoh, the protagonist and antagonist. Once again, the interwoven double plot serves to facilitate this resolution. Various verbs have been used throughout the story to describe the movement out of Egypt (like **נצל**, **עלה**, **יצא**, **גרש**, **גאל**, **שלח**, **גאל** and **בא**) but the agent causing this movement is not always clear. For example, in 12:31 it is Pharaoh who issues the command to ‘get out’ (**יצא**, Qal) from his people, and 12:39 makes reference to the people being ‘driven’ out (**גרש**,

¹⁴¹14:4, 9, 10, 12 (2x), 13, 17, 18, 23, 24 (2x), 25 (2x), 26, 27 (2x), 30, 31.

¹⁴²Significantly named by Pharaoh and his servants in 14:5 and by the Narrator in 14:20, 30 (2x) and 31.

Piel),¹⁴³ but in 12:17, 42, 51; 13:3, 9, 14, 16, explicit mention is made that Yahweh has ‘brought out’ (יצא, Hiphil) the people. In 14:11, the people even accuse Moses of having ‘brought’ (יצא, Hiphil) them out into the wilderness to die. The root שלח (Piel) also strengthens this ambiguity; in 13:17, this final section resumes with Pharaoh letting the people go after the many requests of Moses for him to do so (4:23; 5:1; 7:16, 26; 8:16; 9:1, 13; 10:3) and Yahweh’s earlier statement that he eventually would (3:20). When Yahweh destroys Pharaoh and the Egyptians at the Sea, the truth becomes obvious in the story that he reigns supreme over this pithy antagonist. Any ‘letting go’ that Pharaoh has done falls strictly under Yahweh’s ultimate control.¹⁴⁴

Resolution of Context

A final resolution is effected in Section IV with a full reversal of the context which has dominated the earlier part of the story. Sections I and II were characterised by oppression with the use of several terms described above. Section III, however, shifted the story in that a difficult context for the descendants of Israel becomes replaced with a difficult context for the Egyptians, the closer the former get to leaving the land. This transition is fully developed here.

Again, the clever use of a verbal root enhances this feature. The root עבד reflects the servitude of the descendants of Israel under Pharaoh in various parts of the story (1:13, 14; 5:18; 6:5; 14:5). After the exodus, the descendants of Israel even apply this term to themselves at a weaker moment in 14:12 (2x), complaining to

¹⁴³Reminiscent of 11:1, wherein Yahweh tells Moses that when Pharaoh lets the people go (שלח) he will ‘drive’ (גרש) them away completely.

¹⁴⁴Seen, for example, in the earlier vss. of 4:21 (Yahweh will harden Pharaoh’s heart and then Pharaoh will not let the people go) and 6:1 (Yahweh tells Moses that he will see what Yahweh is going to do to Pharaoh when Pharaoh lets the people go).

Moses that 'serving' the Egyptians is preferable to dying in the desert. This root also reflects the goal of the plot-facet of 'release from Egypt', which is to 'serve/worship' Yahweh, an act that will corroborate Moses' divine commission (3:12) and a feature of Moses' constant requests to Pharaoh (4:23; 7:16, 26; 8:16; 9:1, 13; 10:3). In desperation due to the intensity of the Plagues, Pharaoh's servants beckon him to let the descendants of Israel 'serve/worship' Yahweh because they recognise that Egypt is becoming destroyed (10:7), which he then does, first with reservations (10:8, 11, 24) and then unconditionally (12:31). As Pharaoh and the Egyptians are finally annihilated, and Moses and the descendants of Israel leave Egypt and the closing waters behind, the 'bad' to 'good' contextual shift moves from a transference of 'service' from Pharaoh to Yahweh. The observations of CHARLES ISBELL and others—that the story does not uphold an unqualified liberation from imprisonment and oppression but more accurately depicts this transference of 'service'—provide an appropriate recognition of the Implied Author's conditional parameters for his story and character-related conclusion that Yahweh is now recognised as both the supreme god and the supreme king over Pharaoh.¹⁴⁵

Chapter 15 poetically reinforces this conclusion, lauding Yahweh's great act of deliverance for his people and elevating it to an event of cosmic significance. Implicit in the jubilant poem is an express contrast not only between the descendants of Israel as Yahweh's people and the Egyptians (15:1-12), but between them and the various other 'peoples' who comprise Israel's enemies as well—the Philistines, Edomites, Moabites and Canaanites (15:14-15). The localised victory over Egypt has now become a universal victory over all of Israel's opponents; the triumph of Yahweh's reign, demonstrated by the deliverance of the descendants of Israel and destruction of the Egyptians, has become 'known' in Egypt and in all the earth. 'Who

¹⁴⁵See ISBELL, 'Story Lines and Key Words', 45; FRETHEIM, *Exodus*, 19-20, stresses the 'spiritual' as well as the socio-political implications of this.

is like you among the gods, Oh Yahweh?’ (15:11) suggests that a conflict between deities has occurred. The song of Moses ends with an explicit reference to Yahweh’s kingship and the permanence of his reign (15:18), similar to the language and ideology which underlie several Psalms (like 47, 93 95-99) that GUNKEL suggested celebrate the enthronement of Yahweh.

SUMMARY

Read at a synchronic level, the Exodus story embodies a variety of intricate literary features within its plot which stress the elevated nature of Yahweh as a national god and, consequently, the uniqueness of Israel as a collective body—the people of Yahweh. The story rests upon certain ideological assumptions: the importance of a national deity and the nature and role of this deity within a religiously plural and international context, an interest in questions of kingship and the limits of the throne, a vital concern relating to land, and the focus upon national identity which may reflect concerns about Israelite self-identity and cultic obligations as the perceived unique people of this national deity. Addressing these and other issues, the Exodus story weaves conflicting characters in an oppressive context around the double plot of release from the land and recognition of the knowledge of Yahweh.

CHAPTER FOUR

CHARACTERISATION IN THE EXODUS STORY

INTRODUCTION

Characterisation relates to the types of character portrayed within a literary work and to the techniques which are utilised for their depiction and development. In many modern and postmodern works of literature, the story is communicated largely through its characters and often by stylistic ploys which result in their portrayal as ambiguous and indeterminate. The Exodus story also views individual characters as important. The oft-observed feature of the story's opening phrase וְאֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת—that this introductory material has been edited and embedded within its present context to give the impression that what follows continues what has gone before—focuses upon the function of the conjunction וְ to indicate a particular uniformity in transition from the patriarchal material of Genesis. More relevant here, however, is the name of the book in its Hebrew tradition—שְׁמוֹת; the object of this opening sentence is the 'names' and specifically, the names of the 'descendants of Israel'. By employing the term 'names' both at the outset and also at crucial points in the story, along with the etiological giving of names as an important characterisation technique, Exodus 1-14 must be regarded as a tale that places its characters in the foreground.

The present chapter undertakes a detailed analysis of the primary characters who are introduced to the story in the *Exposition* of Section I (Exod 1:1-2:25: *Introduction*, as outlined in the preceding chapter). Accepting BAR-EFRAT'S observation that the Bible often divulges expositional knowledge at the preliminary

stage of the story as applicable to the introduction of characters,¹ this initial section of the plot will be explored here. Prior to this inquiry, however, some definitions will be given in an attempt to elucidate the role of characters within narratological and poetic structure, along with a brief overview of character-types and some of the various techniques which are employed for their characterisation. Subsequent to these preliminaries, a close reading of the story's *Introduction* will attempt to discover the diverse characterisation techniques and character-types found within its seven pericopae. The chapter closes with an examination of characterisation and etiology within the *Introduction*, particularly the naming accounts of Moses (2:10) and Gershom (2:22). This section on etiology opens the larger methodological question of the relationship between Narrative Criticism and Form Criticism in its discussion, which will be further discussed in Chapter Five (*Narratology and the Exodus Story*) with respect to Source- and Redaction-Criticism.

DEFINITION

Narratological Structure

The presentation of both plot and character occurs within a clear narratological structure. Instead of examining these features of the Exodus story within contours like historical referentiality, an alternate framework is assumed here which presupposes ROMAN JAKOBSON'S speech-act communication model of 'author—message—recipient' to exist within the text itself in the form of 'Implied Author—

¹SHIMON BAR-EFRAT, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, JSOTSup 70, Bible and Literature Series 17 (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1989), 112, 117-18.

Narrative—Implied Audience'.² Inside the world of the story, the Implied Author, who is reconstructed from the story by the reader,³ addresses the Implied Reader—the reader whom the narrative itself assumes.⁴ Sometimes the Implied Author communicates indirectly through characters and at other times more directly through the use of a Narrator. WAYNE C. BOOTH distinguishes between these two methods as 'showing' (indirect storytelling through characters) and 'telling' (direct storytelling by a Narrator),⁵ and comments that authorial intrusion through direct narration is now deemed passé in contemporary literary circles.

Since Flaubert, many authors and critics have been convinced that 'objective' or 'impersonal' or 'dramatic' modes of narration are naturally superior to any mode that allows for direct appearances by the author or his reliable spokesman. Sometimes. . . . the complex issues involved in this shift have been reduced to a convenient distinction between 'showing,' which is artistic, and 'telling,' which is inartistic.⁶

Although modern novelists may reject the validity of 'telling' as an acceptable technique, it is evident that the portrayal of character in the storytelling of the Old

²MARK ALLEN POWELL, *What is Narrative Criticism? A New Approach to the Bible*, Guides to Biblical Scholarship, New Testament Series, ed. DAN O. VIA, Jr. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1990), 7-9, 19.

³Distinguished from the historical author who is tied to the background information of the text itself (POWELL, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, 5).

⁴POWELL, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, 20. POWELL outlines the goal of Narrative Criticism as endeavouring to read the text as the Implied Reader, knowing what the text assumes that reader knows and forgetting what the text assumes that reader does not know.

⁵*The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

⁶*Ibid.*, 8.

Testament manifests a careful interplay between ‘showing’ and ‘telling’.⁷ This narratological hierarchy must be acknowledged and considered in an attempt to understand the characterisation techniques employed in Exodus 1-2.

Types of Characters

The categorisation of characters into types enables the reader to conceptualise the hierarchy which exists amongst characters in a given story and which is strategically constructed by the Implied Author. During the 1927 Clark Lectures at Trinity College, Cambridge, the novelist E. M. FORSTER introduced the now common distinction between *flat* and *round* characters.⁸ *Flat* characters were described by FORSTER as those which are built around a single quality, idea or trait, called ‘humours’ in the seventeenth century and sometimes ‘types’ or ‘caricatures’.⁹ *Round* characters, in contrast, were seen to be much more complex, possessing a variety of traits;¹⁰ this character type transcends the requirements of the plot. FORSTER suggested, ‘The test of a round character is whether it is capable of surprising in a convincing way. If it never surprises, it is flat. If it does not convince, it is flat pretending to be round.’¹¹ These categories have also been differentiated along the lines of ‘two-dimensional’

⁷POWELL (*What is Narrative Criticism?*, 27) suggests that the Narrator is a rhetorical device of the Implied Author.

⁸Published as *Aspects of the Novel*, ed. OLIVER STALLYBRASS (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1962; originally published, 1927); 73-81.

⁹Ibid., 73.

¹⁰Ibid., 77-81.

¹¹Ibid., 81.

versus 'three-dimensional' characters.¹² FORSTER's types are still used to distinguish between characters in literary works.

Another typical classification is the Aristotelian notion of the *agent* (ὁ προαττών), who performs an action that is required by the plot.¹³ These subsidiary characters operate in tandem with the plot within the poetic structure of a literary piece, serving its goal and facilitating its movement. On this relationship, BAR-EFRAT writes,

It can be said that the actions which comprise the plot interrelate with the characters: the individuals are a function of the events, and vice versa. In other words, just as the characters serve the plot, the plot serves the characters, illuminating them and contributing to their characterisation. Moreover, just as the characters' personalities influence the course of events, the course of events affects the personalities of the characters.¹⁴

In Exodus, for example, the Narrator's introduction to the 'magicians of Egypt'¹⁵ who are summoned by Pharaoh during the plagues conflict intensifies the antipathy

¹²CHRIS BALDICK, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), s.v. 'type', 231. FORSTER (*Aspects of the Novel*, 77) used the term 'two-dimensional' for flat characters.

¹³*Aristotle in Twenty-three Volumes*, The Loeb Classical Library, ed. G.P. GOOLD, vol. 23, *The Poetics, 'Longinus' on the Sublime, Demetrius on Style* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1982), chap. 6, 27. See ADELE BERLIN, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1983), 23, 27, 32, who suggests that the character-types of *agent* and *type* appear in narratives either as functions of the plot or as part of the story's setting; they exist primarily for their effect on the plot.

¹⁴*Narrative Art*, 77.

¹⁵חֲרָטִי מִצִּירִים, seen in 7:11, 22; 8:3, 14, 15; and twice in 9:11. In 7:11, this term seems to be a blanket term for the 'wise men' (חֲכָמִים) and the 'sorcerers' (מְכַשְׁפִּים), as per JOHN I. DURHAM (*Exodus*, WBC [Waco, Texas: Word, 1987], 90-91), who translates 'learned men' as derived from חָרַט—'one skilled in using a stylus or other writing and engraving tools'—although HYATT (*Exodus*, New Century Bible

between Pharaoh and Yahweh by consolidating resistance in Pharaoh through their ability to duplicate Moses and Aaron's actions, temporally preventing the ultimate resolution of the plot and preparing for the pinnacle of its climax. These characters are appropriately introduced to the story at its point of *Complication* (Exod 7:8-13:16).

Lines of demarcation are also drawn between characters with regard to the dynamic or static profiles that they evidence within the narrative,¹⁶ although these differences often parallel 'round' and 'flat' distinctions. It must be stressed, however, that all the categories mentioned above are not always so sharply divided. Together, each character-type functions within the plot to tell the story of the Implied Author.

As BERLIN clarifies,

There is no real line separating these three types; the difference is a matter of the degree of characterisation rather than the kind of characterisation. One might think of them as points on a continuum: 1) the agent, about whom nothing is known except what is necessary for the plot; the agent is a function of the plot or part of the setting; 2) the type, who has a limited and stereotyped range of traits, and who represents the class of people with these traits; 3) the [full-fledged] [*sic*] character,¹⁷ who has a broader range of traits (not all belonging to the same class of people), and about whom we know more than is necessary for the plot.¹⁸

[London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1971], 104) appears to think that this refers to a third group. Note CHILDS's comments, (*The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974]), 128, n. on v. 11.

¹⁶M. H. ABRAMS, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 5th ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1988), s.v. 'character and characterization', 22-23; POWELL, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, 55.

¹⁷This is BERLIN's term for *round* character types.

¹⁸*Poetics*, 32.

Techniques for Characterisation

ABRAMS highlights the importance of attention to characterisation in saying, 'The artistic success of a character in literature does not depend on whether or not an author incorporates an established type, but on how well the type is recreated as a convincing individual.'¹⁹ Characterisation has been defined as 'the process through which the implied author provides the implied reader with what is necessary to reconstruct a character from the narrative'.²⁰ This process consists of the careful employment of various techniques like description of characters, portrayal of their inner life and conveyance of their speech and action.²¹ A common characterisation technique in the Hebrew Bible is that of contrast; characters can be contrasted either with another character, with an earlier action of their own, or with the expected norm.²² These techniques enable the reader to situate a particular character in the context of the story as well as to enter into their interior state and understand details of their ontological fabric more fully. Discernment of them by the reader is essential. In the reading which follows, these and other techniques will be discussed as they arise in each particular pericope.

¹⁹*Glossary of Literary Terms*, s.v. 'stock characters', 179.

²⁰POWELL, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, 52.

²¹BERLIN, *Poetics*, 34-39. BAR-EFRAT, *Narrative Art* (95) discusses the function of speech within the smallest narrative units (incidents) in relation to their function in the plot.

²²BERLIN, *Poetics*, 40-41.

ANALYSIS

Before a detailed analysis of characterisation in the *Introduction* to the Exodus story is given, attention must be paid to the structural breakdown of this section within the plot:

Figure 1: Micro-Structure of Plot within Macro-Parameters of the Exodus Story

Reference:	Description:	Role in Plot:
1:1-6, 7	Introduction/transition	KING: ANTAGONIST
1:8-14	Plan #1 of King	
1:15-21	Plan #2 of King	
1:22	Plan #3 of King	
2:1-10	Moses' Birth	MOSES: HERO AND VISIBLE PROTAGONIST
2:11-15a (verse 15)	Moses and Hebrews (transitional)	
2:15b-22	Moses in Midian	
2:23-25	Conclusion/transition	

A thorough discussion of characterisation will now be undertaken, based on the characters and their narratological context as outlined in Appendix One (*Character Chart of Section I*).

Characterisation Techniques

Exod 1:1-6, 7

Exod 1:1-7 begins with a list of characters in the sons of Jacob and describes them as having come down to Egypt, using the verbal root ברא two times in verse 1. The use of this root, instead of another like דלה, enforces the perspective that the vantage point of this story is an Egyptian one.²³ The position of the *athnach* in verse 1 and departure from the fairly standard verb-subject-object sentence syntax in the second part of verse 1 places focus upon the person of Jacob. This Jacob-Israel focus is reinforced by the naming of characters within the section, as each of these ‘names’ are ‘descendants of’ Jacob, named in relation to him and presented as the ancestors of the ‘descendants of Israel’ who are key players in the story which is being introduced. The further clarification of the Septuagint which describes Jacob as ‘their father’ (τῷ πατρὶ αὐτῶν) stresses the literal aspect of these ‘sons’ of Israel²⁴ and distinguishes them from the ‘Israelites’ described in 1:7.

The significance of these important characters is not to be misapprehended by the reader, so they are deliberately represented with transparency by the Narrator’s direct shaping through flat description. Sophisticated techniques like ambiguous depiction are strictly unnecessary because these ‘names’ are not important characters

²³JOHN WILLIAM WEVERS (*Notes on the Greek Text of Exodus*, Society of Biblical Literature Septuagint and Cognate Studies Series, 30 [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990], 1) offers a suggestion that the perfect participle (εἰσπεπορευμένων) is emphasising from the Narrator’s point of view that the descendants of Israel had not merely entered Egypt but were in fact still there, although a popular variant closer to the Masoretic Text and which may have been influenced by the Hebrew nullifies this by changing the participle to the present stem.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 1.

in and of themselves, but exist solely for the effect that they will have on the plot. The characters of 1:1-7 envelop the *Introduction* section of the plot and are mirrored by the similar ‘patriarchally-linked’ characters of 2:23-25 whose importance also lies in their service to the plot alone. The presence of this envelopment heightens the bi-directional focus of the story and its impending action. At the beginning of the story, the copula γ emphasises continuity between these characters and past patriarchal traditions, traditions which foster definition and substantiate appropriated theological claims. These characters and the events which are to follow must be viewed, as the γ indicates, in the broader context of the overarching pentateuchal story. While the Masoretic text stresses continuity between Genesis and Exodus, the Septuagint distinguishes between them, and omits the copula here in Exod 1:1. For the Greek tradition, Exodus constitutes a new work.²⁵

EHUD BEN ZVI has recently suggested that an editor sought to emphasise the separate character of the book of Genesis from the other pentateuchal books by preserving a distinct ending to the book.²⁶ Examining the concluding words of each book of the Pentateuch, BEN ZVI suggests that a four-book series (Exodus to Deuteronomy) is evident. Both Exodus (40:38) and Deuteronomy (34:12), as the outside books of the series, close by indicating the entire people of Israel— $\text{לְעֵינֵי כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל}$ and $\text{כָּל־בֵּית־יִשְׂרָאֵל}$, respectively (the Septuagint of Exod 40:38 is the same as the Masoretic text in Deut 34:12). Leviticus (27:34) and Numbers (36:13), as the inside books of the series, also share a similar reference to Israel and exhibit parallel structural and linguistic features—

$\text{אֱלֹהֵי הַמִּצְוֹת אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־מֹשֶׁה אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּהַר סִינַי:}$ (Lev 27:34) and

²⁵Ibid., 1.

²⁶‘The Closing Words of the Pentateuchal Books: A Clue for the Historical Status of the Book of Genesis within the Pentateuch’, *Biblische Notizen* 62 [1992]: 7-10.

אֱלֹהֵי הַמִּצְוֹת וְהַמְשָׁפְטִים אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה בְּיַד־מֹשֶׁה אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּעֶרְבַת מִזְבֵּחַ
עַל יַרְדֵּן יְרַחוּ: (Num 36:13).

The book of Genesis does not fit into this four-part editorial design but instead, closes with reference to Joseph's death in Egypt. BEN ZVI does not deny that thematic links exist between Genesis and Exodus in their present shape but argues that a specific editorial design was employed to emphasise the separate character of Genesis to a specific audience. This proposal may offer a useful framework for an analysis of the growth of the pentateuchal books into their final shape as Torah, but a larger study is surely required. Did the editor responsible for this structure wish to highlight Moses and the authoritative Mosaic law, as BEN ZVI suggests, and therefore left Genesis out because this concern is not evident there, when on the other hand, such clear verbal and conceptual links with creation and the patriarchal story are expressed at the forefront of the Exodus introduction?

1:7 refers again to the 'descendants of Israel', framing the prologue with 1:1, except now a critical semantic shift has occurred in the usage of בְּנֵי; here it is the Israelites who are identified. With the attainment of this deeper semantic plane for the appellation בְּנֵי, the characters of this segment have almost completed their service to the *Exposition* of the plot. As verse 6 communicates the death of Joseph and demise of that entire generation,²⁷ the transition from the literal to the new 'descendants of Israel' is made complete with a series of verbs describing the latter which relates to their increase and filling of the land of Egypt, resonating with the conceptual antecedent of theological promises which were made to the patriarch Abraham (Gen

²⁷GORDON F. DAVIES (*Israel in Egypt: Reading Exodus 1-2*, JSOTSup 135 [Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992], 29-30) describes the transition from the 'these' (וְאֵלֶּה) of 1:1 to the 'that (הַהֵוא) generation' of 1:6 as a change from a 'panchronic' narratorial stance to the Narrator's fixing of himself in time. This change of the demonstrative assists the perspective that those 'descendants of Israel' now belong in the past.

12:1-3 etc.) and their partial fulfilment here. With this crucial connection solidified the story can now begin.

The fact that these characters are employed to serve the plot and facilitate transition is obvious. Referring to WOLFF's work on the Yahwist in Genesis,²⁸ COATS writes, 'Just as a structural device in Gen 12:1-3 signals movement from the primeval history to the patriarchal traditions, so a similar device in Exod 1:1-14 bridges the patriarchal traditions and traditions associated with Israel's exodus from Egypt.'²⁹ For COATS, this transition has two elements: (1) a summary conclusion comprised of the name list in 1:1-5 and the death notice in 1:6; and, (2) an introduction to the traditions which follow, containing the introduction of the protagonists in 1:7, exposition and the antagonist's speech in 1:8, 9-10, and the report of the execution of his instructions and their results in 1:11-14.³⁰ COATS views the name list of 1:1-5 in parallel with the function of the Joseph story in the Tetrateuch (his term) by connecting Jacob and his family in Canaan with Israel in Egypt. The announcement of Joseph's death in 1:6 'effectively concludes the patriarchal traditions by announcing the end of a generation'³¹ and henceforth, 'Joseph's successor is the new people'.³² It is the characters of this section who pave the pathway for this movement in the story.

²⁸'The Kerygma of the Yahwist', *Interpretation* 20 (1966): 131-58.

²⁹GEORGE W. COATS, 'A Structural Transition in Exodus', *VT* 22 (1972): 130.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 130-32. Note again THOMPSON's comments (*The Origin Tradition of Ancient Israel*, 167) that the narratological function of the transitional 1:1-6, 8 is to clear up what remains from the Genesis narratives in order that a beginning might become possible.

³¹COATS, 'Structural Transition', 131.

³²*Ibid.*, 133.

A fresh examination has been provided recently by GORDON F. DAVIES,³³ who analyses Exod 1:1-7 along the structural and formalist lines of VLADIMIR PROPP. Reducing the plot of this section to the essential structure which underlies its surface details—the ‘function’ or ‘composition’ in Proppian terms, DAVIES suggests that the plot of Exod 1:1-7 is not independent and that the functions of its deep structure cannot be adequately understood unless information is supplied from the preceding Genesis material (particularly the broad genealogical framework of Genesis 46). This results in DAVIES’S identification of Exod 1:1-7 as the second part of the twin functions of: (1) ‘danger—escape from danger’, emphasising the safety found in Egypt by Jacob and his sons when confronted by famine; and, (2) ‘promise—fulfilment’, focusing on the divine multiplication of the patriarch Jacob and his offspring.³⁴ This repetition of material from Genesis serves both to unite and to separate Genesis and Exodus, and narratologically serves to bolster the authority of the Narrator as a storyteller whom the reader can trust.³⁵ DAVIES’S approach helpfully classifies this pericope according to the structural features of its plot-composition and provides a useful reminder that the section is oriented towards the past, but can be criticised for neglecting the transitional aspect assumed therein. Exod 1:1-7 is pronounced much more forcefully by the Narrator as an attempt to introduce the impending story than as an effort to conclude the previous one.

³³*Israel in Egypt: Reading Exodus 1-2*, cited above.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 28.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 34.

Exod 1:8-14

Exod 1:8-14 follows the transitional 1:1-7 with the purpose of opening conflict through its portrayal of characters and character tension. The antagonistic character of the מֶלֶךְ הַחַדָּשׁ ('new king') is initially introduced. As for the 'new' king, the adjective שֶׁחֲדָשׁ reinforces the transitory nature of 1:1-7 and re-establishes the idea that things have now changed. This 'new' king, the Narrator says, did not know Joseph (1:8); not only has Joseph died (1:6) but the continuance of positive relations between Joseph's family—extended to the 'descendants of Israel' of 1:7—and the Egyptian people has now ceased. This is the only direct statement that the Narrator makes in his characterisation of the king.

Details are not given about the precise identity of this new king, his reign nor his ruling era, but the Narrator's description of him is important because it is based upon status—he is the *king*. BERLIN discusses 'description' as a characterisation technique³⁶ which relates to the 'telling' of the Narrator:

The purpose of character description in the Bible is not to enable the reader to visualize the character, but to enable him to situate the character in terms of his place in society, his own particular situation, and his outstanding traits—in other words, to tell what kind of a person he is.³⁷

Thus, description used by the Narrator for purposes of characterisation can refer to status (as here with 'king', further examples including 'widow', 'wise man', 'wealthy', 'old'), profession ('prophet', 'prostitute', 'shepherd'), gentilic designation ('Amalekite', 'Hittite', 'Midianite') or specific physical features ('strong', 'lame',

³⁶*Poetics*, 34-36.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 36.

‘beautiful’).³⁸ As a character in this opening narrative, the new king exudes power and the ability to prescribe law. This intensity of the story’s portrayal of this character is supplemented by the use of ‘Pharaoh’ to describe the king in 1:11. Cities of storehouses—Pithom and Raamses—are built for ‘Pharaoh’ who is the ‘great house’. מֶלֶךְ הַחַדָּשׁ (‘new king’) and פַּרְעֹה (‘Pharaoh’, the ‘great house’) are the only terms used (once each) by the Narrator to refer to the antagonist in 1:8-14.

The Implied Author moves from a technique of ‘telling’ through a Narrator to ‘showing’ with respect to this character. As ALTER and others have recognised, biblical narrative is largely ‘scenic’—broken into a sequence of scenes and predominated by the presence of speech to tell its story—so much of its character shaping is undertaken by indirect means, requiring the active participation of the reader in the narrated events.³⁹ The *scenic* mode of biblical narrative outlines the plot of the narrative through the narratorial portrayal of speech and action, and the plot receives depth and contour through the presentation of various, and sometimes multiple and/or diverging points of view. ALTER writes, ‘The biblical scene . . . is conceived almost entirely as verbal discourse, with the assumption that what is significant about a character, at least for a particular narrative juncture, can be manifested almost entirely in the character’s speech.’⁴⁰ The only direct speech within 1:8-14 is given by the new king in 1:9-10; it is a speech about ‘a people’ to ‘his people’, his subjects who are willing to act upon his words.

³⁸Ibid., 35-36.

³⁹BAR-EFRAT, *Narrative Art*, 64, 89; BERLIN, *Poetics*, 46, 51, 64; JACOB LICHT, *Storytelling in the Bible* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1978), 29-30.

⁴⁰*Art of Biblical Narrative*, 70.

The speech begins by showing the ‘interior vision’⁴¹ of the king with the use of הנה, a device used to introduce a statement of perception which serves to distinguish between the Narrator’s point of view and that of a character—clearly serving that function here. His perception of present matters is that: (1) the ‘people of the descendants of Israel’ are much more numerous and mighty than the Egyptians; and, (2) the application of measures governed by wisdom is necessary to curb their growth so they will not continue to increase, collaborate with Egyptian enemies in the event of war, and abandon the land of Egypt. The symmetry between aspects of the speech and 1:7 is evident. 1:7 related the Narrator’s ‘telling’ of the increase of the ‘descendants of Israel’ with a series of loaded verbs, concluding with their filling of the land. Here, by using direct speech in 1:9-10, the Implied Author substantiates the Narrator’s point of view through ‘showing’ how the new king is thinking, which reinforces his own perspective. Simply stated, the speech of the king serves as a legitimation of the Narrator’s perspective, which is the ‘right’ one in the story. Not only does the king acknowledge the existence of the ‘descendants of Israel’, but he also names and categorises them with the root עמ, setting them in opposition against his own ‘people’ with whom he is presently speaking (1:9a); the king identifies that entity of the ‘descendants of Israel’ as a constitutive body, a people. The speech of the king also testifies to the Narrator’s chronicling of the exceptional growth of this people. The roots רב and עצום are used in his reported diction, corroborating the Narrator’s use of them in 1:7. A third aspect of the king’s speech is its authentication of the Narrator’s perspective regarding ‘the land’, although here the concept is extended in his speech beyond what the Narrator has already stated. Not only do these descendants of Israel ‘fill’ the land (מלא) but they also pose something of a threat in that they might eventually ‘ascend’ from the land (עלה). Through this final

⁴¹BERLIN, *Poetics*, 62, refers to the function of this device as internalising the viewpoint.

phrase, the Narrator foreshadows the exodus event itself in the words of the king.⁴² This proleptic statement at the outset of the story intimates that the king is ultimately not in control, and this device provides a hint for the reader about that fact.⁴³

Although the character of the new king remains completely at the disposal of the Implied Author's explicit intentions, as a character he contributes to the narrative some important information. BAR-EFRAT discusses the intimate relationship between the content of a speech used in the Narrator's 'showing'⁴⁴ and its function, with functional possibilities listed as: (1) expressing emotion; (2) establishing an attitude; (3) spurring someone to action; or, (4) providing information.⁴⁵ As an example of the king's informational contribution to the story, within the catalogue of named characters in 1:8-14, the 'people of the descendants of Israel' and the 'enemies' are supplied by him. In fact, an attempt to arrive at the point of view of his people is only possible when based on the speech of the king in 1:9-10; all these Egyptian people know is what their king has told them—that the 'people of the descendants of Israel', along with their own enemies, pose a threat to them and are therefore to be feared and handled appropriately. The 'people' are set against 'his people' (1:9), named as the Egyptians here by the Narrator (1:13) and all through the story which opens up lines of conflict that develop through the plot of this and subsequent sections. The king's speech also functions to spur his people to action with its imperatival mood and

⁴²J. CHERYL EXUM, "'You shall let every daughter live": A Study of Exod 1:8-2:10', *Semeia* 28 (1988), 68. It is important to observe that at this point in the story, the fact of the descendants of Israel working for the king is not yet established, so the king's fear of them departing from the land seems to be unfounded.

⁴³Just as Moses' name has a proleptic significance (see below), so too do these words of the new king.

⁴⁴BAR-EFRAT uses the term 'narrator' where others would refer to the 'implied author'.

⁴⁵*Narrative Art*, 68-76.

urgent appeal in a tenor that smacks of distorted reality and blatant untruth. His speech also provides information about himself because the nature of a character is not only illumined by his or her actions but also by how they convey information through their speech.⁴⁶ The king's talk of 'enemies' relates directly to his own characterisation—he is paranoid, fearful, a personal paradigm of antipathy towards the descendants of Israel who will employ verbal measures of craftiness and deceit to arrive at his intended ends. There are no 'enemies'; these are mere figments of straw.

DAVIES has examined the rhetoric of this character's persuasive appeal to his people through monologue.⁴⁷ Although the king's real motives remain unknown, the intent of his rhetorical strategy is clearly aimed at describing the Hebrew increase as a danger to his own people.⁴⁸ DAVIES observes that the king's speech arises from the deliberative and not judicial or epideictic branch of rhetoric; his words are hypothetical. The king's speech is broken into the two rhetorical elements of: (1) proem/exordium; and, (2) argumentation/confirmatio. In the proem/exordium, he identifies with his audience by using the verbal first-person plural in order to gain their trust, especially here when using such hypothetical material for persuasive purposes.⁴⁹ Within the argumentation itself, the king argues for a quasi-logical rhetoric based on the faulty premise that the Israelite growth is a threat. DAVIES outlines the king's enthymeme as follows:

⁴⁶Ibid., 76.

⁴⁷*Israel in Egypt*, 47-55.

⁴⁸Ibid., 45, 47.

⁴⁹Ibid., 48.

- (i) whoever is רב ועצום ממנו is a threat
- (ii) they are רב ועצום ממנו
- (iii) therefore they are a threat.⁵⁰

Although the king's syllogism is internally consistent, the king has not demonstrated the validity of his premise—that whoever is רב ועצום ממנו is a threat—and therefore his statement is incorrect.

Exod 1:15-21, 22

Exod 1:15-21 inaugurates the second plan of the king to rid himself and the Egyptians of the 'descendants of Israel' in order to stop their increase. Although in this section they are referred to as Hebrews, the narrative represents them as the same collective body from the previous section (the 'descendants of Israel') and assumes that for the reader this connection is clear. J. CHERYL EXUM⁵¹ submits that 1:15-21 bridges 1:8-14 and 2:1-10: the problem of Israelite increase is common to 1:8-14 and the attempted solution to kill Hebrew males is shared with 2:1-10. In this section, the tension between characters surfaces immediately with the 'king of Egypt' speaking to the Hebrew midwives (as per the pointed Hebrew text).

It was mentioned in the previous section that the 'new king' was only referred to once (1:8) with the adjective הָרָדָּה, facilitating the transition of the 'descendants of Israel' into a new social context, and that the title Pharaoh was only used once in a description of the building projects of Pithom and Raamses—appropriately. Subsequently in the section, the antagonistic characters were described either in terms of the 'taskmasters' or the Egyptians. Here, the present section opens by naming the king with a genitival qualification relating to his people in 1:15, מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם. He is

⁵⁰Ibid., 49.

⁵¹'You shall let every daughter live', 68, n. 6.

the king of those Egyptians who have been oppressing the ‘descendants of Israel’ and his intentions are the same as theirs towards Israel—persecution and oppression. The Narrator refers to this antagonist as the ‘king of Egypt’ in 1:15, 1:17 and 1:18.⁵² In 1:19, the Narrator records the midwives responding to ‘Pharaoh’, perhaps indicating their point of view as they regard the king with an official title. Finally, in 1:22, on the narrated occasion of a description of the king’s third plan against the ‘descendants of Israel’, the title Pharaoh is used again, here with rhetorical intent; the ‘great house’ will not bear with this continued increase of the ‘descendants of Israel’ who are connected with the ‘households’ of the literal descendants of Israel (1:1), and therefore intensifies his strategy to rid Egypt of them.⁵³

Along with the Egyptian king, the Hebrew midwives constitute the major players of this section’s character cast and some important observations have been made on them in the recent essay of TREVOR DENNIS, ‘Exodus 1:15-21: A Midwife’s Tale?’.⁵⁴ First of all, they are named. Although the story contains a large repertoire of human individuals and groups along with animals and insects,⁵⁵ only seven characters are named in the story (apart from the individuals within the introductory prologue of 1:1-7, those within the genealogy in 6:14-25, and God, who names himself). These midwives—Shiphrah and Puah—are the first two of the seven.

⁵²In 1:18 the term ‘Pharaoh’ is used in the Samaritan Pentateuch.

⁵³It is clear that all of these titles refer to one and the same antagonist. Later in the story, ‘Pharaoh’ (5:1, 2) and ‘king of Egypt’ (5:4) are used interchangeably; for example, 6:10, 13, 27, 29; 14:8 use both appellations.

⁵⁴Paper delivered to the summer meeting of the Society for Old Testament Study at Trinity College, Dublin, 16th July, 1992; excerpt from chapter entitled ‘Unsung Heroines: The Women of Exodus 1-4’ now published as *Sarah Laughed: Women’s Voices in the Old Testament* (SPCK, 1994).

⁵⁵DENNIS, ‘A Midwife’s Tale?’, 123-25.

DENNIS ascribes to their ‘fearing God’ (1:17, 21) an important character description⁵⁶ carefully placed in a story where other ‘fears’ are described in the surrounding context,⁵⁷ although this may not be as significant if their ‘fear of God’ merely expresses in conventional terms that they were good women. Then again, the direct action of Elohim in response to their ‘fear’ by providing ‘houses/households’ for them (1:21) as well as by causing the ‘people’ to increase (1:20) may suggest that an intended *double entendre* is evident in the phrase.

With reference to the ‘people’ in 1:20, it is important to observe the Narrator’s use once more of the key words רבה and עצם in this verse as unifying terms that offer a cohesion of characters. In the prologue, the Narrator described the ‘descendants of Israel’ in connection with Jacob’s literal sons as increasing and filling the land, using רבה and עצם (alongside other terms). The Implied Author subsequently has the new king confirm this growth by placing these terms in his speech of 1:9.⁵⁸ Now, in 1:20, the Narrator describes the increase of the people as a direct result of the midwives’ ‘fear’. Thus the terms רבה and עצם serve to unify characters; the ‘people’ in 1:20 are the Hebrews of 1:15-21, 22, equated in the larger story with the ‘descendants of Israel’ of 1:7 who are tied to Jacob’s literal sons.

The main argument of DENNIS’S essay is that the midwives’ response to Pharaoh in 1:19 amounts to a midwives’ joke, and failure to grasp this humorous feature and the fact that Shiphrah and Puah are female tricksters (like Rebekah, Rachel and Tamar of Genesis) can only result in a misunderstanding of the passage.⁵⁹

⁵⁶Ibid., 129-30.

⁵⁷Like that of Pharaoh in 1:9-10, his people in 1:12, Moses in 1:14 and others elsewhere in the ensuing tale.

⁵⁸Although here, adjectival denominatives are employed.

⁵⁹‘A Midwife’s Tale?’, 132.

Although the author of the larger narrative was a man, the story used by him here, maintains DENNIS, originated in a context of women and was constructed for a female audience.⁶⁰ DENNIS concludes, 'Of all the initiatives taken by human beings in Exodus 1-14, it is those of the women, however, that display the greatest courage, invite our keenest admiration, and have the most powerful influence on events.'⁶¹ EXUM also indicates the import attached to 'the fact that ancient Israelite storytellers gave women a crucial role in the initial stages of the major event in the nation's history'.⁶²

DENNIS connects the making of 'households' (1:21) with Nathan's proclamation to David in 2 Sam 7:11, that Yahweh would 'make a house' for David: an interesting comparison, because here the Narrator uses words to refer to the midwives' reward that parallel the storyteller's words in 2 Samuel, referring to the Davidic dynasty and its establishment.⁶³ It is more in accord with DENNIS's suggestion of a humorous tenor to the story, however, to hear another playful overtone: 'houses/households' are given to the privileged protagonists who protect the interests of those in continuity with the 'house/households' of Jacob (1:16), despite the energetic efforts of the 'great house' Pharaoh to stop their increase.

In the same way that the king of Egypt's speech of 1:9-10 related an inauthentic account of events based upon false premises, so too the midwives respond

⁶⁰Ibid., 133. DENNIS cites COATS's monograph (*Moses: Heroic Man, Man of God*, JSOTSup 57 [Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988], 45) to support the idea that the story once circulated as an independent unit and suggests that this is the first occasion in the narrative of Genesis to Kings wherein a male bias cannot be detected. Even with a man present, the women are heroines.

⁶¹'A Midwife's Tale?', 166.

⁶²'You shall let every daughter live', 68.

⁶³'A Midwife's Tale?', 135.

with a jab at Egyptian women that rings of untruth.⁶⁴ An examination of the content of both parties' discourse reveals that each of the king of Egypt's four speeches are concerned with children and use either of the two *Leitwörter* which will form a significant backdrop to the birth story of Moses—בָּן (1:9, as descendants; 1:16; 1:22) or יְלֵדָה (1:18; also the verbal root employed with יְלֵדָהּ in 1:16).⁶⁵ Apart from his fear-inducing introduction of 'enemies' in 1:10 and identifying reference to Hebrew women in 1:16, the king remains primarily concerned about the issue of offspring. The midwives, on the other hand, speak only of women and offer a slighting description of Egyptian women as inferior to their Hebrew counterparts with regard to the birth process (1:19). Instead of strictly following the command of the king, the midwives disobey him, even daring to speak negatively of the women of his race.

Exod 2:1-10

The pericope of 2:1-10 introduces a variety of unnamed characters into the story. Along with 'description', the characterisation device of naming—which considers how and/or in relation to whom a character is referred⁶⁶—is an important feature to notice here, if only by its absence. A noticeable characteristic of the story's naming is anonymity.⁶⁷ Instead of meeting specific characters with proper names like

⁶⁴Note FRETHEIM'S description of their behaviour as 'creative disobedience' (*Exodus*, in *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* [Louisville: John Knox Press, 1991], 23, 32). Perhaps their words should be described as 'creative speech'.

⁶⁵He also mentions 'daughters' in 1:16 and 1:22.

⁶⁶BERLIN, *Poetics*, 59.

⁶⁷EXUM, 'You shall let every daughter live', 65, 70. Both HYATT, *Exodus*, 62-63 and DURHAM, *Exodus* (17) indicate that the legend is narrated in the biblical text without specifically religious features, and with the deity absent from the account. It

Shiphrah and Puah of the previous section, the reader is introduced to virtual non-descriptors who are indicated in relation to important reference points. A certain ‘man of the house of Levi’ (unnamed in 2:1, yet called Amram in 6:20) is given Levitical ancestry, obviously a genealogical link of key importance for the Narrator. This progenitor finds a wife, ‘the daughter of Levi’ (again, unnamed in 2:1 but called Jochebed in 6:20), also of Levitical ancestry.⁶⁸ She is also referred to namelessly as ‘the woman’ (2:2, 7, 9) and ‘the mother of the child’ (2:8).⁶⁹ The ‘daughter of Pharaoh’ (2:5, 7, 8, 9, 10)⁷⁰ lacks a specific name too and is only identified in relation to her father ‘Pharaoh’. Although later tradition ascribed several names to her, like Tharmuth, Thermouthis, Merris, Batyah, and Bithia,⁷¹ this is not mentioned here.

is clear to the reader, however, that אֱלֹהִים, who preserved the lives of the male children through the midwives incident, is protecting מִשָּׁחָה in 2:1-10.

⁶⁸Much discussion has surrounded this Levitical connection with Moses which can assist the present literary analysis. DURHAM, *Exodus* (15-16) suggests that the double authentication of Moses’ priestly descent (i.e. coming from *both* parents) in this non-priestly layer serves the literary function of anticipating the stature and sacerdotal nature of Moses’ leadership. RONALD E. CLEMENTS, *Exodus*, CBC (Cambridge: University Press, 1972), 14, says that the Levite origin of Moses was important for the priestly duties that he would perform, due to the fact that the Levites later formed the priestly class of Israel. MARTIN NOTH, *Exodus: A Commentary*, OTL, trans. J. S. Bowden (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), 25, notes that there is something special about this descent, even though it is questionable what the original tradition meant by בֵּית לֵוִי. CHILDS, *Book of Exodus*, (18), in contrast, focuses on the anonymous aspect and perceives the unknown name of the Levite to place emphasis on the ordinary character of the event.

⁶⁹מ and the Septuagint also preserve אָמֹר before גְּמָא in v. 3.

⁷⁰Also referred to as בַּת־פְּרֹעָה in מ and the Septuagint after עֲלִיּוֹ in v. 6.

⁷¹CHILDS, *Book of Exodus*, 21; S. R. DRIVER, *The Book of Exodus* (Cambridge: University Press, 1918), 10; ENUM, ‘You shall let every daughter live’, 75 n. 26; HYATT, *Exodus*, 64.

Other characters are the 'sister' of the child (אחותו, 2:4, 7), also called a 'young woman' (העלמה, 2:8) and named Miriam in Exod 15:20 and Num 26:59, and the 'maidservant/s' of Pharaoh's daughter (נערתיה, אמתה, 2:5). Even the infant is referred to anonymously throughout, as 'a son' (בן of בת-לוי, 2:2; בן of בת-פרעה, 2:10), 'the child' (הילד, 2:3, 6, 7, 8, 9 [2x], 10), 'the boy' (נער, 2:6) and 'one of the Hebrew children' (מילדי העברים, 2:6).

The texture of the narrative is crisp and lively, with active interchange occurring between these anonymous characters. Within ten relatively short verses, the unnamed characters 'go' (וילך, הלכת, וילך, לכי, האלף, ותלך, 2:1, 5, 7, 8 [2 times]), 'take' (ויקח, ויתקח, ותקחה, והיליכי, 2:1, 3, 5, 9 [2 times]), 'become pregnant' (ותהר; 2:2), 'give birth' (ותלד; 2:2), 'see' (ותראה, ותרא; 2:2, 5, 6), 'hide' (ותצפנהו; 2:2, 3), 'waterproof' (ותחמרה; 2:3), 'set' (ותשם; 2:3 [2 times]), 'stand' (ותתצב; 2:4), 'discover' (ולדעה; 2:4), 'go down' (ותרד; 2:5), 'wash' (לרחץ; 2:5), 'send' (ותשלח; 2:5), 'open' (ותפתח; 2:6), 'weep' (בכה; 2:6), 'have compassion' (ותחמל; 2:6), 'speak' (ותאמר; 2:6, 7, 8, 9, 10), 'summon' (וקראתי, ותקרא; 2:7, 8), 'nurse' (ותינק, והיניקהו, ותניקהו; 2:7, 9 [2 times]), 'pay' (אתן; 2:9), 'grow' (ויגדל; 2:10), 'bring' (ותבאהו; 2:10), 'name' (ותקרא; 2:10) and 'draw out' (משיתהו; 2:10). 46 verbs in total are used in this brief section.⁷²

With respect to the naming intimated above, two critical reference points inform this prominent characterisation feature of 2:1-10.⁷³ Characters are named either in relation to (1) Pharaoh; or (2) the child. The 'daughter of Pharaoh' and 'maidservants' of the daughter of Pharaoh are naming terms which point the reader to Pharaoh, and the 'mother' and 'sister' indicate the child to the reader. Only one

⁷²Including יכלה (2:3), יעשה (2:4) and ויהי (2:10).

⁷³Subsequent to the Levitical link in 2:1.

character is named with a proper noun—מִשְׁרָה the hero.⁷⁴ After Shiphrah and Puah (1:15), Moses is the next character that is given a name in the story, as DENNIS and others have observed. These two reference points enable the reader to perceive the obvious polarity between characters which illustrates the conflict of the plot.

Figure 2: The Structural Balance of Characters

PHARAOH ← TENSION →	MOSES
↓ TENSION ↑ daughter ↑ attendants	↑ mother ↑ sister of child
Act in child's interests	Act in child's interests
Act <i>against</i> Pharaoh's interests	Act <i>against</i> Pharaoh's interests
Function to preserve life of child	Function to preserve life of child
Pharaoh and Moses are antithetical characters	

The above Figure represents the structural balance of characters within this early part of the story. An obvious feature of the section is the prominent focus on women, who comprise several of the story's key players;⁷⁵ the 'daughter of Pharaoh'

⁷⁴COATS, *Moses: Heroic Man, Man of God*, 1-42 *passim*, 43-48, understands this story as heroic saga.

⁷⁵EXUM, "'You shall let every daughter live'", 63-82; ATHALYA BRENNER, 'Female Social Behaviour: Two Descriptive Patterns Within the "Birth of the Hero" Paradigm', *VT* 36 (1986): 257-73; J. G. WILLIAMS, *Women Recounted: Narrative*

and ‘mother of the child’ are both attended by women—‘maidservants’ and ‘daughter’. Every character attempts to preserve the life of the child except for Pharaoh (who is implied in the story), and there is a dissonance of character-intent between Pharaoh and Moses and also between Pharaoh and his daughter. The reader’s sympathies are immediately drawn to the pathos of a helpless child—the mother’s care, the daughter’s watch, the fight to survive. The omniscient Narrator’s portrayal of the Egyptian princess’s inner life reveals her sensitivity to innocence and qualifies her with compassion. The daughter of Pharaoh serves as a foil to her father, and can be contrasted with him to distil some interesting information for the narrative. Exod 2:1-10 portrays the daughter of Pharaoh as possessing complete control, even though her ‘words’ are performed indirectly through attendant functionaries (her maidservants, paralleled in the mother and sister of the child) and she causes the flow of life to continue out of deliberate intention. In contrast, although Pharaoh is the king, his ‘words’ are not performed (1:15-22), and though he is fully intent on preventing the flow of life from continuing, his plans remain thwarted because matters are out of his control.

Exod 2:11-15

2:11-15 is an episodic segment that assists with the development of Moses’ character and also facilitates his transport into Midian. COATS says,

... it [i.e. 2:11-14a] functions as a kind of transition from the birth-adoption narrative to the major portion of the narration in 2:14b-22, in

Thinking and the God of Israel, Bible and Literature Series, 6 (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1982) and NAHUM SARNA, *Exploring Exodus* (New York: Schocken Books, 1987), 31-32.

much the same way that 1:15-22 functions as a transition from the exposition in 1:8-12 to the birth-adoption story.⁷⁶

One principle of characterisation which is operative both here and in the following section is the development of character through the skilled presentation of differing points of view. Both the Narrator along with other characters in this and the next episode own specific perspectives regarding the ethnic identity of Moses, contributing to an ambiguous effect which is heightened by the curious fact that Moses does not even seem to be aware of his true identity as a Hebrew.

SUSAN LANSER distinguishes between *subject* information and *object* information.⁷⁷ *Subject* information is communicated through the discourse, perceptions or thoughts of a character while *object* information is given by the Narrator or another character. Disparity between information communicated from these two levels provides depth to the narrative and can result in irony or ambiguity as competing truth claims struggle to be heard. At the beginning of this episode, Moses encounters two men fighting—an Egyptian and a Hebrew. Snippets of object information are given here by the Narrator about this central character; the reader is initially informed that after Moses had grown up, he went out ‘to his brothers’ (2:11). In case this information is not clear enough, the Narrator further specifies that the Hebrew man involved was one ‘from his brothers’ (2:11). The object information leads the reader to surmise that Moses is a Hebrew, a fact that correlates with his declared Hebrew identity in the birth story of 2:1-10.

The subject information, however, suggests otherwise. After observing the Egyptian man ‘striking’ the Hebrew (נִכְדָּה, 2:11), ‘striking’ the Egyptian himself (2:12)

⁷⁶‘Moses in Midian’, 5.

⁷⁷*The Narrative Act: Point of View in Prose Fiction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 205-6.

and then encountering the two pugnacious Hebrews, Moses asks why they 'strike' their companion. The response of the Hebrew men, instead of gratitude for Moses' solidarity with them in the prior incident, remains accusatory because they do not perceive Moses to be a fellow Hebrew. The dialogue between Moses and the fighting Hebrews takes the form of three questions, one by Moses and two in the Hebrews' response, which cumulate in force of intensity and highlight the question of Moses' actual identity in the story. Pharaoh's perception of the matter also thickens the narrative effect because when he hears of the matter he seeks to kill Moses. Whatever is assumed in this episode of Pharaoh's knowledge and memory of Moses as a Hebrew child from 2:1-10 (if anything), Pharaoh now views Moses as one who sides with the Hebrew cause. For him, Moses' former Egyptian identity is not the primary one.

ERNEST NEUFELD, in a piece entitled 'The Redemption of Moses',⁷⁸ argues that the above mention of Moses going to his 'kinsmen' represents only the Narrator's perspective and not Moses' actual point of view, substantiating LANSER'S distinction between *subject* and *object* information. It is possible that Moses' self-perception in ethnic terms is that he is Egyptian, and it is not until the encounter with Yahweh at the burning bush that his Hebrew identity becomes clear to him with the ironic overtone that the 'I am' reveals himself to one who does not yet know his own 'I am'. The 'redemption' to which NEUFELD refers is of Moses being redeemed from ignorance to a knowledge of his true identity. For NEUFELD, the fact that Moses did not originally know of his Hebrew status highlights his character in that his willingness to assist the Hebrew kinsmen and daughters of Reuel was based upon a commitment to justice and not merely done out of a sense of ethnic duty.

⁷⁸*Judaism: A Quarterly Journal*, no. 165, Vol. 42 (Winter 1993): 50-58.

Through its use of direct speech and multiple points of view, 2:11-15 artfully depicts Moses as a somewhat ambiguous character in the story, in preparation for the elucidation of his character along patriarchal lines in the subsequent section. Although a recollection of 2:1-10 makes it clear to the reader that Moses is a Hebrew albeit with special Egyptian privileges, coupled with the omniscient Narrator's confirmation of Moses' actual Hebrew identity to the reader, the perspectives of the characters in this episode are varied. The Hebrew men seem to regard Moses as an Egyptian. Moses' own point of view does not come across clearly but NEUFELD's suggestion that he is portrayed as not knowing his true identity in the story is plausible, and gives further depth to the tale.

Exod 2:16-22

The fabric of 2:16-22 is woven by interspersing brisk action with dialogue to assist the characterisation of its players and their development in the passage. The first character introduced to the reader is the priest of Midian (2:16), also designated with the proper name Reuel in 2:18. His entrance into the story as the priest of Midian is, again, a character-description relating to status⁷⁹ which highlights him at the beginning as a person of central importance to the story. Not only is he the priest, but one with seven daughters! His significance is further emphasised by the fact that he is properly named. The historical problem of the name was discussed by ALBRIGHT who concluded that Reuel is a clan name and Jethro his proper name; the seeming reference to the same person in Num 10:29-32 was attributed by him to a mis-vocalisation.⁸⁰

⁷⁹BERLIN, *Poetics*, 35.

⁸⁰'Jethro, Hobab and Reuel in Early Hebrew Tradition', *CBQ* 25 (1963): 1-11. ALBRIGHT read יתרו ('son-in-law' of Moses) instead of יתרו ('father-in-law' of Moses), although others have read 'brother-in-law' (HYATT, *Exodus*, 67-68).

The daughters of this priest, although central to the main action of the episode, are subordinated by him with respect to their level of importance as characters in the narrative. Until Zipporah is named at the end of the episode, none of their proper names are given, and they are named with reference to their father, remaining anonymously in his shadow; these 'daughters' of the priest are tending the flock of 'their father' (2:16), they return to Reuel 'their father' (2:18), Reuel speaks to 'his daughters' (2:20) and gives Zipporah 'his daughter' to Moses (2:21). Although references to 'daughters' abound in this section, it is a story about men and not women.

ALTER and others have utilised the theoretical framework of the 'type-scene' for interpreting this story.⁸¹ The concept of the type-scene derives from Homeric studies and originated with the study of WALTER AREND, who identified a variety of formulaic features within Homeric works which he postulated had resulted from its oral compositional background.⁸² This convention emphasises the repetition of forms and patterns as a conscious device of literary composition.

ESTHER FUCHS examines the three Old Testament examples of the betrothal type-scene (Genesis 24, Isaac and Rebekah; Genesis 29, Jacob and Rachel; and, Exodus 2, Moses and Zipporah) from a literary perspective and suggests that 'patriarchal strategies' (i.e. male-biased) can be recovered from their portrayal.⁸³ For

⁸¹*Art of Biblical Narrative*, 47-62.

⁸²*Die typischen Szenen bei Homer* (Berlin, 1933).

⁸³'Structure and Patriarchal Functions in the Biblical Betrothal Type-Scene: Some Preliminary Notes', *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 3, no. 1 (Spring 1987): 7-13. ROBERT C. CULLEY, in *Studies in the Structure of Hebrew Narrative* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 33-68, examines these three stories along with a series of stories wherein parallel accounts exist in the Hebrew Bible. CULLEY, 43, suggests that this may provide a good example of a traditional episode which has been shaped for different contexts, relating to its oral prose transmission.

FUCHS, the development of the stories shows a gradual transfer to the decrease in the bride's status with an increased emphasis on the groom's role.⁸⁴ The betrothal scene has a clear function, both for the groom and also for the bride; for the former, it initiates him into the independence and autonomy of adulthood, while for the latter, it depicts a transfer of custody from her father to her husband.

FUCHS identification of the 'patriarchal' ideology beneath this typical form is an important observation to consider. Distinct from the female orientation of 1:15-21 and 2:1-10, Exod 2:16-22 is a story about men—the priest of Midian and Moses. The shepherds also comprise part of the episode's male cast yet only appear to provide scenic conflict in order to facilitate the progression of the story. More important than ALTER'S identification of the type-scene is the recognition here of a *patriarchal* type-scene, emphasising the connection between Moses and the patriarchs Isaac and Jacob. Moses is portrayed here as a type of patriarchal figure in continuity with the patriarchs of Genesis and a character who will soon worship their God.⁸⁵

Not only the priest but Moses also remains a central male character. Although he is depicted as having patriarchal characteristics through the use of the type-scene, other perspectives again emerge regarding his identity. From the point of view of the daughters of the priest, Moses is an Egyptian. They specifically refer to him as such in 2:19, resulting in their father's sharing of the same perspective (2:20). For the Implied Author, however, Moses remains a Hebrew, evidenced not only by the employment of the type-scene structure but also in the earlier designation of him as מִצְרַיִם—the rescued Hebrew child. This 'authorial' point of view receives further development with the use of a second etiology, discussed below.

⁸⁴'Structure and Patriarchal Functions', 8, 10, 11.

⁸⁵See below on 'The Gershom Etiology' for a fuller treatment of this idea.

Approaching the episode from a different angle—that of attempting to trace the history of the tradition—COATS considers the origin of the tradition that associates Moses with Midian to lie in the marriage story.⁸⁶ Behind the present plot structure of 2:11-22, says COATS, is an older kernel of tradition about marriage,⁸⁷ but its primary focus is between Moses and his Midianite father-in-law which, along with 18:1-27, was ‘... designed, at least in part, to justify a positive relationship between at least a portion of Israel and her traditional enemy’.⁸⁸ However the history of this tradition has contributed to its present shape, it is clear that Moses and the priest of Midian receive prominent focus in the story as it now stands.

Exod 2:23-25

This concluding section of the Exodus *Introduction* offers an *inclusio* both with its thematic content concerning the patriarchs and also its stylistic feature of the Implied Author’s utilisation of a Narrator to continue the story with flat description, akin to the same method employed in Exod 1:1-7. As with 1:1-7, the bi-directionality of the story becomes highlighted once more. It is a period of transition with the announcement of the death of the king of Egypt, but nothing has changed. The sufferings of the present are emphasised with *עֲבַדְתָּהּ* (used twice in 2:23), *שָׁרַפְתָּהּ* (2:23) and *נִאֲקָהָהּ* (2:24), supplemented by the verbal roots *אָנַח* and *זָעַק* (2:23). The divine intervention of the past is evoked with the explicit mention of the patriarchs. The possibility of divine intervention in the present is hinted at with the use of the root *רָבַח* once more in 2:23, although the idea expressed with this adjective here is that the

⁸⁶‘Moses in Midian’, *JBL* 92 (1973): 3-10.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*, 5.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, 10.

days were long and times were hard. But the Narrator—it must be observed—is calling back to the ‘many’ descendants that he ‘told’ about in 1:7, which the Implied Author indirectly ‘showed’ in 1:9 in the new king’s speech. Although times are tough, the patriarchal promise of family increase is being fulfilled. Deliverance from this difficult context will come about when this deity, to whom is ascribed human attributes of a personal nature, intersects with the ‘descendants of Israel’.

Character Types

Exod 1:1-6, 7

The first series of characters introduced to the Exodus story in 1:1-6 are the literal ‘descendants of Israel’, the children of Jacob—Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Benjamin, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher and Joseph—who are *agents*, portrayed solely in the ‘telling’ of the Narrator as an integral part of the story’s introductory prologue. As a tool in the hands of the Narrator, these characters appear merely as a function of the story’s plot⁸⁹ and only information that is necessary for the plot is communicated about them. They do not speak; they are without affective fabric and no details of appearance are given. Even their action is sparsely described and, when included, is done so only for the direct plot purposes of locating them in Egypt. Through these characters, the reader identifies a setting which resembles that described in the closing chapters of Genesis and is therefore duly prepared for the impending transition to the story of the Exodus. This new phase of the story, however, is not about Jacob’s sons any longer but, as 1:7 indicates, chronicles the exploits of a different Israel who seeks a similar theological fulfilment

⁸⁹BERLIN, *Poetics*, 32.

for the promise relating to land and progeny. The characters in this opening section can be compared to an arrow; the ‘descendants’ at the beginning of the section parallel the flight, which orients and directs, while the ‘descendants’ described in 1:7 are honed and can be likened to the arrowhead, the central character point of focus for future action in the story.

Exod 1:8-14

The new king, although prominent, is not the main character of this section. In 1:8, the Narrator qualifies him by stating that he did not know Joseph, i.e. his depiction is given in relation to one of Jacob’s sons and not strictly as a character in his own right. The speech that he gives to his ‘people’ focuses almost exclusively upon the ‘descendants of Israel’—their increase, the possibility of their continued expansion, collaboration with Egyptian enemies and ascent from the land. As an application of measures in response to the king’s speech, taskmasters are installed to supervise hard labour over these people, resulting in their continued increase (רבה, 1:12) but the intensity of the oppression does not focus upon the king as instigator; instead, emphasis is placed on the ‘descendants of Israel’ as the objects of his cruel designs. It must be repeated that the Narrator only refers to the ‘king’ once in 1:8 (as a transitional feature along with מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם and a description of his status to set the mood) and then ‘Pharaoh’ in 1:11 when he narrates the production of storehouses caused by Israelite oppression. After the speech of the king, however, and statement that taskmasters have been appointed, the Narrator attributes the source of this oppression either to the taskmasters (subjects of עָנָה Piel both in 1:11 and 1:12) or to the Egyptians (subject of עָבַד Hiphil in 1:13, and מָרַר Piel and עָבַד Qal in 1:14). These latter characters, illustrating the common character-device of casting groups in single

character roles,⁹⁰ operate as a ‘people’, antagonists over and against the ‘people’ of whom the new king has introduced—the ‘descendants of Israel’.

Of all the characters discussed herein, the focal point of interest remains on the ‘descendants of Israel’, who are *full-fledged* in relation to their character type, *round* characters whose dynamism, exemplified through their continued growth even after the implementation of oppressive measures against them, contributes to their development in the story. The king is a *flat* character, typifying the monarch who lacks secure knowledge of the stability of his throne and becomes threatened by elements that pronounce the limits of his rule. The taskmasters and Egyptians are mere *agents* who move the plot along by applying the harsh measures of the king in order to foster its conflict. The Implied Author sets the Egyptians as a people against the ‘descendants of Israel’ as a people, a contrast which structurally highlights the latter for the next episode of the story.

Exod 1:15-21, 22

The observation of TREVOR DENNIS mentioned above—that Shiphrah and Puah are the initial two of seven named characters in the story—assists the effort to distinguish the types of these characters as well as to assign them their proper role in the story. The king of Egypt, also called Pharaoh in 1:9 and 1:22, is unnamed and relegated to the status of a *flat* character, an ‘archetypal tyrant’⁹¹ who does not exhibit any complex characteristics that arise beyond the requirements of the plot. The Hebrew midwives, alternatively, are named because they constitute the story’s

⁹⁰POWELL, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, 51.

⁹¹DENNIS, ‘A Midwife’s Tale?’, 125.

focalisers⁹²—it is their perspective that the Implied Author intends the reader to share. These midwives are *round* characters who transcend the necessities of the plot and demonstrate individuality and autonomy in their ‘fear of God’, courageously and boldly ignoring the king of Egypt’s proscription.

It must be mentioned that all of the characters mentioned in the conversation between the king (a *flat* character) and the midwives (*full-fledged* characters) are virtually hypothetical and cannot be typified as anything more than *agents* in the story. The ‘Hebrew women’ referred to by the king (1:16) are non-specified, as are the ‘sons/daughters’ (1:16; 1:22) and ‘male children’ (1:18), along with the ‘Egyptian women’ and ‘Hebrew women’ mentioned by the midwives (1:19). But the hypothetical tension will become a real threat embodied in the character soon to be introduced in the following section.

Exod 2:1-10

With respect to the types of characters from the varied selection in this part of the story, two are particularly prominent. The ‘daughter of Pharaoh’ is a *round* or *full-fledged* character, unpredictable to the reader and possessing more than a single trait. She embodies a counterfoil to her father.⁹³ The ‘child’, although passive to the action of the micro-plot within 2:1-10, also remains central. The other characters, however, are not as significant. The ‘man from the house of Levi’ is clearly an *agent*. He only appears as a function of the plot, so that the ‘daughter of Levi’—also an *agent*—can become pregnant and have a child. The ‘sister’ of the child and attendants of the daughter of Pharaoh (her ‘maidservants’ and ‘maid’) are *agents* as

⁹²Defined by BERLIN, *Poetics*, 70, as the character through whom the story is perceived by the reader.

⁹³EXUM, ‘You shall let every daughter live’, 66.

well; they serve the interests of the story at this juncture by responding to the respective calls of the mother of the child and the daughter of Pharaoh. The mother of Moses is a *flat* character, or *type*—intent on preserving the life of Moses. Pharaoh too, although not mentioned but implied (because in its present shape this story assumes the edict of the Egyptian king to submerge Hebrew male children from 1:22) is an implicit *flat* character, bent on the destruction of Hebrew male infants.

Exod 2:11-15

The characters of Exod 2:11-15 fall within fairly clear-cut lines relating to their types. Moses retains central focus throughout the episode and manifests a *round* character whose unpredictability and ambiguity transcend the needs of the plot. The complexity surrounding the portrayal of his character in this episode of the story encourages attentiveness in the reader and a challenge to engage in a more active interpretative role. The Egyptian and Hebrew of the initial clash, along with the two subsequent Hebrews, remain *agents* who contribute movement to the plot and assist the character-development of Moses. They are not important characters in and of themselves. Pharaoh, who maintains his intention to destroy Hebrews, now having associated Moses with them, is therefore a *type*, a despot whose personal needs require the retention of total control.

Exod 2:16-22

It is somewhat difficult to itemise and pinpoint specific character types who are presented within such a stock literary form. The shepherds are easily recognisable as *agents* who provide conflict in the micro-plot of this episode which Moses resolves as a heroic figure. Although the story mainly focuses upon the priest of Midian, supported by the fact that the female characters—his daughters—are named with

reference to him, both him and his daughters' interests remain with 'the Egyptian man'. The daughters should be viewed as *agents* (along with the shepherds), who enable Moses to meet Reuel and find a wife as a development of the domestic aspect of Moses' character. Reuel the priest is a *type*, manifesting parental concern and social propriety. As in the previous section, the indeterminacy fostered in the narrative towards the character of Moses reveals him to be a *round* character. His unpredictability is evident alongside his ambiguity and the reader must exert special effort once again to perceive his nature and course of action. For example, the past act of his murdering the Egyptian in 2:12 contributes suspense to the reader's expectations of how Moses will deal with the shepherds of the present episode.

Exod 2:23-25

FORSTER made two observations about *flat* characters.⁹⁴ The first was that they were easily recognised by the emotional—not the visual—eye of the reader. The second was that they were remembered by the reader because they did not alter through their circumstances but remained unchanged, thus possessing a comforting quality for the reader. With the reader's identification of the *בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל* as *types* of the oppressed minority, he or she can engage in the story by identifying with them emotionally and receiving hope from the potential fact that their circumstances might and hopefully will soon change. The king of Egypt is an *agent* who allows for a transition in the plot yet reinforces the idea that the situation remains unchanged. *אֱלֹהִים* is a *round* character in the story, who, though divine, incorporates human characteristics and brings hope to the narrative that the difficulties will become resolved, yet does not clarify how or when this will transpire. The reference to the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob serves the plot by enlightening the character of

⁹⁴*Aspects of the Novel*, 74.

אֱלֹהִים as one who is faithful to promises made to people in the past, and also by moving the story forward into the future. They are therefore *agents* within the poetic structure of these closing verses.

Characterisation and Etiology

One unique device of the characterisation in the *Introduction* to the Exodus story is the integration of etiology within the narrative fabric to accentuate specific character features. Before this device is examined, however, some background to etiology along with an outline of more recent approaches to the topic will be surveyed.

Etiology

Background

The problem of etiological narrative in the Old Testament has existed at least since critical approaches to the Bible became more widespread in the modern period. HERMANN GUNKEL, in his important work *The Legends of Genesis*,⁹⁵ attempted to comprehend the original setting of the Genesis material and to situate it within its original pre-literary milieu.⁹⁶ According to GUNKEL, the various units of tradition that contained etiological elements (i.e. elements seeking to explain the origin of specific phenomena, or to legitimise certain practises) had functioned originally at the oral

⁹⁵*The Legends of Genesis: The Biblical Saga and History*, trans. W. H. CARRUTH (New York: Schocken Books, 1964).

⁹⁶Note the important observations on developments in GUNKEL's thought in WILLIAM MCKANE, *Studies in the Patriarchal Narratives* (Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1979).

phase to provide an account of particular origins. Thus, the task of the interpreter centred on reconstructing the hypothetical *Kinderfrage* which the narrative material sought to answer. These traditions, understood as formerly oral *Sagen*, were identified and classified according to historical, ethnographic, and etiological categories. While historical legends reflected historical occurrences and ethnographic legends outlined descriptions of race and tribal relations, the etiological legends were further subdivided by GUNKEL into four types: (1) *ethnological* legends explained the present relation of tribes; (2) *etymological* legends provided the interpretation of the origin and real meaning of names of races, mountains etc.; (3) *ceremonial* legends accounted for the derivation of regulations related to religious ceremony; and, (4) *geological* legends focused on the explanation of the origin of a locality.⁹⁷ Against the seeming clarity of these divisions of GUNKEL, GOLKA writes,

Owing to Gunkel's lack of a clear distinction between aetiological motifs and aetiological narratives, the first half of this century produced what can only be called an inflation of etiological narratives, both in Genesis and in other books of the Old Testament. What was needed was a clear definition of aetiological narrative in order to put a stop to this avalanche.⁹⁸

GUNKEL'S etiological paradigm found a following in the so-called ALT-NOTH school, which emphasised the creative role that etiology had played in the formation of the biblical tradition. Both ALT⁹⁹ and NOTH¹⁰⁰ accepted the 'meta-historical'

⁹⁷Ibid., 24-36.

⁹⁸'The Aetiologies in the Old Testament: Part 1', *VT* 26 (1976): 410.

⁹⁹'Josua', in *Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israels*, vol. 1 (München: C.H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1953), 176-92, especially 184f.

¹⁰⁰*Überlieferungsgeschichte des Pentateuch* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1948); English translation, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1972).

interests of etiological narrative but were countered by JOHN BRIGHT in his critique of their approach to the Israelite conquest of Canaan.¹⁰¹ BRIGHT stated that the etiological element often represented a secondary development within the cumulative growth of the narrative tradition.

BURKE O. LONG, recognising the need for further articulation in the etiological discussion from a form-critical perspective, published *The Problem of Etiological Narrative in the Old Testament* in 1968.¹⁰² Borrowing extensively from the work of J. FICHTNER¹⁰³ and sharing the conclusions of JOHN BRIGHT, LONG attempted to answer two prevailing questions, one of *identification*: What are the distinguishing features of etiological narrative?, and the other of *intent*: How do the etiological elements relate to their surrounding narrative contexts? Regarding the initial question of identification, the primary feature which NOTH had addressed as a distinguishable mark up to this period was the formula עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה ('until this day').¹⁰⁴ LONG cautioned against the premature ascription of inauthenticity to etilogically-based narratives, because the etiological features could in fact represent secondary redactional

¹⁰¹'The Israelite Conquest of Canaan in the Light of Archaeology', *BASOR* 74 (1939): 11-23; *Early History in Recent History Writing* (London: SCM Press, 1956), 79-110.

¹⁰²*BZAW* 108 (Berlin: A. Töpelmann, 1968). Previous to LONG, a short article appeared in *JBL* 83 (1964): 55-59 by ANDREW F. KEY, entitled 'The Giving of Proper Names in the Old Testament'. KEY surveyed the giving of names in order to arrive at: (1) the most commonly used forms of expression; (2) the frequency of name-giving in the Old Testament; and, (3) the time in Israel's history when giving names was commonly practised.

¹⁰³'Die etymologische Ätiologie in der Namengebung der geschichtlichen Bücher des Alten Testaments', *VT* 6 (1956): 372-96.

¹⁰⁴'Der Beitrag der Archäologie zur Geschichte Israels', *VTSup* 7 (1960): 278ff. See also CHILDS, 'A Study of the Formula "Until this Day"', *JBL* 82 (1963): 279-92.

additions. CHILDS echoed this caution, stating that scholars who use the etiological model too often commit ‘an unwarranted mythologising of Israel’s historical tradition’.¹⁰⁵

The problem of etiological narrative is, as has been noticed, a form-critical problem relating to the oral phases of the functional aspect of a text’s life within its original setting or settings. The problem itself can be compared to the genetic ‘chicken-versus-egg’ debate, and can be outlined as: ‘Which came first, the narrative—to which was then appended the etiological element or elements, or the etiology itself which subsequently became embedded within a narrative framework?’ In other words, does the phenomenon of etiology explain and/or legitimise the narrative, or does the narrative legitimise the etiological phenomenon? Approaches to the problem have varied, but most share the common basis of seeking to understand the relationship between the etiology and the larger narrative within which it is embedded with interests relating to the historical genesis and growth of the text. A narrative-critical analysis, however, must consider the role of the etiology in relation to its function within the poetics of the text as it stands.

Recent Approaches

More recent approaches to etiology have an increased sensitivity towards the literary fabric of the narrative itself. In two *Vetus Testamentum* articles in 1976 and 1977,¹⁰⁶ FRIEDEMANN GOLKA surveyed the etiological narratives of the Old Testament and compared their basic function with the empirical nature of Wisdom.¹⁰⁷ Just as

¹⁰⁵‘The Etiological Tale Re-examined’, *VT* 24, no. 4 (Oct. 1974): 396.

¹⁰⁶‘The Aetiologies in the Old Testament: Part 1’, 410-28, cited above; ‘The Aetiologies in the Old Testament: Part 2’, *VT* 27 (1977): 36-47.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*, Part 2, 46.

two contradictory proverbs can explain the same thing, likewise two different etiologies can exist to explain the same fact; like Wisdom, GOLKA suggested, etiologies possess an ordering function—they provide order to things which appear to be entirely accidental.¹⁰⁸ Etiologies were also seen by GOLKA to have an affirmative character, making an existing fact intelligible by answering the question ‘Why?’.

Even more sensitive to the intricacies of narrative interplay is the fairly recent article, ‘The Function of So-called Etiological Elements in Narratives’.¹⁰⁹ Writing from a South African context, VAN DYK draws examples both from Namaqua oral narratives (the Namaqua bear relation to South African bushmen) and the Sarai-Hagar story of Genesis 16, arguing that the narrative-elements formerly called etiological—due to their intentions of explaining the origins of or legitimising specific phenomena—function more precisely as rhetorical devices that serve didactic and mnemonic purposes.¹¹⁰ According to VAN DYK, folkloric texts possess a social function, either to educate or to entertain the society as a whole along with the individuals within the society.¹¹¹ Symbols, defined by VAN DYK as stereotyped beliefs within society, and systems of symbols (which he calls ideology) are transmitted within the communication network of a community.¹¹² In the same way that the communication of symbols holds the potential to legitimise the social order of a society, an ‘etiological’ element can function rhetorically to affirm the credibility of the narrative and thus to legitimise the symbols contained within it. This notion of

¹⁰⁸Ibid., Part 2, 46-47.

¹⁰⁹P. J. VAN DYK, *ZAW* 102 (1990): 19-33.

¹¹⁰‘The Function of So-called Etiological Elements’, 19, 27, 33.

¹¹¹Ibid., 23. The distinction between educating or entertaining is based on the Latin poet HORACE’S perception of the dual function of literature (24, n. 25).

¹¹²Ibid., 25.

affirming the credibility of a narrative is not in principle unlike the conclusion of BREVARD CHILDS in 'A Study of the Formula "Until this Day"', mentioned above. CHILDS suggests that this biblical formula (עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה) does not function to justify existing phenomena but instead represents 'a formula of personal testimony added to, and confirming, a received tradition', akin to the 'empirical verification' of the Greek writers like HERODOTUS and PAUSANIAS who use the same formula.¹¹³

In VAN DYK'S analysis, the political and theological symbols of Genesis 16 are 'true' because of the rhetorical function of the so-called etiological elements which verify the surrounding narrative. The *political* symbols are: (1) the characterisation of Hagar/Ishmael as Egyptian/wild-ass which demarcates the boundaries between 'us' (the Israelites) and 'them' (the Egyptian/Ishmaelite groups); and, (2) the depiction of Egyptians as slaves (assumed to be inferior) and Ishmaelites as wild and unrestrained. The *theological* symbols are: (1) the land was given by God to the sons of Abram, but the Ishmaelites have to live in the desert; (2) God is not on the side of Ishmael/Hagar, but on the side of Abram/Sarai; (3) God manifests mercy in letting other nations exist; and, (4) the plight of the oppressed can be altered by God.¹¹⁴ Consideration of the etiological segment's function within its wider narrative context is imperative for a literary approach.

The 'Moses' Etiology

Exod 2:1-10 has received detailed comment on a variety of levels. Certain current approaches to the Pentateuch ascribe etiological status to much of its contents

¹¹³Ibid., 292. The formula can be seen in 1 Macc 13:30, which speaks of the mausoleum that Simon erected for his brother Jonathan in Modin after the latter was put to death by Trypho, a monument 'which . . . stands to the present day'.

¹¹⁴Ibid., 32.

in that it formulates a later explanation of Israelite ancestral and religious origins. For example, THOMAS L. THOMPSON writes,

. . . the biblical tradition is not a history at all. It asks, on the basis of its ahistorical folk tradition, who Israel is and what Israel means among the nations of the world. Its questions are not the historical questions of how Israel came to be. It is historiographical only in the aetiological sense of defining the Israel of its own day in terms of traditions past.¹¹⁵

Past examinations have favoured source-critical and traditio-historical methods of analysis. Traditionally, scholars have divided over whether this birth-of-Moses story continued the Elohist's work¹¹⁶ of 1:15-22 (or 1:15-21) or whether it represents a composition of J,¹¹⁷ continuing the oppression narratives of 1:8-12. Regarding the form of the tradition, the story has been compared with the Legend of Sargon of Akkad, a Mesopotamian king from the middle of the third millennium BCE—another important leader who was preserved in a basket of rushes and subsequently drawn out of the water.¹¹⁸ REDFORD has outlined the widespread use of the motif of the exposed

¹¹⁵*The Origin Tradition of Ancient Israel*, 39-40. See also THOMPSON'S indirect discussion of 'aetiologies' in his refutation of VAN SETERS'S use of OLRİK'S laws pertaining to oral tradition (44-45) and R. N. WHYBRAY, *The Making of the Pentateuch: A Methodological Study*, JSOTSup 53 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987).

¹¹⁶CHILDS, *Book of Exodus*, 7; CLEMENTS, *Exodus*, 14.

¹¹⁷DURHAM, *Exodus*, 15; J. P. HYATT, *Exodus*, 63; NOTH, *Exodus*, 25.

¹¹⁸JAMES B. PRITCHARD, ed. *The Ancient Near East: Supplementary Texts and Pictures Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 119; WALTER BEYERLIN, ed., *Near Eastern Religious Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1978), 98-99. The similarities of Exod 2:1-10 with this Mesopotamian king from the middle of the third millennium BCE have been observed and discussed since the work of HUGO GRESSMANN *Mose und seine Zeit: Ein Kommentar zu den Mose-Sagen*, FRLANT 18 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1913).

hero in the ancient Near East and Graeco-Roman world, citing thirty-two accounts,¹¹⁹ and CHILDS has traced the transformation of the biblical account with reference to wisdom literature, suggesting that this story represents an historicised wisdom tale.¹²⁰

At the conclusion of the birth-story, the daughter of Pharaoh legally adopts the Hebrew child and names him מֹשֶׁה in the standard biblical form of etymological etiologies according to GUNKEL'S types, mentioned above. The text curiously presents the princess as speaking Hebrew, naming him מֹשֶׁה because he was 'drawn out' from the water, associated with the verbal root מִשָּׁה, 'to draw/pull out', a root which is employed only two other times in the Hebrew Bible: in the Hiphil stem in Ps 18:17 and 2 Sam 22:17. Several commentators have observed that the Hebrew connection with this nomenclature remains ambiguous due to the fact that the name מֹשֶׁה is an *active* participle of the verb but is interpreted here as if it were the *passive* participle—מִשָּׁהוּ.¹²¹

On account of this difficulty, scholars have postulated a variety of linguistic derivations. JOSEPHUS and PHILO explained the Greek form of the name—Μωϋσῆς—as meaning 'saved from water', from the two Egyptian words *môu* ('water') and *eses* ('saved').¹²² Similar explanations have also been given from the Coptic form of the

¹¹⁹DONALD B. REDFORD, 'The Literary Motif of the Exposed Child', *Numen* 14 (1967): 209-28.

¹²⁰*Book of Exodus* (12); also, 'The Birth of Moses', *JBL* 84 (1965): 109-22 (especially 119-21).

¹²¹U. CASSUTO, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, trans. ISRAEL ABRAHAMS (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1967), 20; CHILDS, *Book of Exodus*, 19; HYATT, *Exodus*, 64-65; NOTH, *Exodus*, 26.

¹²²*Josephus in Eight Volumes*, The Loeb Classical Library, ed. T. E. PAGE, vol. 4, *Jewish Antiquities*, Books I-IV (London: William Heinemann, 1930), II.ix.6, 263; *Philo in Nine Volumes*, The Loeb Classical Library, ed. T. E. PAGE, vol. 6, *De Vita Mosis*, (London: William Heinemann, 1935), I.iv.17, 285.

name.¹²³ GRIFFITHS records an Egyptian etymology written in Arabic which connected the discovery of Moses in the water and among the trees with the Egyptian *mo* ('water') and *se* ('a tree').¹²⁴

Many scholars think that the name derives from Egyptian and is the Hebrew equivalent of the Egyptian *ms* which comes from the verb *msi'*—'to bear, give birth'.¹²⁵ WILLI-PLEIN highlights the leitmotif of birth in the introductory chapters of Exodus, noting that each subsection contains a form of the root מָלַד.¹²⁶ Commentators connect the form *ms* with other common Egyptian theophoric names like Ah-mose, Amen-mose, Ptah-mose, and Thut-mose (for example, Thut-mose meaning either 'The god Thut is born', referring to the birthday of the god, or 'Born of the god Thut').¹²⁷ They suggest the possibility that מֹשֶׁה has been shortened and originally may have contained the name of a deity in the first element.¹²⁸

¹²³J. GWYN GRIFFITHS, 'The Egyptian Derivation of the Name Moses', *JNES* 12 (1953): 225-26.

¹²⁴*Ibid.*, 226.

¹²⁵G. BEER, *Exodus*, HAT (Tübingen: Verlag J. C. B. Mohr, 1939), 20-21; HENRI CAZELLES, 'La Figure Théologique de Moïse dans les Traditions Bibliques', chap. in *Autour de L'Exode (Études)* (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1987), 360; CHILDS, *Book of Exodus*, 7, who describes the name as a 'hypocoristic form of a theophoric name'; DURHAM, *Exodus*, 17; PAUL HEINISCH, *Das Buch Exodus: Übersetzt und Erklärt* (Bonn: Peter Hanstein Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1934), 40-41; HYATT, *Exodus*, 65; FRANK MICHAELI, *Le Livre de L'Exode* (Neuchâtel: Delachaux & Niestle, 1974), 36, 43; MARTIN NOTH, *Die israelitischen Personennamen im Rahmen der gemeinsemitischen Namengebung*, BWANT III, 10 (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1928), 63; *idem*, *Exodus*, 26; JAMES PLASTARAS, *The God of Exodus: The Theology of the Exodus Narratives* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1966), 42; SARNA, *Exploring Exodus*, 32-33.

¹²⁶'Ort und Literarische Funktion der Geburtsgeschichte des Mose', *VT* 41 (1991): 110-18.

¹²⁷HYATT, *Exodus*, 65.

¹²⁸CHILDS, *Book of Exodus*, 7; CLEMENTS, *Exodus*, 15; DURHAM, *Exodus*, 17; NOTH, *Exodus*, 26.

Parallel terms exist in the Semitic language family as well. The Hebrew noun מַן ('man') is quite common. SASSON discusses the Ugaritic noun *mt*, which seems to indicate the offspring of the marriage of Baal with a cow.¹²⁹ The root *mut* is also attested nominally in Amorite, meaning 'man',¹³⁰ and possesses Old Akkadian,¹³¹ Akkadian,¹³² Ethiopic¹³³ and perhaps Aramaic¹³⁴ cognates. HUFFMON examines this Amorite term in his discussion of genitive compound names and notes from his many examples that the second or final part of the compound is normally a divine name or theophorous element.¹³⁵

The argument of the present literary reading of this story is as follows. מִשָּׂה is an Egyptian name from the root *msʿ*—'to bear, give birth', supported by several Semitic cognates. The Implied Author of the text has, however, deliberately thrown a

¹²⁹JACK M. SASSON, 'Bovine Symbolism in the Exodus Narrative', *VT* 18 (1968): 380-87. WERNER H. SCHMIDT (*Exodus 1,1-6,30*, BKAT [Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1988], 74) accepts the possibility that this word corresponds to the Egyptian *msʿ*.

¹³⁰HERBERT BARDWELL HUFFMON, *Amorite Personal Names in the Mari Texts: A Structural and Lexical Study* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1965), 234.

¹³¹JEANEANE D. FOWLER, *Theophoric Personal Names in Ancient Hebrew: A Comparative Study*, JSOTSup 49 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 229, where she discusses the genitival use of the element *mutum* which describes the one who bears the name as a 'man of' the deity.

¹³²*mutu*, with the suggested meanings of: 1) 'spouse', found in names of the children of widows who depicted the deity as a husband ('My spouse is god'); and 2) 'man, warrior'; FOWLER, *Theophoric Personal Names*, 256, 275 n. 101.

¹³³HUFFMON, *Amorite Personal Names*, 234.

¹³⁴FOWLER, *Theophoric Personal Names* (219, 282), considers the connection between this root and the name בְּתוֹאֵל (Gen 22:22), emended to מְתוֹאֵל.

¹³⁵*Ibid.*, 105, 119-20, 124.

hook into the narrative with which to catch the ear of the hearer by crafting a Hebrew derivation for מִצְרַיִם, using as agent the daughter of Pharaoh, instead of the expected Egyptian derivation. The Egyptian root *msi'* fits perfectly with the thrust and tenor of the narrative, but the Implied Author has bypassed the expected derivation and instead invented his own, in order to promote a particular rhetoric about the character of Moses. This perspective gains support through an examination of the micro-plot of Exod 2:1-10 along with its use of direct speech.

Figure 3 reveals this section's micro-plot, which is as follows:

Figure 3: The Micro-plot of Exod 2:1-10

MICRO-PLOT STRUCTURE:	DESCRIPTION:
<i>Introduction</i> (Beginning)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A man and woman get married. 2. The woman becomes pregnant.
<i>Complication</i> (Middle)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. The woman bears a son. 4. The woman observes that the child is healthy so she hides him for a period of time. 5. Unable to hide him any longer, she takes a basket, waterproofs it, puts the boy in it and sets it by the embankment of a river. 6. The sister of the boy stands at a distance to see what will happen to him. 7. The king's daughter goes down to wash by the river. 8. Her attendants walk by the river bank. 9. The king's daughter sees the basket and sends her maidservant to get it, which she does. 10. The king's daughter opens the basket and recognises him to be a Hebrew male child.
HIGHEST POINT OF CONFLICT	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. The sister offers the king's daughter to fetch a Hebrew midwife to nurse the child. 12. The king's daughter consents. 13. The child's sister summons the child's mother. 14. The king's daughter commands the mother of the child to nurse him for a wage, so the mother does. 	
DENOUEMENT	
<i>Conclusion</i> (End)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 15. The child grows up. 16. The mother of the child brings him to the king's daughter. 17. The king's daughter adopts the child.

This breakdown reveals some obvious but important details. The apex of the plot tension retains strict focus upon the child and the king's daughter. This tension centres on whether the child will or will not be allowed to continue to live. The previous narrative context of Exod 1:8-22 defines the tension because the Moses birth story assumes the edict of the Egyptian king to submerge Hebrew male children in its

present shape. A meaning for מִשָּׁח which relates the themes of ‘life’ and ‘birth’, as the Egyptian derivation does, is ideally suited to this leitmotif which pervades the plot. As the plot tension focuses upon whether the child will or will not be allowed to continue to live due to Pharaoh’s edict, so the naming in the story supplements this tension by indicating Pharaoh and Moses as antagonist and protagonist.

It is interesting to note in parallel with VAN DYK’S example of Genesis 16 above that certain elements fall outside of the plot: 1) the man and woman are of Levitical descent; and, 2) the king’s daughter names the child. That the king’s daughter has adopted the child is enough for the reader to be convinced of her ownership of him. Certain textual gaps or dissonances surface which intensify the reader’s interest.¹³⁶ Why was the mother unable to hide the child any longer after the initial three-month period? Why *three* months? How was the child actually discovered? Was he merely seen, or did his crying draw their attention towards him? Other elements represent plot embellishments, such as the description that the child was ‘good’ (2:2),¹³⁷ the time-period of 3 months (2:2), and the detailed description of the receptacle into which the child’s mother placed him (2:3).¹³⁸ The etiology of the naming of Moses

¹³⁶On this, see MEIR STERNBERG, ‘Gaps, Ambiguity, and the Reading Process’, chap. in *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 186-90.

¹³⁷New English Bible translates ‘fine’; CHILDS, *Book of Exodus* (5), ‘beautiful’; DURHAM, *Exodus* (13), ‘healthy’; NOTH, *Exodus* (24), ‘goodly’. On the construction, see ALBRIGHT (‘The Refrain “And God Saw *Ki Tob*” in Genesis’, in *Mélanges Bibliques: Rédigés en L’Honneur de Andre Robert*, Travaux de L’Institut Catholique de Paris, 4 [Paris: Bloud & Gay, 1956]: 22-26) who, on the basis of the usage of the particle כִּי in Amarna, Mari and Ugarit, suggests that it was not merely a conjunction (‘that’) in its early stages but had an emphatic sense of ‘very, most’. The translational implication for Exod 2:2 is ‘When she saw that he was very good/beautiful. . .’.

¹³⁸תַּבַּת גִּמְאָ—an ‘ark’ of ‘papyrus’, תַּבַּת used only 2x in this chapter and 25x in Genesis 6-9 relating to the traditions of Noah. HYATT, *Exodus*, 63, specifies the papyrus plant as *Cyperus papyrus*.

stands outside the kernel of the plot, as do other features, but it has a critical narrative function in the story—a story whose plot is concerned about life and its continuance, rather than its cessation.

Direct Speech

The idea of an Egyptian meaning for Moses's name is also supported by the particular role of the section's direct speech as a device that the Implied Author uses to reinforce his own point of view in his characters.¹³⁹ With evidence from the quoted direct speech of Exod 2:6b-10 (see Figure 4), the theme of life and its continuance is again portrayed, this time in a carefully constructed chiasm.¹⁴⁰ The first (A) and final (A¹) lines of the pentadic structure focus upon the person of the child, *introducing* him (2:6b) and then *identifying* him more specifically by giving his name (2:10). The introduction to him in the first speech refers to him as a Hebrew; the further identification in the final speech names him with a Hebrew name, although spoken by an Egyptian. The second (B) and fourth (B¹) lines deal with the potential *threat* to this character's life. The sister of the child enhances tension and anticipation in the narrative by offering to get a nurse for the child (2:7b) which, if allowed, will ensure the preservation of his life (B). Both speeches employ the verbal root ינק, 'to suckle, nurse' and make reference to the child with the root ילד. Then, 'the daughter of Pharaoh' resolves this tension by assigning the wet-nurse job to the mother of 'the child' (B¹). The central line (C) offers the solemn pronouncement of life from 'the

¹³⁹See BERLIN, *Poetics*, 43.

¹⁴⁰DONALD W. WICKE ('The Literary Structure of Exodus 1:2-2:10', *JSOT* 24 [1982]: 3-25) also outlines a chiasmic structure at the beginning of Exodus, but restricts it to 1:15-22 and does not directly connect it with anything in 2:1-10. For a different division of WICKE's basic structure, see EXUM, 'You shall let every daughter live', 71.

daughter of Pharaoh': 'Go!', signifying that the wet-nurse can be obtained for 'the child' will be allowed to live. Three ironic features colour the narrative at this point: 1) the daughter of the person who issued the edict counteracts it; 2) the mother of the child is chosen to nurse him; and, 3) the mother of the child receives a wage to nurse her own child.¹⁴¹ To summarise, the child is introduced and further identified (A, A¹), the threat to his life is presented and resolved (B, B¹), and full resolution arrives with the indication that his life will continue (C). The daughter of the one who pronounced death upon Hebrew male children has instead pronounced life upon this child.

Figure 4: The Chiastic Pentad of Exod 2:6b-10

REFERENCE:	SPEAKER:	AUDIENCE:	SPEECH:
2:6b	בת־פרעה	indefinite	A מילדי העברים זה
2:7	אחתו	בת־פרעה	B האלף וקראתי לך אשה מינקת מן העברית ותינק לך את־הילד
2:8	בת־פרעה	אחתו	C לכי
2:9b	בת־פרעה	אם הילד	B ¹ היליכי את־הילד הזה והינקהו לי ואני אתן את־שכרך
2:10	בת־פרעה	indefinite	A ¹ [ותקרא שמו משה ותאמר] כי מן־המים משיתדו

¹⁴¹WICKE, 'The Literary Structure of Exodus 1:2-2:10', and EXUM, 'You shall let every daughter live', 74-75, also discuss aspects of irony in 1:8-14, 1:15-22 and 2:1-10.

Summary

The naming of מֹשֶׁה is a technique used to develop his character. Although an appellation relating to life and its continuance would be most fitting for the narrative, the Narrator hooks a meaning upon the root which foreshadows the life of this somewhat ambiguous child. As one who was ‘drawn out’, he also *will* ‘draw out’, in the impending contest between the forces of Pharaoh and Israel’s descendants at the exodus event.¹⁴² Isa 63:11 remembers מֹשֶׁה as the one who ‘brought them up through the sea’.¹⁴³

Haunting echoes of creation, like the fact that the child was ‘good’ (2:2), and of the primeval deliverance of Noah, with the basket or ‘ark’ (2:3), alert the reader to the special nature of this child. SARNA¹⁴⁴ thinks that the טִיב allusion to Genesis signals this as an event of cosmic significance. He also understands the reference to the rare word ‘reeds’,¹⁴⁵ where Moses is hidden and subsequently found, to prefigure Israel’s deliverance at the Sea of Reeds.¹⁴⁶

The name מֹשֶׁה is a narratological description as part of a broader literary strategy. It does not purport to represent a Hebrew name that an Egyptian princess bestowed upon him. It also does not illustrate the work of a confused or careless author, as DURHAM thinks:

¹⁴²PLASTARAS, *Theology of the Exodus Narratives*, 41-42; EXUM, ‘You shall let every daughter live’, 79.

¹⁴³The Hiphil עֲלָה is used here, not מֹשֶׁה.

¹⁴⁴Ibid., 29.

¹⁴⁵סוּף, 2:3, 5; used only 4x in the Hebrew Bible—here (2x), Isa 19:6 and Jonah 2:6.

¹⁴⁶*Exploring Exodus*, 29.

The writer of the OT account did not know this [i.e. the Egyptian derivation]. Otherwise, he would not have invented an etymology based on assonance and turned a princess of Egypt into a Hebrew speaker. His case is better made by the facts about Moses' name, of which he was unaware.¹⁴⁷

The Narrator was aware of these facts, but modified them to catch the ears of his hearers, and foreshadow the character and future destiny of Moses. מִשָּׁחַ is the one who *was* 'drawn out'; he is the one who *will* 'draw out'.

The 'Gershom' Etiology

The pericope of Exod 2:11-22 containing the naming of Gershom has been almost universally assigned in the past by traditional scholarship to the J-source as a continuation of the Moses birth tradition contained in 2:1-10.¹⁴⁸ Perceived as a unified narrative, it displays two basic sections: (1) 2:11-15, which concerns Moses and the fighting incidents, first between an Egyptian and a Hebrew and then between two Hebrews; and, (2) 2:16-22, which describes the alignment of Moses with the Midianites. Geographically, the two sections depict: (1) Moses in Egypt; and, (2) Moses in Midian with Exod 2:15 operating as a pivotal verse to transport Moses from Egypt to Midian.

In Exod 2:16-22, after Moses has delivered the priest of Midian's daughters from a group of unruly shepherds, their father invites Moses to come and live with them. Moses agrees and as a result, receives Reuel's daughter Zipporah as a wife.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷*Exodus*, 17.

¹⁴⁸CHILDS, *Book of Exodus*, 28 (CHILDS sees the section as a J continuation of vv. 1-10 but with a few secondary glosses); CLEMENTS, *Exodus*, 16; S. R. DRIVER, *The Book of Exodus*, 13-16; HYATT, *Exodus*, 48, 65; NOTH, *Exodus*, 34-35.

¹⁴⁹The explanatory phrase 'as a wife' is preserved in the Samaritan Pentateuch and the Septuagint.

The section concludes with a report of the birth of their child and an etiological account of his naming:

[And she became pregnant]¹⁵⁰ and she gave birth to a son, and he¹⁵¹ called his name Gershom, for he said, ‘A stranger have I been in a foreign land’.

LONG lists this etiology as a Form I formula¹⁵² with a β -element depicting the act of naming (‘ . . . and he called his name Gershom’) and a γ -element providing the etiological explanation (‘ . . . for he said, “A stranger have I been in a foreign land”.’).¹⁵³ According to LONG, the γ -element is only remotely linked with the preceding material (2:11-14, 15, 16-22) and neither גר nor גרר appear outside this γ -element; therefore, he concludes that the etiology originally functioned separately from the Midian tradition.¹⁵⁴ COATS shares this assumption, considering the references to the marriage (2:21b) and the etiology ‘virtually appendixes’.¹⁵⁵ LONG’S approach which divides the etiological element from its narrative context parallels in one sense the view of VAN DYK.¹⁵⁶ VAN DYK agrees in principle that the so-called etiological

¹⁵⁰With the Septuagint.

¹⁵¹A few manuscripts read ‘she’.

¹⁵²Citing FICHTNER, above.

¹⁵³*The Problem of Etiological Narrative*, 5, 58.

¹⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 58. The fact that the precise words גר and גרר do not occur outside the γ -element seems rather restrictive because the very form of the narrative—i.e. the betrothal type-scene common to patriarchal stories—integrates the גר language and resonates with patriarchal episodes as discussed below.

¹⁵⁵‘Moses in Midian’, 5.

¹⁵⁶‘The Function of So-called Etiological Elements’, cited above.

element operates outside of the narrative's main plot and that it possesses its own function. For him, this function is not one of explanation, which has traditionally been upheld, but instead the function is rhetorical—to affirm the credibility of the plot through a type of verification-principle as discussed above. Their ideas of the 'separateness' of the etiological segment from the larger story differ, however. VAN DYK assigns to the etiology an integral function within the narrative while LONG sees it as having been originally independent.

Within the etiology of Exod 2:22, the name Gershom is presented as being comprised of a combination of the noun גֵר ('alien, stranger', from the root גרר) and the adverb שָם ('there'), hence the combination גֵרְשָם in the phrase גֵר הָיִיתִי בְאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם. Many scholars identify the name as composed of a participle deriving from the verb גרש ('to expel, thrust out'),¹⁵⁷ stating that the writer has delivered a folk etymology based upon assonance.¹⁵⁸ SARNA views the name similarly to his perception of the מִשֶׁה etiology as a name which foreshadows Moses' future destiny; connecting the name with גרש, SARNA thinks the name גֵרְשָם also has a foreshadowing effect of anticipating Israel's redemption and refers to three uses of the verb in Exodus which express the breaking of Pharaoh's hardness.¹⁵⁹ It is interesting to observe from a comparative perspective that the root גרש is used in the Ugaritic texts also in a naming context. In the contest between Baal and Yam, the craftsman of the gods Kothar-wa-Hasis provides two clubs for Baal (2.iv.11-26) with which to strike Yam. The first club is named: 'Your name, yours, is *Yagrush*. *Yagrush*, chase

¹⁵⁷CLEMENTS, *Exodus*, 17 (says that the etymology given is not its true one); DRIVER, *The Book of Exodus*, 16; DURHAM, *Exodus*, 23.

¹⁵⁸CASSUTO, *Commentary on Exodus*, 26, says that the writer knew the true etymology of the name but his intention was to show Moses choosing this one because its sound recalled that he was in a foreign land as a sojourner.

¹⁵⁹*Exploring Exodus*, 32-33.

away Yam, chase away Yam from his throne, Nahar from the seat of his dominion' (2.iv.11b-13a; emphasis mine).¹⁶⁰ The club is called Yagrush because it 'chases' or 'drives away' (using גרש to describe this action) Yam.

The etiological v. 22, although bestowing a name upon Moses' son, is employed here to elucidate the identity of Moses in this introductory section of the Exodus plot. The reader of the text asks, 'Who is this person, strangely exposed, adopted and now a royal member of the Egyptian populace?' (2:1-10). 'Is he Egyptian, or perhaps an Israelite?' (2:11-15); the characters in the story at this point consider him to be an Egyptian. 'Does he belong in Egypt, here in Midian, or somewhere else?' (2:16-22). The Qal Perfect verb הִיָּה as a narrative tense indicating past time¹⁶¹ and associated with the name גֵּרֶשָׁם in the explanatory phrase גֵּר הָיִיתִי בְּאֶרֶץ נִכְרִיָּה, results in the verbal sense of 'I *was have become* a stranger in a foreign land', i.e. with respect to Egypt.¹⁶² This appears rather odd, considering that various characters' points of view in the section have understood the ethnic identity of Moses as being Egyptian. Until now, Moses has seemingly even considered himself to be Egyptian.

Through a form of 'showing' in the depiction of Moses' speech, the Implied Author delivers the explanation of the name as a device to orient the reader's understanding of Moses once again. Clearly from the context of this episode, if Moses was a 'stranger' anywhere, it would be in the land of Midian and not Egypt. It is important, however, to transcend the precise terms utilised here and instead to

¹⁶⁰J. C. L. GIBSON, *Canaanite Myths and Legends* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1977), 43-44.

¹⁶¹G. S. OGDEN, 'Time and the Verb הִיָּה in O.T. Prose', *VT* 21 (1971): 451-52.

¹⁶²On this phrase as a reference to Egypt and not Midian, see DURHAM, *Exodus*, 23-24.

appropriate the images and antecedents which they evoke. The attentive reader will become alerted immediately to the fact that several stories in Genesis refer to the patriarchs with the root גור. Abraham is promised the land of his 'sojournings' (גור),¹⁶³ referring to Canaan, with the promise 'I will be their God' (היה) in Gen 17:8. In Gen 23:4, after the death of Sarah, Abraham says that he is a 'stranger' (גר) and 'sojourner' (תושב)¹⁶⁴ among the Hittites. Gen 28:4 refers to the land of 'sojournings' (גור) that God had given to Abraham in the blessing of Isaac to Jacob, and Gen 35:27 recollects the place where Abraham and Isaac had 'sojourned' (גור). More specifically, Gen 35:27 offers the detailed similarity 'where Abraham and Isaac had *sojourned there*' (אשר-גר-שם). In addition to the clear connections with Abraham, other patriarchs are referred to as well; Gen 37:1 makes reference to Jacob and the land of his father Isaac's 'sojournings' (גור), while Gen 36:7 refers to the land of the 'sojournings' (גור) of Esau and Jacob.

As the structural type-scene around which the episode is constructed portrays the identity of Moses with reference to Isaac and Jacob due to the explicit parallels of this literary form, the explanation given to the name orients the reader back to Abraham himself. Although ambiguity and indeterminacy¹⁶⁵ surround the developing character description of Moses and are evident from the various points of view outlined in the episode, a concluding portrayal of Moses' character is offered which utilises patriarchal imagery and language. Moses is a character in continuity with the

¹⁶³A fact of which the reader is reminded in Exod 6:4 wherein the root גור is used twice.

¹⁶⁴Derived from יושב; cf. Moses in Exod 2:15b where the same root is used twice.

¹⁶⁵The place of these features in Hebrew narrative style is discussed by ALTER, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 12, *passim*.

patriarchs, and Moses *was* a stranger in the land of Egypt because he belongs in the land of promise.¹⁶⁶

SUMMARY

The *Introduction* to the Exodus story is a narrative which places a definite stress on its characters and their development through various means which the preceding poetic analysis has only partially uncovered. Within the narratological structure of an Implied Author communicating to an Implied Reader, various types of characters are presented with several techniques like description, portrayal of inner life, reporting of speech and action and contrast. It has been noticed that through the special use of etiological forms and their respective explanations, detailed characterisation has been offered to the reader, particularly with respect to the ‘bi-directional’ portrayal of Moses in the story as a patriarchal type of character and functional representative for the transitory ‘descendants of Israel’.

¹⁶⁶Moses’ representative status may also be indicated here with his description in these terms because the Israelites are described as ‘strangers’ in the land of Egypt—גֵּרִים used alongside חֵיב— in verses like Exod 22:20 and 23:9.

CHAPTER FIVE

NARRATOLOGY AND THE EXODUS STORY

INTRODUCTION: WORKING WITH THE TAPESTRY AND THE FABRIC OF THE TEXT

One of the points of tension leading to most conflict between narrative-critical and traditional historical readings of texts remains the issue of narrative coherence. If a text has developed into its present form as a series of constituent parts that reflect different historical periods of authorship, ideological emphases and socio-religious structures, how can methods like Narrative Criticism naively purport to read it as a unified, coherent story? Many approaches retain a historical frame of reference. Reading at other levels, however, can produce different results.¹

Instead of questioning the fabric of the text within historical parameters of referentiality, Narrative Criticism—as outlined in Chapter One (*Theory and Method in Reading the Exodus Story*)—assumes a self-referential status for the text which is presumed to possess its own intention. Unlike other approaches that identify specific authors and audiences, narrative critics at least initially examine the tapestry of mimetic narrative within which a complete communication transaction occurs at an ‘implied’ level of authorship. The idea was discussed in Chapter One that the text itself possesses an autonomous intention. AS ADELE BERLIN has recently addressed in a broad discussion of indeterminacy, specifically between the relationship of reader-response theory and the role of the text, ‘. . . it could be argued that just as no reading

¹Note the recent fascinating study by ARI MARK CARTUN, “‘Who Knows Ten?’ The Structural and Symbolic Use of Numbers in the Ten Plagues: Exodus 7:14-13:16’, *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 45 (1991): 65-119.

is free of input from the reader, so no reading is free of input from the text'.² Questions of coherence in narrative, therefore, are differentiated on a scale which relates to one's reading-strategy assumptions about referentiality and intentionality. Within the act of reading at a narrative-critical level, *ontological* concerns are distinguished from *functional* interests which means, in the present work about narratology, that both the Narrator and the Implied Author are functional creations of the text.

The present chapter examines the narrative of the Plagues (Exod 7:8-13:16), outlined as the *Complication* (Section III) of the plot in Chapter Three, in order to understand its narratological features and function. The first section ('Working with the Tapestry') offers a close reading of the Prologue (Exod 7:8-13) and initial Plagues Triad (Exod 7:14-8:15) from a narrative-critical vantage point. Here, the guiding perspective is that, although the fabric of the text can be subdivided into compositional units (corresponding to the various threads that constitute the fabric), a narrative-critical reading of the text alternatively considers the tapestry at large, subdividing it into units of *theme*³ and *texture*⁴ and conducting an analysis of its

²'The Role of the Text in the Reading Process', *Semeia* 62, *Textual Determinacy: Part One*, ed. ROBERT C. CULLEY and ROBERT B. ROBINSON (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993): 144.

³Generally understood as a central and often abstract dominating idea of a work, as discussed in Chapter Three (*Plot Directions in the Exodus Story*) in the Definition section, above; ABRAMS, *Glossary of Literary Terms*, s.v. 'theme', 111; BALDICK, *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, s.v. 'theme', 225; CUDDON, *Dictionary of Literary Terms*, s.v. 'theme', 695; HOLMAN and HARMON, *Handbook to Literature*, s.v. 'theme', 502; SCOTT, *Current Literary Terms*, s.v. 'theme', 291; JOSEPH T. SHIPLEY, ed., *Dictionary of World Literary Terms: Criticism, Forms, Technique* (London: George Allen and Unwin Limited, 1955), s.v. 'theme', 583-84.

⁴Referring to the unparaphrasable elements like imagery, irony, metre and rhyme, also discussed in Chapter Three, above; JACK MYERS and MICHAEL SIMMS, *The Longman Dictionary of Poetic Terms*, Longman English and Humanities Series; ed. LEE JACOBUS (London: Longman, 1989), s.v. 'texture', 307; *ibid.*, s.v. 'theme', 308.

stylistic devices and structural features. After this initial explication, the question of the relationship between Narrative Criticism and historically-guided orientations to the text will be considered once again in the second section ('The Fabric of the Text'). Subsequent to an overview of the entire Plagues narratives (Exod 7:8-13:16) based on a discussion of the *Discourse Structure of the Plagues* charts (see Appendix Two), this second section rereads the Prologue and initial Plagues Triad with questions raised at a historical-compositional level. A concern of this chapter is to query whether Narrative Criticism and *Literarkritik* are able to bring their respective findings into dialogue, or if instead they merely exist and operate on separate interpretative planes.

WORKING WITH THE TAPESTRY

Narratology

The term narratology was initiated by TZVETAN TODOROV in his *Grammaire du Décaméron*⁵ of 1969, wherein *narratologie* depicted a new science to be applied to types of discourses with narrative structure like stories, myth and film. HARRIS defines narratology as 'The study or science of narrative structure, inclusive of all narratives, not only those regarded as "literary"'.⁶ The functional distinctions mentioned in Chapter Three between plot as '*what* story is being told?', characterisation as '*who* are the main players/agents within this story?' and narratology as '*how* is this story told?' illustrate the role of narratological analysis within Narrative Criticism proper.

⁵The Hague: Mouton, 1969.

⁶WENDELL V. HARRIS, *Dictionary of Concepts in Literary Criticism and Theory* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992), s.v. 'narratology', 258.

Another important feature alongside structure often considered within narratological analysis falls under the general category of narrative and time. GÉRARD GENETTE, through his influential *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*,⁷ offered several important distinctions in his discussion of the relationship between ‘story-time’ and ‘narrative-time’.

General Observations

With respect to the prevailing stylistic and textural features, the basic literary function of the Plagues which a narrative-critical reading has determined is that they offer intertextual links between the Plagues material proper (Section III, Exod 7:8-13:16) and other sections of the story. Specifically stated, the Plagues connect intertextually and attest an exhibited narrative coherence both with earlier parts of the Exodus (and pentateuchal) story in the form of *resonances*, and also with later parts of the concluding story by *foreshadowing*. Precise verbal and motival links support this coherent narrative expression.⁸ Streams of motifs like creation and the recognition of Yahweh’s supremacy (kingship) along with the separateness of Israel (centred on Passover observance) evidence a clear theme in the Plagues and contribute to the broader story.

⁷Trans. JANE E. LEWIN (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1980).

⁸Both TERENCE FRETHEIM and MICHAEL FISHBANE (‘Exodus 1-4: The Prologue to the Exodus Cycle’, chap. in *Text and Texture: Close Readings of Selected Biblical Texts* [New York: Schocken Books, 1979], 63-76) observe the structure deemed common to Exodus wherein ‘. . . through verbal and thematic links, certain narrative aspects are made to prefigure later ones’ (TERENCE E. FRETHEIM, *Exodus*, in *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* [Louisville: John Knox Press 1991], 7). Similar detailed observations presented here have been arrived at independently.

The comments offered below are based on data collected through the construction and subsequent analysis of a detailed series of charts which were prepared in order to examine the *Discourse Structure of the Plagues (Exod 7:8-12:41)* (see Appendix Two) in pursuit of answers to literary types of questions. The Charts subdivide the text into categories which were designed to analyse formal structure (**ARRANGEMENT**, **COMMAND STRUCTURE**, **COMMAND/ACT**), explicit character **DESCRIPTION** (of Pharaoh, Yahweh, Moses and/or Aaron, the magicians), subsequent **OUTCOME** (including the presence or absence of a **DISTINCTION BETWEEN ISRAEL/EGYPT**) and governing **IMAGES**. Where extra material of a parenthetical nature exists within the Plague, this is appended to the end of the respective Plague-chart. Within the body of the Charts that include the Prologue to the Plagues (7:8-13) along with Plagues #1-10, key verbs and nouns are highlighted and the Hebrew root or word is given which portrays critical features of the Plague and its discourse structure, along with important interconnections with other Plagues and the rest of the story (both before as *resonances* and afterwards as *foreshadowing*).

Paying close attention to the details of the text, which Narrative Criticism advocates, can result in a fresh reading of features of the Exodus story previously discussed on other terms. The situation of the ‘hardening’ of Pharaoh’s heart, by way of illustration, provides an instructive example of the potentially fruitful application of new methods to traditional issues. In Chapter Three (*Plot Directions in the Exodus Story*), the motif was discussed as to how it contributes to the intense conflict between Yahweh and Pharaoh as protagonist and antagonist in the third section (*Complication*) of the plot. Here, attention is given to the discourse structure surrounding the description of this ‘hardening’. The ‘hardening’ motif serves two essential functions in the story: (1) it anticipates the final section of the plot (Section IV: Exod 13:17-14:31) by foreshadowing the end of the story when Yahweh will

become ‘honoured’ (14:4, 17, 18); and, (2) it assists with the characterisation of the third section, developing ambiguity in the person of Pharaoh.

Instead of relying on specific vocabulary as indicating different compositional sources, the distinctive terms used for the ‘hardening’—קָזַח and כִּבְדָּר—can be read in other ways.⁹ Assuming the coherence of the narrative, the following Table (see Table 1, *infra*) suggests that a tension is portrayed at this discourse level, posing the question of whether Pharaoh is in control of his obstinate state, or if instead he is controlled from without—a tension which alerts the reader to the nature and action of this antagonist. If a simple notation of which of the two roots is used is replaced with a concern to understand the grammatical voice of the terms and the significance of this consideration for the story, a comprehensive pattern can be detected.

The primary end towards which the voice of the terms is directed is the conclusion that Yahweh is totally in control of Pharaoh, and that any tension between the active-passive conflict of Pharaoh’s character only serves to heighten the intensity of the plot-conflict until it resolves with the knowledge that he remains passive—subordinate to Yahweh as a character in the story. NOTH writes, ‘. . . it is Yahweh himself who again and again brings about Pharaoh’s unwillingness so as to display his wonderful power in Egypt and to the Egyptians in manifold ways’.¹⁰ This fits with the fact that the present section (7:8-13:16) in the outline of the plot depicts an intensification between Yahweh as the God of the Hebrews and Pharaoh as a

⁹The verb קָזַח is used once in 7:3 as well, but does not figure in the present section.

¹⁰MARTIN NOTH, *Exodus: A Commentary*, OTL, trans. J. S. Bowden (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), 67. JOHN I. DURHAM (*Exodus*, WBC [Waco, Texas: Word, 1987], 105) goes one step further: ‘Yahweh is using Pharaoh, who finally will not fully believe, as a teaching tool for Israel. . . . Yahweh’s hand is in these matters from the start and throughout and to the end that *Israel* might believe—not Pharaoh and not the nation of Egypt.’

representative of the Egyptians gods.¹¹ The Prologue to the Plagues (7:13) along with the third Plague of each triad (Plague #3-8:15, Plague #6-9:12, Plague #9-10:27) develop from the perspective of Pharaoh being passive to the ‘hardening’ (Prologue and Plague #3, קָרַח in Qal) into the firm conviction that Pharaoh is passive to this ‘hardening’ by the deliberate control of Yahweh (Plague #6 and Plague #9, קָרַח in Piel with Yahweh as subject) (see **Line A** of Table 2). It will be apparent immediately that the lines of division utilised here (Prologue, Plagues #3, 6, 9) do not cross over boundaries identified by historical critics but instead offer an alternate reading of their distinction. These Plagues above basically depict Pharaoh as passive to the ‘hardening’. They begin with the enigma that his heart is hardened although it is not explicitly stated how, why or by whom in the Prologue. Then they develop into the clear statement that Yahweh ‘hardens’ his heart.

¹¹See HYATT, *Exodus*, New Century Bible (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1971), 99.

Table 1: Verbal Discourse of 'Hardening' in the Plagues

PLAGUE #:	VERBAL ROOT:	VERBAL STEM:	ACTIVE OR PASSIVE:
Prologue	חזק	Qal	Pharaoh passive
1	חזק	Qal	Pharaoh passive
2	כבד	Hiphil	Pharaoh active
3	חזק	Qal	Pharaoh passive
4	כבד	Hiphil	Pharaoh active
5	כבד	Qal	Pharaoh passive
6	חזק	Piel	Pharaoh passive to Yahweh
7	כבד חזק	Piel & Qal	Pharaoh active Pharaoh passive
8	כבד חזק	Hiphil & Piel	Pharaoh passive to Yahweh (2x)
9	חזק	Piel	Pharaoh passive to Yahweh
10	חזק	Piel	Pharaoh passive to Yahweh

Table 2: Grammatical Voice Divisions of Active/Passive Verbs used of Pharaoh

LINE A:	Passive		Passive		Passive to Yahweh		Passive to Yahweh				
PLAGUE NUMBER:	Prologue	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
LINE B:		Passive	Active		Active	Passive		Active & Passive	Passive to Yahweh (both verbs)		Passive to Yahweh
VERB USED:	פּוֹחַ	נָסַב פּוֹחַ	נָסַב	פּוֹחַ	נָסַב	נָסַב	פּוֹחַ	נָסַב פּוֹחַ	נָסַב פּוֹחַ	פּוֹחַ	פּוֹחַ
STEM:	Qal	Qal	Hiphil	Qal	Hiphil	Qal	Piel	Piel & Qal	Hiphil & Piel	Piel	Piel

Interwoven with this motif, the active-passive tension continues in a slightly different way within the other Plagues (see **Line B** of Table 2). The remaining Plagues of the first two triads operate chiastically: Plague #1 (7:22, חזק in Qal) corresponds with Plague #5 (9:7, כבד in Qal) in a passive construction, while Plague #2 (8:11, כבד in Hiphil) connects with Plague #4 (8:28, כבד in Hiphil) in a picture of Pharaoh as one who actively controls his stubborn refusal. It is interesting to note, as an aside, that the Implied Author has *Yahweh* pronounce the hardness of Pharaoh's heart by 'showing' with this same root כבד (as an adjective) in Plague #1, 7:14; *Yahweh* intimates Pharaoh's 'hardness' and has foreknowledge of it, stated with a root that is used to depict Pharaoh's own control of his choices. In the third triad, Plague #7 (9:34, כבד in Piel) sets the notion of Pharaoh's control against itself (9:35, חזק in Qal), confirmed by the use in Plague #8 of both verbal roots showing Pharaoh as passive to *Yahweh*'s control (10:1, כבד in Hiphil—10:20, חזק in Piel). Plague #10 concludes with this assumption that Pharaoh is wholly passive to the dominant control of *Yahweh* (11:10, חזק in Piel).

Reading the Plagues Proper

Prologue (Exod 7:8-13):

The cycle of Plagues begins with a somewhat familiar Prologue (7:8-13), familiar in that its function of introducing the 'wonders' (מִפְתֵּיִם) to the reader thematically parallels the initial 'sign' (אֵיֹת) given to Moses with which to convince Israel (4:2-5) except that here תַּנִּיחַ (7:9, 10, 12) is used for 'serpent' instead of נָחָשׁ

in 4:3.¹² The fact is thus confirmed for the reader that Moses, the leader who was able to convince the descendants of Israel of his calling and mission at least temporarily (4:31), will prove a successful candidate for attempting to obtain release from the land for the descendants of Israel. CASSUTO parallels Moses' role with 'the interview at which the emissary of a human king presents his credentials to a foreign monarch, to whom he is sent on a mission'.¹³ The Prologue introduces the basic structure of the Plagues-narrative which offers continuity and assists with the momentum of the unfolding plot, along with providing a setting for the intensification of character conflict between its key players through the complication that it depicts. The basic structure is as follows: (1) commissioning of Moses; (2) delivery of the message; (3) its execution; (4) the reaction to it; and, (5) the outcome.¹⁴

Tersely worded, the Prologue contains vocabulary and semantic structures which suggest from the outset that the impending contest is *no* contest; Pharaoh is already a defeated enemy. Although magic retained an important place in Egyptian life and cultus—as it did in Mesopotamia and Ugarit¹⁵—the narrated perspective here

¹²DURHAM, *Exodus*, reads the changes from שָׁחַד to תִּנְיָן as a development portraying a more frightening reptile (89), and the change from אֵת to מוֹפֵת (which he translates 'wondrous deed') as supporting his idea of the theme of the ensuing narrative (92): 'The reality and power of Yahweh's presence is demonstrated to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians by the miraculous' (91). CASSUTO (*A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, 94) wants to defend the historicity of the 'portent' along with Moses' previous similar 'sign'; he speaks of the שָׁחַד being suited to a desert environment and the תִּנְיָן more suited to an Egyptian one.

¹³*Commentary on Exodus*, 94.

¹⁴WILLIAM JOHNSTONE, 'The Deuteronomistic Cycles of "Signs" and "Wonders" in Exodus 1-13', in *Understanding Poets and Prophets: Essays in Honour of George Wishart Anderson*, JSOTSup 152, ed. A. GRAEME AULD (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 176. JOHNSTONE offers the interesting suggestion that ch. 5 contains a 'burlesque' on this theme of the commission of the lord's agent to do his bidding in order to foreshadow the Plagues narratives.

¹⁵CASSUTO, *Commentary on Exodus*, 95.

suggests that God's power reigns supreme over any magical act, whether concocted illusion or otherwise. With reference to **Line A** of Table 2, Pharaoh is portrayed as being passive to the hardening (חזק, Qal and Piel), as mentioned above. This 'hardening' remains under Yahweh's direct control, because Pharaoh's state and refusal to listen occurs precisely as Yahweh had said it would (כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה) 7:13b, referring to 4:21b—(וַיֹּאמֶר אֶחָזֶק אֶת־לְבוֹ—).¹⁶ From another perspective, however, CHILDS recognises the implicit narrative ambiguity in the Prologue in the fact that although the miraculous 'wonder' is attributed to God, it does not immediately achieve its purpose and serves the function of introducing the gradual process of Pharaoh's eventual recognition of Yahweh.¹⁷ So the reader is presented with an antagonist who, as the hints indicate, deserves nothing more than parody and will result in nothing less than ultimate loss.

Probably the greatest hint for the reader that Pharaoh will meet with eventual doom is the symbol of the 'serpent' (תַּנִּין) with the final outcome of its 'swallowing' (בָּלַע). Initially intimated in the Prologue by a wordplay on the verb תָּנַן (7:9aβ), the noun תַּנִּין is used 15x in the Old Testament and 3x altogether in Exodus (7:9, 10, 12—all within the Prologue) with a semantic range from 'serpent' (as here) to 'sea-dragon' or 'sea-monster' elsewhere.¹⁸ Of the other references, Gen 1:21 evokes images of *creation*, which can be used as an appropriate filter through which to view

¹⁶DURHAM, *Exodus* (92), draws attention to the anticipatory function of v. 13.

¹⁷*Book of Exodus*, 152.

¹⁸CASSUTO, *Commentary on Exodus* (94) translates 'crocodile'.

the Plagues-narrative.¹⁹ FRETHEIM highlights the thematic primacy of the theological motif of *creation* in the Exodus story according to the following reasons:

1. A creation theology provides the *cosmic purpose* behind God's redemptive activity on Israel's behalf.
2. God's redemptive activity is set in terms of a *creational need*.
3. God's redemptive activity is *cosmic in its effects*.
4. God's calling of Israel is given *creation-wide scope*.²⁰

Yahweh, the God of life—its origin and preservation—combats Pharaoh, the one who seeks to destroy and discontinue this life. Other uses of the term retain a cosmic dimension to their language in a description of chaotic forces, and nuance the described character of Pharaoh with a picture of the cosmic enemy at war with Yahweh.²¹ In Ps 74:13, God is remembered as one who 'didst divide the sea by thy might; thou didst break the heads of the *dragons* on the waters' (RSV). Isa 27:1 relates the future victory of Yahweh in slaying 'the *dragon* that is in the sea', paralleled with Leviathan the serpent.

Most specific to the point, however, are the uses of the term which explicitly connect Pharaoh with the תַּנִּינִי: (1) Deutero-Isaiah remembers when Yahweh 'cut Rahab to pieces' and 'pierced the *dragon*' (51:9) in continuity with Isa 30:7 which

¹⁹For example, see TERENCE E. FRETHEIM, 'The Plagues as Ecological Signs of Historical Disaster', *JBL* 110, No. 3 (Fall, 1991): 385-96; also his *Exodus*, 12-14, 95, 106, 108 etc.

²⁰*Exodus*, 13-14. See also his article dealing with the characterisation of God in Exodus entitled 'Suffering God and Sovereign God in Exodus: A Collision of Images', *Horizons in Biblical Theology An International Dialogue*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (December, 1989), wherein FRETHEIM includes a fifth statement: 'Finally, God's own relationship to the creation is seen in terms of an *immanental involvement*' (34).

²¹See L. I. J. STADELMANN, *The Hebrew Conception of the World*, AnBib 39 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1970), 20-27 on the idea of the תַּנִּינִי as a primordial monster.

explicitly refers to Egypt as 'Rahab'. Here it must be noted as well that this Deutero-Isaiah context is threaded with 'dividing of the sea'/Passover language (51:10) and also a reference to the return from exile (51:11). (2) Ezekiel moves one step further in identifying Pharaoh, king of Egypt, as 'the great *dragon*' in his oracles of 29:3 and 32:2. The תַּנִּיךְ, therefore, represents Pharaoh and the Egyptians, as inner-textual references elsewhere in the Old Testament corroborate.

This identification operates along with the root בלע (7:12bα) as a foreshadowing device to adumbrate the outcome of the story. The Narrator's foreknowledge and omniscience is evident with the use of this verbal root that later describes the result of the final battle in 15:12: 'You extended your right hand, the earth *swallowed* (בלע) them' (referring to Pharaoh and his army). CASSUTO's perspective is consistent with his assumptions about epic poetry from where he thinks the story derives in his comment that 'Israel's superiority is underlined by the denouement [*sic*], when Aaron's crocodile swallowed the crocodiles of the magicians. There is undoubtedly here an element of irony and satire'.²² It is 'intended primarily to be chanted before the general public, and the masses are particularly fond of jocular and ironic observations'.²³ FRETHEIM also points to the presence of irony here and in the other Plagues where the magicians of Egypt replicate what Moses/Aaron originally perform, because their performance is only destructive with resultant increase in serpents, bloody water and frogs.²⁴

The Prologue provides an image of creation and divine control over natural elements, along with the orienting function for the reader of placing Pharaoh's character and the plot action in continuity with past description, and also

²²*Commentary on Exodus*, 96.

²³*Ibid.*, 92.

²⁴*Exodus*, 113.

foreshadowing the end of the nuanced cosmic enemy at the outset by using the key terms *בלע* and *תנין*.

Plague #1 (Exod 7:14-25):

The first Plague begins with the observation of Pharaoh's 'hardness' and stubborn refusal to let the people go, so Moses is commissioned to meet Pharaoh at the water and bring to him the message from Yahweh. The Plague locates itself into the story with reference to past episodes through the use of *מִיָּמִים* and *כְּבֹד*. The contest in which Moses will be engaged is with an Egyptian monarch whose mind is 'firm' (*כְּבֹד*, 7:14), and the success of Moses before Pharaoh will be further complicated by the fact that the former is 'heavy' (*כְּבֹד*) both of tongue and of mouth (4:10). The function of this antecedent reference is to offer a wordplay which explores the unlikelihood of the success of this 'rag-tag' messenger before the powerful monarch, thus fostering tension in the narrative and dramatic irony in the fact that the unlikely occurs and the weak eventually conquers the strong. DURHAM says, 'Yahweh's purpose cannot be said to be that of convincing Pharaoh and his people that he is the supreme deity Yahweh's purpose, rather, is to convince the Israelites of the reality of his claims of power and Presence.'²⁵ This statement maintains DURHAM'S assumption that a theme of the theology of Yahweh's presence undergirds the book of Exodus.²⁶ The main point, however, is that the *כְּבֹד* vocabulary here reinforces the emphasis that the tension relates to whether or not Yahweh will convince the *כְּבֹד* Pharaoh through his representative, the *כְּבֹד* Moses.

²⁵*Exodus*, 96.

²⁶*Ibid.*, xx-xxiv.

Why is there mention of water in Plague #1? Is it a vulnerable locale for Pharaoh—where he is most likely to be sympathetic to Moses' request after an initial morning wash and before the affairs of the day become too pressing? The mention of מַיִם reminds the reader of a previous scene in the plot wherein divine deliverance (unstated, though implied) prevailed—the birth story of Moses (2:1-10). There, the Hebrew and incumbent representative of the descendants of Israel was rescued from the water and the threat of Pharaoh's call for death, subsequently named as one 'drawn out from the waters' in the almost jocular Hebrew etiology ascribed to the name מֹשֶׁה (2:10). Here, this messenger for 'Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews' (7:16) meets Pharaoh as he is 'going out to the water' (7:15) and is instructed to stand to meet him 'by the edge of the Nile' (7:15; cf. Moses' mother setting him in the basket and among the reeds 'by the edge of the Nile' in 2:3) to bring the request and possible Plague that will not only result in affected water, but will more seriously lead to death in the water (תָּמַתָּה . . . בַּיָּם; v. 18) as an outcome. The image of water functions to resonate with past plot activity in the birth story of Moses, with the accompanying protection and deliverance effected there.

The image of water also functions to resonate with past characterisation in the story. The setting which the water provides serves an ironic function of characterisation contrast in reminding the reader of the inherent evil in Pharaoh by placing him against his daughter who previously foiled his wicked intentions. At the tense moment of Moses' abandonment as an infant, the daughter of Pharaoh 'went down to wash by the Nile' (2:5) and discovered and rescued him there. Now, as Pharaoh is 'going down to the water in the morning' (7:15), the obstinate character of the Pharaoh who refuses to release the Hebrews is offset by the memory of his daughter who rescued the representative of the Hebrews near a similar place. Water evokes antecedent characterisation. Although many commentators have cross-

referenced Exod 2:5 in their discussion of Plague #1, the narratological function of this similar portrayal as it relates to characterisation has been missed by them all.²⁷

At another level, the water image in Plague #1 connects with the third *אֹת* which Moses received to perform before the descendants of Israel in 4:9, a correspondence that is reinforced by the fact that the *קִבְרֵי* link with 4:10 is presented there as a result of Moses' receiving this third sign. Here, however, the 'sign' is to convince Pharaoh and not the descendants of Israel.²⁸ Whereas there a small amount of water from the Nile was poured onto the dry ground, here the entire Nile is affected along with all of the water systems which flow out from it (7:19). The sign to Moses for the descendants of Israel represented a small-scale picture of creation gone bad; instead of the orderly separation of the waters and appearance of dry ground (*יַבֵּשׁוּעַ*), the waters turn to blood when poured upon it. The similar act here before Pharaoh also depicts Yahweh as retaining control of the created order in that he is able to cause a reversion of matter to its chaotic, pre-creation state.²⁹ As the descendants of Israel were characterised by not 'listening' (i.e. an issue of *belief* with

²⁷FRETHEIM, *Exodus*, 114; CASSUTO, *Commentary on Exodus*, 97; HYATT, *Exodus*, 105; NOTH, *Exodus*, 74. CHILDS, *Book of Exodus* (153) connects the specific details of 'in the morning, as he is going out of the water . . . by the river's bank' with an emphasis on Moses' role as a prophetic figure, comparing passages like 1 Kgs 17:3 and Isa 7:3 which contain exact instructions of where to go and what to say. CHILDS also observes that the message itself is structured in the prophetic style of direct address.

²⁸Various terms are used for these acts in the story; see Appendix Three: *Signs, Wonders & Related Miscellanea in the Exodus Story*.

²⁹FRETHEIM uses the ancient near Eastern concept of catastrophe as a natural result of the transgression of law in 'The Plagues as Ecological Signs of Historical Disaster', above. The relationship between law and the created order may be an issue here, but there is no doubt that Yahweh retains complete control of this reversion as creator.

אמן and שמע, 4:9), so too Pharaoh retains this same posture (לא שמע in 7:16 and 7:22).

One more resonance with past events is constructed by the Narrator's use of the striking verb באש which alludes to the past encounter with Pharaoh of chapter 5. After Moses and Aaron requested release from the land, Pharaoh assumed that the descendants of Israel had too much spare time so demanded the same quota of bricks but with the people gathering their own straw; because the foremen were subsequently beaten, they rebuked Moses and Aaron because, according to the foremen's perspective, they had (in the words of a colloquial but humorously mixed metaphor) made Moses and Aaron 'stink' (באש, Hiphil) in the 'eyes' of Pharaoh and his servants (5:21). Here in Plague #1, the fish in the Nile are a 'stink' (באש, Qal) and represent Pharaoh's loss of control within his own land. Maybe the fish can be read as representing Egypt; just as the 'serpent' (= Pharaoh and Egypt) was 'swallowed' in the Prologue, so here the 'fish' (= Pharaoh and Egypt) die and cause a stink which anticipates the antagonist's eventual end. FRETHEIM cites Ezek 29:4-5 which refers to the Egyptians as 'fish'³⁰ and is a particularly interesting reference because of its description of 'Pharaoh, king of Egypt' as a תנין (cf. the Prologue) in 29:3.

As well as resonating with the plot and characterisation of past episodes, facilitated by the employment of כבד and מים as introductory motifs along with the consequent use of באש, Plague #1 also foreshadows the end of the contest. The principle of 'change' is a premonitory motif which is offered in transition with what has gone before. 7:15 makes reference to 'the staff which was *changed* (הפך) into a snake/serpent' (alluding to 4:2-4 and not the Prologue) which will now perform the act of 'striking' the waters of the Nile with the result that 'they will be *changed* (הפך

³⁰*Exodus*, 115.

in 7:17, 20) to blood'. In order to terminate Plague #8, Yahweh 'changes' (הִפְּךָ) a mighty sea-wind which drives the locusts into the Sea of Reeds (10:19), the locusts seemingly depicting the Egyptians and their fate at this later time. Another impending pronounced reference to which the root הִפְּךָ connects is 14:5 wherein 'a change (הִפְּךָ) of heart occurred in Pharaoh and his servants towards the people' with their accompanying decision to pursue the descendants of Israel. The root הִפְּךָ, therefore, offers anticipatory links with later scenes of heightened action in the plot of the story and the concomitant assurance that victory for Yahweh will prevail.

Another example of the foreshadowing function of Plague #1 is its use of blood; the life-giving waters of the Nile will now cause death to its inhabitants with the symbol of this death portrayed in the root מָּוֶת. Used in 7:17; 19 (2x), 20 and 21, מָּוֶת is the result of Yahweh's 'strike' (נִכְּחָה) which leads to 'death' (מָּוֶת). The sequence in 7:17-18 is the 'strike' (נִכְּחָה), the 'change' (הִפְּךָ) to 'blood' (דָּם) and subsequent 'death' (מָּוֶת). The 'strike' is applied by the 'lifting' of the staff which anticipates the other Hiphil use in 14:16 that causes the sea to be divided, resulting in the 'exaltation' of Yahweh in 15:2 (רוּם, Polel). It is also Yahweh's 'strike' (נִכְּחָה) in the final Plague (12:12, 13, 29) which brings 'death' (מָּוֶת) to the Egyptian firstborn (11:5; 12:33), except now those who place דָּם on their doorposts (12:7, 13 [2x], 22 [2x], 23) are spared. Both in Plagues #1 and #10, the blood (already foreshadowed in chapter 4 with the sign to Moses of vv. 8-9 and the Zipporah-incident of vv. 24-26) operates as a negative symbol and results in dire consequences for the Egyptians. Against those who attempt to describe Plagues like this one in natural terms,³¹ DURHAM calls for a reorientation of reading stance because '... the mighty-act narratives are theological accounts, not phenomenological reports'.³² The above

³¹For example, GRETA HORT, 'The Plagues of Egypt: I', *ZAW* 69 (1957): 84-103; 'The Plagues of Egypt: II', *ZAW* 70 (1958): 48-59.

³²*Exodus*, 97.

observations suggest that maybe the word ‘theological’ should be replaced with ‘literary’.

The Plague ends with the report that a seven-day period passed after Yahweh struck the Nile (7:25). CASSUTO connects this numeric particular with the fact that the word ‘Nile’ occurs fourteen times within this one Plague story—fourteen being two times seven.³³ For him, this word ‘Nile’ holds the primary emphasis because the Egyptians regarded the Nile as a god and Yahweh is seen as smiting this deity.³⁴ The number ‘seven’, however, also anticipates the length of time within which the unleavened bread should be eaten later on in the story (12:15, 18-19 and 13:6-7).

Plague #2 (Exod 7:26-8:11):

Plague #2 begins with various points both of similarity and also contrast to Plague #1. While the latter offered an initial **DESCRIPTION OF PHARAOH**, this feature is absent in the present Plague, although both share a note of **Preliminaries** within the **COMMAND/ACT** section, except here they are highly abbreviated (simply ‘go’ to Pharaoh [אֲרָם] in 7:26 instead of the detailed instructions of 7:15 with אֲרָם). Plague #1 specifies the place of worship as ‘in the wilderness’ (7:16) while Plague #2 does not (7:26). Plague #2 also contains a somewhat extended section in 8:4-7, extra material similar to that of Plague #4 (in 8:21-25) and Plague #8 (10:16-18) and all dealing with Pharaoh’s request for prayer in order to obtain relief from the effects of the Plague.³⁵ One difference can be seen in the way that the Plague refuses to overtly

³³*Commentary on Exodus*, 100.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 97.

³⁵Plague #7 contains a dissimilar section that also contains extra material in 9:31-32 about the destruction and non-destruction of certain crops. It includes a brief request for prayer by Pharaoh as well (9:28). Plague #10 is filled with extra material

contextualise itself within the larger story as the first Plague did with reference to Moses' first sign for the descendants of Israel in 4:2-4 (7:15b). Instead, a variety of covert features are apparent, underlining a careful narrative artistry and, again, referring both to previous elements of the story in the form of resonances along with future episodes by foreshadowing.

The presence of frogs can be read as a consequence of the previous Plague, as many commentators have done in the past: because the waters are bloody and therefore filled with dead fish, the frogs consequently come out of them for the as yet untainted land.³⁶ Some writers consider Plague #2 to be less serious in intensity than Plague #1,³⁷ while others suggest that their cumulative effect works with repetition and not with a difference of degree.³⁸ The Plague is certainly more keenly felt by Pharaoh than the previous one, and the deliberations begin with Moses meeting Pharaoh in his palace to which the Egyptian monarch had retired for a seven-day period after the last Plague (7:25).³⁹ The emphasis on the supremacy of Yahweh can be seen in that: (1) Yahweh remains in control in Pharaoh's territory;⁴⁰ (2) the magicians—humorously and ironically for the reader—can only multiply the effects of

both of a 'narrative' and 'cultic' nature (see chart on Plague #10 in Appendix Two: *Discourse Structure of the Plagues [Exod 7:8-12:41]*).

³⁶CHILDS, *Book of Exodus*, 155.

³⁷HYATT, *Exodus*, 108; NOTH, *Exodus*, 74.

³⁸DURHAM, *Exodus*, 103.

³⁹NOTH, *Exodus*, 75; CASSUTO, *Commentary on Exodus*, 100.

⁴⁰DURHAM, *Exodus*, 106.

the Plague;⁴¹ and, (3) the Plague is withdrawn immediately after Moses prays to Yahweh at a time that Pharaoh himself had set.⁴²

One approach to reading the frogs regards them as a metaphorical representation of the descendants of Israel. In a statement that ‘the Nile will *swarm* with frogs’, the Implied Author places the verbal root שרץ into the mouth of Yahweh the protagonist (7:28). This root is used in only one other place in the book of Exodus in the mouth of the Narrator in 1:7 who, alluding to strong notions of a creation-based theology,⁴³ placed the growth in progeny of the descendants of Israel in structural and theological continuity with Adam (and his generation) and Noah (and his generation).⁴⁴ The term here connects with past language depicting the descendants of Israel’s outgrowth as a fulfilment of God’s promise, and also with the past plot tension surrounding the king of Egypt’s attempts to prevent this swarming. It is also used in Ps 105:30’s recollection of this Plague.

CASSUTO and others have imported notions of Egyptian mythology in order to understand the role of the frogs in the narrative.⁴⁵ For them, the frogs are associated with the Egyptian goddess Heket and wife of the god Khnum, who is portrayed as a woman with the head of a frog and embodies the power to give life; she blew the

⁴¹FRETHEIM, *Exodus*, 116; CASSUTO, *Commentary on Exodus*, 102; DURHAM, *Exodus*, 104; and HYATT, *Exodus*, 109.

⁴²HYATT, *Exodus*, 109; NOTH, *Exodus*, 76. CHILDS, *Book of Exodus* (155-56) perceptively observes the bargaining procedures which are at work.

⁴³See CASSUTO, *Commentary on Exodus*, 101.

⁴⁴This connection is also made by DURHAM, *Exodus*, 103. Refer back to Section I of the plot in Chapter Three for a fuller discussion of this idea.

⁴⁵*Commentary on Exodus*, 101; DURHAM, *Exodus*, 104; HYATT, *Exodus*, 108; NOTH, *Exodus*, 75.

breath of life into the bodies that her husband created from the dust of the earth.⁴⁶ This association, according to CASSUTO, resulted in the Egyptian estimation of frogs as fertility symbols. Along these lines, the frogs either remind Pharaoh and the Egyptians of the continued increase of the Israelites in tandem with שֶׁרֵץ, or of a distorted process of creation because they end in death.

The verb פָּעַץ which describes Moses' praying for Pharaoh in 8:8b also connects with what has gone before. Other uses of the root in earlier parts of the story describe either the pleas of the descendants of Israel/Hebrews (Qal participle in 5:8 in the direct speech of Pharaoh; noun פָּעֻץ in the direct speech of Yahweh in 3:7, 9; and synonym פָּעַץ in the Narrator's 'telling' of 2:23) or those of the foremen over them (verb in 5:15) for alleviation of hardship that has been caused by Pharaoh. Here, in contrast, the root is used surrounding the request of Pharaoh for alleviation of a Plague which has been caused directly by Yahweh against him.

The root שָׁבַח again functions, as it did in Plague #1, to remind the reader of the 'stink' which Moses and Aaron had become before Pharaoh and his servants in 5:21.⁴⁷ Here, it refers to the 'stink' in the land (8:10) as an effect of the lifting of the Plague and subsequent death of the frogs. If the frogs offer a metaphorical picture of the descendants of Israel, the 'stink' reinforces the displeasure in which Pharaoh malevolently views them. From another angle, however, the 'stink' can also be read in continuity with the previous Plague which anticipates only decay and death for the arch-enemy of Yahweh.

The frogs also serve to symbolise the descendants of Israel and their involvement in future action that occurs in the ensuing plot. At the outset of the

⁴⁶See H. FRANKFORT, *Ancient Egyptian Religion* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), 15, 85.

⁴⁷CASSUTO, *Commentary on Exodus* (104), makes a loose reference to this.

Plague, the words of Yahweh describe the **Command/Act Proper** for Moses to deliver to Pharaoh, stating Yahweh's intention to 'strike' all of Pharaoh's territory with frogs (7:27b). The use of this different word נָגַף instead of נָכַח from the first Plague (7:17, 20) has an important function in adumbrating the ultimate outcome of the cycle of Plagues as a result of the success of the tenth Plague.⁴⁸ In Plague #10, it is stated that Yahweh would 'strike' the Egyptians (נָגַף, 12:23a) but that the destroyer would be prevented from 'striking' (נָגַף, 12:23b) those who had put blood on their lintels and doorposts. One aspect of the later ritual of Passover to be explained to future generations is that Yahweh 'struck' the Egyptians (נָגַף, 12:27) and the final Plague even refers to itself as a 'blow' with the denominative noun נֶגֶף in 12:13.

The frogs are to 'ascend' upon the land in an attempt to shape the process of change in Pharaoh's mind so he will let the people depart from his land (עָלָה, Qal in 7:28, 29; 8:2; Hiphil in 8:1, 3). DURHAM replaces 'they will go up' (7:28) with 'they will leave the river' for 'clarity';⁴⁹ however, this seems to prescribe a reading for the root עָלָה that robs it of its potential for broader meaning in the story. Reminding the careful reader of Pharaoh's paranoid speech in 1:9-10 wherein he feared that the people would 'go up' from the land, the Implied Author uses the root עָלָה here in the speech of Yahweh (7:28, 29; 8:1; confirmed by the Narrator in 8:2) which is a common term for the exodus from the land, forecasting the end of the contest. Some examples of this usage are as a Qal in 1:10 and 13:18 and a Hiphil in 3:8, 17.⁵⁰

⁴⁸Note FRETHEIM'S similar observation in *Exodus*, 117.

⁴⁹*Exodus*, 101.

⁵⁰The root עָלָה is reinforced by the use of בָּרָא in 7:28, another root which describes the exodus (Qal in 12:25 and Hiphil in 6:8; 13:5, 11).

Egypt is overrun with disaster as the frogs ‘cover’ the land (כסה in 8:2) until Moses entreats Yahweh to remove the frogs so that none ‘remain’ (שאר in 8:5b, 7b) except in the Nile. In the same way, the waters of the sea ‘cover’ (כסה) Pharaoh and his mighty army resulting in the sombre statement that ‘not even one of them remained’ (שאר) in 14:28.⁵¹ The one who ‘set’ the frogs against Pharaoh (שם, 8:8) caused the latter’s subsequent death by submersion when he again ‘set’ (שם) the sea into dry ground in 14:21. Just as the frogs ‘died’ (מות, 8:9b) like the fish before them (מות, 7:18, 21), so too will the Egyptians (מות, 14:30).⁵² It seems that while the initial appearance of the frogs represents the descendants of Israel, their eventual outcome strongly symbolises Pharaoh and the Egyptians.

Plague #3 (Exod 8:12-15):

Plague #3 concludes the first triad of Plagues and exhibits a logical progression within the Plagues narrative at large. Plague #1 witnessed a contamination of the Nile and subsequent death of the fish within it. Plague #2 moved from water to land with its depiction of frogs swarming everywhere. Now, Plague #3 ensures that no place is unaffected with its description of gnats that fly in the air, pestering both humans and animals. The Plague is short and its movements brisk.

Moses is told to instruct Aaron of the action to be taken which will invoke the Plague of gnats; by ‘striking’ the ‘dust of the earth’ (8:12), these insects will appear and make their presence known in the ‘entire land of Egypt’ (with כָּל). Lexical sources usually distinguish between two separate words for ‘gnats’: (1) כְּנָם is only found in Exod 8:13 and 14 (where both the Samaritan Pentateuch and Septuagint read

⁵¹Again, note FRETHEIM’S similar observations on the root כסה.

⁵²The root מות is also used in the later Passover story in 12:30 to say that every house had someone ‘dead’ in it.

in conformity with the other word for ‘gnat/s’); and, (2) *בַּן* (plural *בָּנִים*) is rare, used here in Exod 8:12, 13 and 14, in the description of this plague in Ps 105:31, and also in one other unrelated passage in Isa 51:6.⁵³ The ‘strike’ of Aaron’s staff (8:12, 13) continues the verb *נָכָה* found in Plague #1 (7:17-18, discussed there) in continuity with its anticipatory function towards the ultimate ‘strike’ of the final Plague (12:12, 13, 29).

Aaron is to strike ‘the dust of the earth’ with his staff, a phrase that resonates with creation language from Genesis. In Gen 2:7, the man (*הָאָדָם*) is created by Yahweh God out of the ‘dust (*עֶפְרָר*) of the ground’ (*אֲדָמָה*). Here, the gnats come out of the ‘dust (*עֶפְרָר*, construct) of the earth’ (*אֲרֶץ*), *אֲרֶץ* used in parallel with the consequence of the Plague—they appear in ‘all the land of Egypt’ (8:12b, 13b; with ‘all the dust of the earth’ in 13b for continued emphasis). This construct chain (*עֶפְרָר הָאֲרֶץ*) is rare, considering the numerous uses of the noun *עֶפְרָר* in the Hebrew Bible.⁵⁴ The two other pentateuchal uses of *עֶפְרָר הָאֲרֶץ* also deal with explicit creational themes; the promise from Yahweh to Abram of descendants as the ‘dust of the earth’ (Gen 13:16) and the subsequent reiteration of this same promise to Jacob (Gen 28:14).

The use of ‘man and beast’ (8:13, 14) again evokes images of creation from the early chapters of Genesis. On the sixth day of creation, God brought forth ‘beasts’ from the earth according to their various kinds (Gen 1:24, 25) on the same day that human beings were constructed (Gen 1:26-27). The second creation account

⁵³See, for example GERHARD LISOWSKY, *Konkordanz zum Hebräischen Alten Testament*, 2d ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1981), 684, 685; WILLIAM L. HOLLADAY, ed., *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), 160.

⁵⁴At least 110 times, LISOWSKY, *Konkordanz*, 1101-2. The remaining six other appearances of the phrase occur in 2 Sam 22:43; Isa 40:12; Amos 2:7; Job 14:19; Qoh 12:7 and 2 Chr 1:9.

suggests that, in order to cater for the man's aloneness (Gen 2:18), various 'beasts' and birds were formed (2:19); however, their inadequacy resulted in the subsequent creation of the woman (2:21-22). Similarly, Plague #3 portrays the creative power of Yahweh through the medium of Aaron as expressed through the actions of his staff. Yahweh, as creator, promotes the furtherance of life which, in the case of gnats, presents a great inconvenience for Pharaoh and the Egyptians.

It is possible to read the gnats as a symbolic representation of the descendants of Israel within the Plague. Along these lines, ironically, the magicians contribute towards the Israelite release from the land in 8:14 with their attempt to duplicate the Plague—they try to 'bring forth the gnats' (אצ"ו, Hiphil, same verb used in the creative act of Gen 1:24) but are unable to, with אצ"ו being another common verb which describes the exodus elsewhere in the story.⁵⁵ The magicians also contribute to the Israelite departure with their confession to Pharaoh in 8:15 that 'this is the finger of God', whether referring specifically to the staff of Aaron⁵⁶ or to the Plague in general, because this time, they cannot replicate the wonder which Yahweh has produced.⁵⁷

⁵⁵אצ"ו is used this way as a Qal in 11:4 with several Hiphil occurrences in 3:10, 11, 12; 6:6, 7, 13, 26, 27; 7:4, 5; 12:17, 42, 51; 13:3, 9, 14, 16; 14:11.

⁵⁶As per COUROYER, 'Le "doigt de Dieu" (Exode VIII, 15)', *RB* 63 (1956): 487-90.

⁵⁷A. S. YAHUDA, *The Language of the Pentateuch in its Relation to Egyptian*, with a hieroglyphic appendix, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), 67, provides various examples of the expression 'the finger' in connection with a god's name from a selection of Egyptian magical texts.

THE FABRIC OF THE TEXT**General Observations**

Although the Prologue and the Plagues can be seen to possess explicit bi-directional functions in the story at the synchronous level of self-reference and implied authorship, the historical-referential picture is somewhat different. Whether or not the mere use of terms like חֶזֶק and כְּבֹד can be used as evidence to delineate compositional constituents is debatable. It does seem clear, however, that the Prologue, along with Plagues #3, 6 and 9 (**Line A** of Table 2, above) represent a later supplement to or version of the story most likely in the form of a Priestly redaction. The issue has been traditionally resolved by appealing to the presence of two original narrative sequences in the form of J- and P-narratives⁵⁸ with the debated possibility of input from the Elohist.⁵⁹

Of course, others like CASSUTO have dissented from prevailing opinion and dismissed 'assured results' with scathing criticism:

. . . it is manifest that we have here before us an organically homogeneous composition, not the chance result of an involved process whereby various fragments from different sources were juxtaposed, as many scholars have supposed on the basis of preconceived ideas and a superficial examination of the passages, without deeply delving into their purport or properly understanding their form.⁶⁰

⁵⁸NOTH, *Exodus*, 69-70.

⁵⁹Ibid., 70 and HYATT, *Exodus*, 97-98.

⁶⁰*Commentary on Exodus*, 93.

Instead, CASSUTO assumes that this section describing the Plagues, ‘constructed with architectonic perfection’,⁶¹ contains traces of an ancient epic poem which was one of the principal sources (if not the primary source) of the present book of Exodus.⁶² This early heroic poem narrated the story of enslavement in Egypt, along with the Israelites’ emancipation and subsequent wilderness wandering.

It is not the transition from oral epic poetry to narrative prose,⁶³ but from *legislation* in Deuteronomy to corresponding *narrative* in Exodus that WILLIAM JOHNSTONE defends—here primarily relating to the release of Hebrew slaves and Firstborn/Passover.⁶⁴ This Deuteronomistic (or pre-Priestly)⁶⁵ version represents the penultimate stage of the formation of the Plagues-narratives to which was added a Priestly redaction or version. The conclusion of the Exodus story in general and the narrative of the Plagues in particular as a compositional conflation of both Deuteronomistic and Priestly constituents can be supported by incidental findings gleaned from a reading of the story governed by literary interpretative interests.

Structurally, **Line A** (see Table 2: *Grammatical Voice Divisions of Active/Passive Verbs used of Pharaoh*, above) manifests clear differences from the remaining Plagues of **Line B**. This finding is in accord with the differently-ordered

⁶¹Ibid., 93.

⁶²Ibid., 2, 92.

⁶³As per HERBERT SCHNEIDAU, *Sacred Discontent: The Bible and Western Tradition* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976), 215, *passim*.

⁶⁴JOHNSTONE, ‘The Deuteronomistic Cycles of “Signs” and “Wonders” in Exodus 1-13’, cited above.

⁶⁵According to the recent work of ERHARD BLUM, *Studien zur Komposition des Pentateuch*, BZAW 189 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1990).

list of Plagues in Ps 78:43-51 wherein Plagues #3, 6 and 9 are absent.⁶⁶ One clear omission from **Line A** is the messenger formula—**כִּה אָמַר יְהוָה**—found in all the other Plagues (#1, 7:17; #2, 7:26; #4, 8:16; #5, 9:1; #7, 9:13 and #8, 10:3; along with #10, 11:4) but curiously not in either the Prologue or Plagues #3, 6 or 9. Another omission in the Plagues of **Line A**, seen from the **COMMAND/ACT** subsection of the discourse structure (refer to Appendix Two: *Discourse Structure of the Plagues [Exod 7:8-13:16]* for what follows), is the presence of neither **Preliminaries** nor **Requests** for Pharaoh. While **Line B** has Moses commissioned to approach Pharaoh ‘in the morning’, ‘by the water’ etc. with requests for the release of the people and worship of Yahweh, these facets are consistently absent in both the Prologue and also Plagues #3, 6 and 9.⁶⁷ Also, **Line A** offers no **DESCRIPTION OF PHARAOH** in the **Commission** subsection, while Plagues #1, 2, 5 and 8 use **מֵאֵן** with **שָׁלַח** to describe him (and Plagues #4 and 7 share the use of **שָׁלַח** with the rest of **Line B**). Another structural difference seen in the **DESCRIPTION OF YAHWEH** is that neither the Prologue nor Plagues #3, 6 or 9 offer any stated **Intention** of Yahweh for the particular ‘sign’ or ‘wonder’ being demonstrated, while all the Plagues of **Line B** (except Plagues #5 and #10) present a purpose for the Plague in question. Again, one can detect a structural difference with respect to the overall **ARRANGEMENT** of the Plagues in that the Prologue and Plagues #3, 6 and 9 all demonstrate a brief **Commission**—one or two verses—to which is connected a longer **Execution**, while the remaining Plagues

⁶⁶See ARCHIE CHI CHUNG LEE, ‘The Context and Function of Historical Recitation in Ancient Israel: A Study of the Historical Psalms 78, 105 and 106’ (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1980); also, his ‘The Context and Function of the Plagues Tradition in Psalm 78’, *JSOT* 48 (1990): 83-89, wherein LEE argues a point from his thesis that Psalm 78 reflects the fall of the northern kingdom and that the plagues narrative has been fitted theologically into this context.

⁶⁷Plague #10 omits a **Request**, but a **Preliminary** of sorts is given in 11:1 as well as in the preparation for ‘plundering’ in 11:2.

(#1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10) preserve mostly about a half-to-half correspondence between **Commission** and **Execution**. A final structural observation can be noticed in the **DISTINCTION BETWEEN ISRAEL/EGYPT**. **Line A** neglects this emphasis on the separateness between the descendants of Israel and the Egyptians (Plague #9, 10:23 is probably more concerned with the creation resonances afforded by the term אֵר within a Plague of Darkness [Gen 1:3, 4, 5, 18 etc.] than with this distinction) while **Line B** is concerned to pronounce it with the root פלה in Plagues #4, 5 and 10 (8:18; 9:4; 11:7), the refuge in Goshen in Plagues #4 and 7 (8:18; 9:26) and the recognition by the servants of Pharaoh that Egypt is becoming destroyed in Plague #8 (10:7).

The Plagues Proper

Prologue (Exod 7:8-13):

Various arguments for the Priestly status of this material have been offered so they will not be rehearsed here. The Prologue (assumed to belong to the extended Priestly section from 6:2-7:13)⁶⁸ looks as if it has been inserted into the pre-existing framework which manifests a Deuteronomistic nature and intent, a fact that is demonstrated by the observations above and its clear redactional intention to orient itself into this D-structure with the terms צָנָה (7:10) and דִּבָּר (7:13) which refer back to Exod 4:21-23: כַּאֲשֶׁר צָנָה יְהוָה and כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבָּר יְהוָה. With respect to the peculiar language of this Prologue in the important terms תַּנִּיחַ and בַּלַּע, Jeremiah uses them both together in a simile lamenting Nebuchadrezzar, the king of Babylon, who has ‘swallowed me like a sea-monster’ (51:34). Could this provide a hint that at least the Deuteronomistic (or pre-Priestly) version of the Exodus story was actually

⁶⁸DURHAM, *Exodus*, 73.

slanted towards an indictment of Babylonian prowess under the metaphorical guise of a story about an unspecified Pharaoh and his country Egypt? As already mentioned, Ezekiel directly describes Pharaoh as this תַּנִּיךְ in 29:3 and 32:2 in an oracle which seems to remain curiously silent on the mention of Israelite enslavement in Egypt or an exodus from there. Also, Deutero-Isaiah speaks of 'Rahab. . .the *dragon*' (51:9; identified as Egypt in 30:7) in a context which invokes the זְרוּעַ יְהוָה in rather cosmic terms, using language similar to that of the Passover (end of 51:10; cf. Exod 12:23-27) with explicit mention of the return from exile (51:11). Maybe these later references from the Latter Prophets actually form a nucleus for the beginning of the Exodus story at its germinal stage of composition or inscripturation. However these conceptual affinities are understood, it is possible that Priestly material has been assimilated into the earlier pre-Priestly tradition, as NOTH described with respect to the 'wonder' contained in the Prologue:

In the old Pentateuchal narrative Moses was vouchsafed to change his rod into a serpent to authenticate himself as a messenger from God before the Israelites (4.1ff.). P has transferred this element of the tradition into the context of the negotiations with Pharaoh, and has allowed Aaron to take over the action from Moses.⁶⁹

Plague #1(Exod 7:14-25):

The initial Plague contains many details of diachronic interest. Traditional approaches have held the Plague to represent a composite of the three literary sources J, E and P; in J the fish die when Yahweh strikes the Nile so it is undrinkable and the Egyptians dig around the Nile for water, in E the Nile changes to blood when Moses strikes it, and in P Aaron turns all the waters of Egypt into blood by stretching out his

⁶⁹*Exodus*, 71.

rod.⁷⁰ Within the **Commission** of Exod 7:15, Yahweh instructs Moses to take ‘the staff which was changed into a serpent’ (שִׁנָּה) with a clear reference to the sign given to Moses for the people in 4:2-4 and no mention of the אֲנִיָּהּ from the Prologue. The only ‘changing’ which the present Plague remembers is the incident regarding the שִׁנָּה —not the אֲנִיָּהּ. Commentators often view 7:19 as a Priestly insertion purposing to bolster Aaron’s involvement in the **Execution** of the Plague. JOHNSTONE notes that it destroys the sense of the oncoming disaster;⁷¹ suddenly all the water systems even remotely connected with the Nile are to be infected, although the Egyptians subsequently dig *around* the Nile for water to drink (7:24) because, seemingly, only the waters of the Nile are inadequate. Along with this difference, the presence of blood ‘in all the land of Egypt’ (7:21b, echoing 7:19) is thought to correspond to 7:19 and is deemed a secondary Priestly insertion that has been placed into a pre-existing narrative structure.⁷² The secondariness of this ‘omnipresent’ aspect of the blood-motif is corroborated by the fact that 7:19 describes the Plague as a process of these water systems ‘becoming’ (הָיָה) blood, while the Plague plays off the ‘changing’ into blood using הִפְךָ (7:17, 20) with the ‘changing’ into the serpent that had gone on

⁷⁰See HYATT, *Exodus*, 98, 105; NOTH, *Exodus*, 62-63, 74; DURHAM, *Exodus*, 95-96. CASSUTO, *Commentary on Exodus* (98-99), takes pains to preserve the ‘historical-referential’ coherence of the story and reads Aaron’s smiting as a new episode. He also thinks that untainted water still remained for the magicians to work with from the directions in which Aaron had not stretched out his hand.

⁷¹‘The Deuteronomistic Cycles of “Signs” and “Wonders”’, 181.

⁷²On the terms אֲנִיָּהּ and אֲבָנִים (7:19), NOTH, *Exodus* (73), rejects translational efforts to smooth out the ‘trees’ and ‘stones’ by adding ‘vessels of’. Instead, he understands these as referring to the sap of trees and also to springs rising from rocks situated at the edge of the Nile valley. Also, HYATT, *Exodus*, 106. CASSUTO, *Commentary on Exodus* (99), reads ‘wood’ and ‘stone’ as idols with the idea of Egyptian priests washing images of their gods in water each morning; ‘. . . even the water that was poured that very morning over the idols turned to blood, thus providing another example of mockery at the expense of the Egyptian deities’.

before, also using הִפְּךָ (7:15). Also, as many have observed, it is not logical that the magicians duplicated Moses and Aaron's great act because all of the water was blood already.⁷³

One of the most interesting set of terms utilised within the Plague is the verbs applied to the initial description of Pharaoh: מָאֵן with either שָׁמַע or שָׁלַח . These words foster detailed characterisation of Pharaoh in their depiction of his obstinate attitude towards the request of Moses for departure from his land. Two comparative points are instructive. First, the language of *refusal* with מָאֵן is applied in other Old Testament passages not to Pharaoh but to the people. Jer 11:10 refers to the 'forefathers' of the 'men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem' (11:9) who '*refused to listen to my words*' (מָאֵן with שָׁמַע), common terms used in several Plagues to describe Pharaoh's stubborn state (מָאֵן in Plague #1, 7:14; Plague #2, 7:27; Plague #5, 9:2 and Plague #8, 10:3, 4; לֹא שָׁמַע in Prologue, 7:13; Plague #1, 7:16, 22; Plague #2, 8:11; Plague #3, 8:15; Plague #6, 9:12 and Plague #10, 11:9). The preceding verses in Jeremiah allude twice to the exodus (11:4, 7) in a surrounding context that is full of Deuteronomistic language relating to the reciprocal relationship between covenantal obedience and divine blessing. Because the Judahites have imitated the forefathers' 'refusal' in not 'hearing', punishment will be their reward. Ezra's stirring prayer in Nehemiah 9 also faults the people for '*refusal to listen/obey*' (מָאֵן with לֹא שָׁמַע), a refusal which ultimately landed them in Babylonian exile. Again embedded within a context that provides an overview of several pentateuchal events including the exodus (9:9-12 etc.), Neh 9:16-17 refers both to those people who were a part of the exodus-Sinai pilgrimage as well as to members of the speaker's present generation who '*refused to obey*' (מָאֵן , לֹא שָׁמַע), 'and did not

⁷³See, for example, DURHAM, *Exodus*, 95.

remember your [i.e. Yahweh's] *marvels* (נִפְלְאוֹת)⁷⁴ which you did among them'. Another example wherein the language of obstinacy with מֵאֵן and שָׁמַע appears together is 1 Sam 8:19-20, which describes the people's refusal to listen to the voice of Samuel and their outright rejection of Yahweh as king (8:7). This anti-monarchical strain of the Deuteronomistic corpus paints a bleak picture of actions taken against pro-theocratic sentiments. In Jer 11:10, Neh 9:17 and 1 Sam 8:19-20 it is the people who are faulted with the refusal to listen and obey.

Second, Jeremiah 50 applies the language of refusal with מֵאֵן to the oppressive exilic captors—the Babylonians. While in the Exodus story it is this unnamed Pharaoh who 'refuses (מֵאֵן) to let the people go' (שָׁלַח; 7:14 etc., already anticipated in 4:23), here Jeremiah identifies those who carried the people of Israel and Judah into exile as the ones who 'refuse (מֵאֵן) to let them go (שָׁלַח)' (50:33).⁷⁵ Although the Babylonians are not specifically named in this verse, chapters 50 and 51 comprise explicit oracles against Babylon in which they are named *passim*. In Exodus, שָׁלַח is used negatively pertaining to Pharaoh in Plagues #1, 7:14; #2, 7:27; #4, 8:17, 28; #5, 9:2; #7, 9:17, 35; #8, 10:4, 20; and #9, 10:27. In Plague #1, 7:16 plays on the root שָׁלַח; Yahweh 'sends' (שָׁלַח, Qal) Moses to ask Pharaoh to 'let my people go' (שָׁלַח, Piel), and Yahweh wants 'worship' (עָבַד, Qal)⁷⁶ in place of the

⁷⁴Used in Exod 3:20 for the Plagues with which Yahweh will strike the Egyptians, and also the related root פָּלַא in 15:11 which reminisces Yahweh's greatness among the gods in light of his past deeds.

⁷⁵The verbal translation 'let go' for Piel שָׁלַח retains a somewhat traditional rendering. Something more peremptory like 'dismiss', 'dispatch' or 'expel' is probably required.

⁷⁶עָבַד is used in the request of Plagues #1, 7:16; #2, 7:26; #4, 8:16; #5, 9:1; #7, 9:13; #8, 10:3; anticipated in 3:12, 4:23; partially recognised by Pharaoh and his servants in 10:7, 8, 11, 24, 26 (2x) and fully in 12:31.

previous ‘service’ to Pharaoh (עִבְדָה, Qal).⁷⁷ This ‘service’ has been seen in the developing oppressive context of the plot. With respect to the עִבְדָה which Yahweh desires, the noun עִבְדָה also refers to Passover in 12:25, 26, as well as to the Feast of Unleavened Bread in 13:5 (13:5 in combination with the verbal root עִבְדָה).⁷⁸

It is important to note that the verbal root חִזַק also plays a role in this context, due to its diachronic significance within the Plagues narrative at large. Of the Babylonians it is stated ‘all the ones who took them [Israel/Judah] captive have *seized taken hold* of them’ (חִזַק, Hiphil; 50:33) but against the Babylonians will arise those who ‘*seize* bow and spear’ (חִזַק, Hiphil; 50:42a)—the people from the north—which will result in distress ‘*seizing*’ (חִזַק, Hiphil; 50:43) the king of Babylon. Eventually, the watching guard will be ‘*made strong*’ (חִזַק, Hiphil; 51:12) against Babylon because Yahweh the redeemer is ‘*strong*’ (חִזַק, adjective).

Varying voices in the Old Testament outside Exodus like the verses listed above from Jeremiah, Nehemiah and 1 Samuel apply the characteristic of obstinate refusal towards differing factions. From one perspective, the people themselves manifest a refusal to hear and obey which results in their punishment of exile. Alternatively, another perspective that can be read as a ploy to shift personal blame directs the finger of condemnation towards Babylon instead, faulting the Babylonians for the exilic experience. Both perspectives seem to assume the vantage point of an exilic reality. By retrojecting this obstinacy as a characteristic into the literary

⁷⁷עִבְדָה used this way in 1:14, 5:18; 14:5, 12 (2x); Hiphil in 1:13 and 6:5; noun עִבְדָה in 1:14 (3x); 2:23 (2x); 5:9, 11; 6:6, 9.

⁷⁸These observations have been arrived at independently from FRETHEIM’S similar perspective in *Exodus*, 116 and also CHARLES ISBELL, ‘Exodus 1-2 in the Context of Exodus 1-14: Story Lines and Key Words’ in *Art and Meaning: Rhetoric in Biblical Literature*, JSOTSup 19, ed. DAVID J. A. CLINES, DAVID M. GUNN and ALAN J. HAUSER, 37-61 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1982). CASSUTO, *Commentary on Exodus* (97) notes the wordplay on שִׁלַח in 7:16.

depiction of an unnamed Pharaoh in the Exodus story, Babylon can be slighted somewhat metonymically (i.e. *king* for *country*) with this metaphorical representation of her monarch and the shifting of personal blame is maintained. The authoritative use of פָּרָוֹ to describe Pharaoh in Exodus is bolstered by the fact that the root consistently occurs in the Narrator's 'showing' through the direct speech of Yahweh, a narratological claim to divine legitimation for these words and this perspective.

Plague #2 (Exod 7:26-8:11):

Plague #2 contains many features of diachronic interest, both structural and conceptual. Structural points of difference between this Plague and the other Plagues of **Line B** against those of **Line A** (according to Table 2, above) have already been mentioned in the General Observations section above, like the consistent presence of **Preliminaries** and **Requests** for Pharaoh in the **COMMAND/ACT** section.⁷⁹ Another structural difference is evident with the stated **Intention** in the Plague's **DESCRIPTION OF YAHWEH**—'in order that you will know that there is no one like Yahweh our God' (8:6). The Plagues of **Line A** never express an **Intention** of Yahweh for the particular marvel that is presented while those of **Line B** virtually always do (except for Plague #5).

The compositional-constituent breakdown usually assumes the addition of Priestly elements to a prior pre-Priestly version, whether Deuteronomistic or, in more traditional terms, the narrative of J.⁸⁰ Priestly elements are seen to exist in the

⁷⁹Against DURHAM's comment (*Exodus*, 102) that 'The same general outline present in the other eight of the first nine mighty-act accounts is present, and what might be called the recurring rhetoric of the mighty acts is fully in evidence.'

⁸⁰DURHAM, *Exodus*, 102; HYATT, *Exodus*, 98, 108, and NOTH, *Exodus*, 63, 70, with the detailed discussion of CHILDS, *Book of Exodus*, 130-51. DURHAM (102) focuses on the synthesised present text:

presence and increased role of Aaron, the extended area over which the staff should be stretched as well as the subsequent affected area,⁸¹ and also the presence of the Egyptian magicians—primarily seen in 8:1-3 (EV 8:5-7).⁸² It is difficult to imagine the magicians' duplication of this Plague when the land was already covered with frogs (8:2-3).⁸³ One distinction in the short act of 8:1-3 to support the above can be seen in its use of the Hiphil stem which is common to Priestly supplementation elsewhere in the story. The underlying narrative of the Plague states that the frogs will 'ascend' with עלה in the Qal stem in 7:28 and 29. Although 8:2 also mimics this Qal depiction, 8:1 heightens the verbal sense with the Hiphil stem wherein Aaron 'causes' the frogs to 'ascend', an action matched by the magicians (עלה, Hiphil) in 8:3. This intensification of verbal voice can also be seen in the commonly-ascribed Priestly section of 1:13-14 wherein the depiction of Israelite oppression through hard labour uses the causal Hiphil stem of עבד (1:13) along with the substantival עבֹדָה.⁸⁴

The redactor who produced this amalgam did so without regard to discrepancies of minor detail and sequence. His intention, rather, was to produce a single account suggesting the impact of a mighty act that reached right into Pharaoh's palace, an account giving Yahweh an unqualified triumph, and one in which Moses is presented as Yahweh's representative and spokesman.

⁸¹i.e. They come not only from the Nile but also its various connected water systems (cf. 7:19) and cover the entire land of Egypt (8:1-3), instead of coming only from the Nile and affecting Pharaoh and his servants and people in their homes (7:28-29; 8:9).

⁸²On the role of Aaron, see JOHNSTONE, 'The Deuteronomistic Cycles of "Signs" and "Wonders"', 177, 181.

⁸³HYATT, *Exodus*, 109.

⁸⁴1:14 also 'transitivises' the root מרר as a Piel in order to foster an increased blame on the Egyptians for the Israelite hardship.

The language of ‘hardening’ with respect to Pharaoh’s heart is usually discussed in terms of its source-origins. Along these lines, the final words of 8:11 (EV 8:15b)—‘he did not listen to them according as Yahweh had spoken’—are also assigned to P because of their affinities with the Priestly description of the hardening in the Prologue and elsewhere. For example, the Prologue (7:13) states that ‘the heart of Pharaoh was hardened (חזק) and he did not listen to them according as Yahweh had spoken’. Contrarily, the non-P version uses כבד to describe the hardening. This language, however, can also support further underlying issues of the narrative according to its use elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. As observed above, the variation between חזק and כבד can be read in other ways than distinguishing between literary sources. This perspective is also advanced by JOHNSTONE, who speaks of the Deuteronomistic use of both roots that are subsequently reused by P on occasion.⁸⁵ Certain ideological and possibly compositional hints may be drawn from their various uses elsewhere in the Old Testament.

As a starting point, it is important to observe that while the noun לֵב (‘heart’, ‘mind’) appears in various phrases to describe the ‘hardening’ with the verbs חזק (Qal, 7:13, 22; 8:15; 9:35; Piel, 4:21; 9:12; 10:20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8) and כבד (Qal, 9:7; Hiphil, 8:11, 28; 9:34; 10:1)⁸⁶ sixteen times in the Exodus story, these phrases rarely appear elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. There are only two other narrative passages where לֵב is used with חזק⁸⁷ and two where it is used with כבד. The two

⁸⁵‘The Deuteronomistic Cycles of “Signs” and “Wonders”’, 181, n. 20.

⁸⁶The third verb which appears only once in the Exodus story to describe the ‘hardening’ in 7:3 (קשה) is used with לֵב in two other places: (1) in Ps 95:8, the worshipping audience is instructed not to harden their hearts as happened in the wilderness; and, (2) Prov 28:14 contrasts the person who fears Yahweh with those who harden their hearts and subsequently fall into calamity.

⁸⁷Two other loosely associated uses of חזק with לֵב appear in the parallel poetic admonitions to ‘be strong’ (חזק, Qal imperatives) and ‘let your *heart* take courage’ (אמץ, Hiphil jussives) of Pss 27:14 and 31:25, however, they differ not only

uses with חזק are Josh 11:20 and 2 Chr 26:16. Josh 11:20 is a story which tells of the destruction of Hazor by Joshua and uses the terminology of ‘hardening their hearts’ (חזק, Piel) to describe what Yahweh did towards Jabin king of Hazor and his allies in order to explain why they had arrayed themselves in battle against Israel. Yahweh’s initiative and their subsequent destruction occurred ‘according as Yahweh had commanded Moses’ (כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־מֹשֶׁה), a phrase which appears both precisely⁸⁸ and also synonymously⁸⁹ in various places in the Exodus story. Josh 11:20 signifies a ‘hardening of heart’ in foreign kings and kingdoms (see Josh 11:10) which were active against the people of Yahweh; the terms are used descriptively there against the enemies of Israel.⁹⁰

2 Chronicles 26 narrates the rise and fall of the Judean king Uzziah and is much fuller than its counterpart in Kings, there restricted to the more limited account of 2 Kgs 14:21-22 and 15:1-7.⁹¹ Although Kings is not entirely positive in its recounting of Uzziah’s life—mentioning that Yahweh afflicted him with leprosy (2 Kgs 15:5)—it is the Chronicler who remembers the reason for Uzziah’s nemesis: after his fame spread, he became ‘hard’ in the sense of powerful or strong (חזק, 2 Chr

because of their location in poetry but also in that the noun לֵב does not appear either as subject or object of the verb חזק but only in close proximity to it.

⁸⁸כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־מֹשֶׁה in the Prologue, 7:20; כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־מֹשֶׁה in 12:28, 50.

⁸⁹כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה in Prologue, 7:13; Plagues #1, 7:22; #2, 8:11; #3, 8:15; and the more similar אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אֶת־מֹשֶׁה דִּבֶּר יְהוָה in Plague #6, 9:12; as well as כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה בְּיַד־מֹשֶׁה in Plague #7, 9:35.

⁹⁰Note the important qualification of this obstinacy in A. GRAEME AULD, *Joshua, Judges and Ruth*, DSB (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1984), 79-82.

⁹¹2 Kings generally refers to this monarch as Azariah, while Chronicles calls him Uzziah (except in the list of the kings of Judah in 1 Chr 3:12 where he is called Azariah).

26:15), and after he had become 'hard' (i.e. powerful/strong, again with חזק in 2 Chr 26:16) he 'became exalted in his heart' (גבה, 26:16). Here, חזק and לב are used together with גבה to highlight the unacceptable hubris of this Judean ruler. Both instances of חזק with לב, therefore, are directed towards human rulers. Josh 11:20 portrays a 'hardening' that was instilled into a non-Israelite foreign king while 2 Chr 26:16 offers a disparaging comment on a king who was indigenous to Judah.

The two examples outside of Exodus where לב is used with כבד are 1 Sam 6:6 and 2 Chr 25:19. 1 Samuel 6 concludes the story of the Philistine capture of the ark of Yahweh's covenant in chapters 4-5 which was perceived of as a loss of 'glory' (קבוד). Phinehas' wife named her child אִי־קְבוֹד in 1 Sam 4:21 (restated in 1 Sam 4:22) because 'glory' (קבוד) had 'departed' (גלה) from Israel due to this catastrophic event, and immediately after Eli is informed about it, he dies with an explanation supplied for the reader that 'he was an old man and *heavy*' (קבוד, 1 Sam 4:18). קבוד is played upon with the verbal root כבד in the story; 1 Sam 5:6 and 11 use כבד to depict the severity of the consequences for the Philistines due to their capture of the ark. When the Philistines consult with the priests and diviners of Israel to settle on terms for its return, the latter prescribe certain actions and demand that they 'give *glory* (קבוד) to the God of Israel' (1 Sam 6:5), asking the former, 'Why are you *hardening* (כבד, Piel) your *hearts* as the Egyptians and Pharaoh *hardened* (כבד, Piel) their *hearts*' (1 Sam 6:6)?⁹² Here also, the 'hardening of heart' motif occurs in the collective non-Israelite body of the Philistines in a story which precedes the narrative of the people's request for a human king that also contains the language of *refusal* mentioned above (ex. 1 Sam 8:19) which is prominent in the Exodus story. An exilic audience could equate the Deuteronomistic use of the 'hardening' motif with

⁹²These same Philistines had been admonished to 'be strong' (חזק, Hithpael) in 1 Sam 4:9.

כבוד, along with its association with כבוד signalling the loss of ‘glory’ caused by the ark’s absence, with the loss of glory effected by the exile—more specifically, the loss of the temple which was filled with glory (1 Kgs 8:11; 2 Chr 5:14; 7:1-3; cf. Ezek 43:5; 44:4 etc.). The openness of 1 Sam 4:21, 22 to *double entendre* against the background of an exilic context with its phrase ‘the glory has departed’ (נָלָחָה, with its many Hiphil and Hophal occurrences of ‘to take/be taken into exile’) is noteworthy; employing similar language, Deutero-Isaiah offers encouragement to his audience with the hope that ‘the *glory* of Yahweh will be *revealed*’ (גִּלְיָהוּ, Niphal). So the ‘hardening’ expressed in 1 Sam 6:6 refers both to antagonistic foreigners and also to the loss of glory, common exilic sentiments which could be evoked and exploited by retrojecting this notion of כבוד into the language which describes Pharaoh in the Exodus story.

The other occurrence of לָבַח with כבוד is 2 Chr 25:19. 2 Chronicles 25 recounts the reign of the Judean king Amaziah, Uzziah’s father. After slaughtering the Edomites (25:11-13) and worshipping their gods, Amaziah challenged Jehoash, king of Israel, to battle (25:17). In Jehoash’s response, he referred to Amaziah’s defeat of Edom and stated ‘. . . now you lift up your heart to *boast*’ (כבוד, Hiphil).⁹³ This use of כבוד, like that of חזק above describing Uzziah in 2 Chr 26:16, condemns a Judean king for hubris and, interestingly, is narratologically presented in the direct speech of the co-reigning Israelite king. Has this language applied to these Judean kings Amaziah and Uzziah with חזק and כבוד been retrojected into the depiction of the character of the Egyptian king in the Exodus story? Did the terms in Josh 11:20 and 1 Sam 6:6 motivate a consequent use of them in the description of Pharaoh as a

⁹³A similar phrase occurs in the parallel account of 2 Kgs 14:10 to describe Amaziah except there the root כבוד appears in a Niphal stem.

metaphor for the Babylonian monarch?

Plague #3 (Exod 8:12-15):

The scant account of Plague #3 maintains similar features with the other Plagues of **Line A**: no **Preliminaries** or **Request** for Pharaoh in the **COMMAND/ACT** section, no **DESCRIPTION OF PHARAOH** in either the **Commission** or **Execution** subsections and no stated **Intention** of Yahweh or **DISTINCTION BETWEEN ISRAEL/EGYPT**. According to the narrative-critical observations of resonances and foreshadowing, the Plague is different as well. While the Plagues of **Line B** either resonate with or foreshadow elements contained within the Exodus story itself, Plague #3 echoes back to the Priestly creation account of Genesis for its conceptual fodder with the construct chain קָרָאָה עֲפָרָה (8:12, 13 [2x]) and terms מִדְּמָיִם and בְּהִמָּה (8:13, 14). This antecedent source also controls the creation allusion of Plague #9 with its ‘darkness’ motif (10:21, 22).

An initial reading seems to indicate that the root אָצַץ works alongside the image of gnats to foreshadow the Israelite departure from the land within the Exodus story. Further probing, however, reinforces the perspective that the composer of this Plague, possibly a Priestly one, has again mimicked the pattern of the underlying narrative framework (i.e. the pre-Priestly or Deuteronomistic one). Plague #2 described the movement of the frogs as ‘ascending’ upon the land with עָלָה , a verb used to foreshadow the end of the story. During the process of adding the Priestly supplement in 8:1-3, the writer noticed this literary function and maintained it by also using עָלָה , albeit in the Hiphil and not Qal. In Plague #3, a similar attempt was made to include a feature (the ‘bringing forth’ of the gnats, אָצַץ) which would anticipate the end of the story.

Other features also indicate differences between Plague #3 and the previous two. Again, Aaron plays a leading role in the **Execution** of the Plague.⁹⁴ The ‘gnats’ are constructed with היה (8:12, 13 [2x]), similar to the use of this root in the Priestly insertion to Plague #1 at 7:19 and 7:21b where the water was not ‘changed’ (הפך) to blood as in the foundational narrative, but ‘became’ (היה). The extreme scope of the Plague’s effects also parallel previous Priestly additions; ‘*all* the land of Egypt’ occurs in 8:12, 13 as it does in Plague #1 (7:19b, 21b). As GREENBERG and others have stressed, this Plague (along with the others of **Line A**) belongs to a different tradition-complex.⁹⁵

SUMMARY

Read according to the tenets of Narrative Criticism with assumptions of narrative coherence and implied authorship, the initial Plagues triad exhibits a clear literary function in the Exodus story. These Plagues, as a sample selection of the Plagues in their entirety which comprise the *Complication* of the story’s plot (Section III: Exod 7:8-13:16), provide intertextual links with features found elsewhere in the story’s plot, characterisation and imagery. Interconnections with prior story-elements are evident in the form of resonances, and links which anticipate future aspects are present as foreshadowing. Sometimes allusions are drawn from outside the story altogether, as was seen with Plagues from **Line A** like #3 and #9.

While Narrative Criticism is concerned to offer a holistic reading of the narrative in its present state with attention to literary features as above, its findings

⁹⁴Note that the Septuagint does not preserve ו ’s ‘and they did thus’ in 8:13 before the description of Aaron carrying out the Plague.

⁹⁵MOSHE GREENBERG, ‘The Redaction of the Plague Narrative in Exodus’, in *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William Foxwell Albright*, ed. HANS GOEDICKE (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1971): 245, 252.

can contribute to discussions of diachronic issues as well. Redaction Criticism, which asks editorial questions about how the material came to exist in its present form, can share a fruitful dialogue with narrative-critical results, as the present chapter has sought to suggest. A compositional hybrid of Deuteronomistic (or pre-Priestly) and Priestly versions is a useful way of describing the ontological status of the Exodus story, particularly considering JOHNSTONE'S idea that this story in Exodus represents the legislation of Deuteronomy (15:12-16:8) in narrative form. The story flows towards the central Passover Festival, around which has developed a structured narrative that retrospectively describes incidents which have led up to its origin, possibly a process of 'narrativisation' wherein a cultic feast has become 'storicised' into a national theoepic. Some of the material it uses chronicles a series of Plagues that manifest 'signs' and 'wonders' for both Moses/Israel and Pharaoh/Egypt. In a discussion of the relationship between the Plagues and Passover, NOTH suggests that the story of the Plagues remains both purposeless and senseless unless understood as directed exclusively towards the account of Passover, the latter deemed a separate and independent unit of tradition.⁹⁶ Further narrative development has occurred with the incorporation of intertextual links with both previous and subsequent sections (the resonances and foreshadowing, mentioned above) in order to broaden the contours of the story, flush out important biographical details (for example, that Moses is ritually prepared for Passover, Exod 4:24-26) and locate this story in the wider unfolding tale of Israel's origins and collective pilgrimage under Yahweh.

Rationale for elements of this compositional process can be found in the emphasis on election and the divine protection of Israel in the stories (exemplified by the representative Moses in 2:1-10), along with the need for self-definition and theological understanding in a foreign exilic to post-exilic context. Due to needs of

⁹⁶NOTH, *Exodus*, 68, 87-92.

understanding the present and the requirement to affirm theological worth by divine election, origins take on a crucial role, particularly when the socially-bonding national emphasis becomes enmeshed with religious and theological nuance. Pharaoh can be read as a metaphorical figure who represents the historical hazard of Babylonian rule; Pharaoh continuously ‘refuses’ (מֵאֵן) to ‘let’ the people ‘go’ (שָׁלַח), a phrase and theme mirrored in the description of the Babylonians’ refusal to let the people of Israel and Judah go. Jer 50:33-34a parallels these terms:

Thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘The people of Israel are oppressed, and the people of Judah with them; all who took them captive have held them fast, they *refuse* (מֵאֵן) to *let* them *go* (שָׁלַח). Their Redeemer is strong; the LORD of hosts is his name.’ (RSV)

Egypt is the perfect ‘straw man’ for such a metaphorical representation and a safe enemy about whom to write, considering both the fact of her negative status (Isa 31:1-5) and also the role of the Egyptian Pharaoh Neco in slaying the Deuteronomistic King *par excellence* Josiah (2 Kgs 23:29),⁹⁷ coupled with his subsequent tribute and taxation of the land (2 Kgs 23:33-35). A ‘Pharaoh’ as antagonist in the story may not merely serve to camouflage a vendetta against the Babylonian imperial force with its king as personified head, but may also facilitate the less metaphorical function of avenging Josiah’s death which occurred at the hands of Neco. The close connection between Josiah and Passover (2 Kgs 23:21-23) supports a characterisation of the Exodus story as a deuteronomistically-based anti-Egyptian and Passover-inspired narrative which may contain a two-fold enemy in the Pharaoh metaphor. Obviously, exilic constraints and both theological and ideological tensions resulting in the heightened emphasis on ritual observance (viz. Passover) prohibited

⁹⁷2 Chronicles 35 delivers a whole section on the Passover (vv. 1-19) and the death and end of Josiah (vv. 20-27), except that the Chronicler blames Josiah for not listening to God (35:22) in his attempt to fight Neco.

the choice of a Babylonian monarch like Nebuchadnezzar (or his near successors) as plot-antagonist for this story; 2 Kgs 24:7 describes the powerful hold of Babylon over Egypt. Negative views towards Egypt exhibited in other stories and oracles like Jeremiah 46 enabled the literary-compositional choice of Pharaoh as the ideal representative both of the Babylonian king and also the personification of anti-‘Yahweh as king’ political and religious ideology.

CONCLUSION

A reading of a story is difficult to summarise. The present work has sought to demonstrate the usefulness of Narrative Criticism as a method and also to show that a dialogue between Narrative Criticism and traditional types of criticism is useful and bears great potential for fruitful results. The careful narrative artistry recovered from a study of the etiological passages of Exodus 2 in Chapter Four (amongst other findings) stresses the imperative requirement to engage in questions arising out of a consideration of the narrative tapestry at large in one's interpretative pursuit. Equally crucial, however, is recognition both of the limitations and hard questions of literary inquiry, and of the need for balance in estimating the role and promise of a narratologically-based method like Narrative Criticism alongside more traditional, historical types of criticism. This latter acknowledgement of limitations and balance remained formative in the analysis of the Plagues, wherein literary differences between **Line A** (Prologue and Plagues #3, 6, 9) and **Line B** (Plagues #1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10) were used to support certain suggestions about the redaction and composition of the Exodus story.

A number of issues have surfaced during this course of research which will be pursued by the present writer in the future. The conceptual and compositional relationship between Genesis and Exodus requires further probing. Both the question of priority—if that remains a valid question—and also the nature of the intertextual links which exist between them need a fuller examination. One proposal for this task is a study of the Joseph narrative of Genesis 37-50 along lines similar to the present work, the findings of which will be subjected to a comparative analysis with the Exodus story. A literary reading of the Greek version of the Exodus story will be

undertaken as well, to see if there are particular Greek nuances at a literary level which cannot be found in the Masoretic Hebrew version of the story. The literary function of the 'hardening' motif requires further work as well.

A challenge to traditional critics to explore carefully the possibilities of textual features of narrative intricacy, along with a reminder to those practitioners of the new not to discard the old, can align both methodologically in a common pursuit of narrative rhetoric. The assumption of an active rather than passive redactor automatically brings the historical critic into a forum with the narrative critic who remains conscious of the limitations of that method; both can appreciate the merits of, for example, 'canon-conscious' redaction.¹ The proposal of rhetorical analysis as a means forward through what has been perceived by some as the current impasse was already proposed by JAMES MUILENBURG during his 1968 Presidential Address to the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature.² Identifying problems with the form-critical method, MUILENBURG argued that due attention should be paid to stylistics and aesthetic criticism.³ Whether rhetoric is assumed to have a Greek background in ARISTOTLE and PLATO, or an ancient Near Eastern one as KATZ has argued from Canaanite, Hebrew and Mesopotamian texts,⁴ its composite features and discourse

¹A term used by I. L. SEELIGMANN ('Voraussetzungen der Midraschexegeese', *Congress Volume: Copenhagen 1953*, VTSup 1 [1953], 150-52) and borrowed by THOMAS B. DOZEMAN in *God on the Mountain: A Study of Redaction, Theology and Canon in Exodus 19-24*, SBLMS, Number 37 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989) under discussion of the Priestly Redaction of the Sinai complex, 156-73.

²Later published as 'Form Criticism and Beyond', *JBL* 88 (1969): 1-18.

³*Ibid.*, 7-8. MUILENBURG said, 'It is clear that they [pericopes of Hebrew literary composition] have been skillfully wrought in many different ways, often with consummate skill and artistry. It is also apparent that they have been influenced by conventional rhetorical practices.' (18).

⁴RONALD C. KATZ, *The Structure of Ancient Arguments: Rhetoric and its Near Eastern Origin* (New York: Shapolsky/Steimatzky Publishers, 1986).

function can assist a move towards methodological balance. General principles for this have been expounded by MARTIN KESSLER in *Art and Meaning: Rhetoric in Biblical Literature*⁵ and more specifically in the recent volume by DALE PATRICK and ALLEN SCULT, *Rhetoric and Biblical Interpretation*.⁶ Through the application of these principles, it is hoped that a successful exodus out of the current methodological malaise will occur, providing the plunder of useful exegetical contributions for future biblical criticism.

⁵JSOTSup 19, ed. DAVID J. A. CLINES, DAVID M. GUNN and ALAN J. HAUSER, 1-19 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1982).

⁶Bible and Literature Series, 26 (Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1990). PATRICK and SCULT's essays on Job (81-102) and Genesis 1-3 (103-25) offer the best example of the method being proposed here.

Appendix One: *Character Chart of Section I (Exod 1:1-2:25; Introduction)*

(♦ — indicates hypothetical/abstract character)

<i>Ref.</i>	<i>Name of Character/translation:</i>	<i>Named by whom:</i>	<i>To whom:</i>
1:1	descendants of Israel	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	Jacob	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	each man and his household	Narrator	Implied Reader
1:2	Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah	Narrator	Implied Reader
1:3	Issachar, Zebulun, Benjamin	Narrator	Implied Reader
1:4	Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher	Narrator	Implied Reader
1:5	all those who had gone out of Jacob's thighs	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	Joseph	Narrator	Implied Reader
1:6	Joseph	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	all of his [Joseph's] brothers	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	all of that generation	Narrator	Implied Reader
1:7	descendants of Israel	Narrator	Implied Reader
1:8	new king	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	Joseph	Narrator	Implied Reader
1:9	his people (new king's)	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	the people of the descendants of Israel	new king	his people
1:10	our enemies (אֹיְבֵי)	new king	his people
1:11	taskmasters	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	Pharaoh	Narrator	Implied Reader
1:12 ¹	descendants of Israel	Narrator	Implied Reader
1:13	Egyptians	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	descendants of Israel	Narrator	Implied Reader
1:15	king of Egypt	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	Hebrew midwives (Shiphrah & Puah)	Narrator	Implied Reader
1:16	Hebrews (women)	king of Egypt	Hebrew midwives
♦—	'son'/'daughter' (בֵּן/בַּת)// HYPOTHETICAL	king of Egypt	Hebrew midwives
1:17	Hebrew midwives	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	God (אֱלֹהִים)	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	king of Egypt	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	'male children' (יְלָדִים)	Narrator	Implied Reader
1:18 ²	king of Egypt	Narrator	Implied Reader

¹Greek explicitly mentions 'Egyptians' in v. 12.

²Called 'Pharaoh' in the Samaritan Pentateuch.

Ref.	Name of Character/translation:	Named by whom:	To whom:
—	Hebrew midwives	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	'male children' (יְלָדִים)	king of Egypt	Hebrew midwives
1:19	Hebrew midwives	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	Pharaoh	Narrator	Implied Reader
◆—	'Egyptians (women)'// HYPOTHETICAL	Hebrew midwives	Pharaoh
◆—	'the women of the Hebrews'// HYPOTHETICAL	Hebrew midwives	Pharaoh
◆—	the midwife// HYPOTHETICAL	Hebrew midwives	Pharaoh
1:20	God (אֱלֹהִים)	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	Hebrew midwives	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	the people	Narrator	Implied Reader
1:21	Hebrew midwives	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	God (אֱלֹהִים)	Narrator	Implied Reader
◆—	'houses/households/families'// HYPOTHETICAL	Narrator	Implied Reader
1:22	Pharaoh	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	all his people (Pharaoh's)	Narrator	Implied Reader
◆—	'every son that is born' (בֶּן)// ³ HYPOTHETICAL	Pharaoh	all his people
◆—	'every daughter' (בַּת)// HYPOTHETICAL	Pharaoh	all his people
<hr/>			
2:1	the man from the house of Levi	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	the daughter of Levi	Narrator	Implied Reader
2:2	the woman	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	a son (בֶּן)	Narrator	Implied Reader
2:3	the child (יָלֵד)	Narrator	Implied Reader
2:4	his sister (the child's)	Narrator	Implied Reader
2:5	the daughter of Pharaoh (בַּת)	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	her maidservants (daughter of Pharaoh's) (נַעֲרָה)	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	her maid (daughter of Pharaoh's) (אֲמָה)	Narrator	Implied Reader
2:6	the child (יָלֵד)	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	the boy (נַעַר)	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	one of the Hebrew children (יָלֵד)	daughter of Pharaoh ⁴	indefinite
2:7	his sister (the child's)	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	the daughter of Pharaoh	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	a wetnurse from the women of the Hebrews	his sister (the child's)	daughter of Pharaoh
—	the child (יָלֵד)	his sister (the child's)	daughter of Pharaoh
2:8	the daughter of Pharaoh	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	the girl (עַלְמָה)	Narrator	Implied Reader

³'to the Hebrews' is added in the Greek, Samaritan Pentateuch, Targums and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan versions.

⁴This is only clear from the following verse. In the Samaritan Pentateuch and Greek, however, the specific appellation 'daughter of Pharaoh' is subject of the verb 'had compassion on'.

<i>Ref.</i>	<i>Name of Character/translation:</i>	<i>Named by whom:</i>	<i>To whom:</i>
—	the mother of the child (יִלְדָּה)	Narrator	Implied Reader
2:9	the daughter of Pharaoh	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	this child (יִלְדָּה)	daughter of Pharaoh	mother of the child
—	the woman	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	the child (יִלְדָּה)	Narrator	Implied Reader
2:10	the child (יִלְדָּה)	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	the daughter of Pharaoh	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	a son (בֶּן)	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	Moses	Narrator	Implied Reader
<hr/>			
2:11	Moses	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	his brothers (i.e. Moses')	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	an Egyptian man	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	a Hebrew man—one of his brothers	Narrator	Implied Reader
2:12♦	a man (no one was looking)// HYPOTHETICAL	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	the Egyptian (man, as in 2:11)	Narrator	Implied Reader
2:13	two men of the Hebrews	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	the transgressor/guilty one (רָשָׁע)	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	(your) companion (רֵעַ)	Moses	transgressor/guilty one
2:14♦	'prince/chief' (שַׂר)// HYPOTHETICAL	transgressor/ guilty one	Moses
♦—	'judge'// HYPOTHETICAL	transgressor/ guilty one	Moses
—	the Egyptian (man, as in 2:11)	the transgressor/ guilty one	Moses
—	Moses	Narrator	Implied Reader
2:15	Pharaoh	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	Moses	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	Moses	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	Pharaoh	Narrator	Implied Reader
<hr/>			
2:16	the priest of Midian	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	seven daughters (בָּנוֹת)	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	their father	Narrator	Implied Reader
2:17	the shepherds	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	Moses	Narrator	Implied Reader
2:18	Reuel, their father	Narrator	Implied Reader
2:19	an Egyptian man (Moses)	seven daughters	Reuel, their father
—	the shepherds	seven daughters	Reuel, their father
2:20	his daughters	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	the man (i.e. Egyptian, as in 2:11)	Reuel, their father	his daughters
2:21	Moses	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	the man (Reuel)	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	Zipporah, his daughter	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	Moses	Narrator	Implied Reader
2:22	a son (בֶּן)	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	Gershom	Narrator	Implied Reader

<i>Ref.</i>	<i>Name of Character/translation:</i>	<i>Named by whom:</i>	<i>To whom:</i>
◆—	'a stranger' (גֵר) // HYPOTHETICAL	Moses	indefinite
2:23	king of Egypt	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	descendants of Israel	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	God (אֱלֹהִים)	Narrator	Implied Reader
2:24	God (אֱלֹהִים)	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	God (אֱלֹהִים)	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	Abraham	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	Isaac	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	Jacob	Narrator	Implied Reader
2:25	God (אֱלֹהִים)	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	descendants of Israel	Narrator	Implied Reader
—	God (אֱלֹהִים)	Narrator	Implied Reader

PROLOGUE TO PLAGUES: STAFF TO SERPENT EPISODE (7:8-13)

REFERENCE/ CONTEXT:	7:8-13 Prologue to Plagues: Staff to Serpent episode
ARRANGEMENT:	Commission: 7:8-9 Execution: 7:10-13
COMMAND STRUCTURE:	In Commission: 7:8 'Yahweh <u>SPOKE</u> to Moses and to Aaron, <u>SAYING</u> ' (אמר) 7:9 (to Moses): 'you shall <u>SAY</u> to Aaron' (אמר)
COMMAND/ACT:	Preliminaries: None Request: None Command/Act Proper: 7:9 ' <u>TAKE</u> your <u>STAFF</u> and <u>THROW</u> it before Pharaoh and it will become a <u>SERPENT</u> ' (לקח) (מטה) (שליך) (תניח)
DESCRIPTION OF PHARAOH:	In Commission: None In Execution: 7:11 'Pharaoh <u>SUMMONED</u> the wise men and sorcerers' (קרא) Result: 7:13 ' <u>HEART/MIND</u> of Pharaoh <u>WAS/BECAME HARDENED</u> and he did not <u>LISTEN</u> to them according as Yahweh <u>HAD SPOKEN</u> ' (לב) (וַיִּחַזֵּק) Qal (שמע) (דבר)
DESCRIPTION OF YAHWEH:	Intention: None stated
DESCRIPTION OF MOSES AND/OR AARON:	7:10 'they [Moses and Aaron] <u>DID</u> everything which Yahweh had <u>COMMANDED</u> ; Aaron <u>THREW</u> his staff before Pharaoh and before his <u>SERVANTS</u> ' (עשה) (צוה) (שליך) (עבדיו)
DESCRIPTION OF MAGICIANS:	7:11 'the magicians of Egypt <u>DID</u> the same by their secret arts' (עשה) 7:12 'each man threw his staff and they became serpents'
OUTCOME:	7:12 'the staff of Aaron <u>SWALLOWED</u> their staffs' (בלע)
DISTINCTION ISRAEL/EGYPT:	None stated
IMAGES:	-divine control over natural elements -ability to create serpent out of staff -anticipation of 'swallowing' (בלע) Egyptians at end of story

PLAGUE #1: WATER TO BLOOD (7:14-25)

REFERENCE/ CONTEXT:	7:14-25 Plague #1: Water to Blood	
ARRANGEMENT:	Commission: 7:14-19 Execution: 7:20-25	
COMMAND STRUCTURE:	In Commission: 7:14 'Yahweh <u>SAID</u> to Moses' (אמר) 7:16 (to Moses): 'you shall <u>SAY</u> to him [Pharaoh]' (אמר) 7:17 'Thus <u>SAYS</u> Yahweh' (אמר) 7:19 'Yahweh <u>SAID</u> to Moses, " <u>SAY</u> to Aaron"' (אמר)	
COMMAND/ACT:	Preliminaries: 7:15 ' <u>Go</u> to Pharaoh in the morning, (לך) observe him as he is <u>GOING OUT</u> to the water, and you shall (יצא) stand to meet him by the edge of the Nile/river, and you shall take in your hand the staff which was <u>CHANGED</u> (הפך) into a <u>SERPENT</u> .' (נחש) Request: 7:16 'Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews <u>SENT</u> me to you, (שלח) Qal <u>SAYING</u> , (אמר) " <u>LET</u> my people <u>GO</u> (שלח) Piel so they can <u>WORSHIP/SERVE</u> me in the wilderness"' (עבד) Command/Act Proper: 7:17 'I will <u>STRIKE</u> the water which is in the Nile (מכה) with the <u>STAFF</u> that is in my hand (מטה) and it will be <u>CHANGED</u> (הפך) to <u>BLOOD</u> ' (דם) 7:18 'the fish will <u>DIE</u> , the Nile will (מות) <u>STINK</u> and the Egyptians will be reluctant (באש) to <u>DRINK</u> from it' (שתה) 7:19 'take your <u>STAFF</u> and (מטה) <u>EXTEND</u> your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their (נטה) rivers, over their canals, over their swampy pools and over all the reservoirs of their waters, and let them become blood. And blood will be in all the land of Egypt, and in the wood [vessels] and in the stone [vessels].'	

DESCRIPTION OF PHARAOH:	<p>In Commission: 7:14 ‘<u>HEART/MIND</u> of Pharaoh (לֵב) is <u>HARD</u>; (כָּבַד) he <u>REFUSES</u> to (מֵאֵן) <u>LET</u> the people <u>GO</u>’ (שָׁלַח) Piel 7:16 ‘you [Pharaoh] still have not <u>LISTENED TO/DONE</u> this’ (שָׁמַע)</p> <p>In Execution: None</p> <p>Result: 7:22 ‘<u>HEART/MIND</u> of Pharaoh (לֵב) <u>WAS/BECAME</u> <u>HARDENED</u> and (וַיִּקְצַח) Qal he did not <u>LISTEN</u> to them (שָׁמַע) according as Yahweh <u>HAD SPOKEN</u>’ (דִּבֶּר) 7:23 ‘Pharaoh turned and he went to his house and he did not set his <u>HEART/MIND</u> even to this’ (לֵב)</p>
DESCRIPTION OF YAHWEH:	<p>Intention: 7:17 ‘by this you will <u>KNOW</u> that I am Yahweh’ (יָדַע)</p>
DESCRIPTION OF MOSES AND/OR AARON:	<p>7:20 ‘Moses/Aaron <u>DID</u> everything according as Yahweh (עָשָׂה) <u>COMMANDED</u> them. . . . (צִוָּה) before the eyes of Pharaoh and before the eyes of his <u>SERVANTS</u>’ (עֲבָד)</p>
DESCRIPTION OF MAGICIANS:	<p>7:22 ‘The magicians of Egypt <u>DID</u> the same by their secret arts’ (עָשָׂה)</p>
OUTCOME:	<p>7:17 -knowledge of Yahweh over Pharaoh? 7:21b ‘blood was in all the land of Egypt’ 7:24 -Egyptians not able to drink from waters of Nile</p>
DISTINCTION ISRAEL/EGYPT:	<p>7:24 Egyptians not able to drink from waters of Nile/no mention of Israelites</p>
IMAGES:	<p>-divine control over natural elements -ability to transform water into blood, causing death of fish and rendering the water undrinkable -focus on blood -כִּפְדֵּי signals the end of Pharaoh; relates to future <u>changes</u> -בִּאֵשׁ looks back (relates to past <u>stink</u>); דָּם looks forward</p>

PLAGUE #2: FROGS (7:26-8:11)

REFERENCE/ CONTEXT:	7:26-8:11 Plague #2: Frogs
ARRANGEMENT:	Commission: 7:26-8:1 Execution: 8:2-11
COMMAND STRUCTURE:	In Commission: 7:26 ‘Yahweh <u>SAID</u> to Moses. . . (אמר) “ . . . and you shall <u>SAY</u> to him [Pharaoh] (אמר) ‘Thus <u>SAYS</u> Yahweh’” (אמר) 8:1 ‘Then Yahweh <u>SAID</u> to Moses, (אמר) ‘ <u>SAY</u> to Aaron’” (אמר)
COMMAND/ACT:	Preliminaries: 7:26 ‘ <u>GO</u> to Pharaoh’ (בא) Request: 7:26 ‘ <u>LET</u> my people <u>GO</u> (שלח) Piel so they can <u>WORSHIP/SERVE</u> me’ (עבד) Command/Act Proper: 7:27 ‘I will <u>STRIKE</u> (נגף) all of your <u>TERRITORY</u> (גְבוּלָה) with <u>FROGS</u> ’ (צְפַרְדֵּי) 7:28 ‘the Nile will <u>SWARM</u> with frogs, and they will (שָׂרִיז) <u>ASCEND</u> , and they will come into your house and into the (עלה) chamber of your bed and onto your bed and into the house of your <u>SERVANTS</u> and on your people and in your ovens (עבד) and in your kneading bowls.’ 7:29 ‘And on you and on your people and on all of your <u>SERVANTS</u> (עבד) the frogs will go up.’ 8:1 ‘ <u>EXTEND</u> your hand with your staff over the rivers, over the (נטה) canals, and over the swampy pools, and cause the frogs to <u>ASCEND</u> over the land of Egypt.’ (עלה)
DESCRIPTION OF PHARAOH:	In Commission: 7:27 ‘if you <u>REFUSE</u> to (מאן) <u>LET</u> [them] <u>GO</u> ’ (שלח) Piel In Execution: 8:4 ‘Pharaoh <u>CALLED OUT</u> to Moses and to Aaron (קרא) and he <u>SAID</u> , (אמר) “ <u>PRAY</u> to Yahweh so that he will (עתר) <u>TURN</u> the frogs <u>AWAY</u> from me and from my people. (סור) Then I will <u>LET</u> the people <u>GO</u> (שלח) Piel so that they can <u>SACRIFICE</u> to Yahweh.” (זבח) 8:6 ‘He <u>SAID</u> [Pharaoh]’ (אמר) ‘as you <u>SAID</u> [Pharaoh]’ (דבר) Result: 8:11 ‘he <u>HARDENED</u> his (הִקְבִּיד) Hiphil <u>HEART/MIND</u> and he did not (לב) <u>LISTEN</u> to them (שמע) according as Yahweh <u>HAD SPOKEN</u> ’ (דָּבַר)

DESCRIPTION OF YAHWEH:	<p>Intention: 8:6 ‘in order that you will <u>KNOW</u> that there is no one like Yahweh our God’ (ידע)</p> <hr/> <p>*8:8 ‘which he [Yahweh] <u>HAD SET</u> against Pharaoh’ (שם) *8:9 ‘Yahweh <u>DID</u> according to the word of Moses’ (עשה)</p>
DESCRIPTION OF MOSES AND/OR AARON:	<p>8:2 ‘So Aaron <u>EXTENDED</u> his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs <u>ASCENDED</u> and they <u>COVERED</u> the land of Egypt.’ (נטה) (עלה) (כסה) Piel</p> <p>8:5 ‘Moses <u>SAID</u> to Pharaoh,’ (אמר) 8:6 ‘Then he <u>SAID</u> [Moses]’ (אמר) 8:8 ‘Moses and Aaron <u>WENT OUT</u> from being with Pharaoh, and Moses <u>CRIED OUT</u> to Yahweh concerning the frogs’ (יצא) (צעק)</p>
MAGICIANS:	<p>8:3 ‘The magicians <u>DID</u> the same by their secret arts. They also caused the frogs to <u>ASCEND</u> over the land of Egypt.’ (עשה) (עלה)</p>
OUTCOME:	<p>8:9-11 The frogs <u>DIED</u> and they piled the frogs up in heaps, the land stank and Pharaoh hardened his heart. The magicians reproduce the plague, but only Moses/Aaron (subsequent to praying to Yahweh) are able to get rid of it. (מות)</p>
DISTINCTION ISRAEL/EGYPT:	None stated
IMAGES:	<p>-divine control over natural elements -again, ‘creation’ of the frogs out of the waters of the Nile -‘stink’ (באש); ‘death’ (מות) -עבד/עלה/שריץ-</p>
EXTRA MATERIAL:	<p>8:4-7 Request of Pharaoh to Moses and Aaron to ‘pray’ (עתר) that the Plague will be lifted 8:5 Mention of ‘your <u>SERVANTS</u>’ and ‘your <u>PEOPLE</u>’ of Pharaoh (re: Egyptians)</p>

PLAGUE #3: GNATS (8:12-15)

REFERENCE/ CONTEXT:	8:12-15 Plague #3: Gnats	
ARRANGEMENT:	Commission: 8:12 Execution: 8:13-15	
COMMAND STRUCTURE:	In Commission: 8:12 'Yahweh SAID to Moses, "SAY to Aaron"'	(אמר) (אמר)
COMMAND/ACT:	Preliminaries: None Request: None Command/Act Proper: 8:12 'EXTEND your STAFF and STRIKE the DUST of the earth, and it will become like GNATS in all the land of Egypt.'	(נטה) (מטה) (נכה) (עפר) (כנם)
DESCRIPTION OF PHARAOH:	In Commission: None In Execution: None Result: 8:15 'HEART/MIND of Pharaoh WAS/BECAME HARDENED and he did not LISTEN to them according as Yahweh HAD SPOKEN'	(לב) (וַיִּקְהַזֵּק) Qal (שמע) (דבר)
DESCRIPTION OF YAHWEH:	Intention: None stated	
DESCRIPTION OF MOSES AND/OR AARON:	8:13 'So they DID thus' 8:12 'Aaron EXTENDED his hand with his staff and he STRUCK the dust of the earth, and there were gnats on man and on beast. All the dust of the earth became gnats in all the land of Egypt.'	(עשה) (נטה) (נכה)
DESCRIPTION OF MAGICIANS:	8:14 'The magicians tried to DO the same by their secret arts but they were not able to.' 8:15 'The magicians SAID to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God"'	(עשה) (אמר)
OUTCOME:	8:14 'There were gnats on man and on beast'	
DISTINCTION ISRAEL/EGYPT:	None stated	
IMAGES:	-divine control over natural elements -'creation' of gnats out of the 'dust of the earth', similar to the 'dust of the ground' in Gen 2:7; image of dust -magicians unable to compete	

PLAGUE #4: INSECTS (8:16-28)

REFERENCE/ CONTEXT:	8:16-28 Plague #4: Insects
ARRANGEMENT:	Commission: 8:16-19 Execution: 8:20-28
COMMAND STRUCTURE:	<p>In Commission: 8:16 ‘Yahweh <u>SAID</u> to Moses’ (אמר) 8:16 (to Moses): ‘and you shall <u>SAY</u> to him [Pharaoh] (אמר) “Thus <u>SAYS</u> Yahweh”’ (אמר)</p> <p>In Execution: 8:23 ‘according as he (Yahweh) is <u>SAYING</u> to us (Moses etc.)’ (אמר)</p>
COMMAND/ACT:	<p>Preliminaries: 8:16 ‘<u>GET UP EARLY</u> in the morning, (שכם) and <u>WAIT</u> for Pharaoh; (יציב) observe [him] <u>GOING OUT</u> to the water (יצא)</p> <p>Request: 8:16 ‘<u>LET</u> my people <u>GO</u> (שלח) Piel so they can <u>WORSHIP/SERVE</u> me’ (עבד)</p> <p>Command/Act Proper: 8:17 ‘For if you do not <u>LET</u> my people <u>GO</u>, I will <u>LET GO</u> among you (שלח) and among your <u>SERVANTS</u> and among your people and (עבד) among your houses swarms of <u>INSECTS</u>. The houses of (ערב) Egypt will be <u>FILLED</u> with swarms of insects, and also the (מלא) ground on which they stand.’</p>
DESCRIPTION OF PHARAOH:	<p>In Commission: 8:17 ‘if you do not <u>LET</u> my people <u>GO</u>’ (שלח) Piel</p> <p>In Execution: 8:21 ‘Pharaoh <u>CALLED OUT</u> to Moses and to Aaron (קרא) and he <u>SAID</u>, (אמר) “<u>GO</u>, (הלך) <u>SACRIFICE</u> to your God in the land.”’ (זבח)</p> <p>8:24 ‘Pharaoh <u>SAID</u>, (אמר) “I will <u>LET</u> you <u>GO</u> so you can (שלח) <u>SACRIFICE</u> to Yahweh your God in the wilderness. (זבח) Only you shall not go very far away. <u>PRAY</u> for me.”’ (עתר)</p> <p>Result: 8:28 ‘Pharaoh <u>HARDENED</u> his (הִכְבֵּד) Hiphil <u>HEART/MIND</u> this time also, and he did not (לב) <u>LET</u> the people <u>GO</u>’ (שלח) Piel</p>

DESCRIPTION OF YAHWEH:	<p>Intention:</p> <p>8:18 ‘in order that you will <u>KNOW</u> that I am Yahweh in the midst of the land’ (ידע)</p> <hr/> <p>*8:20 ‘Yahweh <u>DID</u> thus. <u>THICK</u> swarms of insects came into the house of Pharaoh and into the houses of his <u>SERVANTS</u>.’ (עשה) (פָּבַד) (עבד)</p> <p>*8:27 ‘Yahweh <u>DID</u> according to the <u>WORD</u> of Moses. He <u>TURNED AWAY</u> the swarms of insects from Pharaoh, from his <u>SERVANTS</u> and from his people. Not one <u>REMAINED</u>.’ (עשה) (דבר) (סור) (עבד) (שאר)</p>
DESCRIPTION OF MOSES AND/OR AARON:	<p>8:22 ‘But Moses <u>SAID</u>, “It would not be proper to do that, because [things] detestable to the Egyptians we will <u>SACRIFICE</u> to Yahweh our God. If we <u>SACRIFICE</u> [things] detestable to the Egyptians before their eyes, then will they not <u>STONE</u> us?”’ (אמר) (זבח) (זבח) (סקל)</p> <p>8:23 ‘A journey of three days we must <u>GO</u> into the wilderness and we will <u>SACRIFICE</u> to Yahweh our God according as he is <u>SAYING</u> to us’ (הלך) (זבח) (אמר)</p> <p>8:25 ‘Moses said, “Observe that I am <u>GOING OUT</u> from your people, and I will <u>PRAY</u> to Yahweh so that the swarms of insects will <u>TURN AWAY</u> tomorrow from Pharaoh, from his <u>SERVANTS</u> and from his people. Only don’t let Pharaoh continue <u>TO DECEIVE</u> by not <u>LETTING</u> the people <u>GO</u> to <u>SACRIFICE</u> to Yahweh.”’ (יצא) (עתר) (סור) (עבד) (תלל) (שלח Piel) (זבח)</p> <p>8:26 ‘Moses <u>WENT OUT</u> from being with Pharaoh, and he <u>PRAYED</u> to Yahweh’ (יצא) (עתר)</p>
DESCRIPTION OF MAGICIANS:	No mention
OUTCOME:	Pharaoh requests prayer, Moses prays to Yahweh, and the plague is lifted entirely.
DISTINCTION ISRAEL/EGYPT:	<p>8:18 ‘But on that day I will <u>SET APART/SEPARATE</u> the land of Goshen where my people remain, so that swarms of insects will not be there’ (פלה) Hiphil</p> <p>8:19 ‘I will set a <u>DIVISION</u> between my people and between your people’ (פָּדַת)</p> <p>8:20 ‘and in all the land of Egypt, the land was spoiled from the presence of the insects.’</p>
IMAGES:	<p>-divine control over natural elements</p> <p>-again, ‘creation’ of swarms of insects</p> <p>-מלא</p>
EXTRA MATERIAL:	8:21-25 Pharaoh’s partial allowance of Moses’ request (although redefinition of the terms) and further request for prayer is extra, similar to Plague #2, but all of this material has been incorporated into this chart.

PLAGUE #5: DEATH OF LIVESTOCK (9:1-7)

REFERENCE/ CONTEXT:	9:1-7 Plague #5: Death of Livestock
ARRANGEMENT:	Commission: 9:1-5 Execution: 9:6-7
COMMAND STRUCTURE:	In Commission: 9:1 'Yahweh <u>SAID</u> to Moses' (אמר) 9:1 (to Moses): 'you shall <u>SPEAK</u> to him [Pharaoh] (דבר) "Thus <u>SAYS</u> Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews'" (אמר)
COMMAND/ACT:	Preliminaries: 9:1 ' <u>GO</u> to Pharaoh' (בא) Request: 9:1 ' <u>LET</u> my people <u>GO</u> (שלח) Piel so they can <u>WORSHIP/SERVE</u> me' (עבד) Command/Act Proper: 9:3 'Observe that the <u>HAND</u> of Yahweh will be against your cattle (יד) which are in the field, against the horses, against the donkeys, against the camels, against the herds and against the flocks—a very <u>HEAVY</u> (כבד) <u>PLAGUE.</u> ' (דבר)
DESCRIPTION OF PHARAOH:	In Commission: 9:2 'if you <u>REFUSE</u> to (מאן) <u>LET</u> them <u>GO</u> , (שלח) Piel and continue to <u>HOLD</u> them' (מחזיק) In Execution: None Result: 9:7 'Pharaoh <u>SENT</u> and he observed that not even one from (קרא) the cattle of Israel was <u>DEAD</u> . (מות) But the <u>HEART/MIND</u> of Pharaoh (לב) <u>WAS HARDENED</u> and he (ן יִכְבֵּד) Qal did not <u>LET</u> the people <u>GO</u> ' (שלח) Piel
DESCRIPTION OF YAHWEH:	Intention: None stated *9:5 'So Yahweh set an <u>APPOINTED TIME</u> , (מועד) <u>SAYING</u> , (אמר) "Tomorrow Yahweh will <u>DO</u> this thing in the land" (עשה) *9:6 'Yahweh <u>DID</u> this thing from the next day' (עשה)
DESCRIPTION OF MOSES AND/OR AARON:	No mention
DESCRIPTION OF MAGICIANS:	No mention
OUTCOME:	All the cattle of the Egyptians is dead, none of the cattle of the Israelites is dead, yet Pharaoh's heart is hardened and the people are not released.

DISTINCTION ISRAEL/EGYPT:	<p>9:4 'But Yahweh will <u>DIVIDE/SEPARATE</u> between the cattle of Israel and between the cattle of Egypt, so that nothing will <u>DIE</u> from everything that belongs to the descendants of Israel.'</p> <p>9:6 'All the cattle of the Egyptians <u>DIED</u>, but not one was <u>DEAD</u> from the cattle of the descendants of Israel.'</p>	<p>(פלה) Hiphil (מות)</p>
IMAGES:	<p>-divine control over natural elements -Yahweh's ability to kill cattle, and also to ensure that no cattle of the Israelites is killed</p>	

PLAGUE #6: BOILS (9:8-12)

REFERENCE/ CONTEXT:	9:8-12 Plague #6: Boils
ARRANGEMENT:	Commission: 9:8-9 Execution: 9:10-12
COMMAND STRUCTURE:	In Commission: 9:8 'Yahweh SAID to Moses and to Aaron' (אמר)
COMMAND/ACT:	Preliminaries: None Request: None Command/Act Proper: 9:8 'TAKE for yourselves (לקח) ABUNDANT handfuls of soot from the furnace, and Moses (מלא) shall SCATTER it toward the heavens before the eyes of (זרק) Pharaoh.' 9:9 'It shall become a DUST over all the land of Egypt, and it will be (אבק) upon man and upon beast as BOILS breaking out in (שחין) BLISTERS in all the land of Egypt.' (אבעבֶּעֶת)
DESCRIPTION OF PHARAOH:	In Commission: None In Execution: None Result: 9:12 'Yahweh HARDENED the (נִיחַזַק) Piel HEART/MIND of Pharaoh, (לב) and he did not LISTEN to them (שמע) according as Yahweh HAD SPOKEN to Moses.' (דבר)
DESCRIPTION OF YAHWEH:	Intention: None stated
DESCRIPTION OF MOSES AND/OR AARON:	9:10 'So they TOOK soot from the furnace, and they (לקח) STOOD before Pharaoh, and Moses scattered it toward (עמד) the heavens and there were boils in blisters breaking out upon man and beast.'
DESCRIPTION OF MAGICIANS:	9:11 'The magicians were not able to STAND before Moses (עמד) because of the boils, for the boils were on the magicians and on all the Egyptians.'
OUTCOME:	There are boils breaking out in blisters over people and animals, the magicians can't even stand before Moses because they are so bad, yet Pharaoh's heart is still hardened.
DISTINCTION ISRAEL/EGYPT:	None stated (however 9:11 emphasizes the fact of the boils being on the magicians and all the Egyptians, with no mention of Moses or the Israelites being at all affected by them)
IMAGES:	-divine control over natural elements -soot from the furnace which become a dust made into boils -magicians unable to compete

PLAGUE #7: HAIL (9:13-35)

REFERENCE/ CONTEXT:	9:13-35 Plague #7: Hail
ARRANGEMENT:	Commission: 9:13-22 Execution: 9:23-35
COMMAND STRUCTURE:	In Commission: 9:13 'Yahweh <u>SAID</u> to Moses' (אמר) 9:13 (to Moses): 'you shall <u>SAY</u> to him [Pharaoh], "Thus <u>SAYS</u> Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews"' (אמר) 9:22 'Yahweh <u>SAID</u> to Moses' (אמר)
COMMAND/ACT:	Preliminaries: 9:13 ' <u>GET UP EARLY</u> in the morning, and <u>WAIT</u> for Pharaoh' (שכם) (יצב) Request: 9:13 ' <u>LET</u> my people <u>GO</u> so they can <u>WORSHIP/SERVE</u> me' (שלח) Piel (עבד) Command/Act Proper: 9:15 'For now I will <u>LET</u> my hand <u>LOOSE</u> and I will <u>STRIKE</u> you and your people with <u>PLAGUE</u> and you will be <u>DESTROYED</u> from the earth.' (שלח) (נכה) (דָּבַר) (כחד) 9:18 'Observe that I will <u>LET IT RAIN</u> at this time tomorrow—very <u>HEAVY</u> <u>HAIL</u> —which has not been like it in Egypt from the day when it was founded until now' (מטר) (כָּבֵד) (בָּרַד) 9:19 'Now, <u>SEND</u> , <u>SHELTER</u> your cattle and everything which belongs to you in the field. Every man and beast which is <u>FOUND</u> in the field and is not gathered to [its] home, the hail will <u>DESCEND</u> upon them and they will <u>DIE</u> .' (שלח) (עוּז) (מצא) (ירד) (מות) 9:22 ' <u>EXTEND</u> your <u>HAND</u> toward the heavens and hail will be in all the land of Egypt, upon man and upon beast and all the herbage of the field in the land of Egypt.' (נטה) (יָד)

DESCRIPTION OF PHARAOH:	<p>In Commission: 9:17 'You are still <u>ACTING HAUGHTILY</u> against my people not to <u>LET</u> them <u>GO</u>'</p> <p>In Execution: 9:27 'Then Pharaoh <u>SENT</u> and he <u>CALLED OUT</u> to Moses and to Aaron and he <u>SAID</u> to them, "I have <u>SINNED</u> this time. Yahweh is a <u>RIGHTEOUS ONE</u>, and I and my people are the <u>GUILTY ONES</u>." 9:28 <u>PRAY</u> to Yahweh, for that is enough thunder of God and hail. I will <u>LET</u> you <u>GO</u> and you shall not continue to remain.'"</p> <p>Result: 9:34 'When Pharaoh saw that the rain had stopped and the hail and the thunder, he continued <u>TO SIN</u>. He <u>HARDENED</u> his <u>HEART/MIND</u>, him and his servants.' 9:35 'The <u>HEART/MIND</u> of Pharaoh <u>WAS/BECAME HARDENED</u>, and he did not <u>LET</u> the descendants of Israel <u>GO</u> according as Yahweh <u>HAD SPOKEN</u> by the <u>HAND</u> of Moses'</p>	<p>(סלל) (שלח) Piel</p> <p>(שלח) (קרא) (אמר) (חטא) (צדיק) (הרשעים) (עתר) (שלח) Piel (עמד)</p> <p>(לחטא) (וַיִּכְבֵּד) Piel (לב) (לב) (וַיַּחֲזֵק) Qal (שלח) (דבר) (יד)</p>
DESCRIPTION OF YAHWEH:	<p>Intention: 9:14 'For this time I will <u>LET GO/SEND</u> all my <u>PESTILENCES</u> against your <u>HEART</u> and against your <u>SERVANTS</u> and against your people' in order that you will <u>KNOW</u> that there is no one like me in all the land/earth' 9:16 'However, [it is] for the sake of this that I have let you <u>STAND</u> in order to <u>SHOW</u> you my <u>STRENGTH</u>, and so that my name will be <u>RECOUNTED</u> in all the earth.' 9:29 'so that you will <u>KNOW</u> that to Yahweh [belongs] the earth'</p>	<p>(שלח) Qal (מגפה) (לב) (עבד) (ידע) (עמד) (ראה) (כה) (ספר) (ידע)</p>

DESCRIPTION OF MOSES AND/OR AARON:	<p>9:23 ‘So Moses extended his staff toward the heavens and Yahweh gave thunder and hail, and fire went [down] towards the earth, and Yahweh rained hail on the land of Egypt.’</p> <p>9:24 ‘There was hail and fire <u>FLASHING</u> here and there in the midst of the hail—very <u>THICK</u> hail—which there had not been like it in all the land of Egypt since it had become a <u>NATION</u>.’</p> <p>9:25 ‘And the hail <u>STRUCK</u> in all the land of Egypt everything which was in the field from man to beast; and all the herbage of the field the hail <u>STRUCK DOWN</u>, and all the trees of the field it <u>SHATTERED</u>.’</p> <p>9:29 ‘Then Moses <u>SAID</u> to him, “As I <u>GO OUT</u> of the city, I will <u>SPREAD OUT</u> my palms to Yahweh. The thunder will <u>STOP</u> and the hail will be no more so that you will <u>KNOW</u> that to Yahweh [belongs] the earth.</p> <p>9:30 You and your servants—I <u>KNOW</u> that you do not yet <u>FEAR</u> Yahweh God.”’</p> <p>9:33 ‘Then Moses <u>WENT OUT</u> of the city from being with Pharaoh, and he <u>SPREAD OUT</u> his palms to Yahweh. The thunder and the hail stopped, and the rain did not <u>POUR</u> toward the earth.’</p>
DESCRIPTION OF MAGICIANS:	No mention
OUTCOME:	Pharaoh requests prayer, Moses prays to Yahweh, and the plague is lifted entirely.
DISTINCTION ISRAEL/EGYPT:	<p>9:20 ‘The ones who <u>FEARED</u> the <u>WORD</u> of Yahweh from the <u>SERVANTS</u> of Pharaoh <u>GOT</u> their servants and their cattle <u>TO SAFETY</u> into their houses.’</p> <p>9:21 ‘But whoever did not set his mind to the <u>WORD</u> of Yahweh, he <u>LEFT</u> his servants and his cattle in the field.’</p> <p>9:26 ‘Only in the land of Goshen where the descendants of Israel were, there was no hail.’</p>
IMAGES:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -divine control over natural elements -storm-god imagery (control of rain, hail, and even fire/lightning), similar to theophany material of chapter 19 -9:22-25: reference to ‘man, beast and herbage of the field’ as well as ‘trees of the field’ sounds very much like the distortion of creation
EXTRA MATERIAL:	<p>9:31-32 ‘(Now the flax and the barley were <u>DESTROYED</u> because the barley was ripe but still soft, and the flax was in bud. But the wheat and the spelt were not <u>DESTROYED</u> because they were late in ripening.)’</p>

PLAGUE #8: LOCUSTS (10:1-20)

REFERENCE/ CONTEXT:	10:1-20 Plague #8: Locusts
ARRANGEMENT:	Commission: 10:1-12 Execution: 10:13-20
COMMAND STRUCTURE:	In Commission: 10:1 'Yahweh <u>SAID</u> to Moses' (אמר) 10:12 'Then Yahweh <u>SAID</u> to Moses' (אמר)
COMMAND/ACT:	Preliminaries: 10:1 ' <u>GO</u> to Pharaoh' (בא) Request: 10:3 ' <u>LET</u> my people <u>GO</u> so they can <u>WORSHIP/SERVE</u> me' (שלח) Piel (עבד) Command/Act Proper: 10:4 'Observe that I will <u>BRING</u> tomorrow <u>LOCUSTS</u> into your territory' (בוא) Hiphil (אֲרַבֶּה) 10:5 'And they will <u>COVER</u> the eye of the earth so that one will not be able to see the earth. And they will eat the <u>REMAINDER</u> of what is spared remaining for you from the hail and they will eat all your trees <u>SPROUTING</u> from the field.' (כסה) (שאר) 10:6 'They will <u>FILL</u> your houses and the houses of all your <u>SERVANTS</u> , and the houses of all the Egyptians which neither your fathers nor your grandfather's fathers have seen, from the day of their being upon the ground until this day.' (צמח) (מלא) (עבד) 10:12 ' <u>EXTEND</u> your <u>HAND</u> over the land of Egypt with locusts, that they may <u>ASCEND</u> over the land of Egypt. They will eat all the grass of the land and everything which <u>REMAINS</u> from the hail.' (נטה) (יד) (עלה) (שאר)

DESCRIPTION OF PHARAOH:	<p>In Commission:</p> <p>10:1 ‘for I [Yahweh] am <u>HARDENING</u> his <u>HEART/MIND</u> and the <u>HEART/MIND</u> of his <u>SERVANTS</u> in order that I may perform these my <u>SIGNS</u> in his midst’</p> <p>10:3 ‘For how long will you <u>REFUSE</u> to <u>HUMBLE</u> yourself before me?’</p> <p>10:4 ‘For if you <u>REFUSE</u> to <u>LET</u> my people <u>GO</u>’</p> <p>10:8 ‘and he [Pharaoh] <u>SAID</u> to them, “<u>Go!</u> <u>SERVE</u> Yahweh, your God. Who are the ones <u>GOING?</u>”’</p> <p>10:10 ‘he <u>SAID</u> to them, “Thus, may Yahweh be with you when I <u>LET</u> you and your children <u>GO</u>. Look, for evil is before your face.”’</p> <p>10:11 ‘No. Therefore, <u>GO</u>— the <u>MEN</u>—and <u>SERVE</u> Yahweh, for that is what you are <u>SEEKING.</u>’ And he <u>DROVE</u> them from the presence of Pharaoh.’</p> <p>In Execution:</p> <p>10:16 ‘Then Pharaoh hurried to <u>MEET</u> Moses and Aaron and he <u>SAID</u>, “I have <u>SINNED</u> against Yahweh your God and against you.”’</p> <p>10:17 Now, lift up my <u>SIN</u> indeed once and <u>PRAY</u> to Yahweh your God so that he will <u>REMOVE</u> from me this <u>DEATH.</u>”’</p> <p>Result:</p> <p>10:20 ‘Yahweh <u>HARDENED</u> the <u>HEART/MIND</u> of Pharaoh and he did not <u>LET</u> the descendants of Israel <u>GO</u>’</p>	<p>(כבד) Hiphil (לֵב) (עבד) (אֶתְתִּי) (מֵאֵן) (ענָה) (מֵאֵן) (שִׁלַּח) Piel (אָמַר) (הִלֵּף) (עבד) (הִלֵּף) (אָמַר) (שִׁלַּח) (הִלֵּף) (גְּבָרִים) (עבד) (בִּקֵּשׁ) (גָּרַשׁ) (קָרָא) (אָמַר) (חָטָא) (תְּשִׂאתִי) (עֲתַר) (סוּר) Hiphil (מָוֶת) (נִיחַזֵּק) Piel (לֵב) (שִׁלַּח) Piel</p>
DESCRIPTION OF YAHWEH:	<p>Intention:</p> <p>10:2 ‘and so that you will <u>RECOUNT</u> in the ears of your son and your son’s son how I <u>MADE A FOOL</u> of the Egyptians and with my <u>SIGNS</u> which I performed among them so that you will <u>KNOW</u> that I am Yahweh.’</p> <p>10:19 ‘Yahweh <u>CHANGED/TURNED</u> a very <u>STRONG</u> wind of the sea and it lifted the locusts and it <u>THRUST</u> them into the Sea of Reeds. Not one locust remained in all the territory of Egypt.’</p>	<p>(סָפַר) (עֲלַל) (אֶתְתִּי) (יָדַע) (הִפְךָ) (תְּזַק) (תִּקַּע)</p>

DESCRIPTION OF MOSES AND/OR AARON:	<p>10:3 'So Moses and Aaron <u>WENT</u> to Pharaoh and they <u>SAID</u> to him, "Thus <u>SAYS</u> Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews" 10:6 'Then he turned and he <u>WENT OUT</u> from Pharaoh.' 10:8 'Moses and Aaron <u>WERE BROUGHT BACK</u> to Pharaoh' 10:9 'Moses <u>SAID</u>, "With our youngsters and with our elders we will <u>GO</u>. With our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds we will <u>GO</u>, because it is our <u>FESTIVAL</u> to Yahweh." 10:13 'So Moses extended his staff over the land of Egypt and Yahweh drove a <u>WIND</u> from the <u>EAST</u> onto the land all that day and all night. When it was morning, the wind from the east <u>LIFTED</u> the locusts.' 10:14 'So the locusts <u>ASCENDED</u> over all the land of Egypt, and they <u>SETTLED</u> in all the territory of Egypt. Such very <u>THICK</u> locusts had never been before nor afterward.' 10:15 'They covered the eye of all the earth so that the earth became <u>DARK</u> and they ate all the grass of the land and all the fruit of the trees which <u>REMAINED</u> from the hail. And nothing <u>GREEN</u> was left on the trees or among the grass of the field in all the land of Egypt.' 10:18 'Then he <u>WENT OUT</u> from being with Pharaoh and he <u>PRAYED</u> to Yahweh.'</p>	<p>(בֵּא) (אמר) (אמר) (יצא) (יושב) (אמר) (הלך) (הלך) (חג) (רוח) (קדים) (נשא) (עלה) (נוח) (כבד) (חשך) (יתר) (ירק) (יצא) (עתר)</p>
DESCRIPTION OF MAGICIANS:	No mention	
OUTCOME:	Pharaoh requests prayer, Moses prays to Yahweh, and the plague is lifted entirely. Then Yahweh hardens the heart of Pharaoh.	
DISTINCTION ISRAEL/EGYPT:	<p>10:7 'The servants of Pharaoh <u>SAID</u> to him, "For how long will this one [person] be to us a <u>TRAP</u>? <u>LET</u> the men <u>GO</u> that they may <u>WORSHIP/SERVE</u> Yahweh their God. Do you not yet <u>KNOW</u> that Egypt is becoming destroyed?"</p>	<p>(אמר) (מוקש) (שלח) (עבד) (ידע)</p>
IMAGES:	<p>-divine control over natural elements -control of locusts -creation language</p>	
EXTRA MATERIAL:	10:16-18; prayer of Pharaoh	

PLAGUE #9: DARKNESS (10:21-29)

REFERENCE/ CONTEXT:	10:21-29 Plague #9: Darkness
ARRANGEMENT:	Commission: 10:21 Execution: 10:22-29
COMMAND STRUCTURE:	In Commission: 10:21 'Yahweh <u>SAID</u> to Moses' (אמר)
COMMAND/ACT:	Preliminaries: None Request: None Command/Act Proper: 10:21 ' <u>EXTEND</u> your (נטה) <u>HAND</u> toward the heavens and (יד) <u>DARKNESS</u> will be upon the land of Egypt and [the] (חשך) darkness will be <u>FELT</u> .' (משש)
DESCRIPTION OF PHARAOH:	In Commission: None In Execution: 10:24 'Then Pharaoh <u>CALLED</u> to Moses and he (קרא) <u>SAID</u> , (אמר) "Go! (הלך) <u>SERVE</u> Yahweh. Only your flocks and your herds shall (עבד) be <u>LEFT BEHIND</u> . Even your small children can (יצג) <u>GO</u> with you.'" (הלך) Result: 10:27 'Yahweh <u>HARDENED</u> the (וַיְחַזֶּק) Piel <u>HEART/MIND</u> of Pharaoh (לב) and he did not <u>CONSENT</u> to (אָבָה) <u>LET</u> them <u>GO</u> ' (שלח) Piel 10:28 'Then Pharaoh <u>SAID</u> to him, (אמר) "Go from me! Be careful! Don't continue to see my (הלך) face, for on the day when you see my face, you will <u>DIE</u> .'" (מות)
DESCRIPTION OF YAHWEH:	Intention: None stated

<p>DESCRIPTION OF MOSES AND/OR AARON:</p>	<p>10:22 ‘So Moses extended his hand toward the heavens and there was <u>BLACK</u> (אֲפֵלָה) <u>DARKNESS</u> in all the land of Egypt for three days.’ (חֹשֶׁךְ)</p> <p>10:23 ‘No one could see his brother, nor did anyone rise from his place for three days.’</p> <p>10:25 ‘Moses <u>SAID</u>, (אמר) “Also, you shall put into our hands <u>SACRIFICES</u> and (זְבָחִים) <u>BURNT OFFERINGS</u> (עֹלוֹת) which we shall make to Yahweh our God.</p> <p>10:26 And also our cattle will <u>GO</u> with us. (הלך) Not a <u>HOOF</u> will (פְּרָסָה) <u>REMAIN</u>, for from them we must take (שאר) to <u>SERVE/WORSHIP</u> Yahweh our (עבד) God. We ourselves do not <u>KNOW</u> [with] what we shall (ידע) <u>SERVE/WORSHIP</u> Yahweh until we (עבד) <u>COME</u> there.” (בא)</p> <p>10:29 ‘Moses <u>SAID</u>, (אמר) “Thus you [Pharaoh] have <u>SPOKEN</u>. I will not continue to (דבר) see your face.”’</p>
<p>DESCRIPTION OF MAGICIANS:</p>	<p>No mention</p>
<p>OUTCOME:</p>	<p>There’s no mention of the darkness lifting, but both vv. 22 and 23 mention that it is for a three day period. V.27 says Yahweh hardened Pharaoh’s heart and he did not consent to let them go, yet it sounds like Pharaoh sends the people out.</p>
<p>DISTINCTION ISRAEL/EGYPT:</p>	<p>None stated 10:23 ‘But to all the descendants of Israel, light was in their dwelling-place’ is probably concerned with its creation nuances</p>
<p>IMAGES:</p>	<p>-divine control over natural elements -control of darkness and light -explicit creation motif with ‘darkness’ theme</p>

PLAGUE #10: DEATH OF FIRSTBORN (11:1-10; 12:29-41)

REFERENCE/ CONTEXT:	11:1-10; 12:29-41 Plague #10: Death of Firstborn
ARRANGEMENT:	Commission: 11:1-10 Execution: 12:29-41 (specifically, vv. 29-30)
COMMAND STRUCTURE:	<p>In Commission:</p> <p>11:1 'Yahweh <u>SAID</u> to Moses' (אמר)</p> <p>11:9 'Then Yahweh <u>SAID</u> to Moses' (אמר)</p> <p>In Extra Material:</p> <p>12:1 'Then Yahweh <u>SPOKE</u> to Moses and to Aaron in the land of Egypt, <u>SAYING</u>,' (אמר)</p> <p>12:3 '<u>SPEAK</u> to all the <u>CONGREGATION</u> of Israel, <u>SAYING</u>,' (אמר)</p> <p>12:43 'Then Yahweh <u>SAID</u> to Moses and Aaron,' (אמר)</p> <p>13:1 'Then Yahweh <u>SPOKE</u> to Moses, <u>SAYING</u>,' (דבר) Piel (אמר)</p>

COMMAND/ACT:

Preliminaries:

- 11:1 “One more PLAGUE I will
BRING upon Pharaoh and upon the
Egyptians; afterwards, he will LET you GO from there.’
When he LETS you GO,
he will COMPLETELY
DRIVE YOU AWAY from there.”
- 11:2 ‘SPEAK into the ears of the people so that each man will
ASK from his neighbour and each woman will ASK from
her neighbour [for] vessels of silver and vessels of gold.’

Request:

None

Command/Act Proper:

- 11:4 ‘About midnight, I will GO OUT in the midst of Egypt.’
- 11:5 ‘All the FIRSTBORN in the land of Egypt will
DIE, from the
FIRSTBORN of Pharaoh—the one dwelling on his throne—
to the FIRSTBORN of the maidservant who is behind the
handmill, and all of the FIRSTBORN of the cattle.’
- 11:6 ‘And a great CRY will be in all the land of Egypt, which has
not been like it and which shall not be like it again.’
- 11:8 ‘And all of these your SERVANTS will
COME DOWN to me and they will
BOW DOWN to me, saying,
“GO OUT! You and all the people who are following you.”
Then after this, I will GO OUT.’
- 12:29 ‘Now it was at midnight when Yahweh STRUCK all the
FIRSTBORN in the land of Egypt, from the FIRSTBORN of
Pharaoh—the one dwelling on his throne—to the FIRSTBORN
of the CAPTIVE who was in the house of the pit/dungeon
and all of the FIRSTBORN of the cattle.’

(נָּבַע)

(בִּרְא) Hiphil

(שִׁלַּח) Piel

(שִׁלַּח) Piel

(פָּלַח)

(גָּרַשׁ) 2x

(דִּבֶּר)

(שָׁאַל)

(יֵצֵא)

(בָּכֹר)

(מוֹת)

(בָּכֹר)

(בָּכֹר)

(צִעֲקָה)

(עֲבַד)

(יָרַד)

(שָׁחָה)

(יֵצֵא)

(יֵצֵא)

(נָכָה)

(בָּכֹר)

(בָּכֹר)

(בָּכֹר)

DESCRIPTION OF PHARAOH:	<p>In Commission: 11:9 “Pharaoh will not <u>LISTEN</u> to you in order that my <u>WONDERS</u> will be <u>MANY</u> in the land of Egypt.” 11:10 ‘Yahweh <u>HARDENED</u> the <u>HEART</u> of Pharaoh and he did not <u>LET</u> the descendants of Israel <u>GO</u> from his land’.</p> <p>In Execution: 12:30 ‘Then Pharaoh <u>AROSE</u> in the night—he and all of his <u>SERVANTS</u> and all the Egyptians—and a great <u>CRY</u> was in Egypt, because there was not a house which did not have <u>SOMEONE DEAD</u> in it.’</p> <p>Result: 12:31 ‘Then he <u>CALLED OUT</u> to Moses and to Aaron in the night and he <u>SAID</u>, “<u>ARISE!</u> <u>GO OUT</u> from the midst of my people, both you and the descendants of Israel, and <u>GO</u> <u>WORSHIP</u> Yahweh as you have <u>SPOKEN</u>.’ 12:32 <u>TAKE</u> your flocks and your herds as you have <u>SAID</u> and <u>GO</u>, and you shall also <u>BLESS</u> me.”’</p>	<p>(שמע) (מופת) (רב) (וַיַּחֲזֹק) Piel (לב) (שלח) Piel (קום) (עבד) (צַעֲקָה) (מת) (קרא) (אמר) (קום) (יצא) (הלך) (עבד) (דבר) Piel (לקח) (דבר) Piel (הלך) (ברך)</p>
DESCRIPTION OF YAHWEH:	<p>Intention: None stated</p>	
DESCRIPTION OF MOSES AND/OR AARON:	<p>11:4 ‘Then Moses <u>SAID</u>, “Thus <u>SAYS</u> Yahweh,” 11:8 ‘And he <u>WENT OUT</u> from being with Pharaoh in the <u>HEAT</u> of <u>NOSE</u> (anger). 11:10 ‘Then Moses and Aaron <u>DID</u> all of these <u>WONDERS</u> before Pharaoh’. 12:21 ‘Then Moses <u>CALLED</u> to all the <u>ELDERS</u> of Israel and he <u>SAID</u> to them, “<u>DRAW OUT</u> and <u>TAKE</u> for yourselves sheep according to your <u>FAMILIES</u>, and <u>SLAUGHTER</u> the <u>PASSOVER</u>.”’</p>	<p>(אמר) (אמר) (יצא) (חרי) (אף) (עשה) (מופת) (קרא) (זקן) (אמר) (משה) (לקח) (משפחתיהם) (שחט) (הפסח)</p>
DESCRIPTION OF MAGICIANS:	<p>No mention</p>	
OUTCOME:	<p>12:29-30 Death of Egyptian firstborn</p>	

DISTINCTION ISRAEL/EGYPT:	<p>11:7 'But to all the descendants of Israel, a dog will not threaten his tongue to either man or to beast, so that you will <u>KNOW</u> (ידע) that Yahweh is <u>MAKING A DISTINCTION</u> between the Egyptians (פלה) and between Israel.'</p> <hr/> <p>12:33 'But the Egyptians <u>URGED</u> the people to hastily (חזק) Qal <u>LET THEM GO/SEND THEM OUT</u> (שלח) Piel from the land because they said, "All of us are <u>DYING</u>".' (מתים)</p>
EXTRA MATERIAL:	<p>Narration/References to the Exodus:</p> <p>11:3 'Then Yahweh <u>GAVE</u> (נתן) <u>FAVOUR/GRACE</u> to the people in the eyes of the Egyptians. (חן) Even the man Moses was <u>VERY GREAT</u> in the land of Egypt— (גדול מאד) in the eyes of the <u>SERVANTS</u> of Pharaoh and in the eyes of (עבד) the people.'</p> <p>-12:34-41: Narrative describing the exit of the people from Egypt</p> <p>-12:35 'The descendants of Israel <u>DID</u> according to the (עשה) <u>WORD</u> of Moses' (דבר)</p> <p>-12:36 'Then Yahweh <u>GAVE</u> (נתן) <u>FAVOUR/GRACE</u> to the people in the eyes of (חן) the Egyptians.'</p> <p>-12:39 '... because they were/had been <u>DRIVEN</u> from Egypt' (גרש)</p> <p>-12:41 '... all the <u>HOSTS</u> of Yahweh (צבאות) <u>WENT OUT</u> from the land of Egypt.' (יצא)</p> <p>-12:50 'Then all the descendants of Israel <u>DID</u> thus. (עשה) According as Yahweh had <u>COMMANDED</u> Moses and (צוה) Aaron, thus they <u>DID</u>.' (עשה)</p> <p>-12:51 'And it was/came about on that same day, that Yahweh <u>BROUGHT</u> the descendants of Israel from the (יצא) Hiphil land of Egypt by their <u>HOSTS</u>.' (צבאות)</p> <p>Cultic:</p> <p>-12:1-13, 21-28, 42-51: Regulations Regarding the Passover</p> <p>-12:14-20: Regulations Regarding the Feast of Unleavened Bread</p> <p>-13:3-10: Provisions for the Feast of Unleavened Bread</p> <p>-13:11-16: Catechetical section discussing Dedication of the Firstborn</p>

Appendix Three: *Signs, Wonders & Related Miscellanea* in the Exodus Story*

*Denotes terms other than אֹת or מוֹפֵת
(Grouped According to Sequence in Text)

REFERENCE/OBJECT:	WORD USED:	EXPLANATION:
3:12 -Descendants of Israel	הָאֹת (noun: אֹת)	In commission of Moses, Yahweh says 'This will be the <u>SIGN</u> that I have sent you; when I have brought the people from Egypt, they will worship God upon this mountain'.
3:20 -Egyptians	נִפְלְאוֹתַי (either Niphal participle from פִּלַּא or noun (נִפְלְאוֹת))	In commission of Moses, Yahweh says 'I will strike the Egyptians with all of my <u>MARVELS</u> which I will do in their midst, and after this, he will let them go'.
4:8 (2x) -Descendants of Israel	הָאֹת	After giving the first two signs to Moses (staff to serpent/leperous hand), Yahweh says 'If they (i.e. the descendants of Israel) do not believe you and they do not listen to the voice of the first <u>SIGN</u> , then they will believe on account of the voice of the second <u>SIGN</u> '.
4:9 -Descendants of Israel	הָאֹתוֹת	Then Yahweh says to Moses in introducing the third sign 'If they do not believe even on account of these two <u>SIGNS</u> and they do not listen to your voice, then you shall take from the waters of the Nile and you shall pour it on dry ground, and the waters which you took from the Nile will become blood on the ground'.
4:17 -Descendants of Israel	הָאֹתוֹת	After the commission of Moses in chs. 3-4, when Moses is returning to Egypt, Yahweh says 'You shall take this staff in your hand with which you shall do the <u>SIGNS</u> '.
4:21 -Pharaoh	הַמִּפְתִּים (noun: מוֹפֵת)	In a section which is a seeming editorial expansion for purposes of clarification and one which refers to the signs that Moses had been given for the descendants of Israel, Yahweh says to Moses 'When you go to return to Egypt, see all of the <u>WONDERS</u> which I have set in your hand, and you shall do them before Pharaoh, but I will harden his heart and he will not let the people go'.
4:28 -Descendants of Israel	הָאֹתוֹת	After Moses has met up with Aaron, subsequent to his commission, the narrator informs the reader 'Then Moses told Aaron all the words of Yahweh which he had sent him, and all the <u>SIGNS</u> which he had commanded him'.
4:30 -Descendants of Israel	הָאֹתוֹת	After Moses has met up with Aaron and gather the elders of Israel, he performs 'the <u>SIGNS</u> before the eyes of the people' with the result that they believe.

5:3	*דָּבַר	In the context of Moses and Aaron's request to Pharaoh to let the people go for a three-days journey, they give the excuse 'so that he [Yahweh] will not encounter them with <u>PLAGUE</u> or with the sword'.
-Descendants of Israel		
7:3	אֶתֵּי	Just before the Prologue to the Plagues, Yahweh says to Moses 'I will harden the heart of Pharaoh, and I will increase my <u>SIGNS</u> . . . in the land of Egypt'.
-Pharaoh, Egyptians		
7:3	מוֹפְתֵי	Just before the Prologue to the Plagues, Yahweh says to Moses 'I will harden the heart of Pharaoh, and I will increase my . . . my <u>WONDERS</u> in the land of Egypt'.
-Pharaoh, Egyptians		
7:9	מוֹפֵת	In the Prologue to the Plagues, Yahweh says to Moses 'When Pharaoh says to you "Make for yourselves a <u>WONDER</u> ", then you shall say to Aaron, "Take your staff and throw it before Pharaoh, and it will become a serpent" '.
-Pharaoh		
8:19	הָאֵת	In the context of the fourth Plague (Insects), Yahweh gives words for Moses to bring to Pharaoh, concluding with 'By tomorrow, this <u>SIGN</u> shall be'.
-Pharaoh & Egyptians		
9:3	*דָּבַר	In the context of the fifth Plague (Death to Livestock), Yahweh refers to this as a 'very heavy <u>PLAGUE</u> '.
-Pharaoh & Egyptians		
9:14	*מַגֵּפָה (from verb: נָגַף)	In the seventh Plague (Hail), Yahweh gives the message for Pharaoh to Moses and says 'For this time, I will let loose all my <u>PESTILENCES</u> . . . '.
-Pharaoh & Egyptians		
9:15	*דָּבַר	Again in the seventh Plague (Hail), Yahweh says 'I will strike you and your people with <u>PLAGUE</u> . . . '.
-Pharaoh & Egyptians		
10:1	אֶתֵּי	In the eighth Plague (Locusts), Yahweh says 'Go to Pharaoh, because I am hardening his heart and the hearts of his servants so that I may set these my <u>SIGNS</u> in his midst'.
-Pharaoh & Egyptians		
10:2	אֶתֵּי	Again in the eighth Plague (Locusts), reference to '. . . my <u>SIGNS</u> which I set among them'.
-Pharaoh & Egyptians		
10:17	*מָוֶת	Pharaoh requests prayer from Moses during the eighth Plague (Locusts) so that Yahweh will 'remove from me this <u>DEATH</u> '.
-Pharaoh		

11:1 -Pharaoh & Egyptians	נֶגַע*	Prefacing the final Plague (Death of Firstborn), Yahweh refers to it by saying to Moses 'With one more <u>AFFLICTION</u> , I will bring you out from Pharaoh and from the Egyptians'.
11:9 -Pharaoh & Egyptians	מוֹפְתֵי	After Moses has told Pharaoh about the final Plague (Death of Firstborn), Yahweh says to Moses 'Pharaoh will not listen to you so that my <u>WONDERS</u> will be many in the land of Egypt'.
11:10 -Pharaoh	הַמִּפְתִּים	After Yahweh has told Moses (with respect to the final Plague of Death of Firstborn) that Pharaoh will not listen, it says that 'Moses and Aaron did all these <u>WONDERS</u> before Pharaoh'.
12:13 -Future Generations	אוֹת	Within the Regulations regarding Passover, Yahweh says to Moses and Aaron that he will pass over when he sees the blood because 'the blood shall be a <u>SIGN</u> for you'.
12:13 -Future Generations	נֶגֶךְ*	Within the Regulations regarding Passover, Yahweh says to Moses and Aaron that he will pass over when he sees the blood and that 'no <u>BLOW</u> shall be upon you'.
13:9 -Future Generations	אוֹת	The Feast of Unleavened Bread will serve as 'a <u>SIGN</u> upon your hand' when it is told to their sons in the future in the land (13:5, 8) what Yahweh did when he brought the descendants of Israel out of Egypt.
13:16 -Future Generations	אוֹת	The Dedication of the Firstborn serves as 'a <u>SIGN</u> upon your hand' in the future in the land (13:11) because of how Yahweh brought the descendants of Israel out of Egypt.
15:11 -Egyptians, all Nations	פְּלֵא	In poem, Yahweh is seen after the fact as 'working <u>MARVELS</u> '.

Working Definitions:

אוֹת	—	'Sign'
נִפְלְאוֹת	—	'Marvel'
מוֹפְתֵי	—	'Wonder'
דֶּבֶר	—	'Plague'
מִגֵּפָה	—	'Pestilence'
מָוֶת	—	'Death'
נֶגַע	—	'Affliction'
נֶגֶךְ	—	'Blow'
פְּלֵא	—	'Wonder'

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