A Literary-Critical Analysis of the Role of Genesis 38 within Genesis 37-50 as Part of the Primary Narrative (Genesis – 2 Kings) of the Hebrew Bible

By

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For my parents and family

with gratitude and love

Abstract

The present thesis argues that the story of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38 is to be read as the type narrative of the genealogical tensions within Genesis 37-50 and the Primary Narrative (Genesis – 2 Kings). Historical interpreters and literary critics have disagreed over whether this chapter is to be read as a disconnected episode or as a story integral to the surrounding narratives, often given the title 'the Joseph Story'. The argument here is that Genesis 38 does not simply belong to the so-called 'Joseph Story' but is an essential partner to the surrounding chapters in the larger narrative running from Genesis to 2 Kings; the history of David's Judahite lineage. Genesis 38 indeed is about building Judah's and Tamar's family, which turns out to be at once Abraham's family and David's.

From a narratological perspective, the main characters, Judah and Tamar, both play pivotal roles in this chapter and also in the wider story. Judah's character in Genesis 38 at a micro level represents him as the reluctant and despotic father of his family who is brought to accept his own failings. On the macro level, that is within Genesis 37-50, this transformation of Judah's character allows for his role to become that of family spokesman and leader of his brothers. While Joseph seems to be more powerful as the governor in Egypt, Judah ultimately has the more significant role as the deputy of Jacob's family in Canaan. Judah's character develops through the sequence 'Departure-Transition-Return'. In the end, Jacob's blessing of Judah (Gen. 49:8-12) is the most favourable he gives to any of his twelve sons. In retrospect, this creates for Judah the status of a fourth patriarch succeeding Jacob. As such, the argument is presented that the novella of Genesis 37-50 should not be labelled as it is traditionally 'the Joseph Story' or 'the Jacob Story'. Instead, it would be more accurate to call this unit *The Story of Jacob and his Sons.* Genesis 38 is situated in the novella as the epitome of the genealogical ambivalences that are the context for the whole Primary Narrative.

Tamar, the sparring partner of her father-in-law Judah, shows a twofold role in her story in Genesis 38; she is both a matriarch within the Abrahamic lineage and at the same time the type of the marginal and widowed woman as mother in Israel. Surviving a period of trial as a childless widow, she finally succeeds in giving birth to the heirs of Judah by means of a plan that she herself devises. Tamar embodies all the key features of the role of the previous four matriarchs (Sarah, Rebekah, Leah and Rachel) and foreshadows the characteristics of women such as Ruth and Bathsheba who become the mothers of the Davidic line; they too are widows and marginal women within the Primary Narrative. Tamar can thus be presented as both the fifth matriarch, and also the representative of the later marginalised mothers of the Davidic line. Tamar is the crucial link.

The characterisation of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38 can be understood using the binary thematic-symmetrical structure and what I called the *bucket-shaped* structure with its three themes: family building (+), shame (-) and deceit (-). These structures give this family a genealogical function which is typical in the Primary Narrative. Genesis 38, far from being some rather awkward insertion into the story of Joseph, is an integral part of 'the story of Jacob and his Sons'. Through the kind of genealogical twists which Genesis 38 epitomises, this wider story turns out, unexpectedly, not so much to be the story of Abraham's descendants, as the story of the Davidic line.

Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	David Noel Friedman (ed.), *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (6 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1992).
AJSR	*Association for Jewish Studies Review*
AUSS	*Andrews University Seminary Studies*
BASOR	*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
BDB	Francis Brown, S.R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs, *The New Brown – Driver – Briggs – Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1979).
BHS	*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*
BibInt	*Biblical Interpretation: A Journal of Contemporary Approaches*
BIS	Biblical Interpretation Series
BSac	*Bibliotheca Sacra*
BTB	*Biblical Theology Bulletin: A Journal of Bible and Theology*
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CBQMS	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly,* Monograph Series
CI	*Critical Inquiry*
CJud	*Conservative Judaism*
CQ	*Covenant Quarterly*
CRBS	*Currents in Biblical Research: Biblical Studies*
CSSH	*Comparative Studies in Society and History*
CTR	*Criswell Theological Review*
EABS	European Association of Biblical Studies
EM	*Encyclopedia Miqrait*
EncJud	*Encyclopaedia Judaica*
EvQ	*The Evangelical Quarterly*
ExpTim	*Expository Times*
HALOT	Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Study Edition, vol. I, II; Leiden: Brill, 2001).
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*

ICC	International Critical Commentary
IDB	*The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*
IDBSup	*The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible,* Supplementary Volume
Int	*Interpretation*
JCR	*The Japan Christian Review*
JANES	*Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JBQ	*Jewish Bible Quarterly*
JBS	Jerusalem Biblical Studies
JCR	*The Japan Christian Review*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JHS	*The Journal of Hebrew Scriptures (Internet)*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JPS	The Jewish Publication Society
JQR	*The Jewish Quarterly Review*
JR	*Journal of Religion*
JSJSup	*Journal for the Study of Judaism,* Supplements
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament,* Supplement Series
KJCS	*Korea Journal of Christian Studies*
LCBI	Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation
LT	*(Journal of) Literature & Theology*
LTJ	*Lutheran Theological Journal*
LTQ	*Lexington Theological Quarterly*
LXX	Septuagint (the Greek OT)
MLA	*Modern Language Association*
MT	Masoretic Text
NIB	*The New Interpreter's Bible*
NICOT	The New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIV	New International Version
NJPS	*Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures: The New JPS Translation according to the Traditional Hebrew Text*
NKJV	New King James Version
NovT	*Novem Testamentum*
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version

OBT	Overtures to Biblical Theology
OTL	Old Testament Library
OTS	Old Testament Studies
OtSt	*Oudtestamentische Studiën*
PBM	Paternoster Biblical Monographs
PIBA	Proceedings of the Irish Biblical Association
Proof	*Prooftexts : A Journal of Jewish Literary History*
PRSt	*Perspectives in Religious Studies*
PT	*Poetics Today*
ResQ	*Restoration Quarterly*
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLSS	Society of Biblical Literature Semeia Studies
SBTS	Sources for Biblical and Theological Study
SJOT	*Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*
SOTS	Society for Old Testament
SOTSMS	Society for Old Testament Study Monograph Series
SP	Samaritan Pentateuch
SWR	Studies in Women and Religion
Targ	Targum
TynBul	*Tyndale Bulletin*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WW	*Word and World*
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*

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Introduction

Re-reading the Story of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38

> *The story [Gen. 38] is well known and we find it to be full of human interest, with subtle turns in the plot, and a good helping of irony.*[1]

Preliminary Remarks: Statements of the Issue and Research Questions

Two Trends in Studies on Genesis 38: Discontinuity and Continuity

The purpose of this thesis is to study the role of Genesis 38 within a series of contexts within the Primary Narrative (Genesis – 2 Kings)[2] from the viewpoint of literary analysis, and in particular, narrative criticism. Many scholars in recent decades have paid attention to exploring the story of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38[3] and it can be considered an acute example of the dilemmas presented to biblical readers in that so many varied ways of perceiving the function and placement of this text are available. Some believe that the contents of this chapter are distinct and disconnected from the preceding and following chapters. For example, Gerhard von Rad insists that, 'Every attentive reader can see that the story of Judah and Tamar has no connection at all with the strictly organized Joseph story at whose beginning it is now inserted...the Joseph story knows nothing at all about Judah's separation from his brothers.'[4] Walter Brueggemann also alleges that, 'This peculiar chapter [Gen. 38] stands alone, without connection to its context. It is isolated in every way and is most enigmatic.'[5] Similarly, Claus Westermann concurs with the above saying, 'Ch. 38 is a

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[1] Carol Smith, 'The Story of Tamar: A Power-filled Challenge to the Structure of Power', in George J. Brooke (ed.), *Women in the Biblical Tradition* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), pp. 16-28, (16).

[2] I will discuss this terminology in greater detail in later sections.

[3] Clifford says, 'This chapter [Gen. 38] is a fertile ground for promising new approaches in biblical studies – feminist [Phyllis Bird, 1989; Morimura Nobuko, 1993; Melissa Jackson, 2002], literary [Robert Alter, 1981; Edward M. Curtis, 1991; Anthony J. Lambe, 1998, Wilfried Warning, 2000] and structuralist [Edmund Leach, 1969; Martin O'Callaghan, 1981; Diane M. Sharon, 2005].' Richard J. Clifford, 'Genesis 38: Its Contribution to the Jacob Story', *CBQ* 66 (2004), pp. 519-32 (519); In addition, Mathewson states, 'Genesis 38 has generated more frustration than enthusiasm among its interpreters.' See Steven D. Mathewson, 'An Exegetical Study of Genesis 38', *BSac* 146 (1989), pp. 373-92 (373).

[4] Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (trans. John H. Mark; OTL; London: SCM Press Ltd., 1972), pp. 356-57.

[5] Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis* (Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching; Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), p. 307.

self-contained individual narrative.'[6] These textual critics all have in common that they recognise the peculiarity of the placement of Genesis 38 with regard to its 'problematic chronology and the chapter's obscure connection to its immediate context'.[7] The closing verse of Genesis 37, the first and the last verses of Genesis 38 and the opening verse of Genesis 39 read as follows:

> Meanwhile, the Midianites had sold him [Joseph] in Egypt to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard. (Gen. 37:36 NRSV)[8]
>
> It happened at that time that Judah went down from his brothers and settled near a certain Adullamite whose name was Hirah...Afterward his brother [Perez] came out with the crimson thread on his hand; and he was named Zerah. (Gen. 38:1, 30 NRSV)
>
> Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there. (Gen. 39:1 NRSV)

It appears that chapter 39:1 repeats and recapitulates chapter 37:36 due to the interruption of chapter 38. It is, therefore, not surprising that chapter 38 is seen as having nothing to do with the surrounding chapters, perhaps with the exception of the character of Judah.[9]

However, others argue that the Judah-Tamar story is appropriate as it stands in the narrative sequence from Genesis 37 to 50. Umberto Cassuto states that '...our section [Gen. 38] cannot be detached from the preceding text...there is a kind of internal nexus [around six verbal roots] between the story of Tamar and Judah and the selling of Joseph, which is reflected in the correspondence of certain details in the two sections and is clearly manifested

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[6] Claus Westerrmann, *Genesis 37-50: A Commentary* (trans. John J. Scullion; Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986), p. 49.

[7] For discussion on the problematic chronology of Genesis 38 and surrounding narratives, see Jon Choi, *The Significance of Narrative Interruptions in the Patriarchal History* (Unpublished PhD Dissertation; Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2005), pp. 55-59 (56).

[8] Quotations from the Bible in this thesis are usually taken from the NRSV (New Revised Standard Version).

[9] George Aichele *et al.*, *The Postmodern Bible: The Bible and Culture Collective* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 75.

in the parallel expressions that denote these details'.[10] In his influential book on the literary artistry of the biblical narrative, Robert Alter suggests to readers 'how it [Gen. 38] works in itself and how it interacts with the surrounding narrative material'.[11] Cassuto and Alter have shed light on the thematic and linguistic parallels between Genesis 38 and the previous and subsequent chapters (Gen. 37 and 39). Anthony J. Lambe also puts forward the idea that 'the episode of Genesis 38 is intimately related to the Joseph story', asserting the idea that Judah plays a significant role in the following narratives.[12] These scholars take the standpoint that the story of Judah and Tamar is inevitably connected to the immediate narratives and it is important to understand its context. When interpreting the seeming anomaly of Genesis 38 in its present position, the first group of scholars (von Rad, Brueggemann, and Westermann) maintain the idea of its accidental occurrence and the notion that it is generated by editorial inconsistencies, while the second group of scholars (Cassuto, Alter, and Lambe) emphasise the communicative strategies of the author (or editor).

We can divide scholarship on the Judah-Tamar story in this area as a whole into two tendencies: one that emphasises the discontinuity and one that focuses on the continuity of the chapter in relation to other chapters. These different readings could be said, in most cases, to be the result of the scholar's adherence to specific research perspectives in 'biblical criticism'[13] in a wider sense; one is the historical (or 'historico'[14])-critical approach, the so-

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[10] Umberto Cassuto, 'The Story of Tamar and Judah', in *Biblical and Oriental Studies* (vol. 1: Bible; trans. Israel Abrahams; Jerusalem: Magnes Press/Hebrew University, 1973), p. 30.

[11] Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), p. 3.

[12] Anthony J. Lambe, 'Judah's Development: The Pattern of Departure – Transition – Return', *JSOT* 83 (1999), pp. 53-68 (68).

[13] The term, 'Biblical Criticism refers in the broadest sense to the use of rational judgment in understanding the Bible. So defined, biblical criticism is a part of all biblical interpretation. More narrowly, however, it refers to an approach to the study of scripture that is centrally concerned with searching for and applying neutral, i.e., scientific and non-sectarian, canons of judgment in its investigation of the biblical text...Until the middle of the 20th cent., biblical criticism was essentially synonymous with HISTORICAL CRITICISM, which began to appear little more than two centuries ago; today that definition is too narrow...biblical criticism now includes approaches that are not historical in the traditional sense but are designed to address other dimensions of the text (i.e., "the world of the text," "the world in front of the text").' See Richard N. Soulen and R. Kendall Soulen, 'Biblical Criticism', in *Handbook of Biblical Criticism* (3rd rev. edn; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), p. 18; Barton defines it as follows, 'Biblical criticism means a particular *type* of study of the Bible, rather than referring to all biblical studies as such...And very often the term is used evaluatively, whether for good or ill.' See John Barton, *The Nature of Biblical Criticism* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), p. 2.

[14] Barton, *The Nature of Biblical Criticism*, p. 1.

called diachronic and vertical analysis, and the other is the literary-critical method, that is. synchronic and horizontal.[15] The former is mainly concerned with research on genetic or material (source) questions in order to restore the original or authentic form of the narratives. whereas the latter addresses the text 'in its final form as a unity'[16] and focuses on the literary style, structural features, characters, plot and the like. To put it another way, historical interpreters aim to get information regarding *the world behind the text*, while literary critics seek to study *the world of (within or in) the text* (the text as it is or the text as a unified whole).[17] That is to say, it is a question of *what* the text says or *how* it says it.[18]

In brief, within these contemporary debates, it has been argued repeatedly by historical critics that chapter 38 is secondary and was inserted at a later date into the place in Genesis in which we now find it. On the other hand, current narrative and literary critics point out that the story itself, just as the character of Judah, has a specific role within the fourth generation narrative of the patriarchs.[19] They also indicate, as mentioned earlier, that Genesis 38 connects well to the following chapters from the point of view of many literary aspects.[20]

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[15] Noble says, 'synchronic and diachronic approaches to interpretation are not methodologically separable, because each has implications for the texts' method of composition.' See Paul R. Noble, 'Synchronic and Diachronic Approaches to Biblical Interpretation', *LT* 7 (1993), pp. 131-48 (145); Johannes C. de Moor (ed.), *Synchronic or Diachronic?: A Debate on Method in Old Testament Exegesis* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995) and for some debate on these two methods as well.

[16] Eskenazi says 'Literary critics therefore begin with the text in its final form as a unity whose meanings can be discerned by attention to its literary features'. Tamara Cohn Eskenazi, 'Torah as Narrative and Narrative as Torah', in James Luther Mays *et al.* (eds.), *Old Testament Interpretation: Past, Present, and Future* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), p. 14.

[17] The reader may refer to the 'Diagram of Biblical Interpretation' by Richard N. Soulen and R. Kendall Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism: Now Includes Precritical and Postcritical Interpretation* (3rd edn; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), p. 235; for further information on the themes of 'The World Behind the Text', 'The World Within the Text', and 'The World in Front of the Text', see W. Randolph Tate, *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1991); Jerome T. Walsh, *Old Testament Narrative: A Guide to Interpretation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), p. 4

[18] Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1994), p. 20.

[19] Aaron Wildavsky, *Assimilation versus Separation: Joseph the Administrator and the Politics of Religion in Biblical Israel* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1993); *idem*, 'Survival Must Not Be Gained Though Sin: The Moral of the Prefigured Through Judah and Tamar', *JSOT* 62 (1994), pp. 37-48; Lambe, 'Judah's Development: The Pattern of Departure – Transition – Return', pp. 53-68; Clifford, 'Genesis 38: Its Contribution to the Jacob Story', pp. 519-32.

[20] For example, Alter indicates a relationship between ch. 37 and ch. 38 as well as ch. 38 and ch. 39 using parallels, contrasts and verb roots. Alter, 'A Literary Approach to the Bible', in *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, pp. 3-22; Fokkelman investigates the interface of structural analysis and hermeneutics between Genesis 37 and 38. Jan P. Fokkelman, 'Genesis 37 and 38 at the Interface of Structural Analysis and Hermeneutics', in L.J. de Regt, *et al.* (eds.), *Literary Structure and Rhetorical Strategies in the Hebrew Bible* (Assen: Van Gorcum; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1996), pp. 152-87; Anthony J. Lambe, 'Genesis 38: Structure and Literary Design', in Philip R. Davies & David J.A. Clines (eds.), *The World of Genesis: Persons, Places, Perspectives* (JSOTSup. 257;

In the present study, I support the literary critics over the historical interpreters as having the ideal method for reading Genesis 38, even though I do not disregard the contributions of the historical approach. My presumption is that the Judah-Tamar story should be read in the wider context rather than simply within the so-called story of Joseph. The story of Judah and Tamar does not merely belong to the Joseph story, but stands alongside and within the larger narrative because 'the fabula [Gen. 38] would develop from brother to brother (as in Genesis 37-38-39)...[and for this reason] Judah's story is just as good as Joseph's'.[21] It is possible, therefore, to suggest that chapter 38 functions both *paraleptically*[22] and *proleptically.*[23] Giving extra information and foreshadowing (or anticipation) play a pivotal role in the wider significance of chapter 38, as do the main characters, Judah and Tamar.

This is why I wish to go further than simply examining Genesis 38 in relation to its immediate context and to expound Genesis 38 within Genesis 37-50 as part of the Primary Narrative, the longest narrative in the Hebrew Bible. Thus, the various enquiries of research into Genesis 38 are outlined in the following section.

Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), pp. 102-20.

[21] Aichele *et al.*, *The Postmodern Bible: The Bible and Culture Collective*, p. 78; 'Fabula' means 'The set of narrated situations and events in their chronological sequence'. Gerald Prince, 'fabula' in *Dictionary of Narratology* (rev. edn; Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), p. 29.

[22] Bal defines the technical term 'paralepsis' to mean 'extra information' and states that 'Chapter 38 would then be a pure paralepsis without any inkling of analysis...[Genesis] 38 would then presumably fill in a chronological gap between 37 and 39'. Mieke Bal, *Lethal Love: Feminist Literary Readings of Biblical Love Stories* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 96; in Aichele's phrase, 'Genesis 38 relates to its context as paralepsis, "giving information that should be left aside," information, incompatible, by accepted rules of narration, with the context.' Aichele *et al.*, *The Postmodern Bible: The Bible and Culture Collective*, pp. 74-76 (75).

[23] Through the notion of *anachronies* which is, 'a system for nonsequential telling', Genette says *analepsis* describes the situation when an event is narrated belately and *prolepsis*, when an event is narrated prematurely and an actual temporal gap is called *ellipsis* and the omission of some detail from an earlier narrative that the analepsis supplies is called *paralipsis*. For help in understanding these notions, see Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (trans. Jane E. Lewin; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), pp. 33-85; see Mark Allan Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism*?(Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), pp. 36-39; in relation to the concept of *prolepsis*, Mieke Bal defines the term *Achrony* as, 'a deviation of time' which is 'anticipation within-retroversion' or 'forward within a back-reference', in *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (2nd edn; trans. Christine Van Boheemen; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), pp. 97-99; cf. Jerome T. Walsh, *Old Testament Narrative: A Guide to Inter pretation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), pp. 58-62.

Hermeneutical Questions for Re-reading Genesis 38

Why am I, as a researcher, interested in Genesis 38? The reason why I would like to reread this episode is that there still remain quite a few issues and polemics which have to be elucidated in order to understand the story. Bernhard Luther says, '...the story [Gen. 38] also presents us with puzzles, not all of which we are able to solve, given our present state of knowledge.'[24] This is reflected in the fact that there is no consensus of opinion on the context of the story. There are several questions that need to be answered more clearly. The following are those most closely relevant to the topics for the remainder of this present study: (1) why do the characters and themes of the story in chapter 38 (with the exception of Judah) look so distinct from those in chapters 37 and 39? (2) Why does Judah abruptly come on stage alone and separately from his brothers? (3) How do we explain why Judah is portrayed as a negative character – according to some readers – while he is a builder of the tribe of Judah and ancestor of the house of David? (4) How should we judge Tamar, who is Judah's daughter-in-law and has sexual intercourse with him and, in the end gives birth to the twins (Perez and Zerah), the sons of Judah?[25] (5) Who is the main character, Judah or Tamar, given that commentators come to varied conclusions according to their different standpoints[26] on the text, and what is the relationship between the minor characters? (6) What are the consequences of the view, accepted by most literary scholars, that the story of Judah and Tamar should be interpreted within the so-called 'Story of Joseph', and is this the only framework that is appropriate? (7) What is the function of this chapter within Genesis 37-50 and the context of the Primary Narrative (Genesis – 2 Kings) and what does the story accomplish for its readers?[27] Suitable responses to these questions are the targets of the present study.

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[24] Bernhard Luther, 'The Novella of Judah and Tamar and Other Israelite Novellas', in David M. Gunn (ed.), *Narrative and Novella in Samuel: Studies by Hugo Gressmann and Other Scholars 1906-1923* (trans. David E. Orton; JSOTSup, 116; Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1991), pp. 89-118 (89).

[25] Gen. 46:12; Ruth 4:12, 18-22; 1 Chron. 2:1-6; 9:4; 27:3; Neh. 11:4, 6, 24; Lk. 3:33. Tamar is listed in Mt. 1:3 with Judah, Perez and Zerah.

[26] For instance, 'Is this [Gen. 38] a story of a woman subverting patriarchal conventions or of transgression in the *service* of patriarchy?' Eskenazi, 'Torah as Narrative and Narrative as Torah', p. 21.

[27] That is, 'What is the meaning of this text as we now have it?' rather than 'How did it come to be in this form?', see Noble, 'Synchronic and Diachronic Approaches to Biblical Interpretation', p. 144.

These diverse questions seek to find a solution which will enable us to read Genesis 38 through further literary analyses within the larger context of the biblical narrative. In what follows, I focus primarily on narrative criticism and also have a concern with the research methods as a proponent of the '(newer) literary criticism'[28] in such a way that 'the role of the reader'[29] as well as 'the text itself'[30] is significant because reading the text is an 'interaction between the text and the reader'.[31] However, as will become clear later, it is acknowledged that narrative criticism, the main methodology of the present research, is chronologically located in the centre between rhetorical criticism, structuralism and the '(newer) literary criticisms' such as feminist criticism, reader-response criticism, deconstruction and so on.[32]

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[28] Clines and Exum advocate the term 'new literary criticism'. They say, 'It (the new literary criticism) is not a historical discipline, but a strictly literary one, foregrounding the textuality of the biblical literature...its primary concern is the text as an object, a product, not as a window upon historical actuality.' J. Cheryl Exum and David J.A. Clines, 'The New Literary Criticism', in *idem* (eds.), *The New Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible* (JSOTSup, 143; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), p. 11; for more definitions of this term, see also Manfred Oeming, *Contemporary Biblical Hermeneutics: An Introduction* (tran. Joachim Vette; Hants: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006), pp. 60-62; Sherwood identifies 'the old literary criticism' as the diachronic approach and 'the new literary criticism' as the synchronic one. See Yvonne Sherwood, *The Prostitute and the Prophet: Hosea's Marriage in Literary-Theoretical Perspective* (JSOTSup, 212; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), pp. 325-26.

[29] Edgar V. McKnight, 'The Role of the Reader: Imaging the Sacred', in *Postmodern Use of the Bible; The Emergence of Reader-Oriented Criticism* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988), pp. 167-272.

[30] John Barton, 'The Text Itself', in *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study* (2nd edn; London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd., 1996), pp. 158-79.

[31] Wolfgang Iser, 'Interaction between Text and Reader', in Susan R. Suleiman & Inge Crosman (eds.), *The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 106-119.

[32] Exum and Clines, 'The New Literary Criticism', pp. 15-20; Walsh shows properly three positions for reading a text from, in *Old Testament Narrative: A Guide to Interpretation*, p. 5. The division, however, is slightly different from Clines' and Exum's. Look at the diagram below:

author	→	text	→	reader
↑		↑		↑
Meaning is what the author intended.		Meaning is just what the text says.		Meaning is the text's effect on society.
Methods:		Methods:		Methods:
(historical criticism)		(literary criticism)		(ideological criticism)
source criticism		formalism		feminist criticism
redaction criticism		close reading		gay and lesbian criticism
form criticism		structuralism		African American criticism
tradition criticism		narrative criticism		Hispanic, Latino/a criticism
sociological methods		rhetorical criticism		liberation exegesis
anthropological methods		reader-response criticism		postcolonial criticism
and others		and others		and others

Outline of the Thesis

What makes travel in an unfamiliar city possible is working out an itinerary for the trip in advance. It will be my aim in this section to give advance notice of the sequence of chapters in this thesis. The reader will then have a better understanding and be able to grasp the contours of this study.

My plan for the remainder of this research is to explore the literary function of Genesis 38 within Genesis 37-50 in the context of the Primary Narrative (Genesis – 2 Kings). In order to do this, I shall proceed in the following way: the first chapter offers a narrative-critical approach as the main methodology and explains some terminology relevant to the approach and defines such terms as Biblical Hebrew Narrative and *the Primary Narrative* to help in understanding this study. Next, in chapter 2, I begin with a brief literature review of the debates that are going on between historical interpreters and literary critics concerning the position of Genesis 38. Then, the discussion of Genesis 38 within its literary context is examined with respect to the various units or narratives of which it is part; that is, Genesis 37 to 39, Genesis 37-50, the patriarchal narratives (Gen. 12-50), the book of Genesis, and finally the Primary Narrative. Chapter 3 treats how we might conceive of the character of Judah both on the micro level of the narrative (Gen. 38) and on the macro level (Gen. 37-50). The difference in these two levels in their account of the development of Judah's character explains the many ways in which scholars evaluate him. Chapter 4 deals with the other main character, Tamar, daughter-in-law of Judah. In particular, I will describe the significance of the characterisation of Tamar in the immediate context of Genesis 38 from a literary perspective. This exploration will also highlight Tamar's new identity in her own family and even in the genealogy of King David. Chapter 5 presents the structure of the Judah-Tamar story in Genesis 38 revisited within the Primary Narrative. My proposed title, *the Story of Jacob and his Sons,* for the chapters from Genesis 37 to 50, will be suggested. This perspective, seeing what is usually referred to as the Joseph cycle as *the Story of Jacob and his Sons* instead, is significant in various ways for the readers' understanding of the characters

of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38 and beyond.

In chapter 6, I will parallel Tamar with other female characters in the Hebrew Bible; Lot's daughters, Ruth and Bathsheba as well as the four matriarchs Sarah, Rebekah, Leah, and Rachel. These women are investigated from the point of view of several literary themes and their literary relationships with the aim of showing how the themes and narrative characteristics of Genesis 38 pervade the larger narrative. This chapter represents a macro angle on Tamar and shows how her role extends into the Primary Narrative.

In the conclusion, I will summarise the points that I have made throughout the thesis by assessing the pivotal function of Genesis 38 as part of the Primary Narrative in the Hebrew Bible by means of narrative criticism. Then, contributions of this research to contemporary biblical scholarship will be offered and finally some prospects for further study will also be suggested.

Chapter 1

Methodology

It is inevitable that every research field on a text (secular or sacred) has its own peculiar approaches. The Hebrew Bible as a text can be read in various ways, including as a religious canon or as the history of a people or yet further still as an example of literary artistry. In this study, my approach is the one that Leland Ryken recommends: 'the [Hebrew] Bible is a work of literature and...the methods of literary scholarship are a necessary part of any complete study of the Bible.'[1] Regarding the genre of this biblical literature, Shimon Bar-Efrat notes that 'More than one third of the Hebrew Bible consists of narratives'.[2] Narrative is a subspecies of prose literature and has its own ways of depicting events. Reading the biblical narrative is not much different in this sense.

My primary concern in this thesis is to read *the (Hebrew) Bible as an example of literary artistry*. That means reading 'the biblical texts as finished wholes' or as a literary artefact.[3] However, this does not mean that, as with the narrow definition of formalism, 'mere examination of [literary] form will reveal the meaning of texts'[4] or that from reading the biblical text the reader will obtain only one literary viewpoint. That is, the message of a text itself can basically deliver a single point (author or text-oriented), but the response to it can sometimes rely on the reader's interest or intention (reader-oriented) because 'A sensitive

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[1] Leland Ryken, *How to Read the Bible as Literature* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), p. 11.

[2] Shimon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible* (JSOTSup, 70; Bible and Literature Series 17; Sheffield: Almond Press, 1989), p. 9.

[3] Alter says, 'The literature of the Bible is still readable because in many of its conventions and formal devices and strategies of organization it has a deep kinship with other literature that we read,' in Robert Alter, *The World of Biblical Literature* (London: SPCK, 1992), pp. 23-24; However, Barton opposes this stance and insists that 'the books of the Old Testament do not fall easily within our category "literature"...they are in most cases anonymous, lacking the stamp of a single creative mind, and do not themselves operate with the notion of an "original meaning" which is so crucial for traditional historical criticism'. See John Barton, 'Reading the Bible as Literature: Two Questions for Biblical Critics', *LT* 1 (1987), pp. 135-53 (152). But Barton's view just takes into consideration historical approaches, not literary ones.

[4] Stephen A. Geller, 'Some Pitfalls in the "Literary Approach" to Biblical Narrative', *JQR* 74 (1984), pp. 408-15 (409).

reader may, in fact, be "creating" a new world in the process of reading'.[5] Biblical texts can be read variously '...because they [literary texts] are complex and multifaceted, operating on many levels, with many working parts that can be linked together in numerous ways'.[6] For this reason, reader-response criticism says that the reader is the subject and the text is the object, while narrative criticism says that the text is the subject and the reader the object. Even though the latter principally focuses on the meaning of a text, is text-oriented,[7] I will also reflect on the former when it comes to the interaction between the text and the reader.[8] Furthermore, the method of 'intertexuality'[9] is considered in this thesis because intertextual reading is 'the core of the canonical imagination'[10] and 'no text comes into being or can be read as an isolated unit'.[11] Following on from this, intertextuality is a kind of narrative criticism based on the final form which a reader can use to find connections between texts.

If we begin by confining our survey to the book of Genesis, by now many literary scholars have studied Genesis as a literary work, even though 'there are still many questions about whether or not Genesis is a literary masterpiece, a jumbled patchwork of sources or both'.[12] If Genesis is a literary masterpiece, it is natural that the story of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38 would also belong to this category as an example of skilful biblical storytelling. Since the episode is a finite story, it is eminently suitable for examination using narrative criticism, one of the (newer) literary methods, as the research tool because 'Narrative criticism is interested in narrative as narrative...'[13] The notion of the (Hebrew) Bible as Literature, the application of Narrative Criticism and the label 'Primary Narrative' are all

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[5] For a discussions on reader-oriented and text-oriented approaches, see Edgar V. McKnight, *Postmodern Use of the Bible: The Emergence of Reader-Oriented Criticism* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988), pp. 174-77 (176).

[6] Steven Weitzman, 'Before and After the Art of Biblical Narrative', *Proof*27 (2007), pp. 191-210 (201).

[7] Walsh, Old Testament Narrative: A Guide to Interpretation, p. 5.

[8] For this issue, see James G. William, 'Between Reader and Text: A General Response', in Miri Amihai *et al.* (eds.), *Narrative Research on the Hebrew Bible* (Semeia 46; Atlanta: SBL, 1989), pp. 169-79.

[9] For further information on this, see chapter 6.3 of this thesis.

[10] Michael Fishbane, 'Type of Biblical Intertexuality', in A. Lemaire & M. Sæbø (eds.), *Congress Volume Oslo 1998* (VTSup, 80; Brill: Leiden, 2000), pp. 39-44 (39).

[11] Kirsten Nielsen, 'Intertextuality and Hebrew Bible', in A. Lemaire & M. Sæbø (eds.), *Congress Volume Oslo 1998* (VTSup, 80; Brill: Leiden, 2000), pp. 17-31 (18).

[12] Tremper Longman III, *How to Read Genesis* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2005), p. 41.

[13] Richard N. Soulen and R. Kendall Soulen, 'Narrative Criticism', in *Handbook of Biblical Criticism: Now Includes Precritical and Postcritical Interpretation* (3rd rev. edn; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), pp. 119-20.

useful for grasping the impact of the Judah-Tamar story in the narrative beyond it. It is because Genesis 38 is a complete tale, however, that it is also possible to investigate how it may be encompassed by the larger narratives in which it is embedded, whether as the focus of a series of concentric circles or as part of a sequence chain.[14] In the following section, I will expand on narrative criticism as a reading strategy and its applications, and on the definition of biblical Hebrew narrative and *the Primary Narrative*. Both will clarify how to assess the influence of Genesis 38 on the Primary Narrative.

1.1. Narrative and Narrative Criticism: Strategies for Reading Literarily

Referring to the diverse implications of definitions of narrative, Gérard Genette, who is a distinguished French critic and rhetorician, defines 'narrative' in three ways; firstly, 'the narrative statement, the oral or written discourse that undertakes to tell of an event or a series of events,' secondly, 'the succession of events, real or fictitious, that are the subjects of this discourse, and to their several relations of linking, opposition, repetition, etc.,' and thirdly, 'the event that consists of someone recounting something.'[15] These three levels of narrative might be confusing to readers, but a narrative is basically a 'storytelling'.[16]

Modern narratology distinguishes between 'the story as the signified' and 'the discourse as the signifier'.[17] In his influential book on narrative, Seymour Chatman argues that a narrative is composed of two facets: a story (*histoire*) and a discourse (*discours*). Story presents the content or chain of elements such as plot, characters, setting, point of view, while discourse indicates the mode of expression, the rhetoric of the narrative, how the story is told.[18] To put it another way, if these two facets are set in relationship to each other, 'the story

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[14] The arguments related to this will be dealt with in chapter 2.

[15] Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (trans. Jane E. Lewin; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), pp. 25-26.

[16] In relation to this concept of narrative, see Mieke Bal, *On Story-Telling: Essays in Narratology* (Sonoma, CA; Polebridge Press, 1991); Jacob Licht, *Storytelling in the Bible* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1978).

[17] 'The signifier is the phonic or textual expression. The signified is the concept, or, if you like, the semantic content.' Daniel Marguerat and Yvan Bourquin, *How to Read Bible Stories: An Introduction to Narrative Criticism* (London: SCM Press, 1999), p. 20.

[18] Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca: Cornell

is the *what* in a narrative that is depicted, discourse the *how*.'[19] The one is *the narrated* and the other is *the narrating*. David M. Gunn describes narrative as 'the mode of discourse and the vehicle, as it were, of narrative communication'.[20] Consequently, a narrative contains features of both 'story' and 'discourse' such that it could be called a 'story-as-discoursed'.[21]

What exactly is meant by 'narrative criticism'? And what is the position of narrative criticism in biblical scholarship? To explain this, Daniel Marguerat and Yvan Bourquin say, 'narrative criticism is a method of reading the text which explores and analyses how narrativity is made concrete in a particular text.'[22] At first, the term 'narratology',[23] which originates from outside biblical scholarship, was only usually applied to the study of the novel within secular literary scholarship and was not applied to any other genres of literature. Outside biblical scholarship the term narratology was employed to define the theory of narratives rather than narrative criticism. Since the early 1980s, however, biblical scholars who were interested in narratology have tended to be considered 'as an independent, parallel movement in its own right'[24] in particular, with reference to New Testament research. Consequently, the narrative criticism movement has spread within biblical scholarship. Some

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University Press, 1978), p. 19; Mark Allan Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), p. 23.

[19] Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*, p. 19; cf. Jean Louis Ska, *"Our Fathers Have Told Us": Introduction to the Analysis of Hebrew Narratives* (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1990), pp. 5-6; Daniel Marguerat and Yvan Bourquin, *How to Read Bible Stories: An Introduction to Narrative Criticism*, pp. 18-21.

[20] David M. Gunn, 'Hebrew Narrative', in A.D.H. Mayes (ed.), *Text in Context: Essays by Members of the Society for Old Testament Study* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 223.

[21] Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, pp. 23, 35; cf. Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*, pp. 19-31.

[22] Marguerat and Bourquin, *How to Read Bible Stories: An Introduction to Narrative Criticism*, p. 3.

[23] In Prince's terms, 'Narratology is the study of the form and functioning of narrative. Although the term is relatively new, the discipline is not and, in the Western tradition, it goes back at least to Plato and Aristotle. During the twentieth century, narratology has been developed considerably. The last ten or fifteen years, in particular, have witnessed a remarkable growth of narratological activity.' Gerald Prince, *Narratology: The Form and Functioning of Narrative* (Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1982), p. 4; Mieke Bal remarks, 'Narratology is the theory of narratives, narrative texts, images, spectacles, events; cultural artefacts that "tell a story".' See *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (2nd edn; trans. Christine Van Boheemen; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), p. 4.

[24] Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, p. 19; 'Arising particularly in the 1980s and '90s as a self-conscious discipline, narrative criticism has concentrated on the GOSPELS and Acts in the NT and, perhaps to a lesser extent, on the NARRATIVES of the HB [Hebrew Bible]' in Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism: Now Includes Precritical and Postcritical Interpretation*, pp. 119-20; for the New Testament writings using narrative criticism, see David Rhoads ('Narrative Criticism and the Gospel of Mark', 1982), R. Alan Culpepper (*Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design*, 1983), Jack Dean Kingsbury (*Matthew as Story*, 1988) and so on.

scholars in Hebrew Bible, such as David M. Gunn, Christopher R. Heard and Amelia Devin Freedman have adopted the term and tools more recently.[25] According to Mark Powell, narrative criticism in biblical scholarship 'attempts to read these stories with insights drawn from the secular field of modern literary criticism'[26] and narrative criticism can be viewed 'as a subspecies of the new rhetorical criticism or as a variety of the reader-response movement'.[27]

With the help of the 'Diagram of Biblical Interpretation' by Soulen, we can see that narrative criticism in biblical scholarship is located midway between rhetorical analysis and reader-response criticism,[28] even though some classify rhetorical criticism and reader-response criticism as belonging to the same category of narrative criticism because they are all methods in the (newer) literary criticism.[29] Narrative criticism, together with rhetorical criticism, is basically concerned with the analysis of 'a text-oriented definition of "meaning"'.[30] This means that narrative criticism focuses on the reason why the text exists as it stands and what function it performs.[31] Furthermore, I am interested in the role of the (implied) reader. This emphasis is slightly different from that of rhetorical criticism.

1.2. The Importance of the Implied Author and the Implied Reader

What, then, are the characteristic features of narrative criticism? This approach is a synchronic and synthetic literary analysis that tries to read the text as 'the implied reader'[32]

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[25] David M. Gunn, 'Narrative Criticism', in Steven L. McKenzie and Stephen R. Haynes (eds.), *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticism and Their Application* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), pp. 171-95; Christopher R. Heard, 'Narrative Criticism and the Hebrew Scriptures: A Review and Assessment', *ResQ* 38.1 (1996), pp. 29-43; Amelia Devin Freedman, *God as an Absent Character in Biblical Hebrew narrative: A Literary Theoretical Study* (SBL, 82; New York: Peter Lang, 2005).

[26] Mark Allan Powell, 'Narrative Criticism', in Joel B. Green, (ed.), *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1995), p. 239.

[27] Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, p.19.

[28] Soulen and Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*, p. 235.

[29] Walsh, *Old Testament Narrative: A Guide to Interpretation*, p. 5.

[30] Walsh, *Old Testament Narrative: A Guide to Interpretation*, p. 5.

[31] 'What critics who are calling for a [paradigm] shift in biblical studies usually mean by literary criticism today is largly *ahistorical* in nature – methods that require an examination only of the final form of the text'. See William W. Klein *et al.*, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Revised; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), p. 64.

[32] This concept was suggested for the first time by Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974);

would understand it in its present shape rather than looking at the historical information it provides. The implied reader 'is presupposed by the narrative itself' and the complementary concept is 'the implied author'.[33] As mentioned above, the implied reader here is distinct from the real reader in rhetorical criticism, who is sometimes called the 'intended reader', and from the 'competent reader' in structuralism.[34] The primary concern of narrative criticism is not the historicity but the literary aspects of the story. Narrative meanings (or narrativity[35]) can be uncovered by 'close reading'.[36] This reading enables analysis of the elements of the narrative such as plot, character, setting, and point of view in the text. One of the advantages of this methodology is that, although one may not have complete historical knowledge about a text, it is still possible to read and interpret it.[37] In other words, without any idea of the real author of a text or the history of its formation, narrative criticism can still interpret a story.[38] For these reasons, as aforementioned, this approach identifies the 'implied author' and the 'implied reader'. Both are activated within the narrative. The implied author in narrative criticism is not a real or historical author, but 'is simply the discernible perspective from which the narrative is told. That perspective is built into the narrative itself'.[39] The implied reader also has nothing to do with the real, historical reader, but rather reconstructs 'the effect the

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idem, 'Interaction between Text and Reader', in Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crosman (eds.), *The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 106-19.

[33] The term 'the implied author' was introduced by Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), pp. 67-77 (72-73), 211-18 and indicates the wholeness of meanings that can be inferred from a text. The implied author is the result of the investigation of the meaning of a text and so he/she can be inferred and discussed after interpreting the text; Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, p. 18, 76.

[34] Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, p.19; cf. Robert M. Fowler, 'Who is "the Reader" in Reader Response Criticism?' in *Robert Detweiler* (ed.), *Reader Response Approaches to Biblical and Secular Texts* (Semeia 31; Atlanta: SBL, 1985), pp. 5-23.

[35] Marguerat and Bourquin state, '...narrativity is that by which a text or a work can be recognised as narrative,' in *How to Read Bible Stories*, p. 15.

[36] Gunn explains that the notion of close reading 'identifies formal and conventional structures of the narrative, determines plot, develops characterisation, distinguishes points of view, exposes language play, and relates all to some overarching, encapsulating theme'. Gunn, 'Narrative Criticism', in *Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticism and Their Application*, p. 171; Berlin similarly notes that close reading pays attention to 'linguistic structures, patterns, and usages, recurring devices and unusual ones'. Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1994), p. 19.

[37] Powell, What is Narrative Criticism?, p. 5.

[38] Gunn, 'Narrative Criticism', in *Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticism and Their Application*, p. 178.

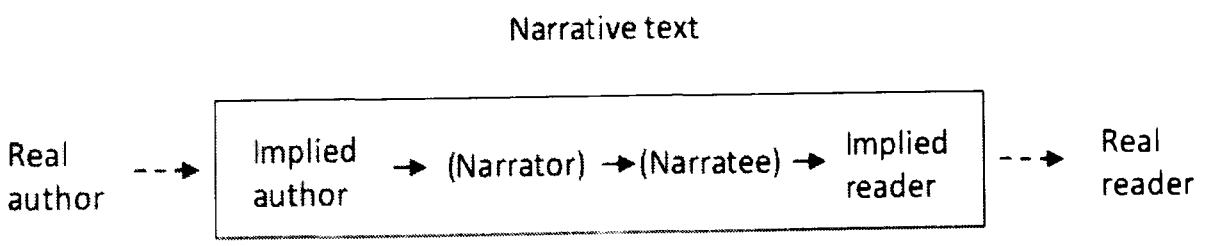
[39] Soulin, and Soulin, 'Narrative Criticism', p. 119; see Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*, pp.147-51; Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, p. 19.

narrative is intended to have on its readers in terms of their value judgments, beliefs, and perceptions'.[40] This means that the implied reader is 'a hypothetical concept' or 'an idealized abstraction'.[41] Narrative criticism sets about 'a goal of reading the text "as the implied reader"'.[42] Through such a process, the meaning of a text can be acquired by the reader. The reader can arrive at their meaning(s) of a text through the application of narrative criticism.

1.3. The Model of the Narrative Text and the Structure of the World in the Text

Narrative criticism makes the basic assumption that the text can be interpreted from the point of view of the reader, too. This is partly akin to reader-response criticism in terms of the notion that there is interaction between the the text and the reader.[43] However, whereas the reader-response approach is that 'the reader determines meaning', narrative criticism says that 'the text determines the reader's response'.[44] Consequently, the aim of narrative criticism is to reveal the meaning of a text, which is implied by the author to the implied reader, highlighting the relationship between the implied author and the implied reader. Chatman persuasively proposes a framework through which to understand these relationships. He points out that 'a narrative is a communication'.[45] I reproduce his framework below:

FIGURE 1



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[40] Soulin, and Soulin, 'Narrative Criticism', p. 120; see Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*, p.147-51; Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, p. 19.

[41] Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, p. 21.

[42] Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, p. 21.

[43] Iser, 'Interaction between Text and Reader', pp. 106-119.

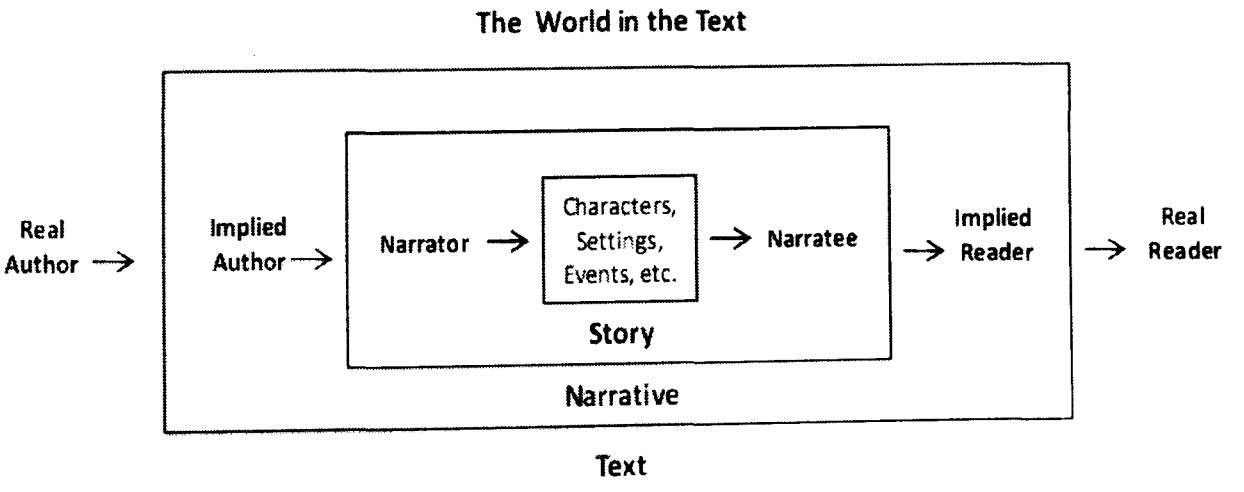
[44] Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, p. 18.

[45] Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*, p. 151; cf. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (2nd edn; London and New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 87; Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, p. 27; Jean Louis Ska, *"Our Fathers Have Told Us": Introduction to the Analysis of Hebrew Narratives* (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1990), p. 40; Marguerat and Bourquin, *How to Read Bible Stories: An Introduction to Narrative Criticism*, p. 12.

Another presupposition of this approach is that the meaning of a text is understood only when one reads the text as a complete literary piece. The literary style of a text bears a relationship to its meaning.[46] Viewed in this light, narrative criticism focuses on the various literary aspects of the text given that a narrative may consist of many events. However, unlike rhetorical criticism and reader-response criticism, narrative criticism is a more 'text-centred (objective) approach' than just a 'reader-centred (pragmatic)' one.[47]

The communicative elements of a narrative are three: author, text and reader. They can also be described as a sender, a message and a receiver, respectively. The concept of a 'story' which is the innermost box in the diagram below is smaller than a narrative. A story has two dialogic components: a narrator and narratee, while a narrative has immanent constituents: an implied author and an implied reader. Finally, a text is written by the real author and is told to the real reader. This is a diagram of 'the World in the Text'.[48] In order to represent these ideas visually, I reproduce Jerome T. Walsh's diagram below:

FIGURE 2



According to the diagram above, a narrative interacts between the implied author and the

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[46] Gunn, 'Narrative Criticism', in *Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticism and Their Application*, pp. 179-80.

[47] Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, pp. 11-20.

[48] Walsh, *Old Testament Narrative: A Guide to Interpretation*, p.6; cf. fig. 6.2. in Terence J. Keegan, *Interpreting the Bible: A Popular Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1985), p. 94.

implied reader from a text's narrative world. That is, a narrative is delivered to the implied reader by the implied author, 'the author's second self.'[49] The area of research in narrative criticism is not the world of a real author and a real reader, but that of an implied author and an implied reader. Text is the 'primary world' as a real world, while the world of the story and narrative is the 'secondary world', although the events in the narrative are chronologically later than those of the story.[50] That is, the story happened in the past, but the implied author and the implied reader are activated at the moment the text is read by the (real) reader. However, the real author and the real reader are still not considered in the narrative. As a result, story and narrative never exist outside of the text, only in the text. As Walsh has said, 'In order to read a narrative as a coherent unity, the reader must *posit* a singular authorial mind to explain that coherence'.[51]

1.4. Elements of a Narrative: Plot, Character, Setting, and Point of View

As mentioned earlier, there are four basic elements in narrative criticism: plot, character, setting, and point of view. These are closely connected to one another and also indispensible components for better understanding the text. Firstly, 'The plot of a literary narrative is the succession of events, usually motivated by conflict, which generates suspense and leads to a conclusion.'[52] The key point of a plot is 'conflict', which is introduced in the beginning, heightened in the middle, addressed and often resolved at the end of the narrative.[53] Bar-Efrat says, 'the plot of a narrative is constructed as a meaningful chain of interconnected events.'[54]

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[49] Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, pp. 67-77; in Berlin's words, '...he [implied author] is part of the text although not part of the story. It is he whom the reader perceives as being responsible for the selection and expression of the events narrated.' Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*, p. 145.

[50] Walsh, *Old Testament Narrative: A Guide to Interpretation*, pp. 7-9.

[51] Walsh, *Old Testament Narrative: A Guide to Interpretation*, p. 8.

[52] Tremper Longman III, 'Biblical Narrative', in Leland Ryken and Tremper Longman III (eds.), *A Complete Literary Guide to the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993), p. 71.

[53] Paul Buchanan, 'Literary Devices', in Stanley E. Porter (ed.), *Dictionary of Biblical Criticism and Interpretation* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 202-04 (202).

[54] Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, p. 93; that is, 'Story refers to the content of the narrative; plot refers to the contour of its representation. Plot discerns how the narrative represents the events, characters, settings, and interactions of these elements in his plot.' Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theilogy: An Exegetical Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), p. 94.

Secondly, a character sets the conflict in the plot into motion and the chief character is called the 'protagonist' while the protagonist's main opponent usually becomes the 'antagonist'.[55] The way these roles are assigned to the characters could depend on the readers' characterisation because, 'The reader reconstructs a character from the information provided to him in the discourse'.[56] For example, in the case of Genesis 38, if Judah is considered to be the protagonist, Tamar would automatically become his antagonist or vice versa. The characters in biblical narratives are seen through their speeches or actions, and description or commentary by the narrator.[57] Thirdly, according to Paul Buchanan, 'Setting refers not only to the geographical and historical point at which the story occurs, but also to any other aspect of a story's physical environment.'[58] That is, setting or background is 'where the time, place, and persons of the narrative are identified'[59] or 'the space in which the characters perform the actions that constitute the plot'.[60] What then is the role of the setting? It is for 'building up the atmosphere of the story'.[61] Finally, point of view is a sort of 'narrative voice'.[62] This can be thought of as 'how the narrator *tells* the story'.[63] The concept of point of view is linked to the characters and the events in the plot because 'a character is not perceived by the reader directly, but rather mediated or filtered through the telling of the (implied) author, the narrator, or another character'[64] and the narrator, as fully omniscient and, 'can reveal the thoughts and motives of any character'.[65] Having seen definitions of the components of narrative criticism, then, what is the biblical Hebrew narrative and how can we approach it using the story of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38 within the Primary Narrative (Genesis – 2 Kings)?

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[55] For understanding these conceptions, see Steven D. Mathewson, *The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), pp. 58-59.
[56] Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*, p. 34.
[57] Buchanan, 'Literary Devices', p. 202.
[58] Buchanan, 'Literary Devices', p. 202.
[59] Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*, p. 102.
[60] Longman III, 'Biblical Narrative', p. 74.
[61] Marguerat and Bourquin, *How to Read Bible Stories: An Introduction to Narrative Criticism*, p. 77.
[62] Longman III, 'Biblical Narrative', pp. 75-76.
[63] Walsh, *Old Testament Narrative*, p. 43-52 (43).
[64] Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*, p. 43.
[65] Buchanan, 'Literary Devices', p. 203.

1.5. Biblical Hebrew Narrative and the Definition of *the Primary Narrative*

1.5.1. Biblical Hebrew Narrative

Since the late 1970s or the early 1980s, the (newer) literary approaches to the biblical Hebrew narrative have become increasingly popular. There was a movement towards the acceptance of the value of the idea that 'Narrative criticism attempts to appreciate the aesthetic nature of stories as both a literary and historical concern within the larger context of the stories or books themselves rather than isolated segments on their own'.[66] This tendency reflected a new paradigm shift (change) away from concentration on historical and diachronic insights towards literary and synchronic aspects which some have seen as marking a new horizon in biblical scholarship.[67] Literary scholars such as Robert Alter (1981), Shimon Bar-Efrat (1989 / 1979 in Hebrew), Adele Berlin (1983) and Meir Sternberg (1985) often with backgrounds outside biblical studies, started to introduce new approaches to reading biblical Hebrew narrative, although they do not use the term narrative criticism. In the wake of this, David M. Gunn, one of the pioneering narrative critics of the Hebrew Bible, brought together some methodological hints for reading the Hebrew Bible as a narrative.[68] According to him, one requirement for reading a narrative is to know the boundaries of the text, and another is to understand the relationship between 'plot' and 'character'[69] as the main factors of narrative research. Here the interpretation of a narrative is flexible depending on how one analyses the relationship between the factors. Often, finding a compositional feature as well as literary art in a narrative is crucial in reading a text.

Again, the chief argument between the two methodological approaches runs along

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[66] J.C. Robinson, 'Narrative', in Stanley E. Porter, (ed.), *Dictionary of Biblical Criticism and Interpretation* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 237.

[67] Rolf Rendtorff, 'The Paradigm is Changing: Hopes–and Fears', *BI* 1,1 (1993), pp. 34-53; Leland Ryken, and Tremper Longman III, (eds.), *A Complete Literary Guide to the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993), p. 19; for information on these two methodologies, see Terence J. Keegan, 'Diachronic and Synchronic Methodologies' in *Interpreting the Bible: A Popular Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1985), pp. 24-39; Johannes C. De Moor (ed.), *Synchronic or Diachronic?: A Debate on Method in Old Testament Exegesis* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995); Han Young Lee, *From History to Narrative Hermeneutics* (Studies in Biblical Literature 64; New York: Peter Lang, 2004).

[68] David M. Gunn, 'New Directions in the Story of Biblical Hebrew narrative', *JSOT* 39 (1987), pp. 65-75.

[69] For further discussion, see Gunn, 'Narrative Criticism', in *Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticism and Their Application*, pp. 179-80. This was mentioned in the previous section in detail.

the lines of: should biblical Hebrew narrative be read as history or as story (or fiction)[70], that is, the world (of represented object) or the word (of discourse that represents it)?[71] The question seems be what the definition of biblical Hebrew narrative is. For example, from a source critical perspective, 'Some are entries in a historical chronicle; they obey the documentary impulse to tell what happened, avoiding the literary impulse to present in detail *how* it happened.'[72] Considering the historical narrative, Frank M. Cross says, 'the narrative [in the Hebrew Bible] is "fraught with meaning," composed to reveal the meaning of Israel's past, and therewith to define the identity and destiny of the nation.'[73] Cross also states, 'Story and history are different in English, but in German one uses *Geschichte* for both.'[74] In light of this, 'all narratives [in the Hebrew Bible], including those we call "historical" are "stories". This is because all narratives employ a plot, have a beginning, middle, and end, a shape, a purpose or moral.'[75] Obviously, *doing narrative* (or story) in biblical Hebrew narrative through narrative criticism is distinct from the goals of 'doing history'[76] because '...the notion of story lies on a literary and not a historical level'.[77] Thus, our present concern in this study of biblical Hebrew narrative is primarily a matter of *storytelling* narrative rather than that of reality as a fact.

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[70] These different perspectives have been paid attention to by some scholars such as Meir Sternberg, 'Fiction and History', in *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), pp. 23-35; V. Phillips Long, 'History and Fiction: What is History?', in *The Art of Biblical History* (Leicester: Apollos, 1994), pp. 58-87; John Rogerson and Philip Davies, *The Old Testament World*, (London: T & T Clark, 2005), pp. 124-25.

[71] Sternberg's question is, 'So does the Bible belong to the historical or the fictional genre?' in Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading*, pp. 24, 30.

[72] Ryken, *How to Read the Bible as Literature*, p. 33.

[73] Frank Moore Cross, *From Epic to Canon: History and Literature in Ancient Israel* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), p. 23.

[74] Cross, *From Epic to Canon: History and Literature in Ancient Israel*, p. 23.

[75] Rogerson and Davies, *The Old Testament World*, p. 124.

[76] For a researcher, 'Doing history' can have at least three meanings: 'History can designate actual events that transpired in the past, the recoverable traces of actual events that transpired, and the interpretation of past events through the creation of cause-and-effect chains to relate the recoverable traces of those events.' Diana Vikander Edelman, 'Doing History in Biblical Studies', in *idem* (ed.), *The Fabric of History: Text, Artefact and Israel's Past* (JSOTSup, 127; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), p. 13.

[77] Marguerat and Bourquin, *How to Read Bible Stories*, p. 20.

1.5.2. What is *the Primary Narrative*?

Before arguing the notion of *the Primary Narrative*, I first wish to make mention of 'the Primary History'[78] in biblical scholarship. In David J.A. Clines' phrase, there are two major distinct history sequences in the Hebrew Bible: 'the Primary History and the Secondary History'.[79] The one is generally defined as the unit from Genesis to the end of Kings with the exception of the book of Ruth according to the order of the Masorectic Text. Clines comments, 'In the older scholarship the term Enneateuch was, by analogy, applied to the historical corpus of Genesis through 2 Kings (excluding Ruth), but the focus here was always upon the presumed sources of these books rather than upon the shape and significance of them considered as a whole.'[80]

The other history is in the four books of 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah as 'a unified narrative sequence'[81] (or in sequence of the LXX), which are also called 'the Chronicler's History'. But these are situated at the end of the MT and its order is Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles. It is acknowledged that this division is made because the secondary history represents writings produced after Israel's return from the Persian Empire and so was written later than the Primary History. Therefore, the Primary History and the Secondary History in the Hebrew Bible exemplify different modes of discourse on the history of Israel.

In detail, the term 'Primary History' was first introduced by David Noel Freedman

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[78] For further information on this topic, see below: Edward L. Greenstein, 'The Formation of the Biblical Narrative Corpus', *AJSR* 15 (1990), pp. 151-78; David Noel Freedman, *The Unity of the Hebrew Bible* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991); Paul J. Kissling, *Reliable Characters in the Primary History: Profiles of Moses, Joshua, Elijah and Elisha* (JSOTSup, 224; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996); Thomas L. Brodie, *Genesis as Dialogue: A Literary, History and Theological Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); as for the author or editor of the Primary History, Freedman and Kelly suggest Seraiah, but I will not deal with this issue because it is beyond the remit of this thesis. See David Noel Freedman and Brian Kelly, 'Who Redacted the Primary History?', in Chaim Cohen, *et al.* (eds.), *Sefer Moshe: The Moshe Weinfeld Jubilee Volume: Studies in the Bible and the Ancient Near East, Quman, and Post-Biblical Judaism* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2004), pp. 39-47.

[79] David J.A. Clines, *What Does Eve Do to Help?: And Other Readerly Questions to the Old Testament* (JSOTSup, 94; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), p.89.

[80] See footnote 1 in Clines, *What Does Eve Do to Help?: And Other Readerly Questions to the Old Testament*, p.89.

[81] Clines, *What Does Eve Do to Help?: And Other Readerly Questions to the Old Testament*, p. 90.

and the subject is 'the great primary history of Israel'[82] that is 'the story from [Yhwh's][83] creation to [Israel's] deportation'[84] being the largest narrative in the Hebrew Bible, formally it contains 'the Pentateuch plus the Deuteronomistic History [Joshua – Kings]'.[85] But, in fact, the same concept of 'the sequence of Hebrew narrative from Genesis through Kings as a unified literary composition' had already been introduced by Benedict de Spinoza.[86] Edward L. Greenstein expounds this term as 'the sequence of Hebrew narrative from Genesis through Kings as a unified literary composition. It tells the story of Israel and its God from the creation of sky and land through the exile of Israel from its particular land'.[87] Gunn and Fewell call this unit 'the primary story (narrative)' or 'the primary history'[88] without any closer clarification of their use of the term.

Nonetheless, from these definitions and terminologies, it is acknowledged that 'the longest block of narrative'[89] from Genesis to 2 Kings is regularly entitled the Primary History

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[82] David Noel Freedman, 'Deuteronomic History, The', (*IDBSup*; Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), pp. 226-28; see Freedman's other writings, *The Unity of the Hebrew Bible*, pp. 1-39; some of those who use this term are as follows: Greenstein, 'The Formation of the Biblical Narrative Corpus', pp.151-78; Kissling, *Reliable Characters in the Primary History: Profiles of Moses, Joshua, Elijah and Elisha* (1996).

[83] Throughout the thesis I will use the name Yhwh to refer to 'the Deity' or 'the Israelite Deity' because it helps us to retain our focus on Yhwh as a character in the biblical narrative without invoking the cultural and theological resonances of referring to 'God'.

[84] Rogerson and Davies, *The Old Testament World*, pp. 127-28; for full details of this modern usage, according to Jan-Wim Wesselius, the Primary History stands for 'the historical books Genesis – 2 Kings at the beginning of the Bible which present one continuous historical account from creation to the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians in 587 BCE,...'. See Jan-Wim Wesselius, *The Origin of the History of Israel: Herodotus's Histories as Blueprint for the First Books of the Bible* (JSOTSup, 345; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), p. ix. He draws parallels between the Primary History and the Greek-language *Histories* of Herodotus of Halicarnassus (written between about 445 and 425 BCE), and divides the *Histories* which are composed of nine books in total into three: book 1, books 2-6 and books 7-9.

[85] Clines, *What Does Eve Do to Help?: And Other Readerly Questions to the Old Testament*, p. 89.

[86] Benedict de Spinoza, *Theologico-Political Treatise* (New York: Dover Books, 1951), pp. 120-32. This was originally published in 1670. Spinoza did not use Freedman's term, but adopted the narrative complex from Genesis to Kings. He also included the book of Ruth within this unified work.

[87] Greenstein, 'The Formation of the Biblical Narrative Corpus', pp. 151-78 (151, 153).

[88] Danna Nolan Fewell and David M. Gunn, 'Narrative, Hebrew', (*ABD* 4; New York: Doubleday, 1992), pp. 1023-27; David M. Gunn, and Danna Nolan Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 3-4, 6, 29, 89.

[89] Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*, p. 13; in recent years, some scholars who have been interested in the Primary History as the largest literary unit in the Hebrew Bible, have drawn attention to structural similarities between the Primary History and the *Histories* of Herodotus (490 – 430 BCE). These books and articles on the relationship between the Primary History and Herodouts are as follows: Sara Mandell and David N. Freedman, *The Relationship Between Herodotus' History and Primary History* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993); Katherine Stott, 'Herodotus and the Old Testament: a Comparative Reading of the Ascendancy Stories of King Cyrus and David', *SJOT* 16 (2002), pp. 52-78; Jan-Wim Wesselius, *The Origin of the History of Israel: Herodotus's Histories as Blueprint for the First Books of the Bible*; for further information on comparisons between Herodotus' history of ancient Greece and the hypothetical Deuteronomistic History of

or the Primary Narrative (or Story) by biblical scholars. While Gunn and Fewell use the terms interchangeably, I prefer to adopt the second one in the present study because confusion could arise between them due to preconceptions as to the differences in meaning between 'history' and 'story'. Furthermore, the term 'Primary Narrative' fits better when it comes to applying the particulars of narrative criticism. In other words, the term 'Primary History' could easily be read as implying the historiography of the Israelites in the Hebrew Bible, while the term 'Primary Narrative' implies a fundamental focus on the nature of the story as discoursed. In the light of narrative criticism, let us have a look at the diagram of the communication system of the Primary Narrative below.

FIGURE 3

Communication System of the Primary Narrative

Discourse + Story → Narrative

Mode of Expression + Content → Narrative

Narrative Order + Narrative → The Primary Narrative

(Gen. ~ 2 Kgs)

As a narrative consists of discourse (mode of expression) and story (content) in narratology, the Primary Narrative has two factors: narrative order as mode of expression and story as content. Narrative Order means a unified narrative sequence from Genesis to Kings and story indicates 'the basic story material'.[90] These two are in harmony with the communication system between the text and the reader in the biblical Hebrew narrative. A story is constructed through discourse which presents the story through narration. Thus, the Primary Narrative designates a 'story-as discoursed'.

In this context, reading narratives in this thesis is primarily concerned with understanding stories in a literary way rather than hypothesized sources or documents of a

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ancient Israel, see Flemming A.J. Nielsen, *The Tragedy in History: Herodotus and the Deuteronomistic History* (JSOTSup, 251; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997).

[90] Prince, 'fabula', in *Dictionary of Narratology*, pp. 29-30.

text. For this, if a story (or a book) seems to be connected with the previous or later one (or book), the reader could attempt to read them together. For instance, the book of Ruth is founded in the Hagiographa (כתובים) within the MT.[91] But in the LXX, Vulgate, and most modern versions it comes after Judges. This is because the historical background of the book of Ruth is closely related to the times of the Judges (Ruth 1:1). So, it is no wonder that the book of Ruth needs to be understood together with Judges in the same historical setting. Then how can the reader evaluate the book of Ruth in the Primary Narrative outlook? My assumption in this thesis is that, in a narratological perspective, we could insert the book of Ruth between Judges and Samuel as a 'ellipsis'[92] or 'paralipsis'[93] which gives a literary function of omission at least in the present sequence of the Hebrew Bible or giving less information as an implied story book in the MT. The book of Ruth can be also readable as having a genealogical function of narrative together with Genesis 38 within the Primary Narrative because the focus here is more on story than on history itself. I would like to say that in many ways the book of Ruth could be seen as the same kind of odd supplementary text as Genesis 38.[94]

The story of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38 is a subtle and exemplary case of the Primary Narrative as an 'achronic structure'[95] in the larger narrative because, as we shall see later, the episode does not connect with the surrounding texts by means of events or chronological sequences but is linked by means of literary themes and linguistic parallels. In the context of the larger narrative, Genesis 38 and the subsequent narratives are both subplots or 'episodic plot(s)'.[96] Ultimately, what, then, is the function of Genesis 38 within the storyline of the Primary Narrative? The answer to this question will be the final target of this

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[91] Rofé says, 'The position of the book [of Roth] in the Hagiographa appears to be original...But if its original position was between Judges and Samuel, why should it have been moved to the Hagiographa?...The reason for this [the book of Ruth is original in the Hagiographa] is likely to arise from the consideration that when the book was accepted as holy, the pentateuchal and prophetic canons were already closed'. Alexander Rofé, *Introduction to the Literature of the Hebrew* Bible (JBS vol. 9; Jerealem: Simor Ltd., 2009), p. 105.

[92] Prince, 'ellipsis', in *Dictionary of Narratology*, p. 26.

[93] Prince, 'paralipsis', in *Dictionary of Narratology*, p. 70.

[94] In particular, in relation to the thematic similarities of Ruth's and Tamar's character, see 6.3.2. of this thesis.

[95] Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, pp. 79-85 (84).

[96] Ska, *"Our Fathers Have Told Us": Introduction to the Analysis of Hebrew Narratives*, pp. 17-18.

synthetic approach which is based on the final text,[97] the following chapter will discuss the relationship between Genesis 38 and the surrounding chapters as well as the larger narratives from the point of view of the placement of chapter 38 and the use of literary devices in the chapter.

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[97] Oeming states, '...Narratology focuses on the final text and tries to understand and appreciate the functional structure of the whole (of chapters, groups of chapters, books, and even groups of books).' See Manfred Oeming, *Contemproary Biblical Hermeneutics: An Introduction* (tran. Joachim Vette; Hants: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006), p. 62; however, for a diachronic approach to Genesis – 2 Kings, see Suzanne Boorer, 'The Importance of a Diachronic Approach: The Case of Genesis – Kings', *CBQ* 51 (1989), pp. 195-208;

Chapter 2

The Placement of Genesis 38 and Its Literary Context

The following quote sums up the approach that will be taken in assessing the position of Genesis 38 in the Primary Narrative as it will be discussed in this chapter:

> *Several narratives, each one a complete unit in its own right, combine with one another in the Bible to create an extensive block, and thus the single narrative becomes one component of a greater narrative whole.*[1]

2.1. Introduction

The larger narrative is made up from the smaller ones (or stories) in it connected up in a systematic way. In biblical narrative there is a close connection between narrative and narrative or the smaller narrative and the larger one in which it is embedded.[2] So, the main objective of this chapter is to demonstrate how Genesis 38 is sited in its literary context both in the immediate and in the wider narrative. I would like to argue that Genesis 38 is a small episode, but at the same time it is also connected to, and encompassed by, larger narratives to which it is related literarily.

In what follows, I will explore the hypothesis that, as Judy Fentress-Williams writes, '...Gen. 38 is not an interruption in the narrative, but an interpretive lens that provides keys for understanding the larger narrative.'[3] The chapter is an indispensible story in the larger narrative angle as a literary artistry, so, it is necessary to discuss the way in which Genesis 38 occupies the centre of Genesis 37 and Genesis 39, but is also part of Genesis 37-50, part of the patriarchal narratives (chapters 12-50), part of the book of Genesis, and finally even part

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[1] Shimon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible* (JSOTSup, 70; Bible and Literature Series 17; Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1989), p. 94.

[2] Chulhyun Park, 'Narrative Criticism in Old Testament Studies: Present and Future', *Reformed Theology* 17 (2005), pp. 9-39 (27).

[3] Judy Fentress-Williams, 'Location, location, location: Tamar in the Joseph Cycle', *The Bible and Critical Theory* 3 (2007), pp. 20.1-20.8 (20.1); published also in Roland Boer (ed.), *Bakhtin and Genre Theory in Biblical Studies* (SBLSS, 63; Atlanta: SBL, 2007), pp. 59-68.

of the Primary Narrative (Genesis – 2 Kings). Looked at in this light, Genesis 38, to some extent, becomes part of an 'interwoven tapestry'[4] in the biblical Hebrew narrative. Before embarking on my arguments, it will be useful to consider briefly the debates in the literature on the placement of Genesis 38.

2.2. Literature Review: Debates on the Placement of Genesis 38

The book of Genesis consists of a series of narratives of different lengths and any relationships between these narratives have represented points of contention for biblical scholars. Among the various narratives, Genesis 37 to 50 is well known as the so-called 'Story of Joseph', although Gen. 37:2a reads אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת יַעֲקֹב ('this is the story of the family of Jacob' NRSV). To some scholars, however, the story of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38 has only been considered as a story isolated from the rest of Genesis 37-50.

2.2.1. Historico-Critical Views on the Placement of Genesis 38

Most interpreters suggest that the story of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38 is a completely unrelated and independent unit, having no significant connection to the surrounding narratives (Gen. 37, 39-50). In particular, a large number of historical commentators (source critics) believe that the small episode in chapter 38 is an awkward interpolation within the Joseph story. On the basis of this, scholars such as Eric I. Lowenthal and Claus Westermann do not include chapter 38 in the larger narrative of Genesis 37-50 because they claim that the story of Judah and Tamar is not part of the Joseph story.[5] Paul Thomas Mann puts the Judah-Tamar episode to the last section in his extensive novel, 'Joseph and His Brothers' (*Joseph und seine Brüder*, this book originally published in 4 vols., 1934–1945). The conclusion that Genesis 38 does

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[4] Joanna Dewey, 'Mark as Interwoven Tapestry: Forecasts and Echoes for a Listening Audience', *CBQ* 53 (1991), pp. 221-36.

[5] Eric I. Lowenthal, *The Joseph Narrative in Genesis* (New York: KTAV Publishing House, INC., 1973); Claus Westmann, *Joseph: Studies of the Joseph Stories in Genesis* (tran. Omar Kaste; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996); Longacre's analysis is similar to this interpretation. See Robert E. Longacre, *Joseph: A Story of Divine Prividence: A Text Theoretical and Textlinguistic Analysis of Genesis 37 and 39-48* (2nd edn; Winona Lake: Eisenbraus, 2003).

not belong where it is found arises from the way the historical critical method handles the text. As a consequence, all these scholars treat the Judah-Tamar story as a disruptive unit, totally different from Genesis 37-50, and therefore added by the editor or author at a later time. With regard to the author (or editor) of Genesis 38 and the reason for the existence of this chapter in the text, Ephraim A. Speiser accepts the opinion of other source critics like Gerhard von Rad and J.A. Emerton and ascribes the story to J (or the Yahwist),[6] and he assumes that the protection of tribal history is a sufficient reason for keeping the story in.[7] Historical interpreters consider the genre of Genesis 38 to be 'historical' and about the history of the tribe of Judah, whereas they assert that the Joseph story is not historical at all, rather just a novella. So as far as the placement of chapter 38 is concerned, they would say it is out of place in the Joseph story.[8]

A form-critical commentary by George W. Coats traces similar patterns in the placement of Genesis 38 and looks for an answer as to what its function might be. He maintains that 'The Judah-Tamar narrative breaks into a firm unity in the Joseph story and thus delays the pace of action in the Joseph story'.[9] While suggesting some of the similarities between the Judah-Tamar story and the surrounding narratives, he concludes that these points of contact are 'superficial'.[10] Nonetheless recognising the parallels between Genesis 38 and the surrounding narratives, Coats regards the text as 'heroic tradition', describing a 'woman

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[6] Most historico-critical scholars ascribe the story of Judah and Tamar to the Yahwist, who is the so called J.

[7] Ephraim A. Speiser, *Genesis* (3rd edn; AB 1; Garden City; NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1982), pp. 299-300; Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (trans: John H. Mark; OTL; London: SCM Press Ltd., 1972), pp. 355-62; Emerton also argues that Gen.38 mentions the ancestor of the tribe of Judah and it means that the members of the tribe lived with the Canaanites and married them at that time. J.A. Emerton, 'Judah and Tamar', *VT* 29 (1979), pp. 406, 414; see his other articles on Genesis 38, 'Some Problems in Genesis xxxviii', *VT* 25 (1975), pp. 338-61; *idem*, 'An Examination of a Recent Structuralist Interpretation of Genesis xxxviii', *VT* 26 (1976), pp. 79-98.

[8] However, Wright points out that the non-historical motifs in Genesis 38 enable the chapter to get along with the Joseph story as conformability. George R.H. Wright, 'The Positioning of Genesis 38', *ZAW* 94 (1982), pp. 523-29.

[9] George W. Coats, *Genesis, with an Introduction to Narrative Literature* (Grand Rapids: W.B Eerdmans, Pub. Co., 1983), p. 273; *idem*, 'Redactional Unity in Genesis 37-50', *JBL* 93 (1974), pp. 15-21 (16); see also Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), p. 611.

[10] Coats, *Genesis, with an Introduction to Narrative Literature*, p. 273.

accused of a capital crime who wins her freedom at the last possible moment'.[11] He also asserts the etiological character of the birth and naming of the twin sons. Perez and Zerah, and refutes other commentators, saying that interest in the genealogy of David would not be sufficient justification for preserving the story.[12] Furthermore, Coats insists that 'Judah is not the focal character; he is virtually the villain of the story'.[13] Thus, he concludes that the intention of the story is to entertain while giving some instruction.[14]

However, these opinions, including Coats', are inadequate because they do not consider the text systematically in relation to Genesis collectively,[15] let alone in the broader context of the whole literature of the Primary Narrative. In addition, they do not clearly provide us with a reason why Genesis 38 exists in its present position or identify its function, although they do try to look into the origin of chapter 38 and its form. In the present study of the final text, the question of the real author or editor is not a primary concern, but rather it is more appropriate to enquire into how we can understand the text itself. After all this, it is now time to examine the literary critics on the history of this kind of scholarship on the story.

2.2.2. Literary-Critical Views on the Placement of Genesis 38

Prior to the 1970s, an increasing number of studies had already been published devoted to the investigation of the literary features of biblical narratives.[16] However, since 1980s, research

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[11] Coats, *Genesis, with an Introduction to Narrative Literature*, p. 275.

[12] However, Rendsburg mentions that Genesis 38 is closely connected to the family of David, 'Various scholars have correctly noted that much of Genesis mirrors the events of the United Monarchy of David and Solomon...Most scholars who have worked along these lines have concentrated on the material usually ascribed to J...Important contributions are those of Joseph Blenkinsopp, Walter Brueggemann, Ronald E. Clements, Lothar Ruppert, and Peter F. Ellis.' Gary A. Rendsburg, 'David and His circle in Genesis xxxviii', *VT* (1986), p. 438; see also Wright, 'The Positioning of Genesis 38', p. 523.

[13] Coats, *Genesis, with an Introduction to Narrative Literature*, p. 275; Rendsburg notes that we cannot deny Judah's character is portrayed in a comical way. According to his analysis, this can be translated as mocking the king and his court. Rendsburg. 'David and His Circle in Genesis xxxviii', p. 445.

[14] Coats, *Genesis, with an Introduction to Narrative Literature*, p. 276.

[15] Childs states some questions as to its present context are required, 'What is the shape of the final chapters [chs. 37-50] and what is their function within the book of Genesis as a whole?', B.S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), p. 156.

[16] James Muilenburg, 'A Study in Hebrew Rhetoric: Repetition and Style', VTSup 1 (1953), pp. 97-111; Kenneth R.R. Gros Louis *et al.*, (eds.), *Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1974); Jan P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art in Genesis: Specimens of Structural and Stylistic Analysis* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1975); Jerome T. Walsh, 'Genesis 2:4b-3:24: A Synchronic Approach', *JBL* 96 (1977), pp. 161-77; for

by literary critics has come up with new perspectives we can use to help understand Genesis 38. Literary critics argue that the story fits as it stands in the narrative of chapters 37 to 50.[17] They also insist that Genesis 38 goes well with chapter 37 and chapter 39 from the point of view of their many shared literary connections.[18]

Robert Alter is one of the literary critics who tries to explore the narrative art of the biblical text and make the links between the Judah-Tamar Story (Gen. 38) and the surrounding stories (Gen. 37, 39-50) using literary allusions. As Alter observes, two compositional features of narrative which need to be understood well are 'the repeated use of narrative analogy' and 'the richly expressive function of syntax'.[19] If we apply some of these to the narrative of Genesis, particularly chapter 38, we can easily find repetitions and syntax in common with the larger narrative. These aspects of the text are different from those that interest historical critics when they read the text. This is because, as Kenneth Gros Louis has observed, 'Teachers of literature are *primarily* interested in the literary reality of a text and not its historical reality.'[20]

At this point we need to investigate Genesis 38 and the surrounding narratives with reference to intimate connections between them such as motif, theme and repeated verbs such as 'recognise' and 'went down'.[21] Regrettably, however, Alter does not present plainly the ultimate function of Genesis 38 with respect to its literary connections even though he

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further information, see footnote 1 of Shimon Bar-Efrat, 'Some Observations on the Analysis of Structure in Biblical Narrative', *VT* 30 (1980), pp. 154-73.

[17] Aaron Wildavsky, 'Survival Must Not Be Gained Though Sin: The Moral of the Prefigured Judah and Tamar', *JSOT* 63 (1994), pp. 37-48; Anthony J. Lambe, 'Judah's Development: The Pattern of Departure – Transition – Return', *JSOT* 83 (1999), pp. 53-68; Richard J. Clifford, 'Genesis 38: Its Contribution to the Jacob Story', *CBQ* 66 (2004), pp. 519-32.

[18] For example, Alter notes relationships between ch. 37 and ch. 38 as well as ch. 38 and ch. 39 including parallels, contrasts and repeated verbal roots. Robert Alter, 'A Literary Approach to the Bible' in *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1981), pp. 3-22; Fokkelman investigates the interface of structural analysis and hermeneutics between Genesis 37 and 38 in, Jan P. Fokkelman, 'Genesis 37 and 38 at the Interface of Structural Analysis and Hermeneutics', in L.J. de Regt, *et al.* (eds.), *Literary Structure and Rhetorical Strategies in the Hebrew Bible* (Assen: Van Gorcum; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1996), pp. 152-87; Anthony J. Lambe, 'Genesis 38: Structure and Literary Design', in Philip R. Davies & David J.A. Clines (eds.), *The World of Genesis: Persons, Places, Perspectives* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), pp. 102-20.

[19] Alter mentions 'Repetition is a familiar feature of the Bible, but it is in no way an automatic device: when does literal repetition occur, and what are the significant variations in repeated verbal formulas?,' Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, p. 21.

[20] Kenneth R.R. Gros Louis, 'Some Methodological Considerations', in Kenneth R.R. Gros Louis and James S. Ackerman (eds.), *Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives*, II (Nashville: Abingdon, 1982), pp. 13-24 (14).

[21] Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, pp. 4-11.

acknowledges the literary genius of the biblical writers.[22]

Since Alter, numerous scholars have changed their methodologies and study the literary aspects of the Hebrew Bible using the tools he suggested.[23] To illustrate. Peter E. Lockwood suggests in another way that there are reasons to read chapter 38 and the surrounding stories as a continuous narrative.[24] According to his argument, Genesis 38 has a wider significance in the sense that it serves as an abridgment of the whole Joseph cycle and anticipates its outcome. He makes plain other parallels between Genesis 38 and the subsequent chapters.[25] First of all, both Tamar and Joseph suffer banishment and threat to their lives (Gen. 38:11, 24; 37:26, 26-27). Secondly, Tamar and Joseph force their victimisers not only to acknowledge their wrongdoing but also to mend their ways (Gen. 38:26; 44:18-34). Thirdly, in both, God turns the crimes of the evil-doers to good effect. Finally, both Tamar and Joseph have two sons, and in both cases the second son is elevated above the first (Gen 38:27-30; cf. 41:50-52; 48:1-20).

One of Lockwood's contributions is that he details some parallels between Tamar and Joseph seeing them as characters with similar roles. This is very interesting and it is persuasive that he evaluates chapter 38 as a microcosm of the whole Joseph cycle;[26] however, his assertion that 'it [Genesis 38] is the Joseph story'[27] is hardly acceptable. The main characters in the episode are obviously Judah and Tamar, and this story is not in any way subordinated as part of the 'traditional' Joseph story. We need to acknowledge the fact that some literary connections between Genesis 38 and the surrounding narratives are to be

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[22] There are still numerous influences of his work. For reviews on Robert Alter, see R. Norman Whybray, 'On Robert Alter's *The Art of Biblical Narrative*', *JSOT* 27 (1983), pp. 75-86; Steven Weitzman, 'Before and After *The Art of Biblical Narrative*', *Proof* 27 (2007), pp. 191-210.

[23] For instance, David M. Gunn, 'Tamar and Judah: Genesis 38', *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 34-45; For further literary critics' articles, see footnote 8 in Anthony J. Lambe, 'Judah's Development: The Pattern of Departure – Transition – Return', p. 54.

[24] Peter E. Lockwood, 'Tamar's Place in the Joseph Cycle', *LTJ* 26 (1992), pp. 35-43; Seybold enphasises similarly. 'From the point of view of literary analysis, however, its placement serves to recast and reinforce some major aspects of the Joseph narrative'. Donald A. Seybold, 'Paradox and Symmetry in the Joseph Narratives', Kenneth R.R. Gros Louis, *et al.* (eds.), *Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1974), p. 61.

[25] Lockwood, 'Tamar's Place in the Joseph Cycle', pp. 39-40.

[26] Lockwood, 'Tamar's Place in the Joseph Cycle', p. 37.

[27] Lockwood, 'Tamar's Place in the Joseph Cycle', p. 37.

expected, but the unique points of the stories should be also considered within the larger narrative. Otherwise, such an incomplete interpretation of the text could lead readers to a misleading interpretation of Genesis 38 within the broader context of Genesis. That is. it could be even more likely that the traditional Joseph story,[28] including the story of Judah and Tamar, should come under the proposed title of *the Story of Jacob and his Sons*[29] because Gen. 38 (Judah and Tamar story) and 49 (Jacob's last words to his sons) do not really belong to the compass of the story of Joseph[30] and nor do Gen. 43:1-16 (Judah's discourse); Gen. 46:1-30 (Jacob's journey to Egypt and lists of his sons); Gen. 47:28-31 (Jacob's will); Gen. 48 (Jacob's blessing to Manasseh and Ephraim), although chapters 37-50 form a unitary story.

Finally, recently a growing number of feminist scholars are showing an interest in Genesis 38.[31] Yet some of them are only focused on Tamar and her rights over against Judah,

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[28] To most scholars, Gen. 37-50 is usually called 'the story of Joseph' and it is considered that Genesis 38 has been added to the Joseph story later. However, a few commentators indicate that the title of Gen. 37-50 is not 'the story of Joseph' but 'Joseph and his brothers.' Speiser, *Genesis*, pp. 287-378.; Westermann uses this title only with respect to chapter 37. Westermann, *Genesis 37-50, A Commentary*, pp. 31-45.

[29] For further detail of my arguments on this issue, see chapter 6 of the present thesis; here I am just introducing some scholars who are interested in alternative titles for 'the Joseph story' in relation to Genesis 38. Mathewson regards Genesis 38 as a part of the story of Jacob. Steven D. Mathewson, 'An Exegetical Study of Genesis 38', *BSac* 146 (1989), pp. 393-92 (385); Clifford also insists that chapter 38 fits within the history of Jacob's son, showing how one son, despite his serious sins, retains God's favour and establishes a major tribe in Israel. Richard J. Clifford, 'Genesis 38: Its Contribution to the Jacob Story', *CBQ* 66 (2004), pp. 519-32 (522); In the context of holistic literature, two stories (Judah-Tamar and Joseph) should not only be read separately but should also be read together as one unit; Coats calls Gen. 37-50 'The Jacob Saga as a Whole' and considers Gen. 37:1-36; 39:1-47:27 to be a separate section called the Joseph story but part of the whole Jacob story. He also entitles Gen. 50:15-21 a 'Recapitulation of Joseph story[:] Denouement' and includes it in 'The Individual Units'. Coats, *Genesis, with an Introduction to Narrative Literature*, pp. 259, 263, 311; in another of his articles he argues that the unit of narrative in Gen. 37-50 is 'united around Jacob and his sons'. *idem*, 'Redactional Unity in Genesis 37-50', pp. 15-21 (15); Fretheim calls Gen. 37:1-50:26 'Joseph, Judah, and Jacob's Family'. Terence E. Fretheim, 'The Book of Genesis', *NIB*, vol. I (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), pp. 333-34.

[30] Westermann, *Genesis 37-50, A Commentary*, p. 22.

[31] Susan Niditch, 'The Wronged Woman Righted: An Analysis of Genesis 38', *HTR* 72 (1979), pp. 143-49; Mieke Bal, 'One Woman, Many Men, and the Dialectic of Chronology', in *Lethal Love: Feminist Literary Readings of Biblical Love Stories* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), pp. 89-103; Johanna W.H. Bos, 'Out of the Shadows: Genesis 38; Judges 4:17-22; Ruth 3', in J. Cheryl Exum and Johanna W.H. Bos (eds.), *Reasoning with the Foxes Female Wit in a World of Male Power* (Semeia 42; Atlanta: SBL, 1988), pp. 37-67; Fokkelien Van Dijk-Hemmes, 'Tamar and the Limits of Patriarchy: Between Rape and Deduction', in Mieke Bal (ed.), *Anti-Covenant: Counter-Reading Women's Lives in the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1989), pp. 135-56; Carol Smith, 'The Story of Tamar: A Power-filled Challenge to the Structures of Power', in George J. Brooke (ed.), *Women in the Biblical Tradition* (Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), pp. 16-28; Morimura Nobuko, 'The Story of Tamar: A Feminist Interpretation of Genesis 38', *JCR* 59 (1993), pp. 55-67; Cecilia Wassén, 'The Story of Judah and Tamar in the Eyes of the Earliest Interpreters', *LT* 8 (1994), pp. 354-66; Eleanor Ferris Beach, 'An Iconographic Approach to Genesis 38', in Athalya Brenner and Carole Fontaine (eds.), *A Feminist Companion to Reading the Bible: Approaches, Methods and Strategies* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), pp. 285-305; Esther Marie Menn, *Judah and Tamar (Genesis 38) in Ancient Jewish Exegesis: Studies in Literary Form and Hermeneutics* (JSJSup, 51; Leiden: Brill, 1997); Ellen van Wolde, 'Intertextuality: Ruth in Dialogue with Tamar', in Athalya Brenner and Carole Fontaine (eds.), *A*

her father-in-law.[32] It seems to me that this is simply the reverse of the conventional opinion that the main character of the chapter is Judah in his attempt to beget a family. It may be, however, that choosing either of these characters as the main focus of the text from the outset is likely to reveal more about the prejudices of the reader than about the literary dynamics of the text itself. Leaving this question open may help our reading. In a sense, readers have a duty to seek other alternatives to understanding the chapter as an integrated text. In what follows, I shall argue how Genesis 38 is intimately linked with other chapters and helps form a literary whole.

2.3. Genesis 38 within Its Literary Context

The following subsections come to demonstrate how Genesis 38 is positioned naturally from the point of view of literary connections. As Edward M. Curtis puts it, 'It seems more appropriate to consider the meaning of the passage in its present canonical [or literary] context since it is there that the tradition is fixed in its final and authoritative form.'[33] To readers, Genesis 38 could be seen as a smaller story located between Genesis 37 and 39, but it could also be examined more broadly in relationship to other larger narratives up to and including the largest one; the Primary Narrative (Genesis – 2 Kings).

2.3.1. Genesis 38 as Part of the Literary Unit of Genesis 37 to 39

In the early part of the 20th century, Umberto Cassuto focused on the problem of the

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Feminist Companion to Reading the Bible: Approaches, Methods and Strategies (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), pp. 426-51; Melissa Jackson, 'Lot's Daughters and Tamar as Tricksters and the Patriarchal Narratives as Feminist Theology', *JSOT* 98 (2002), pp. 29-46; Mary E. Shields, '"More Righteous than I": The Comeuppance of the Trickster in Genesis 38', in Athalya Brenner (ed.), *Are we Amused?: Humour About Women in the Biblical Worlds* (JSOTSup, 383; London: T & T Clark International, 2003), pp. 31-51; Dvora E. Weisberg, 'The Widow of Our Discontent: Levirate Marriage in the Bible and Ancient Israel', *JSOT* 28 (2004), pp. 403-49; Diane M. Sharon, 'Some Results of a Structure Semiotic Analysis of the Story of Judah and Tamar', *JSOT* 29 (2005), pp. 289-318; Judy Fentress-Williams, 'Location, Location, Location: Tamar in the Joseph Cycle', *The Bible and Critical Theory* 3 (2007), pp. 20.1-20.8; also published in Roland Boer (ed.), *Bakhtin and Genre Theory in Biblical Studies* (SBLSS, 63; Atlanta: SBL, 2007), pp. 59-68.

[32] For example, Beach says, 'Genesis 38 is one of several family stories in Genesis 12-50 to have attracted feminist study because of its depiction of women working to achieve patriarchal priorities, by means that run counter to patriarchal control'. Eleanor Ferris Beach, 'An Iconographic Approach to Genesis 38', p. 290.

[33] Edward M. Curtis, 'Genesis 38: Its Context(s) and Function', *CTR* 5.2 (1991), pp. 247-57 (249).

relationship between Genesis 38 and its literary context rather than its inner content.[34] Contrary to most contemporary scholars, he argued that Genesis 38 was composed as a sequel to the preceding narrative on the subject of Joseph's journey to Egypt.[35] As Cassuto aptly observed:

> ...there is a kind of internal nexus between the story of Tamar and Judah [Gen. 38] and the selling of Joseph [Gen. 37], which is reflected in the correspondence of certain details in the two sections and is clearly manifested in the parallel expressions that denote these details.

Cassuto finds the same six verbal patterns in Genesis 38:25-26 ['*She sent* (שָׁלְחָה) word to her father-in-law, saying...*and she said* (וַתֹּאמֶר): *Discern* (הַכֶּר), *pray* (נָא), whose are these, signet (חוֹתָם), cord (פְּתִיל) and staff (מַטֶּה).[36] And Judah *recognised* (וַיַּכֵּר) them *and said* (וַיֹּאמֶר): She is more righteous than I'] and Genesis 37:32-33 ['*and they sent* (וַיְשַׁלְּחוּ) *the long robe with* sleeves...*and said* (וַיֹּאמְרוּ): This we have found; *discern* (הַכֶּר), *pray* (נָא), whether it is your son's robe or not. And he *recognised* (וַיַּכִּירָהּ) it, *and said* (וַיֹּאמֶר): It is my son's robe'].[37] Consequently, Cassuto draws the conclusion that it is difficult to suppose that such a list of parallels is only coincidence in the successive chapters. His insights were published much earlier than those of the modern literary critics who only really began using literary approaches in the 1970-80s with any real enthusiasm.

Due to his popularity and influence, Alter's handling of Genesis 38[38] has dominated much of the succeeding discussion although he mostly just seems to follow Cassuto's

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[34] Umberto Cassuto, 'The Story of Tamar and Judah', in *Biblical and Oriental Studies* (vol. I: Bible; trans. Israel Abrahams; Jerusalem: The Magnes Press/Hebrew University, 1973), pp. 29-40 (original in Hebrew, 1929, pp. 108-17).

[35] Cassuto, 'The Story of Tamar and Judah', p. 30.

[36] Gunn and Fewell elucidate these three words as follows: 'The word *hotam* [signet] may remind us of *hotan*, "father-in-law" [bridegroom]; *petileka* conceals *peti*, "simpleton" (and so peti leka, "you have a simpleton [on your hands]!"); and *matteh* [staff] is surely a sexual euphemism as in so many other languages.' David Gunn and Danna Nolan Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 40.

[37] Cassuto, 'The Story of Tamar and Judah', pp. 30-31.

[38] Alter deals with Genesis 38 in the first half of the first chapter of his book, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, pp. 3-12.

opinion.[39] He has tried to look into the art of biblical narrative and describes the interrelationship between the Judah-Tamar Story (Gen. 38) and Genesis 37. 39-50 through the perspective of literary devices. He has an interest in the 'thematic similarities, repeated words, and dialogue'[40] in the surrounding narratives. In the light of thematic similarities, Alter illustrates 'consolation' as found in Genesis 37:34-35 (Jacob's denial of Joseph's death as reported by his deceiving sons) and Genesis 38:12 (Judah's consolation of his wife). By making linguistic connections in the same way as Cassuto had already done, Alter makes a parallel between Genesis 37:32 (הַכֶּר־נָא, *see now,* NRSV), 33 (וַיַּכִּירָהּ, [*and*] *he* [Jacob] *recognised it,* NRSV) and Genesis 38:25 (הַכֶּר־נָא, *take note,* NRSV), 26 (וַיַּכֵּר יְהוּדָה, [*and*] *Judah recognised them,* NIV) which use the same verbal patterns. The verbs in Genesis 37:32 and 37:33 are in the imperative and imperfect forms (vav consecutive) and the same pattern also appears in Genesis 38:25 and 26.

Secondly, Alter also shows us the link between Genesis 38:1 (וַיֵּרֶד יְהוּדָה, [*and*] *Judah went down,* NRSV) and Genesis 39:1 (וְיוֹסֵף הוּרַד, [*and*] *Joseph was taken down,* NRSV) which use the same verbal root. However, it seems that Alter missed Genesis 37:25 (לְהוֹרִיד, *to take down,* NIV). The verb ירד is often used by the narrator in both Genesis 37, 38 and even other chapters.[41] He speculates that the first verb (הַכֶּר) plays a crucial thematic role at the end of the Joseph story. When Joseph meets his brothers in Egypt, he recognises them (וַיַּכֵּר), but they fail to recognise him (הִכִּרָהוּ Gen 42:8). Alter states, 'This precise recurrence of the verb in identical forms at the ends of Genesis 37 and 38 respectively is manifestly the result not of some automatic mechanism of interpolating traditional materials but of careful splicing of sources by a brilliant literary artist.'[42]

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[39] No modern commentators and critics note this and only quote Alter's contention; however, as far as I have investigated it, his verbal analysis of Genesis 38 is at least not new as it is comparable to Cassuto's.

[40] Dong-Weon Lim, 'A Study on the Re-canonicity of Genesis Chapter 38 through Reader–Response Approach', *KJCS* 36 (2004), pp. 5-20 (7).

[41] This verb is also used when Jacob takes his sons to Egypt (Gen. 42:2; 38; 43:4-5, 15; 44:26; 46:4); Barbara Green, in the third chapter of her book, calls Genesis 38 and 39, 'Two Brothers [Joseph and Judah] Go Down' in, *'What Profit for us?': Remembering the Story of Joseph* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1996), pp. 61-90.

[42] Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, p. 10.

Thirdly, from the perspective of theme, after the death of Judah's wife, he was widowed and had passed his period of mourning (38:12) and was 'being consoled', while Jacob had been in mourning because his sons deceived him leading him to believe that Joseph was dead, but he refused to be consoled (37:34-35).[43] In this case we can see two common and contrasting themes: 'mourning'[44] and 'consolation'. Finally, in regard to the sexual issue, Alter contrasts the 'sexual incontinence' in the relationship between Judah and Tamar, and 'sexual continence' between Joseph and Potiphar's wife.[45]

The linguistic and thematic similarities in Alter's analysis above show us reasons to believe that these narrative portions of the Hebrew Bible were not written by a clumsy editor or author, but by a skilful writer. This implies that a narrative is more meaningful when literary devices are closely examined in the text. However, parallelism in only a few words around chapter 38 cannot prove any connection between chapters for certain. We need to have a more detailed look at the narrative including other key words and themes to rule out the possibility that these links could have happened accidentally. It is true that in a literary unit every part makes a contribution within the whole narrative. In this sense, I agree with Alter's opinion that the placement of the final text of Genesis 38 should be decided upon by an evaluation of the individual units before it is considered to be an incomplete interpolation by historical authors, and assessment of it also should be deferred until every part of the narrative shows us its individual function as part of the whole.[46]

Mieke Bal, on the other hand, refuses to accept Alter's opinion of 'a thematic unity as a substitute for the apparent lack of chronological continuity' as 'both too easy and too drastic'.[47] Instead, she suggests a solution 'within the binary opposition between the two

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[43] Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, p. 7.

[44] The theme of mourning which involves abstaining from food and/or sexual relations is mentioned in various combinations; 1 Sam.31:13; Num. 20:29; Deut. 34:8; 21:13. See Nubuko, 'The Story of Tamar: A Feminist Interpretation of Genesis 38', p. 65; Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, p. 7.

[45] Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, p. 7; other interpreters also point out contrasts between Tamar in Genesis 38 and Potiphar's wife in Genesis 39. See Thomas W. Mann, *The Book of Torah: The Narrative Integrity of the Pentateuch* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988), pp. 67-68.

[46] Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, p. 11.

[47] Mieke Bal, 'One Woman, Many Men, and the Dialectic of Chronology', in *Lethal Love: Feminist Literary*

narrative devices of chronology and analogy'.[48] According to Bal, in Genesis 37-39 the analogy is that 'deceit is committed with the help of an object used as a pledge or as a proof, each time a significant part of the victim's outfit'.[49] The deceptions are Joseph's brothers to their father, Jacob (Gen. 37), Judah to Tamar and vice versa (Gen. 38),[50] and Potiphar's wife to her household servants and Potiphar (Gen. 39). In spite of the fact that they use different evidence, both Alter and Bal arrive at similar conclusions and recognise the literary continuity between chapters 37-39.

Another literary critic who is interested in the parallels and the literary techniques that link Genesis 37 and Genesis 38 is Jan P. Fokkelman.[51] He has discovered some common literary factors in the two chapters, and has tried to connect them to each other. According to Fokkelman the stories in chapter 37 and 38 set in Canaan may indeed be called the prelude to the Joseph cycle (chs. 37-50) as a whole.[52] He also claims that there are clear comparisons between Gen. 37:31-34 and Genesis 38; for example, 'deception by means of clothing,' 'recognition,' 'the death aspect,' powerless fathers (Jacob and Judah) who look at the material objects (Jacob: Joseph's coat, Judah: Tamar's veil) do not recognise what they mean.[53] It seems that Fokkelman's thematic parallels between the two chapters are, to some extent, more extensive than Cassuto's and Alter's.

Meanwhile, as a thematic connection between Genesis 38 and 39, Alter contrasts the 'sexual incontinence' of Judah and 'sexual continence' of Joseph.[54] David A. Dorsey mentions 'the seduction of Judah' and 'the failed seduction by Potiphar's wife'.[55] More recently, Joan E.

Readings of Biblical Love Stories, p. 90; Sarna also points out that 'Deception occurs in both narratives [Gen. 37 and 38]'. Nahum M. Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis-*בראשית (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), p. 264.

[48] Bal, *Lethal Love: Feminist Literary Readings of Biblical Love Stories*, p. 90.

[49] Bal, *Lethal Love: Feminist Literary Readings of Biblical Love Stories*, p. 95.

[50] On the topic of deception and the use of similar Hebrew vocabularies in both Genesis 37 and 38, see Lindsay Wilson, *Joseph Wise and Otherwise: The Intersection of Wisdom and Covenant in Genesis 37-50* (PBM; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2004). pp. 90-91.

[51] Fokkelman, 'Genesis 37 and 38 at the Interface of Structural Analysis and Hermeneutics', pp. 152-87.

[52] Fokkelman, 'Genesis 37 and 38 at the Interface of Structural Analysis and Hermeneutics', p. 152.

[53] Fokkelman, 'Genesis 37 and 38 at the Interface of Structural Analysis and Hermeneutics', p. 178.

[54] Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, p. 10.

[55] David A., Dorey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis-Malachi* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), pp. 62-63.

Cook has conducted some literary analyses – settings, plots, characters and themes – between Genesis 38 and 39.[56] In Cook's view, Genesis 39 also has a common issue of 'faithfulness practised in spite of grave difficulties'. Both chapters dramatise the dangers and risks involved in the fulfilment of the divine promise to Abraham to perpetuate his seed.[57] In particular, she highlights the two stories in these chapters as stories of Jacob's sons, connected by being 'juxtaposed canonically'.[58] It is interesting to note that Cook presents both stories as accounts of episodes involving marginal women who planned sexual encounters with the two men.[59] What is more, in these stories articles of clothing are used as evidence against the men. Finally, both stories develop the characters of people who remained faithful to their convictions and to the significant people in their lives.[60] In accordance with this, one of Cook's contributions to the field is an attempt to seek out marginalisation in chapter 38 and 39. According to Cook, there are four aspects of marginalisation: 'forms of marginalization', 'outcomes of marginalization', 'implications of marginalization' and 'transcendence of marginalization'.[61] It is probable that these similarities between Genesis 38 and 39 can be seen more clearly as the examples of the use of the same literary devices.[62] Accordingly, I suggest that the resonances in the the story of Genesis 38 are not confined to the story of Joseph; that is its immediate context, from a traditional point of view. Rather, these echoes can be heard in the larger narratives too and represent part of the literary interaction between the smaller and the larger narratives that make up the 'Primary Narrative'.

In a similar way, John R. Huddlestun insists that Genesis 38 has more to do with garments or personal objects than any other chapter in the Joseph story, and hence is worthy

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[56] Joan E Cook, 'Four Marginalized Foils-Tamar, Judah, Joseph and Potiphar's Wife: A Literary Study of Genesis 38-39', *Proceedings of Eastern Great Lakes Meetings Biblical Society* 21 (2001), pp. 115-28.

[57] Cook, 'Four Marginalized Foils-Tamar, Judah, Joseph and Potiphar's Wife...', p. 116.

[58] Cook, 'Four Marginalized Foils-Tamar, Judah, Joseph and Potiphar's Wife...', p. 115.

[59] Cook, 'Four Marginalized Foils-Tamar, Judah, Joseph and Potiphar's Wife...', p. 116; Alter contrasts the 'sexual incontinence' in Genesis 38 and 'sexual continence' in Genesis 39. *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, p. 7; other interpreters also point out a contrast between Tamar in Genesis 38 and Potiphar's wife in Genesis 39. See Mann, *The Book of Torah: The Narrative Integrity of the Pentateuch*, pp. 67-68.

[60] Cook, 'Four Marginalized Foils-Tamar, Judah, Joseph and Potiphar's Wife...', p. 116.

[61] Cook, 'Four Marginalized Foils-Tamar, Judah, Joseph and Potiphar's Wife...', pp. 123-27.

[62] Bal states, 'the first and foremost thematic unity is *love*, especially between 38 and 39. Love, and Tricksters,' in *Lethal Love: Feminist Literary Readings of Biblical Love Stories*, p. 91.

of examination side by side with chapters 37 to 39.[63] In all three chapters, garments have an important function in plot development as indicators of status and authority by which identities are revealed or concealed. These motifs include: 'deception via removal or loss of garment/personal items',[64] 'deception through forced recognition',[65] 'authority signified by evidence in hand'.[66]

As we have seen above, while some researchers have focused on parallels between chapters 37 and 38, others have addressed the thematic and linguistic interactions between chapters 38 and 39 or chapters 37 to 39 as a whole. In all cases, these investigations have resulted in defensible interpretations of the links between the chapters around Genesis 38. Now it is clearer that the context for reading the Judah-Tamar story should be expanded into the larger context or narrative. To put it another way, this means that we can clarify the relationship between Genesis 38 and the traditional Joseph story (Gen. 37, 39-50) and show how, by using literary insights, these two stories can be read as a continuum despite the barriers between the different scholarly approaches.

2.3.2. Genesis 38 as Part of the Literary Unit from Genesis 37 to 50

In the previous section I have discussed the connection between Genesis 38 and each of the two chapters, 37 and 39. Many scholars have used the thematic and linguistic links to understand the different contents of chapter 38 using various literary techniques, despite the fact that events in Genesis 38 are not continued in the following chapters.[67] With regard to

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[63] Huddlestun is strongly critical of the fact that Victor Mathews did not include the garment motif in Genesis 38 in his article, 'The Anthropology of Clothing in the Joseph Narrative', *JSOT* 65 (1995), pp. 25-36. He also says, 'Such an omission would be understandable if the narrative in ch. 38 had nothing to do with clothing or personal items, but precisely the opposite is the case. Indeed, ch. 38 is arguably more concerned with garments or objects of one's wardrobe than any in the Joseph story. Unlike the adjacent chs. 37 and 39, this chapter contains not one but two instances where such items, indicative of status, play a pivotal role in the plot.' John R. Huddlestun, 'Divestiture, Deception, and Demotion: The Garment Motif in Genesis 37-39', *JSOT* 98 (2002), pp. 47-62 (48-9).

[64] Gen. 37:23; Gen. 38:23; Gen. 39:12, 16.

[65] Gen. 37:26; Gen. 38:14, 15, 16; Gen. 39:19-20 (*implication*).

[66] Gen. 38:18, 20, 28-30; Gen. 39:1, 3-4, 6, 8, 12-13, 22-23; Huddlestun, 'Divestiture, Deception, and Demotion: The Garment Motif in Genesis 37-39', pp. 55-60.

[67] Coats states, 'Yet, despite a general unity of theme, Genesis 37-50 shows no marked unity of structure...The Judah-Tamar story (III) stands out of the unity in the Joseph story as an independent element

Judah, it is clear that his actions, as a father of the family on the stage in chapter 38, are awkward.[68] But this chapter is not literarily separated from its context because it is more understandable viewed from the wider context; that is we can find clues to its interpretation in the wider context.[69]

A good example of such an analysis is that of Anthony J. Lambe which is concerned with the character development of Judah.[70] His analysis produces a structural pattern of 'departure-transition-return' in Genesis 37-50.[71] Judah's career as a character begins with his brothers in Canaan (Gen. 37). However, when he separates from his brothers in Gen. 38:1, Judah is alienated and creates his own family. But when his two sons, Er and Onan, die he faces a new situation of alienation. In Lambe's terms, this is 'departure'.[72]

In the second step Judah has a dramatic experience[73] when he recognises the pledges, 'the signet and the cord and the staff' (NRSV), from Tamar (Gen. 38:26). He admits his breach of the Levirate Law (Deut. 25:5-10) in not keeping his promise that he would give Tamar to Shelah, his third son (Gen. 38:26). For this reason, his admission to Tamar is sincere and, after this, he plays a key role as a spokesman on behalf of his brothers (Gen. 43:3-5, 8-10; 44:16-34). After learning an important lesson in Genesis 38, Judah becomes the main speaker in chapters 43 and 44.[74] This rapid change in Judah's character positively affects the tone of the wider narrative. Moreover, when the brothers are blessed, Judah is given

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with an independent plot.' His outline of Gen. 37-50 shows structural disunity and he breaks down the unit as follows: I. Exposition (37:1-4), II. Complication (37:5-36), III. *Judah-Tamar story* (38:1-30), IV. Digression in the Plot of the Joseph Story (39-41), V. Complication (42), VI. Denouement (43-35), VII. Conclusion (46:1-47:27), VIII. *Traditions about Jacob's Death in Egypt* (47:28-50:14), IX. Denouement Recapitulation (50:15-21), X. Appendix (50:22-26). George W. Coats, 'Redactional Unity in Genesis 37-50', *JBL* 93 (1974), pp. 15-21, see especially 15.

[68] For further discussion, see 'The Micro Level: Analysis of Judah's Character in Genesis 38' in chapter 3.3 of this thesis.

[69] Coats, 'Redactional Unity in Genesis 37-50', p. 15.

[70] Anthony J. Lambe, 'Judah's Development: The Pattern of Departure – Transition – Return', *JSOT* 83 (1999), pp. 53-68.

[71] Lambe, 'Judah's Development: The Pattern of Departure – Transition – Return', pp. 55-67.

[72] Lambe, 'Judah's Development: The Pattern of Departure – Transition – Return', pp. 55-58.

[73] 'Judah's experience in Genesis 38 thus has a definite connection and impact upon his development in the Joseph story, where his role is crucial for the reconciliation, survival and destiny of the family.' Lambe, 'Judah's Development: The Pattern of Departure – Transition – Return', p. 60.

[74] P. Fokkelman, 'Genesis 37 and 38 at the Interface of Structural Analysis and Hermeneutics', pp. 178-81.

outstanding status (Gen. 49:8-12).[75] When his younger brother, Joseph, is sold to the Ishmaelites (or the Midianites), it appears that Judah is a timid person (Gen. 37:26-27). However, the dramatic change in Judah's character is revealed to us in Genesis 38:26. Subsequently, Genesis 38 is taken up fully in the traditional Joseph story. Using Lambe's terminology, this is a 'transition'[76] and Judah's conversion is a 'paradigm'.[77]

Finally, Judah gains his new identity and self-understanding. Lambe calls this 'return'.[78] In the same vein, Coats evaluates Judah's status as follows:

> ...in Genesis 37 Judah is a boy among his brothers; in ch. 38 he is the head of a family in Canaan; and in ch. 46 he is responsible for moving a family including Tamar's sons to Egypt.[79]

In a similar way, Yigal Levin compares Judah to his other brothers. 'Reuben's leadership is gone. Simeon's brief moment (if he ever had one) has passed. It is now Judah's turn to assume the mantle of leadership.'[80] We can see evidence of this in the text. Judah is the only one of his brothers who recommends his father, Israel, to allow Benjamin to travel to Egypt (Gen. 43:8-10) and pleads with Joseph to save Benjamin (Gen. 44:16-33). Thus, Genesis 38 is an important transition between Judah before and Judah after conversion.

Returning to Coats' comments, his argument that 'these parasites in the Joseph story function to incorporate the Joseph story into the larger narration' is also possible.[81] In addition, he says, 'The framework binds into the Joseph story, not as a part of the plot in the Joseph narrative itself, but as a part of the larger collection of traditions about Jacob and his sons.'[82] However, Coats omitted several important points. Firstly, he did not refer to the benediction

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[75] 'Judah, your brothers shall praise you;...The *scepter* shall not depart form Judah, nor the *ruler's staff* from between his feet,...and the *obedience of the people* is his.' (NRSV)

[76] Lambe, 'Judah's Development: The Pattern of Departure – Transition – Return', pp. 58-60.

[77] 'Judah is transformed first, raising hopes that others can be also, and the family can be saved'. Richard J. Clifford, 'Genesis 38: Its Contribution to the Jacob Story', *CBQ* 66 (2004), p 532.

[78] Lambe, 'Judah's Development: The Pattern of Departure – Transition – Return', pp. 60-67.

[79] Coats, 'Redactional Unity in Genesis 37-50', p. 17.

[80] Yigal Levin, 'Joseph, Judah and the Benjamin Conundrum', *ZAW* 116 (2004), pp. 223-41 (238).

[81] Coats, 'Redactional Unity in Genesis 37-50', p. 15.

[82] Coats, 'Redactional Unity in Genesis 37-50', p. 20.

for Judah from Jacob separately (Gen. 49:8-12). Secondly, Coats did not speak of the intention of the narrator when Jacob blessed Joseph's two sons Manasseh and Ephraim because the order of blessing was not the order of birth (Gen. 48). Finally, if Coats suggests Genesis 37-50 is a 'collection of traditions unified around Jacob and his sons', then what is the function of Genesis 38 in relation to this larger literary work? Is this suggestion enough to help us to read these chapters without difficulty? Nonetheless there remains an unexplained aspect. This point will be argued later in detail. More importantly, although Genesis 38 stands as the second chapter of Genesis 37-50, it should be re-examined in the wider context because the meaning of the Judah-Tamar story would be clearer to the reader then. Instead, the conclusion to be drawn here is that Genesis 38 is one stage in the larger narration of *Jacob and his Sons' Story* just as Genesis 37 and 39-50 are one part of the larger story of Jacob and his family.[83]

2.3.3. Genesis 38 and the Wider Literary Units within the Patriarchal Narratives

Until recently Genesis 38 has been considered by most scholars, both from the historical and the literary critical camps, to be part of the story of Joseph, although their perspectives in reading this chapter are different. For a full understanding of the narrative, the literary range of the story should be extended beyond the so-called story of Joseph as well as beyond the chapter itself because Genesis 38 is not part of the Joseph Story but an equal part of the stories of the sons of Jacob.[84] Furthermore, the literary patterns and themes of the story can be observed in other patriarchal stories. Melissa Jackson, for instance, compares some literary parallels between the stories of Lot's daughters (Gen. 19:30-38) and Tamar (Genesis 38). She comments that '...the stories of Lot's daughters and Tamar contain many allusions to other

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[83] Coats, 'Redactional Unity in Genesis 37-50', p. 21.

[84] Coats suggests that a larger narration of traditions about Jacob stretching from Gen. 25:19 to Gen. 50:14 (15-26) should be entitled 'Jacob and his sons'. Coats, 'Redactional Unity in Genesis 37-50', p. 15; Steven D. Mathewson, 'An Exegetical Study of Genesis 38', *BSac* 146 (1989), pp. 373-92 (385); Noth says, 'the Joseph story...cannot be adduced...its theme is not "Joseph", but "Joseph and his brothers".' Martin Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions* (trans. Bernard W. Anderson; Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1972), p. 42.

female trickster stories of the patriarchal narratives'.[85] If the suggested relationship between the two stories is accurate, a parallel can be made between chapter 38 and the other patriarchal stories. The relationship also needs to be re-evaluated because the chapter should be recognised in the wider context of patriarchal narratives in the book of Genesis. Hence, our fundamental premise is that Genesis 38 does not stand alone but is connected literarily[86] to the larger patriarchal narratives beyond chapters 37 to 50 even though the events of the narrative are not similar. If the connection between them is acknowledged, we can reach the conclusion that the author (or editor), in other parts of the patriarchal narratives, may have wanted to use Genesis 38 as a bridge.

According to Carol Smith, writing on the other patriarchal narratives in relation to Genesis 38, the parallels 'are so striking that it would be difficult to view Tamar in isolation from the other women in Genesis. Her story overlaps with theirs'.[87] She illustrates two points: 'subversive elements'[88] and 'birth stories'.[89] Smith mentions on the former that 'it is a story which does not show a major Israelite figure in a particularly favourable light'. The latter point is that in other patriarchal narratives, such as Sarai (Gen. 16:1-2), Rebekah (Gen. 25:21), and Rachel (Gen. 29:31), there are similarities with Genesis 38,[90] but there are also two important differences: first, it is not suggested that Tamar cannot have a baby because she is barren. Second, on the question of the births of the babies, 'the agency [in Genesis 38] is

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[85] Melissa Jackson, 'Lot's Daughters and Tamar as Tricksters and the Patriarchal Narratives as Feminist Theology', *JSOT* 98 (2002), pp. 29-46; see also Allen P. Ross, 'The Daughters of Lot and the Daughter-in-Law of Judah: Hubris or Faith in the Struggle for Women's Rights', *Exegesis and Exposition* 2:1 (Summer 1987), pp. 71-82; see also Naomi Steinberg, 'Israelite Tricksters, Their Analogues and Cross-cultural Study', in J. Cheryl Exum and Johanna W.H. Bos (eds.), *Reasoning with the Foxes Female Wit in a World of Male Power* (Semeia, 42; Atlanta: SBL, 1988), pp. 1-13.

[86] In her paper, Carol Smith is interested in two issues as follows; firstly, that the story of Tamar in Genesis 38 contains 'subversive elements' and secondly, the position of Genesis 38 among other biblical birth stories. Carol Smith, 'The Story of Tamar: A Power-filled Challenge to the Structures of Power', in George J. Brooke (ed.), *Women in the Biblical Tradition* (Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), pp. 16-28 (17).

[87] Smith, 'The Story of Tamar: A Power-filled Challenge to the Structures of Power', p. 23.

[88] Smith notes, 'first,...the so-called law of levirate marriage has a basic flaw in it, thus implying the further suggestion that the relative status of individuals within families is not a pattern so firmly established...Second,...there may be exceptions to applying the rule of law in circumstances where there is deemed to have been an unfairness in the way the law has been used... Finally, the story makes the point that those whom society has traditionally revered and respected are not necessarily worthy of reverence and respect.' Smith, 'The Story of Tamar: A Power-filled Challenge to the Structures of Power', p. 17.

[89] Smith, 'The Story of Tamar: A Power-filled Challenge to the Structures of Power', pp. 17-23.

[90] For further details of these arguments, see chapter 6.2. of this thesis.

human rather than divine.'[91] Smith continues her discussion of the patriarchal narratives by stating the following with regard to Rebekah's connection to Tamar.

> Of all the patriarchal wives Tamar probably most resembles Rebekah. Rebekah, like Tamar, gives birth to twin boys after Yhwh has intervened on her behalf, and as in Gen 38:27-30, there is some ambiguity about which of the twins is to be the more important.[92]

Smith comments insightfully that the younger of the twins will become greater than the elder (Gen. 25:23). In terms of this, the story of the birth of Rebekah's sons (Gen. 25:21-26) is noticeably similar to the story of Tamar's sons' births (Gen. 38:27-30). In the patriarchal narratives one of the distinct literary aspects is that the right of 'primogeniture' gives way to 'ultimogeniture'.[93] Tamar gave birth to twin boys, Perez and Zerah, to Judah. However, when they were in Tamar's womb, their position was reversed. The theme of reversal in the right of the firstborn is mentioned in several stories: Ishmael and Isaac (Gen. 21), Esau and Jacob (Gen. 25:24-26; 27), Joseph's brothers and Joseph (Gen 37; 42-47; 50), Manasseh and Ephraim (Gen. 48). These patterns in Genesis lead us to the conclusion that Genesis 38 is not an isolated story.

Smith's most significant contribution to the debate is that similarities and differences between Genesis 38 and other patriarchal narratives are properly paralleled. However, she focuses only on Tamar from a female's standpoint in relation to the royal line of David but ignores Judah's role as the father of his tribe. The fact that Tamar goes to such lengths to instigate sexual relations with Judah emphasises his importance rather than reduces it. Without Judah, there is no Tamar in the story. However, it is unfortunate that Judah's role is considered unfavourably. This is merely Smith's view because the developing character of Judah and his role in the family, which is depicted in the following chapters of the book of

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[91] Smith, 'The Story of Tamar: A Power-filled Challenge to the Structures of Power', p. 22.
[92] Smith, 'The Story of Tamar: A Power-filled Challenge to the Structures of Power', p. 22.
[93] Jackson mentions that the issue of untimogeniture is an ambiguity of birth order. Jackson, 'Lot's Daughters and Tamar as Tricksters and Patriarchal Narratives as Feminist Theology', pp. 43-44.

Genesis, seems to be ignored.[94]

Again, as Jackson has argued, the best available story from the patriarchal period that can be examined in order to see the literary parallels with Genesis 38 is the story of Lot's daughters (Gen. 19:30-38).[95] Jackson lists a number of family-related similarities between them:

> First,...deep concern, on the part of the woman, for perpetuation of the line...Second, the barrier to perpetuation of the line is not, as we find in other patriarchal stories, barrenness. Rather, the common threat in these two stories is lack of a willing and/or suitable man. Third is the women's common status as widows...Fourth, the father figures in both stories have recently become widowers. A final similarity with regard to family is that the narratives conclude with the birth of two sons. Furthermore, one in each pair of sons has a place in the lineage of David: Moab and Perez.[96]

Jackson suggests a syllogism as follows: 'the stories of Lot's daughters and Tamar are trickster narratives; trickster narratives are a comic genre[97]; therefore, the stories of Lot's daughters and Tamar are comedy'.[98] According to her, these two stories are 'intrusive' and 'subversive'.[99] As a result, these stories describe women struggling for their rights to be the mothers of heirs. Jackson draws a parallel between these two stories from the perspective of the female trickster. She concludes that these stories can be interpreted comically. The reason that the author uses this technique is for 'inverted reality' and, as a consequence, in Jackson's view, there are no tricksters and underdogs in the patriarchal narratives.[100] On the contrary, Jackson deals with Judah as if he were a fool.[101] Both Smith and Jackson degrade Judah in his status in the narrative of Genesis 38 relative to Tamar. However, this binary separation based

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[94] Lambe, 'Judah's Development: The Pattern of Departure – Transition – Return', pp. 53-68.

[95] Smith, 'The Story of Tamar: A Power-filled Challenge to the Structures of Power', p. 22; Jackson, 'Lot's Daughters and Tamar as Tricksters and the Patriarchal Narratives as Feminist Theology', pp. 29-46.

[96] Jackson, 'Lot's Daughters and Tamar as Tricksters...', p. 30.

[97] Ryken divides biblical stories into four categories: Heroic Narrative, Epic, Comedy, and Tragedy. Leland Ryken, *How to Read the Bible as Literature* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), pp. 75-86.

[98] Jackson, 'Lot's Daughters and Tamar as Tricksters...', p. 39.

[99] Jackson, 'Lot's Daughters and Tamar as Tricksters...', p. 39.

[100] Jackson, 'Lot's Daughters and Tamar as Tricksters...', p. 29-46 (29).

[101] Jackson, 'Lot's Daughters and Tamar as Tricksters...', p. 40.

on gender between Judah and Tamar is not appropriate because we need to acknowledge that these two stories are enclosed by the larger patriarchal narratives and these are only part of them. Therefore, if one wants to understand the meaning of literary similarities in the patriarchal narratives, the meaning should be interpreted in the context of the whole literary work rather than in a part or one chapter of it.

Gordon J. Wenham, a critic who widens the scope of literary aspects held in common between various stories in the patriarchal narrative, refers to the Judah-Tamar story in Genesis 38 as follows: 'This short story [Gen. 38] then helps to focus the leading ideas of the whole patriarchal narrative.'[102] Furthermore, he notes two successive active verbs - 'saw'[103] and 'take' - related to marriage (or intercourse) in Genesis 38:2 and these combinations can be seen within the patriarchal narratives. For instance, Pharaoh *sees* and *takes* Sarah (Gen. 12:15), and Shechem *sees* and *takes* Dinah (Gen. 34:2).[104] The scene which depicts the continuation of the line being in danger in Genesis 38 reminds the reader of 'endangered matriarchs'[105] in Gen. 12:10-20 (Sarah); Gen. 20:1-18 (Sarah); Gen. 26:1-11 (Rebekah). Wenham's view allows us to extend our view of Genesis 38 into the perspective of the wider patriarchal narratives. These literary analyses provide a more holistic method.

Finally, Cook asserts that 'chapter 38, the story of the sexual mistreatment of Tamar by Judah, is literarily symmetrical with chapter 34, the story of the rape of Jacob and Leah's daughter, Dinah, by Shechem the Hivite'.[106] Furthermore, the story of disguise and disclosure

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[102] Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50* (WBC, 2; Dallas: Word Books Publisher, 1994), p. 369.

[103] Nobuko shows this word works on two levels: a 'physical level' and a 'cognitional level.' Examples of the way these levels work include Eve's seeing a fruit (Gen. 3:6) and David's seeing a woman bathing (2 Sam. 11:2). Nobuko, 'The Story of Tamar: A Feminist Interpretation of Genesis 38', pp. 58-59. Although they saw (physical level) a temptation near to them, they did not resist it and could not see (cognitional level) the consequences.

[104] Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, p. 366; Nobuko mentions that verses 14, 15 and 16 use similar syntax as well as key words. These are כִּי רָאֲתָה כִּי־גָדַל שֵׁלָה (v. 14), כִּי כִסְּתָה, פָּנֶיהָ. וַיִּרְאָהּ יְהוּדָה וַיַּחְשְׁבֶהָ לְזוֹנָה: (v. 15) and כִּי לֹא יָדַע כִּי (v. 16). She divides seeing into two levels: a *physical level* and a *cognitional level*. Although Tamar saw the situation with Shelah and understood Judah's intention (v. 14), Judah only saw Tamar's disguise as a prostitute but did not recognise her. Thus Tamar operates on both the physical and cognitional levels, while Judah only operates on the physical. In Nobuko's words, 'In the bible, one can walk the way of wisdom only when seeing leads to knowing.' (for example, see Gen. 18:21; Exod. 2:25) Nobuko, 'The Story of Tamar: A Feminist Interpretation of Genesis 38', pp. 58, 65.

[105] For this topic, see chapter 6.

[106] Cook, 'Four Maginalized Foils-Tamar, Judah, Joseph and Potiphar's Wife...', p. 116; Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, p. 5.

in Genesis 38 is related to Genesis 31 and 37, and Genesis 44-45. It functions to connect them thematically.[107]

As seen above, we have discussed the relationship between Genesis 38 and the patriarchal narratives in the book of Genesis. From this, we can conclude that the author of the story of Judah and Tamar (Genesis 38) is concerned with this story in the context of the whole patriarchal narrative otherwise there would not be so many common literary aspects. In the following section, in order to see more evidence of this, let us turn the argument to the wider range of the Primary Narrative as well as Genesis.

2.3.4. Genesis 38 as Part of the Book of Genesis

The book of Genesis, which is positioned first in the Hebrew Bible, can be considered to have a pivotal function for two reasons: the book introduces readers many biblical narratives and it has been evaluated as the 'storm-centre of biblical criticism in the modern period'.[108] As a matter of fact, the approach mainly used by biblical scholarship for over two hundred years has been to dissect Genesis using the documentary hypothesis. Scholarly criticism of recent works on biblical narrative, however, has focused on a 'macrostructures'[109] approach to the Hebrew Bible. Brevard S. Childs, one of the chief advocates of reading the text in its canonical location, insists that it is necessary to ask some questions about the present context of Genesis: 'What is the shape of the final chapters and what is their function within the book of Genesis as a whole?'[110] This is persuasive to me because Childs may be indicating that Genesis is more significant when it is understood as a unified or a unitary literary work rather than as a collection of individual narratives. In this section I support literary approaches which suggest Genesis forms a book in the literary sense and is completely designed by the author.

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[107] Fokkelman, 'Genesis 37 and 38 at the Interface of Structural Analysis and Hermeneutics', pp. 177-78.

[108] Bernard W. Anderson, 'From Analysis to Synthesis: The Interpretation of Genesis 1-11', *JBL* 97 (1978), pp. 23-29 (23).

[109] Fox, 'Can Genesis Be Read As a Book?', in Miri Amihai *et al.* (eds.), *Narrative Research on the Hebrew Bible* (Semeia 46; Atlanta: SBL, 1989), pp. 31-40 (32).

[110] Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), p. 156.

Everett Fox deals with the book of Genesis as a unity.[111] While accepting the traditional division of the book into four main narratives: the Primeval History (chapters 1-11), the Abraham Cycle (11:27 or 12:1-25:11), the (Isaac-)Jacob Cycle (25:12-36:43), and the Joseph Narrative (37-50), he focuses on the handling of character development, style of the text, the use and development of theme words and thematic threads, and so forth. As a consequence, Fox concludes that the book of Genesis is intentionally systematic.[112] In Fox's argument, a list of major themes can be seen in Genesis and everything is integrated into a systematic whole that has a consistent structure and 'chiastic'[113] elements (ABB'A'), as follows:

[A] *Primeval History*
A Chosen Figure (Noah)
B God f[F]avo[u]rs Youngest Son (Abel); Hatred (Cain-Abel)
C Family Continuity Threatened (Abel murdered)
D Ends with Deaths (Haran, Terah)
E Humanity Threatened (Deluge; repeated use of *kol* in 7:21-23)
F Ends Away from Land of Canaan ("in Haran")

[B] *Abraham Cycle*
A Chosen Figure (Abraham)
B God Favo[u]rs Youngest Son (Isaac); Hatred (Sarai-Hagar)
C Family Continuity Threatened (Sarai Barren; Isaac almost killed)
D Ends with Deaths (Sarah, Abraham, Ishmael)
G Barren Wife (Sarah)
H "Wife-Sister" Incident (chaps. 12 and 20)
I Rivalry Between Wives (Sarah-Hagar)
J Hero Renamed (Abraham)
K Ends with Genealogy of Non-Covenant Line (Ishmael)

[B'] *Jacob Cycle*
A Chosen Figure (Jacob)
B God Favo[u]rs Youngest Son (Jacob); Hatred (Esau-Jacob)
C Family Continuity Threatened (Jacob almost killed)
D Ends with Deaths (Deborah [Rebekah's nurse, Gen. 35:8], Rachel, Isaac)

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[111] Fox, 'Can Genesis Be Read As a Book?', pp. 31-40.
[112] Fox, 'Can Genesis Be Read As a Book?', pp. 32-33.
[113] Rendsburg also suggests that the Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph cycles are laid out chiastically -- that is, ABC...C'B'A' etc., but the Primeval History and 'the Linking Material' are arranged in a parallel pattern, ABC...A'B'C' etc., Gary A. Rendsburg, *The Redaction of Genesis* (Winona Lake: Eisenbraun, 1986), pp. 7-97; Dorsey applies this chiastic structure to the Hebrew Bible in his commentary. David A. Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis-Malachi* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999).

G Barren Wife (Rachel)

H "Wife-Sister" Incident (chap. 26)

I Rivalry Between Wives (Leah-Rachel)

J Hero Renamed by God (Jacob)

K Ends with Genealogy of Non-Covenant Line (Esau)

[A'] *Joseph Story*

A Chosen Figure (Joseph)

B God Favo[u]rs Yongster Son (Joseph); Hatred (Brothers-Joseph)

C Family Continuity Threatened (Joseph almost killed; Judah's sons die; family almost dies in famine)

D Ends with Deaths (Jacob, Joseph)

E Humanity Threatened (Famine; repeated use of *kol* in 41:54-57)

F Ends Away from Land of Canaan ("in Egypt")[114]

The diagram above, which is divided into four sections, is impressive in its allocation of individual narratives according to a similar pattern and other themes at least with regard to four topics in the four stories (A-D). As Fox puts it, all of the four narratives are composed of parallel motifs, each narrative has a chosen figure, and these characters are developed in each scene. For example, the human characters in the book of Genesis, Jacob, Judah and Joseph, etc., go through many transformations: [115] being threatened with death, experiencing repentance, having sons as heirs. Of course, it is true that Yhwh as a character is also prominent in the narrative of the book of Genesis.[116]

As we have already seen, however, the so-called Joseph story focuses not only on Joseph, but also on Jacob and his other sons through the development of character.[117] Thus, the traditional title of Genesis 37-50 could be altered into *Jacob and his Sons' Story* rather than the 'Joseph story'. This suggested title helps us to read the text in the wider range of Genesis as a whole. Regrettably, it seems to me that Fox missed this point in his article when he treats the fourth narrative in Genesis. In addition, his analysis of Genesis 38 could be said

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[114] Fox, 'Can Genesis Be Read As a Book?', p. 36.

[115] Fox, 'Can Genesis Be Read As a Book?', p. 33.

[116] For further information, see W. Lee Humphreys, *The Character of God in the Book of Genesis: A Narrative Appraisal* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001); Amelia Devin Freedman, *God As an Absent Character in Biblical Hebrew Narrative: A Literary Theoretical Study* (SBL, 82; New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2005).

[117] The issue of character and its development will be discussed in chapter 5.3.

to overemphasise the role of Joseph and does not mention why the chapter is in its present position in the book of Genesis. Just as the Joseph story is one stage in the larger narrative about Jacob and his family,[118] so too is the Judah-Tamar story. It is important that these two stories are read together as part of the story about Jacob's family.

Then, what does this mean for the placement of Genesis 38 literarily in the book of Genesis? My suggestion for this is that the chapter is intended to show readers the importance of the roles of Judah, Tamar and their family in Genesis.[119] In order to do this, firstly, the chapter tells us of the personal repentance of Judah for transgressing the levirate law in relation to Tamar, his daughter-in-law. Secondly, Genesis 38 is significant with respect to Judah's twins, Perez and Zerah (Gen. 38:27-30). When they were in Tamar's womb, their position was reversed. As regards the order of birth, we know that Perez was the second of the twins born to Judah and Tamar. In consideration of his later status, the motif of the preference for the younger son is not unusual, but rather is widespread throughout the book of Genesis.[120] In the story of Cain and Abel (Gen. 4), preference for the younger son comes out for the first time in Genesis; Yhwh only accepts Abel's offering (Gen. 4:4-5), but we are not told why Cain's offering was not acceptable to Yhwh. Genesis 10 lists the genealogy of the three sons of Noah. The interesting point is that the order of the sons' names in verse one is Shem, Ham, and Japheth, but the description of their lineage is set out in reverse order: the Japhethites (vv. 2-5), the Hamites (vv. 6-20), and the Shemites (vv. 21-31). According to the Midrash, if Shem was really the youngest,[121] it may not be coincidence. As a matter of fact, Abraham, who became the first patriarch of the Israelites in Genesis, was not only the youngest of the Terahites,[122] but his descendants also reversed primogeniture. This reversal is called ultimogeniture, as I mentioned above, and the stories are thoroughly familiar. That is to

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[118] Coats, 'Redactional Unity in Genesis 37-50', p. 21.
[119] For these arguments, see chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis.
[120] Judah Goldin, 'The Youngest Son or Where Does Genesis 38 Belong', *JBL* 96 (1977), pp. 27-44.
[121] Goldin, 'The Youngest Son or Where Does Genesis 38 Belong', p. 33.
[122] Goldin quotes from J. Jacob who 'points out that the principle, the younger is favourite, appears also in connection with the matriarchs'. See footnote 38 in 'The Youngest Son or Where Does Genesis 38 Belong', p. 33.

say, the younger supersedes the older. Most of all, Judah is the fourth of Leah's six sons (Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar and Zebulun, Gen. 35:23). Indeed, Judah takes over the status of primogeniture over his older brothers. But Joseph is the firstborn of Rachel (Gen. 35:24; Gen. 30:25 for Joseph; 35:16-18 for Benjamin).

These patterns of ultimogeniture in Genesis enable us to reach the conclusion that Genesis 38 is not an isolated story in line with Fokkelman's claim that '...there is hardly a story in the Bible that stands on its own'. It means then that Genesis 38 should be analysed in the context of the entire book of Genesis, the so-called literary unit. This is because 'A unit of narrative prose is always part of a sequence, a link in a chain'.[123] Fokkelman also asserts, '...often there are no independent data about it [the creation of a text] or witnesses to it, except for what is to be found in the text itself.'[124] This thinking also can be applied to Genesis 38 in its relationshiop to the rest of the book of Genesis. As Herbert Rand says, the Judah-Tamar story together with surrounding narratives is 'the turning point of the Joseph story [Jacob and his sons' story], the binding force which connects the early and latter parts of the saga'.[125] In the wider perspective of Genesis, 'The Judah-Tamar story is integral to Genesis...And so such breaks and changes are also losing their force within the larger history [narrative].'[126]

Furthermore, the core reading of Genesis 38 is consonant with the importance of genealogy in the book of Genesis.[127] The author of Genesis places many genealogies throughout the book. In regard to this, the status of Perez, who is one of the meaningful characters genealogically, as the successor of Judah, explains why chapter 38 should be located in Genesis in advance of the story of Ruth (4:18-22). However, the story of Judah and

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[123] Jan P. Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Narrative: An Introductory Guide* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), p. 156.

[124] Jan P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art in Genesis: Specimens of Structural and Stylistic Analysis* (2nd edn; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), p. 3.

[125] Herbert Rand, 'Judah and Joseph: A Study in Contrasts', *JBQ* XXI, 2 (82) (1993), pp. 127-28.

[126] Thomas L. Brodie, *Genesis as Dialogue: A Literary, History, and Theological Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 36.

[127] Fokkelman calls this a 'genealogical register' (Gen. 5:1; 10:1; 11:10; 25:12 and 36:1) and 'the heading to an act or cycle' (Gen. 6:9; 11:27; 25:12 and 37:2); only the first occurrence has been shifted to the epilogue of the Creation story, 2:4a). See Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Narrative: An Introductory Guide*, pp. 158-59.

Tamar does not mention Perez's future status as a distant relative of King David because this would have been outside the framework of Genesis.[128] In other words, chapter 38 indicates a 'functional unity'[129] in the text in Genesis, but it is likely that the story reveals an implicit intention of the author to call attention to echoes in stories beyond Genesis.

2.4. Concluding Remarks

The present chapter has argued that, in relation to the position of Genesis 38, the Judah-Tamar story is a small unit, but it is also designed in its literary context within the larger perspective. So far, a number of historico-critical commentators and literary critics have considered this story as an interruption or as a chapter necessary to the surrounding narratives within the Joseph story in the book of Genesis. Since my position on this chapter is more in line with the literary defences of the apparent discontinuities between chapter 38 and the chapters around it as being part of the communicative strategies of a wider narrative perspective, I have shown the placement of Genesis 38 in its literary context on different scales, from its role as part of the literary unit of Genesis 37-39 up to forming part of the whole Primary Narrative (Genesis – 2 Kings). The reason that I have dealt with chapter 38 within these contextual frames is that each unit interacts and the stories in each fit together. This research has focused on the linguistic and thematic connections between Genesis 38 and the surrounding narratives and suggests a way of understanding such serial narratives. Looked at in this way, we propose that the story of Judah and Tamar should be comprehended within a series of wider narrative contexts ranging from the surrounding chapters up to the Primary Narrative – the largest literary unit in the Hebrew Bible – to show the complex ways a single story works as part of the whole narrative.

Therefore, it is clear that Genesis 38 should not be isolated from other narratives,

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[128] Robinson states, 'The conclusion of the Book of Genesis does not achieve full closure. Few stories ever do..."They lived happily ever after" never appears in realistic narrative; we anticipate further stories. Likewise, the logic of the genealogies does not favour full closure.' Robert Robinson, 'Literary Functions of the Genealogies of Genesis', *CBQ* 48 (1986), pp. 595-608 (607).

[129] Fox, 'Can Genesis Be Read As a Book?', pp. 37-38.

either smaller or larger. Such arguments are linked to the final form of the artificial work. To support this assumption that Genesis 38 should be read in connection with the units around it, in the following chapters I shall examine the portrayal of the main characters, Judah and Tamar, in Genesis 38. As we shall discuss, in the case of Genesis 38, it appears that Judah is awkward, but his character and his position can be better understood if we read the stories about him in Genesis 37 to 50 as part of the overall picture the narrator gives us of him. Moreover, Tamar, daughter-in-law of Judah, is only mentioned in chapter 38 and the narrator does not present any more about her (whether she continued as Judah's wife after this incident, or not?) as she overcame her difficult situations. The text ends with the account of the birth of the twins Perez and Zerah. The significance of these episodes cannot be comprehended within the limits of Genesis 38 itself. However, by looking at the wider narrative context, we can see that these events, which appear to be trivial matters, have a major significance in reference to King David (Ruth 4:18-22). From the point of view of this thematic connection, understanding Genesis 38 opens us up to the larger narrative.

Chapter 3

Literary Analysis of the Character of Judah

He rejected the tent of Joseph, he did not choose the tribe of Ephraim; but he chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion, which he loves. (Ps. 78:67-68 NRSV)

3.1. Introduction

Genesis 38 shows us the relationship between two major characters – Judah and Tamar – in stages of conflict, tension, struggle and resolution.[1] One of the reasons why most scholars are interested in Genesis 38 is because of Judah's character.[2] Indeed, his character in the narrative is somewhat ambiguous.[3] The first verse in the episode makes the reader curious from the beginning.[4] It can be assumed that in patriarchal society the fact that Judah leaves his father, Jacob, and his brothers to establish a family is an unusual event in that he removed himself entirely to do it, rather than staying at home to do it.[5] Parting from his brothers, Judah moved to the Adullamite area (וַיְהִי בָּעֵת הַהִוא וַיֵּרֶד יְהוּדָה מֵאֵת אֶחָיו וַיֵּט עַד־אִישׁ עֲדֻלָּמִי וּשְׁמוֹ חִירָה׃) and married a foreign woman there (Gen. 38:1-2). Two verbs of motion (ירד 'went down' and נטה 'turned')

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[1] Gunn says, 'Plot may be conceived on a simple model of exposition, conflict, climax, and resolution.' David M. Gunn, 'Narrative Criticism', in Steven L. McKenzie and Stephen R. Haynes (eds.), *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), pp. 178; Coats mentions that chapter 38 deals with 'a wide range of human elements'. George W. Coats, 'Widow's Rights: A Crux in the Structure of Genesis 38', *CBQ* 34 (1972), pp. 461-66 (461); Smith also describes it in these words, 'We find it to be full of human interest, with subtle turns in the plot, and a good helping of irony.' Carol Smith, 'The Story of Tamar: A Power-filled Challenge to the Structures of Power', in George J Brooks (ed.), *Women in the Biblical Tradition* (Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), p. 16.

[2] Peter E. Lockwood, 'Tamar's Place in the Joseph Cycle', *LTJ* 26 (1992), pp. 35-43 (40-42); Anthony J. Lambe, 'Judah's Development: The Pattern of Departure – Transition – Return', *JSOT* 83 (1999), pp. 53-68; John Petersen, *Reading Women's Stories: Female Characters in the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), pp. 119-64.

[3] See Petersen, *Reading Women's Stories: Female Characters in the Hebrew Bible*, pp. 119, 122.

[4] Clifford says, 'One reason the chapter has been judged to be alien is the seemingly abrupt change of subject in 38:1, at a particularly exciting part of the Joseph story. Yet the change of subject is no more abrupt than, say, chap. 26 or chap. 34.' Richard J. Clifford, 'Genesis 38: Its Contribution to the Jacob Story', *CBQ* 66 (2004), p. 521.

[5] From the references to Reuben, it seems that Reuben established his family as well (Gen. 42:37). However, it is not clear whether Reuben left Jacob to do it. The narrator does not show any of the other sons of Jacob voluntarily leaving him in order to establish a new family as Judah does in the following narrative in the book of Genesis.

describe his departure.[6] Judah leaves his own people and settles down among the Canaanites.

In addition, Judah has some dramatic experiences as the father of a family. Judah gets married to a woman who is the daughter of a Canaanite man named Shua (שׁוּעַ) and his wife gives birth to three sons (Gen. 38:2-5): Er (עֵר), Onan (אוֹנָן), and Shelah (שֵׁלָה). Er, his firstborn married Tamar,[7] but he and his brother Onan soon died. After losing his two sons, even accepting the consequence of transgressing the law of levirate marriage, 'to perform the duty of a brother-in-law'[8] (Deut. 25:5-10), Judah tries to avoid giving Tamar to Shelah, his third son, because he is afraid of losing his last son as well (Gen. 38:11).[9] Initially Judah observed the levirate custom by giving Tamar to Onan, but then withheld Shelah from Tamar and even sent her away from his family. Later, when he was told that Tamar was guilty of prostitution and had become pregnant, he issued an order that Tamar should be burned to death without delay (Gen. 38:24). On hearing the news of Tamar's prostitution and pregnancy, 'Judah's response is quick and uncompromising.'[10] Tamar presents three pledges – signet (חוֹתָם), cord (פְּתִיל) and staff (מַטֶּה) - in his presence, which Judah had given her around three months before when they had had a sexual interaction, and then he has to admit his fault to the audience including Tamar (Gen. 38:26).

From the brief mention of Judah's character from the story above, it seems that Judah's judgment as a leading character in Genesis 38 is impulsive and decisive, but inconsistent[11] (Gen. 38:24, 26), and the consequences of his judgment are very serious for

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[6] M.E. Andrew, 'Moving from Death to Life: Verbs of Motion in the Story of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38', *ZAW* 105 (1993), pp. 262-69 (262).

[7] Tamar seems to be a Canaanite woman although it does not mention that explicitly in the text. It looks highly likely that that is the case because the narrator refers to the origin of the woman Judah marries as the daughter of a Canaanite man called Shua, but Tamar's origin is omitted.

[8] 'There are two examples of levirate marriage in the [Hebrew] Bible' (Gen. 38 and in the book of Ruth). For further information, see Timothy M. Willis, 'Levirate Law', in Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* (New York and Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 434.

[9] Some think that there might be some superstition around Tamar, that she is a 'man-killing daughter-in-law', because her husbands die off in quick succession. Mary E. Shields, '"More Righteous than I": The Comeuppance of the Trickster in Genesis 38', in Athalya Brenner (ed.), *Are we Amused?: Humour About Women in the Biblical Worlds* (JSOTSup, 383; London: T & T Clark International, 2003), p. 33.

[10] Susan Niditch, 'The Wronged Woman Righted: An Analysis of Genesis 38', *HTR* 72 (1979), pp. 143-49 (147).

[11] Judah's inconsistent actions are already evident in relation to the giving of his sons in levirate marriage in Gen. 38:8, 11. He tried to keep the custom with Onan, but delayed giving Shelah to Tamar.

Tamar. As a result of his actions as described in the text, Judah's character seems contradictory and the evaluation of him is largely polarised in contemporary scholarship: negative or positive, hypocrite or victim,[12] victim or victimizer, hero or villain and so forth. In this chapter, therefore, I will evaluate current debates on Judah's character within the text and afterwards come to a fresh conclusion in the light of the Primary Narrative (Genesis through 2 Kings).

3.2. Judah's Character and Its Contextual Range

John Petersen suggests that there are enigmatic issues in Genesis 38, according to modern scholarship: 'the story's relation to its surrounding biblical chapters [placement], the significance of the story [importance], and the characterisation of Judah [character].'[13] He observes that the first two issues are related to the literary context and the third is connected to Judah's obscure role. In the case of Judah's character, scholars' views are different. Why do they not reach an agreement?

Petersen introduces two opposite opinions on 'the characterisation of Judah: is it negative or positive?'[14] On one side, Avigdor Shinan and Yair Zakovitch consider Genesis 38 to be an anti-Judah story and give five examples of his negative behaviour: 'leaving his brothers and grieving father, not mourning for his sons or wife, being used by Tamar as a tool to realize her plan, impetuously sentencing his daughter-in-law without examining the charges against her, and performing the function he prevented his son from doing – carrying out the levirate responsibility.'[15] From the opposing perspective, Dalia Ravid depicts five positive images of 'Judah's inner life'[16] (vv. 11, 15, 16, 23, and 26) and five stages of an Aristotelian

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[12] Deborah F. Sawyer, *God, Gender and the Bible* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 58-64.

[13] Petersen, *Reading Women's Stories: Female Characters in the Hebrew Bible*, pp. 120-22.

[14] Petersen, *Reading Women's Stories: Female Characters in the Hebrew Bible*, pp. 121-22, 147-53.

[15] Avigdor Shinan and Yair Zakovitch, *The Story of Judah and Tamar: Genesis 38 in the Bible, the Old Versions and the Ancient Jewish Literature* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press, 1992), pp. 220-21[Heb]. This is quoted by Petersen, *Reading Women's Stories: Female Characters in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 121.

[16] Bar-Efrat points out that, 'inner workings of the human characters' play a key role. Shimon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible* (Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1989), p. 20; Smith insists that information on a character's inner life in Genesis 37-39 is rare, but the truth is, he overlooks it. Bryan Smith, *The Presentation of*

tragic character: 'fatal mistake, awesome act, change, recognition, and suffering.'[17] As a result, according to Ravid, Judah experiences the important learning curve required of a hero 'to take a major leadership role in restoring the unity and wholeness of the family'.[18] In brief, Shinan and Zakovitch's discussion is based on the background of an anti-Judah perspective and Ravid deals with the tragic character of the narrative.

Neither of these views, however, is persuasive because they are premised on reading the text with a particular bias. It is possible, as a reader, not only to misunderstand the final purpose of the author, but also to pass an immediate judgment without sufficient consideration. In fact, Genesis 38 neither exhibits the features of an anti-Judah polemic nor completely fits the conditions required for an Aristotelian tragic character.[19] If this chapter is hostile to Judah, the lineage of Judah described in the early part (vv. 1-6) and last (vv. 27-30) should, perhaps, not have been mentioned because it would mean that the family that is being emphasised belongs to Judah, who is not someone you would want in your lineage. Rather, it is evidence to the contrary that Genesis 38 is interested in this genealogy.[20] Furthermore, is the 'suffering' of Judah elucidated in the narrative? As a rule, a tragic narrative ends in disaster, whereas a comedy ends in happiness.[21] According to some critics, the story of Judah and Tamar is closer to comedy than to tragedy.[22] If their contentions are accurate, Ravid's introduction of the theory of tragic narrative in Genesis 38 is far from convincing.

Judah in Genesis 37-50 and Its Implications for the Narrative's Structural and Thematic Unity (Unpublished PhD Dissertation; Bob Jones University, 2002), p. 59.

[17] Dalia Ravid, 'She Hath Been More Righteous Than I': Circles of Interpretation in Gen 38 (MA diss, (University of Tel Aviv, 1993), p. 36, [Heb]. This is quoted by Petersen, *Reading Women's Stories: Female Characters in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 121.

[18] Petersen, *Reading Women's Stories: Female Characters in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 121.

[19] For example, Judah's confession in v. 26 can be understood positively in terms of his admission to Tamar and, with respect to Aristotelian tragic characters, Judah's suffering is not presented clearly in the text.

[20] Westermann suggests that the framework of two genealogical passages (vv. 1-11, 27-30) surrounds 'the kernel of the narrative' in vv. 12-26, even though chapter 38 is rooted in oral tradition. Claus Westermann, *Genesis 37-50: A Commentary* (trans. John J. Scullion; Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986), p. 49.

[21] J. Cheryl Exum and J. William Whedbee, 'Isaac, Samson and Saul: Reflection on the Comic and Tragic Visions', in Paul R. House (ed.), *Beyond Form Criticism: Essays in Old Testament Literary Criticism* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1992), pp. 272-308 (275). This article was originally printed in *Semeia* 32 (1984), pp. 5-40.

[22] Leland Ryken suggests that there are four kinds of stories in the Hebrew Bible: the heroic narrative, the epic, comedy and tragedy. For further discussion and explanation, see his book *How to Read the Bible as Literature* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1985), pp. 75-86; for discussion on the comedic value of Genesis 38, see also Melissa Jackson, 'Lot's Daughters and Tamar as Tricksters and the Patriarchal Narrative as Feminist Theology', *JSOT* 98 (2002), pp. 29-46.

With reference to these two opposing views, Petersen accepts that, 'Both studies are right in isolating significant positive and negative factors in the construction of Judah's character. Indeed, these conflicting elements need to be balanced with each other...to assess Judah's ambiguous character.'[23] Furthermore, he looks at the dynamics of the narrative from six angles including narratological and interpretive issues as well as the roles of the main characters.[24] Petersen's analysis of the interpretation of the narrative in Genesis 38 is very systematic and detailed. Indeed, as he says, if the construction of a character is partly the responsibility of a reader, then the understanding of a character depends on each reader's view. In other words, it means that 'the consistency of a character depends on the consistency of the choices which she or he is represented as making'.[25] In this regard, the evaluation of the character of Judah depends upon the reader.

However, the fact that Judah can be interpreted in two such contrasting ways from the same text according to the chosen standard of evaluation means that neither argument can be accepted as persuasive. Making a simple judgment on Judah's character fails to acknowledge the tension in the literary work between the immediate context of the Genesis 38 narrative and the larger narrative of Genesis 37-50. Accordingly, we need to focus on the consequences of assessing Judah as either a negative or positive character. The author may be intending to say more to the reader about the results of Judah's actions than about the actions themselves. What is more, whether the reader understands Judah either as negative or positive or neither, what is the wider purpose of the author in line with this reading? This means that we need to read the text as a whole literary piece with strategies, as Robert Alter says, which suppose that every section of a larger unit has been allocated its place within the whole for the

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[23] Petersen, *Reading Women's Stories: Female Characters in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 122.

[24] Those issues are as follows: (1) Reviewing the temporal shape of the story, (2) Surveying the sequential buildup of tensions, (3) Assessment of the major plotting strategies, (4) Evaluating the modern interpretive issues, (5) Analysis of the roles of the main characters, and (6) Assessment of the overall significance of the story. For further information, see Petersen, *Reading Women's Stories: Female Characters in the Hebrew Bible*, pp. 122-64.

[25] Hugh S. Pyper, *David as Reader: 2 Samuel 12:1-15 and the Poetics of Fatherhood* (BIS, 23; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), p. 53.

purpose of high quality.[26] From this perspective, it is essential that every segment in the biblical text is given a chance to play its part in the understanding of the whole.[27]

Genesis 38 is no exception to this. Although in the field of biblical studies, it seems to be impossible to define the boundaries of the literary unit rigidly, in the last analysis, the smallest unit becomes a component of an larger unit then an entire biblical book and those books again are incorporated into a comprehensive large-scale literary work.[28] This is why I would like to connect Genesis 38 both with the larger context of Genesis and furthermore into the largest building blocks of the Primary Narrative (Genesis – 2 King). From this point of view, to begin with, I would like to look into the character of Judah in Genesis 38. For the sake of convenience, we can distinguish two levels in the interpretation of these stories: 'a micro (periscope) level', and 'a macro (the whole text) level.'[29] The former is confined to chapter 38 and the latter extends to all chapters where Judah enters the stage in the book of Genesis within the context of the Primary Narrative.

3.3. The Micro Level: Analysis of Judah's Character in Genesis 38

It is true that one representative description of Judah's character is 'enigmatic'. When Judah becomes a father, he acts like a dignified patriarch, but in the process of the story his actions seem to alter in order to emphasise the weak points in his character in the competition with Tamar. Looked at this way, by the end of the narrative he could be seen 'as a hypocritical and

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[26] Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), pp. 3-22.

[27] Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, p. 11.

[28] Shimon Bar-Efrat, 'Some Observation on the Analysis of Structure in Biblical Narrative', *VT* 30 (1980), pp. 154-73 (154-56); with respect to this, Fokkelman states, '...there is hardly a story in the Bible that stands on its own. A unit of narrative prose is always part of a sequence, a link in a chain...' Jan P. Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Narrative: An Introductory Guide* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), p. 156; Amit notes that, 'A given unit may be regarded as whole in relation to smaller units and as a part in relation to larger ones—in the same way that an act in a play may be regarded as a whole unit in relation to the scenes that comprise it and as a part of the whole play.' Yairah Amit, *Reading Biblical Narratives: Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), p. 15.

[29] For further understanding of these words, see Cynthia Long Westfall, 'Narrative Criticism', in Stanley E. Porter (ed.), *Dictionary of Biblical Criticism and Interpretation* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 237-39.

weak stooge'.[30] On the other hand, we could judge that in Genesis 38 Judah has a chance to show immediately his conversion to Tamar's point of view.[31] Thus, what is the more accurate evaluation of the character of Judah in this chapter?

In a sense, the fact that we can see the two different dimensions of Judah's character in Genesis 38 could be seen as self-contradictary. The narrator gives the audience a detailed description of the leading characters, but sometimes he does not give the reader enough information. This may be a deliberate strategy employed by the biblical author. In relation to this, Alter says:

> Biblical narrative offers us, after all, nothing in the way of minute analysis of motive or detailed rendering of mental processes; whatever indications we may be vouchsafed of feeling, attitude, or intention are rather minimal; and we are given only the barest hints about the physical appearance, the tics and gestures, the dress and implements of the characters, the material milieu in which they enact their destinies...the sparely sketched foreground of biblical narrative somehow implies a large background dense with possibilities of interpretation...Though biblical narrative is often silent where later modes of fiction will choose to be loquacious, it is selectively silent in a purposeful way:...[32]

This method, as Alter points out, is often used by the biblical author when the main characters are employed in the narrative. If the same principle is assumed to be applied to Judah, his ambiguous character may be intended by the author, who could be called 'a literary artist'.[33] Let us, therefore, look into the nature of Judah's character in Genesis 38. With regard to the nature of Judah's character in the text, there are three ways character might be disclosed: description by the narrator as 'telling' and speech and dialogue as 'showing'.[34] I shall analyse

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[30] Sawyer, *God, Gender and the Bible*, p. 58.

[31] Clifford, 'Genesis 38: Its Contribution to the Jacob Story', pp. 519-32, see especially pp. 530-32.

[32] Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, pp. 114-15.

[33] Gregory L. Ritchie, *Genesis 38: Idiocy or Genius from a Literary Perspective* (Unpublished MA Thesis; Anderson College School of Theology, 1986), p. 36.

[34] Genette calls the direct presentation of a character's action or speech 'showing', and a description of a character as 'telling'. Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (trans. Jane E. Lewin; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), pp. 163-64; Petersen states, 'Characters express themselves less by actions than through direct discourse...Through their speech, characters open up to each other and to the reader, directly influencing the course of events. Dialogue presents the characters as actors on a stage, often without the mediation of narrative summary,' in Petersen, *Reading Women's Stories: Female Characters in the Hebrew Bible*,

Judah's character section by section according to Gunn's division of Genesis 38.[35]

3.3.1. Judah's Attempt to Establish Himself as Patriarch (Gen. 38:1-5)

The first part of the story is made up of description by the narrator. In literary terms, this comes under the heading of 'telling'. There are two characteristics in the first verse: the time phrase and the reference to the leading character, Judah, as a subject. These two factors are common at the start of a biblical narrative. In Genesis 38 there are four time phrases altogether: vv. 1, 12, 24, 27.[36] Each one introduces a new scene using the relevant time indicators in the story, and each indicates a new turn of events. The function of the first one is to connect Genesis 37 and 38 and it leads the reader to anticipate the arrival of the main character. In other words, the author gets the attention of the reader by using the typical opening formulae of biblical narrators. The verb usually shows the personality of the character either directly or indirectly. So, the two verbs (ירד and נטה) in the first verse are closely related to the personality of Judah. The verb ירד [37] may be understood as indicating Judah's independence, that is, separation from his father and brothers. The other verb, נטה, suggests an adventurous person moving to a foreign area (עדלם) which does not belong to his people.[38]

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p. 15.

[35] David M. Gunn and Danna Nolan Fewell, 'Tamar and Judah: Genesis 38', in *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 34-45. He divides this chapter into five parts: Gen. 38:1-5; 12-19; 20-23; 24-26; 27-30.

[36] Jan P. Fokkelman, 'Genesis 37 and 38 at the Interface of Structural Analysis and Hermeneutics', L.J. de Regt *et al.* (eds.), *Literary Structure and Rhetorical Strategies in the Hebrew Bible* (Assen: Van Gorcum; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1996), pp. 152-87 (167); Brodie mentions five time phrases including Gen. 38:6 and he believes that this verse implies the passage of Er from birth to the age of marriage. Thomas L. Brodie, *Genesis as Dialogue: A Literary, History and Theological Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 356; However, Clifford notes, in his words, the 'notice of time' is revealed three times in vv. 1, 12 and 24. Clifford, 'Genesis 38: Its Contribution to the Jacob Story', p. 523.

[37] This verb is often used in Genesis when a character leaves, or is separated from, others (Gen. 12:10; 26:2; 37:35; 39:1; 42:2, 3; 46:3, 4). Andrew suggests that the verb in Gen. 37:35, 'can be used for a drastic family separation because Jacob refuses to be comforted.' M.E. Andrew, 'Moving from Death to Life. Verbs of Motion in the Story of Judah and Tamar in Gen 38', *ZAW* 105 (1993), pp. 262-69 (262); this being the case, it has two functions with respect to Judah in Genesis 38:1; a geographical one; moving to the south, and an emotional one; leaving his father and brothers.

[38] In his article, Andrew argues that these two verbs of motion indicate 'Judah's living his own people and entering an alien sphere among the Canaanites' and finally these are to show a 'movement from death to life in the alien life'. Andrew, 'Moving from Death to Life. Verbs of Motion in the Story of Judah and Tamar in Gen 38', pp. 262-63; Aschkenasy says that three narratives, that is Lot (Gen. 19), Judah (Gen. 38), and Elimelech (the

The progress of the story from the second verse to the fifth is very fast. This part contains eight verbs (ראה, לקח, בוא, הרה, ילד, קרא, יסף, היה) and the ones that are mainly related to the nature of Judah in the portion are:[39] ראה, לקח, בוא. From the point of view of giving information about Judah's actions, the other five verbs are comparatively neutral. The former three verbs are connected to acquiring goals. According to Gunn and Fewell, Judah meets people to obtain these benefits and the other two verbs (ראה and לקח) are also used together in several places in Genesis.[40] Even so, we cannot be sure whether Judah's actions are simply motivated by the fact that he has to be faithful to his responsibilities as the father of a family. To be sure, the main concern of the narrator is with the birth of Judah's sons which will ensure succeeding generations. There is no dialogue between Judah and any other characters in this first section. Judah meets a Canaanite woman, the daughter of Shua and he marries her she becomes pregnant. This serial explanation shows us that the narrator is more interested in the building of Judah's new family and himself as a patriarch than in the rash thing he has done in marrying a foreign woman. It is not coincidental that, as Richard J. Clifford has observed, '...the overriding theme [in Gen. 38] is Judah's propagation of males in his family.'[41] The narrator, therefore, is specifically concerned with describing the birth of Judah's sons.

3.3.2. Judah's New Family and Their Trials (Gen. 38:6-11)

This section contains some descriptions by the narrator and two speeches by Judah (vv. 8, 11). That is, 'telling' and 'showing' are mixed. The whole passage is about Judah's descendants and the narrator changes his focus to Judah's sons' marriages. Many commentators consider

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book of Ruth), contain similar elements starting with a partriarch separating himself from his group – Lot departs from Abraham, Judah from his brothers and Elimelech from the Bethlehem community. Nehama Aschkenasy, 'Reading Ruth through a Bakhtinian Lens: The Carnivalesque in a Biblical Tale', *JBL* 126 (2007), pp. 437-53 (448).

[39] Gunn and Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 35.

[40] Gunn and Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible,* p. 35; ראה (vv. 1, 2); לקח (vv. 2, 4, 9, 16, 17, 21, 25, 26, 28 - The usage in verses 17, 25, 26, 28 is related to the meaning 'taking out', whereas others indicate sexual actions; בוא (vv. 5, 20); for striking parallels of these verbs Clifford notes that Eve 'saw' and 'took' the fruit in Gen 3:6 and the sons of God 'saw' and 'took' mortal women in 6:2 and Shechem 'saw' and 'took' Dinah in 34:2. See Clifford, 'Genesis 38: Its Contribution to the Jacob Story', p. 524.

[41] Clifford, 'Genesis 38: Its Contribution to the Jacob Story', p. 523.

Judah to be selfish here.[42] This is demonstrated when he chooses a wife both for Er and for himself. In verse 8, we read Judah's first speech which is part of a dialogue with Onan. What Judah says to Onan concerns the levirate custom (Deu. 25:5-10).[43] It is interesting that his first words clearly indicate his character and we may understand the intention of the narrator in this part through this speech, too. This is because the author is writing about Judah's heirs. This means that Judah's speech can be 'reflected as responsible, intelligent and understanding of the needs of the family'.[44] This depiction of Judah by the narrator prepares for the development of the plot, whereas his speech indicates the beginning of the story as dialogue. His speech is direct to the other characters, so it holds the reader in suspense.[45] What will the implications of this insistence on custom be for the story? Furthermore, this speech is placed between the comment on Er's death and Onan's. The two verses 7 and 10 are connected by the words of Yhwh's judgment against them. These belong to the explanation of the narrator and as such constitute 'telling'. However, it seems that Judah does not know the reason why they have died, and in his second speech (v. 11), he has to send his daughter-in-law, Tamar, back to her father's house. Then, why do Onan and Tamar not reply properly to Judah as dialogists in 'showing'?

To the reader, in this part, Judah may be understood as controlling his dialogue partners. As mentioned above, his first speech to any character is the one with Onan (v. 8); 'Go in to your brother's wife and perform the duty of a brother-in-law to her; raise up offspring for your brother' (NRSV). However, it is closer to a monologue than a dialogue because Onan's words are not written. From the beginning it seems that the narrator is leading the reader to pay attention to the development of the plot rather than the speech itself, at least

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[42] Petersen evaluates Judah's character as 'heavy-handed' and using a 'commanding tone' in the first scene. See *Reading Women's Stories: Female Characters in the Hebrew Bible*, pp. 147-50.

[43] For further discussion, see Miller Burrows, 'Levirate Marriage in Israel', *JBL* 59 (1940), pp. 23-33; Eryl W. Davies, 'Inheritance Rights and the Hebrew Levirate Marriage: Part 2', *VT* 31 (1981), pp. 257-68; Dvora E. Weisberg, 'The Widow of Our Discontent: Levirate Marriage in the Bible and Ancient Israel', *JSOT* 28 (2004), pp. 403-49.

[44] Lambe, 'Judah's Development: The Pattern of Departure – Transition – Return', p. 55.

[45] In Bar-Efrat words, the 'speech' and 'actions' of characters are indirect ways of shaping the characters and these encompass an 'individual's inner state'. Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, p. 64.

in this section. This is because Onan does not reply to Judah and just pretends to carry out the levirate practice, although he has no intention of accomplishing it.[46] The text shows that Yhwh intervenes in the deaths of both Er and Onan in Genesis 38 (vv. 7, 10).

As a consequence, we can assume that Judah changes his mind the next time round because of the possibility of losing Shelah, his third son. The target of the dialogue between Judah and Onan is no longer his last son Shelah but transfers to Tamar. Judah says to Tamar, 'Remain a widow in your father's house until my son Shelah grows up' (v. 11b NRSV). The narrator then attempts to explain why Judah has to change his mind. To sum up, in relation to Judah's actions, it is simply taken for granted that this second section should be understood in terms of Judah's struggle to protect his new family in trouble as it is.

3.3.3. Judah Deceived by Tamar (Gen. 38:12-19)

From the third section, the suspense of the story gradually grows in tension. The narrator places the second time phrase at the beginning of verse 12; וַיִּרְבּוּ הַיָּמִים 'in course of time' (NRSV). This is an indication of the time lapse between Tamar's leaving for her father's house and the death of Judah's wife. We can see here there is quite some time following the death of his wife, when Judah had a period of mourning, and then went to Timnah for sheep-shearing.[47] All of these events in verse 12 are very briefly depicted by the narrator, but from verse 13 on more space is given to speech and dialogue or action; that is 'showing', than it is to 'telling'. Simultaneously, in verse 13, the point of view[48] naturally seems to have shifted

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[46] For further information on Onan, see Leonard Mars, 'What was Onan's Crime?', *CSSH* 26 (1984), pp. 429-39; Gale A. Yee, '"Oooooh, Onan!": *Geschlechtsgeschichte* and Women in the Biblical World', in Athalya Brenner (ed.), *Are We Amused?: Humour About Women in the Biblical Worlds* (JSOTSup, 383; London: T & T Clark International, 2003). pp. 107-18.

[47] Wenham indicates that 'sheep-shearing' (Gen. 38:13) is an enthusiastic festival and gives an opportunity for characters to meet and misbehave as well as to relax with wine. Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50* (WBC, 2: Dallas: Word Books Publisher, 1994), p. 368; in the Hebrew Bible there are four references to sheep-shearing (Gen. 31:19; 1 Sam. 25:2-37; 2 Sam. 13:23-28) and this one in Genesis 38:13. According to Nobuko, it was customary that at the feast one buys a prostitute and lies with her 'in terms of sympathetic magic in order to increase the flock'. Morimura Nobuko, 'The Story of Tamar: A Feminist Interpretation of Genesis 38', *JCR* 59 (1993), pp. 55-67 (65).

[48] 'Point of view' or 'viewpoint' is a concept of modern fictional criticism, but this is applicable to poetry as well as prose both in ancient and modern texts. Berlin says, 'Indeed, the Bible uses point of view frequently and effectively as a vehicle for conveying its narrative in a way which is not far different from modern prose fiction.'

from Judah to Tamar because the subject of the actions described in verse 13 has also changed. Thus, we, as readers, know Tamar has a plan to deceive Judah. I will deal with Tamar's plan and her viewpoint later in cahper 4 since the focus here is on the character of Judah. When, as part of her plot, Tamar disguised herself, Judah saw her as a prostitute (זוֹנָה) because she had covered her face (v. 15). Now the narrator concentrates his attention on the dialogue between Judah and Tamar. Jan P. Fokkelman analyses the dialogues between Judah and Tamar in verses 16 to 18.[49] Let us look at this:

Speech A Judah: 'Come, let me come in to you'. (v. 16)

Tamar: 'What will you give me [,] that you may come in to me?' (v. 16)

Speech B Judah: 'I will send you a kid from the flock'. (v. 17)

Tamar: 'Only if you give me a pledge, until you send it'. (v. 17)

Speech C Judah: 'What pledge shall I give you?' (v. 18)

Tamar: 'Your signet and your cord, and the staff that is in your hand'. (v. 18) (NRSV)

These dialogues have a crucial role with reference to the preparation for sexual intercourse between them in this chapter and their conversation constitutes 'the longest real time scene of the story'.[50] This section reveals both the detailed speeches by the characters ('showing') of what is going on between them and something about Judah's character in his meeting with Tamar.

Before their meeting, an anonymous character reports to Tamar Judah's movements saying Judah is on his way to Timnah (v. 13). This is an opportunity for Tamar to see her father-in-law. She then decides on a course of action and exchanges her widow's clothes for

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Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1994), p. 43; for further information on the importance of the point of view in a narrative, see Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, pp. 14-16.

[49] Fokkelman sees a symmetrical pattern in Genesis 38. The chapter consists of 11 units (ABCDEXE'D'C'B'A'). These six speeches by Judah and Tamar in vv. 16-18d stand in the centre (x) and the others form a chiasmus (AE and E'A'). Fokkelman, 'Genesis 37 and 38 at the Interface of Structural Analysis and Hermeneutics', pp. 170-74.

[50] Petersen, *Reading Women's Stories: Female Characters in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 127.

the veil of disguise and sits down at the entrance to Enaim. Then the narrator describes the place they meet (v. 14) as בְּפֶתַח עֵינַיִם 'at the entrance to Enaim,' that is to say, he describes simultaneously both the place where Tamar awaits Judah, and why she has to fabricate a plot againt him. Judah then says to Tamar, in speech A (verse 16); 'Come, let me come in to you.' When Judah sees Tamar, according to the narrator, it seems that he considers her to be a prostitute because she had covered her face with a veil to disguise herself. Even though Judah's character has been evaluated as careless in 'the Sins of Judah'[51] in this chapter, we are not sure whether it is right or not to think of him in this way, for the reader can only read what the story tells us.[52] It is rather the belief of the narrator that Judah thinks her to be a prostitute (v. 15). In the early part of v. 16, the subject of realising that the harlot was his daughter-in-law is not Judah, but the narrator. In this way, the narrator keeps the story going. Following this, there are three dialogues between Judah and Tamar. It is through the speeches that we can determine Judah's character more clearly.

It is interesting that the meaning of בְּפֶתַח עֵינַיִם can be translated literally as the 'opening of the eyes' rather than 'at the entrance to Enaim'. Their meeting in that place is connected with being face to face for the purpose of a business deal.[53] Clifford notes that Enaim indicates 'spring' or 'double spring' according to its etymology.[54] If his contention is right, this comes to remind us of some other meetings at springs (Isaac and Rebekah in Gen. 24:11-31, Jacob and Rachel in Gen. 29:1-14; Moses and Zipporah in Exod. 2:15b-22). At any

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[51] Clifford says that the sins of Judah are four: firstly, marrying a Canaanite, secondly, visiting a prostitute, thirdly, authoritatively ordering the burning of his daughter-in-law, lastly, failing to keep the levirate law. Clifford, 'Genesis 38: Its Contribution to the Jacob Story', pp. 524-26.

[52] Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*, p. 43; Bar-Efrat says, 'We see and hear only through the narrator's eyes and ears...The narrator within the narrative should not be identified with the writer as a real person....The figure of the "implied author" (i.e. the author who emerges through the story, as opposed to the actual writer) and his or her way of looking at and presenting things is part of the character of the work and is revealed to us only through reading and studying it...It is also customary to make a distinction between the (implied) author and the narrator.' Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, pp. 13-14.

[53] Petersen, *Reading Women's Stories: Female Characters in the Hebrew Bible*, pp. 127-28; Gunn and Fewell insist that the place may be fictional and is a 'conceptual word-play' on Gen. 3:7 (Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. NRSV) because it is not mentioned as a place name anywhere else in the Hebrew Bible, so this is irony. Gunn and Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 39.

[54] It is possible to consider this as a biblical type-scene of finding a bride by a well or spring. Clifford, 'Genesis 38: Its Contribution to the Jacob Story', p. 529; Esther Marie Menn, *Judah and Tamar (Genesis 38) in Ancient Jewish Exegesis: Studies in Literary Form and Hermeneutics* (JSJSup, 51; Leiden: Birll, 1997), p. 37; see Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, pp. 47-62.

rate, I would like to suggest that the term Enaim in this verse has a double function for both of them and the narrator seems to use the ambiguity of the words as a literary technique.[55] This is the way Tamar's real identity is hidden from Judah, whilst it also has the role of making the part where Judah's supposedly positive actions are exposed to a reader's gaze in this business deal.

In his second and third speeches B and C– 'I will send you a kid from the flock' (v. 17), 'What pledge shall I give you?' (v. 18) – the author's intention seems to be not to highlight Judah's carelessness but to indicate his businesslike character through his rapid decision making. Otherwise, this section is developed by Tamar rather than Judah. If his character is exposed as being careless here, this is entirely due to his daughter-in-law's plot. The perspective of this section, indeed, is centred on Tamar as a deceiver. It is therefore possible that the words of Judah are related to the technique of the author, and his clumsy action rather than his character itself is also the focus of the author. The author (or narrator) continuously expects, as John Petersen notes, to be questioned by the reader in order to build up the suspense in the story as well as for the reader to concentrate on the episode: 'Will Judah find out how he has been duped? In exchanging payment and pledge, will he recognise the new "prostitute" [by the narrator]? What will be the fate of his widowed daughter-in-law who has become pregnant?'[56] The function of this section and a more detailed evaluation of Judah's character should remain open to question until we have finished reading the continuing events.

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[55] In relation to Tamar's action in disguising herself, the narrator uses four phrasal verbs in order in verse 14: 'She put off her widow's garments, put on a veil, wrapped herself up, and sat down at the entrance to Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah.' (NRSV) These four actions of Tamar reverse the previous set in verse 19: 'Then she got up and went away, and taking off her veil she put on the garments of her widowhood' (v. 19). See Petersen, *Reading Women's Stories: Female Characters in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 128; Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, pp. 8-9; Fokkelman, 'Genesis 37 and 38 at the Interface of Structural Analysis and Hermeneutics', p. 171. Vv. 14 and 19 constitute a chiasmus around a widow's veil. See the diagram below:

She took off her widow's garb,	14a
and covered her face with a veil.	b
She sat down (....) along the road (....)	c
.....	
She stood up and left.	19a
She took off her veil	b
and again put on her widow's garb.	c

[56] Petersen, *Reading Women's Stories: Female Characters in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 129.

3.3.4. Judah, an Honourable Man? (Gen. 38:20-23)

In the previous section the subject as architect of the plot is Tamar,[57] whereas in these verses the narrator returns to the viewpoint of Judah.[58] As usual, the narrator begins with Judah as the subject (v. 20). Judah dispatches his friend the Adullamite, who is called Hirah, with a kid, in order to get his pledges (signet, cord, and staff) back from the woman, but Hirah does not find her. The narrator describes the dialogue between Hirah and the people who live in Enaim, which mentions a temple prostitute (קְדֵשָׁה), but contrary to the MT, some English scriptures (RSV, NKJV) interpret this word as a common prostitute (זוֹנָה).[59] However, it seems more likely that this results from the confusion of two words because Judah thinks Tamar to be an ordinary prostitute and his intention is clear in verse 15. Gunn and Fewell say that 'Judah's double standard is wonderfully encapsulated in his choice of words'.[60] This is right because the author plainly employs the same word קְדֵשָׁה in verses 21 (twice) and 22 (once) without confusion. That is, according to the text, only Judah takes her for a common prostitute (v. 15) and we do not know exactly what the situation is later, whether he uses a different word to describe her to Hirah. Hirah as a 'simple-minded friend'[61] just carries out his duty as a friend when Judah asks him for help and he only reports what the countrymen say to him. The problem is why Judah seems to abandon his plan to get back his property. Then, is there something more important to Judah than his property? Yes, his honour; not being shamed in front of others.

In Claus Westermann's words, 'The episode [vv. 20-23] serves further to portray Judah as an honorable man. The narrator does not regard Judah's going to a prostitute as something dishonorable; but it would have been dishonourable had Judah reneged on the

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[57] 'Her [Tamar] control of the dialogue over Judah signifies an important change in the tone of the story.' Ritchie, *Genesis 38: Idiocy or Genius from a Literary Perspective*, p. 42.

[58] Gunn and Fewell, Narrative in the Hebrew Bible, p. 40.

[59] The NRSV reads 'temple prostitute' (v. 21b) and 'prostitute' (v. 21c, 22). The JPS, Hebrew-English Version also presents 'cult prostitute' and 'prostitute'. On the other hand, The RSV and the NKJV read 'harlot' in all cases. However, the NIV translates 'shrine prostitute' literally in all three places as written in BHS.

[60] Gunn and Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 41.

[61] Gunn and Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 41.

payment.'[62] Westermann presumably believes that Judah's actions in attempting to return the payment to the woman were for the purpose of protecting his honour.

If so, is it appropriate to evaluate Judah as 'an honourable man'?[63] Can Judah's image as 'the commander of his family-an authoritarian patriarch'[64] in the story be understood in this way? Could verse 23 be interpreted as Judah recognising that he could have been deceived by a prostitute?[65] On Judah's authoritative character through the episode in Genesis 38, Petersen comments:

> Judah's increasingly unmotivated commands end by claiming omnipotent status in determining the fate of others. Each command becomes less justified, while putting him more and more out of touch with his own family. In the command to Onan (V. 8), he provides two reasons, doing a brotherly duty and providing his brother with offspring, both openly stated. In his command to Tamar (v. 11), he again has two reasons, Shelah's maturation and worry about his death, but he only mentions the first reason to Tamar. He passes sentence on Tamar in her absence, accepting mistaken, unconfirmed hearsay and supplying no reasons, spoken or private (v. 24). Finally, he dispenses capital sentence and summarily disposes of crime and criminal. His verbal word is the law of all beneath him, if not the law of the land.[66]

This tells us of the authoritative aspects of Judah, but simultaneously it is certainly possible that the narrator indicates that Judah, as a father and patriarch of a family, would take a serious view of his reputation for integrity in general even though he sometimes has trouble maintaining it. Evidence for this is that Judah recommends that Hirah stops searching for the harlot and forgets the matter (v. 23). If this is right, Judah would have two reasons to stop looking for her; one is, if they continued to seek for her, he would worry about being a figure

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[62] Westermann, *Genesis 37-50: A Commentary*, pp. 53-54.

[63] Gunn and Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 41; however, Wenham insists that the situation is the opposite because, 'Whereas he had reneged on his solemn promise to give his son Shelah to Tamar in marriage, he is very anxious to pay the goat he had promised to a common prostitute. And his concern here seems to have no higher motive than the return of his pledges.' See Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, p. 368.

[64] Petersen presents Judah's omnipotent status as an authoritarian patriarch. See Petersen, *Reading Women's Stories: Female Characters in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 148.

[65] Judah does not give Shelah to Tamar, even when he is grown up and is able to marry her. To put it plainly, he does not follow the law of levirate marriage (Deut. 25:5-10). On the other hand, Judah does not recognise the disguised Tamar when she deceived him to accomplish her plan, in order to have a baby by him. To be sure, they are both deceived deceivers. Compare Lockwood, 'Tamar's Place in the Joseph Cycle', p. 35. Joseph's brothers, those who deceive Jacob in Genesis 37:31, become the deceived by Joseph in Genesis 42:8.

[66] Petersen, *Reading Women's Stories: Female Characters in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 206.

of fun to people. The other is, as some commentators say, and as Judah himself would acknowledge, that he would be obliged to try to find her to protect his honour because he had promised to give her a kid (v. 17). Westermann and Tikva Frymer-Kensky insist that Judah, in verse 20-23, is portrayed as 'an honourable man'[67] because he had tried everything to send the promised kid to the prostitute through his friend Hirah. Furthermore, it is probable to say that Judah would want to get back the pledges from the prostitute. However, 'the prostitute' (Tamar) had his possessions so it is just as likely that Judah was anxious of exposure as it is that he was motivated by a sense of honour. Gordon Wenham has argued that Judah's sneaky way to pay back the woman shows 'the disreputable status of [the] proposition'. According to Wenham, Judah just dispatches his friend Hirah (the Adullamite) on his behalf to swap a goat for the pledges (signet, cord, and staff) given to the woman (v. 20) and it seems that Judah's motivation is nothing higher than wanting to conceal what he has done because he wanted to finish the matter silently.[68] Phyllis A. Bird also observes, 'Here the issue of opprobrium surfaces. Judah, a man of standing, who has surrendered his insignia to a prostitute in a moment of weakness, does not go back in person to retrieve his goods, but sends a friend, a man of the region, to inquire discreetly of the local inhabitants.'[69] If, then, Judah was not thinking of his honour and protecting himself, why did he stop looking for her?

Indeed, there is evidence for either a negative or a favourable evaluation of Judah's character here. From the point of view of the author's portrayal of the interaction between Judah and Hirah, his literary ability is higher than we think. We can suggest, therefore, that the text in this section may be implying that Judah's character wishes to avoid his shame with respect to the prostitute anyway, while in the earlier part he seems to be an authoritarian patriarch who is trying to build his new family (vv. 1-11). The following verse 24 relates to

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[67] Westermann, *Genesis 37-50: A Commentary*, p. 53; Frymer-Kensky considers Judah's deed of sending Hirah to pay the woman as evidence that he is 'being an honorable man' in *Reading Women of the Bible: A New Interpretation of Their Stories*, p. 272.

[68] Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, p. 368.

[69] Phyllis A. Bird, 'The Harlot as Heroine: Narrative Art and Social Presupposition in Three Old Testament Texts', p. 126.

his judgment on his daughter-in-law and the author has to have anticipated this. Therefore, this makes Judah not try to seek out the prostitute to get his passions back, though he cannot anticipate the subsequent events. From Judah's point of view, his possessions, the three pledges, are less important than avoiding the disclosure of his dealings with the prostitute to others.

3.3.5. Judah the Repentant (Gen. 38:24-26)

This section begins with the third time phrase; 'About three months later.' It seems that the narrator intends an interlude in order for Tamar's pregnancy to be established as well as to allow for the crossover to the next scene. Also, this interlude gives Judah time to gradually forget his business dealings with the prostitute. Above all, the time indicator introduces the following scene by building up the suspense rapidly, so the narrator introduces again an anonymous speech as Tamar is spoken about by someone to her father-in-law (v. 13): 'Your daughter-in-law Tamar has played the whore; moreover she is pregnant as a result of whoredom' (v. 24 NRSV). The anonymous report contains two issues: one is that Tamar has worked as a prostitute, and the other is that she has become pregnant through prostitution. These two facts would be fatal weak points in a widow like Tamar. For this reason, Judah reacts to this report with two verbs and without any hesitation: הוֹצִיאוּהָ וְתִשָּׂרֵף ('Bring her out, and let her be burned'. v. 14 NRSV). His commands remind us of the patriarchal authority in his early actions. His speeches constitute the last words initiated by Judah and this phrase is the high point of the story.[70] Finally, Tamar sends a message and his personal items to Judah, and he recognises them (vv. 25-26). Even though Judah does not explicitly withdraw his sentence of death on Tamar, the narrator resolves the crisis with the speech of Judah; וַיֹּאמֶר צָדְקָה מִמֶּנִּי ('And he said, she is more in the right than I…' NRSV)[71]. As soon as he recognises

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[70] See Petersen, *Reading Women's Stories: Female Characters in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 131, footnote 15.

[71] This confession causes us to remember the words of Saul to David in 1 Sam. 24:17 [MT 18]; וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-דָּוִד צַדִּיק אַתָּה מִמֶּנִּי: ('He said to David, You are more righteous than I' NRSV). Efrat points out this is a positive description by Saul. He says that 'in biblical narrative information referring directly to the inner feelings of the

his possessions, Judah immediately announces Tamar's innocence. The narrator also notes that from the moment Judah discovered that he himself impregnated Tamar he did not lie with her anymore.[72]

In considering his character, however, Judah's speech is unexpected and it causes various disputes amongst modern scholars. That is, does his speech represent humiliation or is it his faithful repentance in the presence of Tamar? These questions are closely related to the evaluators' bias. According to Clifford, Judah's acknowledgement in verse 26 is evaluated as a turning point in Judah's attitude and this enables him to go up a level morally from his previous position.[73] In addition, what Judah said to Tamar is a 'transition' in self-revelation or recognition of his own identity.[74] If we judge his character in this perspective, this recognition is not a matter of shame to Judah but rather a chance to re-establish his status as a patriarch in his family because he acknowledges that the reason why Tamar is more righteous than he is, is due to his not giving her to Shelah (v. 27). Carol A. Newsom properly remarks:

> Though Judah had been represented in the story as anything but an honourable man, his public statement, "She [Tamar] is more in the right than I" (Gen 38:26), is an act of hono[u]r and is presented as such in the narrative. Indeed, in the context of the larger story, this episode serves as the redemptive moment that marks the transition of Judah's character from one of moral ambivalence to the moral leadership that enables him to resolve Joseph's hesitancy to reconcile with his brothers (Gen 44:18-34).[75]

Thus, the thing that we can evaluate about Judah's character at this stage is his confession, for his speech is close to repenting his mistake in not giving Tamar to Shelah, according to the 'telling' by the narrator (v. 14). If he considered his act with Tamar as a humiliation, he could not have acknowledged this to people. In terms of this, his speech is not merely a humiliation

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characters is often supplied by either the narrator, other characters or the subjects themselves'. Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, pp. 55, 64.

[72] Amit, *Reading Biblical Narratives: Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible*, p. 92.

[73] Clifford, 'Genesis 38: Its Contribution to the Jacob Story', p. 531.

[74] Lambe, 'Judah's Development: The Pattern of Departure – Transition – Return', pp. 58-60.

[75] Carol A. Newsom, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 197.

and surrender to his daughter-in-law because the story in this chapter does not end here, but still continues in order to make the author's main point. In the rest of the immediate story, the tension between Judah and Tamar 'leaves suspense only about the future of the Er-Tamar line, and about Judah's line as well'.[76]

3.3.6. Judah's Family Continued (Gen. 38:27-30)

This is the last scene in the story and the author employs the last time phrase; וַיְהִי בְּעֵת לִדְתָּהּ 'When the time of her delivery came' (NRSV). The literal translation of this is 'there was in that time of her [Tamar] labor'. This phrase connects with Tamar's delivery. In verse 27, the mention of the twins (Perez and Zerah) in Tamar's womb reminds us of the twin boys (Esau and Jacob) in Rebekah's womb (Gen. 25:24). The reason why we draw attention to the parallel between them is to point out the concern for succeeding generations exhibited by the author. Yhwh says to Rebekah that the twins mean two nations (Gen. 25: 23). In addition, the description of struggle between the twins is similar as well (Gen. 25:25-26; 38:28-29). Particularly, the reversal of the order of birth, with respect to the right of the firstborn, is highlighted. One of this section's characteristics is the naming of Tamar's twins and the continuity of Judah's line. Just as Rebekah is daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, so Tamar too seems to be a Canaanite (cf. Gen. 38:2, 6) although her exact identity is not shown. Both Isaac's and Judah's marriages are examples of exogamy and it seems that the author has a concern for the successor in the following generation. Petersen maintains that Judah forsakes his Israelite identity and becomes a Canaanite, so this guides him to a more negative picture of Judah.[77] For the author, however, the more important concern is how Judah builds his new family amongs the Canaanites. For this reason, his character seems more or less negative compared to Tamar and he plays an iconic role,[78] but this is not the author's final intention but only a partial strategy in the small narrative.

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[76] Petersen, *Reading Women's Stories: Female Characters in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 131.
[77] Petersen, *Reading Women's Stories: Female Characters in the Hebrew Bible*, pp. 149-50.
[78] Petersen, *Reading Women's Stories: Female Characters in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 163.

Then, how shall we re-read Genesis 38 strategically? How can we understand the character of Judah effectively in this chapter? How can we re-evaluate the interpretation of Judah's character held by some commentators, which are, doubtless, influenced by their points of view, that is, negative or positive to a particular character, as the text can be seen in both ways.[79] However, it is certainly necessary to recognise that what is relevant to understanding the character of Judah is not limited to one chapter. In other words, in the case of Judah, he should not be judged only by his actions in Genesis 38. His actions are still open and the plot involving his character is an unfinished drama. For this reason, it is necessary for the reader to look to the larger framework of other chapters in the book of Genesis. The main point, therefore, is how the reader should understand his character in a wider context; the transition between the Judah at the beginning of the story and the Judah at the end, from an ordinary brother (Gen. 37) to an authoritative patriarch and a repentant confessor (Gen. 38), a family spokesman (Gen. 43, 44), and even a leader of his brothers (Gen. 46, 49).[80]

When it comes to the character of Judah in Genesis 38, is it accurate to consider, as some scholars imply, that this story is pro-woman and anti-male?[81] At this stage we should not draw a hasty conclusion, but this may be at least a poor judgment of Judah in Genesis 38. Of course, the events of the chapter take unexpected turns in the text. This applies to the characters as well. For example, it is true that the leading character seems to shift from Judah to Tamar in the middle of the story (Gen. 38:12-19). This strategy by the author of changing the focal characters may be a sort of irony,[82] which reverses a character's position, serving to

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[79] Mieke Bal, *Lethal Love: Feminist Literary Readings of Biblical Love Stories* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 22.

[80] Petersen, *Reading Women's Stories: Female Characters in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 161; Victor H. Matthews, *More Than Meets the Ear: Discovering the Hidden Contexts of Old Testament Conversations* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2008), pp. 62-63.

[81] Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, pp. 3-12; Gunn and Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*, pp. 34-45; Amit introduces some scholars who talk about 'Judah in a bad light. They are Shinan and Zakovich (1992). However, she argues that Judah is presented 'in a favorable light'. See *Biblical Narratives: Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible*, pp. 91-92.

[82] According to Bal, the irony 'creates a gap between the seriousness of the events and the dry tone in which they are narrated', but she thinks that it is a notion 'that goes too easily with all sorts of phenomena, and as a synonym for or explanation of ambiguity, it is not exclusive enough to be a useful tool'. As a result, 'it prevents the reader from making more specific interpretations.' Bal, *Lethal Love: Feminist Literary Readings of Biblical Love Stories*, p. 23.

gradually increase the suspense.[83] The result of Judah's actions is to bring him into a difficult situation. On the other hand, the status of Tamar recovers, but we are not sure what is going on in the relationships between Judah and Tamar or Shelah and Tamar. Chapter 38 could also be understood as comedy in terms of the overturning of characters' positions.[84] Meanwhile, Coats insists that 'Judah is not the focal character; he is virtually the villain of the story'.[85] His verdict is true in Genesis 38:12-19; however, if we consider 'the text itself as a pattern of meaning and effect' on the basis of the 'discourse-oriented analysis' in the perspective of final literary artistry,[86] Judah's actions are more advanced than his brothers and texts related to him are as significant as those related to his brother, Joseph[87] and these are also never ordinary throughout Genesis 37 to 50. Therefore, we need to investigate the bigger compass of the story, which extends to the end of Genesis, in order to better comprehend the characteristics of Judah, who functions as a significant figure linking the stories in Genesis 37-50.

3.4. The Macro Level: Developments in Judah's Character from Genesis 37 to 50

As mentioned in the section above, an evaluation of the character of Judah based on Genesis 38 alone is not adequate because his character first appears in the previous chapter, Genesis 37,[88] and his dialogues and actions can be found beyond Genesis 38. As Bryan Smith puts it:

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[83] Good mentions, 'The irony is in the way the audience sees the downfall coming, hears it adumbrated in speech, follows it to its awful conclusion, knowing all the while what the dramatist's characters do not know, perceiving therefore the tragic overtones and undertones that take the dramatis personae by surprise.' Edwin M. Good, *Irony in the Old Testament* (Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1981), pp. 17-18.

[84] Melissa Jackson, 'Lot's Daughters and Tamar as Tricksters and the Patriarchal Narrative as Feminist Theology', *JSOT* 98 (2002), pp. 29-46 (39); Mary E. Shields, '"More Righteous than I": The Comeuppance of the Trickster in Genesis 38', in Athalya Brenner (ed.), *Are We Amused?: Humour About Women in the Biblical Worlds* (JSOTSup, 383; London: T & T Clark International, 2003). pp. 31-51; Peterson, *Reading Women's Stories : Female Characters in the Hebrew Bible*, p.153.

[85] George W. Coats, *Genesis, with an Introduction to Narrative Literature* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdman Publishing Co. 1983), p. 275.

[86] Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), p.15.

[87] Brodie says, 'Much of the Joseph narrative is about two sons – a young dreamy shepherd and an older tougher sheepshearer.' Brodie, *Genesis as Dialogue: A Literary, History and Theological Commentary*, p. 351.

[88] With the exception of Joseph, out of all the brothers, only Judah (vv. 26-27) and his eldest brother Reuben (vv. 21-22, 30), receive an individual mention. However, the speakers of other words in v. 8, 19, 20 and 32 are anonymous or plural without indication of a particular name. That is, it seems that Judah and Reuben have a key role when the brothers sell Joseph to the Ishmaelites (v. 28). However, Reuben was absent when Joseph was actually sold, so Judah would, in effect, be the leading character.

> Any attempt to explain Judah's role in Genesis must give special attention to the only chapter that is devoted entirely to his deeds and their consequences. Beginning with an explanation of Genesis 38 and its immediate context, however, would be premature.[89]

His remarks encourage us to look into other chapters where Judah's name and his actions are mentioned in the book of Genesis. The episode in Genesis 38 is just a small part of Judah's role which is continued in the larger story in the rest of the book of Genesis (Gen. 37:26-27; 43:8[1]-10, 44:14-34, 46:28; 49:8-12).[90] Since Judah receives so much of the author's attention in the broader picture, it is clear that he should be evaluated properly as a main character in the larger story of Jacob's family; that is, the peculiar actions of Judah in Genesis 38 are unique compared to his brothers and it seems to me that the author gives him special attention in the wider context of 'the Story of Jacob and his Sons'.

Moreover, by looking at the wider context, Judah's character could be rounded out in various aspects[91] as it is developed in the narrative.[92] For instance, in chapter 37 Judah seems merely a timid person who does not have the stomach to help Joseph but persuades his brothers to sell him instead (vv. 26-27). Then, Genesis 38:11 presents him as a deceiver of his daughter-in-law, Tamar, even though he is also deceived by her later. After that, when the land of Canaan is in trouble due to the famine, in particular, from the second journey to Egypt in chapter 43, Judah actually becomes a persuasive leader of his brothers.[93] To be sure, Judah's position is superior to Reuben's, who is the firstborn of Jacob, and the same situation

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[89] Smith, *The Presentation of Judah in Genesis 37-50 and Its Implications for the Narrative's Structural and Thematic Unity*, p. 23.

[90] Brodie, *Genesis as Dialogue: A Literary, History and Theological Commentary*, p. 352. I wonder why Brodie confined himself to the scope of Gen. 43:8-10 when discussing Judah. However, the speech of Judah (v. 3) begins with the background of Canaan in Gen. 43:1.

[91] Kim classifies Judah's role into five parts from Genesis 37 to 50; 'a leader of the brothers' (ch. 37:26-27), 'a father of the sinners' (ch. 38), 'a son of the father' (ch. 43:1-10), 'a brother of the leader' (ch. 44:14-34), and 'an ancestor of the Messiah' (ch. 49:8-12). Youngho Kim, *Judah's Role in Joseph's (?) Story* (Unpublished ThM Thesis; Covenant Theological Seminary, 1991), pp. 21-89. However, I disagree with Kim's view on chapter 38 about Judah as 'a father of sinners', for this name seems to be justified only in the light of a redemptive and theological approach. If the lineage of Judah is considered at the beginning (Gen. 38:1-6) and at the end (Gen. 38:26-30) of the story, the title of this chapter overall would be more appropriately 'Judah as a builder of his new family'.

[92] Lambe, 'Judah's Development: The Pattern of Departure – Transition – Return', pp. 53-68.

[93] For further information, see subsection 3.4.2. 'Judah as a persuasive person in Genesis 43:1-10' in this chapter.

continues up to chapter 49 in which Jacob blesses his twelve sons before his death. The blessing for Judah is one of the most favourable of all.[94]

As far as the character of Judah in Genesis 38 is concerned, he is a father of his new family, as suggested in the previous section. Then, from Genesis 37 to 50, what are the main themes in relation to the character of Judah and the other brothers and Jacob, their father? In brief, we can observe the general themes of the story of Judah and the other characters within the three parts of 'the Story of Jacob and his sons'

<Table 1> Common Themes in Genesis 37-50[95]

Gen. 37	Gen. 38	Gen. 39-50
the brothers' immorality	Judah's immorality	Joseph's morality
Jacob's suffering	Tamar's suffering	Joseph's suffering
Jacob's twelve sons	Judah's five sons	Joseph's two sons
the brothers' deception	[Judah and] Tamar's deception [of each other]	Joseph's trick
Jacob's recognition	Judah's recognition	Joseph's recognition
the brothers' identity	Tamar's identity	Joseph's identity
Jacob's torment	Judah's confession	Joseph's elevation
Judah's victory [against Reuben?]	Tamar's victory	Joseph's victory
Jacob's favouritism [towards Joseph]	Judah's blessing [favouritism towards Shelah?]	Joseph's blessing [favouritism towards Manasseh?]
Brothers' idea [Judah's idea]	Tamar's wisdom	Joseph's wisdom

As seen in the table above, there are quite a few thematic parallels between the three columns and the role of leading character from Genesis 39 to 50 is not limited to Joseph, as the conventional reading believes, but is rather shared with Jacob and his other sons.[96] The whole of chapter 38 shows Judah's actions and his speeches[97] (with the exception of the parts where

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[94] Good and Camichael, however, argued that Jacob ironically rebukes Judah in his saying for him. See Edwin M. Good, 'The "Blessing" on Judah, Gen 49:8-12', *JBL* 82.4 (1963), pp. 427-32; Calum M. Carmichael, 'Some Sayings in Genesis 49', *JBL* 88 (1969), pp. 435-44;

[95] See Kim, *Judah's Role in Joseph's (?) Story*, pp. 17-18; The title is mine and I have slightly changed the shape of the table and some contents. The words in the square brackets are also mine.

[96] However, Kim's division in Gen. 39-50 is only limited to the acts of Joseph.

[97] Tamar is also a main character alongside Judah in Genesis 38. I shall argue proof for this statement in the next chapter.

Tamar takes the lead) and many portions of chapters 37-38, 42-44, 46, 48 and 49 concentrate on characters other than Joseph. In particular, Judah appears in other episodes either as a character in his own right or as part of the collective of Jacob's sons.

These episodes include the introduction of the story of Jacob and his sons (Gen. 37), the story of Judah and Tamar (Gen. 38), Jacob's sons going to Egypt (Gen. 42), Judah's speeches to Jacob and Joseph (Gen. 43, 44), the lists of Jacob's family going to Egypt (Gen. 46), Jacob's blessing of Manasseh and Ephraim (Gen. 48), and Jacob's blessing of his sons (Gen. 49). Jacob's blessing of Judah (Gen. 49:8-12) is definitely prominent among those of his brothers and it is rather superior to Joseph's (Gen. 49:22-26). In this way, the character of Judah is intimately connected to the larger narrative of the 'Story of Jacob and his Sons' within the book of Genesis. Concerning the relationship of Judah's character to the broader context, Gunn's inquiries could help us. Gunn points us to the following question in considering the significance of a character in any given biblical episode 'Who is the subject and who is [the] Other in the larger story? What value is placed upon the Other?'[98] These questions may properly help us to understand Judah's character within the book of Genesis because his role in Genesis 37 and 39-50 as well as in Genesis 38 is as wide-ranging as Joseph's. This could also be applicable to the largest perspective; that of the Primary Narrative (Genesis – 2 Kings).

Accordingly, it is necessary to re-examine my hypothesis that the debate on the character of Judah should be reconsidered depending on the length of the narrative portion that is considered: Genesis 38, Genesis 37-50 or even indirectly the whole Primary Narrative, from Genesis to 2 Kings. The point is that the narrative confines of the smaller episode do not show a complete interpretation of the character to the reader. Therefore, we need to analyse the character in the larger narrative as well as in Genesis 38. But the scope of Judah's character in the larger narrative firstly stretches from Genesis 37 to 50 because of his speeches.

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[98] Gunn, 'Narrative Criticism', in *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticism and Their Application*, p. 191.

actions and depiction by the narrator, which spreads over those chapters. By examining the larger narrative, we may distinguish more clearly the character of Judah in the midst of other characters. Now, let us look at other chapters macroscopically, excluding Genesis 38. to help in the analysis of Judah's character.

3.4.1. The First Competition between Reuben and Judah (Gen. 37:22-23, 26-27)

The speeches and mentions of Judah in the larger Primary Narrative of Genesis through 2 Kings may be considered in three dimensions: direct speeches by Judah himself, description by the narrator, and the mentions of his name as a tribe or as a Kingdom.[99] The first and second scopes correlate with the story of Jacob and his sons (Gen. 37-50) in the book of Genesis, but the third one is mostly confined to references beyond the book of Genesis relating to his name rather than to actions of the eponymous character. For example, the name Judah[100] indicates one of the twelve tribes of the Israelite community from the book of Exodus on and is the label used to designate the Kingdom of Judah (or the southern Kingdom) after the death of King Solomon (1 Kgs 12:20, 14:21). Thus, the speeches by Judah and depictions of him by the narrator are confined to 'the Story of Jacob and his Sons'.

Comparison of the Two Speeches

Genesis 37:21-30 offers us a narrative describing the schemes of two of Joseph's older brothers, Reuben and Judah, designed to rescue Joseph. Their actions serve to heighten the suspense and underscore the gravity of resistance, as well as to mitigate the vengeance of his brothers. However, it is difficult for modern readers to understand the two speeches. According to Hugh C. White, the scholarly debates on the text are as follows:

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[99] The name Judah is mentioned first in the account of his birth in Gen. 29:35.

[100] A.R. Millard, 'The Meaning of the Name Judah', *ZAW* 86 (1974), pp. 216-18. In Millard's words, A. Alt and R.de Vaux believe that Judah's name originates from 'a place-name', while he suggests Judah as 'a personal name' in support of W.F. Albright's contention, which is that Judah as a jussive Hoph'al of ידה means 'may he be praised' and the name is connected to יהודאל 'may God be praised'.

a. indisputable evidence of internal contradiction necessarily implying dual authors and sources (Seebass);
b. no inescapable contradictions but doublets which imply two independent sources (Gunkel);
c. contradictions and doublets which imply redactional [redaction] levels but not two independent source documents (Schmitt, Redford);
d. contradictions due to glosses but no doublets, implying literary unity (Coats, Rudolph).[101]

As seen above, there are various contentions about the text and no real consensus has been reached about any of the text. The only common keyword among these theories is 'contradictions'. In contrast, I would argue that it is necessary to reread the text 'holistically' [102] as a reader. While many historico-critical commentators regard its two speeches as heterogeneous materials,[103] Coats, who considers Genesis 37:5-36 as a unit, says, 'The roles [Reuben and Judah's] are not doublets...The two roles present different activity on the part of two distinct principles in the plot.'[104] Furthermore, according to Coats, the two brothers 'add to the tension of the plot by their contrast'.[105] I agree with these statements. The two speeches of Reuben and Judah are called doublets on the basis of the background of the documentary hypothesis. This leads to the assumption that their roles are similar and they are both seen as good brothers.[106] But, their roles are not the same and cannot be the same within the whole storyline of chapter 37. We cannot recognise either of the brother's exact motivation for asking for Joseph's life to be saved but the results of their two interventions are very different. At first sight, the purpose of the two older brothers is to save Joseph's life, but Reuben's request results in Joseph being thrown into a cistern and that of Judah causes Joseph

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[101] Hugh C. White, 'Reuben and Judah: Duplicates or Complements?,' in James T. Butler *et al.* (eds.), *Understanding the Word: Essays in Honour of Bernard W. Anderson* (JSOTSup, 37; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1985), pp. 73-97 (81).

[102] John Barton, *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1984), pp. 127-29.

[103] See 'Genesis, Book of,' *EncJud* vol. 7 (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House Ltd., 1971), pp. 391-92 on the division according to the documentary hypothesis, vv. 2b-20, 25-27 and 28b belong to J source, but vv. 21-24, 28a, 28c-36 are included in the E source. Vv. 1-2a is classified as P.

[104] George W. Coats, *From Canaan to Egypt: Structural and Theological Context for the Joseph Story* (CBQMS 4; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic Biblical Association, 1976), p. 69; for help understanding the literary unit chapter 37:5-36, see *idem*, *Genesis, with an Introduction to Introduction to Narrative Literature*, p. 271.

[105] Coats, *From Canaan to Egypt: Structural and Theological Context for the Joseph Story*, p. 69.

[106] Coats, *From Canaan to Egypt: Structural and Theological Context for the Joseph Story*, p. 69.

to be sold to the foreign traders. Accordingly, although their intentions to save Judah's life are both good, the author of the story has allowed them each their own role and employs them differently in the scenes. So, what are the contrasting characteristics of the two speeches?

Firstly, we cannot deny that Reuben, the eldest son of Jacob, is described as one of the good brothers in chapter 37.[107] In particular, we have his request to save Joseph focused in vv. 21-22 as follows:

> But when Reuben heard it, he delivered him out of their hands, saying, 'Let us not take his life.' Reuben said to them, 'shed no blood; throw him into this pit here in the wilderness, but lay no hand on him' – that he might rescue him out of their hand and restore him to his father. (NRSV)

Reuben made four statements; the first is a plea that they should not take Joseph's life (לֹא נַכֶּנּוּ נָפֶשׁ).[108] The second mentions that Joseph's blood should not be shed (אַל־תִּשְׁפְּכוּ־דָם). In his third statement he suggests that Joseph should be thrown into a cistern in the wilderness (הַשְׁלִיכוּ אֹתוֹ אֶל־הַבּוֹר הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר בַּמִּדְבָּר). The fourth utterance says they should not harm Joseph (וְיָד אַל־תִּשְׁלְחוּ־בוֹ).

For comparison, the first direct speech of Judah can be read in Genesis 37:26-27.

> Then Judah said to his brothers, 'What profit is there if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and not lay our hands on him, for he is our brother, our own flesh.' And his brothers agreed. (NRSV)

Judah's first speech is introduced in Genesis 37 as an interruption of the attempt by his

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[107] Donald B. Redford, *A Study of the Biblical Story of Joseph (Genesis 37-50)* (VTSup, 20; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1970), p. 133; by contrast, Walter Breuggemann evaluates both Reuben and Judah as cowardly characters in his commentary, *Genesis* (Interpretation; A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching: Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), p. 304.

[108] In relation to the verb נַכֶּנּוּ English versions translate the form of the verb as if it were hiphil imperfect 1st person common plural, suffix 3rd person masculine singular cohortative, that is, 'Let us not take his life' (NRSV, JPS) or 'Let us not kill him' (NKJV). However, Wenham suggests the following, 'We must not take his life.' According to Wenham, 'Reuben used the לא for an absolute prohibition (cf. the Decalogue).' Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, p. 354. I quote his translation of vv. 21-22, 'Reuben overheard this and rescued him from their clutches. He said, "We must not take his life". Reuben said to them, "Don't shed blood. Dump him in this pit in the wilderness, but don't lay hands on him". This was in order to rescue him from their hands and return him to his father.'

brothers to kill Joseph. There are four main points in Judah's speech within two verses; first, there is no benefit in killing Joseph (מַה־בֶּצַע כִּי נַהֲרֹג אֶת־אָחִינוּ). Secondly, if they do, they have to cover up their blood stains (וְכִסִּינוּ אֶת־דָּמוֹ). Thirdly, instead, Judah persuades the other brothers to sell Joseph to foreign traders (לְכוּ וְנִמְכְּרֶנּוּ לַיִּשְׁמְעֵאלִים); finally, Judah also persuades them not to do harm to Joseph because he is their flesh (וְיָדֵנוּ אַל־תְּהִי־בוֹ כִּי־אָחִינוּ בְשָׂרֵנוּ הוּא). The structures of the two speeches by Reuben and Judah are symmetrical:

<Table 2> The Symmetrical Structure between the Two Speeches

Reuben	Motif	Judah
A Let us not take his life.	Life	A' What profit is there if we kill our brother.
B Shed no blood.	Blood	B' [What profit is there if we] conceal his blood?
C Throw him into this pit here in the wilderness.	Disposal	C' Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites.
D But lay no hand on him.	Hand	D' [Do] Not lay our hands on him, for he is our brother, our own flesh.

Indeed, these two speeches made by Judah and Reuben look similar on the basis of motifs. Many source critics of Genesis insist that this is due to the amalgamation of two separate sources.[109] As Adele Berlin says, however, 'whatever the sources of the present text of Gen. 37:18-30 may have been, they lie far below the surface of the text and can probably not be found by the criteria used in source criticism.'[110] She goes on, '...there are gaps, inconsistencies, retellings, and changes in vocabulary in biblical narrative, but these can be viewed as part of literary technique and are not necessarily signs of different sources.'[111] In fact, source criticism may well claim that there are various hands visible in the narrative, and that the source of the narrative is usually fragmented; however, it ignores the rhetorical and

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[109] von Rad calls these two successive speeches a 'double thread' in the narrative from a source critical point of view. Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (trans. John H. Mark; OTL; London: SCM Press Ltd., rev. edn., 1972), p. 353; Speiser claims that vv. 21-30 including the speeches by Reuben and Judah are characterised by 'inconsistency, duplication, and discrepancies'. Ephraim A. Speiser, *Genesis,*(3rd edn; AB 1; Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1982), p. 293. They also believe that the Ismaelites (vv. 25, 28b) are to be ascribed to J, while the Midianites (v. 28a) are to be assigned to E. According to the division taken from *EncJud* 7, pp. 391-92, Judah's speeches belong to J (vv. 18-20, 25-27, 28b), while Ruben's mentions are contained in E (vv. 21-24, 28a, 28c-30).

[110] Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*, p. 121.

[111] Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*, p. 121.

poetic features which bind the narrative together. As a result, this methodology does not enable the reader to create their meaning of the text.

It is certain that historical-critical approaches, such as source criticism. have a limitation in comprehending the depth of meaning and the structure of a text. In the case of Genesis 37, the similarity of the speeches of Reuben and Judah should not be understood as mere duplication due to the presence of different documents, but as a technique of the author using the device of repetition.[112] Furthermore, the style of the sentences and the foci of the speeches are different, although the first three clauses in the speeches by Reuben and Judah are similar. For instance, the speech of Reuben uses imperative verbs three times (B, C and D) and the cohortative once (A), but in Judah's, jussive verbs (C' and D') are employed twice and the cohortative once (C'). However, the last imperative verb is clearly placed in Judah's explanation with a connective כִּי as to why they should sell Joseph to the traders. This may show us the focus of the author's intention in terms of the style he has chosen. We shall return to this point later as the difference in verb forms is a crucial factor in the characterisation of the two brothers. Next, with regard to the foci of the speeches, the motivations of the two speeches to the brothers are different: the narrator states a clear motivation on Reuben's part (to take Joseph back to his father) whereas there is no clear description of Judah's motivation. The reader is left to wonder whether it is to obtain monetary profits or because Joseph is his brother.

To analyse the consequences of these differences, the present text needs to be read as 'a unified entity'[113] or as 'a unified product';[114] a whole literary work. In other words, to the reader, the poetics of the final text is more meaningful than trying to analyse reconstructed earlier anonymous documents for meaning.[115] Even though the shift between the name of the

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[112] Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative,* pp. 88-113; Ackerman, 'Joseph, Judah and Jacob', pp. 85-113.
[113] Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*, p. 120.
[114] Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*, p. 121.
[115] Alter says, 'Though not all the details of the two versions have been harmonized as modern conventions of consistency would require, it seems to me clear that the writer needs both for a variety of reasons...' Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative,* p. 166.

Midianites and the Ishmaelites on the one hand, and Jacob and Israel (Gen. 37, 42-43) on the other hand is a standard way of recognising a division in the documentary hypothesis, this does not, in fact, cause the readers difficulty in understanding the final text. The contrast between the speeches of Reuben and Judah is that Reuben's shows us a clear motivation to take Joseph back to his father, while Judah does not mention Jacob and is practical and has a self-interested concern. For these reasons, the two speeches are not simply repetitive and the documentary hypothesis may not be the best approach to understanding the text.

Reuben versus Judah: Who is the True Leader?

Returning to the speeches of Judah and Reuben, both the first and second utterances are about killing (הָרַג, נָכָה) and blood (דָּם). The third corresponds to the resolution concerning the disposal of Joseph, that is, Judah suggests selling (מָכַר) Joseph to the foreign traders,[116] whereas Reuben proposes that his brothers put (שָׁלַךְ) Joseph in a pit. The fourth indicates the same request for the brothers not to directly harm Joseph with their hands (יָד). The last speech by Judah reflects his own defence (Gen. 37:27c), in contrast to Reuben's. This is the only major difference between Judah and Reuben who both make suggestions about the method of disposal of Joseph. As a consequence, it may be concluded that the author intended to express their different roles in terms of the dissimilar methods for disposing of Joseph in the text.

In considering the features of the two speeches in detail, Berlin argues that Reuben appears more sensitive and emotional as the eldest; by contrast, Judah is more logical and practical.[117] Donald B. Redford, however, insists that the role Reuben plays is better than that

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[116] In fact, the act that one is selling a person is equivalent to murder in Israelite law; 'Whoever kidnaps a person, whether that person has been sold or is still held in possession, shall be put to death' (Exod. 21:16) and 'If someone is caught kidnapping another Israelite, enslaving or selling the Israelite, then that kidnapper shall die. So you shall purge the evil from your midst' (Deut. 24:7).

[117] Berlin says that both Reuben and Judah use good rhetoric, but Judah's speech is different from Reuben's. She suggests the reason is that Judah's is logical; 'Judah stresses 1) that there is nothing to be gained by killing Joseph while, as it turns out, the sale of Joseph is profitable, and 2) that Joseph is "our brother" (mentioned twice) and "our flesh" – this plays on the element of guilt'. Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*, p. 119. She goes on to say that Reuben is the protector and Judah is the good brother as she quotes Redford's division of the Documentary Hypothesis. See also pp. 117, 121.

of Judah with respect to 'moral and literary superiority'.[118] It is true that Reuben defends Joseph from the brothers who attempt to kill him in verses 21 and 22, but Judah does the same thing as well.[119] For this reason, we cannot distinguish them with these two standards; moral and literary superiority. Rather, it is certain that Reuben did not perform his duty. For instance, Reuben was absent at the moment Joseph was sold to the foreign traders. That is, chapter 37 is strange in that it does not say Reuben was not there when the brothers sat down to eat, but only that he looked down the cistern to rescue Joseph after he had been sold. The narrator tells us that, when Reuben returns, he could not see Joseph in the cistern. In verse 30, the narrator points out two things; one is that Joseph is not in the cistern. The other is Reuben's concern about returning home without him. Reuben's distress, as the eldest, may be presenting the explicit motivation to the reader in relation to the description by the narrator – that '...he might rescue him out of their hand and restore him to his father' (v. 22 NRSV). This is why the narrator tells us exactly what Reuben's motivation is. It is because he is responsible for all of the brothers because he is the eldest. This situation may be profitable to Judah in another way – that he becomes his father's favourite once Joseph is out of the way.

Even so, Reuben did not stay with Joseph in Dothan, whilst Judah did. Judah was there together with Joseph and claimed logically to his brothers the reasons for saving Joseph, while Reuben had gone elsewhere after talking quickly and impulsively to the brothers (vv. 21-22). To the reader, the difference may be indicating some implications which bring unexpected results such as status reversal.

Victor P. Hamilton insists that Reuben would have planned to return to the cistern secretly after the brothers had left, and the possibility is that he wants 'to rebuild some broken communication with his father because of disgraceful transactions with Bilhah' (Gen.

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[118] Redford, *A Study of the Biblical Study of Joseph*, p. 133.

[119] Coats says these two direct expressions by Reuben are 'two speeches' or 'double speeches' being employed as a stylistic device. Coats, *From Canaan to Egypt*, pp. 16, 63; according to Ackerman, the speeches of Judah and Reuben correspond to 'doubling' in the Joseph story and this is one of the author's literary devices. For example, 'The brothers make two trips to Egypt for grain...twice find money in their grain bag, make two attempts to gain Jacob's permission to send Benjamin to Egypt, and finally receive two invitations to settle in Egypt...' Ackerman, 'Joseph, Judah and Jacob', pp. 85-86.

35:22).[120] Even if we accept his view, there are still some problems. First, Reuben's motivation may be good but the results are unsatisfactory.[121] The brothers do not follow Reuben's plan. Second, Hamilton's view is only a supposition not a fact. If the author really intended to restore Reuben to the status due to him as the eldest, he would not be depicted as a failure. Third, Reuben's later offer to Jacob to use his own sons as a guarantee so that he could take Benjamin to Egypt is also rejected (Gen. 42:37-38). Therefore, in the perspective of the larger narrative, it seems that Reuben as a character is depicted as a failure,[122] though he is shown making his proposals with good intentions.

In addition, it is difficult to know from the text whether Reuben's absence is because he had a more important duty than keeping Joseph alive or whether the author had intended to eliminate this reference to Reuben. However, the fact is that Judah was there with Joseph, but Reuben was not, although it is not clear that Judah had any intention of restoring Joseph to his father. At this point, the text does not seem to give any other motive than the one Judah expresses himself, which is to make a profit out of Joseph rather than just disposing of him for nothing. However, considering the results of the event, this sets up a clear comparison between Judah and Reuben. Which of the two is more effective?

Regardless of the fact that Reuben was Jacob's firstborn and considered a good brother, he was not there with his brothers at the most important time. In this context, Judah's direct utterance in verses 26 and 27 may be better timed and more persuasive to the other brothers. Judah's main goal seems to be to prevent the killing of Joseph. Selling him to the traders may be the second best policy. Reuben does not succeed in his plan, whereas Judah completes his scheme. Thus, Reuben and Judah play contrasting roles to other each in verses 21-22 and 26-27. James S. Ackerman talks about this contrast as follows:

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[120] Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18-50* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1995), p. 418.

[121] 'Throwing Joseph into a pit can hardly rank as a satisfactory substitute for their initial plot to murder him. Joseph's fate still hangs in the balance.' Anthony F. Campbell and Mark A. O'Brien, *Sources of the Pentateuch: Texts, Introductions, Annotations* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), p. 226.

[122] Brett notes that 'his [Reuben] character is flawed, and his genealogical status has been weakened' (Gen. 35:21-2; cf. 49:3-4). Mark G. Brett, *Genesis: Procreation and the Politics of Identity* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 111.

> Reuben will gradually weaken and disappear as the story unfolds, Judah will undergo the most important change of any of the characters so that he will play *the* key role in catalyzing the reconciliation. To what extent has the narrative prepared us for Judah's dramatic rise in Genesis 43-44?[123]

Indeed, this prospect of Judah's dramatic rise compared to Reuben is the climax of Genesis 43-44. Similar speeches of Reuben and Judah to Jacob are repeated again in Genesis 42:37 (Reuben) and 43:3-5, 8-10 (Judah). Is this merely coincidental? Redford thinks that 'Judah's role is not only a secondary intrusion into the narrative, but it also represents a diminution of the story's overall literary artistry'.[124] However, it should be accepted that the author has more concern for Judah's role than for Reuben's in the light of their speeches and acts in the larger narrative in the book of Genesis. If part of Judah's speech is an echo of Reuben's speech, this may be to emphasise the connection and therefore also the contrast between their actions.[125] In this regard, the next chapter, Genesis 38, brings Judah into focus as the main character.

What, then, can we conclude as to the role of Judah in Genesis 37:26-27? Even though some scholars such as Ackerman, believe that Judah has no intention of rescuing Joseph, unlike Reuben, and that Judah seeks benefit from the deed,[126] this may be debatable. In fact, it is not clear that Judah could obtain any profit for himself from the event. Rather, this story demonstrates Judah's capacity for negotiating with his brothers, and here the significance of the different verbal forms in the speeches becomes clear. In contrast to Reuben's use of imperatives which implies a distance between himself and his brothers and his right to issue orders to them, Judah uses the first person plural 'we' to persuade them and to emphasise their common dilemma. In this way, 'the leadership of Judah'[127] is revealed in

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[123] Ackerman, 'Joseph, Judah and Jacob', p. 99.

[124] Redford, *A Study of the Biblical Story of Joseph*, pp. 132-35; Ackerman, 'Joseph, Judah and Jacob', pp. 98-99.

[125] Ackerman states two uses for the device of doubling: 'Emphasis' and 'plot retardation', in his 'Joseph, Judah and Jacob', p. 86.

[126] Ackerman, 'Joseph, Judah and Jacob', p. 99.

[127] Brodie, Genesis *as Dialogue: A Literary, History and Theological Commentary*, p. 361.

his effectiveness as an intercessor for his brothers, a role that he will go on to perform in later episodes in the story. It is Judah who persuades Jacob to let Benjamin accompany the brothers on their return to Egypt in Chapter 43, whereas Reuben's impulsive offer to allow Jacob to kill his grandsons in Gen 42:37 is an understandable failure. Judah is also the one who pleads with Joseph for his brothers in Gen. 44: 16-34 and it is Judah that Jacob sends ahead to deal with Joseph in Gen 46:28. Judah's role as the effective persuader is foreshadowed by his successful appeal to his brothers in Genesis 37. By contrast, Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, is 'faltering and ineffectual'.[128] To support this, we can remember the act of Reuben who slept with Jacob's concubine Bilhah (Gen. 35:22). Reuben's act implies replacement of his father.[129] The result was that Reuben lost his birthright as firstborn.[130] Throughout, Reuben's speeches are impulsive, violent, and couched as orders, presuming an authority that he is shown not to carry.

Judah's suggestion to his brothers that they sell Joseph reflects his role as a mediator in the facilitation of this difficult situation. He knew the best way to calm down the rage of his brothers over Joseph. To point this out, the author had to allocate Judah a more logical and practical speech than Reuben's which emphasises his solidarity with his brothers rather than assuming command over them. Nevertheless, the problem that Judah did not restore Joseph to his father still remains and it seems to me that Judah's characterisation does not emerge clearly. This may be a strategy of the author to raise questions for the reader for the following scenes. The role of Judah has only just begun in Genesis 37.

3.4.2. The Second Competition between Reuben and Judah (Gen. 42:36-38; 43:1-14)

This section is composed of dialogues between Judah and his father 'Israel' over Joseph's

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[128] Brodie, *Genesis as Dialogue: A Literary, History and Theological Commentary*, p. 360; see Yigal Levin, 'Joseph, Judah and the Benjamin Conundrum', *ZAW* (2004), p. 238; White, 'Reuben and Judah: Duplicates or Complements?', pp. 73-97; Weinstein also comments, 'But, Reuben is inconsistent,...disappear. His ineffectiveness is there for all to see'. Brian Weinstein, 'Reuben: The Predicament of the Firstborn', *JBQ* 36 (2008), pp. 196-201 (198-99).

[129] Duane A. Garrett, *Rethinking Genesis: The Sources and Authorship of the First Book of the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991), p. 173; Speiser, *Genesis*, pp. 274-75.

[130] Judah Goldin, 'The Youngest Son or Where Does Genesis 38 Belong', *JBL* 96 (1977), pp. 27-44 (37-39).

command that Benjamin should be sent to Egypt.[131] Judah's speeches (Gen. 43:3-5, 8-10) can be compared to Reuben's in the chapter before on the same subject (Gen. 42:37) just as we compared their speeches to persuade the brothers not to kill Joseph in Genesis 37:21-22, 26-27.[132] The speeches in Genesis 42 and 43, in fact, could be called a second 'competition' between Reuben and Judah. Once again, Reuben's and Judah's proposals to their father in Genesis 42:36-38 and 43:1-14 are set side by side. This being the case how should we, as the reader, read the texts?

Reuben's Speeches and his Characterisation

Firstly, in Genesis 42, the dialogue takes place between Jacob and Reuben (v. 36 and 38 for Jacob, vv. 37 for Reuben,). This chapter is the first chapter of a new scene which tells of Jacob's sons in the context of the journey to Egypt (Gen. 42-45).[133] After Joseph, the governor, forced Jacob's sons to leave Simeon as a hostage in Egypt (Gen. 42:24), they were also obliged to return there with Benjamin as ordered by the governor of Egypt and, at the same time there, was a severe famine[134] in Canaan so that there was no grain to eat (Gen. 43:1-2).

However, in verse 36 before the dialogue with Reuben, Jacob does not speak merely

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[131] The name Israel usually accompanies Judah, whilst in the dialogue with Reuben the name Jacob is used. Many Genesis commentators think that the difference between the two names Jacob and Israel is due to multiple sources (J and E) in the text. However, the name Israel, which is to be the northern kingdom's name in the future is paired with Judah, whose name will also later be the name of the southern kingdom, and is contrasted with Jacob because this name goes no further. In the context of this, Longacre's question is interesting: 'Why, after the change of name in 35:10, is Jacob not consistently called Israel – as Abram becomes consistently Abraham after his change of name?' He goes on, 'In some degree also our story here represents Israel as the public person and Jacob as the private person...I believe that a careful sympathetic reading of the story makes it highly plausible that a skilful narrator has been at work and his use of Israel/Jacob is neither random nor unmotivated.' Robert E. Longacre, *Joseph: A Story of Divine Providence: A Text Theoretical and Textlinguistic Analysis of 37 and 39-48* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1989), pp. 149-51.

[132] Berlin mentions three kinds of contrast between two characters in her section on character and characterisation: 1) contrast with another character, 2) contrast with an earlier action of the same character, and 3) contrast with the expected norm. The competition between Reuben and Judah in Genesis 37, 42 and 43 belongs to the first and second at the same time. See Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*, p. 40.

[133] Genesis 42-45 consists of two journeys of Jacob's sons to Egypt. According to Westermann, chapter 42 parallels chapters 43-45. Westermann, *Genesis 37-50: A Commentary*, p. 118.

Departure of the brothers	42:1-5 / 43:1-15
Sojourn in Egypt	42:6-25 / 43:16-34; 44:4-45:24
Return to the father	42:26-38 / 44:1-3; 45:25-28

[134] The theme of 'famine' enables us to connect 37, 39-41 and 42-45. In particular, 'This famine which is the cause of Jacob's concern [Gen 43:2] (v.2) is the same as the one that has struck the land of Egypt.' Westermann, *Genesis 37-50: A Commentary*, p. 103.

to Reuben, but to all his sons (וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם יַעֲקֹב אֲבִיהֶם). He then speaks to Reuben. Reuben. the firstborn of Jacob, speaks twice, in Genesis 42:22 and 37. In Genesis 42:22, Reuben addresses his brothers who sigh with grief for one another[135] when the governor of Egypt orders them to bring their youngest brother from Canaan. Reuben's first speech seems understandable as a rebuke to his brothers because Joseph, as the governor in Egypt, threatened to keep one of their brothers as a hostage and ordered them to bring their youngest brother, Benjamin, to Egypt.[136] Reuben's speech reminds us of his leaving the scene and his irresponsible attitude toward Joseph along with the brothers in Genesis 37.[137] After Reuben gives his speech to the brothers to save Joseph, the story progresses without Reuben until the sale of Joseph to the foreign traders is completed. Once again in chapter 42 Reuben is psychologically distancing himself from his brothers, but he is implicitly acknowledging the ineffectiveness of his speeches when he says to his brothers, 'You would not listen,' in front of the governor of Egypt, whom he would not expect to understand them. Despite his interventions, Simeon had to stay in prison and wait for Benjamin there (Gen. 42:19, 24).[138] Although Reuben's motivation in both cases seems to be good, we cannot but admit his half-hearted attitude to solving the problem. He seems to act by distancing himself from the brothers, proclaiming his innocence (Gen. 42:22).[139] Thus, Reuben's reproach to his brothers could be comprehensible in this context.

In the next speech in Genesis 42:37, Reuben asks Jacob to let him take Benjamin with him to Egypt.[140] Reuben also suggests that Jacob may kill his two sons as a guarantee if

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[135] Gen. 42:22 reads: Then Reuben answered them, 'Did I not tell you not to wrong the boy? But you would not listen. So now there comes a reckoning for his blood.' (NRSV)

[136] David W. Cotter, *Berit Olam Studies in Hebrew Narrative & Poetry: Genesis* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2003), pp. 307-08.

[137] Ackerman properly points out Reuben's isolation and irresponsibility, 'As chapter 37 concluded, we found Reuben proclaiming his tragic isolation...The true firstborn should provide leadership that assumed at least a shared responsibility for the situation.' Ackerman, 'Joseph, Judah and Jacob', p. 101.

[138] Sternberg puts it, 'As Leah's second son, Simeon makes the perfect hostage for Benjamin, Rachel's second,' Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading*, p. 291.

[139] Ackerman, 'Joseph, Judah and Jacob', pp. 101, 105.

[140] Ackerman maintains that Reuben's speeches in both chapter 37 and 42 are similar. 'Reuben's language reminds readers of his earlier intent "to *bring him* [Joseph] *unto* his father" (37:22). In chapter 42 the same words are used to express Reuben's promise regarding Benjamin: "two of my sons you may kill if I do not *bring him unto* you" (42:37).' See Ackerman, 'Joseph, Judah and Jacob', p. 102.

he does not bring Benjamin back home.[141] Reuben's last word here is that Jacob should trust in him (תְּנָה אֹתוֹ עַל־יָדִי) ('Entrust him to my care' NIV). Reuben's speech in Genesis 42:37 demonstrates his hasty approach in the same way as his first plea to save Joseph in Genesis 37:21-22 did. His character continues with this pattern in Genesis 42 as well. In addition, his appeal to Jacob is not effective, except as 'the role of an ineffective moral extremist',[142] in the same way as his entreaty to his brothers in Genesis 37 was. Concerning Reuben's proposal to Jacob, Meir Sternberg writes:

> ... Reuben's appeal [is] widely mistaken for a mere index of recklessness. Its extravagance makes sense as a desperate response to an accusation that admits of no straightforward denial – not just because it is left unspoken but mainly because it happens to be half-true. How could he say, W[w]e (or *they*) have indeed done away with your favourite and lied to you, but this time our hands are clean and our hearts pure? Or could one repeat the old falsehoods about a crime that lies at the root of the new trouble? Caught in this grotesque visitation of the past, Reuben tries the indirect father-to-father approach: "My two sons thou mayest kill if I do not bring him to thee." But such facile talk about the killing of sons only makes Jacob dig in his heels.[143]

Just as Reuben uses imperatives throughout Genesis 37:21-22, it could be argued that Reuben's speech in Genesis 42:37 provides evidence of his quick-tempered and thoughtless attitude just as his imperative manner of speaking to his brothers did. So, it can be seen that the two scenes in chapters 37 and 42 present an antithesis using opposite pleas.[144] One is that Reuben in Genesis 37 forbids the shedding of blood, whereas he seems to allow for the killing of his two sons in Genesis 42.[145] The other is that Reuben attempts to bring Joseph back to his

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[141] Gen. 42:37 reads: Then Reuben said to his father, 'You may kill my two sons if I do not bring him back to you. Put him in my hands, and I will bring him back to you.' (NRSV)

[142] Hugh C. White, *Narration and Discourse in the Book of Genesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 264; 'Shrilly he turns on them with an "I told you so", refusing to accept the guilt while recognizing that he must share the judgment...Reuben attempts to identify himself with the innocent...' Ackerman, 'Joseph, Judah and Jacob', p. 101.

[143] Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading*, p. 299.

[144] Kim sees a symmetrical pattern in the contradictory requests of Reuben: abb'a'; a - Let's not kill him (37:22b), b - To bring him (Joseph) to him father (37:22c). a' - Kill my two sons (42:37a), b' - If I do not bring him (Benjamin) to you (42:37b). Kim, *Judah's Role in Joseph's (?) Story*, p. 44.

[145] Ackerman says, 'Here Reuben steps forward, making a statement more reckless than Jephthah's [Jud. 11:30], offering the life of two sons as pledge for Benjamin's.' Ackerman, 'Joseph, Judah and Jacob', p. 102.

father in Genesis 37, but he is prepared to lose his own sons if he does not bring Benjamin to Jacob. It is interesting that Reuben is now offering his own sons in exchange for Jacob's two sons to restore both Simeon and Benjamin to his father. Thus, it can be inferred that the author prefers to employ parallel structures as his way of contrasting characters in these two chapters.

Now it becomes clear that these two scenes (Gen. 37 and 42) reveal two contradictory sides of Reuben's character. As far as the importance of ranking in the family is concerned, Reuben as the firstborn of Jacob is undeniably significant. However, Reuben's unsuitable offer to his father Jacob to allow his own sons to be killed, if he fails to bring Benjamin back from Egypt, indicates a contradictory character is being conveyed by the storyteller. Likewise, Simeon, the second son of Jacob, cannot be forgotten. Taking Benjamin to the governor of Egypt is followed by the release of Simeon from confinement. This means that Simeon is as important as Benjamin to the governor in terms of redemption. We are also told that Joseph loves Benjamin more than his other half brothers (cf. Gen. 45:21-22). Reuben may well know this situation so that it seems that he would allow his father to kill his own sons in place of Benjamin and Simeon.

However, Reuben's attitude in persuading his brothers and Jacob is not consistent when it comes to saving life; he attempts to save Joseph's life, but seems to abandon his own sons' lives with ease. For the reader, indeed, this causes confusion with respect to his character. Finally, Reuben receives nothing but Jacob's refusal. Reuben had already failed to bring Joseph with him to Jacob in Genesis 37. Because of this, could Jacob trust Reuben's proposal which depended on an unexpected order from the governor of Egypt? In other words, in Jacob's thinking, the loss of Joseph in the wilderness is at risk of being repeated with the loss of Benjamin and Simeon in Egypt. It could be assumed that Jacob seems to be thinking carefully about these two possibilities. For this reason, no matter how Reuben tries to persuade his father to let him take Benjamin to Egypt, it would always be in vain. Rather, the narrator focuses on Reuben's twofold character. Ackerman maintains that, while Reuben makes two opposing suggestions, he uses a similar style of narration:

> Reuben's language reminds readers of his earlier intent "to bring him [Joseph] unto his father" (37:22). In chapter 42 the same words are used to express Reuben's promise regarding Benjamin: "two of my sons you may kill if I do not bring him unto you" (42:37).[146]

It is suggested, therefore, that this is an intentional literary device used by the author. If Reuben considered his own sons carefully, why did he not speak to Jacob in a considered and wise way like Judah (Gen. 43:8-11)? Judah is still interested in Joseph's life (Reuben attempts to save his life as well) in Genesis 37 and the lives of all family members including his own two sons in chapter 43,[147] but Reuben is not in Genesis 42. Reuben seems to be running a risk to save his two brothers at the expense of his two sons without being able to anticipate the result of the meeting with the governor. His character in chapter 42, thus, is opposite to that in chapter 37 in terms of saving lives. Reuben seems not to think about his father's concern regarding the loss of four members of his family (Simeon, Benjamin, and even Reuben's two sons). Thus, Reuben is not effective, as Berlin points out,[148] in persuading his father Jacob.

Judah's Speeches and His Characterisation

As for the dialogue between Judah and Israel (or Jacob) in Genesis 43, the speeches between them alternate and there are two from each of them (vv. 3-5, 8-18 for Judah, vv. 2, 11-14 for Israel). The father's first speech in verse 2 is directed to all his sons. However, Judah alone responds to his father (vv. 3-5). When Israel asks a question in return as to why they have brought such trouble, the answer in verse 7 is attributed to all the brothers.[149] These speeches are a further explanation of the course of events that took place between the governor of

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[146] Ackerman, 'Joseph, Judah and Jacob', p. 102.

[147] Judah's argument for life continues in chapter 44. See David A. Diewert, 'Judah's Argument for Life as Wise Speech', in J.I. Parker and Sven K. Soderlund (eds.), *The Way of Wisdom: Essays in Honor of Bruce K. Waltke* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), pp. 61-74.

[148] 'The Joseph story contains a contrast between Reuben and Judah in several episodes (Gen. 37:21-29; 42:37-43:11) in which Reuben, although he means well, is always less effective than Judah.' Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*, p. 40.

[149] Gen. 43:7 reads: They replied, 'The man questioned us carefully about ourselves and our kindred, saying, "Is your father still alive? Have you another brother?" What we told him was in answer to these questions. Could we in any way know that he would say, "Bring your brother down"?' (NRSV)

Egypt and Israel's sons in Egypt. One of the interesting things is that the names Jacob and Israel are used interchangeably in Genesis 42-43. In particular, when Judah talks to his father. the name of the father is usually Israel (Gen. 43:6, 8, 11) rather than Jacob. Reuben talks to Jacob (Gen. 42:36, 38). Anyway, Judah's proposal is agreed to. This is because Judah's speech indicates psychological and structural strengthening in preparation for the second journey to Egypt. In this way, Judah's second speech in verses 8 to 10 encourages his father to change his mind and allow them to take Benjamin with them to Egypt. Finally, Israel's speech in vv. 11-14 gives his permission for Benjamin to go to Egypt with the brothers.

To be specific, as Reuben asks Jacob for permission to take Benjamin to Egypt in Genesis 42:37, Judah also speaks to Israel in Genesis 43:3-5, 8-10. We can see that Judah's first statement in chapter 43:3-5 is clearer than Reuben's:

> Then Reuben said to his father, 'You may kill my two sons if I do not bring him back to you. Put him in my hands, and I will bring him back to you'. (Gen 42:37 NRSV)

> But Judah said to him, 'The man solemnly warned us, saying, "You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you". If you will send our brother with us, we will go down and buy you food; but if you will not send him, we will not go down, for the man said to us, "You shall not see my face, unless your brother is with you".' (Gen 43:3-5 NRSV)

Contrary to Reuben's speeches, Judah attempts to persuade his father logically and with rhetorical speech; firstly, Judah begins his address by recapitulating the governor's speech in verse 3. 'The man solemnly warned us, saying…' The purpose of this language is to effectively increase the persuasive power of Judah's speech to Jacob because it is vivid to the listener, whereas Reuben speaks to Jacob without using the quote from the governor. In this way, the Egyptian official's speech seems more immediate to Jacob-Israel than Reuben's or Judah's own speeches. Next, Judah directly quotes the governor's order; 'You shall not see my face, unless your brother is with you.' His command is repeated twice in verses 3 and 5. It is certain that Judah's repeated speeches are a rhetorical device. In the biblical narrative, when

a character uses direct quotations and repetition they are related to the literary artistry of the storyteller and link the present story to others in the larger narrative.[150]

What, then, could be drawn from Judah's speech to Israel in Genesis 43:3-5? The narrator briefly describes the situation in the land of Canaan in Genesis 43:1.[151] It is true that Israel (Jacob) plays a key role as a character who takes the initiative to get food to save his family in chapter 43:2 as well as in chapter 42:1-2. The point is that chapter 42 is about the first journey to Egypt. Jacob's family can afford to live in Canaan due to the grain brought from Egypt when Jacob would not send Benjamin to Egypt with Reuben. However, Israel in chapter 43 recommends that his sons 'go back' to Egypt and 'buy' more food. Genesis 43 describes a different situation from the one in the previous chapter; there is no grain to eat again so Jacob is forced to dispatch his sons to Egypt a second time. Jacob cannot simply protect his sons, they need to eat.

Judah knows how to manipulate his father because his personal opinion is located in the middle of the speech by the governor which is repeated around it; 'If you will send our brother with us, we will go down and buy you food' (v. 4). Judah understands clearly that the whole family is in danger of starving to death and he gets this insight into his father's thinking from when Jacob said to his sons in Genesis 42:1-2 to respond to the famine: '...there is grain in Egypt; go down and buy grain for us there, that we may live and not die' (NRSV). In assessing Reuben and Judah in their response to the same situation, Ackerman's evaluation seems reasonable: 'Whereas Reuben offered to destroy part of the next generation if he could not return Benjamin to his father, Judah emphasises the necessity that the next generation must continue.'[152]

In Genesis 37:27, Judah mediated between Joseph and his brothers to save Joseph's life. His capacity for reconciliation can be seen again in Genesis 43:3-5. After Judah speaks,

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[150] Ackerman insists that the reason why Judah's speech to Israel is successful is to help understand the text in the larger context of chapters 37-50. Ackerman, 'Joseph, Judah and Jacob', pp. 99-103.

[151] Now the famine was severe in the land. (NRSV)

[152] Ackerman, 'Joseph, Judah and Jacob', p. 103.

Israel rebukes his sons for telling the governor that they have another brother, Benjamin (v. 6). In verse 7, the brothers describe to Israel how it came about that the governor now wants them to bring Benjamin to Egypt. Following on from this, Judah's second speech, where he is speaking as the spokesman for all the brothers, is to persuade his father to let them take Benjamin to Egypt and it functions as the climax when Israel is finally convinced (vv. 8-10).[153]

Nonetheless, Judah's second speech in Genesis 43:8-10 is slightly different from the first speech to Israel in chapter 43:3-5. In his second speech, Judah tells Israel directly to send Benjamin to Egypt whilst his first speech is conditional. It is obvious that Jacob's mind is moved by Judah's second speech. Judah does not forget to tell Jacob that he will stand willingly as surety. Judah also persuasively demonstrates the scope of relief for his whole family: Jacob, the brothers, and Judah's own children. Judah talks about facing difficulties unless he brings Benjamin back to Israel (v. 9). Finally, Judah says to Israel, if they had not delayed, they could have returned twice (v. 10). Judah's speech using 'we' language in Genesis 43 reminds us of his first speech to the brothers using 'we' language in Genesis 37:26.[154] The meaning of Judah's 'we' language is different from Reuben's 'you' language in Genesis 42:22.[155] The former urges the group to cooperate together, but the latter is a sort of rebuke of the brothers. It appears that Reuben does not want to be included among 'them'. Accordingly, this part, in fact, shows the result of the second 'competition', as it shows the 'contrasting roles'[156] between Judah and Reuben in their attempt to persuade Jacob/Israel to let them take Benjamin to Egypt while Simeon is still in prison there.

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[153] Then Judah said to his father Israel, 'Send the boy with me, and let us be on our way, so that we may live and not die – you and we and also our little ones. I myself will be surety for him; you can hold me accountable for him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame forever. If we had not delayed, we would now have returned twice.' (NRSV)

[154] Then Judah said to his brothers, 'What profit is there if we kill our brother and conceal his blood?' (NRSV)

[155] Then Reuben answered them, 'Did I not tell you not to wrong the boy? But you would not listen. So now there comes a reckoning for his blood.' (NRSV)

[156] Ackerman, 'Joseph, Judah and Jacob', p. 99. He goes on, 'One must examine the larger context of the Joseph story to determine why Reuben and Judah play these opposing roles.' p. 100; Kim suggests this contrastive characterisation device in his *Judah's Role in Joseph's (?) Story*, p. 28.

The similar situations between the two events in chapters 37 and 42-43 are recapitulated as follows; first, there is a detainee in both cases, that is, Joseph and Simeon respectively. Second, both Reuben and Judah attempt to persuade their brothers to save Joseph's life and now they both again persuade Jacob/Israel to let them take Benjamin to Egypt to save Simeon. Finally, the request of Reuben is rejected on the two occasions,[157] whereas Judah's proposal is accepted on both. Redford's outline of the contents of Genesis 42-43, which includes Genesis 37, too, with respect to Reuben and Judah in the role of 'good brother' for little Joseph and Benjamin is reproduced below:[158]

<Table 3> Donald B. Redford's Synopsis of the Two Brothers' Roles

Reuben	Judah
37:21-22, deters brothers from killing Joseph; suggests he be put in pit.	37:26-27, deters brothers from killing Joseph by suggesting they sell him to the Ishmaelites.
37:29-30, returns to pit and is horror-stricken to find Joseph gone.	
42:22, interprets straits in which they find themselves as retribution and chides brothers therefor[e].	
42:37, offers his own sons as surety for Benjamin.	43:8-10, offers guilt on his own head as surety for Benjamin.
	44:16, offers all the brothers as slaves.
	44:18-34, makes an impassioned speech.

Redford considers the current narratives as 'duplication'; for example, chapters 42 and 43 are both travel narratives. Reuben and Judah take turns in the role of 'good brother' defending Joseph and Benjamin.[159] Redford, however, neglects to take into consideration Judah's statements in chapter 43:3-5. This speech of Judah serves the function of presenting a more

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[157] 'Reuben's efforts at leadership had been correspondingly ineffective (37:21-30; 42:22, 37).' Brodie, *Genesis as Dialogue: A Literary, Historical, and Theological Commentary*, p. 412.

[158] Redford, *A Study of the Biblical Story of Joseph*, p. 133; it is interesting to compare the two proposals offered by Reuben and Judah. 'The different features of their appeals in chs. 42-43 are: 1) not to their brothers but to their father, Jacob/Israel; 2) not on the subject of what to do with Joseph, but on the subject of what to bring with Benjamin; 3) not at the field but at the house of the father; 4) not in the same chapter, but in the different chapters with four names in pairs: Jacob/Israel and Reuben/Judah.' in Kim, *Judah's Role in Joseph's (?) Story*, pp. 40-41.

[159] Redford, *A Study of the Biblical Story of Joseph*, pp. 133-35.

direct and detailed account of his family's situation than Reuben's. Westermann clearly insists on the two brothers' contrasting roles:

> The change from Reuben to Judah would be compatible with this because the two names are nowhere juxtaposed in chs. 42-45, but follow in sequence; that is, they do not occur together; in ch. 42 it is only Reuben, in chs. 43-45 only Judah. One could understand better the narrator giving both brothers a role in chs. 42-45 if the two names were at hand to him from ch. 37...The Israel/Jacob is much more of a problem; but the mere occurrence of the two names is not an obvious argument for the juxtaposition of two sources.[160]

According to Westermann, 'the succession of the two journeys' (chs. 42 and 43-45) focuses on the harmony rather than being a doublet in the broad context of the narrative.[161] In a similar way, Jacob Licht, on the perspective of the literary device of repetition, says, 'This whole longish part (chapters 42-45) is built by expansion of a single notion, and consequently full of cross references and very tight in its composition; or in other words, closely coherent.'[162] On the basis of this, it does not seem to me that the author makes use of the 'doubling' or 'doublets' in his narrative without reason.[163] That is, it should be accepted that this is not only duplicating, as source critics say, but the plot of 'type-scenes';[164] the literary tactic of repetition. In the same way, Berlin notes that, 'The purpose of the second of the repeated phrases is to return the reader to the scene in which the first phrase occurred.'[165]

Then, why does the reader see the literary device of repetition again in Genesis 43?

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[160] Westermann, *Genesis 37-50: A Commentary*, p. 118-19.

[161] Westermann, *Genesis 37-50: A Commentary*, p. 118; 'The respective passages in chapters 42, 43, and 44 are examples of the narrator's use of structural repetition and the art of reticence.' Mark A. O'Brien, 'The Contribution of Judah's Speech, Genesis 44:18-34, to the Characterisation of Joseph', *CBQ* 59 (1997), pp. 429-47 (436).

[162] Jacob Licht, *Storytelling in the Bible* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1978), p. 141; Berlin agrees with this view, 'Each one exists separately, and they are combined in a certain order to make the greater narrative, but an individual frame has no life of its own outside of the film as a whole.' Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*, p. 125.

[163] In his article, Ackerman quotes H. Donner's double elements in Genesis 37-50. According to Ackerman, 'Doubling appears in speeches as well as actions. In some instances characters repeat a phrase in one episode...The common assumption has been that much of the doubling is a result of the conflation of sources...My concern is to point out the effect that doubling has as a literary device in the story.' Ackerman, 'Joseph, Judah and Jacob', p. 85. In this way, the speeches between Reuben and Judah can be considered as a doubling literary device, not mere duplication.

[164] Alter uses this terminology in biblical narrative as conventions repeated in the narratives, not different versions of the same event. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, pp. 47-62.

[165] Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*, p. 126.

One of the features in this second competition between Reuben and Judah is that the name of Jacob is altered; when Reuben talks to his father, the name used is Jacob, while Judah communicates with the name Israel. Many documentary hypothesis scholars believe that this is due to the different sources, E and J. However, we can obtain little, if anything, from the hypothesis theory because 'poetics limits form criticism and shows that form critics have mistaken a poetic feature in the discourse for evidence of the text's history'.[166] Coats claims: 'The two names [Jacob and Israel] are not simply doublets'.[167] Rather, it is necessary to enquire as to the reason why double speeches between Judah and Israel as well as Reuben and Jacob are stated successively. Furthermore, it is essential to analyse the reason why the author puts Judah's speeches after Reuben's. These may be related to the author's literary artistry in the narrative.[168] This is because, as Edward M. Curtis puts it, 'Judah's leadership is affirmed despite the fact that he was not the first born-or the second or even the third born-and despite Jacob's preference for Joseph.'[169]

Now, we can see the background of the journey of Jacob and his sons' to Egypt from Genesis 42 to 45. Chapter 37 introduces a scene in which Joseph is sold by his brothers to foreign traders and Reuben's and Judah's speeches aimed at saving Joseph are given to their brothers, while Gen. 42:37 and Gen. 43:3-5, 8-10 describe a scene in which the two sons attempt to persuade their father, Jacob/Israel to let them take Benjamin to Egypt. Thus, the point in chapter 43 is that, as Sternberg states, 'It is indeed Judah who, the famine having

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[166] Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*, p. 128.

[167] Coats, *From Canaan to Egypt: Structural and Theological Context for the Joseph Story*, p. 60.

[168] '...Joseph story must be understood essentially as a unit, an artistic masterpiece. But the masterpiece does not appear to me to be a product of a redactor who expressed his art by weaving together two originally distinct sources. Nor does the masterpiece appear to me to have been compromised by a later, clumsy hand. The masterpiece remains masterpiece as it now stands, each piece in its piece...' in Coats, *From Canaan to Egypt: Structural and Theological Context for the Joseph Story*, p. 74. Coats continues with respect to the name Jacob-Israel in his commentary, *Genesis, with and Introduction to Narrative Literature*, p. 293, 'The scene is a unit. It has duplication in speeches, but the duplications serve as a structural emphasis at crucial points, not as indications of parallel narration (so, the two self-revelation speeches). Moreover, the variation between names, particularly Jacob and Israel, does not suggest two layers of narration, but a scheme of unity in the scope of the plot.'

[169] Edward M. Curtis, 'Genesis 38: Its Context(s) and Function', *CTR* 5.2 (1991), pp. 247-57 (253); John Van Seters, 'The Pentateuch: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy', in Steven L. McKenzie & Patrick Graham (eds.), *The Hebrew Bible Today: An Introduction to Critical Issues* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), pp. 3-49 (33).

compelled Jacob to reopen the subject, finally breaks the stalemate ([Gen.] 43:1-14). His persuasion works backwards as well as forwards, since it also reflects the progress (in empathy, self-control, family feeling) made by the brothers during the otherwise blank period of waiting.'[170] Thus, Judah's speech to his father in Genesis 43 is vital for his role as a persuader and the repetition of these stories is part of the development of Judah's character, in contrast to Reuben's, and is part of the whole positioning of Judah as the main leader among his brothers.

3.4.3. Judah as Family Spokesman (Gen. 44:14-34)

Genesis 44 contains Judah's longest speech[171] in all of the narratives which are related to him in the final fourteen chapters of the book of Genesis. In particular, Judah's speech in Genesis 44:16, 18-34 has often been evaluated as a 'moving speech'[172] or a 'wise discourse'.[173] This section presents a clear feature of Judah's character and explains why it is he who is to lead his brothers to Egypt and how the events have come to show his capacity for petition before the governor of Egypt, Joseph himself. Furthermore, his speech has also been considered to be a 'turning point'[174] towards a change of mind by Joseph in the 'Story of Jacob and his Sons' in Genesis 37-50.

Therefore, it is understandable that Judah has a crucial role as a spokesman[175] and his speech in Genesis 44 persuades Joseph to change his mind, even if some scholars have

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[170] Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, p. 300.

[171] On this speech of Judah's compared to other long patriarchal speeches, Smith says, 'The importance of this speech (44:18-34), both in revealing Judah's character and in directing the plot, is seen in the fact that it is one of the longest in the Book of Genesis. Having 218 words in Hebrew, it is longer than any speech by Joseph and is the third longest in the book. The longest speech is Jacob's prophecy concerning his sons (268 words; 49:1-27), and the second longest is the speech of Abraham's servant to Rebekah's family (239 words; 24:34-49).' Bryan Smith, 'The Central Role of Judah in Genesis 37-50', *BSac* 162 (2005), pp. 158-74 (171).

[172] O'Brien, 'The Contribution of Judah's Speech, Genesis 44:18-34, to the Characterisation of Joseph', p. 429.

[173] Diewert, 'Judah's Argument for Life as Wise Speech', pp. 61-74.

[174] John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis* (ICC; 2nd edn.; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1930), p. 485; 'The pressure of the confrontation brings the Joseph Story to a turning point'. Coats, *Genesis, with an Introduction to Narrative*, p. 292.

[175] Lambe, 'Judah's Development: The Pattern of Departure – Transition – Return', pp. 53-68; Ackerman, 'Joseph, Judah and Jacob', p. 105; Diewert suggests Judah's role as the family spokesperson in 'Judah's Argument for Life as Wise Speech', p. 72.

concentrated more on the characterisation of Joseph than Judah.[176] For example, Mark A. O'Brien maintains that Judah's speech in Genesis 44:18-34 is to be assessed as an instrument to support Joseph's characterisation.[177] O'Brien's argument in connecting Judah's speech with the characterisation of Joseph is undoubtedly convincing. This results in the interpretation of Joseph's role as pivotal by the commentators.

However, this is merely the same position as that posed by those who are interested in Joseph and also that posed by O'Brien who characterises Judah as having a 'selfish' character in the preceding narrative. Finally, his attention only focuses on the transformation of Joseph.[178] Nevertheless, the importance of Judah's speech as well as his role in the context of the larger narrative should not be overlooked. Coats asserts that Judah's speech to the governor has a powerful effect. He says:

> Judah responds to the sentence with one of the two most important speeches, in the entire unit, 44:18-34. This speech does not develop in an uncontrolled, panic-stricken flow. Rather, it is carefully constructed. It begins with a polite supplication to Joseph, then builds a case by citing previous conversations with both Joseph and their father.[179]

Judah's speech is closely connected to Joseph's change of mind, and in the end his speech is followed by Jacob's journey to Egypt from Canaan. In other words, Judah's speech functions as the primary motive for Jacob and his family coming to Egypt. For this reason, Joseph's transformation in Genesis 45 can only be a secondary motive for Jacob's journey in comparison with Judah's speeches in Genesis 44:16, 18-34. What is more, Judah's speech

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[176] 'So far, the speech has not been considered as one playing a key role in the characterisation of Joseph. As a result, a benign understanding of him has prevailed.' See O'Brien, 'The Contribution of Judah's Speech, Genesis 44:18-34, to the Characterisation of Joseph', p. 429.

[177] O'Brien, 'The Contribution of Judah's Speech, Genesis 44:18-34, to the Characterisation of Joseph', pp. 427-47.

[178] In the beginning of his article, he says, '[Judah's] speech has not been considered as one playing a key role in the characterisation of Joseph.' His conclusion is that '[Joseph] has undergone a profound transformation.' O'Brien, 'The Contribution of Judah's Speech, Genesis 44:18-34, to the Characterisation of Joseph', pp. 429, 447.

[179] Coats, *Genesis, with an Introduction to Narrative Literature*, p. 292.

becomes the first step in Jacob and his sons' successful journey.[180] In Anthony J. Lambe's view, Judah's special role as a family spokesman has four elements: '(1) survival of the family; (2) Judah's self-sacrifice as atonement for past evil; (3) reconciliation of the brothers: (4) Judah's blessing. All have a connection to Judah's experience in Genesis 38.'[181] In light of this, the text needs to be read from the perspective of Judah's speech as a central focus in chapter 44.

The evaluation of Judah by scholars such as Bryan Smith is that Judah's role in the narrative throughout Genesis 37 to 50 is no less significant than Joseph's. For example, 'All of chapter 38 develops the life of Judah, and much of chapters 42-44, 46, and 49 focus on characters other than Joseph...The scope of Genesis 37-50 is significantly broader than the life of Joseph. It therefore seems unwise to label this narrative 'the Joseph story.'[182] Nahum M. Sarna also points out, 'The present chapter [Gen. 38], then, provides a foil to the Joseph-centred episodes.'[183]

In this context, it is clear that the character of Judah is strengthened in the process of persuading Israel and Joseph, the Egyptian governor, in Genesis 43-44. In particular, Judah's actions and speeches in chapter 44, ultimately, come to solve the problem of the 'lost brother' which occurred in chapter 37, although the purpose of Judah's plea is simultaneously concerned with the welfare of his father and the safety of his brothers (Simeon, Benjamin). From chapter 37 to 44, the reader can see the development of the character of Judah in general. He enters the stage at the point where he suggests selling Joseph as a slave and ends up

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[180] Ackerman's words are helpful for understanding this: 'The brothers, through Judah's bold action in Genesis 44, have passed the crucial test...Only when Joseph explains that the dreams indicated a specially ordained family role rather than a personally privileged divine love are the brothers able to approach him. Only when they perceive that Joseph's suffering and survival had played a key role in continued life for the family of Jacob-Israel are they able to "speak with him." The survival of the family had been the key issue in Judah's entreaty to Jacob to send Benjamin with them to Egypt. And the survival of Jacob-Israel had been the key theme in Judah's desperate plea before the Egyptian lord.' Ackerman, 'Joseph, Judah and Jacob', pp. 97-98.

[181] Lambe connects these factors with Judah's experience in Genesis 38. Lambe, 'Judah's Development: The Pattern of Departure – Transition – Return', p. 61.

[182] Smith, 'The Central Role of Judah in Genesis 37-50', pp. 158-74, especially pp. 157-8; Golka correctly argues that Genesis 37-50 is the story of Israel-Joseph story rather than the story of Joseph with the connection between Genesis 38 and 49 in his article. Friedmann W. Golka, 'Genesis 37-50: Joseph Story or *Israel*-Joseph Story?', *CRBS* 153 (2004), pp. 153-77.

[183] Nahum M. Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis-*בראשית (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), p. 264.

resolving the tension in the narrative with two episodes in which he persuades Israel and Joseph to change their minds, and finally motivates Joseph to make himself known to his brothers in Genesis 45:1-12. That is, it is because of Judah that Joseph was sold to foreign traders, rather than being killed by his brothers.[184] When Joseph finally makes known his identity to his brothers at the beginning of Genesis 45, it is truly because of Judah's lengthy speech in chapter 44:18-34. Furthermore, at the end of the narrative of Jacob and his sons, Jacob's blessing for his sons in Genesis 49 foretells Judah's future high status. From this blessing, the reader can understand the contents of Jacob's blessing of Judah (vv. 8-12) as superior to Joseph's (vv. 22-26). Thus, Judah is not a mere flat character or a type, but a rounded or fully-fledged character.[185]

In fact, with the exception of chapters 39-42, in Genesis 37, 38, 43 and 44 Judah's position has been increasingly elevated, in contrast to that of his three elder brothers Reuben, Simeon, and Levi. In addition, Jacob sent Judah ahead of him to Joseph to get directions to Goshen, which is the place in which they were to live in Egypt, after Jacob left Canaan; 'Israel sent Judah ahead to Joseph to lead the way before him into Goshen…' (Gen. 46:28 NRSV). Again, Judah's persuasive speech to Israel in chapter 43 causes his brothers, including the youngest, Benjamin, to travel to Egypt for the second time. In chapter 44, when Judah meets Joseph, the Egyptian official, the characterisation of him reaches a climax. Smith comments on Judah's character and his transformation in Genesis 37-44:

> Nevertheless if Genesis 38 records the transformation of Judah, it does so in a most subtle way. If Genesis 37-50 recorded nothing more about Judah, it would be impossible to state with certainty that he did change in 38:26 and that verses 27-30 do testify to a divine breakthrough and a spiritual

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[184] On the contrary, Brett degrades Judah's status in Genesis 38 seeing him in a negative light, 'Reuben's intervention has the effect of saving Joseph's life, whereas Judah's speech is really focused only on the question of profit…' Mark G. Brett, *Genesis: Procreation and the Politics of Identity* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 112-13; however, Brett did not consider the wider context of the story in connection with Judah's character as family leader.

[185] Berlin says character types in biblical narratives fall into three categories: the 'full fledged character', who is equivalent to a rounded character; the 'type', which is the same as the flat character; the 'agent', who is the functionary in biblical narrative. One of the considerations on characters is that, 'Some person may appear as a full-fledged character in one story and as a type or agent in another', in Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*, pp. 23-24.

> dawn. Why, then, is this important information presented in this way? The subtlety plays an important role in the ensuing narrative, especially in chapters 42-44. By leaving the reader uncertain of Judah's spiritual condition at the end of Genesis 38, the narrative enhances its presentation of chapters 42-44.[186]

Smith sees a problem of vagueness in chapter 38 with reference to Judah's moral character (among others), and views Genesis 42-44 as offering a solution to that. At the same time, Joseph's speech to the brothers in Genesis 44:15, 17[187] is ironic because one of the brothers has to remain as a hostage, but the others paradoxically go back to their father in peace.[188] At this pivotal moment, if Judah's persuasive speech had not been uttered, the enigmatic speech of the Egyptian lord to the brothers may not have taken place and the issue of Joseph's identity would not have been resolved. As David A. Diewert says, 'the situation he [Judah] faces is extremely desperate.'[189] It appears that the narrator describes Judah's character as having developed by juxtaposing him with Reuben (Gen. 37, 44), Jacob (Gen. 37, 42-44), and Joseph (Gen. 37, 44).

According to Smith's view, 'Before Genesis 38:26[,] the narrator used Judah's relationship with these three characters to condemn him. Now in Genesis 42-44 it uses these characters to reverse that judgment.'[190] He goes on, 'Whereas Reuben behaved more honourably than Judah in chapter 37, Judah behaved more honourably than Reuben in chapters 42-44.'[191] However, Smith's contention is not persuasive when considering the contrasting of the characters of Reuben and Judah because we are not sure whether Reuben is conscious of Judah as a rival. If this is the intention of the storyteller, it is certain that Reuben loses his status as a leader among the brothers, while Judah obtains the confidence of the brothers, his father, and even the governor of Egypt. Hence, Curtis' argument is appropriate:

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[186] Smith, 'The Central Role of Judah in Genesis 37-50', p. 161.

[187] Genesis 45:15 reads: 'Joseph said to them, "what deed is this that you have done? Do you not know that one such as I can practice divination?"' And, in verse 17, Joseph says, 'Far be it from me that I should do so! Only the one in whose possession the cup was found shall be my slave; but as for you, go up in peace to your father.' (NRSV)

[188] Diewert, 'Judah's Argument for Life as Wise Speech', p. 73.

[189] Diewert, 'Judah's Argument for Life as Wise Speech', p. 64.

[190] Smith, 'The Central Role of Judah in Genesis 37-50', p. 162.

[191] Smith, 'The Central Role of Judah in Genesis 37-50', p. 162.

> Judah's leadership is affirmed despite the fact that he was not the firstborn-or the second or even the third born-and despite Jacob's preference for Joseph. God's providence is evident in this even though human factors such as the brothers' irresponsible behaviour play a role as well. The possibility that chapter 38 recounts an event that began a transformation in Judah's character may contribute to this theme also.[192]

In the case of Joseph, Smith claims that, 'Whereas Judah's treatment of Joseph in Genesis 37 condemned him as remarkably cruel, his treatment of Benjamin (the family's 'second Joseph') in chapter 44 demonstrates that he became amazingly kind'. [193] However, as many commentators say, it is true that even though Judah's motivation in chapter 37 is ambiguous, his demand for Joseph to be sold results in the saving of Joseph. In the perspective of the larger narrative, this may be an essential component included by the storyteller.

Finally, the change in Judah's attitude toward Jacob is astonishing. In Genesis 37, Judah guided his brothers to sell Joseph who was specially loved by Jacob as the result of 'unequal love'.[194] Jacob still shows his unequal love for his sons by keeping Benjamin who is the other beloved son of Rachel at home.[195] When Judah encounters the Egyptian official, he asks for Benjamin's release due to his deep concern for Jacob's comfort. We may assume that the character of Judah has certainly been changed since chapter 37. That is, Judah suggested selling Joseph to the foreign traders as an alternative to killing him and also admitted publicly his fault in not giving Shelah to Tamar, his daughter-in-law, in Genesis 37:26-27 and 38:26. The two cases are both situations he had no control over and were his mistakes. In Genesis 44:33-34[196] Judah appeals to the governor to sacrifice him instead of Benjamin. It is probable

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[192] Curtis, 'Genesis 38: Its Context(s) and Function', p. 253.
[193] Smith, 'The Central Role of Judah in Genesis 37-50', p. 162.
[194] Smith, 'The Central Role of Judah in Genesis 37-50', p. 162.
[195] Indeed, Joseph was the first beloved son of Jacob, but Jacob believed that he had been killed by wild animals as the brothers had told him.
[196] 'Now therefore, please let your servant remain as a slave to my lord in place of the boy; and let the boy go back with his brothers. For how can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? I fear to see the suffering that would come upon my father.' (NRSV)

that the events indicate the progress of Judah's character development into a 'leading'[197] character. Accordingly, this is certainly the highest rhetorical climax[198] in the course of his character progession in the entire 'Story of Jacob and his Sons'. This scene is followed by the one in which Joseph reveals himself to his brothers. As Coats mentions, 'Joseph's following move, then, changes the audience from a hostile mood dominated by a legal exchange of accusation and defence to a more personal encounter.'[199] Thus, concerning Judah's speech in Genesis 44 with the other three characters (Reuben, Jacob, and Joseph), we can understand his various roles: as a comforter for Jacob, as a guardian for Benjamin,[200] and as a spokesman for the brothers whilst in dialogue with 'the Egyptian, Joseph, [who] is faced with the decision of bringing life or death to this – his own – family'.[201]

As far as character development is concerned, Judah is as important as Joseph. If Joseph rises to fame as governor of Egypt at the end of hardship, Judah becomes a leader among his brothers. In chapter 44, the narrator uses the phrase 'Judah and his brothers' (Gen. 44:14) when they come into Joseph's house in Egypt. This mode of expression means that Judah is a representative character and that he is the only opponent of the Egyptian official. Furthermore, it is indeed Judah who persuades both Israel and the Egyptian to change their minds (Gen. 43, 44), and this also indicates the direct motive of the subsequent narrative. Thanks to Joseph, Jacob and his sons are saved, and thanks to Judah, Joseph can change his mind. Ackerman insists, in the context, that Judah's speech plays a pivotal role as a catalyst between Joseph, his brothers, and even Jacob/Israel in the larger narrative.

> Joseph's dreams were partially interpreted by his brothers and father in chapter 37, but not until Judah's speech are we (and Joseph) given sufficient narrative perspective to reach a more complete

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[197] 'Judah played a leading role in selling his brother into bondage; yet he becomes the key to a positive resolution of the plot. He convinced Jacob to send Benjamin to Egypt and then helps Joseph understand the meaning of his dreams when he describes Jacob's distress and offers to remain in Egypt in Benjamin's stead.' Ackerman, 'Joseph, Judah and Jacob', p. 110.

[198] Diewert, 'Judah's Argument for Life as Wise Speech', pp. 70-72.

[199] Coats, *Genesis, with an Introduction to Narrative Literature*, p. 292.

[200] Diewert, 'Judah's Argument for Life as Wise Speech', p. 63.

[201] Diewert, 'Judah's Argument for Life as Wise Speech', p. 71.

> interpretation. Judah's speech shows what the brothers have learned – that the loss of a brother would be the death of Jacob-Israel. Perhaps Joseph did not realize what additional grief to his father his test of the brothers would cause. Paradoxically, there is something more important that *Joseph* must learn from *Judah*: the risking / offering up / suffering / descent of a brother can mean life for the family of Israel.[202]

Therefore, it is not an exaggeration to say that Joseph functions only as Judah's helper in leading the course of events because by chapter 44 the Egyptian lord still has not revealed his identity to Judah and his brothers, rendering the chapter and Judah's speech central to the narrative as a whole. That is, it can be argued that the main character in chapter 44 is not Joseph but Judah. Judah is an active character in his role in persuading the Egyptian governor, but the governor is a passive character in his role of listening to the petition for Benjamin to go back to his father. This results in the amplification of Judah's voice in his plea to the Egyptian. As Diewert asserts, 'Judah's perceptive and persuasive words bring about a measure of healing ('the tongue of the wise brings healing', Prov. 12:18) to the patriarchal family, whose history had been characterized by much internal fragmentation and self-destruction.'[203]

Thus, it should be concluded that, in chapter 44, Judah truly acted as a family spokesman to the governor of Egypt, who immediately opened his mind to being prepared to reconcile himself with his brothers. Finally, as a result of Judah's speech, Joseph discloses himself to his brothers and asks about the condition of his father: 'I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?' (Gen 45:3 NRSV)

3.4.4. Judah as the Most Blessed (Gen. 49:8-12)

Genesis 49 naturally falls into two parts: Jacob's blessing of his twelve sons (vv. 1-28) and the account of Jacob's death (vv. 29-33). The former involves 'the blessings of the tribes' that descend from his twelve sons by Jacob.[204] The latter is composed of Jacob's last words (vv.

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[202] Ackerman, 'Joseph, Judah and Jacob', pp. 105-06.

[203] Diewert, 'Judah's Argument for Life as Wise Speech', p. 72.

[204] 'Jacob's death bed blessings', as Waltke says, are the last of his three blessings in his story: of Pharaoh (47:7-10), of Ephraim and Manasseh (48:15-20), and of his twelve sons (49:1-28). See Bruce K. Waltke,

29-32) and the description of his death (v. 33). But as Kent Sparks has observed, in particular, there are big differences between the blessings for Judah and Joseph and those for the other brothers in this chapter.[205] The distinctions between them are in the length and quality of the blessings for Judah (vv. 8-12) and Joseph (vv. 22-26). In the table below, I have set out Seth Daniel Kunin's figures for the length and quality of Jacob's blessings:[206]

<Table 4> The Quality of Jacob's Blessings to his Twelve Sons

Leah	Rachel	Zilpah	Bilhah
Judah (+) [5]	Joseph (+) [5]		
			Dan (+) [3]
Shim./Levi (-) [3]			
Reub. (-) [2]			
Zeb. (+) [1]		Gad (+) [1]	
Iss. (+) [1]→[2][207]	Ben. (+) [1]	Asher (+) [1]	Naph. (+) [1]

( ) = quality [ ] = numbers of verses

According to the table above, we can see four features of Jacob's blessing; first, Judah's and Joseph's blessings take up the largest number of verses (each taking up five verses in all).

Genesis: A Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2001), p. 602; Coats calls these verses a 'collection of tribal sayings' in *Genesis: with an Introduction to Narrative Literature*, pp. 307-11; According to Hoop, the term 'tribal sayings' was derived from Gresßmann. Raymond De Hoop, *Genesis 49 in Its Literary and Historical Context* (OTS, 39; Leiden: Brill, 1998), p. 282.

[205] Sparks properly highlights that 'the tribal list in Genesis 49' shows two abnormal points: 'First, the pronouncements concerning Reuben and Simeon/Levi are different from all others because they serve primarily in their present context to discredit Judah's three older brothers and, in doing so, to explain Judah's ultimate position of authority among them. Secondly, it is strange that the blessings of ch. 49 pronounce this ultimate authority upon not one but two brothers: upon Joseph, and then more strongly upon Judah. How might these peculiarities be explained?' Kent Sparks, 'Genesis 49 and the Tribal List Tradition in Ancient Israel'. *ZAW* 115 (2003), pp. 327-47 (330).

[206] Kunin introduces the list of blessings through Jacob's four wives (see Seth Daniel Kunin, *The Logic of Incest: A Structuralist Analysis of Hebrew Mythodology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995) p. 159. The number of positive or negative sayings is different according to different scholars. For instance, like Kunin, Longacre believes that only the sayings to Reuben, Simeon and Levi are negative and all the others are positive. See Robert E. Longacre, *Joseph : A Story of Divine Providence : A Text Theoretical and Textlinguistic Analysis of Genesis 37 and 39-48* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1989), p. 53; On the other hand, Smith thinks that Jacob's review of Issachar, Dan, and Gad are negative. Smith, 'The Presentation of Judah in Genesis 37-50 and Its Implications for the Narrative's Structural and Thematic Unity', pp. 276-77. Smith also believes that Jacob's sayings on Issachar and Dan are harsh compared to that on Gad, who is comparatively less harshly assessed than them. For the proof of this, he presents Genesis 47:2, where that is, Joseph chooses five of his brothers and takes them before Pharaoh. However, we cannot see any verses which relate to these three sons.

[207] It seems that Kunin mistakes the blessing of Issachar as just one verse, but his blessing consists of two verses (Gen. 49:14-15).

These figures are 40 percent of the total number of 25 verses.[208] Second, Reuben, Simeon and Levi, the three elder brothers, are seen by Jacob from a negative point of view because those three brothers were cursed due to their wrong deeds (Gen. 34:25; 35:22).[209] They each have weak points and it appears that Jacob considers these things.[210] This results in their loss of rights as elder sons. These sayings could actually be called 'anti-blessings',[211] although the narrator indicates the words of Jacob as 'blessing' (בָּרַךְ Gen 49:28). Third, the sayings of Simeon and Levi are linked together.[212] This tells us that Jacob evaluates them equally. Finally, the order of Jacob's blessing shows 'a chiastic pattern' by the sons' mothers.[213] That is to say, these are Leah (Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun), Bilhah-Zilpah (Dan and Gad) Zilpah-Bilhah (Asher and Naphtali), Rachel (Joseph and Benjamin); ABB′A′. This is because Leah and Rachel are Jacob's legal wives and Bilhah and Zilpah are concubines. It seems that the birth order of the brothers is slightly altered for the sake of the chiastic pattern; the birth order of the first four sons (Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah) and the last two sons (Joseph and Benjamin) is correct, but the others (Zebulun, Issachar, Dan, Gad, Asher, and Naphtali) have their birth sequence altered.[214]

So far, it has usually been argued that there are two ways to read Genesis 49:8-12.

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[208] Longacre, *Joseph: A Story of Divine Providence*, p. 53.

[209] Reuben's behaviour, as a firstborn, sleeping with his father's concubine reminds us of Absalom as a firstborn of King David who lies with his father's concubines (2 Sam. 16:21-22). This results in 'an importunate claim on the status of the head of the family'. Brett, *Genesis: Procreation and the Politics of Identity*, p. 133.

[210] 'Now at the point of death, Jacob assumes an almost omniscient point of view, as he sees the future emerging from the past...Reuben–the first of Jacob's procreative strength–is no longer first because he "went up" to his father's bed in a premature attempt to assume the rights of primogeniture and the role of the father (cf. 35:22). Simeon and Levi are strong in anger, with implements of violence (their "cutters/cutting" perhaps punning on the cutting of covenant by the cutting of foreskins in 34:13-31) that resulted in the slaying of Shechem and Hamor (the man and the ox of 49:6?) with the "edge of the sword".' Ackerman, 'Joseph, Judah, and Jacob', pp. 109-10; Good says, 'The first two blessings refer back to incidents narrated earlier in Genesis. that on Reuben to the incident of 35:22, that on Simeon and Levi to the incident of ch. 34.' Edwin M. Good, 'The "Blessing" on Judah, Gen 49:8-12', *JBL* 82 (1963), pp. 427-32 (429); Brodie states, 'The three eldest sons, Reuben, Simeon, and Levi, are dealt with quickly (49:3-7). No leadership is accorded to them, basically because of incidents related to sex and violence', in *Genesis as Dialogue: A Literary, Historical, and Theological Commentary*, p. 412; See also Calum M. Carmichael, 'Some Sayings in Genesis 49', *JBL* 88 (1969), pp. 435-44 (435).

[211] Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary*, p. 603.

[212] Coats, *Genesis, with an Introduction to Narrative Literature*, p. 308.

[213] Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary*, p. 603.

[214] According to Gen. 29:31-30:24, the list of the birth order of Jacob's sons is as follows: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, and Joseph. However, the name Benjamin, the youngest son, is not mentioned here.

Firstly, some scholars such as Edwin M. Good and Calum M. Carmichael believe that vv. 8-12 are closely related to the behaviour of Judah in chapter 37 and 38 so that the saying of Jacob to Judah is to be understood as irony or as a reprimand.[215] Secondly, a contrary view put forward by Victor P. Hamilton suggests that because vv. 8-12 do not refer to the events in chapters 37 and 38, it is possible to say that Judah has not been assessed with regard to the previous events in his life in chapter 49.[216] For this reason, Hamilton raises some queries: 'Why is [Gen.] 49:8-12 so roundabout in its recall of chs. 37-38, when 49:3-7 were so unmistakably direct? If Judah's previous actions are now being decried by Jacob, why is there no simple "you sold your brother" or "you went into your daughter-in-law"?'[217] These two arguments hinge on whether the saying of Jacob in Genesis 49:8-12 indicates a negative point of view towards Judah or not.

Gary A. Rendsburg, however, who attempts to connect King David to Genesis 38 and 49, maintains that '...it [Gen. 49] is a fitting parallel to [Gen.] 38:1-30 which deals with Judah's life in the same country'[218] and '...[Gen.] 49:8-10 is a clear reference to Judah's role as a kingly tribe.'[219] Rendsburg notes that Genesis 49:8-12 contains 'ten theme-words',[220] which have echoes in chapter 38. He presents some parallel words between the two chapters as detailed below:

i. The key to seeing the blessing to Judah as a reference to 38:1-30 is the similarity between שִׁילֹה, traditionally rendered 'Shiloh,' in 49:10, and שֵׁלָה, 'Shelah,' in 38:5, 38:11, 38:14, 38:26.

ii. The שֵׁבֶט, 'sceptre,' shall not depart from Judah in 49:10, just as Judah's מַטֶּה, 'staff,' was handed to Tamar in 38:18 and used as evidence against him in 38:25.

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[215] Good, 'The "Blessing" on Judah, Gen. 49:8-12', pp. 427-32; Carmichael, 'Some Sayings in Genesis 49', pp. 435-44.

[216] Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18-50* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1995), p. 657.

[217] Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18-50*, p. 657.

[218] Gary A. Rendsburg, *The Redaction of Genesis* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1986), p. 83.

[219] Rendsburg, *The Redaction of Genesis*, p. 114. See also his article 'David and His Circle in Genesis XXXVIII', *VT* 36 (1986), pp. 438-46.

[220] Scholars who believe that Gen. 49:8-12 alludes to Genesis 38 are as follows: Good, 'The "Blessing" on Judah, Gen 49:8-12', pp. 427-32; Carmichael, 'Some Sayings in Genesis 49', pp. 435-44; Ackerman, 'Joseph, Judah and Jacob', pp. 85-113; Rendsburg, *The Redaction of Genesis*, pp. 84-86.

iii. A sexual connotation can certainly be read into מְחֹקֵק מִבֵּין רַגְלָיו, 'the staff between his legs,' in 49:10, and allied to Judah's visiting a prostitute in 38:15-19.

iv. עִירֹה, 'his donkey,' in 49:11, evokes עֵר, 'Er,' Judah's first son in 38:3, 38:6, 38:7.

v. Similarly, בְּנִי אֲתֹנוֹ, 'son of his she-ass,' in 49:11, brings to mind אוֹנָן, 'Onan,' Judah's second son in 38:4, 38:8, 38:9.

vi. שֹׂרֵקָה, 'vine, stock,' in 49:11, alludes to the valley of Soreq, which recalls Timnah in 38:12-13.

vii. The verbal root סור in the Qal, 'depart,' appears in 49:10; and in the Hiphil, 'remove,' it occurs in 38:14, 38:19.

viii. יָבֹא, 'he comes,' in 49:10, suggests וַיָּבֹא, 'he came,' in 38:18.

ix. סוּתֹה, 'his robe,' in 49:11, is not etymologically related to כִּסְּתָה, 'she covered,' in 38:15, but they share three consonants, sound alike, and both convey the idea of clothing.

x. The root לבש, 'clothe,' appears in both 49:11 and 38:19.[221]

It is obvious that these parallels are not coincidental, although some do not represent solid proof. David M. Carr also has acknowledged that 'the Judah–focused material in Genesis 38 and 49:1b-28 is part of a broader compositional level spanning the Jacob-Joseph story'.[222] To be sure, Rendsburg's contribution is that he could see chapters 38 and 49 have various linguistic connections. However, he regards these as interludes on the grounds that they can be labelled 'Joseph not present' (Gen. 38:1-30) and 'Joseph nominally present' (Gen. 49:1-29). But this emphasis on Joseph is not enough because both chapters certainly focus on Judah as the leading character. Thus, we can see that Rendsburg is just following the lead of diachronic source critics. Westermann, for instance, insists that chapter 49 belongs to the period of the Judges comparing it to 'the Blessing of Moses' (Deut. 33) and 'the Song of Deborah' (Judg. 5:14-18). He also thinks that Genesis 49:8-12 is not a blessing for Judah but rather is to be understood eschatologically.[223] Therefore, he states that, 'Vv. 8-12 do not form a continuous whole.'[224]

It should be noted, however, that we can only read the fact that Judah, the fourth son, is one of the two most favoured sons of Jacob from the blessings in Genesis 49. Particularly,

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[221] Rendsburg, *The Redaction of Genesis*, pp. 84-85.
[222] David M. Carr, *Reading the Fractures of Genesis: Historical and Literary Approaches* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), p.252.
[223] Westermann, *Genesis 37-50: A Commentary*, pp. 220-21, 32.
[224] Westermann, *Genesis 37-50: A Commentary*, p. 227.

the character of Judah has been developed dynamically in a wider context through Genesis 37 to 50. Therefore, as Ackerman remarks,[225] apart from his thoughts about his three elder sons, Jacob might have to reflect on Judah's mistakes carefully and he also could not but accept the fact that it was Judah who led Jacob into Egypt and enabled him to meet Joseph. Thus, it is probable that Judah should be worthy of the blessing in Genesis 49:8-12.[226] In the same context, Brodie also points out that 'Judah (49:8-12) stands out in both quantity – five verses – and content…despite sinfulness, he had shown both repentance and leadership (37:26-27; chap. 38; 43:8-10; 44:14-34; 46:28)'.[227] Ackerman also says:

> Judah is a main character in the Joseph story,…Judah played a leading role in selling his brother into bondage; yet he becomes the key to a positive resolution of the plot. He convinces Jacob to send Benjamin to Egypt and then helps Joseph understand the meaning of his dreams when he describes Jacob's distress and offers to remain in Egypt in Benjamin's stead.[228]

As can be seen above, several aspects of the role of Judah become clear in the larger narrative; the story of Jacob and his sons, Genesis 37 to 50 as opposed to in Genesis 38 itself: beginning (ch. 37), development (ch. 38), crisis (ch. 43-44), climax (ch. 46:28), and conclusion (ch. 49). David W. Cotter properly evaluates Judah as well:

> Judah: This fourth son has proved the most trustworthy. He attempted to save Joseph's life and acted to protect Benjamin. He was schooled in justice by Tamar, his daughter-in-law who bore twins to him, and he will become the ancestor of the royal house of Israel. David and all the kings descended from him were heirs of Judah. In his strength he is likened to a young lion, victorious in the hunt.[229]

So, what does it mean to the reader that the blessing of Jacob to Judah is considered to be one

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[225] 'Is it possible that, in his last words on Judah, Jacob is playfully pondering a son's foibles that led to blessing?' See Ackerman, 'Joseph, Judah and Jacob', p. 110.

[226] Amit, *Reading Biblical Narratives: Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible*, p.146.

[227] Brodie, Genesis As Dialogue: A Literary, Historical and Theological Commentary, p. 412.

[228] Ackerman, 'Joseph, Judah, and Jacob', p. 110.

[229] David W. Cotter, *Berit Olam Studies in Hebrew Narrative & Poetry: Genesis* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2003), p. 326.

of the most favoured sayings?

Conventionally, it has usually been said that Genesis 37-50 is 'the story of Joseph'. From this point of view, it may not be strange that the level of praise in Joseph's blessing stands out from those of the other brothers. Joseph's blessing is slightly longer than Judah's, even though the number of verses in the blessings for both characters is the same.[230] Nevertheless, the blessing for Judah cannot just be disregarded because a few keywords are full of meaning; including lion's whelp (גּוּר אַרְיֵה), scepter (שֵׁבֶט), and ruler's staff (חֹקֵק). The contents of the blessing for Judah, in effect, are even superior to Joseph's at least in the use of these terms. These contents remind us of kings because a lion's whelp could represent bravery, an important attribute of a leader, and a scepter and a ruler's staff point to royal authority.

Recently Friedemann W. Golka has linked chapters 38 and 49 by means of accepting the findings of source critics and acknowledges that the first is about transforming Judah into an equal with Joseph, while the other 'even goes one step further'.[231] Although I do not accept the notion of independent sources for the present shape of chapters 38 and 49, as is argued by source critics, I strongly agree with his opinion that these two chapters are meaningful to Judah in a positive way. Lambe maintains that the development of Judah's character in Genesis 38 is:

> crucial to the family's destiny and this is why Judah is given the most intense and promising blessing by his father in ch. 49: 'The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet' (49.10). The mention of the scepter or staff evokes the staff that temporarily departed from Judah's hand in Genesis 38 before being returned by Tamar. Jacob's words verify that it shall never depart again. The staff not only interconnects the stories but also suggests the pre-eminence of Judah's line as that which will survive and ensure survival.[232]

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[230] The Hebrew for the blessing of Judah uses fifty-five words and this is the second longest in chapter 49, whereas the Hebrew for Joseph's consists of sixty-one words.

[231] 'Judah is the heir of the spiritual blessing, Joseph of the worldly.' Friedemann W. Golka, 'Genesis 37-50: Joseph Story or *Israel*-Joseph Story?', *CRBS* 2.2 (2004), pp. 153-77, especially p. 160; '...The present form of Genesis 38 and 49:1b-28 are dependent on their context, the core traditions behind texts seem to have been originally independent of the Joseph story.' Carr, *Reading the Fractures of Genesis: Historical and Literary Approaches*, p. 250.

[232] Lambe, 'Judah's Development: The Pattern of Departure – Transition – Return', p. 67.

Now, let us look at the blessings of Judah and Joseph in chapter 49 comparatively:

> 'Judah, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons shall bow down before you. Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He crouches down, he stretches out like a lion, like a lioness – who dares rouse him up? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute [שִׁילֹה] comes to him; and the obedience of the peoples is his. Binding his foal to the vine and his donkey's colt to the choice vine, he washes his garments in wine and his robe in the blood of grapes; his eyes are darker than wine, and his teeth whiter than milk. (Gen. 49:8-12 NRSV)

> 'Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a spring; his branches run over the wall. The archers fiercely attacked him; they shot at him and pressed him hard. Yet his bow remained taut, and his arms were made agile by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob, by the name of the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel, by the God of your father, who will help you, by the Almighty who will bless you with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies beneath, blessings of the breasts and of the womb. The blessings of your father are stronger than the blessings of the eternal mountains, the bounties of the everlasting hills; may they be on the head of Joseph, on the brow of him who was set apart from his brothers. (Gen. 49:22-26 NRSV)

In considering the two blessings of Judah and Joseph, we can again raise several questions with Kim in reference to the role of the characters in the text; 'Why are Jacob's words to Judah and Joseph's sayings (five verses each) longer than his words to the other brothers in their blessings? Can we examine these two particular blessings as a clue to resolving the above-mentioned problem [the problem of the *Sitz im Leben* of the sayings and the disputed unity of the chapter] in the blessing of Jacob?....Can the Judah blessing be explained in terms of his positive and negative roles in Canaan and Egypt in relation to chs. 37-44?'[233] Answers to these questions may bear a close relationship to the reason why Jacob's blessings of Judah and Joseph make them more important than the other brothers and why the chapter needs to be linked to the larger context of the 'Story of Jacob and his sons' (Gen. 37-50).

Nonetheless, some critics have insisted that Jacob's blessing of Judah looks fake. For example, Good believes that the Judah blessing in verse 8 has no connection to the rest of the section because 'this laudatory opening is a late insertion' while the rest of the verses are

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[233] Kim, *Judah's Role in Joseph's (?) Story*, pp. 72-73.

different in the context of the contents.[234] Then Good makes the following concluding remark in his article, 'the whole "blessing" on Judah turns out to be an ironic reflection on Judah's misdeeds in two earlier incidents [Gen. 37 and 38]...Actually the only tribe unambiguously lauded in the whole passage is Joseph,'[235] Similarly, Carmichael suggests a negative implication.[236] However, it should be pointed out that all they do is merely confined to chapters 37 and 38, and they do not take chapters 43 and 44 into consideration in order to see how Judah's character develops in the perspective of the larger narrative. Kim argues that these five verses are representative of each of Judah's various roles in the previous chapters. He describes Judah's roles in verses 8-12 as follows: v. 8 is the blessing of Judah as a praised brother, v. 9 is the blessing of Judah as a brave son, v. 10 is the blessing of Judah as a leader, and v. 11 and v. 12 are the blessing of Judah as a father.[237]

Furthermore, neither Good nor Carmichael explain why the author allocates the same number of verses to Judah's blessing as he does to Joseph's. They also give no indication of what the 'irony' is, and what it has been used for or whether this may be a sort of literary device for the reader or not. If the Judah blessing is ironic, why did the narrator write it down in detail as it is? It is clear, finally, that Jacob's sayings are presented as positive because at the end of the blessing the narrator alludes to them as 'blessings' twice in Gen. 49:28 (כָּל־אֵלֶּה שִׁבְטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁנֵים עָשָׂר וְזֹאת אֲשֶׁר־דִּבֶּר לָהֶם אֲבִיהֶם וַיְבָרֶךְ אוֹתָם אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר כְּבִרְכָתוֹ בֵּרַךְ אֹתָם:).[238] This suggests that Good's and Carmichael's views are wrong and Jacob's blessing for Judah should not be regarded as ironic.

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[234] Good, 'The "Blessing" on Judah, Gen 49:8-12', p. 428; Westermann insists that the three occurrences of the name Judah within five of the verses are each separate and independent because the chapter presupposes the period of judges in the land of Canaan. He goes on, 'Vv. 8-12 do not form a continuous whole; the text cannot be described as the "Judah' saying"' in *Genesis 37-50: A Commentary*, pp. 220-27. See especially p. 227 for the direct quote.

[235] Good, 'The "Blessing" on Judah, Gen 49:8-12', p. 432.

[236] Carmichael accepts Good's suggestion that the laudatory speech in verse 8 is irony, and in addition analyses some Hebrew expressions in relation to chapters 37 and 38. However, it seems that he missed the fact that the contents of Jacob's blessing contain not only things from chapters 37 and 38, but also chapters 43, 44 and 46. See Carmichael, 'Some Sayings in Genesis 49', p. 438.

[237] Kim, *Judah's Role in Joseph's (?) Story*, pp. 73-86.

[238] Brodie also supports this view, 'If chapter 49 is defined by its beginning then it is simply a testament, and it consists of sayings. It appears appropriate, amid the complexity, to accept the author's own designation (49:28): Jacob's words are primarily blessings,' in his book, *Genesis as Dialogue: A Literary, Historical, and Theological Commentary*, p. 407.

What is more, Smith, who draws parallels between Joseph and Judah in terms of their relationship to Jacob, suggests 'the theme of the reversal of the favoritism' within Jacob's family.[239] The reversal of favouritism is expressed in a symmetrical structure as follows:

A Genesis 37:3 – Jacob loves Joseph more than the other sons due to favouritism toward Rachel over Leah (cf. 42:38; 44:20)
B Genesis 37:4, 14 – Jacob sends Joseph to the brothers as Jacob's favoured information-gatherer
C Genesis 37:5-10 – God favours Joseph by giving him dreams of supremacy
C' Genesis 49:8 – God favours Judah by giving him the promise of supremacy
B' Genesis 46:28 – Jacob sends Judah to Goshen as Jacob's favoured information-gatherer
A' Genesis 49:29-33 – Jacob longs for burial with Leah, Judah's mother, and not Rachel, thereby reversing the favoritism

The symmetrical pattern ABCC'B'A' shows us the structure of favouritism by Jacob (ABB'A') and God (CC'). The subject of A-B is Jacob, who loves Joseph, but the object of B'A' is altered to Judah. God in C-C', as a subject, favours Joseph and Judah in turn in Genesis 37:5-10 and 49:8. However, in this part God as a character does not exist. Smith's approach is rather theological. It may be that the motivation behind the changing of favouritism from Joseph to Judah is due to the events in Genesis 38, 43, and 44 with relation to the development of Judah's character. These chapters are located between ABC and C'B'A'. In particular, the scene of Judah's confession to Tamar (Gen. 38:26), the petition of Judah to his father Jacob to bring Benjamin to Egypt (Gen. 43:1-14), and the plea of Judah before the Egyptian governor to take Benjamin back to his father (Gen. 44:14-34) hold crucial positions in the 'Story of Jacob and his Sons' as a whole.[240]

To be sure, as Ackerman writes, '...He [Judah] and Joseph are the two people whose

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[239] Smith, 'The Central Role of Judah in Genesis 37-50', pp. 162-63.

[240] '...He [Judah] had shown both repentance and leadership (37:26-27; chap. 38; 43:8-10; 44:14-34; 46:28) It is not surprising, therefore, that the praise comes not from his mother but from his brothers; "Judah (are) you, your brothers praise you".' Brodie, *Genesis as Dialogue: A Literary, Historical, and Theological Commentary*, p. 412; for my argument on the literary structure of the 'Story of Jacob and his Sons', see section 5.3.3. of this thesis.

development is most clearly documented.'[241] In this respect, it is simply a textual fact that Judah is a main character along with Joseph from Genesis 37 to 50. Of course, even though Judah does not appear as a speaker in the scenes after chapter 45, it should be admitted, in effect, that his influence continues up to Genesis 49 where he is evaluated highly among his brothers.[242] Therefore, we can read from the text that the title of the Judah blessing in Genesis 49:8-12 should be *Judah as the most blessed.* In other words, Judah's significance does not come from his being Joseph's brother, but because he is truly one of Jacob's favoured sons.[243]

3.5. Concluding Remarks: Judah's Character Development and Its Significance

The so-called Joseph story which conventionally is taken to run from Genesis 37 to 50 still tells us that pivotal characters such as Jacob[244] and Judah have key tasks in general scenes and are not confined to only one narrative. For instance, Jacob is introduced in Genesis 37:2 and his name leads off this unit in the heading 'the generations (תּוֹלְדוֹת) of Jacob'.[245] Additionally, Genesis 46 reads Jacob took his sons to Egypt as a leader of his family and he blesses his twelve sons (Gen. 49: 1-28) and two grandsons: Manasseh and Ephraim (Gen. 48), but he reversed his benediction of them making Ephraim, rather than Manasseh, the elder.[246] In this respect, Jacob is not simply a minor character but close to being the main character in the last

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[241] Ackerman, 'Joseph, Judah and Jacob', p. 110.

[242] 'Throughout Genesis 42-44, Judah expressed deep concern for several problems in his family, and he demonstrated that he was willing to suffer great personal loss so that this family would not suffer any more damage than it already had.' See Smith, *The Presentation of Judah in Genesis 37-50 and Its Implications for the Narrative's Structural and Thematic Unity*, p. 153.

[243] The New Testament begins with a statement with relation to Judah: 'Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron..., and Jesse the father of King David...and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah.' (Mt. 1:2-6, 16 NRSV)

[244] Wesselius points out there are two instances of chapters that clearly interrupt the Joseph narrative. These are Genesis 38 and 49. Jan-Wim Wesselius, *The Origin of the History of Israel: Herodotus's Histories as Blueprint for the First Books of the Bible* (JSOTSup, 345; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), p. 8.

[245] Mathewson regards Genesis 38 as a part of the story of Jacob. Steven D. Mathewson, 'An Exegetical Study of Genesis 38', *BSa* 146 (1989), pp. 373-92 (385); The genealogical register in the book of Genesis occurs five times as an introduction Gen. 5:1 (Adam); 10:1 (Shem, Ham and Japheth); 11:10 (Shem); 25:19 (Isaac) and 36:1 (Esau), and five times as a heading to an act or cycle (Gen. 2:4; 6:9 (Noah); 11:27 (Terah); 25:12 (Ishmael), and 37:2 (Jacob), and 2:4a is the only exception where it is transferred to the epilogue of the Creation story. Jan P. Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Narrative: An Introductory Guide* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), pp. 158-59.

[246] These repeated patterns with relation to the benediction for sons appear as parallels between Esau and Jacob (Gen. 27), between Perez and Zerah (Gen. 38:27-30).

part of Genesis as a whole.[247]

In the meantime, Judah's position as a true main character increases and is reinforced continuously throughout the 'Story of Jacob and his Sons',[248] including Genesis 38. It is clear that the character of Judah, as Lambe has aptly observed, is revealed through the structural pattern of 'departure-transition-return' in Genesis 37-50.[249] He observes that Judah's important place is as spokesman for the family in the Joseph story,[250] and his experience with Tamar in Genesis 38 is crucial in the development of his character. Lockwood also claims, 'The change in Judah that occurs in chapter 38, culminating in his confession of sin and guilt (v. 36[26]), provides a pointer to what will occur in the Joseph cycle at large.'[251] In relation to this, Clifford presents the meaning of the expression צָדְקָה מִמֶּנִּי in verse 26 as 'She is righteous, not I' rather than 'She is more righteous than I' (KJV, RSV, and NIV) or 'more in the right than I' (NRSV, NAB, and NJPSV).[252] As a result, the announcement 'is a recognition by Judah that Tamar carried out the divine purpose of propagating Judah's family...it is a humble acknowledgment of his sin, especially of his refusal to give Tamar to Shelah in levirate marriage'.[253] If we accept these views, the confession of Judah in Genesis 38:26 is a turning point in his character. However, as Lambe and Lockwood insist, the problem that the title conventionally given to Genesis 37-50 is 'the Joseph story' or 'the Jacob story' needs to

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[247] Of course, the account of his story as an active main character already begins with Genesis 25.

[248] Mathewson, 'An Exegetical Study of Genesis 38', p. 385; Clifford also insists that chapter 38 fits within the history of Jacob's sons, showing how one son, despite his serious sins, retains God's favour and establishes a major tribe in Israel. Richard J. Clifford, 'Genesis 38: Its Contribution to the Jacob Story', *CBQ* 66 (2004), pp. 519-32 (522); in the narrative perspective, the two stories (Judah-Tamar and Joseph) should not only be read separately but should also be read together as one unit; Coats denotes Gen. 37-50 as, 'The Jacob Saga as a Whole' and he makes the Joseph story (Gen. 37:1-36; 39:1-47:27) a section of the whole Jacob story. He also entitles Gen. 50:15-21 the 'Recapitulation of Joseph story Denouement' and includes it in 'The Individual Units.' Coats, *Genesis, with an Introduction to Narrative Literature*, pp. 259, 263, 311; in his another article, Coats argues that the unit of narrative in Gen. 37-50 is 'united around Jacob and his sons'. *idem*, 'Redactional Unity in Genesis 37-50', *JBL* 93 (1974): 15-21 (15); Fretheim calls Gen. 37:1-50:26 'Joseph, Judah, and Jacob's Family'. See Terence E. Fretheim, 'The Book of Genesis', *NIB*, vol. I (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), pp. 333-34.

[249] Lambe, 'Judah's Development: The Pattern of Departure – Transition – Return', pp. 53-68; Ackerman also argues that Judah undergoes a transformation in Genesis 38 and he is different from the way he appeared in Genesis 37. Ackerman, 'Joseph, Judah, and Jacob', pp. 85-113; cf. Gary E. Schnitter, *The Torah Story: An Apprenticeship on the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2006), pp. 157-71 (167-70).

[250] Clifford says, 'Judah, displacing his biologically older brothers Reuben, Simeon, and Levi, will come to speak and act authoritatively for the whole family (43:3, 8; 44:16-34; 46:28; 49:8-10),' in 'Genesis 38: Its Contribution to the Joseph Story', p. 522.

[251] Peter E. Lockwood, 'Tamar's Place in the Joseph Cycle', *LTJ* 26 (1992), pp. 35-43 (40).

[252] Clifford, 'Genesis 38: Its Contribution to the Joseph Story', p. 530.

[253] Clifford, 'Genesis 38: Its Contribution to the Joseph Story', p. 531.

be disputed because Judah is also one of main characters in the story. I will deal with the issue of the most appropriate title for this unit in chapter 5.3.3.

Anyway, Judah's character pervades Genesis 37-50. He comes on stage together with Joseph in Genesis 37. While Judah assists his brothers in selling Joseph to the Midianite merchants (Gen. 37:26) and in chapter 38 his actions are damaging to Tamar, he has an opportunity to change his character.[254] What is more, when Simeon is detained by the orders of Joseph their brother, second-in-command to the pharaoh of Egypt (Gen. 42:24), it is Judah who persuades Jacob his father to allow Benjamin to travel with them (Gen. 43:8-10). In the event, when Joseph announces his intention to retain his younger brother Benjamin, Judah is the one who makes an unusually lengthy speech to petition Joseph (Gen. 44:16-34). Judah would rather become a slave himself in place of Benjamin (Gen. 44:33). For that reason, Joseph reveals himself to the brothers at last. Finally, 'Judah is the one entrusted by his father to get directions from Joseph for the journey to Goshen (46:28).'[255] Therefore, it is Judah who imperils Joseph and separates him from his father Jacob at the very outset, but also Judah who arranges for them to meet each other in Egypt. This is an 'internal transformation' for Judah and 'his turnabout is total'.[256] Clifford says that 'Judah's conversion is a paradigm'.[257] As a matter of fact, none of the brothers is as dynamic a character as Judah. It is clear that Judah's transition is as dramatic as Joseph's life.

Accordingly, we can see that Judah is a vital character in the larger narrative of Genesis and within the context of the 'Story of Jacob and his Sons' in Genesis. Judah emerges clearly as a vivid character (Gen. 37:26-27; 38; 43:8-10; 44:14-34; 46:28; 49:8-12), and he has an experience of conversion and development (Gen. 43:3-10; 44:14-34). After all, he is

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[254] With reference to Judah's confession to Tamar, see Mary E. Shields, '"More Righteous than I": The Comeuppance of the Trickster in Genesis 38', in Athalya Brenna (ed.), *Are we Amused?: Humour About Women in the Biblical Worlds* (JSOTSup, 383; London: T & T Clark International, 2003), pp. 31-51.

[255] T. Desmond Alexander, 'Form Adam to Judah: The Significance of the Family Tree in Genesis', *EvQ* 61.1 (1989), pp. 5-19 (13).

[256] However, Lockwood says that Judah's transformation in Genesis 38:26 is not perfect. See Lockwood, 'Tamar's Place in the Joseph Cycle', pp. 40-42.

[257] Clifford, 'Genesis 38: Its Contribution to the Jacob Story', p. 532.

appointed as leader of his family in the blessing of Jacob (Gen. 49:8-12)[258] and the contents of the blessing are different from Joseph's (Gen. 49:22-26). Furthermore, Jacob died after blessing his twelve sons in chapter 49 and the account of Joseph's death is presented in Genesis 50:22-26. But there is no mention of Judah's death in the book of Genesis. From this, we can draw an inference that his influence as a character in the major narrative and even up to the Primary Narrative (Genesis – 2 Kings) needs to be extended continuously because the largest narrative of the Hebrew Bible 'in its own artistic way, was well planned'.[259] Regarding the narrative's plot, a character should be evaluated finally in the largest context of the narrative. In the light of this consideration, it should be remembered that the traditional Joseph story including the Judah-Tamar narrative are part of a meta-narrative. The narrator needs more than the narrow aspect of the shorter story to develop a character, so any character that straddles more than one episode in the larger narrative can only be seen fully rounded once all of their appearances have been taken into consideration. In relation to the narrator and characters, Alter poses several appropriate questions as follows:

> Why, then, does the narrator ascribe motives to or designate states of feeling in his characters in some instances, while elsewhere he chooses to remain silent on these points?....Why is actual dialogue introduced at certain junctures, and on what principle of selectivity are specific words assigned to characters? In a text so sparing in epithets and relational designations, why are particular identifications of characters noted by the narrator at specific points in the story?[260]

His suggestions are essential for understanding the relationship between the narrator and the characters in the narrative. The characters are employed by the narrator intentionally and systematically.[261] This means that interaction between narrator and characters in the text is very important and contributes meaningfully to the reader's understanding of the text.

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[258] Brodie, *Genesis as Dialogue: A Literary, History and Theological Commentary*, p. 352; 'The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and the obedience of the peoples is his.' (Gen. 49:10 NRSV)

[259] Brodie, *Genesis as Dialogue: A Literary, History and Theological Commentary*, p. 413.

[260] Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, pp. 20-21.

[261] Fokkelman, 'The Narrator and His Characters', in *Reading Biblical Narrative: An Introductory Guide*, pp. 55-72 (56).

Again, in the case of Judah's and Jacob's characters, the narrator implies that their roles go beyond the boundaries of the so-called 'Joseph cycle',[262] unlike Joseph's. Subsequently, looking back on Genesis 38, we can conclude that Judah's character is not fully developed in the smaller narrative, but as leader of his brothers and an heir of Jacob he is the essential character in the larger narrative which goes beyond the book of Genesis. After the Israelites occupied Canaan, Judah became a forefather of a great community, the tribe of Judah and finally shared his name with the Southern Kingdom, Judah (931 – 586 BCE).[263] In addition, King David is the outstanding figure from the tribe of Judah (2 Sam. 2:4). That is to say, his name, Judah, is used as the honourable name of the Kingdom as well as being a tribal eponym. Indeed, Judah is altered through the event with Tamar in Genesis 38:26 and his character is opened as a leader to the brothers in the book of Genesis. This could be called a dramatic change in his role. Moreover, we cannot deny that Judah is a crucial patriarch in the history of Israel, whose tribe allows his name to be immortalised in the land, including Jerusalem, and whose lineage finally extends as far as King David. If one has any intention of understanding Genesis 38, these results should not be ignored.

In this chapter, we have debated Judah's character on both the micro level in Genesis 38 and the macro level in Genesis 37 to 50. In order to understand the character as a whole, Judah should not be judged solely on his actions and words in chapter 38. The story of Judah is active and lively just as the stories of his father Jacob and his brother Joseph are in the larger context. These two levels of Judah's story are intimately related to the development of his character in the same way as working out a puzzle game. For this reason, it is exactly right that, as T. Desmond Alexander puts it, 'Although Joseph is by far the most important character in the final chapters of Genesis, the part played by Judah should not be

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[262] Wenham states that Genesis 37-50 is 'the second half of the Jacob story, which begins in [Gen.] 25:19'. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, pp. xxvi.

[263] Siegfried H. Horn, 'The Davided Monarchy: The Kingdoms of Judah and Israel', in Hershel Shanks, (ed.), *Ancient Israel from Abraham to the Roman Destruction of the Temple* (N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1999), pp. 129-99.

overlooked.'[264] Judah's role could be extended outside Genesis and into the Primary Narrative through his descendants and the occurrences of his name as the name of a tribe and a place name. However, there is no room in this thesis to extend both main characters into the Primary Narrartive. We have chosen, therefore, to show how the less likely of the two main characters in Genesis 38, Tamar, reaches into the Primary Narrative in more detail in chapter 6.

The following chapter will deal with the character of Tamar, daughter-in-law of Judah. This is because the role of Tamar is also significant along with Judah's in the building of their new family.

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[264] Alexander, 'From Adam to Judah: The Significance of the Family Tree in Genesis', p. 13.

Chapter 4

Literary Analysis of Tamar's Character

The righteous will flourish like the palm tree [תָּמָר,Tamar], and grow like a cedar in Lebanon. (Ps. 92:12 NRSV [MT 92:13])

4.1. Introduction

In the preceding chapter we have discussed the character of Judah from micro- and macro-perspectives; that is in the Judah-Tamar story in Genesis 38 and in the 'Story of Jacob and his Sons' from Genesis 37 to 50. If the story has been illuminated from the perspective of Judah's character, it is essential to note that, as Nelly Furman points out, the episode in Genesis 38 is 'her story' as well as 'his story'.[1] That is to say, 'One piece of clothing, two stories. His [Judah] story versus her [Tamar] story.'[2] Even though Tamar only appears in Genesis 38, her significance in the story may be greater than we might expect. In order to bring this significance out, in this chapter Tamar's character in Genesis 38, as Judah's sparring partner and one of the focal characters of the chapter alongside Judah, will be examined. This chapter will commence by looking at Tamar's character from the point of view of the structure of chapter 38 and will then explore the character of Tamar in the immediate context of Genesis 38. After that, I shall argue the significance of Tamar's character from a literary perspective. The following research on the characterisation of Tamar will enable readers to keep a balance and read the story from the point of view of both genders.

4.2. Tamar's Character in Genesis 38

So far, Judah has usually been regarded as the chief character in Genesis 38,[3] but recently,

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[1] Nelly Furman, 'His Story versus Her Story: Male Genealogy and Female Strategy in the Jacob Cycle', in Miri Amihai *et al.* (eds.), *Narrative Research on the Hebrew Bible* (Semeia 46; Atlanta: SBL, 1989), pp. 141-49.

[2] Furman, 'His Story versus Her Story: Male Genealogy and Female Strategy in the Jacob Cycle', p. 142.

[3] This tendency mostly appears among historico-critical authors, but quite a few literary critics accept this as well. For instance, Lambe, one of the literary scholars, insists on the development of Judah's character in the

supported by some feminist scholars, it seems that the emphasis is changing to Tamar[4] and much attention has been paid to Tamar's literary characterisation.[5] Above all, it is arguable that the number of passages about Tamar might entitle her to be called the main character in the case of chapter 38, as the reader comes to recreate a character from the narrative with the information provided.[6]

In relation to the viewpoint of the narrator and the character, the structure of Genesis 38 can be examined in several ways. First, on the basis of the Tamar and Judah characters: if Genesis 38 is divided into three broad sections (vv. 1-12, 13-26, 27-30), at the beginning of the narrative there are mainly references to Judah who builds his own family (vv.1-12), but in the next scene the focus is altered to Tamar (vv. 13-14). This, in effect, extends up to verse 26 until the finishing statements of the narrator from verse 27 to the end (v. 30). Second, the story is mainly depicted by the narrator both at the beginning and in the end scenes. In this respect, these portions are composed of the narrator as a storyteller and two main characters as the substantial subjects of the storyline: Narrator (vv. 1-7) – Judah (vv. 8-12) – Tamar (vv. 13-26)[7] – Narrator (vv. 27-30). Thus, it should be borne in mind that the portion allotted to the

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Joseph Cycle in Genesis 37-50. As a result, in Genesis 38, Judah is understood as a positive character as well as a main character. See Anthony J. Lambe, 'Judah's Development: The Pattern of Departure – Transition – Return', *JSOT* 83 (1999), pp. 53-68; *idem*, 'Genesis 38: Structure and Literary Design', in Philip R. Davies & David J.A. Clines (eds.), *The World of Genesis: Persons, Places, Perspectives* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), pp. 102-20.

[4] Susan Niditch, 'The Wronged Woman Righted: An Analysis of Genesis 38', *HTR* 72 (1979), pp. 143-49; Bal and van Dijk-Hemmes are examples of feminist studies on Tamar's literary characterisation. Mieke Bal, 'One Woman, Many Men, and the Dialectic of Chronology', in *Lethal Love: Feminist Literary Readings of Biblical Love Stories* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), pp. 89-103; Fokkelien van Dijk-Hemmes, 'Tamar and the Limits of Patriarchy: Between Rape and Seduction', in Mieke Bal (ed.), *Anti-Covenant: Counter-Reading Women's Lives in the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1989), pp. 135-56; Carol Smith, 'The Story of Tamar: A Power-filled Challenge to the Structures of Power', in George J. Brooke (ed.), *Women in the Biblical Tradition* (Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), pp. 16-28; Morimura Nobuko, 'The Story of Tamar: A Feminist Interpretation of Genesis 38', *JCR* 59 (1993), pp. 55-67; Nehama Aschkenasy, *Woman at the Window: Biblical Tales of Oppression and Escape* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998); Melissa Jackson, 'Lot's Daughters and Tamar as Tricksters and the Patriarchal Narratives as Feminist Theology', *JSOT* 98 (2002), pp. 29-46; Mary E. Shields, '"More Righteous than I": The Comeuppance of the Trickster in Genesis 38', in Athalya Brenner, (ed.), *Are we Amused?: Humour About Women in the Biblical Worlds* (JSOTSup, 383; London: T & T Clark International, 2003), pp. 31-51.

[5] Mieke Bal, *Lethal Love: Feminist Literary Readings of Biblical Love Stories*, pp. 89-103; van Dijk-Hemmes, 'Tamar and the Limits of Patriarchy: Between Rape and Seduction', pp. 135-56.

[6] Berlin says, 'The reader reconstructs a character from the information provided to him in the discourse: he is told by the statements and evaluations of the narrator and other characters, and he infers from the speech and action of the character himself.' Adele Berlin, *Politics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1994), p. 34.

[7] For further arguments on Tamar as a subject in this section, see subsections 4.3.3. to 4.3.5.

Tamar character is the biggest.

To be specific, the episode of Genesis 38 is composed of five scenes: vv. 1-5, 6-11, 12-19, 20-26, and 27-30. Firstly, after introducing Judah's family (vv. 1-5), the narrator describes Tamar from Judah's viewpoint as a daughter-in-law, who has lost two husbands and finally leaves to return to her father's house (vv. 6-11). The second section is shaped by the custom of the levirate law by which a widow should be given in marriage to her dead husband's brother. Next, scene three consists of verses 12-19. The first part, verses 12-14, includes information about how the situations of the two prime characters have changed since the second scene; that is, the death of Judah's wife and the chance for Tamar to meet Judah. Following this, the dialogue between Judah and Tamar (vv. 15-19) helps the plot progress, thanks to Tamar's scheme. Then, the fourth scene consists of verses 20-26. In the search for a prostitute, the subject of conversation between Judah and his friend the Adullamite is Tamar, even though they do not recognise this (vv. 20-23). About three months later, Judah is told that Tamar has become pregnant through prostitution and he has her taken before the people to be tried. However, Tamar offers the three pledges – signet (חוֹתָם), cord (פָּתִיל) and staff (מַטֶּה) – which were traded to her by Judah for sexual intercourse. In the end Judah has to confess his guilt in not giving his son Shelah to Tamar (vv. 24-26). Finally, through the progression of the middle scenes, the reader comes to know that all the successive events in Genesis 38 were thoroughly planned and executed by Tamar. Therefore, we reach the conclusion that the active character in vv. 13-26 is actually Tamar rather than Judah. Ultimately the last section, verses 27-30, contains information about Tamar giving birth to twins with the help of a midwife, but, significantly, there is no mention of Judah, who is father to the newborn babies, Perez and Zerah.

From this viewpoint, we are consequently made to see that the tone of Genesis 38, by and large, is predominantly characterised by Tamar and she can be called its 'heroine'.[8]

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[8] Rosenblum deals with the three Tamars of the Hebrew Bible: Tamar as heroine in Genesis 38, Tamar as victim in 2 Samuel 13, and Tamar as a reminder of the two faces of woman in 2 Samuel 14:27. See William I.

Despite the fact that Tamar may be a Canaanite (?) with outsider status,[9] as Frank Anthony Spina points out, she 'had a dramatic effect on the direction in which one prominent member of the elect family was headed'.[10] However, it is unnecessary to say that Judah, equally, is a decisive character in the chapter[11] because of his position in the larger narrative framework of Jacob and his sons (Gen. 37-50). Even so, we cannot deny that the relative importance of Tamar's character in Genesis 38 has a great meaningfulness to the reader.

Then, does this mean that Tamar's contribution to Genesis 38 is bigger than Judah's from the micro perspective? Furthermore, as many feminist scholars have asked, does the narrator intend to make Judah a brute or a villain? If we rush to identify Judah negatively, how can we connect his character to other chapters? We would have to face a severe contradiction with regards to Judah. Instead it would be better to say that what Judah confesses, that is, 'She is more in the right than I, since I did not give her to my son Shelah' (Gen. 38:26 NRSV) is close to acknowledging his fault to the audience as well as to Tamar. Thus, it is clear that Judah's deeds are immediately connected to the character of Tamar. In relation to Judah's deeds, some feminists such as Melissa Jackson argue that chapter 38 should be defined as belonging to a comic genre.[12] This may mean that the status of the two main characters changes; Judah's status is relegated to the bottom, whereas Tamar's is promoted to that of heroine.[13] Then, let us scrutinise the character of Tamar in the immediate context of Genesis 38.

Rosenblum, 'Tamar Times Three', *JBQ* 30 (2002), pp. 127-30.

[9] Although the narrator does not clearly indicate Tamar's origin, it is highly probable that Tamar came from Canaan because Judah married the daughter of a Canaanite man named Shua and got a wife for Er, his oldest son there (Gen. 38:2-6). However, what is more important is that the author only implies this.

[10] Frank Anthony Spina, 'Tamar's Resolve, Judah's Family, Israel's Future', in *The Faith of the Outsider: Exclusion and Inclusion in the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2005), pp. 35-51 (36).

[11] Nobuko believes that both Judah and Tamar are 'protagonists' in the central section (vv. 12-26). See Nobuko, 'The Story of Tamar: A Feminist Interpretation of Genesis 38', p. 57.

[12] Jackson, 'Lot's Daughters and Tamar as Tricksters and the Patriarchal Narratives as Feminist Theology', pp. 29-46.

[13] 'It [Gen. 38) is a subversive story, calling into question accepted elements of patriarchal behaviour.' Johanna W.H. Bos, 'An Eyeopener at the Gate: George Coats and Genesis 38', *LTQ* 27 (1992), pp. 119-23 (120).

4.3. The Immediate Context: Literary Features of Tamar's Character in Genesis 38

In this section, I shall deal with the literary features of Tamar's character within the smaller story of Genesis 38. The framework-the beginning and the ending of the story-is composed of the first scene (Gen. 38:1-5) and the last scene (Gen. 37:27-30) out of a total of six scenes (Gen. 38:1-5; 6-11; 12-19; 20-23; 24-26; 27-30). These two units relate birth stories, that is, the genealogy of Judah within the patriarchal system. It could be generally admitted that, as Thomas Brodie says, 'The literary type...for the episode of Judah and Tamar is that of a conversion story'[14] from Judah's point of view, but the whole framework of the story could be read as the events around giving birth to a son for a childless widow from Tamar's viewpoint.[15]

One of the distinguishing features of Tamar in chapter 38 is that her plot is hidden from, and unknown to, Judah until the disclosure of her real identity because she disguises herself,[16] while Judah's two-faced plan is comparatively obvious to the audience. This is because 'Judah's intentions to avoid at all costs a marriage between Tamar and his younger son [Shelah] must be obvious to the young widow...his intentions are transparent to others, especially Tamar'.[17] If Tamar's plan could be considered as a sort of literary strategy by the narrator to construct a story deliberately designed to impact the reader with regards to the female character, we can argue that by the end of this chapter, the female character, as a trickster, may be wiser than the male character, or that the weak could be cleverer than the strong at the end of this chapter. Mary E. Shields states, 'Genesis 38 provides just such a comeuppance story for Judah the trickster'.[18] Accepting this view could impact on the

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[14] Brodie, *Genesis as Dialogue: A Literary, Historical, and Theological Commentary*, p. 354.

[15] See Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18-50*, pp. 429-56. Although Hamilton calls Genesis 38 'Judah and Tamar', he focuses the subtitles on Tamar as follows: 1. Tamar, the Childless Widow (38:1-11). 2. Tamar Deceives Judah (38:12-19), 3. Tamar is Exonerated (38:20-26), 4. The Birth of Perez and Zerah (38:27-30).

[16] '...the narrator veiled her scheme and initially mentioned only her motivation and actions. Delayed disclosure of her plan leads the reader through a merry chase for meaning, until her plan becomes clear through her actions.' See Petersen, *Reading Women's Stories: Female Characters in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 154.

[17] Aschkenasy, *Woman at the Window: Biblical Tales of Oppression and Escape*, p. 83.

[18] Shields, '"More Righteous than I": The Comeuppance of the Trickster in Genesis 38', p. 383: London: T & T Clark International, 2003), p. 50; on the comparative research into clever women in both the biblical and

interpretation of Tamar's character positively. For this reason, when evaluating a character in the text, we need to take a neutral attitude about character both in the immediate context and in the wider context until we get the whole picture. How we can characterise Tamar, who does not appear as often as Judah, still needs to be explained. Indeed, for the first step, our investigation into Tamar's character relative to Judah's is confined to Genesis 38. This represents an investigation of Tamar's character from a micro angle for the reader.

4.3.1. Background of the Family: Tamar's Father-in-law (Gen. 38:1-5)

At the beginning of the story the narrator introduces Judah as a subject (v. 1), while the woman who is to be Judah's wife is depicted as an object. That is to say, it appears that the male is an active subject whereas the female is a passive object.[19] As an instance of the latter, the first woman mentioned in the story is referred to as 'the daughter of a Canaanite man named Shua' (v. 2 NRSV). But the narrator does not tell the reader her name, whereas the name of Judah's male friend, Hirah the Adullamite, is clearly given in verse 1: '...a certain Adullamite whose name was Hirah.' (NRSV)

On the other hand, it must not be overlooked that 'the narration of verses 3, 4, and 5 uses descriptions that are predominantly feminine',[20] that is verbs with a female subject such as...וַתֹּסֶף...וַתַּהַר...וַתַּהַר ('and she conceived...and she conceived...and she added [conceived]'). But, even though Judah's wife gives birth to three sons, she does not get her own name.[21] According to Gunn's and Fewell's readings of the MT, Judah names the first son Er, whilst his wife names the other two, indicating that Judah's interest is only in the firstborn as an heir. It seems that the role of Judah's wife as a mother is to give a name to the second (Onan) and

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ancient Near Eastern texts, see J. Cheryl Exum and Johanna W.H. Bos, (eds.), *Reasoning with the Foxes Female Wit in a World of Male Power* (Semeia 42; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1988).

[19] Paul E. Koptak says, 'The descriptions and associations narrated in verses 1 and 2 of Genesis 38 are predominantly masculine.' See in his article, 'Reading Scripture with Kenneth Burke: Genesis 38', *CBQ* 55 (1997), pp. 84-94 (88).

[20] Koptak, 'Reading Scripture with Kenneth Burke: Genesis 38', pp. 88-89.

[21] 'The woman is given no name, which further underscores her lack of value in his sight, except for sex and procreation.' Gunn and Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 35.

third sons (Shelah) following the naming of Er, the firstborn by Judah.[22] As a result, Judah's unnamed wife 'functions only to produce and name (v. 2) sons for the plot...in patriarchal culture women are esteemed primarily for their ability to produce [male] children'.[23] Even though who it was who named Er is brought into question in the ancient versions, the naming of Onan and Shelah by Judah's wife shows no difference of opinion between the MT and the ancient versions.[24] We are not sure why the later rabbinic versions on the naming of Er read a feminine form. But, a definite reason for the MT to read a masculine form is that, when it comes to preference for the eldest son, Judah's naming of Er would be familiar to the audience, who preferred primogeniture at that time. At any rate, it is quite clear that the text of the MT, from the beginning of the story, reveals some evidence of an androcentric bias.

However, as C.A. Ben-Mordecai observes, 'The reader's attention is instantly arrested by the last sentence...but the sentence remains obscure'.[25] The difference between MT and LXX is, in particular, presented in verse 5. The one reads, 'And he [Judah] was in Kezib when she bore him [Shelah]' (וְהָיָה בִכְזִיב בְּלִדְתָּהּ אֹתוֹ), but the other reads 'she [Judah's wife] was...' (αὐτὴ δὲ ην) as suggested by John Skinner,[26] Claus Westermann,[27] and J.A. Emerton.[28] The problems here are: Where is Kezib and what does it mean? Who was in Kezib? In Wenham's argument, 'Kezib is the same as Akzib (Josh 15:44; Mic 1:14),[29] three miles west of Adullam (*EM* 1:278). It was later settled by some of the Shelahite clan (2 Chr

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[22] Gunn and Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 35.

[23] Shields, '"More Righteous than I": The Comeuppance of the Trickster in Genesis 38', p. 35.

[24] The MT reads 'and he [Judah] called' (וַיִּקְרָא) in verses 3, 29 and 30 and 'and she named' (וַתִּקְרָא) in verses 4 and 5, while SP, Targ, Jonathan read 'and she named' (וַתִּקְרָא) in verses. 3, 4, 5, 29 and 30. Scholars who support the former are as follows: Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, pp. 361-63; Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible: A New Interpretation of Their Stories*, pp. 264, 274. But the following scholars accept the latter, see Westermann, *Genesis 37-50: A Commentary*, pp. 47-49; Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18-50*, pp. 430, 452. I also follow the MT in this thesis.

[25] C.A. Ben-Mordecai, 'Chezib', *JBL* 58.3 (1939), pp. 283-86, especially p. 283.

[26] John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1912), p. 451.

[27] Wetermann, *Genesis 37-50: A Commentary*, p. 47.

[28] J.A. Emerton, 'Some Problems in Genesis xxxviii', *VT* 25 (1975), pp. 338-61 (339).

[29] Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50* (WBC, 2; Dallas: Word Books, Publisher, 1994), p. 366; Ephraim A. Speiser also agrees with this in *Genesis* (3rd edn; AB, 1; Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1982), p. 297; according to LXX and Targum Onkelos, Kezib is the name of a place. The word, as a *hapax legomenon*, appears nowhere else, but there are similar names (Josh. 15:44; Mic. 1:14; 1 Chron. 4:22) in the Hebrew Bible. For further arguments on the name of the place, see Emerton, 'Some Problems in Genesis xxxviii', pp. 340-41.

4:21-22), which may explain the mention of Judah going there in this passage'.[30] And the meaning of Kezib comes from *kzb*, 'false'.[31] But the issue is *who* was in Kezib, and the MT reads וְהָיָה ('he was'), the 3rd person masculine singular, so that if we follow this, it would be understood that Judah was in Kezib.[32] However, the important thing is that Judah's wife certainly names both Onan and Shelah in the text. If we also accept a symbolic meaning for Kezib, it seems reasonable to assume that Judah's inadequate deeds toward his daughter-in-law in the following sections could be due to one of the elaborate devices of the storyteller.

Accordingly, from the woman's point of view, even though the name Tamar is not yet presented in the first section (vv. 1-5), the scene can be read as the background to the family of Tamar's father-in-law because in the next scene (vv. 6-11) the name Judah as a subject is simultaneously paralleled with Tamar as a subject. Tamar does not remain a constantly 'disappeared' object, as is the case with Judah's wife, who is a flat character. Tamar's influence in the story gradually increases. Hence, if this scene shows us implications for the woman's role as a bearer of Judah's children, the last scene (vv. 27-30) does the same for Tamar's role as a mother. In addition, both the first scene and the last scene in Genesis 38 contain flat characters: Judah's wife and a midwife. This may indicate a symmetrical pattern in the structure of the first and the last scenes (AA'). What is more, if we understand that the following scene cannot be developed without Tamar, who is to be the wife of two brothers (Er and Onan) one after the other, the first part of Genesis 38 (vv. 1-5) could be considered to be a description of the family setting of Judah, who is to be her father-in-law, from Tamar's point

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[30] Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, p. 366; Gunn and Fewell note that Kezib is not found anywhere in the Hebrew Bible, but they say it means 'false' or 'lie' as does 'Akzib', which means 'deception'. See *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 35.

[31] Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible*, p. 266; for information on the derivation of כָּזָב ('lie, falsehood, deceptive thing') and the place name in the lowlands of Judah, אַכְזִיב (Josh. 15:44; Mic. 1:14), see BDB, p. 469. However, Gunn and Fewell insist that the place-name is not found anywhere in the Hebrew Bible. See *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 35.

[32] Ben-Mordecai reads the sentence as follows: 'And Shelah was in Chezib when she bore him.' According to him, the frequent repetition of a personal name can be replaced with its pronoun, quoting the cases of the name of Abraham in Genesis 21:5 and 16:15, see Ben-Mordecai, 'Chezib', p. 284; however, there could be several problems if we follow his assumption. Firstly, that Shelah was in Chezib makes no sense in the context of the story. That is, what does the mention of the birth place of Shelah mean? Secondly, the term 'Chezib' symbolises 'false' or 'lying'. This terminology cannot be connected directly with Shelah. Finally, the meaning of 'Chezib', better fits the character of Judah because Judah did not give Shelah to Tamar because he was scared he would die (v. 11). Through this word, Judah is intimately linked to the next scene (vv. 12-19).

of view. So, the first section of the episode describes the beginning of the family of Judah. Tamar's father-in-law.

4.3.2. Tamar and Levirate Law (Gen. 38:6-11)

This unit introduces Tamar's character for the first time (v. 6). Her name follows after those of Judah and his first son, Er. That is, Tamar is not introduced as herself, just in her relationship to her father-in-law and husband.[33] In relation to the perspective of the narrator, at the beginning, there is no real difference in the Hebrew in Tamar's appearance on the scene from that of Judah's wife, since the latter is 'taken' (וַיִּקָּחֶהָ) as wife and the former is chosen as a 'woman' (אִשָּׁה) for Er. It is significant, however, that Tamar is referred to by name, unlike Judah's wife. Furthermore, Judah's wife does not have any role in this scene. Instead, the focus changes to Tamar's connection to the law of levirate marriage (Deut. 25:5-10). She is chosen by Judah as a daughter-in-law to be given to his eldest son, Er, who does not have the privilege of selecting his own wife as his father did. That said, Judah has never been in the position of having a brother whose wife had to be looked after, and it is not clear that marrying a levirate wife rules out being married to someone else as well, either before or after. Just as Judah's wife builds up his family in terms of having children,[34] Tamar is also ready to achieve that with her name and she does eventually reconstruct Judah's family. She accomplishes this aim as a righteous woman.

It is true that, as Paul E. Koptak points out, 'In verses 6-11, the verbs are almost all masculine again'.[35] This is because the actors introduced by the narrator are actually all males again: Judah, Er, and Onan. Tamar, in this section, is mentioned in verses 6, 8, and 11. The

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[33] In chapter 3 of her book, which is a feminist analysis of Hosea 1-3, Sherwood deals with the text of Gomer's marriage from the point of view of the subject-object (male-female) dichotomy. For further discussion, see Yvonne Sherwood, *The Prostitute and the Prophet: Hosea's Marriage in Literary-Theoretical Perspective* (JSOTSup, 212; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), pp. 254-322.

[34] According to some English versions, when a woman in Genesis bears a child it means building her own family: 'and Sarai said to Abram, "You see that the LORD has prevented me from bearing children; go in to my slave-girl; it may be that I shall obtain children by her".' (Gen. 16:2 NRSV); compared to this other version, 'so she said to Abram, "The LORD has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my maidservant; perhaps I can build a family through her".' (Gen. 16:2 NIV)

[35] Paul E. Koptak, 'Reading Scripture with Kenneth Burke: Genesis 38', *CQ* 55 (1997) pp. 84-94 (89).

first and the last of these references include the name of Tamar, but the second refers to her simply as 'your brother's wife' (v. 8). Verse 11, however, may indicate two sides of her character as her name is mentioned twice: first, Tamar as an object who should obey her father-in-law and second, Tamar as a subject who acts in her own right (v. 11). The two dimensions of Tamar as a character coexist in verse 11. That is, even though Tamar is the passive recipient of an order by Judah to return to her father's house, the narrator makes a point of saying that she now *goes* (וַתֵּלֶךְ) and stays (וַתֵּשֶׁב) there, just as her father-in-law *went down* (וַיֵּרֶד) from Jacob and his brothers in verse 1. These two verbs (וַתֵּלֶךְ and וַיֵּרֶד) used in reference to Tamar and Judah respectively have the same connotation in association with the theme of leaving one's former family relationships: Judah leaves his father and brothers and Tamar leaves her husbands' father and brother.[36] These verbs also show the reader that Tamar acts; they indicate departure to somewhere.

From Tamar's point of view, Koptak makes it clear that, 'No verbs describe her [Tamar] action until she goes to her father's house and stays there'.[37] His statements may support the contention that the narrator intentionally begins the stories of Tamar and Judah with the topic of 'setting off', in verses 1 and 11. However, Tamar's departure is slightly different from Judah's. While Judah leaves his father to build up his own house, Tamar's leaving firstly deprives her of her rights. After this, a misfortune turns into a blessing. Tamar is put in a position where she will need to initiate action herself to gain her rights. So, the intention of Tamar's actions, from the beginning, was to build her own family, which is crucial to the larger context.

Yet, Tamar as a woman is manipulated by her father-in-law and his sons; she had to get married to Er by the command of Judah (v. 6). When Tamar's first husband was killed by the LORD (יְהוָה), she still had to be given to the deceased husband's brother (v. 8). However,

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[36] Niditch notes, 'Judah's attempt to send Tamar back to her father's home appears highly irregular. She no longer belongs there. The social fabric as a whole is weakened by her problem, and extremely unusual means are allowed to rectify the situation.' See Susan Niditch, 'The Wronged Woman Righted: An Analysis of Genesis 38', *HTR* 72 (1979), pp. 143-49 (146).

[37] Koptak, 'Reading Scripture with Kenneth Burke: Genesis 38', p. 89.

Onan does not accomplish the duty as a levir and the LORD, in turn, puts him to death (v. 10). Finally, Judah returns Tamar to her father's house, saying that the last son, Shelah, needs to be grown up before he can marry her. The storyteller also relates the other reason why Tamar had to be sent back to her father's house: Judah was worried that his son would die if he was married to Tamar (v. 11). Even though Tamar is subjugated to the authority of her father-in-law and his sons due to patriarchal structures, a chance to turn her character from submissive to assertive comes her way. Ironically, the chance comes via the levirate law.

What is more important is that, considering these two aspects of Tamar as a subject in contrast to Tamar as an object above,[38] the two verbs that describe Tamar's action, from ילך to ישב in verse 11, can lead us to read a connotation. In particular, the verb ישב may function as a linguistic connection to verse 14 in the next scene where Tamar also 'sits down' (וַתֵּשֶׁב) at the entrance to Enaim disguised in a prostitute's (?) clothing. Accordingly, those verbs applied to Tamar in verse 11 and 14 certainly imply a change for her from an object to a subject.

As Dvora E. Weisberg puts it, 'Levirate marriage is central to the narrative of Genesis 38…'[39] Indeed, the main background for the second scene in Genesis 38 is levirate marriage. In detail, the goal of the obligation is to honour the dead brother by continuing his line and to ensure the widow's status in her husband's family.[40] According to Millar Burrows, this custom is described in Deuteronomy 25:5-10, but, 'The story of Judah and Tamar is not a typical instance'[41] because '…while the union between Tamar and Onan correlates with the law set forth in Deuteronomy, the union between Tamar and her father-in-law Judah seems at

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[38] Aschkenasy defines the change in Tamar as Tamar going 'from the passive victim to the active arbiter of her own fate'. See Nehama Aschkenasy, *Woman at the Window: Biblical Tales of Oppression and Escape* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998), p. 86.

[39] Dvora E. Weisberg, 'The Widow of Our Discontent: Levirate Marriage in the Bible and Ancient Israel', *JSOT* 28 (2004), pp. 403-49 (413); Eryl W. Davies, 'Inherence Rights and the Hebrew Levirate Marriage: Part 1', *VT* 31.2 (1981), pp. 138-44; *idem*, 'Inherence Rights and the Hebrew Levirate Marriage: Part 2', *VT* 31.3 (1981), pp. 257-68.

[40] Niditch, 'The Wronged Woman Righted: An Analysis of Genesis 38', p. 146; Aschkenasy, *Woman at the Window: Biblical Tales of Oppression and Escape*, p. 81.

[41] Millar Burrows, 'Levirate Marriage in Israel', *JBL* 59 (1940), pp. 23-33 (23); cf. *idem*, 'The Ancient Oriental Background of Hebrew Levirate Marriage', *BASOR* 77 (1940), pp. 12-15.

odds with Deuteronomy'.[42] This is true: Judah asked Onan to fulfil the duty, but he failed. Finally, Judah becomes a *levir* unconsciously instead of his third son, Shelah. However, Judah is the father of Er, not his brother. Anyway, until then, Tamar is forced to remain as a young childless widow in her father's house.[43] Tamar's situation is unstable as a widow who is banished from her father-in-law's family, and she needs to wait for an appropriate instruction from Judah. Tamar is in a kind of limbo while she waits in her father's house for Shelah.

It is interesting to see that Judah is represented as abandoning his daughter-in-law. The narrator hints at this (v. 11). It leaves Tamar in the quandary of having a male heir for her husband while being an outsider excluded from her father-in-law's house. The 'outsider' theme associated with women constitutes a major theme within the patriarchal narrative.[44] In particular, the levirate law is connected to the theme of the outsider in Genesis 38. So, the narrator describes Tamar, the outsider in the family, as being at the centre of the performance of the levirate duty within the family of Judah. In other words, the possibilities afforded by the levirate custom enable Tamar as an outsider to achieve her goal. For this reason, as Suzanne Shaw mentions, it must be admitted that Tamar's role as a female character is 'not central, but at least not marginal'.[45] Shaw's contention is applicable to the second part of this story at least. We could not imagine the dynamic story of Tamar and Judah without the custom of levirate marriage. Hugh Pyper's comments are significant:

> In this context of the necessity of maintaining the family line, it is thus possible to comprehend

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[42] Weisberg, 'The Widow of Our Discontent: Levirate Marriage in the Bible and Ancient Israel', p. 404; Walter Brueggemann also says, 'It may be that the narrative is simply a presentation of the custom and the difficulties with it. However, that would apply only to the first part (vv. 1-11), whereas the interest of the narrative focuses on the interaction between Tamar and Judah in the middle part of the narrative (vv. 12-26).' See in his book, *Genesis* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), p. 308.

[43] Gunn and Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*, pp. 36-37; for further discussion on the violation of the rule of the levirate marriage, see Calum M. Carmichael, 'A Ceremonial Crux: Removing a Man's Sandal as a Female Gesture of Contempt', *JBL* 96/3 (1977), pp. 321-36.

[44] 'From one vantage point, the prominence of the outsider motif in Genesis 38 should not be so surprising in light of the Joseph story that surrounds it. Whatever else may be said about the famous account in Genesis 37-50, outsiders are found throughout.' See Frank Anthony Spina, *The Faith of the Outsider: Exclusion and Inclusion in the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2005), p. 37.

[45] Suzanne Shaw, 'Letters to the Editor of Genesis', in Philip R. Davies (ed.), *First Person: Essays in Biblical Autobiography* (London: Sheffield Academic Press Ltd, 2002), pp. 25-46 (31).

> seemingly bizarre provisions such as the so-called 'levirate', the legislation for which is outlined in Deut. 25.5-10. A childless widow was entitled to expect to be married to her dead husband's brother in order to raise children who would keep up the remembrance of the dead man's name and maintain her rights under this law and it is alluded to in the story of Ruth, where her kinsman has a prior claim on her over Boaz (Ruth 4.6).[46]

So, if Tamar along with the levirate custom were not mentioned in this section, the story could not have proceeded as it does. That is, the section on Tamar and the levirate law tells us the reason why the audience should read the text as one where the outsider becomes essential to the story of Judah's family and therefore to the continuity of succession.

Finally, Tamar is depicted as one of the members of Judah's family in Genesis 38:6. Her name is introduced in connection to Judah's sons. In a sense, this is in contrast to Judah's wife as a mother who herself names her second and third sons according to the text (vv. 4-5). However, the name of Judah's wife herself is not mentioned. This may imply that her function as mother in the family is more important than that of her identity in the story. On the contrary, Tamar is the only named woman among the three women in Genesis 38. Of course, Tamar's name first appears in the setting of her social relationship within Judah's family. But, her naming as Judah's daughter-in-law and as a wife of Er, who is the elder son of Judah, set beside Judah's nameless wife, could indicate that Tamar's eventual position as a subject member rather than an object in the family is already foreshadowed. In fact, it may be more than accidental that the feminine pronouns used three times in relation to Judah's wife (v. 3, 4, and 5) appear from the perspective of (a) male narrator(s) who is (are) attempting to describe Judah and his new family in the narrative. However, it is more intriguing that, as Victor Matthews notes, 'Since Judah's wife is the only woman other than Tamar in the story, her death and the callous dismissal (*yāšab*) of Tamar to her father's house (38:11) triggers the next phase in the narrative. It leaves the family without an available "womb" to produce an

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[46] Hugh S. Pyper *An Unsuitable Book: The Bible as Scandalous Text* (eds. J. Cheryl Exum, Jorunn Okland, Stephen D. Moore; The Bible in the Modern World, 7; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2005), p. 105.

heir and continue its existence.'[47] As a result, Judah's wife's death means that Shelah will be Judah's last son, who is Er's full brother, but also means that Judah himself is available for remarriage. Hence, the way is open for Tamar as a woman to initiate the next scene.

4.3.3. Tamar's Plot against Judah (Gen. 38:12-19)

The section begins a new phase of the story with the second time heading in Genesis 38 – וַיִּרְבּוּ הַיָּמִים (literally 'the days multiplied'). From the time phrase, the narrator describes in one verse several events including the death of Judah's wife, Judah's recovery from it, and his going to Timnah to the sheep-shearing with his friend Hirah (v. 12). As Alter says, 'All the information in this verse is essential for what follows'.[48] The verb indicating Judah's movement in verse 12, וַיַּעַל ('and he went up') is contrasted with וַיֵּרֶד ('and he went down') in verse 1 and it shows us the beginning of a new scene.[49] This section contains two kinds of narrative style: narrations and speeches. Verses 12-15 and 19 are relayed in the narrator's voice, but the remainder of the section (vv. 16-18) is almost totally made up of six speeches between Tamar and Judah.[50]

From Childless Widow to Active Plotter

This part of the story tells us about Tamar who does not keep her status as a daughter-in-law but struggles to retrieve her right as a childless widow from outside Judah's family in the patriarchal system. The reader may wonder how Tamar could return to her former status within her father-in-law's house. As a matter of fact, the reason Tamar needs a plan at all is

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[47] Victor H. Matthews, 'Discourse and Cognition in the Story of Judah and Tamar', in *More Than Meets the Ear: Discovering the Hidden Contexts of Old Testament Conversations* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2008), pp. 27-66 (39).

[48] Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), p. 7.

[49] Bos, 'Out of the Shadows: Genesis 38; Judges 4:17-22; Ruth 3', p. 42.

[50] Licht says, 'The conversation between Tamar, who had disguised herself as a prostitute, and Judah, who is hiring her services (Genesis 38, 16-18), is marked throughout by the simplest possible "he said", "she said", creating the atmosphere of a matter-of-fact transaction. An increase of narrative tempo is another effect of the same device: it enables the narrator to deal with the scene quickly, without making the speeches too laconic.' Jacob Licht, *Storytelling in the Bible* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1978), p. 104.

due to Judah's failure to ensure the fulfilment of levirate marriage for her,[51] despite the fact that Shelah is already grown up. Tamar finally realises Judah's non-performance regarding the obligation and rather 'uses the force of the law to restore her position in Judah's family'.[52] Tamar had already had a bitter experience with Onan, her brother-in-law, who refused to have a child for her. Tamar's pregnancy is, in fact, hindered by both her father-in-law and her brother-in-law. Thus, Sharon Pace Jeansonne's enquiry as to Tamar's motive for disguising herself as a prostitute and putting on a veil, at least from Judah's point of view, seems appropriate: 'How does Tamar respond to these inequities?,'[53] especially in relation to Judah's intentions. Tamar could perceive her father-in-law's deeds as being unjust. To the reader, it is no wonder that these inequities may, to some extent, cause Tamar's response. In these terms, Tamar's plotting against her father-in-law looks natural when she hears of his coming to Timnah for the sheep shearing. Accordingly, the function of verse 12 is to enable us to see the background that motivates Tamar's promotion to a main active character alongside Judah from this point on. In George W. Coats' understanding:

> The digression changes the scene of action for both Judah (v. 12) and Tamar (vv. 13-14). The statement of change also reveals part of Tamar's plan...The goal of her plan is to secure her right in the levirate. That right is not marriage, but the conception of a child.[54]

Verse 12 can be considered to be a sort of *turning point* in the assignment of character roles between Judah and Tamar. Judah, as a father-in-law, who is powerful and authoritative within his family, has deceived Tamar (v. 11). In response, the narrator merely states that a long time has passed as indicated by the successive events. In the process, the reader can comprehend

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[51] Sarna puts it, '...the responsibility for the enforcement of the levirate obligation rested at this time with the widow's father-in-law...' Nahum M. Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis-בראשית* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), p. 268.

[52] Bach entitles this part of the story of Tamar, 'A Woman on Top of the Situation: The Appropriate Seduction in Genesis 38.' Alice Bach, *Women, Seduction, and Betrayal in Biblical Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 62.

[53] Sharon Pace Jeansonne, *The Women of Genesis: from Sarah to Potiphar's wife* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1009), p. 98.

[54] George W. Coats, *Genesis: with an Introduction to Narrative Literature* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1983), p. 274.

that Tamar could do nothing but only wait out this period of time. This term of endurance may justify Tamar's character transformation from a subservient, respectable but childless widow to an active plotter prepared to act the role of a prostitute (?) for the purpose of the protection of her rights under levirate law. Tamar as an 'underdog'[55] in the story had to undergo many difficulties over a long time period until she had a chance to meet her father-in-law, Judah, on the road. As Jeansonne observes, however, 'Tamar does not confront Judah, but she does act decisively and ingeniously.'[56] This is the way Tamar acts over against her father-in-law.

So, it is not surprising that Tamar's lively actions and plot in verses 12-19 even transcend Judah's who deceived her earlier. In particular, the behaviour pattern of Tamar's character as a childless widow changes from a negative or passive mode into a positive or active one.[57] The descriptive background of the conversations between Tamar and Judah in verse 12 makes clear Judah's failure to act in not giving Tamar to Shelah. Thus, the storyteller shows the audience that 'she [Tamar] knows that she herself must act to protect her future'.[58] This fact correlates with Tamar's plot against Judah being set in motion by the news that her father-in-law is coming to Timnah (v. 13).

The Veil at the Entrance to Enaim

In verse 14, Tamar systematically puts her plan into practice. She takes the initiative and launches a scheme to get her father-in-law to act according to custom. To understand Tamar's plan, above all, we need to clarify the phrase בְּפֶתַח עֵינַיִם ('at the entrance to Enaim', NRSV). This has usually been interpreted as indicating the place of the meeting between Tamar and

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[55] On this topic along with that of 'trickster', see Susan Niditch, *A Prelude to Biblical Folklore: Underdogs and Tricksters* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000).

[56] Jeansonne, *The Women of Genesis: from Sarah to Potiphar's wife*, p. 103; Bal also says in the same vein. 'The confrontation between Judah and Tamar in 14-26 is a confrontation of two relatively strong subjects, each displaying a specific competence. Judah is powerful whereas Tamar is smart. The sequence is often presented as an example of optimism with respect to the position of women in the Bible. Indeed, Tamar's victory, due only to her wit, sets the limits to patriarchal power.' Mieke Bal, *Lethal Love: Feminist Literary Readings of Biblical Stories*, p. 101.

[57] Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, p. 8; Aschkenasy presents the contrast in Tamar's character as follows: 'Thus, Tamar turns from the passive victim to the active arbiter of her own fate', in *Woman at the Window: Biblical Tales of Oppression and Escape*, p. 86

[58] Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible: A New Interpretation of Their Stories*, p. 269.

Judah. For instance, commentators such as Westermann and Cotter suggest a general location 'at the entrance / opening gate to / of Enaim',[59] while Friedman and Shectman translate the phrase literally as 'the opening of the eyes' or 'Open Eyes'.[60] In Robinson's opinion, according to Targums, the Peshita, and the Vulgate, the phrase means a parting of the road (juncture) of / for Enaim or a crossroad.[61] Meanwhile, Alter interprets the name of the place symbolically. Enaim means 'Twin Wells' because the word עֵינַיִם can be understood as the dual of 'well' rather than 'eye'.[62] However, Alter does not suggest what the literary function of 'twin wells' might mean in the context of this narrative. Rather, it is clear that Aschkenasy derives further insight from the meaning of the place itself when she writes:

> The name of the place combines the twin aspects of Tamar's strategy. The first is making herself available for sexual intercourse and thus literally 'opening' herself, or turning herself into a gate…The second element in Tamar's successful strategy is her clear sight, her "eyes" that are constantly open and alert...or, that Tamar, in her actions, opened Judah's eyes.[63]

Aschkenasy finally elucidates the symbolism of בְּפֶתַח עֵינַיִם as the opening of Judah's eyes by Tamar. These words cannot be separated from 'the level of the conceptual content'[64] and read

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[59] Westermann, *Genesis 37-50: A Commentary*, p. 53; Cotter, *Berit Olam Studies in Hebrew Narrative & Poetry: Genesis* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2003), p. 284.

[60] Richard Elliot Friedman, *Commentary on the Torah* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001), p. 128; Sarah Shectman, *Women in the Pentateuch: A Feminist and Source-Critical Analysis* (Hebrew Bible Monographs, 23; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009), p. 106; Bos has suggested that the phrase 'the Enayim gate' is simply the gate's name and it means 'opening of the eyes'. Johanna W.H. Bos, 'An Eyeopener at the Gate: George Coats and Genesis 38', *LTQ* 27 (1992), pp. 119-23, especially 121; Gunn and Fewell also insist that the phrase 'entrance to Enaim' means the 'opening of eyes' and that it is an example of 'language at play', see *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 39.

[61] Ira Robinson, '*bĕpetah 'ênayim* in Genesis 38:14', *JBL* 96 (1977), p. 569; Speiser assumes that 'the place [Enaim] is probably the same as Enam in Josh xv 34 (in the Shephelah)' in *Genesis*, p. 298.

[62] Robert Alter, *Genesis: Translation and Commentary* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996), p. 220; Hamilton also accepts 'twin springs'. He talks about the Hebrew word עֵינַיִם as being related to the Sumerian word for 'eye, spring'. See Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18-50* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1995), p. 440.

[63] Aschkenasy, *Woman at the Window: Biblical Tales of Oppression and Escape*, pp. 86-87; Hamilton interprets it in a similar way: '…Thus *bepetah ênayim* may be a double entendre: Enaim is not only the place where Tamar met Judah, but also her sexual invitation to Judah.' Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18-50*, p. 440, see, 'An Eyeopener at the Gate: George Coats and Genesis 38', p. 121.

[64] This level stands on 'the themes of the narrative units or the ideas contained therein'. Bar-Efrat divides the structural analysis of narrative into four elements: (1) the verbal level, (2) the level of narrative technique, (3) the level of the narrative world, (4) the level of the conceptual content. For further information, see Shimon Bar-Efrat, 'Some Observations on the Analysis of Structure in Biblical Narrative', *VT* 30 (1980), pp. 154-73; Aschkenasy simply classifies two levels: the literal level and the metaphorical level in *Woman at the Window:*

independently. Accordingly, this opening of Judah's eyes is linked to Tamar's sexual invitation to him.[65] However, Judah does not recognise his daughter-in-law behind the veil of disguise,[66] whereas Tamar can see her father-in-law through the veil and even penetrates his mind.[67] It is true to say that this awkward situation appears ironic because Judah's eyes are effectively closed rather than open when he meets the disguised Tamar. Judah does not know Tamar's true identity and the narrator recounts that Judah thought her to be a prostitute, but the text does not plainly tell us Tamar intended her disguise to make him think she was a prostitute. Although Huddlestun says, 'the veil itself was not diagnostic,'[68] it is no exaggeration to say that the veil itself enables Judah to talk with Tamar whom he considered to be a prostitute. In other words, the veil may function as 'a communicative channel' or as a 'communicative device between the sexes'.[69]

The episode of Tamar and Judah clearly presents some implications for veils. If Judah considered Tamar to be a prostitute and it was the express aim of the narrator for the reader to pick up on that, then, as Furman points out, prostitute's veils would have two social functions: 'their use as symbols in the sexual code' and 'masks and disguises.'[70] In this way, the veil between them is necessarily a symbolic medium for negotiating business leading to sexual intercourse, imparting Tamar's desire to play a relevant role in the patriarchal hierarchy; to be the mother of the heirs of Judah's line.

Biblical Tales of Oppression and Escape, p. 88.

[65] Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18-50*, p. 440.

[66] There are arguments concerning the use of the veil in Genesis 38:15 whether it oozes prostitute or just allows for Tamar to hide her real identity. For lists of scholars on both sides of the dispute, see John R. Huddlestun, 'Unveiling the Versions: The Tactics of Tamar in Genesis 38:15', *JHS* 3, Article 7 (2001), footnotes 2 and 3. [electronic]

[67] Aschkenasy says, 'Tamar's "seeing" is not a matter of sight but of insight, a mental realization that Judah has no intention of ever allowing her to be his son's wife.' See *Woman at the Window: Biblical Tales of Oppression and Escape*, p. 87.

[68] Huddlestun, 'Unveiling the Versions: The Tactics of Tamar in Genesis 38:15'.

[69] Furman also notes, 'For the men, garments are symbolic markers of filial love and recognition, whereas for the women they serve as a means of self-inscription in a system that neglects them...As for Judah, he is unable to recognise his daughter-in-law behind the prostitute's veil. Whereas for the man garments have a determined, precise meaning, that is to say, a truth value, for the women clothes are nothing but signifiers open to a variety of meanings; they are items whose function and referential meaning can easily be changed.' Nelly Furman, 'His Story versus Her Story: Male Genealogy and Female Strategy in the Jacob Cycle', in Miri Amihai *et al.* (eds.), *Narrative Research on the Hebrew Bible* (Semeia, 46; Atlanta: SBL, 1989), pp. 147-48.

[70] Furman, 'His Story versus Her Story: Male Genealogy and Female Strategy in the Jacob Cycle', p. 148.

Furthermore, it should be noted that, as Shields writes, 'The rest of v. 14 gives the reason for her actions: "for she *saw* that Shelah had grown up but she had not been given to him as a wife". Perhaps she hoped to open Judah's eyes to the fact that he had not fulfilled his obligation to her, or perhaps she hoped to trick Judah as she herself had been tricked earlier'.[71] This coincidence between the meaning of the word and the features of the characters is clever because the narrator suggests that 'Judah, who thinks that he "sees" the woman, does not know what he sees'.[72] Later, this is what brings about the result of Judah's confession to Tamar: 'She is more in the right than I, since I did not give her to my son Shelah' (v. 26 NRSV).

All the results, however, come from Tamar's deliberate plan. Victor H. Matthews has aptly observed that 'She [Tamar] does not publicly denounce Judah but allows him to save face...At the heart of Tamar's actions is her desire to provide an heir for her deceased husband Er'.[73] I agree with his statements because it seems that Tamar's speeches and actions primarily seem focused on her need for a child. As a result, there is no public criticism of her father-in-law's inappropriate deeds such as the incompletion of the levirate marriage and having a relationship with a strange prostitute. Again, Tamar's goal merely seems to be to obtain a son as heir from Judah to mitigate her unstable status rather than marriage itself, at least on the verbal level.[74]

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[71] Shields, '"More Righteous than I": The Comeuppance of the Trickster in Genesis 38', p, 39; Bos also says, 'Tamar provides an eyeopener to the patriarch and sets at least a limit to patriarchal power.' See 'An Eyeopener at the Gate: George Coats and Genesis 38', p. 121.

[72] Aschkenasy, Woman at the Window: Biblical Tales of Oppression and Escape, p. 87.

[73] Victor H. Matthews, 'Female Voices: Upholding the Honor of the Household', *BTB* 24 (1994), pp. 8-15 (9).

[74] See Coats, *Genesis: with an Introduction to Narrative Literature*, p. 274; 'Tamar's plan is designed to secure intercourse with Judah. There is no implicit element in her plan that might force Judah into marriage.' *idem*, 'Widow's Rights: A Crux in the Structure of Genesis 38', *CBQ* 34 (1972), pp. 461-66 (464); von Rad insists that the levirate custom extends to father-in-law as well as brother-in-law so that Tamar could initiate her plan to marry Judah. Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1972), pp. 359-60. However, the narrator does not give any information about this within the story. In addition, as Coats puts it, 'it (v. 30) concludes without telling whose wife Tamar finally became.' Coats, 'Widow's Rights: A Crux in the Structure of Genesis 38', p. 461.

Tamar's Plot

The narrator keeps the focus on the theme of *seeing* in verse 15; 'When Judah *saw* (ראה) her, he thought her to be a prostitute (זונה), for she had covered her face' (NRSV). As mentioned above, the fact that Judah does not see (recognise) Tamar because she is disguised in a veil can be considered as a sort of irony, 'For where Judah sees a prostitute we know that he is in fact seeing someone else. It is as though his eyes are closed'.[75] On the depictions of Tamar and Judah in this verse, Jeansonne notes, 'She [Tamar] does nothing to prompt Judah; she merely sits at the roadside. Judah presumes she is a prostitute because of the way she has disguised herself'.[76] On the contrary, Ira Robinson argues that Tamar takes the initiative to entice her father-in-law and we should take note of 'an attitude of harlotry, the pose assumed by Tamar in order to deceive Judah'.[77]

Then, as readers can we query the idea that if someone finds a woman with her face covered by a veil sitting at the roadside they should be entitled to assume that she is a prostitute, as Judah did?[78] Or, is it appropriate to say that, from Tamar's perspective, she herself is pretending to be a prostitute disguised in a veil? [79] If that were so, then why does the narrator not describe Tamar's veil plainly? Finally, how can readers read the ambiguous standpoint of the narrator with respect to the veil?

First, many contemporary scholars consider that Tamar is a prostitute in verse 14 just because her face was covered by a veil. For instance, Jonathan Kirsch maintains that 'Tamar is described by the biblical narrator as a common prostitute (*zonah*) when we are first told how she disguises herself as a harlot to seduce her father-in-law'.[80] However, I disagree on

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[75] Gunn and Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 39; see also Shields, '"More Righteous than I": The Comeuppance of the Trickster in Genesis 38', p. 40.

[76] Jeansonne, *The Women of Genesis: from Sarah to Potiphar's Wife*, p. 103.

[77] Ira Robinson, '*bĕpetah 'ênayim* in Genesis 38:14', *JBL* 96 (1977), p. 579.

[78] However, Sarna has insisted that on the basis of the case of Sarah in Genesis 12:14 Israelite women usually did not cover their faces with veils and neither did Tamar put on a veil. She just attempted to hide her identity in front of Judah. For further comments on the veil, see *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis-*בראשית, pp. 170, 268.

[79] Jeansonne, *The Women of Genesis: from Sarah to Potiphar's Wife*, p. 99.

[80] Jonathan Kirsch, *The Harlot by the Side of the Road: Forbidden Tales of the Bible* (London: Rider, 1997), p. 131; many commentators assume that Tamar has dressed up as a prostitute. Others have recognised that it is Judah who assumes Tamar is a prostitute. For a list of these opinions, see footnotes 23 and 26 in Shields, '"More

this point because I think it is more reasonable to accept Athalya Brenner's statement, 'Some biblical commentators are only too hasty to assume'[81] Tamar's disguise was that of a harlot. Furthermore, the text only says that it is Judah who considers Tamar to be a harlot. At least, we cannot see anywhere else that Tamar intended to be a prostitute in the story; she merely put a veil over her face,[82] while Judah only considered her as a sexual partner. As Hamilton points out, 'It is not the veil but Tamar's positioning herself at Enaim (v. 14) that made her appear to be a prostitute'.[83] Thus, there is the possibility of different points of view among scholars. These varying opinions may originate from cognitive differences between the narrator and the readers who have differing intellectual backgrounds. In other words, the distance between the viewpoints of the characters and the readers remains. In any case, this gap is intended by the narrator.

Second, it also should be noted that there is no other mention of a veil being used by a prostitute in the Hebrew Bible.[84] In terms of the spatial and cultural background of the story which happened in Canaan, as Hamilton puts it, '...there is little evidence that prostitutes in Canaan wore veils'.[85] In particular, in relation to the usage of the veil, Shields has argued that Tamar's veil is not used as the sign of a prostitute, pointing instead to the case of Rebekah who only covers herself with a veil as she meets her future husband, Isaac, in Genesis 24:65.[86] The latter use of a veil is related to the implication of a potential marriage. If Tamar does not intend the veil to be a sign to Judah that she is a prostitute, as Shields contends, is it an exaggeration to say that Tamar presumably could be pretending to be a bride on a

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Righteous than I": The Comeuppance of the Trickster in Genesis 38', p. 40.

[81] Athalya Brenner, 'A Double Date: We are Tamar and Tamar', in *I Am...: Biblical Women Tell Their Own Stories* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), p. 136.

[82] Hamilton translates the Hebrew word כִּי as 'even though', a concessive clause instead of 'because', a casual conjunction in *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18-50*, p. 438.

[83] Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18-50*, p. 443.

[84] Shields, '"More Righteous than I": The Comeuppance of the Trickster in Genesis 38', p. 40. However, for the lists of those who accept that Tamar put on her veil in order to look like a prostitute, see footnote 23.

[85] For his arguments in connection with Hos. 2:4 (Eng. 2) and Song 1:7, see Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18-50*, pp. 441-42.

[86] Gen. 24:65 reads: and said to the servant, 'Who is the man over there, walking in the field to meet us?' The servant said, 'It is my master.' So she [Rebekah] took her veil and covered herself. (NRSV); Shields says, 'Clearly...the veil [in Gen. 38:14] does *not* denote a prostitute. Tamar merely wraps herself in a veil.' See '"More Righteous than I": The Comeuppance of the Trickster in Genesis 38', p. 41; Frymer-Kensky also agrees with this in *Reading the Women of the Bible: A New Interpretation of Their Stories*, p. 270.

metaphorical level? This may be so because 'the narrator hints at her upcoming relationship to Judah as a sexual partner because *kallâ* [כַּלָּה Gen. 38:11, 16, 24] may mean either "daughter-in-law" or "bride"'.[87] As the reader, if this supposition is available for consideration, the narrator is describing the veil ambiguously because it is possible that the reader could be reminded of the veil worn by Rebekah when she met Isaac.

Nahum M. Sarna asserts, on the other hand, 'Tamar was not normally veiled and that she simply wanted to conceal her identity (cf. 24:65).'[88] According to him, the veil was a sign of distinction and the privilege of a free woman in Middle Assyrian law, but wives in the Near East including Canaan normally went about unveiled, although the veiling of the bride was part of the marriage ceremony. Sarna believes that Tamar put on a veil only to disguise her identity. However, as already noted, the word used for the veil (צָעִיף) is the same word in both Genesis 38:14 and Genesis 24:65 and the context, in that the two women were waiting for men, is similar. If we consider the role of Tamar as mother of Perez and Zerah in the near future, this could be more persuasive. In all probability, the narrator is being deliberately ambiguous with regards to the veil from Tamar's point of view, but for Judah, it functions as the signal of her being a prostitute. Yet Tamar's motive for disguising herself from her father-in-law could be closer to her hiding her identity than to appearing to be a prostitute. More deeply, the veil could imply marriage indirectly. Tamar knows her father-in-law's way of thinking. Thus, the veil has two meanings: a prostitute's clothing from the viewpoint of the surface structure and an article of clothing appropriate for a bride in the deep structure of the narrative.[89]

Finally, Tamar's intention in disguising herself in a veil links the levirate law and the

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[87] Jeansonne, *The Women of Genesis: From Sarah to Potiphar's Wife*, p. 103; see 'כַּלָּה', BDB, p. 483.

[88] Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis-*בראשית (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), pp. 170, 268.

[89] Aschkenasy says there are two levels of a word: 'literal level and metaphorical level,' in her *Woman at the Window: Biblical Tales of Oppression and Escape*, p. 88; on the other hand, Brenner states, '...Tamar pretends to be a priestess, a hallowed one, which is fine; but as for Judah, he makes a mistake.' Athalya Brenner, 'Gender in Prophecy, Magic and Priesthood: From Sumer to Ancient Israel', in Deborah W. Rooke (ed.), *Embroidered Garments: Priests and Gender in Biblical Israel* (Hebrew Bible Monographs, 25; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009), pp. 3-18 (12).

sheep-shearing festival; tricking Judah into performing the levirate custom himself[90] and using the sheep-shearing event to have sexual intercourse with her father-in-law.[91] Dealing with the trickster theme in the Hebrew Bible narratives, Mieke Bal points out that 'Tamar uses the semiotic means, the signs that are left at her disposal, to take over…Sexuality is one of her means…But her use of her sexual attraction is both exposed and hidden in a more clearly cultural, semiotic object, the veil that denotes publicly available sexuality'.[92] In the second half of verse 14 the narrator emphasises the reason why Tamar had to make a plan to trick her father-in-law. We might also assume that 'her trick is a *response* to the trick played against her, not an *initiative* of trickery'.[93] Hence, there is no definite proof in the text that Tamar's disguising herself with a veil indicates that she thought the veil would make Judah see her as a prostitute. Rather, Judah's seeing and thinking about Tamar's disguise only allows us to know that her appearance was understood as that of a prostitute from Judah's viewpoint and nothing else.[94] Verse 15 is more likely designed to show the reader Judah's ignorance of Tamar's designs.[95] Judah sees a veiled woman and precisely does *not* see Tamar. He deduces she is a prostitute because covering her face – the issue as to whether this implies that covering one's face is a positive sign of being a prostitute, or merely that he cannot identify the woman as Tamar because her face is covered and decides she is a prostitute on other grounds, possibly just from the fact that she is sitting alone where she does – is rather secondary for the purposes of the story.

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[90] Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible: A New Interpretation of Their Stories*, p. 269.

[91] The season of sheep-shearing means 'a time of eating, drinking, and general festivities'. See Gunn and Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 38; according to Nobuko, this event normally brings out a mood of exuberance and relaxation in the participants. For these events, she presents another two references in 1 Samuel 25:8 and 2 Samuel 13:28. See Morimura Nobuko, 'The Story of Tamar: A Feminist Interpretation of Genesis 38,' *JCR* 59 (1993), pp. 55-67 (57).

[92] Mieke Bal, 'Tricky Thematics', in J. Cheryl Exum and Johanna W.H. Bos (eds.), *Reasoning with the Foxes Female Wit in a World of Male Power* (Semeia, 42; Atlanta: SBL, 1988), pp. 133-55 (149).

[93] Bal, 'Tricky Thematics', pp. 148-49.

[94] Shields persuasively notes that Judah jumps to the conclusion that Tamar is a prostitute when he sees a veiled woman at the entrance to Enaim, just like his father, Jacob, who jumps to a conclusion when he sees Joseph's bloody coat, in '"More Righteous than I": The Comeuppance of the Trickster in Genesis 38', p. 41.

[95] Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible: A New Interpretation of Their Stories*, p. 270.

Two Dialogues between Tamar and Judah

Now we can investigate the dialogues between Tamar and Judah in verses 16-18. Above all, the verb used for Judah in verse 16 may be connected to the previous two verbs in verse 15: the verbs ראה and חשב in verse 15 (וַיִּרְאֶהָ יְהוּדָה וַיַּחְשְׁבֶהָ לְזוֹנָה 'and Judah saw her and he thought her to be a prostitute') could be linked to the verb נטה in verse 16 (וַיֵּט אֵלֶיהָ 'and he turned to her'). These three successive verbs present Judah's actions stepwise. The swift process of Judah's actions is made up of these two kinds of verbs; the first two in verse 15 are perceptional verbs, while the last one in verse 16 is understood as an active verb. The active verb נטה [96] is used twice in Genesis 38: 1 and 16: 'once for turning aside for lodging, once for turning aside for sex.'[97] This could mean Judah's deviation from his daily routine. The former represents the turning aside from daily life under his father Jacob and the latter is the departure from daily life related to sex. It seems that the narrator intends to show a paradigm shift in Judah's action in the story. M.E. Andrews maintains that Judah's move of turning to an Adullamite in verse 1 is to show 'a movement from death to life'.[98] However, he overlooks the use of the verb נטה in verse 16. However, we can see that the narrator uses the word deliberately to indicate Judah's actions whenever he turns aside for something.

For Tamar's plot to work, Judah needs to think of his daughter-in-law as a prostitute. The successive verbs in verses 15-16 demonstrate Judah's intentions and show that he has fallen for the ruse. The three verbs describing Judah's actions above are related to the single verb depicting Tamar's activity; כסה ('cover'). In addition, vv 15 and 16 are bound together by four כִּי clauses. Following this, there are lively dialogic interactions between the imperceptive Judah and the disguised Tamar in verses 16-18.[99] The reader understands that

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[96] 'נָטָה', BDB, pp. 639-41; Soggin suggests that the verb נטה in verses 1, 12 and 20 can be translated 'to join in business'. J. Alberto Soggin, 'Judah and Tamar (Genesis 38)', in Heather A. McKay and David J.A. Clines (eds.), *Of Prophets' Visions and the Wisdom of Sages: Essays in Honour of R. Norman Whybray on his Seventieth Birthday* (JSOTSup, 162: Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), p. 281. However, he does not mention the verb in verse 16 and it does not even appear in verses 12 and 20.

[97] Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18-50*, p. 443.

[98] M.E. Andrews, 'Moving from Death to Life: Verbs of Motion in the Story of Judah and Tamar in Gen 38', *ZAW* 105 (1993), pp. 262-69.

[99] Paul E. Koptak, 'Reading Scripture with Kenneth Burke: Genesis 38', *CQ* 55 (1997), pp. 84-94.

the cognitive distance between them in the dialogues is vast. The speeches of the imperceptive Judah are anticipated by Tamar, whereas the speeches of the disguised Tamar are unexpected by Judah. Let us have a look at the dialogues in detail.

FIGURE 4

Two Dialogues between Tamar and Judah

Dialogue 1	Judah	(v. 16) הָבָה־נָּא אָבוֹא אֵלַיִךְ	A
	Tamar	(v. 16) מַה־תִּתֶּן־לִי	B
	Judah	(v. 17) אָנֹכִי אֲשַׁלַּח גְּדִי־עִזִּים מִן־הַצֹּאן	C
Dialogue 2	**Tamar**	(v. 17) אִם־תִּתֵּן עֵרָבוֹן עַד שָׁלְחֵךְ	C'
	Judah	(v. 18) מָה־הָעֵרָבוֹן אֲשֶׁר אֶתֶּן־לָךְ	B'
	Tamar	(v. 18) חֹתָמְךָ וּפְתִילֶךָ וּמַטֶּךָ	A'

The dialogues above exhibit several features of literary artistry. First, the dialogues are composed of six speeches[100] and two pair-statements (Dialogue 1: Judah-**Tamar**-Judah / Dialogue 2: **Tamar**-Judah-**Tamar**). The first dialogue contains two of Judah's speeches and the second dialogue includes two of Tamar's speeches. Second, the two dialogues are different with respect to the characters' individual aims. In the first dialogue, from Judah' point of view, the centre of attention is a charge for sexual intercourse (v. 16b), whilst the focal point from Tamar's viewpoint in the second dialogue is a pledge (v. 18).[101] Finally, the six speeches form a chiasmus (ABC C' B' A') starting with the same Hebrew consonant in every speech in parallel pairs, although the ה of the first speech of Judah looks as if it has changed into ת in the last of Tamar's speeches. It is clear to see that the dialogues between the characters have been

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[100] Matthews defines these speeches as follows: Judah Speaks First, Tamar's First Riposte, Judah's Offer, Tamar's Second Riposte, Judah's Acceptance of Terms, Tamar's Third Riposte. See Matthews, *More Than Meets the Ear: Discovering the Hidden Contexts of Old Testament Conversations*, pp. 51-59.

[101] Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18-50*, p. 443.

deliberately designed.[102]

Again, the interests of the disguised Tamar and the imperceptive Judah are different. Apparently, Judah asks for the equivalent of a business deal[103] – demand, supply and transaction - from the disguised Tamar, but Tamar claims for pledges (signet, cord and staff) which stand for the owner's identity, much like a personal credit card,[104] a driver's license or a passport.[105] For Judah, this appears to be a business deal for sexual relations, but 'Tamar does not request these items primarily as promissory notes, though she implies that to Judah'.[106] Instead, it could mean a sort of oath of marriage on the level of conceptual content. Consequently, these items seem to be trivial to Judah; he gives them to her without any hesitation, but to Tamar they are important; 'to be or not to be.'

When their bargaining is finished, the narrator tells the story very quickly in the last half of verse 18: 'So he gave [נתן] them to her, and went in [בוא] to her, and she conceived [הרה] by him' (NRSV). It seems that the intent of the narrator in this verse is to emphasise that 'Judah is the father of the coming child'.[107] However, there is no such comment about Judah in the last scene at the births of Perez and Zerah (vv. 27-30). The narrator's voice in verse 19 expresses an inclusio, that is, the order of the verbs in verse 14 related to Tamar's activities in the following triplet is reversed: 'clothing, actions and locations'[108] / 'location, action, clothing.'[109] As Jan William Tarlin aptly points out, '...Tamar set in motion a series of transformations that reconfigured her from abandoned widowed daughter-in-law, to bride, to wild woman, to prostitute, to phallic mother.'[110] Therefore, it is obvious that the Tamar

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[102] Anthony J. Lambe, 'Genesis 38: Structure and Literary Design', in Philip R. Davies & David J.A. Clines (eds.), *The World of Genesis: Persons, Places, Perspectives* (JSOTSup, 257: Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), pp. 102-20 (114-16).

[103] Aschkenasy, *Woman at the Window: Biblical Tales of Oppression and Escape*, p. 88.

[104] Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, p. 9.

[105] Shields, '"More Righteous than I": The Comeuppance of the Trickster in Genesis 38', p. 44.

[106] Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18-50*, p. 444.

[107] Shields, '"More Righteous than I": The Comeuppance of the Trickster in Genesis 38', p. 44.

[108] Lambe, 'Genesis 38: Structure and Literary Design', p. 116.

[109] Matthews, *More Than Meets the Ear: Discovering the Hidden Contexts of Old Testament Conversations*, p. 60.

[110] Jan William Tarlin, 'Tamar's veil: Ideology at the Entrance to Enaim', in George Aichele (ed.), *Culture, Entertainment and the Bible* (JSOTSup, 309: Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), pp. 174-81 (180).

character acts systematically within her story through the verses 12-19.

4.3.4. Tamar's Hidden Identity (Gen. 38:20-23)

This part returns to Judah as subject after Tamar's plot against him in the previous section. From Judah's point of view, this scene can be designated as 'Judah's attempt to retrieve his pledge'[111] from a prostitute. But the prostitute (Tamar) does not appear in this scene. Instead, the anonymous woman (Tamar's character) is mentioned here indirectly by other characters (the narrator, Judah and Hirah). The issue, as far as the characters are concerned in this scene, is about the woman's identity as a common prostitute or a temple prostitute. Thus, the goal of reading these verses is to grasp the meaning of the implication of Tamar's hidden identity behind the dialogues between Judah, Hirah, and the local population. The way Tamar's hidden identity is understood in this scene may also help with judgements on the dynamics of the characters and the storytelling in this episode.

As a reader, one finds out two intriguing things in this section, verses 20-23; one is the fact that Hirah is unable to find the woman who had an assignation with Judah as Judah hoped he would. The other is the fact that three commentators, that is, Judah, Hirah and the men[112] of the village, as aforementioned, each have different points of view on the woman; the woman who met with Judah, the woman who was looked for by Hirah, and the woman who was talked about by the local people. That is, Judah considers the woman to be a common prostitute (זוֹנָה). Hirah reflects on her as a temple harlot (קְדֵשָׁה). Finally, the men of the place believe that there has never been a temple prostitute (קְדֵשָׁה) in the place. Given these different views on the woman in question, how can we evaluate the different opinions of the characters in this episode as to how they understand the woman who had sat on the roadside and had met with Judah?

First, the narrative employs the same verb שלח ('sent') twice, in verses 20 and 23. As

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[111] Jeansonne, *The Women of Genesis: from Sarah to Potiphar's Wife*, pp. 104-05.
[112] The *BHS* reads אַנְשֵׁי (Gen. 38: 21; 'the townspeople' NRSV).

Johanna W. H. Bos observes, 'The section opens with the phrase "Judah sent" (v. 20) and closes with Judah's announcement, "I sent" (v. 23)'.[113] The use of this particular verb in this way constitutes a structural juxtaposition. The first instance is in 'reported speech' by the narrator.[114] The second is part of Judah's speech where Judah's character is also reporting.[115] Thus, this unit comes to an agreement between the narrator and the character in the choice of verb to describe the action. It may also mean that the story piles Judah's action and speech up appropriately in a balanced manner within the smaller episode.

In order to view another dynamic of the literary artistry related to Tamar's hidden identity, it is important to note that another verb root מצא is used three times (vv. 20, 22, and 23) in this section.[116] Let us look at this in some detail.

Speaker	**Speech**	**Verse**
Narrator	'…he [Hirah] did not find her [וְלֹא מְצָאָהּ]…'	(v. 20)
Hirah	'…I [Hirah] have not found her [לֹא מְצָאתִיהָ]…'	(v. 22)
Judah	'…You [Hirah] could not find her [לֹא מְצָאתָהּ]'	(v. 23)

The sentences above indicate a variety of uses in the narrative; first, for example, the speakers are all different. The first one is described by the narrator, the second one is told by Hirah himself, and the last one is a comment by Judah. Secondly, at the same time, the subject of the verb used by the speakers is the third (he/Hirah), the first (I/Hirah) and the second (You/Hirah) person (pronoun) respectively. Lastly, the final speaker is emphasised: narrator → Hirah → **Judah**. That is to say, although the three speakers are different, the most important one is the speaker of the final speech because the focus is on him. The person who

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[113] Johanna W.H. Bos, 'Out of the Shadows: Genesis 38; Judges 4:17-22; Ruth 3', in J. Cheryl Exum and Johanna W.H. Bos (eds.), *Reasoning with the Foxes Female Wit in a World of Male Power* (Semeia, 42; Atlanta: SBL, 1988), pp. 37-67 (43).

[114] Gérard Genette describes it as a *narratized discourse* which is a speech by the narrator himself, quoting Plato. See *Narrative Discourse: an Essay in Method* (trans. Jane E. Lewin; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), pp. 170-75.

[115] Genette calls this an *imitated discourse* which is reported by the character, quoting Homer, in his *Narrative Discourse: an Essay in Method*, pp. 170-71.

[116] Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18-50*, p. 446.

needs to find the woman is ultimately Judah as the main character in this episode. After hearing the news that Hirah had not found the prostitute, Judah wants to avoid becoming a figure of fun to people (v. 23). Accordingly, the text implies that it was Judah himself who could not find the woman in the end. The narrator sets a more general mood in the exposition stage of the story, but the speeches of the characters show more detail along with the 'character's inner life'.[117] Furthermore, the narrator's report and the characters' direct speeches seem to gradually strengthen the meaning of the verb. For instance, the verb מצא is connected with Hirah the Adullamite who is sent by Judah to the meeting place with the woman; but Hirah is not the person who is finally responsible for the event. Ironically, the use of the verb מצא in searching for the woman finally reaches a climax through Judah's direct speech in verse 23. As a matter of fact, it was ultimately not Hirah who had an interest in finding the woman; the person who could not find the woman is Judah himself, and not Hirah. Thus, it can be inferred that the double-effect of the narrative in this section is shown through the three repetitions of the verb מצא by the speakers and the emphasising of Tamar's hidden identity through the speakers. From the use of the verb מצא we can recognise that the three speakers refer to the same word in turn, but that the focus of the dialogue between Hirah and Judah is different with regards to their understandings of the same woman, Tamar.

As for the words זנה and קדשה, the narrator says that Judah presumed the anonymous woman to be a common prostitute (זנה) in verse 15, while Hirah speaks of a temple harlot (קדשה) or a hierodule[118] when he talks to the local people and Judah in verses 21 and 22 respectively.[119] The word זנה occurs within the narration, whilst the term קדשה is only used in the dialogue. Sarna presumes that Hirah intentionally employs the 'Canaanite notions' of קדשה because the word 'harlot' could be considered a corruption of religion to the Israelites, and he

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[117] Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1994), pp. 37-8; Bar-Efrat says, 'A different technique of presenting the inner life of characters directly is by giving their thoughts, calculations and intentions.' Shimon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible* (JSOTSup, 70; Bible and Literature Series 17; Sheffield: Almond Press, 1989), pp. 63-4, especially 63.

[118] Literally, the word קְדֵשָׁה means a 'consecrated woman' or 'sacred woman'. Michael C. Astour, 'Tamar the Hierodule: An Essay in the Method of Vestigial Motifs', *JBL* 85 (1966), pp. 185-96. However, it seems that Astour's premise of Tamar as a temple harlot looks hasty from the beginning. See especially p. 185.

[119] Hirah's speech to Judah in verse 23 is a report of what the local population said in verse 21.

quotes Hosea 4:14 as proof ('I will not punish your daughters when they play the whore, nor your daughters-in-law when they commit adultery; for the men themselves go aside with whores, and sacrifice with temple prostitutes; thus a people without understanding comes to ruin'. NRSV)[120] However, Brenner argues that, 'Tamar pretends to be a priestess, a hallowed one…', although קדשה was the original designation and זנה secondary in ancient Israel.[121] According to Bird, no matter what she was called, 'Hirah knows how to handle the situation; he uses a euphemism – comparable to our substitution of the term "courtesan" for the cruder expression "whore" – (a substitution of court language in the latter instance, cult language in the former)'.[122] Anyway, the confusion about the woman's identity, at least, to the characters leaves the reader with an unclear impression because the meanings of the two terms are actually different.

In relation to the point of view in this story, it may be accurate to say, as Gunn and Fewell do, that the narrator restarts the story from Judah's viewpoint after verse 20.[123] In reality, however, Judah as a main character, leaves an unfavourable impression trying to avoid shaming himself in front of the people from the disclosure of his business deal with the woman he considered to be a prostitute (v. 23). Of course, in the words of Frymer-Kensky, 'Tamar has disappeared back into her widowhood...'[124] But the present issue for the characters in this section is the anonymous woman's identity for Judah calls her *the woman* (הָאִשָּׁה) and not *the prostitute*[125] when he sends Hirah to find her (v. 20). As Hamilton points out, it is highly probable that, 'Her namelessness is the narrative's way of emphasizing Judah's casual relationship with Tamar'.[126] This seems to telescope two things – the namelessness may show something about Judah's relationship to the prostitute, but he does not know that it also says something about his relationship to Tamar. Presumably, on the basis of her experience in

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[120] Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis-*בראשית, p. 269.
[121] Brenner, 'Gender in Prophecy, Magic and Priesthood: From Sumer to Ancient Israel', p. 12.
[122] Bird, 'The Harlot as Heroine: Narrative Art and Social Presupposition in Three Old Testament Texts', p. 126.
[123] Gunn and Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 40.
[124] Frymer-Kensky, *Reading Women of the Bible: A New Interpretation of Their Stories*, p. 272.
[125] Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18-50*, p. 446.
[126] Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18-50*, p. 446.

Judah's house earlier, Tamar would know the pattern of Judah's moods, his actions and inner thoughts so that she would design her scheme to enable her plot against Judah to succeed. Aschkenasy also agrees with this and says, 'To deceive Judah successfully, as she does, Tamar must have a strong understanding of how she is perceived by others, since only then can she skilfully conceal her true identity'. [127]

For this reason, it is not an exaggeration to say that the whole mood of verses 20-23 has been already supplied by the hidden Tamar. In other words, Tamar has never lost control since the beginning of her plot in verses 12-19,[128] but Judah has still not obtained the initiative in the confrontation with his daughter-in-law, even though Judah is the head of a patriarchal family. Judah is present in the scene but passive, dispatching Hirah to act for him. In addition, in the confrontation with his daughter-in-law, Judah can be understood as a symbolic leader in the family, whilst Tamar, who had already planned this scenario, holds the true initiative in this smaller episode. Therefore, it may be concluded that, 'She [Tamar] does not actually appear in verses 20-23 but her lack of presence is significant in itself'.[129]

4.3.5. Tamar's Pregnancy and Judah's Trial (Gen. 38:24-26)

The unit starts again with the time heading: 'About three months later' (וַיְהִי כְּמִשְׁלֹשׁ חֳדָשִׁים). It is unique as a phrase referring to a specified time in the story of Genesis 38. This may imply a significant moment for both Tamar and Judah at the 'Unravel[l]ing' [130] stage of the chapter. As for Tamar, it is a concrete time for her to reveal her pregnancy to other people and even to her father-in-law. It is also a real time for Judah to be notified of Tamar's prostitution and her pregnancy (v. 24). That is, the time phrase foreshadows near future events from the opposing

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[127] See Aschkenasy, *Woman at the Window: Biblical Tales of Oppression and Escape*, p. 89.

[128] Gunn and Fewell insist that the narrator recommences Judah's viewpoint in Gen. 38:20-23, in *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 40. However, I would like to point out that Judah's viewpoint and Judah's initiative in this section are different in my arguments.

[129] Margaret Parks Cowan, *Genesis 38: The Story of Judah and Tamar and Its Role in the Ancestral Narratives of Genesis* (Unpublished PhD Dissertation; Vanderbilt University, 1990), p. 145.

[130] Amit suggests there are five stages in every story: Exposition, Complication, Change, Unravel[l]ing, and Ending. According to her, we can see that the scene of the exposure of the identity of the woman in verses 24-26 can be called an 'Unravel[l]ing'. See Yairah Amit, *Reading Biblical Narratives: Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), pp. 46-47.

standpoints of the main characters. These standpoints are Tamar's adventurous idea of using sex to get justice, which is dangerous in the patriarchal system on the one hand, and Judah's resentment and horrifying judgment against his daughter-in-law on the other. The smaller episode includes Judah being told that Tamar, his daughter-in-law, has prostituted herself with someone so having brought about her pregnancy (v. 24).

The narrator employs the same verb mode (וַיֻּגַּד לִיהוּדָה, 'and Judah was told', v. 24 NRSV) for Judah as had been used for Tamar when she was told that Judah would be coming to Timnah to shear his sheep (וַיֻּגַּד לְתָמָר, 'When Tamar was told', v. 13 NRSV). In particular, the verb נגד causes rapid changes in the characters' inner lives and their actions; when Tamar heard the news, she took off the mourning clothes of a widow and hurriedly covered her face with a veil. Likewise, when Judah hears the unacceptable news about his daughter-in-law, he gives his rapid and 'incredibly cruel'[131] instruction to his people, 'Bring her out, and let her be burned' (NRSV v. 24). Judah's quick and unexpected speech as a powerful patriarch is decisive and in this way somewhat similar to Tamar's actions when she prepared to meet him on the roadside in Timnah (v. 13). The respective structural functions of the two instances of the verb are undoubtedly different; the former marks the beginning of Tamar's designed plot against Judah and the latter marks the ending part of the three middle scenes (vv. 12-19, 20-23, 24-26) in verses 12-26. The two parallel actions between the main characters allow us to feel suspense twice within the story in Genesis 38. Both verbs also emphasise the fact that Judah and Tamar know of each other's actions only through other people, but by the same token, they remind us that there are other people around who do not only know both of them but are talking about their actions and know that the actions of one are of interest to the other. Here, the anonymous tale-bearer knows that Judah's honour as patriarch is affected by the actions of Tamar as a member of his family, even if he has sent her back home. Why does her own family such as her father or brothers not react to this news?

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[131] Jeansonne, *The Women of Genesis: From Sarah to Potiphar's Wife*, p. 105.

However, is it an exaggeration to say that Judah mimics the patterns of Tamar's actions when she has everything under the 'total control of her being'[132] when he judges her so severely using his patriarchal authority. To be sure, Tamar could calculate Judah's response and his temper when her pregnancy becomes known and it is persuasive to say that, 'Tamar has read Judah (and her whole society) correctly...for she has anticipated the entire scenario.'[133] However, Judah's announcement of death by burning might be unexpected to Tamar.[134] According to Gunn and Fewell, in the case of Tamar, the punishment Judah should sentence her to should not be death by burning but by stoning, as it is written in Deuteronomy 22:20-21:[135]

> If, however, this charge is true, that evidence of the young woman's virginity was not found, then they shall bring the young woman out to the entrance of her father's house and the men of her town shall stone her to death, because she committed a disgraceful act in Israel by prostituting herself in her father's house. So you shall purge the evil from your midst. (Deut. 22:20-21, NRSV)

However, this refers to the penalty for a virgin daughter, which is not quite Tamar's situation. Jeansonne maintains that, 'Death by burning is specified for the act of prostitution by a priest's daughter (Lev. 21:9) and if a man takes a woman and her mother as wives, all are to be punished this way' (Lev. 20:14).[136] But this is also not the case with Tamar because we are not sure whether Tamar is a daughter of priest or not in the story. Instead, the Leviticus Code reads, 'If a man lies with his daughter-in-law, both of them shall be put to death; they have committed perversion; their blood is upon them' (Lev. 20:12 NRSV). As a matter of fact, the punishment should have included Judah himself as a father-in-law as well, though he did not recognise Tamar. Judah's sentence, indeed, looks like an error from the point of view of

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[132] Aschkenasy, *Woman at the Window: Biblical Tales of Oppression and Escape*, p. 89.

[133] For further arguments, see Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible: A New Interpretation of Their Stories*, p. 273.

[134] Leviticus 21:9 reads, 'When the daughter of a priest profanes herself through prostitution, she profanes her father; she shall be burned to death.' (NRSV)

[135] Gunn and Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 42.

[136] Jeansonne, *The Women of Genesis: From Sarah to Potiphar's Wife*, p. 105.

Israelite law and furthermore, he should have included himself in the punishment. If Judah knows the levirate law, he, as a patriarch, should also know the punishments for the sin of an individual in the community. However, Judah's application of the law looks strange. To help understand this problem, we need to ask two questions; first, what exactly is Tamar's offence in terms of the judgment by her father-in-law? Second, is Judah's punishment against his daughter-in-law correct? It is right to say that, as Jeansonne puts it, '...in order for Tamar to be considered an adulteress, she must be either Er's widow or Shelah's future wife. Tamar has been denied on both accounts.'[137] It seems, therefore, that Judah's trial is a mistrial.

Then, we now need to scrutinise Tamar's two speeches as she is brought out in front of the public: 'It was the owner of these who made me pregnant' and 'Take note [הַכֶּר-נָא], please, whose these are, the signet and the cord and the staff' (v. 25 NRSV). The former is Tamar's direct speech, but the target of her speech is only mentioned indirectly. She has no intention of saying directly who made her pregnant. Instead, she makes use of an imperative mood in her speech when she talks to Judah, presenting the pledges (the signet, the cord and the staff). Although she does it this way for the purpose of keeping the honour of her household and father-in-law,[138] it is certainly also from Tamar's perspective to protect her own honour as well.[139]

The narrator (or the author) shows his (or her) literary sensibility by using the same verb root שלח in verse 25 and Judah uses it in verses 20 and 23 respectively. The verb looks more effective when it is employed in verse 24 by Tamar from her viewpoint in conjunction 'with the term her father-in-law'[140] (שָׁלְחָה אֶל־חָמִיהָ). As a result, it is time that Tamar makes clear the plan she has designed against Judah, her father-in-law. For Tamar, her pregnancy and her father-in-law's anger could be expected to some extent. On the other hand, Judah could

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[137] Jeansonne, *The Women of Genesis: Form Sarah to Potiphar's Wife*, p. 105.

[138] Matthews states, '...the woman defends the honor of her household...She does not publicly denounce Judah but allows him to save face while at the same time requiring him to state...' See 'Female Voices: Upholding the Honor of the Household', pp. 8-9

[139] Jeansonne, *The Women of Genesis: Form Sarah to Potiphar's Wife*, p. 99.

[140] Gunn and Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 42.

not have anticipated anything about the proceedings until the presentation of the pledges by his daughter-in-law. Judah knew nothing of Tamar's plan until she produced the pledges. Judah actually never takes the initiative in verses 12-26, whereas Tamar is able to manipulate him. Furthermore, Tamar's speeches in verse 25 strengthen her intended plot against her father-in-law. It seems that Tamar does not hurry when she presents her case. Rather, she presents a careful demonstration of the case like an excellent attorney in the court. In her first speech in this section in verses 24-26, Tamar speaks in defence of herself.[141] After that, in her second speech, she presents convincing evidence.

Finally, Judah has to admit his wrong-doings toward his daughter-in-law in verse 26 and 'understands all that he had failed to see before'.[142] If we take into account Tamar's prepared plan against her father-in-law as seen above, it is most likely that she predicted the whole situation.[143] From all this it should be clear that Judah's last speech maintaining Tamar's innocence (צָדְקָה מִמֶּנִּי כִּי־עַל־כֵּן לֹא־נְתַתִּיהָ לְשֵׁלָה בְנִי, 'She is more in the right than I, since I did not give her to my son Shelah'. NRSV) may reinforce the literary strategy. In this respect, Judah's announcement can be read as an encapsulation of his characterisation; that is this is where one's opinion of him could shift, he could be seen 'in a bad light'[144] or 'in a favourable light'.[145]

However, in relation to what I have previously discussed about Tamar's adventurous project, Judah's confession reveals how thoroughly Judah fell for Tamar's plan. In addition, this section verses 24-26 is often understood to be androcentric rather than gynocentric,[146] but my argument is that if Tamar's actions and their effects, which 'prevail and change the

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[141] Jeansonne, *The Women of Genesis: Form Sarah to Potiphar's Wife*, p. 99.
[142] Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible: A New Interpretation of Their Stories*, p. 273.
[143] Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible: A New Interpretation of Their Stories*, p. 273.
[144] Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2001), p. 508; Mark G. Brett, *Genesi : Procreation and the Politics of Identity* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 113.
[145] Amit, *Reading Biblical Narratives: Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible*, pp. 143-47.
[146] Bos sees 'a gynocentric bias' in the story in Genesis 38. See Bos, 'Out of the Shadows: Genesis 38; Judges 4: 17-22; Ruth 3', pp. 48-49.

direction of events'[147] are not considered, the reader would not be able to understand this unit in a balanced way. This is not merely about defending Tamar as a female character over against Judah the male character, but comes from the perspective of Tamar's own point of view. As a matter of fact, the events surrounding Judah are anticipated and estimated by Tamar in the middle of the story in Genesis 38:12-26. It is obvious, therefore, that the three scenes (vv. 12-19, 20-23, 24-26) are inclined towards Tamar rather than Judah in this reading from Tamar's perspective.

4.3.6. Tamar's New Identity: Building Her Own Family (Gen. 38:27-30)

The last episode of the story introduces Tamar's giving birth to twin boys (Perez and Zerah); that is, the birth of Judah's sons can be read as implying that they replace the previous two sons (Er and Onan) from Judah's viewpoint.[148] To be sure, the beginning of Genesis 38 focuses on Judah who departs from his brothers (vv. 1-5), while the last scene is concerned with the mother who bears twins (vv. 27-30).[149] In other words, Tamar does not appear until verse 6, whilst Judah as a chief actor, in effect, is not present in the final scene.[150] It is true, in this regard, that the last section of Genesis 38 could be called the ending part of 'Tamar's story'[151] on the basis of the narration and the midwife's speeches through the process of Tamar's delivery.

First of all, we see the last time indicator in verse 27, which acts as a sort of prelude to the specific depiction of the births.[152] The first word of the sentence וַיְהִי has two functions:

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[147] Bos, 'Out of the Shadows: Genesis 38; Judges 4:17-22; Ruth 3', p. 48.

[148] 'From Judah's point of view, this final scene corrects an imbalance. He has lost two sons; now the two sons are replaced – much as in the story of Job'. See Gunn and Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 44.

[149] Gunn and Gewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 45.

[150] Of course, it is appropriate to say that, 'Unless one accepts the MT of vv. 29, 30, and identifies him as the unnamed subject of the verb' one may come to a different conclusion as to Judah's role because most ancient versions such as LXX, SP, Targ, Pesh. read this verb וַתִּקְרָא ('and she called') but MT reads וַיִּקְרָא ('and he called'). See Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis-בראשית*, p. 270; Gordon Wenham, *Genesis 16-50* (WBC, 2; Dallas: Word Books Publisher, 1994), p. 363; Victor R. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 18-50* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), p. 452-53.

[151] Alice Ogden Bellis calls Genesis 38 'Tamar's story' in terms of Tamar's point of view in her, *Helpmates, Harlots, and Heroes: Women's Stories in the Hebrew Bible* (2nd edn; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), pp. 77-78; Bos, 'Out of the Shadows: Genesis 38; Judges 4:17-22; Ruth 3', p. 48.

[152] Bos, 'Out of the Shadows: Genesis 38; Judges 4:17-22; Ruth 3', p. 44.

it announces a new scene and follows in sequence the previous time headings (v. 1, 24).[153] At the same time, it leads us into the following section. Bos states that, 'The details of the birth process draw attention to the giving of life in which Tamar is involved against all expectation'.[154] This means that the results for which Tamar constructed her plot come to a natural conclusion for the reader.

In conjunction, then, with the larger patriarchal story in Genesis, the description of Tamar's pregnancy in Genesis 38:27 may call to mind Rebekah's in Genesis 25:24. These two episodes have several things in common. Let us have a look at them together:

וַיִּמְלְאוּ יָמֶיהָ לָלֶדֶת וְהִנֵּה תוֹמִם בִּבְטְנָהּ: (Gen. 25:24)

(When her [Rebakah] time to give birth was at hand, there were twins in her womb. NRSV)

וַיְהִי בְּעֵת לִדְתָּהּ וְהִנֵּה תְאוֹמִים בִּבְטְנָהּ : (Gen. 38:27)

(When the time of her [Tamar] delivery came, there were twins in her womb. NRSV)

According to Nahum M. Sarna, the twins in Genesis 38:27 cannot be compared directly with Genesis 25:24 because of the different patterns of the word,[155] but it is obvious that both the cases certainly use the word תאם (the meaning is 'twins').[156] Rather, the two phrases reveal a parallel in the description of the women's wombs and in grammatical form. Tamar's twins may imply 'compensation for Judah's two deceased sons'[157] and for each we could say that 'The birth of this child not only perpetuates the lineage of his dead father; it also establishes the lineal heir for his grandfather, in this case Judah'.[158] However, these statements about Judah have to be added to this passage which focuses on Tamar as a mother who has a

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[153] The word וַיְהִי at the beginning of verses 7 and 29 is not related to the time phrases, but only used as a verb by the narrator to indicate the subject's action.

[154] Bos, 'Out of the Shadows: Genesis 38; Judges 4:17-22; Ruth 3', p. 44.

[155] Sarna says, 'Unlike in Rebekah's case, as told in [Gen.] 25:24, twins were apparently not expected', in *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis-*בראשית, p. 270.

[156] BDB, p. 1060.

[157] Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis-*בראשית, p. 270; Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis 18-50*, pp. 452-53.

[158] Naomi Steinberg, *Kinship and Marriage in Genesis: A Household Economics Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), p. 127.

significant place in the house of Judah. Without Tamar, the last scene could not be read properly.

In verses 28 to 30, the story of Tamar is reinforced with the support of the narration and the midwife's speeches simultaneously. These verses are composed of five steps in terms of the speaker: narrator – midwife's speech – narrator – midwife's speech – narrator (ABABA). As mentioned above, it should be noted that one of the outstanding features in this last section of Genesis 38 is that Judah does not appear on the scene. Instead, Shields' statement on Tamar is meaningful, 'Like Abraham, Tamar is decisive to the future of Israel. It is through her actions that Judah's line is carried on: through her second son, Perez, Tamar establishes the Davidic line'.[159] This is because, as Jeasonne points out, 'Tamar's own initiative enabled her to have the child to which she was entitled, but the reader knows that an injustice remains – Judah does not provide support for her'.[160] Even so, is it true that, 'The attention of the story and its readers passes from Tamar to her sons and to the father who names them, claiming his role in their lives'[161] because 'the narrative seems to echo a history of rivalry between clans and is to be compared with [Gen.] 25:22-23'?[162] Finally, Gunn and Fewell conclude:

> Unlike the beginning of the story the ending focuses upon the mother....Tamar building her own family and consequently her own future...Then Tamar becomes, like the daughter of Shua, just another channel for the male seed. She is triumphal in her own story in the birth of sons, yet eclipsed in the ongoing story by those sons and their unrighteous father.[163]

Indeed, the final scene in verses 27-30 focuses on Tamar who gives birth to two sons. Although she was just a childless widow, Tamar finally overcame the hardships and became a mother who built her own family. This is how Tamar arrives at her new identity as a

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[159] Shields, '"More Righteous Than I": The Comeuppance of the Trickster in Genesis 38', p. 48.
[160] Jeansonne, *The Women of Genesis: From Sarah to Potiphar's Wife*, p. 106.
[161] Bellis, *Helpmates, Harlots, and Heroes: Women's Stories in the Hebrew Bible*, pp. 77-78.
[162] Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis*-בראשית, p. 270.
[163] Gunn and Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 45.

productive womb in Judah's family.

4.4. The Significance of Tamar's Character from a Literary Perspective

4.4.1. The Significance of Tamar's Character

Generally speaking, characterisation, in the narrative approach, is one of the vital factors along with narrator and plot in the composition of a story. The Tamar-Judah story in Genesis 38 is by no means an exception to this principle. Tamar is a unique competitive female character opposite Judah, who is her father-in-law, in the story.[164] When we read the larger context of the story in Genesis 37 to 50, the apparent differences between the two characters, at first glance, are very plain in the range of occurrences of their names as well as in the fact that one is male and the other is female. Let us now look at these differences between the two characters.

First, narrative material related to Judah can be read throughout the broader text base of Genesis 37:26-27, 43:8-10, 44:14-34, 46:28 and 49:8-12 as well as in chapter 38.[165] By contrast, the Tamar character is only active in Genesis 38 within the 'Story of Jacob and his Sons'[166] in the book of Genesis. The distinction between the two characters in the scope of the narrative which mentions them directly may simply lead the modern reader to assume that Tamar is a minor character and subordinated to Judah. However, if one reflects on the manner in which the story unfolds in the chapter and the two characters' traits within the text, the evaluation of a character should be delayed until it is clarified in the larger narrative. The

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[164] Although Judah has three sons (Er, Onan, and Shelah), Tamar is a sole daughter-in-law to him in accordance with the levirate marriage law (Deut. 25:5-10).

[165] Throughout Genesis 37 to 50, the gravity of the character role of Judah is never less than Joseph's. Joseph has an important function in encouraging Jacob and his brothers to emigrate to Egypt, while Judah attempts to force Joseph to release Benjamin to go back to Canaan from his position as a hostage in Egypt. This motivation enables Jacob to go to Egypt finally. In the context of this, it is not true to say that Jacob and his sons' journey to Egypt is only due to Joseph. Judah gives an imminent spur to Joseph's change of mind (Gen. 44:18-34). In addition, at least to the present reader, it seems that the centre of moving to Egypt is still Jacob (Israel). This understanding leads us to see the use of different names Jacob in Canaan and Israel in Egypt respectively, as George W. Coats notes in his book, *Genesis: with an Introduction to Narrative Literature* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), p. 293; Brodie sees these six chapters about Judah as,'The Climactic Role of Judah'. See Brodie, *Genesis as Dialogue: A Literary, Historical, and Theological Commentary*, pp. 46, 352.

[166] The argument for this amended title, which I propose instead of 'the story of Joseph', is not mentioned here but will be discussed in chapter 5 in this thesis.

contents of chapter 38 themselves could be independent compared to the surrounding stories, but the impact of a character may still open to the wider range of the larger narrative through literary links.

In terms of the length of the story, it would be more natural for present day readers to comprehend that this preconception of the Tamar character as marginal could have originated from the range of the story which makes mention of her.[167] Shimon Bar-Efrat, one of the literary critics, states as follows:

> In real life not everything people do is characteristic of them, but this is not the case in a literary work of art, or at least in a short story. In this respect, the length of the work is of decisive importance: because there is no room in a short story to describe the various deeds and repeated actions of any one character single actions necessarily serve to define the person. The short story chooses to relate the particular action which is characteristic of the individual and can exemplify what is considered to constitute the essential nature. We remember Cain as someone who murdered his brother, and Amnon as the person who violated his sister. If the author had wanted us to see them in different light we would have been told about other (or additional) things they did.[168]

It is true to say that in a short story we cannot expect to understand all of a character's traits. To be sure, we cannot deny that the length of a story is of importance for the purpose of a character's evaluation. In this context, it has been argued that whether a character is round or flat depends the length of the story.[169] However, as Gunn and Fewell put it, 'The narrator offers subtle but significant clues [in a short story]'[170] so that 'Biblical short stories are seldom so stark in their representation. Remembering characters on the basis of one act or trait is more often the product of tradition, not of close reading'.[171] A character's speeches and

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[167] 'One of the difficulties in understanding a character's place in the story is that we often come to biblical stories with strong preconceptions.' See Amit, *Reading Biblical Narrative: Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible*, p. 87.

[168] Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, p. 80.

[169] Gunn and Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 77; Bar-Efrat calls flat characters 'one-dimensional', and round ones 'three-dimensional'. He elaborates as follows, 'On the one hand, a flat character is defined as having one single feature, while a round one is complex and has several traits. On the other hand, a round character is perceived changing and developing while flat ones remain static however often they may appear.' Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, p. 90.

[170] Gunn and Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 79.

[171] Gunn and Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 77.

actions or descriptions by the narrator[172] in a short story may have meaningful literary implications even beyond the story and the evaluation of a character could alter in the larger picture of the narrative as well as in a short story. Furthermore, in the Bible, the literary methods for assessing a character such as linguistic parallels, motif, theme, and aesthetic connections, can be combined with those in other stories as part of the author's literary artistry. In order to clarify this point, next we shall present an analysis of the literary significance of the character of Tamar in Genesis 38.

From Judah's viewpoint, Genesis 38 is basically 'the story of the house of Judah'.[173] Judah attempts to establish his new family away from his father Jacob. Verse 1 reads, 'It happened at that time that Judah *went down* from his brothers and settled near a certain Adullamite whose name was Hirah' (NRSV). Judah's efforts to build his own house continue when he marries a Canaanite woman who is a daughter of Shua, who bears three sons, but his two oldest sons (Er, Onan) die and only the third remains. However, it would seem that Judah fears his daughter-in-law, Tamar, who has been pledged to be the wife of his third son according to the levirate marriage custom at that time. In fact, Judah's attempt to start his own family is actually finished when he sends Tamar back to her father's house (v. 11). By contrast, Tamar has a plan to conceive a baby by Judah and finally succeeds in it.[174] The intriguing successive scenes dominated by Tamar's design are located in the middle of the whole story and are composed of at least two parts (vv. 12-23, 24-26). These sections each start with time headings: וַיִּרְבּוּ הַיָּמִם ('in course of time', NRSV), וַיְהִי כְּמִשְׁלֹשׁ חֳדָשִׁים ('about three months later', NRSV). The middle scenes in Genesis 38:12-26 are related to Tamar's detailed scheme to deceive Judah.

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[172] Berlin writes on characterisation as follows, 'The reader reconstructs a character from the information provided to him in the discourse: he is told by the statements and evaluations of the narrator and other characters, and he infers from the speech and action of the character himself.' Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*, p. 34.

[173] Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible: a New Interpretation of Their Stories*, pp. 264-77; on the ancestors of the clans of Judah in relation to Genesis 38 within the historical background, see J.A. Emerton, 'Judah and Tamar', *VT* 29 (1979), pp. 403-15.

[174] 'The courage and wisdom of Tamar, Judah's daughter-in-law, results in the successful re-establishment of Judah's patrilineage (Gen. 38).' See Esther Fuchs, *Sexual Politics in the Biblical Narrative: Reading the Hebrew Bible as a Woman* (JSOTSup, 310; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), p. 46.

However, there still remains an unexplained aspect for the readers in the last section of the chapter (vv. 27-30). Why is Judah not referred to by the narrator in this scene while Tamar as a mother is depicted in the process of giving birth to the twin boys? If Genesis 38 is the story of Judah's house as was shown above, his name should probably – if not *definitely* – have been mentioned in the final scene. Instead, one reads of the account of Tamar in childbirth, a midwife and two sons, but no Judah. When Perez was born, he was named by someone ambiguously (literally, if we accept the MT version of this verse, this was probably Judah because the verb קרא is in the Qal imperfect, third person, masculine singular) or it could be impersonal or, effectively, a passive form with the omission of the name of Judah as the subject (וַיִּקָּרֵא שְׁמוֹ פָּרֶץ). If we are looking for a male antecedent in this chapter, then Judah is the most likely one, but this is not made clear in the text. This is in striking contrast to the naming of Er. When Er, the first son of Judah, was born, Judah named him immediately in verses 2-3 (וַיַּרְא־שָׁם יְהוּדָה בַּת־אִישׁ כְּנַעֲנִי וּשְׁמוֹ שׁוּעַ וַיִּקָּחֶהָ וַיָּבֹא אֵלֶיהָ: וַתַּהַר וַתֵּלֶד בֵּן וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ עֵר). According to the MT reading, the fact that Judah names his son could indicate that the society is male-centred and Judah plays his role as a father actively. In other words, it may suggest that the author would like to show us Judah's authority and the meaning of that authority in his family. The narrator, however, does not use the same pattern for Perez. In addition, Judah does not appear as a subject in the sentences in verses 27 to 30. The midwife is the subject twice (v. 28, 29). Other versions, however, read that the verb קרא raises a new question as to whether the midwife or Tamar could have named Perez as Judah's wife did with Onan and Shelah (v. 4, 5).

Thus, with respect to the building of Judah's house, undoubtedly, it needs to be pointed out that the central character, in the last stage at least, is not Judah but Tamar. This means that even though Tamar appears as an active character only in chapter 38, the significance of her character as the mother of Perez is not the same as that of the other ordinary characters in the story. When it comes to building up the family of Judah, Tamar is no longer a minor character. As J. A. Emerton has aptly observed, 'She is in a sense the

heroine of the story'[175] and, as Frymer-Kensky states, 'Tamar passes from the scene, but her impact continues'.[176]

Secondly, it would not be an overstatement to say that the biblical narrative reflects an androcentric or male-dominated social system.[177] For that reason, it is no wonder that Genesis 38 has fundamentally focused on the character of Judah: the male rather than the character of Tamar: the female. But the common social notion towards Judah and Tamar, as a man and woman respectively, with regards to sexual intercourse with another person can lead present-day readers to retain a fixed idea in their minds as to a double standard of morality between male and female characters. When Judah and Tamar have intercourse together, for Judah as a widower, it seems not to matter, even if Judah could be considered guilty of incest (Lev. 20:12); yet, for Tamar as a widow, the same deed corresponds to her being guilty under Israelite law and deserving of the death sentence (Gen. 38:24). That is, if this reading is right, the gender discrimination between the male and female characters, at least, could have given an impetus for modern readers to look at their social positions from a fixed viewpoint.

In relation to the double standards in aspects of the story, Bos argues that this general androcentric bias is counterbalanced by a gynocentric bias in Genesis 38 as follows:

> Androcentric bias is also clearly visible in the interpretations of the story which show difficulty in dealing with a woman as a central character...her [Tamar] actions based on this view prevail and change the direction of events...The story of Tamar points in the direction of a gynocentric bias. The men in the story are wrongheaded irresponsible bunglers, who don't see straight. They are shown up as such by Tamar, who notices correctly and who causes Judah such an "eye-opener" that his view of reality is restored. The tone in which the men are discussed, summarily dispatched by God, or acting as if they were in charge and all the while making fools of themselves, points to a gynocentric bias as well.[178]

She believes that the story of Tamar-Judah contains both patriarchy and its counter-voice

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[175] Emerton, 'Judah and Tamar', p. 410.
[176] Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible: a New Interpretation of Their Stories*, p. 275.
[177] Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible: a New Interpretation of Their Stories*, pp. xiii-xvii.
[178] Johanna W.H. Bos, 'Out of the Shadows: Genesis 38; Judges 4:17-22; Ruth 3', in J. Cheryl Exum and Johanna W.H. Bos (eds.), *Reasoning with the Foxes: Female Wit in a World of Male Power* (Semeia, 42; Atlanta: SBL, 1988), pp. 37-67, especially pp. 48-9.

simultaneously. That is, Tamar does not change the structure of the patriarchal system but effects a change in understanding in her role as the mother who establishes the line of David (Ruth 4:18-22). Nonetheless, scholars such as John Petersen state that Tamar has a 'marginal role as a barren widow'[179] in the story. He also continues that Tamar is portrayed in various roles such as 'wife and widow, prostitute and family planner, trickster and redeemer'.[180]

However, it is inappropriate to describe Tamar as 'a barren widow'. This may bring about a misunderstanding concerning her ability to reproduce, for she was not in the same situation as Sarah (Gen. 11:30, 16:1-2; cf. 17:17), Rebekah (Gen. 25:21) and Rachel (Gen. 29:31) as barren women who could not have a baby. In the case of Tamar, she is merely 'a childless widow' who, in fact, *does* have the ability to bear a child.[181] Truly, Tamar is a victim of 'enforced barrenness'[182] but she is still a 'potential fruit-bearer'.[183] The important thing is that the author employs Tamar in multiple roles as a female character in Genesis 38 and her story brings 'a ray of hope'[184] in terms of her connection to Judah's lineage.

We return to the topic of how Tamar's role is, in the words of Suzanne Shaw, 'not central [compared to Judah], but at least not marginal'.[185] Tamar is at the very least closer to a protagonist than an antagonist.[186] Therefore, Judah is a representative male character in his

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[179] John Petersen, *Reading Women's Stories: Female Characters in the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), p. 163.

[180] Petersen, *Reading Women's Stories: Female Characters in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 153.

[181] As Alice L. Laffey points out, 'She [Tamar] is not childless by nature, a barren women; she is childless by circumstance...' Alice L. Laffey, *Wives, Harlots and Concubines: The Old Testament in Feminist Perspective* (London: SPCK, 1990), p. 46; Jeansonne also designates Tamar as 'a childless widow' who protects her honour and justice against two men (Er, Onan) and her father-in-law (Judah). See Sharon Pace Jeansonne, 'Tamar: the Woman Who Demanded Justice' in *The Women of Genesis: from Sarah to Potiphar's Wife* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), pp. 98-106.

[182] Emerton, 'Judah and Tamar', p. 409.

[183] Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible*, p. 266; on the issue of Tamar's fertility, Smith says: 'She [Tamar] appears to be remarkably fertile, since she conceives after only one act of sexual intercourse with Judah.' Smith, 'The Story of Tamar: A Power-filled Challenge to the Structure of Power', p. 22.

[184] Alice O. Bellis, *Helpmates, Harlots, and Heroes: Women's Stories in the Hebrew Bible* (2nd edn; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), p. 78.

[185] Suzanne Shaw, 'Letters to the Editor of Genesis', in Philip R. Davies (ed.), *First Person: Essays in Biblical Autobiography* (The Biblical Seminar 81; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), p. 25-46 (31); Menn insists that Tamar is a 'marginal protagonist' and her shifting perspectives 'exemplify a characteristic feature of the poetics of biblical narrative'. Esther Marie Menn, *Judah and Tamar (Genesis 38) in Ancient Jewish Exegesis: Studies in Literary Form and Hermeneutics* (JSJSup, 51; Leiden: Brill, 1997), pp. 28-35.

[186] Menn says, 'she [Tamar] ultimately emerges as the narrative's unconventional protagonist when the male characters fail to initiate progress towards procreation through conventional means', and she insists that Tamar is a 'marginal protagonist' and her shifting perspectives 'exemplify a characteristic feature of the poetics of biblical

story, while Tamar is uniquely a decisive woman character in the house of Judah.

4.4.2. Tamar's Character from a Literary Perspective

So, if Tamar can be considered as a focal character along with Judah in Genesis 38, by means of which literary analytical tools does the author accomplish this? In other words, how can we read the text in relation to Tamar's character within the context of literary methods? This section will explore the question of the literary devices used to reveal Tamar's character in her story.

First of all, let us focus on the diversities of Tamar's character. As far as the variety of a character's role in the narrative is concerned, as with Judah's different character roles as a round character in Genesis 38,[187] we may draw out from the text that the character of Tamar, as a full-fledged character, is also exploited by the author in various ways: as a voiceless bride of an arranged marriage, as an outsider in the socially and physically confined circumstances in her household, [188] and as a redeemer who has her rights as a woman paid back through the serial roles as a childless widow,[189] a prostitute, a mother of twins, and so on.[190] However, the most significant role of Tamar's character as a matriarch in the wider context of the story will be discussed in chapter 5 of this thesis.

Here, instead, we need to concentrate on the literary angles used in the story of Tamar and Judah. Viewed in this light, it could be assumed that Tamar's character plays a key

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narrative.' See Menn, *Judah and Tamar (Genesis 38) in Ancient Jewish Exegesis: Studies in Literary Form and Hermeneutics*, pp. 28-35.

[187] 'Judah shifts from the married head of the household to a grieving widower to a businessman, a customer, an embarrassed dupe, a judge, and finally a morally-repentant model of proper behaviour.' See Victor H. Matthews, 'Discourse and Cognition in the Story of Judah and Tamar', in *More Than Meets the Ear: Discovering the Hidden Contexts of Old Testament Conversations* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2008), pp. 27-66 (34).

[188] Matthews, 'Discourse and Cognition in the Story of Judah and Tamar', p. 34; on the concept of the outsider, see also Frank Anthony Spina, 'Tamar's Resolve, Judah's Family, Israel's Future', in *The Faith of the Outsider: Exclusion and Inclusion in the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), pp. 35-51.

[189] Alice L. Laffey, Wives, Harlots and Concubines: The Old Testament in Feminist Perspective (London: SPCK, 1990), p. 46; Mieke Bal, *Lethal Love: Feminist Literary Readings of Biblical Love Stories*, pp. 99-100; Petersen, *Reading Women's Stories: Female Characters in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 153.

[190] Petersen says, 'She [Tamar] interacts with all the other characters in the story, gaining positive depth in roles that run the gamut for a female caught between two families: wife and widow, prostitute and family planner, trickster and redeemer.' See *Reading women's Stories: Female Characters in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 153.

role together with Judah with the help of the application of the author's literary techniques, even though the socially constructed role of a woman like Tamar is usually understood as subordinate to the male within the patriarchal system of that ancient society.[191] The author's strategy is there in the text to read plainly. Tamar's actions in the middle scenes of the story show us why the author portrays Tamar in this specific way.

Victor H. Matthews, for example, suggests 'an ironic juxtaposition' [192] in the use of the verb ישׁב between *sitting* in her father's house (וְתֵשֶׁב בֵּית אָבִיהָ Gen. 38:11) and *sitting* at the entrance to Enaim (וְתֵשֶׁב בְּפֶתַח עֵינַיִם Gen. 38:14), demonstrating, according to him, 'cognitive identity'.[193] Matthews' point is that the two uses of ישׁב juxtapose the passive Tamar, confined in her father's house and reduced to waiting for Judah to act, with the active Tamar, who has personally actively contrived to place herself where she can initiate and control Judah's actions.[194] That is, the first mention of Tamar 'sitting' signals that she is a powerless type, a poor childless widow, but the second mention of Tamar 'sitting' may imply that the cards are now in her hands when it comes to who is in control; Judah or Tamar.

Furthermore, it is highly probable to say that the use of the same verb ישׁב in v. 11 and 14 seems to be calling to mind Tamar's static social and economic position, as well as her lowly position in her family. The fact that Tamar disguises herself and puts on other clothes is significant from the point of view of literary artistry. It means she is escaping from under the authority of her father-in-law and signals her willingness to act without the help of others. Accordingly, Tamar's deeds could be taken for granted here as a sort of deviation at that time.

However, it is quite clear that Tamar's actions in changing her appearance from that of a widow to that of a prostitute (?) are orderly and systematic, and vice versa (Gen. 38: 14,

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[191] Joseph Blenkinsopp, 'The Family in First Temple Israel', in Leo G. Perdue *et al.* (eds.), in *Families in Ancient Israel: The Family, Religion, and Culture* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), pp. 76-78.

[192] Matthews, 'Discourse and Cognition in the Story of Judah and Tamar', p. 46.

[193] This means that 'Tamar creates the charged location for the dialogue and precipitates the action in this scene that is based on Judah's misreading of cognitive cues.' See Matthews, 'Discourse and Cognition in the Story of Judah and Tamar', p. 46.

[194] Petersen describes the change of Tamar's status together with Judah's transformation as follows: 'Deft narrative crafting moves her from passive agent to antagonist to counter-protagonist to catalytic reason for Judah's transformation.' See *Reading Women's Stories: Female Characters in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 153.

19). Together, Tamar's changing of her clothes to disguise herself (v. 14) and changing back again (v. 19) form a concentric ABCB'A' pattern:[195] Tamar *puts off* (A) her widow's garments, *covers* (B) her face with a veil, and *sits* (C) at the entrance to Enaim. After having the assignation with Judah, her father-in-law, she *uncovers* (B') her face and *puts on* (A') her widow's garments again. Moreover, if the verb וַתָּקָם 'And she arose' in verse 19 is added to the pattern, it alters it slightly and it becomes a symmetrical ABCC'B'A' pattern.[196] The garment theme in relation to Tamar, therefore, allows us to understand clearly the author's literary sensibilities. In this case, the verb קום could be interpreted as the playing out of a literary device indicating not only Tamar 'rising' from her sitting, but also as going from being horizontal to being vertical in terms of her social position. It may symbolise 'obtaining a higher social status (mother)'[197] as well as moving from the location geographically speaking.

Another literary feature in the story is variously related to the number three. Fokkelman appropriately points out 'the ternary principle'.[198] For instance, firstly, the number of Judah's sons is three: Er, Onan, and Shelah (vv. 2-5). Then, the pledges that Tamar asks of Judah for the purpose of sexual intercourse are three: seal, cord, and staff (v. 18). And finally, Judah hears of Tamar's prostitution from someone three months later (v. 24).

In relation to Tamar's position in the household, she is called Judah's 'daughter-in-law' three times (v. 11, 16, and 24). All the instances of this designation appear in the middle scenes associated with Tamar. As the story unfolds, the status of Tamar as a daughter-in-law is mixed with that of a widow.[199] However, there is a big difference between them in the

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[195] Matthews, 'Discourse and Cognition in the Story of Judah and Tamar', p. 38.

[196] Fokkelman says, 'The juxtaposition of the widow's dress and the veil makes for a double change of clothes, in vv. 14 and 19, and takes the shape of a simple but very effective device of mirroring, a chiasmus.' Jan P. Fokkelman, 'Genesis 37 and 38 at the Interface of Structural Analysis and Hermeneutics', in L.J. de Regt *et al.* (eds.), *Literary Structure and Rhetorical Strategies in the Hebrew Bible* (Assen: Van Gorcum; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1996), pp. 152-87 (170).

[197] Matthews, 'Discourse and Cognition in the Story of Judah and Tamar', p. 47.

[198] 'The use of "three" as an ordering device is so pervasive that we would actually be able to retell most of the story by simply stepping from one triplet to another along the linear axis.' See Fokkelman, 'Genesis 37 and 38 at the Interface of Structural Analysis and Hermeneutics', pp. 175-77, especially 175.

[199] The word 'widowhood' (אַלְמָנוּת) only appears twice in verses 14 and 19 of Genesis 38.

thinking of the time. The former describes her status as a member of a family, but the latter highlights her status as being alone, without anyone to rely on, such as a husband, and without any dependents, such as children. This being the case, it seems reasonable to assume that Tamar's act of changing her clothes can be taken as the reason for her becoming a focus of criticism (v. 14, 19). In addition, it is intriguing to acknowledge that, as Fokkelman writes, 'Three times she [Tamar] is called a קְדֵשָׁה [v. 21 (twice), 22] and three times the root זנה [v. 15, 24 (twice)] is applied to her'.[200]

Returning to the three pledges (seal, cord and staff), the word 'pledge' (עֵרָבוֹן) occurs three times in verses 17, 18, and 20 as well. According to Fokkelman, the mention of these pledges stands within the central dialogues of six speeches between Judah and Tamar in verses 16-18. These six speeches consist of two triplets (ABA / BAB):[201] Judah – Tamar – Judah / Tamar – Judah – Tamar and are 'business negotiations'.[202] Their dialogues are shown below:

Judah: 'Come, let me come in to you'. (v. 16)

Speech A: Tamar: 'What will you give me, that you may come in to me?' (v. 16)

Judah: 'I will send you a kid from the flock'. (v. 17)

Speech B: Tamar: 'Only if you give me a pledge, until you send it'. (v. 17)

Judah: 'What pledge shall I give you?' (v. 18)

Speech C: Tamar: 'Your signet and your cord, and the staff that is in your hand'. (v. 18) (NRSV)

The order of the speeches in verses 16-18 begins with Judah and ends with Tamar. If Judah is an initiator, Tamar is a completer in the smaller unit of dialogue over this business deal. This pattern expands into the whole story. That is, if Judah could be called a builder of his new

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[200] Fokkelman, 'Genesis 37 and 38 at the Interface of Structural Analysis and Hermeneutics', p. 176.

[201] Fokkelman notes that these six speeches in verses 16-18 are situated in the middle (X) with the symmetrical pattern, ABCDEXE'D'C'B'A'. See 'Genesis 37 and 38 at the Interface of Structural Analysis and Hermeneutics', p. 170.

[202] 1. Speech: Judah's request for a business relationship (15-16a); 2. Speech: Tamar's request for price specification (16b); 3. Speech: Judah's offer (17a); 4. Speech: Tamar's counter-request (17b); 5. Speech: Judah's call for clarification (18aα); 6. Speech: Tamar's specification of price (18aβ). See George W. Coats, *Genesis: with an Introduction to Narrative Literature* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1983), pp. 272-73.

family moving away from his father Jacob at the beginning of the story, Tamar becomes his partner at the end of the story when she gives birth to the twins (Perez and Zerah).[203] Judah, the first character to speak in the dialogue between them, is similar to the Judah who willingly departs from his father; taking the initiative in Genesis 38:1. In these terms, the dialogue scene in verses 16-18 looks like 'the mirror stage'[204] within the whole story of Tamar and Judah in Genesis 38. If Judah lays the foundation of his family, then Tamar brings it to fruition in her father-in-law's house in chapter 38. These two triplet speeches show a perfect dialogue in which both characters achieve their own purpose.

In the last scene of this story, the birth scene (vv. 27-30), we can recognise three verbs related to child bearing: 'conceive' (הרה, v. 18, 24, and 25), 'breach' (פרץ, mentioned three times only in v. 29), 'come out' (יצא, v. 28, 29, and 30).[205] These verbs are also used three times respectively. The name פרץ especially is referred to three times, whilst the name זרח occurs only once (v. 30). Furthermore, the series of time designations וַיְהִי continues in verses 27a, 28a, and 29a and indicates 'an increasing precision, focusing on the details of the delivery'.[206] These time designations are mentioned in the headings of the three verses (vv. 1, 12, and 24) respectively. Before Tamar delivers at the end of the story, she experiences 'the triple crisis'[207] with respect to the three sons of Judah, although she bears two children from Judah. As a result, if we think of the importance of the name of Perez as one of the ancestors of King David, it seems that the reconsideration of the 'three times' above could not be merely coincidental in Genesis 38. At the end of the book of Ruth (4:18-22), we read ten generations from Perez to David. The number of generations between Perez and Boaz is two times three. Then, the genealogical distance from Boaz to David is three triplets: *Perez* –

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[203] 'Her [Tamar] significance seems to lie in the fact that she is a channel for the family Judah is building...He merely provides the seed she needs so badly. Here at the end we see Tamar building her own family and consequently her own future.' Gunn and Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 45; Devora Steinmetz has a section called, 'Tamar: reconstruction of the family', in her book, *From Father to Son: Kinship, Conflict, and Continuity in Genesis* (LCBI; Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), pp. 46-47.

[204] For further information on this term, see Bal, *Lethal Love: Feminist Literary Readings of Biblical Love Stories*, pp. 100-03,

[205] Fokkelman, 'Genesis 37 and 38 at the Interface of Structural Analysis and Hermeneutics', p. 177.

[206] Fokkelman, 'Genesis 37 and 38 at the Interface of Structural Analysis and Hermeneutics', p. 168.

[207] Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible: A New Interpretation of Their Stories*, p. 266.

Hezron – Ram – *Amminadab* – Nahshon – Salmon – *Boaz* – Obed – Jesse – *David.*

Last but not least, is it a jump of logic that the name Tamar itself might be connected with the number three in terms of the same name appearing three times within the wider context of the Primary Narrative (Gen. 38; 2 Sam 13:1-21; 14:27)? The three Tamars may have no direct relationship to each other, but it might be meaningful to look at them in order from the perspective of genealogy. According to William Rosenblum, the first Tamar in Genesis 38 is depicted as developing from a childless widow into a heroine, and the second Tamar in 2 Samuel 13 is employed as a victim of the son of King David, who is raped by her half-brother, Amnon.[208] The last one, Absalom's daughter in 2 Samuel 14:27, comes 'as a reminder of the two faces of woman, represented in the Tanakh by her two predecessors; woman as heroine and woman as victim'.[209] Of course, we are not sure that these three Tamars in Genesis 38 and beyond have any direct relationship to each other, but if Rosenblum's arguments can be taken to be plausible, it must be concluded that the stories must have been written by (a) brilliant artist(s). This suggests that there is something significant in the fact that the name Tamar itself is repeated three times in the larger perspective of the Primary Narrative.

In this context, it is meaningful to say that the first Tamar in Genesis 38 plays an equally crucial role as a female character alongside Judah, and her image and the power of her influence in the story can be expanded into the wider biblical narratives beyond Genesis 38, especially in relation to the genealogy of David, via her son Perez (Gen. 46:12; Ruth 4:12, 18-22; 1 Chr. 2:1-6; 4:1; Matt. 1:3). Thus, as far as the Tamar of Genesis 38 is concerned, it would be interesting to see whether or not we could find some implications with respect to the other two homonymous characters.

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[208] William Rosenblum, 'Tamar Times Three', *JBQ* (2002), pp. 127-30; Gary H. Oller, 'Tamar' (ABD, 6; New York: Doubleday, 1992), p. 315; Carr says, 'The Genesis 38 Tamar story has numerous parallels and contrasts to the Tamar story in 2 Samuel 13'. David M. Carr, *Reading the Fractures of Genesis: Historical and Literary Approaches* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), p. 250. For this relationship between the two Tamars, see also Fokkelien van Dijk-Hemmes, 'Tamar and the Limits of Patriarchy: Between Rape and Seduction (2 Samuel 13 and Genesis 38)', in Mieke Bal (ed.), *Anti-Covenant: Counter-Reading Women's Lives in the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1989), pp. 135-56.

[209] Rosenblum, 'Tamar Times Three', p. 130.

In the wider genealogical context of the Primary Narrative (Genesis – 2 Kings), it is probable to say that the narrator (or author) may have intended that whilst the character of Judah is mentioned in the larger story (Gen. 37-50), Tamar's character is concentrated in the smaller unit of one chapter (Gen. 38), symbolically but meaningfully. This is because, as Johanna W. H. Bos observes, 'it is no secret that the Bible is a book that grew in a patriarchal context, that pushes a patriarchal agenda...'[210] In the same way, if one considers the 'androcentric ideology of the text',[211] the differences between the two characters may simply derive from the traditional roles afforded them as a male and a female in patriarchal society To the present reader, therefore, it does not look a strange thing that Tamar, as a woman, is only allotted a short story, whereas Judah, as a man, pops up all the way through the 'Story of Jacob and his Sons'. Even so, the important thing is that the role of Tamar as a pivotal character in Genesis 38 is remarkable and the text can be read in this way. Tamar is indeed a completer of the house of Judah in her story and foremother of the Davidic line.

4.5. Concluding Remarks

This chapter has aimed to examine the characterisation of Tamar in Genesis 38 within a literary and multi-textual context. This research, unlike that in the case of Judah examined in the previous chapter, only has a micro perspective because Tamar's active presence in Israel's history ends in the immediate context of Genesis 38. However, Tamar's role as a clever woman and as a marginal widow in her story is of more importance than we might expect. Under the patriarchal social system, she had to endure a period of loneliness and isolation in her father-in-law's house as well as in her father's house. The custom of levirate marriage can be good for a widow, but it is still a male orientated institution, focused on carrying on a dead man's line. In the case of Tamar, the non-application of levirate law was utilised for a positive end allowing her to give birth to children.

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[210] Bos, 'An Eyeopener at the Gate: George Coats and Genesis 38', p. 121.

[211] J. Cheryl Exum, *Fragmented Women: Feminist (Sub)versions of Biblical Narratives* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1993), p. 11.

While Judah as father raised his family and was then in crisis at the loss of his two sons (Er and Onan) and the death of his wife, it was Tamar who completed the line of Judah in the end, even though she was not given to Shelah, the last son of Judah. The result came not from her father-in-law, but from herself. Tamar designed and controlled the plan by herself when the chance came. From Tamar's point of view, she became the first mother of Judah's line and her impact genealogically would continue into the following eras of the Primary Narrative (Genesis – 2 Kings).[212] Therefore, the next chapter will deal with the structure and the function of the Judah-Tamar story of Genesis 38 within Genesis 37-50 and its appropriate title of the novella in the larger narrative.

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[212] '...as she is birthing, Tamar's role in Israel's history ends. She will act no more...Tamar passes from the scene, but her impact continues.' See Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible: A New Interpretation of Their Stories*, p. 275.

Chapter 5

The Judah-Tamar Story of Genesis 38 within Genesis 37-50

...every segment of a larger unit has been assigned its place within the whole for a good reason...every piece of information provides a clue to the meaning of the whole.[1]

5.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, we have discussed the character of Tamar in the micro perspective of Genesis 38 because Tamar's active presence in Israel's history ends in it. Taking the importance of Tamar's character together with Judah's, the purpose of the present chapter is to affirm the structure and the function of Genesis 38 in relation to Genesis 37-50 and in the wider context of the Primary Narrative (Genesis – 2 Kings). That is, Genesis 38 is embedded as one of the various narratives that together make up the overarching patriarchal narrative.[2]

However, as I have proposed throughout the present thesis, if we take the Primary Narrative into consideration as the longest story of Israel, charting the fate of the Davidic line which derives from the tribe of Judah,[3] the Judah-Tamar story contains the accounts of the birth of Judah's immediate heirs both at the beginning (vv. 1-5) and at the end (vv. 27-30). These scenes could be seen as vital to the development of the larger stories of Israel's ancestors as well as this particular story in the patriarchal narratives. This is the reason why the birth of the heirs through Judah and Tamar in the family is used as an example of the result of the fulfilment of Yhwh's promise to Abraham.

Hence, if the Primary Narrative is understood as the long story recounting the stages of the genealogy of the Davidic line, what does the structural scheme and the aim of Genesis

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[1] Lockwood denotes the unification of a single holistic narrative, quoting the words of Robert Alter. See Peter F. Lockwood, 'Tamar's Place in the Joseph Cycle', *LTJ* 26 (1992), pp. 35-43 (35).

[2] Cowan says, 'An intertextual study of the story of Tamar and Judah contributes further to this view of the narrative as an integral part of the ancestral cycle,' Margaret Parks Cowan, *Genesis 38: The Story of Judah and Tamar and Its Role in the Ancestral Narratives of Genesis* (Unpublished PhD Dissertation; Vanderbilt University, 1990), p. 241.

[3] See the Chronicler's introduction of the sons of Israel (Jacob) from the sons of Judah up to Jesse's family which mentions David (1 Chron. 2:1-17).

38 bring to the reader from this perspective of the Primary Narrative? A. Graeme Auld similarly enquires, 'How then should we interpret the dynamics of the structure, of the shaping, of the final quarter [Gen. 37-50] of the book of Genesis?'[4] To answer these questions, the present study will first outline the structure of Genesis 38 and then explore the role of the chapter in reading Genesis 37 to 50 from the viewpoint of the Primary Narrative. Because of the importance of allusions to Genesis 38 both in terms of function and the roles of characters such as Judah and Tamar in the wider stories, it will be suggested that the novella found in chapters 37-50 could better be entitled *The Story of Jacob and his Sons*, recognising that 'Genesis is a book whose plot is genealogy'.[5] Ultimately, readers will see that Genesis 38 plays a focal genealogical role both in the building of Judah's family and in the context of 'David's Judahite...identity'[6] in the larger perspective of the Primary Narrative. That is, Genesis 38 is the story about 'the continuation of the generations of the house of Judah'.[7]

5.2. The Structure of Genesis 38 Revisited

Shimon Bar-Efrat expresses a fundamental question in relation to the study of biblical narrative structure as follows, 'Structure can be defined as the network of relations among the parts of an object or a unit. This definition at once raises the question what is to be considered a unit in the area of biblical narrative. Should biblical scholars focus their attention on the smallest literary units or should the literary work as a whole be the object of investigation?'[8]

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[4] A. Graeme Auld, 'Tamar between David, Judah and Joseph', in Margaret Barker (ed.), *Samuel at the Threshold: Selected works of Graeme Auld* (SOTSMS; Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004), pp. 213-24 (224).

[5] Naomi Steinberg, 'The Genealogical Framework of the Family Stories in Genesis', in Miri Amihai *et al.* (eds.), *Narrative Research on the Hebrew Bible* (Semeia 46; Atlanta: SBL, 1989), pp. 41-50 (41); see also Terry J. Prewitt, 'Kinship Structures and the Genesis Genealogies', *JNES* 40 (1981), pp. 87-98.

[6] Ho concludes in his article that, 'In short, Gen. xxxviii is a statement of David's Judahite and Israelite (i.e. Jewish) identity written probably a little earlier than the Book of Ruth. Ruth links David to the genealogy of Perez via Boaz and Gen. xxxviii provides an earlier link between Judah and David via Perez.' See Craig Y.S. Ho, 'The Stories of the Family Troubles of Judah and David: A Study of Their Literary Links', *VT* 49.4 (1999), pp. 514-31 (529); Keith Bodner, *David Observed: A King in the Eyes of His Court* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2005), pp. 140-41.

[7] Cowan, *Genesis 38: The Story of Judah and Tamar and Its Role in the Ancestral Narratives of Genesis*, p. 174.

[8] Shimon Bar-Efrat, 'Some Observations on the Analysis of Structure in Biblical Narrative', *VT* 30 (1980), pp.

In this regard, Genesis 38 can be examined as a small unit (or story) or as part of the larger Primary Narrative. The literary links between Genesis 38 and other stories in the story of David's line are closely considered by the characters of the stories[9] and they 'strengthen the literary correlation between the Judah story and the David story...'[10] To demonstrate this from the point of view of a reader, I shall first introduce Anthony J. Lambe's literary structure of Genesis 38 and then comment on it. After that, the perspective of the Primary Narrative will be used to suggest a fresh structure for the chapter in order to extend the horizon of reading the larger narrative.

5.2.1. Anthony J. Lambe's 'Overarching Structure' of Genesis 38

In 1998, Lambe published his article on Genesis 38, showing that the chapter is 'an integrated literal whole'.[11] In the paper, he focuses on the overarching structure of Genesis 38 as 'an ideal narrative' with the help of Tzvetan Todorov's notion which presents the feature of plot structure. This is concerned with the surface structure of the chapter and consists of five phases (Phase 1 Gen. 38:1-6; Phase 2 Gen. 38:7-11; Phase 3 Gen. 38:12a (axis); Phase 4 Gen. 38:12b-26; Phase 5 Gen. 38:27-30). These phases reflect 'a chiastic structure'[12] with the central point in the third phase: Equilibrium (Phase 1), Descent (Phase 2), Disequilibrium (Phase 3), Ascent (Phase 4), Equilibrium (Phase 5). I reproduce Lambe's figure below:[13]

154-73 (155).

[9] Gary A. Rendsburg, 'David and His Circle in Genesis xxxiii', *VT* 36 (1986), pp. 438-46 (441); for the parallels between the two stories (Tamar and Bathsheba), see section 6.3.3 of the present thesis.

[10] Ho, 'The Stories of the Family Troubles of Judah and David: A Study of Their Literary Links', p. 515.

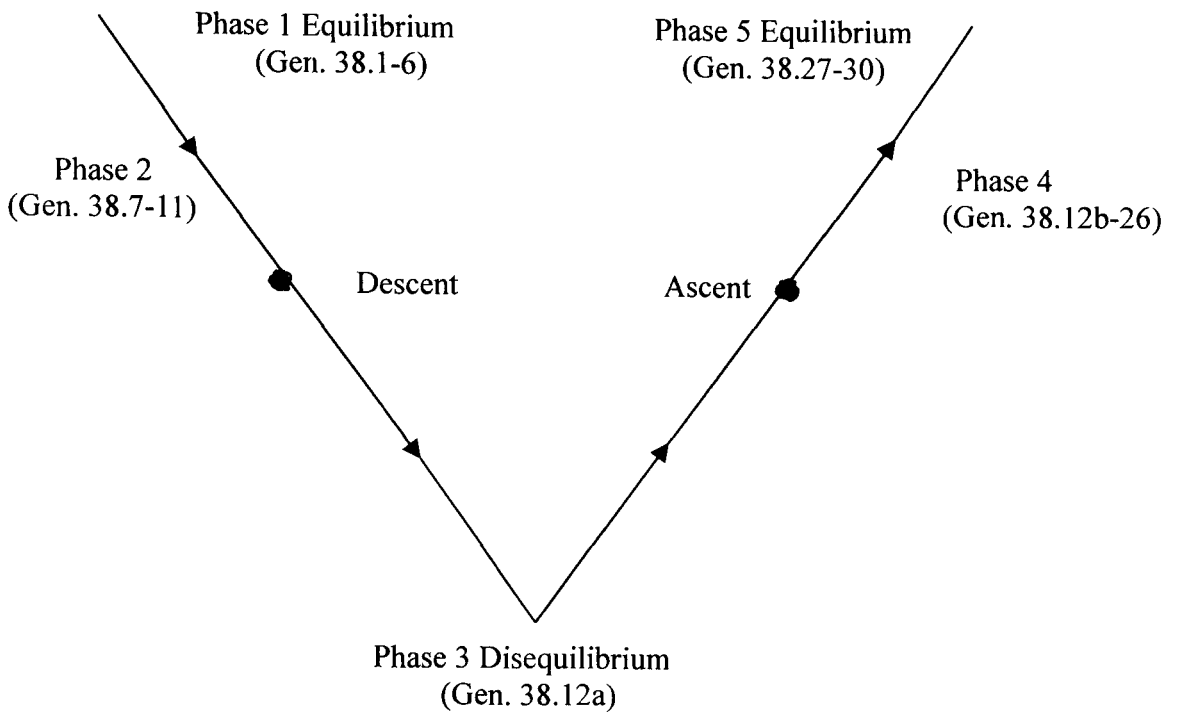
[11] Anthony J. Lambe, 'Genesis 38: Structure and Literary Design', in Philip R. Davies and David J.A. Clines (eds.),*The World of Genesis: Persons, Places, Perspectives* (JSOTSup, 257; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), pp. 102-20.

[12] For an account and some illustrations of the structure of the Hebrew Bible, see Elie Assis, 'Chiasmus in Biblical Narrative: Rhetoric of Characterisation', *Proof* 22 (2002), pp. 273-304.

[13] Lambe, 'Genesis 38: Structure and Literary Design', p. 103.

FIGURE 5

Anthony J. Lambe's 'Overarching Structure' of Genesis 38



The figure displays 'two parts or panels' centring on Phase 3 Disequilibrium. According to Lambe, this structure focuses on the movement of Judah's character. While Judah *went down* (ירד) to stay with a man of Adullam named Hirah from his brothers in verse 1, he *went up* (עלה) to Timnah to see his sheepshearers with Hirah in verse 12a. Phase 3 indicates the 'turning point' of Judah's movement or expresses an 'axis of symmetry' in the structure. Lambe also suggests some parallel Hebrew words through the story – brothers (אֲחִים v. 1) / brother (אָח vv. 29, 30); name (שֵׁם vv. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 / vv. 29, 30); bear (יָלַד vv. 3, 4, 5) / give birth (v. 27), be in labour (v. 28); first born (בְּכוֹר v. 6) / this one came out first (זֶה יָצָא רִאשֹׁנָה v. 28); take (לָקַח vv. 2, 6 / v. 28) – between Phase 1 (Gen. 38:1-6) and Phase 5 (Gen. 38:27-30). In particular, the symmetrical similarities of the repeated motifs of birth and naming between the first unit and the last unit are also acknowledged by Esther Marie Menn[14] and Martin

[14] Esther Marie Menn says, 'Since the motifs of birth and naming appear earlier in the narrative as well (Gen 38:3-5), Genesis 38 may be viewed as a double tale of procreation...,' in her book, *Judah and Tamar (Genesis 38) Ancient Jewish Exegesis: Studies in Literary Form and Hermeneutics* (JSJSup, 51; Leiden: Brill, 1997), p. 15.

O'Callaghan.[15]

Regrettably, however, Lambe's overarching structure of Genesis 38 causes confusion because in verse 23 of Phase 4 Judah seems worried about being shamed by others due to his sexual relations with a prostitute, or so he understands the situation.[16] That is, contrary to the diagram, the trend of the story seems to indicate an aspect of *descent* (or shame) rather than one of ascent in Judah's situation because he could not secure the return of his property (seal, cord, and staff) from the prostitute. Judah also confessed his fault in not giving his son Shelah to his daughter-in-law, Tamar, in verse 26. In fact, this situation reflects a *descent* rather than an ascent for Judah. With respect to Lambe's chiastic structure, Wilfried Warning shrewdly observes, 'It should be noticed, however, that the postulated chiasms are mainly based on conceptual and only partly on terminological considerations.'[17]

Furthermore, the figure above does not take Tamar's actions into consideration sufficiently. Throughout the story, Judah struggles with his daughter-in-law as a sparring partner. This means that, without Tamar, the storyline of Genesis 38 cannot be explained. Judah should be seen in relation to Tamar. Here, O'Callaghan's research is significant for the reader. He notes Tamar's rising role in the middle section (vv. 12-26). According to him, chapter 38 is simply divided into three parts: '1) Judah's family-building, vv. 1-11, 2) Tamar's story, vv. 12-26, 3) an account of how Perez and Zerah were born and got their names, vv. 27-30. The middle part, Tamar's story, 'is the longest of the three and as a dramatic narrative is far more attractive and effective than the other two.'[18] With respect to Tamar's role, O'Callaghan notes that the theme of Genesis 38 is, 'the *propagation* of the family, the prolongation of Judah's line, or to use a single word, progeny'[19] and the central part is also associated with this. From the second scene on the importance of Tamar increases rapidly.

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[15] O'Callaghan points out, '...whereas two brothers [Er and Onan] die at the start, two new brothers [Perez and Zerah] replace them at the end.' Martin O'Callaghan, 'The Structure and Meaning of Genesis 38—Judah and Tamar', PIBA 5 (1981), pp. 72-88 (80).

[16] For this argument in Gen. 38:20-23, see section 3.3.4. of this thesis.

[17] Wilfried Warning, 'Terminological Patterns and Genesis 38', *AUSS* 38.2 (2000), pp. 293-305, especially see footnote 1.

[18] O'Callaghan, 'The Structure and Meaning of Gen. 38', p. 73.

[19] O'Callaghan, 'The Structure and Meaning of Gen. 38', p. 74.

This is because, 'the whole purpose of Tamar's action is to have a child, and the result of her action is that Judah's line *is* propagated.'[20]

Accordingly, the goal of Judah and Tamar is the same – propagating the family. But if we consider the literary relationships between the genders, the two main actors are binary opposites[21] with contrasting roles manifesting the deep structure of the story.[22] So, chapter 38 not only 'represents a turning point in the life of Judah'[23] from a negative light to the positive one in Lambe's analysis, but also shows the rise of Tamar, daughter-in-law and childless widow. Lambe ignored the role of Tamar in the structure. That is to say, the changing situation of the two leading actors overlaps in the middle part: Judah is still descending, while Tamar is about to ascend. If my analysis is accepted, Lambe's structure does not lay proportionate emphasis on the characters in the story because the main characters in Genesis 38 are truly both Judah and Tamar. Therefore, the Judah-Tamar story is a story as much about Tamar as it is about Judah, a story to which both contribute equally.[24]

5.2.2. A Fresh Look at the Structure of Genesis 38

If both Judah and Tamar contribute to the story equally, is the figure suggested by Lambe above truly adequate as an explanation of the structure of Genesis 38? I would like to propose a new structure which recognises both leading characters in the story, because dealing with

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[20] O'Callaghan, 'The Structure and Meaning of Gen 38', p. 74.

[21] This term indicates 'pairs of semantic units' or 'meaning by perceiving the relationships of opposion'. O'Callaghan, 'The Structure and Meaning of Gen. 38', p. 75; see also Diane M. Sharon, 'Some Results of a Structural Semiotic Analysis of the Story of Judah and Tamar', *JSOT* 29.3 (2005), pp. 289-318 (294).

[22] In O'Callaghan's argument, 'Just as the theme of the propagation of Judah's line is the keystone of the thematic content of the story, so the contrast between Judah and Tamar is the keystone of its narrative development.' For further information on the deep structure, see, 'The Structure and Meaning of Gen. 38', pp. 77-79.

[23] Edward M. Curtis, 'Genesis 38: Its Context(s) and Function', *CTR* 5.2 (1991), pp. 247-57 (252).

[24] For example, Coats is concerned with the rights of Tamar as a childless widow in Genesis 38, but neglects the last section, verses 27-30, which results in childbirth from Judah. See George W. Coats, 'Widow's Rights: A Crux in the Structure of Genesis 38', *CBQ* 34 (1972), pp. 461-66; on the importance of Tamar's character in Genesis 38, see the following four articles; Lockwood, 'Tamar's Place in the Joseph Cycle', pp. 35-43; Carol Smith, 'The Story of Tamar: A Power-filled Challenge to the Structure of Power' in George J. Brooke, (ed.), *Women in the Biblical Tradition* (Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), pp. 16-28; Morimura Nobuko, 'The Story of Tamar: A Feminist Interpretation of Genesis 38', *JCR* 59 (1993), pp. 55-67; Judy Fentress-Williams, 'Location, Location, Location: Tamar in the Joseph Cycle', *The Bible and Critical Theory* 3 (2007), pp. 20.1-20.8; also published in Roland Boer (ed.), *Bakhtin and Genre Theory in Biblical Studies* (SBLSS, 63; Atlanta: SBL, 2007), pp. 59-68.

them together is a better way to grasp the unit as a whole. With this end in mind, I divide the chapter into six sections; first, section 1 is Judah's attempt to establish his new house away from his brothers (vv. 1-5). The next stage, section 2, is the shame of Tamar who is sent back to her father when her two husbands die (vv. 6-11). After that, section 3 is Tamar's deception of Judah for the purpose of conception (vv. 12-19). Then, section 4 is Judah's deception of Hirah (vv. 20-23). It is crucial to say that the topic of sections 3 and 4 is *deceit* in the centre of the structure because deceit 'plays a formative role in both chapter 37 and 38'[25] as well as chapter 39 in a thematic continuity.[26] Although Judah thought the woman with whom he had sexual intercourse was an ordinary prostitute (זוֹנָה), he never tells Hirah this when they dialogue with each other (vv. 22-23). The local residents and Hirah only mention a shrine (or temple) prostitute (קְדֵשָׁה). Following this, section 5 is Judah's shame and Tamar's triumph (vv. 20-26). Judah admits his fault and Tamar accomplishes her goal. Finally, section 6 is Tamar's building up of her new family (vv. 27-30). The binary thematic-symmetrical patterns in Genesis 38 can be depicted as follows:

FIGURE 6

The Binary Thematic-Symmetrical Patterns in Genesis 38

Section 1	A	Judah building up his family (vv 1-5)
Section 2	B	Tamar's shame (vv. 6-11)
Section 3	C	Tamar's deception (vv. 12-19)
Section 4	C'	Judah's deception (vv. 20-23)

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[25] W. Lee Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family: A Literary Study* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), p. 37; for the verbal and thematic relationships between Genesis 37 and Genesis 38, see Umberto Cassuto, 'The Story of Tamar and Judah', Biblical and Oriental Studies (vol. I: Bible, trans. Israel Abrahams; Jerusalem: Magnes Press/Hebrew University, 1973), pp. 29-40 (original in Hebrew, 1929, pp. 108-17); Jan P. Fokkelman, 'Genesis 37 and 38 at the Interface of Structural Analysis and Hermeneutics', in L.J. de Regt *et al.* (eds.), *Literary Structure and Rhetorical Strategies in the Hebrew Bible* (Assen: Van Gorcum; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1996), pp. 152-87.

[26] For example, *deceit* between Jacob's sons and Jacob in Gen. 37:31-32, between Judah and Tamar in Gen. 38:11, between Judah and Hirah in Gen. 38:22-23, between Potiphar's wife and household servants or Potiphar in Gen. 39:13-17.

Section 5 B' Judah's shame (vv. 24-26)

Section 6 A' Tamar building up her family (vv. 27-30)

The story represents a symmetrical structure according to the characters' importance and their roles in the three repeated themes. The sections are paired: AA'-BB'-CC'. It is interesting to note that the sections change strategically reflecting the main actor in each section. Sections 1, 4, and 5 involve Judah, whereas sections 2, 3, and 6 involve Tamar. So, the main characters follow this pattern; Judah (A) – Tamar (B) – Tamar (C) – Judah (C') – Judah (B') – Tamar (A'). The allocation of actions to each character in their parts of the story is equal: half and half.

One of the features of this structure is that the first section opens with Judah and the last section ends with Tamar. However, from the second unit to fifth, the dominant character in the scene follows the order Tamar (BC) and Judah (C'B') on both sides (section 2-3 for Tamar and section 4-5 for Judah). Control of the situation shifts twice. Thus, if one considers this story according to the emphasis on each of the main characters, the sequence is Judah (A) – Tamar (BC) – Judah (C'B')–Tamar (A') in turn.

Another observation is that both characters' common interest is procreation and the building up of their family. This is verified when one understands the way some Hebrew verb patterns are used; Judah *saw* (וַיַּרְא) a Canaanite woman, *took* her (וַיִּקָּחֶהָ) and *went into* her (וַיָּבֹא אֵלֶיהָ) taking the initiative as a male, whereas Tamar performs the same actions as Judah's wife who *conceived* (וַתַּהַר), *gave birth* (וַתֵּלֶד) and *named* (וַתִּקְרָא). In both cases, these are the female responses.[27] According to the brinary thematic-symmetrical patterns in Genesis 38, the chapter begins with the story of building up Judah's family and ends with the story of building up Tamar's family.

Finally, the intermediary sections are equally distributed between Tamar and Judah. The subject of section 2 and 3 is Tamar, but in section 4 and 5 it changes to Judah. And finally,

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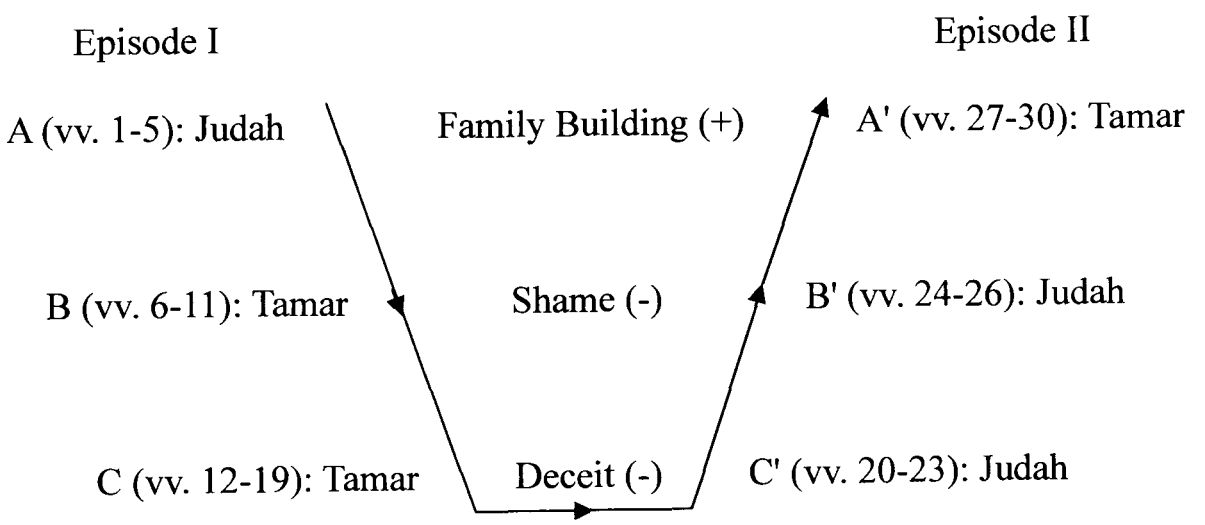
[27] Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), p. 6; Menn, *Judah and Tamar (Genesis 38) Ancient Jewish Exegesis: Studies in Literary Form and Hermeneutics*, pp. 16-17.

section 6 again comes to an end with Tamar. Overall, the sections produce an exact binary shape, but the subject of the binary structure is Judah in the beginning and in the end is Tamar. That is, it should be noted that the narrator depicts Judah as the initiator of building up his distinctive lineage, while Tamar brings to completion the building up of the lineage both with and despite Judah. Even though Judah loses his two sons, Er and Onan, the twins, Perez and Zerah, 'become the replacement for the two deceased sons'.[28]

Our earlier diagram of the binary thematic-symmetrical patterns of the Judah-Tamar story, can be presented as a *bucket-shaped* structure with two episodes as shown below. The structure does not only show 'Judah's Descent amd Tamar's Rising (38:1-30)'[29] in the whole structure of the episode, but also each of the common items of *family building*, *shame*, and *deceit* in turn. Let us consider the figure of the bucket-shaped structure of Genesis 38. This could encourage the reader to read the story from the point of view of a new paradigm from the wider perspective of the Primary Narrative in relation to the building up of Judah's genealogy (or the Judahite line) all the way up to David.

FIGURE 7

The Bucket-Shaped Structure of the Judah-Tamar Story



[28] Bernhard Luther, 'The Novella of Judah and Tamar and Other Israelite Novellas', in David J.A. Clines and Philip R. Davis (eds.), *Narrative and Novella in Samuel: Studies by Hugo Gressmann and Other Scholars 1906-1923* (trans. David E. Orton; JSOTSup, 116; Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1991), pp. 89-118 (116).

[29] Paul Borgman, *Genesis: The Story We Haven't Heard* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001), pp. 189-92.

Episode I: Positive Judah (A) + Negative Tamar (B, C)

Episode II: Positive Tamar (A') + Negative Judah (B' C')

Dialectic: Thesis (Episode I) + Antithesis (Episode II) = Synthesis (Establishing a Family)

In Diane M. Sharon's paradigm for Genesis 38, every narrative exhibits a 'tension' with two antithetical elements in the text and these move the story dramatically.[30] The beginning of the story starts with Judah, the main character. The antagonist is his sparring character, Tamar. This relationship is displayed dialectically in the course of the story: Thesis – Antithesis – Synthesis. The story of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38 can be analysed in this way; 'tension' comes out in each episode. The order of prominence between the characters Judah and Tamar is related to the themes (*family building, shame, deceit*) and is systematic.

In Episode I, Judah's endeavours to build his family (*Family Building*) begin positively (+, A, vv. 1-5), but when his two sons die, from the reader's point of view at least, a time of trial starts for Tamar. Tamar lost husbands twice with the result that Judah would not give his third son, Shelah, to her. This is *shame* on Tamar (-, B, vv. 6-11). The situation could hardly be worse for her. Following this, Tamar is also subjected to humiliation due to 'Judah's banishment of Tamar'[31] when Judah told that she was to return her father's house. After returning to her father's home, she had to wait for a chance to deceive Judah and put her plan into action when the opportunity came. Tamar's *deceit* of Judah could be seen negatively (-, C, vv. 12-19). Although, as Margaret Parks Cowan states, 'Her [Tamar] deception enables her to counter-act Judah's power and to act effectively to achieve justice for herself and posterity for her father-in-law [Judah].'[32] The method Tamar uses for achieving the (good) goal of having a child could be evaluated negatively because the end does not always justify the means. It could be also ironic, however, that the ancestors of David should be born from such unions.

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[30] Sharon calls these oppositions 'narrative program (NP)' and 'anti-narrative program (-NP)'. They are related to each other in the text. For further information, see Diane M. Sharon, 'Some Results of a Structural Semiotic Analysis of the Story of Judah and Tamar', *JSOT* 29.3 (2005), pp. 289-318 (294-96).

[31] Sharon, 'Some Results of a Structural Semiotic Analysis of the Story of Judah and Tamar', p. 297.

[32] Cowan, *Genesis 38: The Story of Judah and Tamar and Its Role in the Ancestral Narratives of Genesis*, p. 175.

In Episode II, the reader can see a hint of *deceit* at the bottom of the structure. Judah does not correct Hirah's reference to the shrine (or temple) prostitute by explaining that he should be looking for an ordinary prostitute. This is a kind of *deceit* against Hirah (-, C', vv. 20-23). The narrator uses the term קְדֵשָׁה twice in the dialogue between Hirah and the local people (vv. 21-22) and once in dialogue between Hirah and Judah (v. 22-23). But Judah only mentions her using pronouns (תִּקַּח-לָהּ 'Let *her* keep the things' NRSV) without indicating whether she was a shrine prostitute or an ordinary prostitute. When Judah asked for Hirah's help with getting his pledge back from the woman by sending him with the goat for payment, Judah presumably labelled her because Hirah goes on to describe her twice, both to the local people and to Judah, in the terms he can only have heard from Judah. However, if the usage of the term קְדֵשָׁה by Hirah is wrong, is there any reason for Judah not to mention it? Thus, it is possible to say that Judah held his tongue to Hirah about her identity. If this is not deceiving Hirah, then at the very least Judah's fear of ridicule leads him to try to suppress any wider knowledge of the incident. Judah deceives all those around him by hiding his folly.

In the second part of Episode II, when Judah finally recognised that it was Tamar who had taken his possessions (seal, cord and staff), he realised he *had* been put to shame and as a result, Judah confessed his fault and Tamar's righteousness. This is the moment Tamar recovers her honour, but at the same time it corresponds to a new public awareness of a negative perspective on Judah. This is *shame* on Judah (-, B', vv. 24-26). Finally, in the last part of Episode II Tamar delivers the heirs of Judah to build her family (*Family Building*) and obtains a positive evaluation (+, A', vv. 27-30). To be sure, Tamar is 'the agent who secures these goals'.[33]

Accordingly, the two episodes share the same tensions (the threat to the continuity of Judah's line) and reversals in thematic order: family building (by Judah), shame (of Tamar), deceit (of Tamar) ↔ deceit (of Judah), shame (of Judah), family building (by Tamar). These

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[33] Sharon, 'Some Results of a Structural Semiotic Analysis of the Story of Judah and Tamar', p. 299.

two tensions throughout *Thesis* and *Antithesis* develop to the *Synthesis*: Judah and Tamar in the episodes both work together to achieve a common goal of building their family. This is the narrative goal: the production of an ancestor for David. Therefore, we may conclude in this section that by means of the binary thematic-symmetrical patterns or the bucket-shaped structure of the Judah and Tamar characters, Genesis 38 conveys an equal balance between the actions of the two main characters. They both play pivotal roles in the story; Judah as father of his new family and Tamar as daughter-in-law both bear their share of the responsibility for building their family. As a result, the symmetrical structure of the story implies the significance of childbirth to both Judah and Tamar for securing the next generation.

If this is so, then what is the function of Genesis 38 in the broader viewpoint of the so-called 'story of Joseph' and what allusions are there between Genesis 38 and Genesis 37 to 50? Furthermore, how could this novella be interpreted together with the Judah-Tamar story of Genesis 38 in the larger perspective of the Primary Narrative? The following section explores a more realistic title for Genesis 37 to 50 in relation to the role of Genesis 38 within the larger Primary Narrative. As shall be seen, indeed, the story in Genesis 38 is a compact part of the larger work in the Hebrew Bible.

5.3. Re-reading Genesis 37-50

Over the last several decades, the majority of arguments on Genesis 37 to 50 in biblical scholarship have dealt in particular with the title of the story which is relevant to main characters. The fourteen-chapter 'novella'[34] in the last part of the book of Genesis is generally viewed as 'the story of Joseph'[35] or '(the narrative of) Joseph and his brothers'[36] or 'Joseph

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[34] In Humphreys' words, '...novella is currently used in literary criticism to denote a type of prose narrative that stands between the novel and the short story, sharing characteristics of each.' See Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family: A Literary Study*, pp. 16; see Luther's article, 'The Novella of Judah and Tamar and Other Israelite Novellas', pp. 89-118.

[35] R. Norman. Whybray, 'The Joseph Story and Pentateuchal Criticism', *VT* 18 (1968), pp. 522-28; Donard B. Redford, *A Study of the Biblical Story of Joseph (Genesis 37-50)*, (VTSup, 20; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1970); Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (trans. John H. Mark; OTL; London: SCM Press Ltd., rev. edn., 1972), pp. 347-440; Eric I. Lowenthal, *The Joseph Narrative in Genesis* (New York: KTAV Publishing House, INC., 1973); George W. Coats, *From Canaan to Egypt: Structural and Theological Context for the Joseph Story* (CBQMS, 4;

and his family'[37] by both historico-critical interpreters and literary critics. On the other hand, scholars such as Nelly Furman and Richard J. Clifford entitle this unit 'the Jacob story (or cycle)'.[38] In the broader sense of the family of Jacob, some refer to Genesis 37-50 as 'the story of Jacob's family'[39] or 'Joseph, Judah, and Jacob's Family'.[40] More recently, David A. Bosworth has suggested that this unit is 'the story of Jacob's line'[41] in the context of genealogy. Naomi Steinberg, J. William Whedbee and Victor H. Matthews, however, have an interest in Jacob's sons and Jacob himself and describe it as 'the narratives of Jacob and his sons' or 'the story of Jacob and his sons'[42] at times, although they tend to accept its traditional title 'the Joseph story'. Others who focus on Jacob's two more remarkable sons designate this part as '[the] account of Jacob and Joseph'[43] or 'the Joseph-Judah story'.[44] The debate over

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Washington D.C.: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1976); Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis* (Interpretation; A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching; Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), pp. 288-380; Hugh C. White, 'The Joseph Story: A Narrative which "Consumes" Its Content', in Robert Detwieler (ed.), *Reader Response Approaches to Biblical and Secular Texts* (Semeia 31; Atlanta: SBL, 1985), pp. 49-69; Claus Westermann, *Genesis 37-50: A Commentary* (trans. John J. Scullion; Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986); Robert E. Longacre, *Joseph: A Story of Divine Providence: A Text Theoretical and Textlinguistic Analysis of Genesis 37 and 39-48* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1989); Nahum M. Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis-בראשית* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), pp. 254-353; Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50* (WBC, 2; Dallas: Word Books Publisher, 1994), pp. 343-493; Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapter 18-50* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1995), pp. 403-715; Thomas L. Bordie, *Genesis as Dialogue: A Literary, Historical, and Theological Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 351-417; Lindsay Wilson, *Joseph Wise and Otherwise: The Intersection of Wisdom and Covenant in Genesis 37-50* (PBM; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2004).

[36] Ephraim A. Speiser, *Genesis* (3rd edn; AB, 1; Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1982), pp. 285-378; Robert L. Cohn, 'Narrative Structure and Canonical Perspective in Genesis', *JSOT* 25 (1983), pp. 3-16; Arieh Yoseph, 'Joseph and His Brothers', *JBQ* 21 (1993), pp. 153-58; David A. Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis-Malachi* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), pp. 60-63.

[37] Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family: A Literary Study*.

[38] Nelly Furman, 'His Story versus Her Story: Male Genealogy and Female Strategy in the Jacob Cycle', Miri Amihai *et al.* (eds.), *Narrative Research on the Hebrew Bible* (Semeia 46; Atlanta: SBL, 1989), pp. 141-49; Richard J. Clifford, 'Genesis 38: Its Contribution to the Jacob Story', *CBQ* 66 (2004), pp. 519-32.

[39] Laurence A. Turner, *Announcements of Plot in Genesis* (JSOTSup, 96; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), pp. 143-73; *Idem*, *Genesis* (2nd edn; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009), pp. 161-217.

[40] Terence E. Fretheim, *The Pentateuch* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), pp. 87-88.

[41] Bosworth mentions that he prefers to speak of the Story of Jacob's Line rather than the Joseph Story in his monograph regarding 'the *toledoth* notice' of Genesis 37:2. See David A. Bosworth, *The Story within a Story in Biblical Hebrew Narrative* (CBQMS, 45; Washington: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2008), pp. 38-39.

[42] Naomi Steinberg, *Kingship and Marriage in Genesis: A Household Economics Per*spective (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), pp. 120-31; J. William Whedbee proposes the sub-title, 'Comic Narratives of Jacob and His Sons: Joseph, Judah, and Their Brothers (Genesis 37-50) in his book, *The Bible and the Comic Version* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 107-26; Victor H. Matthews, *More Than Meets the Ear: Discovering the Hidden Contexts of Old Testament Conversations* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2008), p. 27. Even though they call the unit *Jacob and his sons' story*, they still use the traditional title. For example, Matthews says, 'It [Gen. 38] is part of a larger unit associated with stories about Jacob and his sons, and most especially with the stories of Joseph.' Regrettably, these scholars do not reconstruct the structure of Genesis 37 to 50 by entitling it Jacob and his sons' story.

[43] John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids:

the place in the title of the two main characters as father and son in Genesis 37-50 is encapsulated in Friedeman W. Golka's question: 'Joseph story or *Israel*-Joseph story?'[45]

Why, then, should the issue of Genesis 37-50 relating to the title of its story need to be argued as modern readers who would like 'to play [a] prominent part in the process of attaching meaning to the text'[46]? Basically it may depend on the readers' viewpoints while he or she reads the text although the process of interpretation is not confined to the reader only. We need to consider 'text, reader, and a number of circumstances which influence the interpretative process'.[47] In light of this issue, this research, as a reader, attempts to read the story in an alternative way from the viewpoint of the Primary Narrative.

Among the various disputes on the whole title of Genesis 37-50, however, few stop to enquire, as we should, whether the traditional novella, the so-called story of Joseph, has been investigated so that the outline of the story can be explained sufficiently by the title. This is because the title of a story may provide a clue to its characteristics for the reader. Thus, in this thesis, I would like to criticise the traditional title(s) and instead propose an alternative one *The Story of Jacob and his Sons* in this thesis, because it is more likely to help the present-day reader to grasp its function in the wider perspective of the Primary Narrative. The text, in effect, exhibits clues pointing to a wider perspective; for example, such as the references - 'Judah and his brothers' (Gen 44:14), 'Israel's sons' (Gen. 42:5; 45:21) and 'Jacob's sons' (Gen. 50:12) - in association with the flow of the story. Above all, it should be borne in mind that in the narrator's own words, the introduction of the story Genesis 37:2a clearly reads: 'This is the story of Jacob's family' (אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת יַעֲקֹב) rather than 'the story of Joseph'. Jacob still lives until Genesis 49 and continues to exercise an influence on the story.

Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), pp. 206-38.

[44] Youngho Kim, *Judah's Role in Joseph's (?) Story* (Unpublished ThM Thesis; Covenant Theological Seminary, 1991); Bryan Smith, *The Presentation of Judah in Genesis 37-50 and Its Implications for the Narrative's Structural and Thematic Unity* (Unpublished PhD Dissertation; Bob Jones University, 2002); *idem*, 'The Central Role of Judah in Genesis 37-50', *BSac* 162 (2005), pp. 158-74.

[45] Friedemann W. Golka, 'Genesis 37-50: Joseph Story or *Israel*-Joseph Story?', *CBR* 2.2 (2004), pp. 153-77.

[46] Ron Pirson, *The Lord of the Dreams: A Semantic and Literary Analysis of Genesis 37-50* (JSOTSup, 355; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), p. 3.

[47] Pirson, *The Lord of the Dreams: A Semantic and Literary Analysis of Genesis 37-50*, p. 3.

Furthermore, the beginning of a wider perspective for reading the stories in Genesis 37-50, which includes all Jacob's sons, is represented by the inclusion of Judah-Tamar story of Genesis 38. Hence, in the following sections, I shall first suggest a new reading of Genesis 37-50 and secondly, the traditional titles of 'the Joseph Story' or 'the Jacob Story' will be discussed critically. Finally, I will deal with the justification for the alternative title *The Story of Jacob and his Sons*. As part of the arguments in the last section, the thematic chiasmus of Genesis 37-50 and its relationship to the structure of Genesis 38 will be presented as a key to the reading of the novella in the context of the Primary Narratvie.

5.3.1. A New Proposal for Reading Genesis 38 as part of Genesis 37-50

The last major section of Genesis 37-50 in the book of Genesis does not only contain the story of Joseph, but also include the story of Jacob and his family or his sons;[48] for instance, in chapter 37 when Joseph was sold to the foreign traders by his brothers, and where Reuben and Judah attempted to save Joseph's life (vv. 18-29). Jacob is depicted in the beginning of the chapter by the narrator (vv. 1-2a, 3, 11) and speaks to Joseph (v. 11) and comes and speaks again on stage after the narration of Joseph's situation in Egypt at the end of the chapter (vv. 33-35); in effect, the appearance of Jacob as father is as significant as that of Joseph, Reuben and Judah among his sons in Genesis 37 in terms of father's agony for the loss of his beloved son (Joseph). Next, chapter 38 is the story of Judah and Tamar and chapters 42-45 consist of the serial stories of Jacob in Canaan and his sons going down to Egypt. Chapter 46 tells of the journey of Jacob and his sons to Egypt and Judah is shown as the leader of his brothers (v. 28). In Egypt, when Joseph took his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim to Jacob who was in bed due to illness, Jacob blessed them crossing his hands reversing their birth order (ch. 48).[49] Jacob's

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[48] Cohn puts it,'The last part of Genesis [chs. 37-50], usually called the Joseph story, is more accurately called by the name indicated in the formula which heads it: "These are the generations (toledot) of Jacob." This title specifies not only Joseph but the entire family of Jacob as the subject of the narrative.' Cohn, 'Narrative Structure and Canonical Perspective in Genesis', p. 11; Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), pp. 156-57.

[49] Ron Zvi, 'The Preference of Ephraim', *JBQ* 28 (2000), pp. 60-61.

domination of his family still continues up to chapter 49 in which he blesses his twelve sons. However, if the title of Genesis 37 to 50 were confined only to Jacob, this would also seem inappropriate because the importance of his sons, especially Judah and Joseph, is much greater than we may have expected. On the other hand, the subject of the novella should not be restricted to Jacob's sons ignoring Jacob.

Of course, it is true that quite a few passages in Genesis 37-50 are relevant to Joseph so that it could be argued that the story should be given a title that mentions his name. For instance, Joseph appears in three chapters without his father Jacob and his other brothers (Gen. 39-41) and in other parts he speaks to Jacob or his brothers (Gen. 42; 43; 44:1-15; 45; 46:31-32; 47:1-26; 48; 50). As is generally known, however, some chapters do not contain any appearance of Joseph, but instead, the fourth son of Jacob, Judah and his deeds, are given prominence (Gen. 37:26-27, 38, 43:3-14, 44:16-34, 46:28 and 49:8-12). In particular, Genesis 38 only features Judah out of all the family including Jacob. Also we should not be ignoring Tamar's character and her influence as mother of the heirs within Judah's family up to the David in the book of Ruth 4:12-22. In Genesis 49, Judah's blessing from his father Jacob is better than those of his brothers.[50] In addition, other chapters include Jacob along with Joseph and his brothers (אֶחָיו) present their unique features in the novella (Gen. 37:4, 8-11, 17-25, 28-32; Gen. 42-47:12; Gen. 48; Gen. 49-50).[51]

For the sake of clarifying the structure of the following subsections of the present chapter in this thesis, therefore, several questions must be suggested: first, are there any reasons for the reader to adhere to the titles of 'The Story of Joseph' or 'The Story of Jacob' for Genesis 37 to 50? Secondly, is this novella best characterised as a one-man (Joseph or Jacob) show? Furthermore, if neither the title of Joseph nor Jacob story explains the contents persuasively to the reader, what could replace them as an alternative? Finally, what is the implied role of Genesis 38 as one of the key chapters in the novella, given to the reader in the

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[50] For this argument, see section 3.4.4 of this thesis.

[51] Pirson notes that, 'Genesis 37-50 actually presents the tale in which several of Jacob's sons enter the spotlight' in *The Lord of the Dreams: A Semantic and Literary Analysis of Genesis 37-50*, p. 1.

larger perspective? I maintain that the appropriate title for Genesis 37-50 could be variable according to the reader's interest and what they see as the emphasis of the range of the story in relation to the larger point of view of the Primary Narrative (Genesis – 2 Kings) because, as Furman notes, '…the reader proposes a personal understanding of the meaningful aspects of a literary work.'[52]

5.3.2. Genesis 37-50: 'The Joseph Story' or 'The Jacob Story'?

Problematic Placements of Genesis 38 and Genesis 49

As noted earlier, many scholars have insisted that Genesis 37-50 should be entitled 'The Story of Joseph' or 'The Story of Jacob'. They also believe that, even though chapters such as the story of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38 and Jacob's blessing of his sons in Genesis 49 seem to have no connection to its storyline, the Joseph story contains these smaller episodes as interceptions or interludes.[53] In the case of the latter title (The Story of Jacob), John Goldingay notes:

> As was the case with 'the Isaac narrative', to entitle the sequence 'the Jacob narrative' feels somewhat whimsical, since most of the chapters refer explicitly to the life of one of his sons rather than to Jacob himself. Yet it is clearly marked as 'the Jacob story' at its beginning and on its return to Jacob for the closing chapters (47-50), and, indeed, the point about the Joseph material in its context is to explain how Jacob's family came to be in Egypt.[54]

Between the two titles for the story, however, it is plain to say that in the field of scholarship the title 'The Joseph Story' is more popular as a title for the fourteen chapters than 'The Jacob

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[52] Furman, 'His Story Versus Her Story: Male Genealogy and Female Strategy in the Jacob Cycle', p. 141.

[53] For example, see John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1912), p. 438; see the BB' pairing of the structure of the Joseph Story by Rendsburg below. He considers these two chapters as interludes. However, I wonder whether Rendsburg elucidates their functions and meanings appropriately within the whole story of Genesis 37-50; Pirson includes Genesis 48 in these interruptions. He states that '…in the entire story [Genesis 37-50] the narrative flow is suddenly interrupted by the intrusion of Gen. 38, the story of Tamar and Judah – not to mention the death-bed episode in Gen. 48 and the old tribal sayings in Gen. 49, which are not considered an integral part of the Joseph story', in *The Lord of the Dreams: A Semantic and Literary Analysis of Genesis 37-50*, p. 2.

[54] John Goldingay, 'The Patriarchs in Scripture and History', in A.R. Millard & D.J. Wiseman (eds), *Essays on the Patriarchal Narratives* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1980), pp. 11-42 (20).

Story'. In terms of source criticism, since Julius Wellhausen's work published in 1885 (English)[55] it has usually been supposed that Genesis 37-50 is composed of J and E documents or sources fitted together, although this story has also been recognised as 'a single, sustained narrative work'.[56] In relation to the aim, purpose and origination of the story, Gerhard von Rad has been judged to have opened an epoch in biblical scholarship by proposing that the story is for 'wisdom teaching' and born within the context of the 'Solomonic enlightenment' and that it reflects Egyptian influence shaped by 'a single writer of genius' as a redactor (J the Yawhist).[57] Supporting von Rad and concerning the genre of the story, in particular, George W. Coats claims that Genesis 37-50 is a novella and the work of an artist. He states:

> The Joseph story is an intricate and complex piece of art...Its narration is structured in a series of scenes, with all principal characters except Joseph appearing at appropriate points, then dropping away when the narration moves on. It is especially significant that the story can drop a principal character, a line of narration in a subplot, or even the narration of the major plot, then return to the same point later for continued attention and finally for resolution of the theme. Moreover, this story shows sophisticated psychological insight by depicting the grief of a father, the guilt of the brothers, the vindictive response of Potiphar's wife, the almost vindictive response of Joseph to his brothers. This kind of art work is comparable to Ruth, to Jonah, to Tobit. It qualifies as a novella...is the work of an artist'.[58]

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[55] J. Wellhausen, *Geschichte Israels*, I, Marburg, 1878; second edition, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels*, 1883. An English translation of this second edition by J.S. Black and A. Menzies entitled *Prolegomena to the History of Israel* was published in 1885. A reprint of this with a further change of title *to Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* was made in 1957 (Harper Torch-books, New York), requoted in Ronald E. Clement, *A Century of Old Testament Study* (Guildford and London: Lutterworth Press, 1976), p. 28, see footnote 3; but Whybray, who is suspicious of source criticism, suggests that one has to make a decision on the Joseph story as either the mixed corpus of the documentary hypothesis (a conflation of two sources) or 'a novel of genius' (a complete literary unit), asserting that the documentary hypothesis has a possibility of fallacy. More importantly, Whybray's suggestions seem to bring out two things from the story: the possibility of literary artistry along with a single literary work. Whybray, 'The Joseph Story and Pentateuchal Criticism', pp. 525, 528.

[56] Whybray 'The Joseph Story and Pentateuchal Criticism', p. 522; for information on source critical aspects of 'the Joseph Story', see J.A. Soggin, 'Notes on the Joseph Story', in A. Graeme Auld (ed.), *Understanding Poets and Prophets: Essays in Honour of George Wishart Anderson* (JSOTSup, 152; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), pp. 336-49 (336-38).

[57] Gerhand von Rad, 'The Joseph Narrative and Ancient Wisdom', in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (trans. E.W. Trueman Dicken; Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1965), pp. 292-300; however, Soggin challenges von Rad because no direct evidence of wisdom can be obtained from Genesis 37 to 50, only 'the product of divine inspiration'. see Soggin, 'Notes on the Joseph Story', pp. 338-44.

[58] George W. Coats, 'The Joseph Story and Ancient Wisdom: A Reappraisal', *CBQ* 35 (1973), pp. 285-97 (293-95).

In another article, Coats continues his hypothesis claiming that Genesis 37-50 is 'a collection of traditions' and this unit 'incorporates the Joseph story into the larger narration', although the structure shows disunity.[59] Finally, Coats states that the plot structure of the Joseph story shows 'a story within a story'.[60] It is true that the story, in a literary sense, has a close connection to the surrounding narratives.

Nonetheless, Coats does not illuminate convincingly 'all principal characters except Joseph appearing at appropriate points…' along with the chief characters of the other chapters such as the Judah-Tamar story in Genesis 38 and Jacob's testament to his sons in Genesis 49. That is, Coats ignored some meaningful chapters such as Genesis 38 and Genesis 49 in the wider context of Genesis 37-50. Of course, some scholars speculate that Genesis 38 interrupts, or reduces the narrative pace of, the story of Joseph and that this results in the enhancement of the tension within it.[61] However, these contentions fundamentally do not come to a satisfactory solution as long as they stick to the title of the Joseph story. If, as Coats admits, Genesis 37-50 is 'the work of an artist' and, as Lindsay Wilson acknowledges, Genesis 38 is 'an intentional rather than accidental interlude',[62] why are the present readers of the novella forced to be confused by the traditional titles for the storyline?

Additionally, from a redationalist point of view, it is difficult to identify the J document and the authorship of J in the story of Genesis 37-50. For these reasons, in this thesis I have not been concerned with the documentary hypothesis (source criticism) or tradition criticism but have concentrated on the final form, literary structure and literary implications. Again, one problem still remains, that both those who are interested in the sources of Genesis, and those who are not, believe that Genesis 37-50 is 'not wholly coherent.

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[59] Coats, 'Redactional Unity in Genesis 37-50', *JBL* 93 (1974), pp. 15-21 (15).

[60] Coats, 'The Joseph Story and Ancient Wisdom: A Reappraisal', pp. 285-97 (288).

[61] Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, pp. 3-4; Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family: A Literary Study*, p. 37, 205; Longacre, *Joseph: A Story of Divine Providence: A Text Theoretical and Textlinguistic Analysis of Genesis 37 and 39-48*, p. 26; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, p. 363.

[62] Lindsay Wilson, *Joseph Wise and Otherwise: The Intersection of Wisdom and Covenant in Genesis 37-50* (PBM: Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2004), p. 86.

despite what a first reading may lead us to presume',[63] while accepting that the story is called 'The Story of Joseph' or 'The Story of Jacob'.

The Preference for the Title 'the Joseph Story'

The question for this section is, firstly, why is the title 'the Joseph Story' preferred by most scholars? Of course, it is true that the narrative in Genesis 37 to 50 contains large portions on the role of Joseph. However, as Golka indicated, we also need to investigate whether it helps the reader for the title to suggest Joseph as the sole hero in the novella. According to him:

> ...Joseph was held up as an example of prudence and chastity, of a wise ruler and provider for the world and his brothers, and even as a prototype of Christ, prefiguring the life and suffering of the redeemer...But is this story really about Joseph as its sole hero?...What exactly is its textual base in the Bible?[64]

In order to answer this question, I will deal with the background for the preference of most biblical scholars for the title 'the Joseph Story'. First of all, it has been said that the story of Joseph consists of five steps describing his life: exposition, complication, conflict, climax, and resolution.[65] According to this way of looking at the situation, Genesis 38 functions as an exposition, as an 'interlude', in the story of Joseph's life. Joseph was sold to the foreign traders by his brothers and this is the beginning of the long story. Then Joseph experiences a period of trials; Joseph is compromised sexually twice by the wife of his master, Potiphar (Gen. 39:7, 12) and put into prison for over two years (Gen. 41:1). In the phases of climax and resolution, Joseph successfully interprets Pharaoh's dreams and finally becomes second-in-command (Gen. 41:1-45). In the story of Joseph, the point of resolution in his life is indeed

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[63] Soggin, 'Notes on the Joseph Story', p. 339.

[64] Golka, 'Genesis 37-50: Joseph Story or *Israel-Joseph* Story?', p. 153.

[65] Coats describes the whole structure (five steps) of, what he calls, the Joseph story, as follows; I. Exposition: introduction of principals (37:1-4), II. Complication: Joseph's power is challenged, the family is broken (37:5-36), III. Digression: Joseph rises to new power (39:1-41:57), IV. Complication: Joseph challenges the power of his brothers (42:1-38), V. Denouement: by Joseph's power, reconciliation of the family (43:1-45:28), VI. Conclusion: from Canaan to Egypt (46:1-47:27). However, Coats omits some chapters such as Gen. 38, Gen. 47:28-50:26. George W. Coats, *Genesis, with an Introduction to Narrative Literature* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1983), pp. 263-64.

chapter 41 because he becomes the highest official apart from the Pharaoh in Egypt. On the other hand, W. Dietrich insists that 'the "Josephs-Novelle" runs from Gen. 37-45, excluding chs. 38 and 39, as well as Judah's speech in 44.18-34. The tale ends when the brothers are reconciled in Gen. 45 and Jacob is reported [told] that his son is still alive (*Die Josephsgeschichte*, 53-66)'.[66] However, the whole story of Genesis 37-50 still occupies five more chapters (chs. 46-50) and it opens up to chapter 50. There are other factors unrelated to Joseph in the story. This means that the novella should not only be focused on Joseph.

Secondly, Joseph's image and his high status in Egypt may affect the reader's evaluation of his character in Genesis 37-50. For example, Joseph dreamed dreams twice at the beginning of the story (Gen. 37:5, 9). The contents of Joseph's dreams are relevant to his parents and his brothers who bowed to him. Due to this, Joseph's brothers hated him, but Jacob kept the matter in his mind (Gen. 37:10-11). Although Joseph was sold into Egypt against his will, he ascended to a higher position there anyway. When his brothers came to Egypt in order to buy grain because of the severe famine in Canaan, Joseph got a chance to test them (Gen. 42-44). Later when Joseph made himself known to his brothers who had bowed to Joseph (Gen. 45:1-3), his dreams could be seen to have come true in the end. However, the story does not finish at that stage but continues into the following chapters in which Jacob arrives in Egypt and he blesses his sons and grandsons (Gen. 46-49). Accordingly, as Joseph's confession states, just as he came to Egypt in advance to further God's plan and save the lives of *Jacob and his sons* (Gen. 45:7), so too did Jacob come to Egypt to bless Joseph and his two sons and his eleven brothers before his death (Gen. 48-49).

Finally, for quite a few scholars, Genesis 37-50 portrays Joseph's dramatic life to the reader. But his father Jacob also had to weather the storms of life in the story: when Jacob was told by his sons that his beloved Joseph had been killed by wild animals, he refused to be comforted by his sons and daughters (Gen. 37:31-35) and when Simeon was a hostage in

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[66] Quoted in Pirson, *The Lord of the Dreams: A Semantic and Literary Analysis of Genesis 37-50*, p. 146, footnote 11.

Egypt and the Egyption official (Joseph) ordered that Benjamin the youngest should also be taken to Egypt, Jacob as a father must have had a bitter experience again (Gen. 42-43). In other words, Jacob's unexpected life is basically more substantial than Joseph's. In a similar way, Judah also goes though a dramatic reversal in his life. In brief, Judah's character throughout the story of Genesis 37-50 can be summarised as going through the process of 'Departure-Transition-Return'[67] in his development through the events and he becomes the most blessed among his brothers (Gen. 49:8-12). This could mean that, as Ron Pirson points out, '...the story told in Gen. 37-50 results in Judah's rise and Joseph's decline – even though Joseph is presented favourably in several episodes (like ch. 39)...Joseph's role is reduced or presented less favourably and Judah's role enlarged and given more prominence.'[68] That is to say, it is certain that Genesis 37-50 not only contains stories about Joseph but also stories about his father Jacob and his brother Judah as well as his other brothers.

On the other hand, in the fourth chapter on 'The Joseph Story as Literature' in his book, Donald B. Redford maintains that, 'the Joseph narrative is a masterpiece of story-telling...[It is] a short story and a united whole.'[69] In a similar way, W. Lee Humphreys notes that the Joseph novella has a 'trajectory' and it unfolds in seven steps over the course of the story: Exposition (Gen. 37:1-4), Complication (Gen. 37:5-36), Interludes (Gen. 38-41), Further Complications (Gen. 42-44), Resolution (Gen. 45:1-15), Denouement (Gen. 45:16-50:21), Conclusion (Gen. 50:22-16).[70] These stages are similar to Coats' five steps introduced earlier.

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[67] Lambe, 'Judah's Development: The Pattern of Departure – Transition – Return', pp. 53-68.

[68] Pirson, *The Lord of the Dreams: A Semantic and Literary Analysis of Genesis 37-50*, pp. 145-46; Alexander maintains that, 'Although Joseph is by far the most important character in the final chapters of Genesis, the part played by Judah should not be overlooked. Chapter 38 narrates the unseemly incident with Tamar, portraying Judah in a very negative light. However, he is pictured in a more positive manner as the Joseph story progresses. When Joseph demands that Benjamin be brought down to Egypt, Judah is prepared to take full responsibility before his father for what happens to Benjamin (43:8-9). Moreover, later Judah acknowledges the guilt of the brothers (44:16), and volunteers to be a slave in Egypt in order that Benjamin may return home to his father in Canaan (44:18-34). Finally, Judah is the one entrusted by his father to get directions from Joseph for the journey to Goshen (46:28).' T. Desmond Alexander, 'From Adam to Judah: The Significance of the Family Tree in Genesis', *EvQ* 61.1 (1989), pp. 5-19 (13).

[69] Redford, *A Story of the Biblical Story of Joseph (Genesis 37-50)*, pp. 66, 68.

[70] Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family: A Literary Study*, pp. 32-67.

From these serial steps, one of the features is that the 'interludes' comprise four chapters: the Judah and Tamar story (Gen. 38) and the story of Joseph from the house of Potiphar to the Royal Court (Gen. 39-41). With respect to the 'interludes' of Genesis 38-41. Humphreys believes that Genesis 38 serves as 'a counterpoint to the larger novella in which it is now placed'[71] and Genesis 39-41 'reflect the rhythms of Joseph's rise' as a 'time as experienced psychologically, in which some brief moments shape years, while [thirteen] years can pass and be hardly remembered between these bright events'.[72] Humphreys also accepts Alter's opinion on the location of Genesis 38 that the function of the story is to hold back the narrative speed and act as an interval in order to enhance the suspense of Joseph's fate in Egypt and his family in Canaan.[73]

However, Humphreys overlooks the role and the meaning of the Judah and Tamar characters and the implication of Genesis 38 within the larger narrative of Genesis 37-50. He merely considers some parallel themes such as 'recognise/identify' as an equivalent pair between Genesis 38 and the surrounding narratives. In the case of Genesis 39-41, Humphreys only focuses on Joseph's rise in Egypt, but the story does not end at that point in spite of Joseph's elevation. In Humphreys' case, the title of Genesis 37-50 is given as 'the Joseph novella', but this should have finished in chapter 41 because Joseph was elevated to the highest office in Egypt as a positive ending to the story. But as Humphreys recognises, the story goes on in the next scenes in which Jacob's sons 'go down'[74] to Egypt for food and meet Joseph through the scene of 'Further complications (42:1-44:34)'. As a result, to the reader, the stories in Genesis 37-50 understood as the so-called Joseph story are not about a single character instead they are further episodes about Jacob and his other sons.

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[71] Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family: A Literary Study*, p. 38.

[72] Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family: A Literary Study*, pp. 38-39, 41.

[73] Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family: A Literary Study*, p. 37; Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, pp. 3-12. Alter's contribution is that he successfully explains some words and thematic relationships between Genesis 38 and Genesis 37, 39 and realises that as a result 'the text is an intricately interconnected unity…'. However, Alter still clings to the title of the Joseph story .

[74] Interestingly, two brothers, Judah and Joseph go down Canaan and Egypt in Genesis 38 and Genesis 39 respectively. Barbara Green, *"What Profit for us?": Remembering the Story of Joseph* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1996), pp. 61-90.

A Critical Review of Gary A. Rendsburg's Structure of the Joseph Story

Returning to the positioning of Genesis 38 and Genesis 49, Gary A. Rendsburg, who suggests an intriguing literary construction of Genesis 37-50, asserts that, '...the Joseph story is the most unified of the four major cycles [Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph] in Genesis...'[75] His structure of Genesis 37-50 is different from Humphreys' (Gen. 38-41) regarding the placement of the units considered to be interludes: the first interlude in Genesis 38 and the second interlude in Genesis 49. The following outline highlights his take on the systematic structure of the Joseph story:[76]

FIGURE 8

Gary A. Rendsburg's Structure of the Joseph Story

A Joseph and his brothers, Jacob and Joseph part (37:1-36)
B Interlude: Joseph not present (38:1-30)
C Reversal: Joseph guilty, Potiphar's wife innocent (39:1-23)
D Joseph hero of Egypt (40:1-41:57)
E Two trips to Egypt (42:1-43:34)
F Final test (44:1-34)
F' Conclusion of test (45:1-28)
E' Two tellings of migration to Egypt (46:1-47:12)
D' Joseph hero of Egypt (47:13-27)
C' Reversal: Ephraim firstborn, Manasseh secondborn (47:28-48:22)
B' Interlude: Joseph nominally present (49:1-28)
A' Joseph and his brothers, Jacob and Joseph part (49:29-50:26)

Interestingly, Rendsburg notes that the structure of Genesis 37-50 shows a symmetrical schema with binary six stages which share vocabulary or theme-words as designed by a

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[75] Gary A. Rendsburg, 'Redactional Structuring in the Joseph Story: Genesis 37-50', in Vincent L. Tollers and John Maier (eds.), *Mappings of the Biblical Terrain: The Book as Text* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1990), pp. 215-32 (229); Cohn states that Genesis 37-50 is 'not a cycle of stories but one continuous tale' in his 'Narrative Structure and Canonical Perspective in Genesis', p. 11.

[76] Gary A. Rendsburg, *The Redaction of Genesis* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1986), p. 80; *idem*, 'Redactional Structuring in the Joseph Story: Genesis 37-50', pp. 216-17.

skilful redactor.[77] However, like Humphreys, Rendsburg does not clearly elucidate what the function of the interludes of B (Gen. 38) and B' (Gen. 49) is in the larger story as a whole because the content of B is the story of Judah and Tamar and the B' is Jacob's blessing of his twelve sons and the blessing for Judah (Gen. 49:8-12) is the best and even better than Joseph's (vv. 22-26). In particular, the point is that both these two chapters are notable for their concentration on Judah's role and his standing in the family. Rendsburg thinks these two chapters are only interruptions. The notion of a consistent structure for the Joseph story would be weakened if it contained stories that were merely interludes, whereas if the so called interludes could be shown to play crucial roles in the whole story, that would signal an impetus to include their part in the story in the title of the whole narrative section. If so, is it coincidental that B and B' both contain material concerning Judah?[78]

Another problematic thing about the structure above is that the parallel pairing CC' about reversal is not persuasive enough because the reversal of Joseph's guilt and Potiphar's wife's innocence is obviously not the same theme of reversal as the reversal of birth order between Ephraim and Manasseh. Rather, the latter is closer to the reversal of the order of childbirth involving Perez and Zerah in Genesis 38 and relates to the issues of ultimogeniture and the importance of genealogy. David A. Dorsey clearly parallels the 'reversal of elder and younger sons of Judah as "firstborn" (38:1-30)' and the 'reversal of elder and younger sons of Joseph (47:27-49:32)'.[79] As Dan W. Forsyth puts it, 'the younger brother prevails.'[80] Thus, it is more convincing to say that C and C' need to be compared using the theme of the birthright of Judah's sons and Joseph's sons respectively.

Finally, the pairing FF', 'final test' and 'conclusion of test', look similar by virtue of the theme of 'test', but in the strict sense of the word they do not seem comparable with each

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[77] Rendsburg, 'Redactional Structuring in the Joseph Story: Genesis 37-50', p. 225.
[78] Rendsburg, 'Redactional Structuring in the Joseph Story: Genesis 37-50', p. 219.
[79] Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis-Malachi*, p. 60.
[80] Dan W. Forsyth, 'Sibling Rivalry, Aesthetic Sensibility, and Social Structure in Genesis', *Ethos* 19 (1991), pp. 453-510 (461); for information on 'the triumph of the younger son over the older', see Judah Goldin, 'The Young Son or Where Does Genesis 38 Belong', *JBL* 96.1 (1977), pp. 27-44, especially from page 30 onwards.

other. Strictly speaking, F contains Judah's plea to Joseph which occupies more than half of the chapter (Gen. 44:16-34), whereas F' is the part of the story where Joseph makes himself known to his brothers who go back to report it their father (Gen. 45). So, these are not symmetrical. Again, a thematic analogy would be more helpful here paralleling Judah's petition to Joseph (Gen. 44:16-34) with Judah's plea to Jacob in Genesis 43:3-10. Moreover, the revelation (disclosure) of Joseph to his brothers (Gen. 45:1-15) could be connected to the revelation of Pharaoh's dreams by Joseph (Gen. 41:1-57).

From the analysis of the structure of Genesis 37-50 in relation to the so-called story of Joseph, neither Humphreys nor Rendsburg explains the presence of the interlude(s) – Gen. 38, 49 – in the final form and this brings us to re-open the question of the claim that the novella shows great artistry and skill.[81] The issue is not about the boundaries of the story but the title of it. As a result, it is a question as to whether the title of Genesis 37-50 is more appropriately named 'The Story of Joseph' or 'The Story of Jacob'. Furthermore, this novella seems not to lean toward only one character as do the previous patriarchal narratives. It is closer to being about 'the wider family of Jacob as the second part of the story of Jacob [the first part being Gen. 25-36]'[82] because, among his twelve sons, only Judah and Joseph build their family away from Jacob, but the rest, along with the distinguished two brothers, were still under the influencing power of their father almost up to the end of the story. Thus, if my proposition has merit, the title of Genesis 37-50 may need to be changed in order to recognise the relevance of this section as part of the Primary Narrative.

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[81] Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*, p. 438; von Rad, *Genesis*, p. 342; Redford, *A Study of the Biblical Story of Joseph (Genesis 37-50)*, pp. 66-68.

[82] Wilson, *Joseph Wise and Otherwise: The Intersection of Wisdom and Covenant in Genesis 37-50*, p. 86-87 (86). Ironically, Wilson prefers to consider Genesis 37-50 as 'the story of Joseph' rather than 'the whole family of Jacob'.

5.3.3. The Justification for the Title *The Story of Jacob and his Sons*

Throughout the patriarchal narratives in the book of Genesis, the first three stories of the generations of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are called 'cycle(s)' because some 'theme-words and catchwords' or events are repeated. By contrast, the fourth story (Gen. 37-50) is not normally evaluated as a cycle.[83] It is noticeable that, as Chaim Spring and Jay Shapiro put it, 'The fourth generation, that of Jacob's sons, is considered the eponymic progenitors of the tribes of Israel but does not attain the status of the first three generations.'[84] That is, in relation to their names, the images of Jacob and his sons in the fourth generation story of the patriarchal narratives are different from the characters of the previous cycles and their names may at least imply two meanings in the history of Israel throughout the Primary Narrative (Genesis – 2 Kings); one is that Israel (Jacob) become the name of his people (Exod. 12:37; Num. 1:45) and the progenitor of the northern kingdom of Israel in the land of Canaan and afterwards his name stands for the place-name of the kingdom (1 Kgs 14:19). The other is that the eleven sons of Jacob together with Joseph's two sons (Manasseh and Ephraim) compose the twelve Israelite tribes and then occupy their portions in the land (Josh. 13-20). Judah the fourth son of Jacob, in effect, became the true leader who lead his brothers to Egypt (Gen. 46:28). After that, David is a Judahite (1 Kgs 12:20). In these terms, the understanding of the role of Genesis 38 within Genesis 37-50 is important to the reader because the episode sheds light on some implications of the activities of Judah and Tamar in their genealogical function as ancestors of the Judahite line. From this, we need to re-read the structure of Genesis 37-50 in line with the activities of Jacob and his sons in the larger stories.

The structure of Genesis 37-50 within the title of Jacob and his sons' story is composed of fourteen stages and each stage has a binary pair so that seven episodes parallel

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[83] Rendsburg, *The Redaction of Genesis*; According to Hamilton, for instance, the patriarchal cycles are: the Abraham cycle (Gen. 12:1-25:18) and the Isaac/Jacob cycle (Gen. 25:19-36:43), but the last part is the Joseph story (Gen. 37:1-50:26). Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1990); *Idem*, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters18-50.*

[84] Chaim Spring and Jay Shapiro, 'The Enigma of the Joseph Narrative', *JBQ* 35 (2007), pp. 260-69 (260).

each other according to the theme in each binary pair. I have altered the title of Dorsey's 'Symmetry of the Joseph story (Gen. 37:2-50:26)'[85] to the *Thematic Chiasmus Showing the Story of Jacob and his Sons (Gen. 37:1-50:26)*. The asterisks below show Dorsey's pairings. Where there is no asterisk, the pairing is mine. But the focus of my suggestion, in particular, adds the middle section G and G':

FIGURE 9

Thematic Chiasmus Showing the Story of Jacob and his Sons (Gen. 37:1-50:26)

A Prologue: Beginning of Jacob and His Sons' Story (37:1-20)
B **Reversal** of Birthright between Reuben and Judah (37:21-36)
C **Reversal** of Elder and Younger Sons of Judah as 'firstborn' (38:1-30)*
D Joseph's **Enslavement** to Egyptian (39:1-23)*
E **Disfavor** at Pharaoh's Court (40:1-23)*
F Joseph's **Revelation** of Pharaoh's Dreams (41:1-57)*
G **Jacob's Sons** Going to Egypt and **Judah's Plea** (42:1-43:14)
a Jacob's Sons Going to Egypt for food (42:1-38)
b Judah's Petition to **Jacob** and Its Acceptance (43:1-14)
G' **Jacob' Sons** Going to Egypt and **Judah's Plea** (43:15-44:34)
a' Jacob's Sons Going to Egypt for food (43:15-44:3)
b' Judah's Petition to **Joseph** and Its Acceptance (44:14-34)
F' Joseph's **Revelation** of His Identity to Brothers (45:1-45:15)*
E' **Favor** at Pharaoh's Court (45:16-47:12)*
D' Joseph's **Enslavement** of Egyptians (47:13-26)*
C' **Reversal** of Elder and Younger Sons of Joseph (47:27-48:22)*
B' **Reversal** of Birthright between Judah and His Elder Brothers (49:1-28)
A' Epilogue: End of Jacob and His Sons' Story (49:29-50:26)

The structure of the Story of Jacob and his Sons is quite obvious by virtue of the parallel words and themes. Above all, the core segment G and G' is unique and its significance in the

[85] Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis-Malachi*, p. 60. According to Dorsey, the structure consists of fourteen stages (a-g, a'-g') in total and I quote exactly c (C), d (D), e (E), f (F), f' (F'), e' (E'), d' (D') and c' (C') using the asterisk, but in Dorsey's figure f' (44:4-45:15), e' (45:16-47:12) and c' (47:27-49:32) are slightly different in verses compared to my symmetrical design above.

scheme is obvious; it explains why the suggested title is appropriate. In this part, all the characters are presented to the reader (Jacob, Jacob's sons as group, Judah, and Joseph) and the two crucial elements are included: *Jacob's Sons Going to Egypt* and *Judah's Plea*. In G and G', the former gives the reason for the plot; why Jacobs's sons went to Egypt, and the latter is the climax of the story and the solution for the difficult situation of Jacob and his sons in Egypt. These two themes connect Jacob and Joseph. The intercessor between the two main characters is Judah who is, in effect, his brothers' representative. Judah's pleas to both Jacob and Joseph result in a positive way for the situation to proceed and lead to a climax in the story of Jacob and his sons. That is to say, Judah's role is remarkable and, without Judah's help, Jacob and Joseph would not have met again. Jacob's other sons also help to move the story on but as helpers: from Canaan to Egypt and from Egypt to Canaan. Their movements are repeated twice (Gen. 42:2; 43:15). Accordingly, all these characters in the storyline are equally significant in the middle part of the structure.

Another feature is that the topic of B and B' as well as C and C' is *reversal* and this is also repeated twice: reversal of birthright and reversal of elder and younger. [86] However, Dorsey missed the first Reversal (BB'), in that the competition between Reuben and Judah in Genesis 37 in their attempts to save Joseph from the threat of death by their brothers brings about, in effect, a reversal of birthright. As a result, Judah prevails over his elder brother, Reuben. Likewise, the blessing of Jacob to Judah exceeds in both quantity and quality those given to his elder brothers, Reuben, Simeon and Levi (Gen.49). If the reversal theme covers the outer episodes in this structure, the stages G and G' are repeated in a chiastic pattern (a-b and a'-b') at the centre of it: going to Egypt twice and Judah's two petitions one to Jacob and one to Joseph. The pleas of Judah clearly reveal a man of ability as family spokesman for his brothers.

The last thing is that the stages DD', EE', and FF' centre on enslavement, disfavour,

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[86] On this topic, see Roger Syrén, *The Forsaken First-Born: A Study of a Recurrent Motif in the Patriarchal Narrative* (JSOTSup, 133: Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993).

and revelation respectively. The stages of D, E, and F are only relevant to Joseph and the Egyptians, but in D', E', F' Joseph reconciles with his brothers and Jacob and his sons move out to Egypt to live. In both prologue and epilogue, however, the character who is emphasised is Jacob rather than Joseph because Jacob is the head of his family and Joseph is only one of his sons. Thus, it is concluded that the novella of Genesis 37-50 recounts the activities of Jacob and his sons and the symmetrical structure of the story explains the reason why the novella should be entitled *The Story of Jacob and his Sons*.

5.4. Concluding Remarks

In the present chapter, I have argued that Genesis 37-50 indicates that the novella contained in those chapters is the story of Jacob and his twelve sons rather than that of only a single character (Joseph or Jacob etc.). We can see that the author employs the unit as a preparatory stage for the future descendants of Israel/Jacob in the periods of the Judges and the Kings. If this is true, to conclude, what is the implied role of Genesis 38 within the larger story of Jacob and his sons (Gen. 37-50) from the viewpoint of the Primary Narrative (Genesis – 2 Kings)?

As we have mentioned briefly before, all of Jacob's progeny become 'the manifestation of the twelve tribes of Israel'.[87] When it came to the allotment of the land the twelve tribes divided the land up between them, with the exception of the tribe of Levi who received no share of the land but was allotted only thirteen towns from the tribes of Judah, Simeon and Benjamin (Josh. 14:4, 21:4). However, one of the remarkable things is that on the tribe of Judah, the fourth son of Leah, is bestowed the southern land of Canaan (Josh. 15) and his name only becomes a place-name, that of the southern kingdom, that is Judah later on.[88] In the wilderness, when the tribal census of the Israelites was taken twice in the book of Numbers (chs. 1 and 26), it is noteworthy that the tribe of Judah, out of all the tribes, has the

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[87] Naomi Steinberg, 'The Genealogical Framework of the Family Stories in Genesis', Miri Amihai *et al.* (eds.), *Narrative Research on the Hebrew Bible* (Semeia, 42; Atlanta: SBL, 1988), pp. 41-50 (48).

[88] Millard, in his brief article, introduces the origin of Judah's name as a divine name, a place-name, and a personal name. Among them he supports the third one. See A.R. Millard, 'The Meaning of the Name Judah', *ZAW* 86 (1974), pp. 216-219.

largest number of adult males (74,600 and 76,500 each).[89]

Given the circumstances of the tribes of Israel above, we can now confront several enquiries: first, how could these results with respect to the tribe of Judah's name in the history of Israel have effected the understanding of Genesis 37-50 in retrospect? This question leads us to suggest that, 'Joseph's role is reduced or presented less favourably and Judah's role enlarged and given more prominence.'[90] The Psalmist also writes a poem, 'He [God] rejected the tent of Joseph, he did not choose the tribe of Ephraim; but he chose the tribe of Judah. Mount Zion, which he loves' (Ps. 78:67-68 NRSV).[91] What is more, it seems that the name of Jacob/Israel is important in the novella because his name becomes the eponymous title of the northern kingdom, the kingdom of Israel. Jacob's influence still remains active up to chapter 49. For these reasons, presumably, as Prison suggests, the topic of 'why Joseph has disappeared from Israel's literary history'[92] may be discussed together with this. Second, if the chapters 37-50 are not concerned with only one character, does this shed light on the possibility of a modification of the existing titles such as 'The Story of Joseph' or 'The Story of Jacob'? This has been argued in the preceding section 5.3.2. Finally, as I have proposed previously, would the corrected title *The Story of Jacob and his Sons* be inclusive enough to encompass the dynamic story of Genesis 37-50 in relation to the role of Genesis 38 within the Primary Narrative? In particular, the prominence of Tamar as a focal character and marginal mother of the heirs of Judah in Genesis 38 should be emphasised in the reading the chapter as 'The most prominent position in Israel is going to be taken by Judah'.[93] These two leading characters as 'patriarch and matriarch'[94] foreshadow the following stories: Naomi and Ruth,

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[89] For a comparison of the numerical size of the tribes, see Aaron Wildavsky, *Assimilation versus Separation: Joseph the Administrator and the Politics of Religion in Biblical Israel* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1993), p. 167.

[90] Pirson, *The Lord of the Dreams: A Semantic and Literary Analysis of Genesis 37-50*, p. 146; in a similar way, Amit argues Judah's character in Genesis 49. See Yairah Amit, *Reading Biblical Narratives: Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), pp. 145-47.

[91] We can also read of the preference for Joseph in a poem: 'With your strong arm you redeemed your people, the descendants of Jacob and Joseph.' (Ps. 77:15 NRSV)

[92] On this theory, see Pirson, *The Lord of the Dreams: A Semantic and Literary Analysis of Genesis 37-50*, p. 4.

[93] Pirson, *The Lord of the Dreams: A Semantic and Literary Analysis of Genesis 37-50*, p. 1.

[94] Bal says, '...his [Judah] later confrontation with his brothers shows that they are still under the authority of

and David and Bathsheba in connection with the genealogical succession within Judah's bloodline.

The novella that is Genesis 37-50 does not merely contain the story of Joseph or the story of Jacob as many believe. As we can see if we focus on more of the characters, the activities of Jacob and his sons (not including Joseph) are allocated as much importance in the novella as Joseph's activity. Except for Reuben in the capacity of firstborn of Jacob, Jacob's sons are almost anonymous when one speaks. However, Judah is an exception. It is true to say that the scholarly interest in Judah with respect to the study of Genesis 37-50 has increased in recent years.[95] For instance, in the section of her study on Judah and Tamar entitled: 'View of Israelite History Implied by the Presence of Genesis 38 in the Joseph Story,' Esther Marie Menn puts it as follows:

> Judah's pivotal role in Gen 37-50 brings into question the appropriateness of the common designation of these chapters as the "Joseph Story." Although Joseph receives primary attention, Genesis 37-50 actually features two of Jacob's sons, Judah and Joseph, by describing the events of their lives after they part company with their borthers and portraying their rise to positions of leadership, within the family and over Egypt, respectively.[96]

Menn properly insists on the importance of Judah's status within the larger narrative of Genesis 37-50 from the wider context of the biblical narrative or the history of Israel. She continues to argue the function of Genesis 38 in the same way.

> Perhaps Genesis 38, with its focus on Judah, appears intrusive at least in part because Genesis 37-50 is generally viewed as Joseph's story. If one broadens one's understanding of the subject of

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the father, while in [Gen.]38 Judah is already a mighty patriarch,' in Mieke Bal, *Lethal Love: Feminist Literary Readings of Biblical Love Stories* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 96; for the matriarchal function of Tamar in Genesis 38, see sections 6.2.5. and 6.3.4. of this thesis.

[95] For instance, see Lockwood, 'Tamar's Place in the Joseph Cycle', p. 42; Menn, *Judah and Tamar (Genesis 38) Ancient Jewish Exegesis: Studies in Literary Form and Hermeneutics* (1997), pp. 78-82; Anthony J. Lambe, 'Judah's Development: The Pattern of Departure – Transition – Return', *JSOT* 83 (1999), pp. 53-68; Warning, 'Terminological Patterns and Genesis 38', pp. 292-305; Bryan Smith, 'The Central Role of Judah in Genesis 37-50', *BSac* 162 (2005), pp. 158-174.

[96] Menn, *Judah and Tamar (Genesis 38) Ancient Jewish Exegesis: Studies in Literary Form and Hermeneutics*, p. 79.

these chapters to include events important for Israel's history, then Genesis 38 doesn't appear intrusive, but rather of paramount importance.[97]

I strongly agree with Menn's contention that Genesis 38 needs to be read as one of the important events in Israel's history in the larger perspective, although she still sticks to the title of the Joseph story. That is to say, if we consider the history of Israel as the largest Primary Narrative context from Genesis up to 2 Kings of the Hebrew Bible, the role of Genesis 38 in this history cannot be disregarded by the reader. In relation to the story of Judah and Tamar, Lockwood, who considers Genesis 38 to be a summary of Genesis 37-50, suggests that Judah's transformation in chapter 38 foretells the transformation of the brothers in chapter 44.[98] In a similar way, Wilson calls it a 'microcosm' since 'Genesis 38 appears to mirror that of the whole Joseph story [Gen. 37-50]'.[99] Although Lockwood's presupposition lies in the frame of Judah-Tamar in the small narrative versus Joseph-his brothers in the larger narrative,[100] this case shows a close connection both to Genesis 38 and the wider context of the patriarchal narratives. Of course, Joseph's character may be receiving most of the readers' attention. Lockwood's and Wilson's arguments can help us to see the immediate narrative connections between Genesis 38 as a small story and Genesis 37-50 as a larger story. However, Menn comes to expand the reader's insight from just focusing on Genesis to seeing

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[97] Menn, *Judah and Tamar (Genesis 38) Ancient Jewish Exegesis: Studies in Literary Form and Hermeneutics*, p. 79, see footnote 134; Warning, 'Terminological Patterns and Genesis 38', p. 294.

[98] Lockwood, 'Tamar's Place in the Joseph Cycle', pp. 35-43.

[99] Wilson, *Joseph Wise and Otherwise: The Intersection of Wisdom and Covenant in Genesis 37-50*, pp. 87-91 (88). For help in understanding the concept, I reproduce Wilson's structural parallels between chapters 37-50 and chapter 38:

The Joseph Story	**Judah/Tamar**	**Description**
Chapter 37	38:1-11	The wiser family picture
Chapters 39-47	38:12-26	The human initiatives of the main character (God behind the scenes) to right a wrong through the use of a shrewd plan
46:8-27 and chapters 48-50	38:27-30	A genealogical summary of subsequent descendants [amplified in Joseph's case to include the future destiny of his brothers]

[100] In this regard, Wilson insists that '...the Tamar story [Gen. 38] is a kind of microcosm of the larger Joseph story, and that its function in the final from of Genesis 37-50 is to anticipate themes in the subsequent chapters.' In *Joseph Wise and Otherwise: The Intersection of Wisdom and Covenant in Genesis 37-50*, p. 290.

the picture as far as the end of the Primary Narrative. In addition, Menn's assertion is helpful to the reader because the majority of scholars have focused less on Judah than on Joseph. Similarily, another example of a scholar who pushes for Judah to receive his deserved place in the interpretation of Genesis 37-50 is Wilson, who writes:

> The story of Judah, and especially his role as the bearer of the line of the Abrahamic promise, is a major sub-plot in Genesis 37-50. Judah is a key player in chapter 37, is one of the two main characters in chapter 38, is the brother who persuades Jacob to send Benjamin (43:1-15), and is a noble spokesman for the brothers (44:18-34). Furthermore, Jacob's blessing in Gen 49:8-12 makes it clear that his descendants will gain prominence among the later twelve tribes. As the bearer of the line of promise, Judah's story is thus interwoven with that of Joseph in this concluding section of the book of Genesis.[101]

It is true to say that Wilson perceived Judah's crucial position through the fourth generation patriarchal narrative in Genesis. Unfortunately, however, while admitting the significance of Judah's status along with Joseph in the last patriarchal narrative, both Menn and Wilson only consider the role of Judah 'within the Joseph Story'.

It is now clear to say that Judah's crucial role both within the narrow confines of Genesis 38 and the wider story of Genesis 37-50 is very meaningful. That being the case, one of the fundamental questions is that if Genesis 37-50 is called the 'Joseph story' or the 'Jacob story', how can other seemingly irrelevant chapters such as Genesis 38 be understood? Or how does Genesis 38 affect Genesis 37-50 within the context of the perspective of the Primary Narrative? Can the point be justified, as many scholars argue, that this chapter intrudes into the story of Genesis 37-50?[102] In the sub-title of his book, 'The Climactic Role of Judah', Thomas L. Brodie claims that, 'The most climactic speech in Genesis is not given by Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob, or by Rebekah or Joseph; it is given by Judah...The story of

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[101] Wilson, *Joseph Wise and Otherwise: The Intersection of Wisdom and Covenant in Genesis 37-50*, p. 87.

[102] Goldin states, 'Not only modern scholars, but also medieval commentators like Rashi (1040-1105) and Ibn Ezra (1092-1167) have almost been stopped short by the insertion of the thirty-eighth chapter of Genesis between the thirty seventh and thirty-ninth, i.e., by the insertion of the Judah and Tamar story into the carefully wrought and arranged narrative of Joseph.' See his article 'The Youngest Son or Where Does Genesis 38 Belong', pp. 27-44 (27).

Judah and Tamar (Gen. 38), far from being an intrusion in Genesis, is an indication of that future role.'[103] So, in view of the final shape of the text of Genesis, chapter 38 should naturally be understood as part of the surrounding narratives.

Therefore, I do not agree with those who consider Genesis 38 to have been added later or who disregard Jacob, Judah and his brothers and other characters in the various dimensions of the stories and instead focus only on Joseph. At least, it seems that the present final form of the story of Genesis 37-50 tells the the complexity and pervasiveness of the characters to the reader. As a result, two things remain: one is that Genesis 38 sheds a new light on how to read Genesis 37-50. That is, the reader can acknowledge that Genesis 37-50 is not only confined to a particular character from reading Genesis 38 and Genesis 49. The other is that the influence of Jacob as father of twelve sons, in effect, continues at the end of the story. In terms of this, the title, *The Story of Jacob and his Sons (Gen. 37-50)*, is more meaningful for the reader. Genesis 38 and Genesis 49 are examples of why this is the more appropriate title and these are also closely relevant to Judah, the fourth son of Jacob. In the case of Genesis 49, as Brodie says, 'the scene is set for a long history that will lead eventually to the conversion and prominence of Judah – and implicity of Judea. The ultimate goal of the entire Primary History [Narrative] – Judah's return from exile and conversion – is already built into the very fabric of Genesis.'[104] Thus, it is not exact to say that 'the Judah-focused material in Genesis 38 and 49:1b-28 is part of a borader compositional level spanning the Jacob-Joseph story'.[105] This is because the focus in these two units is, in effect, not Joseph but Judah.

After highlighting Judah's character in Genesis 38 we cannot ignore the character of Tamar who gave birth to the heirs of Judah and built up their family and I have shown her leading role in the structure of Genesis 38 (see figs. 6 and 7). Although Judah's activities can

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[103] Thomas L. Brodie, *Genesis as Dialogue: A Literary, History and Theological Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 46.

[104] Brodie, *Genesis as Dialogue: A Literary, History and Theological Commentary*, p. 46.

[105] David M. Carr, *Reading the Fractures of Genesis: Historical and Literary Approaches* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), p. 252.

be seen clearly in the wide range of Genesis 37-50 and Tamar's are only highlighted in Genesis 38, without her essential role in the chapter the storyline of Genesis 38 would not be continued. As a result, through these two main characters (Judah and Tamar), Genesis 38 fulfils its function which is to show the building up the Judahites who will be the ancestors of King David from the genealogical viewpoint of the Primary Narrative. Tamar, as one of the first ancestresses of the Judahites along with Judah's wife, carried out her vital role in the episode together with Judah, her father-in-law. Thus, the roles of Judah and Tamar are both significant from a genealogical point of view when reading Genesis 38 as part of Genesis 37-50 in the Primary Narrative.

The conclusion to be drawn here is that Genesis 38 plays a pivotal role in Genesis 37-50 and beyond it. For this reason, the title of Genesis 37-50 would more appropriately be *The Story of Jacob and his Sons* as opposed to 'the Story of Joseph' or 'the Story of Jacob' in the larger perspective of the Primary Narrative (Genesis – 2 Kings). This is because Genesis 38 (and Genesis 49) is not merely an interlude in Genesis 37-50 but part of an intentional literary structure. What is more, it is certain that in these two chapters concentration is focused on Judah among Jacob's sons. This also suggests the inadequacy of the other traditional titles because the Judah character is not directly relevant to them.

Through the thematic chiasmus structure of Genesis 37-50, the roles of Jacob and his sons are expanded persuasively and in the centre of the structure (GG' in fig. 9) they are shown clearly. As Genesis 38 together with Genesis 49 is one of the significant keys for understanding the novella, the proposed title is also linked to the view of the wider Primary Narrative. Beyond Genesis, Israel (or Jacob) becomes the forefather of the northern kingdom of Israel in the land of Canaan and his eleven sons together with two sons of Joseph (Manasseh and Ephraim) become the eponymous forefathers of the twelve tribes. Most of all, Judah becomes the progenitor of the southern land of Canaan which takes his name later in the narrative. Tamar as the sparring partner also becomes one of the mothers of the heirs. This is why Genesis 38 as well as Genesis 49 should be emphasised in the narrative of Genesis 37-

50. These chapters have a concern with genealogy and the future of Israel through the theme of the reversal of birthright. They are also bridges that connect the various units from the novella up to the Primary Narrative outlook. Accordingly, Genesis 38 is the opening chapter of this scheme in the larger narrative.

Finally, I shall suggest that the characters of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38 should be viewed as a *mise en abyme*[106] (or *mise en abîme*) of the reading procedure. If we apply this literary theory to Genesis 38, one can read this chapter as a *mise en abyme* in the story of Jacob and his sons.[107] There are two appropriate reasons to do this: firstly, as many literary critics suggest, Genesis 38 is closely linked to the surrounding chapters despite its different characters (all except Judah), altered setting, and other events. Several linguistic and thematic motifs such as the verbs ירד and נכר, and the theme of deception are links to the immediate chapters. Secondly, Genesis 38 is necessarily an integral part of *The Story of Jacob and his Sons* rather than an interpolation in the larger narrative that runs from chapter 37 to 50. This means that chapter 38 has a significant function in opening up the following narratives. Lockwood also insists that Genesis 38 functions as a *mise en abyme*. He notes, 'Chapter 38 has a wider significance, in that it serves as an abridgement of the whole Joseph cycle and anticipates its outcome. It is the Joseph story in a nutshell...'[108] Lockwood continues, 'Chapter 38 enhances our understanding of the Joseph cycle [the story of Jacob and his sons] as a whole by serving as a mini-commentary.'[109] Finally, Lockwood believes that Tamar's character in Genesis 38 is the same as Joseph's character in the larger narrative through Genesis 37 and 39-50.[110] One of Lockwood's contributions is that he details some parallels between Tamar and Joseph as characters with similar roles. There is little wonder that he

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[106] Bal prefers to use the term 'mirror texts' which can be interpreted as the embedded text. Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (2nd edn; trans. Christine Van Boheemen; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), p. 58.

[107] Recently in relation to this literary theory, Bosworth has presented three example narratives including Genesis 38 from the Hebrew Bible. See David A. Bosworth, *The Mise-en-abyme and Biblical Hebrew Narrative: The Cases of Genesis 38, 1 Samuel 25, and 1 Kings 13* (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, The Catholic University of America, 2003).

[108] Lockwood, 'Tamar's Place in the Joseph Cycle', p. 37.

[109] Lockwood, 'Tamar's Place in the Joseph Cycle', p. 37.

[110] Lockwood, 'Tamar's Place in the Joseph Cycle', pp. 37-40.

evaluates chapter 38 as a summary of the whole Joseph cycle; however, his statement that Genesis 38 is the Joseph story is hardly acceptable because Tamar as the mother of the heirs of Judah has a correlation with the genealogy of Judah who is father of Perez, but Joseph does not. If the author had the intention of making a connection between Tamar and Joseph, he should have mentioned the same lineage at least. However, Genesis 38 is about the building of Judah's and Tamar's family and Tamar, who was a marginal widow, plays a key role as a mother of the heirs or a matriarch who helps with Judah's new family-building.

The following chapter provides a macro angle on Tamar's character relating aspects of her character to those of other women characters in the Primary Narrative.

Chapter 6

Relationships between Tamar and Other Women Characters in the Primary Narrative

> *Since Scripture is intertextual in nature, it has depths that can reach into the very essence of the human experience.*[1]

6.1. Introduction

The present chapter discusses the broader context for Tamar's character in order to help with understanding the implications of the literary relationship of her character to some selected women characters (Sarah, Rebekah, Leah and Rachel, Lots' daughters, Ruth and Bathsheba). As Tamar's role both as the mother of heirs and as a marginal woman in the lineage of Judah's family is significant throughout the history of Israel, this comparative study is necessary to read the character in context. This is a sort of 'macro' perspective of Tamar's character. Although the activities of the Tamar character are restricted to Genesis 38, her character shares thematic and other connections with other female characters in Genesis and in the Primary Narrative as a whole. I will use intertextual methodologies to bring these connections out and to show how Tamar's influence continues into the Primary Narrative.

6.1.1. Allusion and Intertextuality in the Wider Perspective of the Primary Narrative

The reader first encounters the storyline of Genesis 38 as beginning with Judah's attempt to build up his new family in succession to his father (vv. 1-5) ending in the last scene with the birth of his children to Tamar (vv. 27-30). From Judah's point of view, the foregoing verses 24-26 with the pronouncement by Judah that exonerates Tamar ('She is more in the right than I, since I did not give her to my son Shelah' NRSV) may be regarded as the central focus of the chapter[2] because thereafter Judah does not appear in the last unit and this acts as a climax

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[1] James A. Sanders, 'Intertextuality and Dialogue', *BTB* 29 (1999), pp. 35-44 (42).

[2] Claus Westermann, *Genesis 37-50: A Commentary* (trans. John J. Scullion; Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986), p. 54.

in the story. As Walter Brueggemann and Sharon Pace Jeansonne believe, in this vein, the last episode of chapter 38 would then be interpreted by the reader as an additional-genealogical appendix.[3]

These views, however, do not consider the character of Tamar the mother who is not simply the main female character in the story of Judah in this chapter. Indeed, the characterisation of Tamar who gives birth to children in the last stage of the chapter is ultimately concerned with her wider importance as the mother of the twins, Perez and Zerah. The way in which the scene of the birth is related explicitly to her as the mother of the twins and its meaning within chapter 38 tends to be overlooked by some scholars such as Brueggemann and Jeansonne. By contrast, David M. Gunn and Danna Nolan Fewell introduce the concepts of 'allusion and intertextuality' and attempt to analyse the literary contexts and their relationship between readings of Genesis 38 and those of other stories such as the book of Ruth in the Primary Narrative (Genesis – 2 Kings). They argue:

> ...Allusion can invite other texts into play. Allusion can be effected through the choice of identical or similar words, similar grammatical arrangement, or similarly constructed narrative situation. Allusion to other literature can enrich a narrative in several ways. Allusions can foreshadow; they can help the reader fill gaps in terms of character motivation, for example, or of social expectation. Allusions reflect the larger text or context of literary expression and give the reader a sense of both the commonality and the uniqueness of the work in question...; allusions can also be parodied or disclaimed in a story's attempt to promote a different message. In the larger corpus of biblical narrative, some connections are more apparent than others... The exposition of the book of Ruth describes a situation structurally reminiscent of the exposition to the Judah and Tamar story in Genesis 38. There is separation from family/homeland, a sojourning elsewhere, marriages to foreign women, deaths of two sons and spouse...Struck by the analogy between the stories, a reader might well wonder whether Ruth has become to Naomi what Tamar was to Judah...Intertextuality, a term coined by the French theorist Julia Kristeva, differs from allusion. In

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[3] For example, Brueggemann divides the story of Genesis 38 into only three sections leaving out verses 27-30: verses 1-11, 12-23, 24-26. See Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis* (Interpretation; A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching; Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), pp. 309-12; regrettably, Jeansonne deals with the last section of Genesis 38 together as a conclusion in terms of the subject of justice, but does not separate or entitle it. The titles of the units are as follows: Judah's life among the Canaanites: Marriage and Birth of His Sons (Gen. 38:1-5), Introduction of Tamar and Her Life with Judah's Family (Gen. 38:1-11), Tamar's Plan (Gen. 38:12-14), Judah's Encounter with Tamar (Gen. 38:15-19), Judah's Attempt to Retrieve His Pledge (Gen. 38:20-23), The Discovery of Tamar's Pregnancy (Gen. 38:24-26). Sharon Pace Jeansonne, *The Women of Genesis: from Sarah to Potiphar's wife* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), pp. 100-06. The importance of verses 27-30 with respect to Tamar has been examined in section 4.3.6 of this thesis.

> the case of allusion, markers in the text itself (words, phrases, motifs, etc.) point to other texts. Intertextuality, on the other hand, is a relationship that might exist between any two texts. The reader, rather than the text, makes the connections. Connections can, of course, be arbitrary, but most readers do not bother to associate texts which have nothing in common…In the Hebrew Bible, there are many texts competing for rhetorical power. Two such texts are the Genesis – 2 Kings [the Primary Narrative] and Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah narratives.[4]

If we accept Gunn's and Fewell's suppositions on reading the biblical narrative, it could be illuminating to read the stories of Tamar and the selected women in the ways suggested above. As present-day readers, we are challenged to take responsibility or take on the 'duty'[5] of reading these stories through the common features its characters share with other specific stories employing a literary perspective. As Margaret Parks Cowan aptly points out, 'The theory of intertextuality allows one to investigate relationships which transcend the immediate context.'[6] Thus, my premise in this section is that the analysis of the character Tamar needs to be explored through comparison with surrounding female characters in the patriarchal narratives of Genesis and beyond them in the larger Primary Narrative.

6.1.2. 'Matriarchs' and 'the Marginal Mothers of Israel'

As mentioned in the last chapter, Tamar's character in the narrative of Genesis 38 presents multi-functional aspects of her status as a female in her story.[7] In the wider context, however, it can be argued that these features of Tamar are already anticipated in the previous stories of the 'matriarchs'[8] (Sarah, Rebekah, Leah and Rachel) or 'the mothers of Israel'[9] within the

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[4] David M. Gunn and Danna Nolan Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 163-65.

[5] Barton states that the concept of final form has two basic shifts; one is theological and the other is literary. According to him, '…the interpreter of any text, biblical or not, has a primary duty to interpret the text that lies before us, before (or instead of) being concerned with putative earlier stages underlying that text.' See John Barton, 'Intertextuality and the "Final Form" of the Text', in A. Lemaire & M. Sæbø (eds.), *Congress Volume Oslo 1998* (VTSup, 80; Brill: Leiden, 2000), pp. 33-37 (33).

[6] Margaret Parks Cowan, *Genesis 38: The Story of Judah and Tamar and Its Role in the Ancestral Narrative Genesis* (Unpublished PhD Dissertation; Vanderbilt University, 1990), p. 225.

[7] See section 4.4.1.

[8] Until recently, the term 'matriarch(s)' has been less commonly used than the term 'patriarch(s)' by scholars, for the latter has been preferred to indicate the ancestors of Israel in Genesis 12-50. But this labelling could be misunderstood by the reader because the women in the book of Genesis, the so-called representative 'matriarchs' - for example, Sarah, Rebekah, Leah, and Rachel and so on - are distinguished as much as their husbands, the patriarchs. As a result, the dictionary of *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* suggests the more inclusive and

patriarchal narratives because just as the matriarchs she gives birth to a prominent male heir in the lineage of Judah, a lineage that includes King David. That is to say, in the patriarchal narrative of Genesis, 'Thus, the great-grandmother [Sarah], the grandmother [Rebekah], and the mother [Leah] of Judah overcame vulnerability and powerlessness to give birth to, and determine the success of, the grandfather [Isaac] and father [Jacob] of Judah and Judah, himself. Tamar continues this pattern [from Sarah to Rachel as matriarchs and mothers of Israel] to the next generation.'[10]

Furthermore, it could also be suggested that Tamar's characteristics are projected as the 'mirror images or shadows'[11] of other female characters in various ways. For example, as observed by David A. Bosworth, 'The story of Judah and Tamar encapsulates the larger narrative of Joseph and his brothers'[12] in Genesis 37 to 50. However, the function of a narrative is not only confined to its influence on the immediate narrative. Its impact can affect the larger narrative. To be specific, on the one hand, the story in Genesis 38 can be

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balanced term 'ancestor(s)' for the biblical patriarchs and matriarchs. See John W. Rogerson, 'Ancestors, The', in Bruce M. Metzger & Michael D. Coogan (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 26-27; in fact, the term 'matriarch' has normally been used to counterbalance the patriarchs in the book of Genesis. However, it is not easy to define the range of the term exactly in the Bible because the definition of 'patriarch' is slightly different according to the references. For example, in Acts 7:8-9 of the New Testament, the twelve sons of Jacob are referred to as patriarchs. In the case of the Apocrypha, there are references to '...our patriarchs Abraham and Isaac and Jacob' (IV Maccabees 7:19) and '...Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the patriarchs' (IV Maccabees 16:25). See Harry Freedman, 'Patriarchs' (*EncJud*, 13; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1971), p. 181-84 (181); the term patriarchs, thus, is used in a broader sense across Israel's history as mentioned such as 'the patriarch David' (Acts 2:29); L. Hicks, 'Patriarchs' (*IDB*, 4; Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), pp. 677-78 (677); more recently, for the term 'patriarch' the use of the term 'the ancestors' has been offered exclusively to include both the chief male and female characters in the stories. See Paul J. Achtemeier (ed.), 'Patriarchs', *Harper's Bible Dictionary* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), p. 756; Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan (eds.), 'Patriarchs', *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 576; however, Brenner deals with the term 'matriarch' in a different way with complementary pairs, two conflicting sides of the same female entity, that is, Sarah and her maid; the two pairs of sisters, Lot's daughters and Leah and Rachel and the latter's two maids. Athalya Brenner, *The Israelite Woman: Social Role and Literary Type in Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), pp. 92-98; for further recent information on matriarchs, see Tammi J. Schneider, *Mothers of Promise: Women in the Book of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), pp. 15-17.

[9] J. Cheryl Exum, '"Mother in Israel": A Familiar Figure Reconsidered', in Letty M. Russell (ed.), *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1985), pp. 73-85, 156-57; *idem*, 'The Mothers of Israel', in Harvey Minkoff (ed.), *Approaches to the Bible: the Best of Bible Review* (vol. 2 A Multitude of Perspectives; Washington, D.C.: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1995), 273-79; Frymer-Kensky prefers to use 'the mothers of Israel' rather than 'matriarch(s)'. Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible: A New Interpretation of Their Stories*, (New York: Schocken Books, 2002), p. Xiii.

[10] Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible: A New Interpretation of Their Stories*, p. 276.

[11] Brenner, *The Israelite Woman: Social Role and Literary Type in Biblical Narrative*, p. 92.

[12] David A. Bosworth, *The Story within a Story in Biblical Hebrew Narrative* (CBQMS 45; Washington: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2008), p. 1.

comprehended within the immediate stories such as Genesis 37 and Genesis 39; on the other hand, the range of the story can be expanded broadly into the wider narrative through Genesis to 2 Kings as a single narrative within the Hebrew Bible. Accordingly, being aware of Tamar's character when compared to other female characters beyond Genesis 38 could exercise a far-reaching influence on our understanding of the Primary Narrative.

However, surprisingly, it should be noted that Tamar's role as the mother of Judah's heirs considered together with the matriarchs of Genesis has seldom been focused on by modern scholarship. In fact, Tamar's role as the mother of Judah's heirs is not distinctive from that of the previous matriarchs. It is widely known that these heirs of promise are given by Yhwh (Gen. 12:2-3) and their mothers are closely connected within the extended family of Abraham; Isaac and his mother Sarah, Jacob and his mother Rebekah, Judah and his mother Leah, Joseph and his mother Rachel; so, too, Perez and Zerah and their mother Tamar, and so forth.

As Tammi J. Schneider puts it, nonetheless, 'the term [matriarchy or matriarchs] does not appear frequently or with consistent meaning. Scholars also seldom study these women in comparison to one another. When treating the patriarchs' wives, scholars usually compare the matriarchs to someone else, often a woman with whom the matriarch has a conflict or is a rival…Nowhere does the Masoretic Text group the matriarchs together, and no ancient text treats them as a group.'[13] Yet these women as matriarchs have commonality as meaningful mother figures in the larger story so that they can be grouped together. For help in understanding the concept, Esther Fuchs' statements are useful in relation to the motif of the mother figure, showing that after the birth of their sons, the heirs of a family, the mother's job is usually done unless she is necessary for the furtherance of the plot in the Hebrew Bible as follows:

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[13] For example, Sarah and Hagar, Rachel and Leah are both paired and each other's rival. Schneider, *Mothers of Promise: Women in the Book of Genesis*, pp. 16-17.

> ...the narrative [of the Primary History] frequently deals with the mother-figure because of its interest in her immediate or future offspring rather than in her own character. Some narratives involving a mother-figure focus mainly on the circumstances leading to the last son's birth. Soon after the birth of the son, the mother-figure is quickly whisked off the stage (Leah, Tamar, Samson's mother, Ruth). Other mothers survive in a few details concerning their protection of their sons, for example, Sarah, Rebekah, the Shunammite and Bathsheba.[14]

Fuchs' observations about the mother figure are helpful in grasping the patriarchal structure indirectly, but could result in confusion when we encounter the female characters out of their contexts. If we are applying the method of Schneider's grouping (Matriarchs, Mothers of Potential Heirs, Mothers Who Predate the Promise and Women Who do Not Bear), why cannot Tamar become one of the members of the matriarchal group?[15] In light of Tamar's role as the mother of Judah's heir who is an ancestor of King David, it should not be ignored that she is qualified to become a candidate for the matriarchal group. Yet Tamar's character does not overlap with other biblical women in only one category. She also displays features in common with some women as a mother of Israel who is a marginal woman (or widow):[16] therefore, I agree with Schneider's contention that the second group, 'Mothers of Potential Heirs', also includes Tamar of Genesis 38.[17] I shall argue that Tamar takes on especial significance as the character which links these two groups of the matriarchal and the marginal woman (or widow).

For those reasons, in the study that follows it is significant to explore comparisons and contrasts of characterisation between Tamar and the other women in these texts, especially those more commonly categorised as matriarchs or mothers.[18] As we shall discuss

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[14] Esther Fuchs, 'The Literary Characterisation of Mothers and Sexual Politics in the Hebrew Bible', in Adela Yarbro Collins (ed.), *Feminist Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship* (Biblical Scholarship in North America, 10; Chico: Scholars Press, 1985), pp. 117-36 (135).

[15] Schneider categorises only four women in the matriarchal group: Sarah, Rebekah, Leah, and Rachel. Schneider, *Mothers of Promise: Women in the Book of Genesis*, pp. 15-100.

[16] This concept will be discussed in the following section 6.3.4.

[17] Schneider, *Mothers of Promise: Women in the Book of Genesis*, pp. 151-60.

[18] On the interrelationship between the matriarchs and mothers, Exum says, 'It is worthwhile to look at the matriarchs only in their role as mothers, not only because motherhood so often defines a "woman's place," because of the ordinariness of the role – mothers *per se* are not major characters. These women derive their significance from the fact that they gave birth to famous sons. But closer examination reveals that these mothers are not so ordinary after all, and their influence is far-reaching.' Exum, 'The Mothers of Israel', p. 274.

with regard to her characterisation, Tamar, who has a bridgehead role as the fifth matriarch and as one of the mothers of Israel, stands in the centre between the previous four matriarchs (Sarah, Rebekah, Leah and Rachel) on the left side and other mothers on the right side at the same time. That is, in the narrow definition of a matriarch who gives birth to a meaningful son whose line has to be part of the Abrahamic/Davidic line, the four wives of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob can be called traditional matriarchs in the patriarchal narrative, but in the larger context, the range of matriarchs or mothers of Israel can also be broadened.[19] This is because some mothers such as Ruth and Bathsheba are non-Israelites, but Tamar, in effect, is the first mother of Israel of an ambiguous origin (not an Israelite) who gives birth to heirs of Judah. In this wider context, 'she [Tamar] has made it possible for that family to thrive and develop into a major tribe and eventually the Judean state...Tamar passes from the scene [Gen. 38: 27-30], but her impact continues,'[20] points out Tikva Frymer-Kensky.

Consequently, we need to distinguish between two kinds of female character looking at them from the point of view of a number of characteristics.[21] First, the so-called matriarchal group (Sarah, Rebekah, Leah and Rachel) in the patriarchal narratives of Genesis will be compared to Tamar.[22] Second, other selected women who could be called 'Type-Characters'[23] in the book of Genesis and beyond the book (Lot's daughters, Ruth, and Bathsheba) will be analysed in comparison to Tamar as well. Basically, they are all mothers of Israel[24] and sometimes show literary parallels to each other. In particular, regarding the various backgrounds of the mothers, Frymer-Kensky considers that, 'The five mothers [the daughters of Lot, Leah, Tamar, Ruth] of what becomes the most prominent family in Judah have

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[19] For further information on matriarchs, see footnote 8 in this chapter.

[20] Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible: A New Interpretation of Their Stories*, pp. 274-75.

[21] In her book, *Mothers of Promise: Women in the Book of Genesis*, Schneider divides the women into four groups as follows: 'Matriarchs', 'Mothers of Potential Heirs (or Slaves, Concubines, Daughters and Daughters-in-law)', 'Mothers Who Predate the Promise', and 'Women Who Do Not Bear.'

[22] This contention has already been suggested by Carol Smith, 'The Story of Tamar: A Power-filled Challenge to the Structure to Power', in George J. Brooke (ed.), *Women in the Biblical Tradition* (Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), pp. 16-28.

[23] This terminology can be compared to 'Type-Scenes', by Robert Alter, in 'Biblical Type-Scenes and the Uses of Convention', *CI* (1978), pp. 355-68.

[24] Michael Fishbane, 'Israel and the "Mothers"', in *Garments of Torah: Essays in Biblical Hermeneutics* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), pp. 49-63.

different points of origin.'[25] I will accept her point of view partly, but will exclude Leah from the latter group on the grounds that she belongs to the previous matriarchal group, and instead will include Bathsheba, one of the wives of King David. This is because, as far as female characters as mothers in the Hebrew narratives are concerned, 'the same [or similar] patterns and paradoxes can be found in the Exodus narrative, in the period of the Judges and [even in] the monarchy.'[26] If this is accessible to the reader, it will shed light on the meaning of Tamar's character and its implications in her story and other narratives outside of Genesis.

6.2. Tamar's Relationship with the So-called Four Matriarchs

Generally speaking, using a narrow definition, the three patriarchs in the book of Genesis are Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.[27] Their spouses, and therefore the patriarchs' wives, are Sarah, Rebekah, Leah and Rachel respectively. Most commentators presume that they are the traditional four matriarchs, the chief female characters corresponding to their husbands 'though the book of Genesis never defines them as such'.[28] For the covenantal relationship between God and his people, J. Cheryl Exum insists that the special role of the patriarchs is as 'the bearers of God's promise to his chosen people'.[29] If the patriarchs are called the bearers of God's promise, their spouses or partners earn their own status in relation to their children who will be the successors in the next generation. The stories of the matriarchs or mothers of Israel normally unfold in relation to childbirth and sometimes with reference to 'how significant the character and actions of a woman could be to the future of the family'.[30] In this way, it is necessary to say that the patriarchs' wives could be automatically named 'matriarchs' or 'mothers of Israel', as mentioned above. However, in the narrow definition, the four matriarchs are subordinated to the patriarchs and appear merely as their partners.

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[25] Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible: A New Interpretation of Their Stories*, p. 275.
[26] Exum, 'The Mothers of Israel', p. 274.
[27] For the definition of patriarchs and matriarchs, see footnote 8 in this chapter.
[28] Schneider, *Mothers of Promise: Women in the Book of Genesis*, p. 12-13.
[29] Exum, 'The Mothers of Israel', p. 273.
[30] Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible: A New Interpretation of Their Stories*, p. 5.

Unlike any of the matriarchs before her, there is no mention that Tamar is Judah's wife.[31] After their single encounter, the narrator only relates, '...And he [Judah] did not lie with her [Tamar] again' (Gen. 38:27 NRSV). We do not know exactly what this means: whether Tamar was forsaken by him or Judah did not accept Tamar as his spouse. Whatever the situation, Tamar became the mother of the twins (Perez[32] and Zerah) and one of them is ultimately the progenitor of David. This could mean that there is more emphasis on the character of Tamar as the true mother of her children than on the anonymous wife of Judah in the story. Then, if we suppose that the status of a woman is determined by her producing selected heirs of Israel, the semantic range of the concept of a traditional matriarch may be somewhat flexible. In other words, the primary function of the matriarchs in the family is giving birth to an heir of Israel. Likewise, describing Tamar, the narrator would probably highlight her role as mother of heirs in the last scene of Genesis 38. This is the core of the relationship between the previous matriarchs and Tamar. Of course, the so-called four matriarchs in the book of Genesis are someone's wives, but, by contrast, not all wives and mothers in the book are matriarchs in a narrow sense. Athalya Brenner, however, deals with a broader semantic range of 'Matriarchs' or 'Hero's Mother' in relation to 'mothers or hopeful mothers-to-be' in the pattern of 'Birth of a Hero'.[33] For instance, the matriarchs include 'Sarah and her maid; the two pairs of sisters, Lot's daughters and Leah and Rachel; and the latter's two maids'.[34]

However, Brenner has missed out the character of Tamar in Genesis 38 as 'Matriarch' or 'Hero's Mother'. Tamar is no different from the previous matriarchs; Perez

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[31] According to Clifford, however, 'In Genesis 38, the type-scene [of Enaim] functions to show that Tamar, no less than Rebekah and Rachel, is a fruitful "wife" of an ancestor.' Richard J. Clifford, 'Genesis 38: Its Contribution to the Jacob Story," *CBQ* 66 (2004), pp. 519-32 (529).

[32] Frymer-Kensky mentions in relation to Perez: 'One of the twins is even bolder than Jacob. Jacob, the second born, came out holding on to his brother's heels, and spent the first part of his life trying to supplant him. Perez supplants his brother [Zerah] even before he leaves the womb...' Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible: A New Interpretation of Their Stories*, p. 275.

[33] This paradigm contains many female characters: Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Samson's mother (Judg. 13), Samuel's mother (1 Sam. 1) and others. For further information, see Brenner, *The Israelite Woman: Social Role and Literary Type in Biblical Narrative*, pp. 92-105 (95).

[34] Brenner, *The Israelite Woman: Social Role and Literary Type in Biblical Narrative*, p. 92.

becomes the great-grandfather of David (Ruth 4:22). If Tamar is viewed in this wider perspective, although she is not explicitly called Judah's wife, her function as the mother of the heir (Perez) links her to the matriarchs (Gen. 38:27-30). Duly, the following sections will argue that Tamar could belong in the so-called matriarchal group through her role as the mother of Judah's heirs. This contrasts with the view of Schneider, who maintains that, 'Tamar is not a matriarch but she is a mother tied to the patriarchal line, especially concerning inheritance.'[35] However, it should be noted that Schneider fails to examine all the literary and intertextual connections between the previous matriarchs and Tamar. These connections will be examined in the next section as we compare the four matriarchs alongside the Tamar character on the following themes: hidden origin of genealogy, trickster, veiling, twins and naming. I believe that reading the stories of the Bible using the tool of intertextuality is basically useful because, as Fewell puts it, 'The similarities between the two texts invite conversation. The differences allow each text to be affected by the other.'[36]

6.2.1. Hidden Origin of Genealogy: Sarah and Tamar

The issue of genealogy in the patriarchal narrative and the Primary Narrative is of significance in terms of the story of Israelite history. It is true that the matriarchs are mothers of the prime heirs of Israel (or Abrahamites) such as Isaac, Jacob and his twelve sons. The mothers play a pivotal role: bearing children. They aid the patriarchs, building up their families in every generation,[37] and Judah's genealogy beginning from the patriarchal narrative continues to the succeeding generations. So, looking into genealogical continuity and its relationship to Tamar the last matriarch and other previous matriarchs in the book of Genesis could be interesting to the reader.

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[35] Schneider, *Mothers of Promise: Women in the Book of Genesis*, p. 151; Exum also insists that the stories in Genesis 37-50 do not show matriarchs and their roles. See J. Cheryl Exum, *Fragmented Women: Feminist (Sub)versions of Biblical Narratives* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1993), p. 95, see footnote 2.

[36] Danna Nolan Fewell, 'Introduction: Writing, Reading, and Relating', in *idem*, (ed.), *Reading between Texts: Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), pp. 11-24 (13).

[37] Ironically, 'Only mothers are eager, even desperate, to maintain patrilineal continuity and only mothers are barren.' Esther Fuchs, *Sexual Politics in the Biblical Narrative: Reading the Hebrew Bible as a Woman* (JSOTSup 310; Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), p. 88.

The first matriarch, Sarah, married Abraham in the patriarchal narratives of Genesis.[38] The narrative states that Sarah was barren (Gen. 11:30; 16:1). In the patriarchal period, as Fuchs has noted, 'the mother-figures are acting in accordance with the requirements of the patriarchal plot'[39] their purpose is building a patrilineage. If motherhood is the most important duty imposed on a wife at that time,[40] at first, Sarah failed by not giving birth to a child at the beginning of her marriage because her husband Abraham did not obtain an heir who would inherit his estate (Gen. 15:2). She remains barren for nine full chapters (chs. 12-20). A long time later, however, she finally bears Isaac to Abraham as Yhwh had promised Abraham (Gen. 21:1-6). One of the remarkable themes in the patriarchal and matriarchal narratives in Genesis 12-50 is a promise[41] related to future offspring (Gen. 13:15, 16; 15:5, 18; 17:7, 8, 19; 22:17; 26:3, 4, 24; 28:13, 14; 35:12)[42] and it was originally given to Abraham as a promise by Yhwh that a great nation would come from him. According to these promises, Sarah got her son and became the first wife to fulfil the promise.[43] It is because Yhwh had already nominated Abraham to be a 'bearer of the promise'[44] that he would have children to carry on the next generation (Gen. 15:5; 22:17). As Robert B. Robinson observes, 'With the continued interplay between genealogy and narrative continues also the sense that one is tracing a family history.'[45] As a consequence of bearing an heir, Sarah, the first matriarch of the Abrahamite line, played a significant role in her position as mother in the family of

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[38] In this thesis, I will use by default the names Sarah and Abraham which are commonly known, rather than referring to Sarai and Abram whose names are changed by Yhwh in Genesis 17:5 (from Abram to Abraham) and 15 (from Sarai to Sarah) respectively.

[39] Fuchs, *Sexual Politics in the Biblical Narrative: Reading the Hebrew Bible as a Woman*, p. 47.

[40] Bellis says, 'The importance of motherhood is a theme that runs through the stories of these women, as well as the women of the Hebrew Bible in general.' Alice Ogden Bellis, *Helpmates, Harlots, and Heroes: Women's Stories in the Hebrew Bible* (2nd edn; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), p. 59; cf. J. Cheryl Exum, '"Mother in Israel": A Familiar Story Reconsidered', in Letty M. Russell, (ed.), *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1985), pp. 73-85, 156-57.

[41] Exum lists the three fold promise: numerous descendants, the land of Canaan, mediator of God's blessing to all humanity in her, 'The Mothers of Israel', p. 274.

[42] Robert B. Robinson, 'Literary Functions of the Genealogies of Genesis', *CBQ* 48 (1986), pp. 595-608 (604).

[43] Jeansonne puts it, '...the promise of descendants is not given only to Abraham. Not just any heir of Abraham will be the recipient of God's promise; rather, only the child born of Abraham and his first wife Sarah (first known as Sarai) will inherit God's covenantal promise.' Jeansonne, *The Women of Genesis: From Sarah to Potiphar's Wife*, p. 14

[44] Exum, *Fragmented Women: Feminist (Sub)versions of Biblical Narratives*, p. 94.

[45] Robinson, 'Literary Functions of the Genealogies of Genesis', p. 607.

Abraham when she finally bore Isaac, the second patriarch, to him. This is indeed the beginning of mothers as the 'enablers' and 'sustainers of patrilineal continuity'[46] in the story of Israel. The crucial position of mothers in the narratives of Genesis is in line with the patriarchal system which depends completely on a mother giving birth to a boy. In relation to the concern of mother characters over having a child in biblical narratives, Fuchs notes that '...the biblical narrative projects onto the mother-figure the concern for patrilineal continuity; the mother-figure rather than the father-figure is most interested in giving birth to a male heir...'[47]

Considering the preference for a male heir in the patriarchal-genealogical system, it is intriguing to observe that there are several features of Sarah's character which can be compared to Tamar's. First of all, Sarah's lineage is in effect ambiguous; her father is not given. In Sarah's genealogical description the first mention of her is in the family tree of Terah, Abraham's father (Gen. 11:27-32).[48] To understand Sarah's family identity, Frymer-Kensky says:

> Sarah's ancestry is not clear. Genesis 11 relates that Abram and his brother Nahor married Sarai and Milcah, respectively (v. 29). It does not name Sarah's father, even though it relates that Milcah was the daughter of Haran, Terah's other son, and then names Haran's other daughter, Iscah. When Gen 11:31 tells that "Terah took his son Abram and his grandson Lot son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram's wife" from Ur to Haran, it does not call Sarah Terah's granddaughter. However, in Genesis 20, when Abraham explains his wife-sister ruse to Abimelech of Gerar, he claims that Sarah is his non-uterine sister (v. 12). This contradiction has led some readers to identify Sarah with the otherwise unknown Iscah [the daughter of Haran]. But this would make Sarai Abram's niece, not his half[-]sister; it would not explain why she is identified as daughter-in-law to Terah, not as his daughter.[49]

Frymer-Kensky's enquiry is appropriate because, if Abraham's statements to Abimelech may not be true and if Sarah may be the daughter of Haran, why would the narrator not describe

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[46] Fuchs, *Sexual Politics in the Biblical Narrative: Reading the Hebrew Bible as a Woman*, p. 47.
[47] Fuchs, *Sexual Politics in the Biblical Narrative: Reading the Hebrew Bible as a Woman*, p. 48.
[48] Irene Nowell, *Women in the Old Testament* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1997), p. 3.
[49] Tikva Frymer-Kensky, 'Sarah 1/Sarah', in Carol Meyers (ed.), *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2000), pp. 150-51 (150).

Sarah as the granddaughter of Terah, as in the case of Milcah (v. 29)? Sarah's family background is not clearly given. At the beginning of the patriarchal narrative. Sarah is mentioned in relation to Terah, her father-in-law, and Abraham, her husband,[50] just as Tamar is introduced in her relationship to her father-in-law and her husband.

In addition, the descriptions by the narrator of Terah's two daughters-in-law, Sarah and Milcah, are totally different and contrasting. In the words of Jeansonne, 'The narrator juxtaposes the introduction and ancestry of Milcah (Abram's brother's wife) with the absence of ancestral information about Sarai.'[51] In the case of Milcah, the narrator refers to her father's name and her family, while Sarah is not presented in this way.[52] Analysing Genesis 11:29, Nahum M. Sarna aptly observed, 'Though the parentage of Nahor's wife is given, that of Sarai is not. This omission [of parentage] is so extraordinary that it must be intentional. The narrator withholds information so as not to ruin the suspense in chapter 20 when Abraham, in order to extricate himself from an embarrassing predicament, reveals that Sarai is his half sister.'[53] If the omission is intentional, I support Sarna's contention that it could be a literary strategy by the author.

Finally, the description of Sarah's barrenness seems to accentuate her difficulties (וַתְּהִי שָׂרַי עֲקָרָה אֵין לָהּ וָלָד, 'Now Sarai was barren; she had no child' Gen. 11:30 NRSV). The narrator says that Sarah could not conceive so that she had no children. According to Jeansonne, 'The narrator dramatically introduces Sarai's childlessness...'[54] Although Sarah gives birth to Isaac by Abraham eventually (Gen. 21:2), the narrator of Genesis 11 seems to be

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[50] '...the beginning of Sarah's story is not the beginning of Abraham's. Abraham's beginning locates him in Ur of the Chaldeans as part of a family that continues into the generation following him, through the reference to Lot's birth (11:26-28). The beginning of Sarah's story does the direct opposite.' Schneider, *Mothers of Promise: Women in the Book of Genesis*, p. 20.

[51] Jeansonne, *The Women of Genesis: From Sarah to Potiphar's Wife*, p. 14.

[52] Schneider aptly points this out in the section called 'Sarah' in her book, see *Mothers of Promise: Women in the Book of Genesis*, 15-40, especially 20, 26.

[53] Nahum M. Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis-בראשית* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), p. 87; It is persuasive to say that the omission of Sarah's parentage could be intended by the narrator. But it is disputable whether Sarah is Abraham's half sister because 'Abraham's accounting that she is his half-sister never is verified. An examination of Genesis 20 shows that Abraham's claims are suspect'. For further information, see Jeansonne, *The Women of Genesis: From Sarah to Potiphar's Wife*, p. 119.

[54] Jeansonne, *The Women of Genesis: From Sarah to Potiphar's Wife*, p. 15.

more concerned about Sarah's predicament.[55] Jeansonne also states that, 'The narrator twice informs the reader of Sarai's inability to conceive…the narrator emphasizes the seriousness of her plight by the repetition.'[56] Thus, it is possible to say that these three characteristics of Sarah above - no record of her father, the contrast between Milcah and Sarah and Sarah's barrenness – as 'the ancestress of all Israel'[57] represent the author's literary design as applied to her genealogical and social position.

This being the case, what does it say about Tamar, the daughter-in-law of Judah? The way Tamar is introduced in Genesis 38 shares some similar aspects with Sarah's introduction. First, like Sarah's, Tamar's ethnic background is not clear and she is also introduced in relation to her father-in-law. That is, the first step in the genealogical appearance of Tamar in the story puts her in the line of Judah, her father-in-law; the description of Tamar's genealogical identity is more centred on her role as the daughter-in-law of Judah than as the wife of Er, the first son of Judah. Just as Sarah is introduced in the middle of the account about Terah, the initial scene in Genesis 38 is about the story of Judah building his family (vv. 1-7).

Next, the information given about Judah's wife is in sharp contrast to what we know about Tamar; Judah's anonymous wife is introduced to the reader with reference to her nationality and her father's name; she is the daughter of Shua, the Canaanite, whereas the narrator does not reveal what Tamar's identity (her parentage or her origin) is at all. The relevant verses are as follows:

> There Judah saw the daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua; he married her and went in to her…Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn; her name was Tamar. (Gen. 38:2, 6 NRSV)

The story of Tamar never lets the reader know who Tamar's father was. These features are the

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[55] Thomas L. Brodie, *Genesis as Dialogue: A Literary, Historical, and Theological Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 204.
[56] Jeansonne, *The Women of Genesis: From Sarah to Potiphar's Wife*, p. 15.
[57] Frymer-Kensky, 'Sarah I/Sarah', p. 150.

same with Sarah. But the variation is that the name of Judah's wife is not known to the reader, contrary to the situation with Milcah. Nonetheless, the narrator juxtaposes genealogical statements about Judah's wife and Tamar.

Another shared feature is that both Sarah and Tamar were childless for quite some time. Of course, the aspects of their childlessness were different; Sarah's seems to be due to innate barrenness whereas Tamar's reflected the inadequacy of her husbands (so could be characterised as 'enforced' barrenness),[58] but they are both described as childless at the beginning of the scenes. Just as Sarah eventually bears an heir to Abraham, so Tamar bears Perez and Zerah to Judah (Gen. 38:27-30). Finally, as Schneider points out, 'What is clear is that Sarah takes action to procure a son for Abraham (16:2),'[59] even if she had to give her maidservant Hagar to Abraham to produce a son on her behalf. That is, this attempt to have a child comes from Sarah's plan not Abraham's. Sarah's conflicts with Hagar in Genesis 16:1-6 are about the inheritance, not about the fact that she has a son.[60] In a similar way, Tamar takes action to give birth to a child with Judah and succeeds in it. Perez, one of the twins, has a special meaning for Tamar as a mother in the Judahite line up to King David (Ruth 4:18-22). In this respect, it is certain that Tamar is the ancestress of all Judah.

If we reflect on the maternal importance of these female characters in the larger context because of who their sons were, what does it mean that there is no mention of their own parentages in the patriarchal society?[61] Does it mean that this suppresses the non-Abrahamic male line in the ancestry of their sons? Or does the author just ignore the family of the female characters in their father's line? The latter is not a persuasive explanation because

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[58] See J.A. Emerton, 'Judah and Tamar', *VT* 29 (1979), pp. 403-15 (409); Laurence A. Turner, *Genesis* (2nd edn; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009), p. 170.

[59] Schneider, *Mothers of Promise: Women in the Book of Genesis*, p. 38; Exum states, 'She [Sarah] initiates the action and controls events throughout the six verses [Gen. 16:1-6] in which she appears', in her, 'The Mothers of Israel', p. 274.

[60] Schneider, *Mothers of Promise: Women in the Book of Genesis*, p. 40.

[61] Jeansonne notes, 'While it is true that Sarah comes from the same ancestral land as Abraham, no other information about her background is given by the narrator.' *The Women of Genesis: From Sarah to Potiphar's Wife*, p. 119; scholars such as Emerton guess that Tamar's origin is Canaanite because, 'nothing is said about Judah sending elsewhere...to find a bride of non-Canaanite ancestry for his son..,' in Emerton, 'An Examination of a Recent Structuralist Interpretation of Genesis xxxviii', *VT* 26 (1976), pp. 79-98 (90-1); However, there is no explicit mention of her being a Canaanite in the text.

others such as Milcah and Judah's wife are mentioned with their genealogical relationship to their fathers. The important thing is whether a woman gives birth to an heir from her partner or not. As T. Desmond Alexander says, 'Ancestry is reckoned through the father, and descendants are always clearly named. Moreover, it is apparent that each descendant must be of his father's seed...He [Abraham] must have an heir from his own body (15:4). For this reason barrenness presents a major barrier to the continuation of the family lineage.'[62] Furthermore, in a narrative where the single paternal line from Abraham is so important, there may be some reticence in reminding us that all the heroes and patriarchs had two grandfathers. This is in contrast to the book of Kings, where queens are often introduced with a mention of their father. Is this because dynastic alliances are significant to the monarchs so that the reminder of the other grandfather is a positive thing, whereas in Genesis that interest in alliances is not yet relevant as the identity of Israel and Judah themselves has yet to be established?

Whatever the answer to this, there is a clear contrast, in the timing of conception and the way the pregnancies proceed, between Sarah and Tamar. Sarah had to wait for a long time before she became pregnant. When Sarah finally gives birth to Isaac, she is already 90 years old (Gen. 17:17). Tamar's pregnancy is also delayed; how long for depended on how long each of her husbands (Er and Onan) lived and when Judah's wife died. But there is no indication that she was beyond the normal age for childbirth when she had intercourse with Judah. What is more, Sarah's pregnancy is closely related to Yhwh's intervention (Gen. 17:19).[63] There is no indication of any divine intervention in the case of Tamar. As Carol Smith states, '...indeed, she [Tamar] appears to be remarkably fertile, since she conceives

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[62] T. Desmond Alexander, 'From Adam to Judah: The Significance of the Family Tree in Genesis', *EvQ* 61.1 (1989), pp. 5-19 (14); cf. *idem*, 'Genealogies, Seed and the Compositional Unity of Genesis', *TynBul* 44.2 (1993), p. 255-70.

[63] On Yhwh's intervention for the married barren women, Fuchs says, 'Yhwh, in the biblical narrative, restricts his interest in barren women to married women and to situations that leave no doubt about the identity of the potential father.' See Esther Fuchs, 'The Literary Characterisation of Mothers and Sexual Politics in the Hebrew Bible', in Adela Yarbro Collins (ed.), *Feminist Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship* (Biblical Scholarship in North America, 10; Chico: Scholars Press, 1985), pp. 117-36 (120).

after only one act of sexual intercourse with Judah'[64] (Gen. 38:24).

In Sarah's case, in effect, 'The Deity [Yhwh] saves Sarah in Egypt (17:16). blesses her and promises to make her a mother of nations (17:17), sends messengers to her to let her know she will have a child (18:10)...'[65] However, there is no intervention by Yhwh that will ensure an heir for Tamar. The story of Genesis 38 develops so that it is Tamar who makes a plan in order to have a baby with her father-in-law, Judah (Gen. 38:12-19). Nonetheless, Yhwh did intervene twice in Tamar's story, by causing the deaths of Judah's two sons, Er and Onan (Gen. 38:7-10). Rather than intervening to make a barren woman a mother, here Yhwh removes the husbands to leave a fertile woman childless. So, it is clear that Tamar's conception is totally different to those of Sarah, Rebekah (Gen. 25:21), and Rachel (Gen. 29:31), all of whom are afflicted with barrenness. Irene Nowell has aptly observed that, 'In the midst of the stories of barren women, Tamar conceives immediately...She herself has provided descendants for her dead husband and continued the line of Judah.'[66] Thus, Tamar's story in this respect is different from those of Sarah, Rebekah and Rachel, who have the support of Yhwh.

Among the matriarchs, Rebekah is the only woman whose parentage is given in detail. The record of her family background as 'the daughter of Bethuel son of Milcah, who was the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor' appears three times in her stories (Gen. 24:15, 24, 47). The first time it is given by the narrator, the second time it is stated by Rebekah herself and the last time it is mentioned by Abraham's servant. So here, it is quite clear that Rebekah's origins are available to the reader. But there are distinguished parallels between Rebekah and Tamar. So, can we read any literary relationship between Rebekah and Tamar in their stories? In the next section, I will examine this.

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[64] Smith, 'The Story of Tamar: A Power-filled Challenge to the Structure to Power', in George J. Brooke (ed.), *Women in the Biblical Tradition* (Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), pp. 16-28 (22).

[65] Schneider, *Mothers of Promise: Women in the Book of Genesis*, p. 40.

[66] Nowell, *Women in the Old Testament*, p. 45.

6.2.2. Trickster, Veiling and Twins: Tamar the Second Rebekah?

As far as the themes of veiling and of twins in the patriarchal narrative are concerned, the literary relationship between Rebekah and Tamar is close. These issues are mentioned uniquely in the stories of these two women. They show the reader the interrelationships and interplay between these motifs.

The second matriarch, Rebekah, is the wife of Isaac who is the heir of his father Abraham in his lineage. It has been said that '...Rebekah is one of the most prominent women – in terms of her active role and her control of events – in the Hebrew Bible'.[67] However, she was barren just as Sarah was (Gen. 25:21). We are not sure whether they were naturally infertile, or whether their barrenness was always the result of a deliberate action by Yhwh. Referring to the biblical type-scenes in the Primary Narrative and even in the New Testament, James G. Williams insists that there are four thematic literary conventions with regard to the female characters in type-scenes; first, the motifs of 'the wife-sister scenes' (Sarah, Gen. 12:10-20; Gen. 20; Rebekah, Gen. 26), second, 'the betrothal scenes' (Rebekah, Gen. 24:10-61; Leah and Rachel, Gen. 29:1-19; Zipporah, Ex. 2:15-21), third, 'the type-scenes of the agon, of the barren wife' (Sarah, Gen. 16:1-6 and 21:1-7, Rachel, Gen. 29:31-30:24, Hannah, 1 Sam. 1), and finally, 'the promise to the barren wife' (Sarah, Gen. 18:1-15; Manoah's wife, Judg. 13:2-24; the Shunammite woman, 2 Kgs 4:8-17; and Elizabeth, Lk. 1:5-25).[68]

However, it seems that Williams missed the additional *type-scenes of veiling and twins* (Rebekah, Gen. 24:62-67; 25:21-26; Tamar, Gen. 38:15-19, 27-30) as well as *the trickster scenes* (Rebekah, Gen. 27:1-46; Tamar, Gen. 38:13-19) and these are significant. So

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[67] Carol Meyers, 'Rebekah', in Carol Meyers (ed.), *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2000), pp. 143-44 (143); for further information on Rebekah's initiative, see Robert Alter, 'Biblical Type-Scenes and the Uses of Convention', CI (1978), pp. 355-68 (361); Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, pp. 47-62.

[68] James G. Williams, 'The Beautiful and the Barren: Conventions in Biblical Type-Scenes', *JSOT* 17 (1980), pp. 107-19 (108-10); in Alter's words, the term type-scene means 'certain prominent elements of repetitive compositional pattern in both Greek epics that are conscious conventions...', quoting a concept from Homer scholarship. Alter, 'Biblical Type-Scenes and the Uses of Convention', p. 358; Nowell states, 'The story of Rebekah's betrothal to Isaac (Genesis 24) is one of the longest chapters in Scripture. The narrative is a type scene, a literary convention in which the narrator is expected to include a specific set of elements as the story is told...All the expected elements are found in Genesis 24.' Nowell, *Women in the Old Testament*, p. 21.

what are the juxtapositions between Rebekah and Tamar? There are striking analogies between them; first of all, Rebekah is well known as a 'trickster'[69] or as a 'shrewd' woman [70] within scholarship. For example, with the help of his mother, Jacob, the younger son, deceived his father, Isaac, by wearing his older brother Esau's clothes and goatskins and thereby intercepted Jacob's blessing in place of Esau (Gen. 27:1-40). This transpired due to Rebekah's designed and detailed 'scheme',[71] not due to Jacob alone. Tricksters or shrewd characters are employed by the author as a device when the plot cannot move on without an unexpected twist. In Schneider's view, 'Rebekah's actions could be motivated by her desire to ensure that the promise goes to the one identified by the Israelite Deity (27:7).'[72] In addition, the actions of the Rebekah character are decisive.[73] For instance, when Rebekah was asked by Abraham's servant to leave her parents home for the purpose of becoming Isaac's bride, she answered immediately that she would go with him (Gen. 24:52-58). Schneider insists that '…She [Rebekah] is willing to leave everything she knows without a moment's hesitation'.[74] These instances from the story of Rebekah show that Rebekah is portrayed as a trickster and that she is quick to make up her mind.

The case of Tamar as a trickster in Genesis 38 is similar to that of Rebekah in Genesis 27.[75] Once Tamar realised that Judah, her father-in-law, had no plan to give her to his third son Shelah in levirate marriage, she was on the lookout for an opportunity to put the situation right herself. As soon as she heard that Judah was coming to Timnah for sheep

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[69] Schneider, *Mothers of Promise: Women in the Book of Genesis*, p. 41; Bal states, '…tricksters function as a mise en abyme or metasemiotic figure,' quoting Dällenbach (1989; 1978 in French). See Mieke Bal, 'Tricky Thematics', in J. Cheryl Exum and Johanna W.H. Bos (eds.), *Reasoning with the Foxes Female Wit in a World of Male Power* (Semeia, 42; Atlanta: SBL, 1988), pp. 133-55 (136-38).

[70] Alter, 'Biblical Type-Scenes and the Uses of Convention', p. 361; Brueggemann, *Genesis: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, p. 231.

[71] Ephraim A. Speiser, *Genesis* (3rd edn; AB, 1; Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1982), p. 211.

[72] Schneider, *Mothers of Promise: Women in the Book of Genesis*, p. 51.

[73] Jeansonne calls Rebekah's character 'the decisive matriarch', in *The Women of Genesis: From Sarah to Potiphar's wife*, pp. 53-69.

[74] Schneider, *Mothers of Promise: Women in the Book of Genesis*, p. 50.

[75] For recent articles on this issue for Tamar in Genesis 38, see Melissa Jackson, 'Lot's Daughters and Tamar as Tricksters and the Patriarchal Narratives as Feminist Theology', *JSOT* 98 (2002), pp. 29-46; Mary E. Shields, '"More Righteous than I": The Comeuppance of the Trickster Genesis 38', in Athalya Brenner (ed.), *Are We Amused?: Humour About Women in the Biblical Worlds* (JSOTSup, 383; London: T & T Clark International, 2003), pp. 31-51.

shearing, Tamar rapidly put her plan into practice because she had probably designed to have a child (Gen. 38:12-14).[76] But, unlike Sarah, Rebekah and Rachel, there is a variation in Tamar's case; the narrative does not include Yhwh's intervention or intrusion in conceiving this time.[77] Both Rebekah and Tamar, in their roles as tricksters, take the initiative in order to achieve their aims of security. Rebekah did it to secure Isaac's blessing for Jacob and so did Tamar to secure a child from Judah. These two female characters could certainly be called tricksters or shrewd women.

Secondly, both Rebekah and Tamar were veiled to conceal their faces. Only these two characters (and, maybe, the young woman in Song 1:7) in the whole Hebrew Bible are veiled. Many scholars have argued about what it meant that the women, in particular Tamar, were veiled. George W. Coats suggests that Rebekeh veiling herself in front of Issac as he approached her for the first time has to do with respecting the bond of marriage.[78] In the same context, Gunn and Fewell insist that, 'The veil she [Tamar] puts on is the same kind of veil that Rebekah wears when she first encounters Isaac.'[79] By contrast, J.A. Emerton believes that Tamar's veil indicates a prostitute by analogy with the veiled young woman who could be thought to be a prostitute looking for business in Song 1:7.[80]

The narrator of Genesis 38 does not state that Tamar disguised herself as a prostitute, only that Judah himself thought her to be a prostitute (Gen. 38: 15). Can we guess that Tamar had covered her face with a veil carrying some 'ideological' implications 'from abandoned

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[76] Turner notes that the ancestral family in Genesis, 'is continued through a remarkable example of female scheming (38.12ff.)'. Laurence A. Turner, 'The Story of Jacob's Family', in *Announcements of Plot in Genesis* (JSOTSup. 96; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), p. 170.

[77] It is true that, 'When Sarah, Rebekah and Rachel eventually bear children this is clearly attributed to divine intervention (21:1; 25:21; 30:22).' Alexander, 'From Adam to Judah: The Significance of the Family Tree in Genesis', p. 14.

[78] George W. Coats, *Genesis, with an Introduction to Narrative Literature* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1983), p. 169; Sarna insists that with the help of Middle Assyrian law, 'Rebekah's veiling herself has both symbolic and socio-legal significance. It is an unspoken signal to Isaac that she is his bride.' See Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis-בראשית*, p. 170.

[79] Danna Nolan Fewell and David M. Gunn, Gender, *Power & Promise: The Subject of the Bible's First Story* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), p. 88.

[80] J.A. Emerton, 'Lice or Veil in the Song of Songs 1.7?', in A. Graeme Auld (ed.), *Understanding Poets and Prophets: Essays in Honour of George Wishart Anderson* (JSOTSup. 152; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), pp. 127-40 (129).

widowed daughter-in-law, to bride, to wild woman, to prostitute, to phallic mother'?[81] It is interesting to see that just as Judah did not recognise Tamar when they slept together (Gen. 38:18), Jacob did not know that he lay with Leah (Gen. 29:23-25); was Leah veiled or was it dark? Regarding Tamar, if we consider that she was hiding her real identity from Judah, is it persuasive to say that the purpose of the veiling of Tamar is 'not [for] marriage, but [for] the conception of a child'[82]; a childless widow's right? Whether the meaning of the veiling carries the implication of marriage or being a bride or not, Tamar's veiling definitely serves to remind the reader of Rebekah's veiling (Gen. 24:65). But it is important to note here that Tamar seems to choose this decisive way of having a child in order to improve her insecure status rather than as a way of finding a new marriage. Why did she not wait for Shelah to assume his role as *levir*? All this said, it is certain that the primary common purpose of the veils in these two stories is to conceal the faces of Rebekah and Tamar from specific male characters.

The last significant parallel between Rebekah and Tamar is that they both give birth to twin boys; Rebekah bore Esau and Jacob to Isaac (Gen. 25:21-26) and Tamar the twins, Perez and Zerah (Gen. 38:27-30). Rebekah suffered from 'initial barrenness'[83] and Tamar endured 'enforced barrenness',[84] but they finally both achieved their goals to obtain children for their families. Furthermore, for both, the order of the twin sons' birthright is reversed according to the oracle (Gen. 25:23). The elder son of Rebekah, Esau, loses his right to primogeniture when he sells out to his younger brother, Jacob, for a bowl of red stew (Gen. 25:27-34).[85] This results in Isaac's blessing passing to Jacob instead of Esau (Gen. 27). This is

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[81] Tarlin says, '...the sheer entertainment value, the sophisticalted aesthetic pleasures, and the complex formal structures that can be read in it serve as ideological traps...' For further information on this topic, see Jan William Tarlin, 'Tamar's veil: Ideology at the Entrance to Enaim', in George Aichele (ed.), *Culture, Entertainment and the Bible* (JSOTSup. 309; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), pp. 174-81 (174, 180); John R. Huddlestun, 'Unveiling the Versions: The Tactics of Tamar in Genesis 38:15', *JHS* 3 Article 7 (2001) [electronic].

[82] Coats, *Genesis, with an Introduction to Narrative Literature*, p. 274; cf. *idem*, 'Widow's Rights: A Crux in the Structure of Genesis 38', *CBQ* 34 (1972), pp. 461-66 (464-65).

[83] Meyers, 'Rebekah', p. 143.

[84] Emerton, 'Judah and Tamar', p. 409; Turner, *Genesis*, p. 170.

[85] The ultimogeniture issue recurs up to the blessing of Jacob to Joseph's two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim (Gen. 48), and Judah rather than his older brothers, Reuben, Simeon and Levi (Gen. 49:1-12); on this topic in relation to Genesis 38, see Judah Goldin, 'The Youngest Son or Where Does Genesis 38 Belong', *JBL* 96.1 (1977), pp. 27-44.

how Jacob acquired the position of third patriarch of Israel in the book of Genesis; Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Smith is probably correct in arguing that the issue of the chosen younger child could be parallel in both Rebekah's and Tamar's stories. She states:

> That the younger should take precedence is a reversal of the expected order of things (although a common motif in Genesis and elsewhere), and we may compare Rebekah's oracle with the account of the birth of Tamar's twins, found in Gen 38:27-30, where, again, the question of precedence is confused, as it is the twin whose hand makes the first appearance who, in fact, is born second. These parallels are so striking that it would be difficult to view Tamar in isolation from the other women in Genesis. Her story overlaps with theirs.[86]

Just as Jacob, the younger son of Rebekah, gets the first position, so, too, does Perez, the second son of Tamar. The narrator's description of the struggle in the childbirth scenes between Perez and Zerah in Genesis 38:27-30 reminds us of the wrestling between Esau and Jacob in Genesis 25:24-26. Rebekah and Tamar are both mothers of heroes in the story of Israel. Jacob 'is destined to become ancestor of all Israel'[87] and Perez becomes the ancestor of King David (Ruth 4:18-22; 1 Chron. 2:3-15). As a result, the analogies between Rebekah and Tamar represent significant aspects of their roles in their own stories.

Going back to the issue of intervention by Yhwh, there is a difference between the two female characters. Rebekah, like Sarah before her, is introduced after the prayer of a servant of Abraham who met her by the well (Gen. 24:12-14), whereas there is no link to Yhwh in Tamar's story. With regard to Tamar, the lack of intercession to Yhwh is a key feature that distinguishes her from Sarah and Rebekah. However, we have also noted that several pieces of information about Tamar seem to be being withheld; ethnic background, barrenness, whose wife she became. All these make the reader wonder. One significant thing is that, although Smith's argument is partly problematic, 'Of all the patriarchal wives Tamar probably most resembles Rebekah. Rebekah, like Tamar, gives birth to twin boys after Yhwh

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[86] Smith, 'The Story of Tamar: A Power-filled Challenge to the Structure to Power', p. 23.
[87] Meyers, 'Rebekah', p. 143.

has intervened on her behalf, and, as in Gen 38:27-30, there is some ambiguity about which of the twins is to be the more important.'[88] Yhwh intervened in Rebekah's conception (Gen. 25:21), but did not in Tamar's pregnancy. Just as Rebekah carries on Sarah's role,[89] so Tamar also follows her role as the mother of the twin sons of Judah.

6.2.3. Naming: Diversity and Continuity

The purpose of this section is to discuss the names of female biblical characters (matriarchs) including Tamar in Genesis 38 and the significance of the meanings of them within the narratives, and also to examine the issues around the naming of their children. In particular, the naming of children by the matriarchs differs, that is, sometimes they name them alone and sometimes with their husbands.

Characters in the patriarchal narratives almost all have their own names, even though some are anonymous. The name is crucial to the characters within a story because it can be a meaningful signal as to the theme of the whole narrative or its context. For instance, God (אֱלֹהִים) changed the name of Abram, who is the first patriarch in the history of Israel, to Abraham and the meaning of his name is altered in the process to 'chief of a multitude' (אַבְרָהָם) from 'exalted father' (אַבְרָם).[90] Abraham's new name makes it possible for him to be the first father of his people (Gen. 12:2; 13:14-17; 17:4-8). Jacob (יַעֲקֹב),[91] Abraham's grandson, wrestled with a man until daybreak and in the end had a new name, Israel (יִשְׂרָאֵל), bestowed on him by him, a name which means 'The one who strives with God or God strives'[92] (Gen. 32:22-32). These names above are special to the fathers and they became the first and the third patriarchs, respectively, in the history of Israel.

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[88] Smith, 'The Story of Tamar: A Power-filled Challenge to the Structure to Power', p. 22.
[89] Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible: A New Interpretation of Their Stories*, p. 6.
[90] 'אַבְרָם', BDB, p. 4.
[91] According to footnote *r* of Gen. 25:26, NRSV, 'That is, "He takes by the heel or He supplants."'
[92] See footnote *k* in Gen. 32:28, NRSV.

Sarah and Rebekah

The matriarchs are also characterised by their names and their titles. The meanings of these personal names are played out in their stories; Sarai (שָׂרַי), Abraham's wife, was renamed Sarah (שָׂרָה 'princess, noble lady'[93]) at the annunciation of Isaac's birth (Gen. 17:15-21; 18:9-15) and held a special place as mother of the first heir according to God's promise that she would be the mother of nations (Gen. 17:16). Comparatively, however, the meaning of Rebekah, Isaac's wife, is uncertain,[94] but it seems to be understood more symbolically. Carol Meyers assumes that the name Rebekah means 'cow' or 'knot'.[95] Without any explanation of her name in the story, Rebekah is rather labelled as נַעֲרָה ('young woman'[96]) by the servant of Abraham twice (Gen. 24:14 [ה]נַעֲרָ, fem. of נַעַר], 28).[97] This description by Abraham's servant could show her physical appearance as a 'realistic picture of the girl'[98] on the one hand, but it could also present an inner feature or characteristic reflecting her vigour on the other. Furthermore, when Abraham's servant asks to take Rebekah to Abraham in order for her to become Isaac's bride, her brother and mother, also call her נַעֲרָה twice (Gen. 24:55, 57).[99] Some say that the term designates a 'young unmarried girl' or a 'serving [servant] girl'.[100] For the former, its meaning can be understood as 'virgin' in terms that she is not yet married and has only her brother but no father. The terminology may imply two concepts, that is, 'the concept of נערה that has already been fulfilled and the concept of אשה that is yet to be decided', states Susanne Gillmayr-Bucher, '...Rebekah is the hoped-for girl.'[101] According to Schneider, 'The reference to her having a brother reinforces why she is a *na'arah* and explains why her

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[93] 'שָׂרָה', BDB, p. 979.
[94] 'רִבְקָה', HALOT, vol. 2, p.1182.
[95] Meyers, 'Rebekah', pp. 143-44; See 'רִבְקָה', HALOT, vol. 2, p.1182.
[96] Schneider, *Mothers of Promise*, p. 45.
[97] The servant of Abraham uses another word עַלְמָה ('young woman', Gen. 24:43) when he explains to Laban and Bethuel what happened between him and Rebekah.
[98] Susanne Gillmayr-Bucher, 'The Woman of Their Dreams: The Image of Rebekah in Genesis 24', in Philip R. Davies & David J.A. Clines (eds.), *The World of Genesis: Persons, Places, Perspectives* (JSOTSup, 257; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), pp. 90-101 (96).
[99] Schneider, *Mothers of Promise*, p. 45.
[100] 'נַעֲרָה', HALOT, vol. I, p. 707; Schneider, *Mothers of Promise*, p. 45.
[101] Gillmayr-Bucher, 'The Woman of Their Dreams: The Image of Rebekah in Genesis 24', pp. 98-99.

brother is so prominent and her father is not.'[102] In effect, the description of her as a נַעֲרָה is only applied to Rebekah in the patriarchal narratives of Genesis. Thus, it is certain that the narrator underlines that she is '*na'arah*' as the image of her character, although her name Rebekah is not clearly explained.

Leah and Rachel

Then what can we learn about Leah and Rachel with respect to their names in their stories? First, in Frymer-Kensky's words, Leah's name לֵאָה means 'cow', a prominent symbol of fertility in Mesopotamia.[103] She gives birth to six sons and a daughter by Jacob; Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, and Dinah (Gen. 29:32-35; 30:17-20). It is true to say that, as Schneider points out, 'Most of Leah's actions concern bearing children, naming children, or giving someone to Jacob to have more children on her behalf.'[104] Among these actions, the event where Leah, as a matriarch, gives her children's names is the first time that happens in the patriarchal narrative of Genesis.[105] All of Jacob's twelve sons are named by their mothers alone; whenever Leah bears Jacob a son, she always endows the name with a meaning which is related to her circumstances. The meaning of the name of Reuben, her first son, is '...the LORD has looked on my affliction; surely now my husband will love me' (Gen. 29:32 NRSV). The second son of Leah is Simeon whose name means '...the LORD has heard that I am hated...' (v. 33). Levi, the third son, '...Now this time my husband will be joined to me, because I have borne him three sons...' (v. 34, NRSV). Judah, the fourth son, is called 'This time I will praise the LORD' (v. 35). Leah's other sons, Issachar and Zebulun, are also given their names by Leah herself (Gen. 30:17-20). Furthermore, Leah and Rachel give their

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[102] Schneider, *Mothers of Promise*, pp. 46-47.

[103] Frymer-Kensky, 'Leah', pp. 108-09.

[104] Schneider, *Mothers of Promise: Women in the Book of Genesis*, p. 67.

[105] Of course, in the Hebrew Bible the various women 'who name their own children include Eve (Gen. 4.25), the daughters of Lot (Gen. 19.37, 38), Leah (Gen. 29.32, 33, 34, 35; 30.11, 13, 17, 20), Rachel (Gen. 30.6, 8, 24; 35.18), Shua's daughter (Gen. 38.4, 5), Samson's mother (Judg. 13.24), Hannah (1 Sam. 1.20), and Maacah the wife of Machir (1 Chron. 7.16). It is interesting to note that it is the name Bathsheba gave her son by which he was to be known, not the name by which he was known to Yahweh (2 Sam. 12.25)'. See Elna K. Solvang, *A Woman's Place is in the House: Royal Women of Judah and their Involvement in the House of David* (JSOTSup, 349; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), p. 138.

sons' names when Bilhah the maidservant of Rachel (birth mother of Dan, Naphtali) and Zilpah the maidservant of Leah (birth mother of Gad, Asher) bear their sons (Gen. 30:3-13). Then, when Rachel gives birth to Joseph, she also names him (Gen. 30:22-24). However. when the last son of Jacob was born, Rachel named her son בֶּן-אוֹנִי ('son of my sorrow'), but Jacob called him בִּנְיָמִין ('Son of the right hand or Son of the South')[106] in Genesis 35:16-18. Thus, we can see that the naming of children by the mothers (matriarchs) and the meanings of all the names are significant in relation to the lives of the mothers and the sons.

Returning to the matriarch's name, Rachel is the younger daughter of Laban, Nahor's son (Gen. 29:5) and becomes one of the co-wives of Jacob (Gen. 29:16ff). The meaning of her name רָחֵל is 'ewe'.[107] We are told that she was loved by Jacob and this enabled him to work for Laban seven years for her bride price (Gen. 29:18). However, Rachel had to remain in her status as the second wife of Jacob owing to the custom that any older sister should marry first (v.26). Accordingly, Jacob worked for Laban seven more years (v. 29).[108] What is worse, like Sarah and Rebekah before her, Rachel was barren and experienced a long period of childlessness[109] before Yhwh opened her womb (Gen. 29:31; 30:22). It made her unhappy and she attempted to create a family out of envy towards Leah (Gen. 30:1-3). To be sure, it is noted that Rachel's consciousness of being in competition is more pronounced than her older sister Leah's[110] and 'she has been waging and winning (Gen. 30:7-8)'[111] in the contest with her sister. This reminds us of Jacob's attempt at taking Esau's birthright (Gen. 25:27-34). Rachel is a sibling of and rival co-wife with Leah, but ironically, when they work together to build their family, Jacob accepts their proposals.[112] For example, when Rachel gave Bilhah

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[106] See footnotes *t* and *u* in Gen. 35:18, NRSV.

[107] 'רָחֵל,' BDB, p. 932; cf. Gen. 32:15; Is. 53:7.

[108] The law in Leviticus says that marriage to sisters is forbidden: 'And you shall not take a woman as a rival to her sister, uncovering her nakedness while her sister is still alive.' (Lev. 18:18 NRSV)

[109] Frymer-Kensky, 'Rachel', p. 139.

[110] Gen. 30:1 reads, 'When Rachel saw that she [Leah] bore Jacob no children, she envied her sister; and she said to Jacob, "Give me children, or I shall die!"' (NRSV); Gen. 30:7 reads, 'Rachel's servant Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. Then Rachel said, "I have had a great struggle with my sister, and I have won"...' (NRSV)

[111] Frymer-Kensky, 'Rachel', p. 139.

[112] Frymer-Kensky, 'Rachel', p. 139.

her maid to Jacob in order to have a child (Gen. 30:1-8) and Leah also provided Zilpah her servant to him (Gen. 30:9-13), Jacob willingly received their requests. While the competition over bearing children between Leah and Rachel is going on, it seems that Jacob is a passive participant;[113] interestingly, it should be noted that all the children of Jacob were named by Leah and Rachel apart from Benjamin (Gen. 29:31-30:24; 35:18).

However, it can be shown that in the early patriarchy the patriarchs usually named their children themselves. The pattern of naming by the matriarchs was not common in the period of Abraham and Isaac; when Hagar and Sarah bore sons to Abraham, it was certainly he who named them Ishmael (וַיִּקְרָא אַבְרָם שֵׁם־בְּנוֹ אֲשֶׁר־יָלְדָה הָגָר יִשְׁמָעֵאל 'and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael' Gen. 16:15 NRSV), and Isaac (וַיִּקְרָא אַבְרָהָם אֶת־שֵׁם־בְּנוֹ הַנּוֹלַד־לוֹ אֲשֶׁר־יָלְדָה־לּוֹ שָׂרָה יִצְחָק 'Abraham gave the name Isaac to his son whom Sarah bore him' Gen. 21:3 NRSV), respectively. Afterward, when Rebekah gave birth to sons, Isaac and Rebekah named Esau together (וַיִּקְרְאוּ שְׁמוֹ עֵשָׂו 'they named him Esau' Gen. 25:25 NRSV), but Jacob was named by his father. That is, in these stories of Abraham and Isaac, the matriarchs (Sarah and Rebekah) did not name their children on their own. However, this naming of children was the responsibility of Leah and Rachel in the time of Jacob as mentioned above.

Thus we can say that through the three patriarchal generations (from Abraham to Jacob) the naming of children by their father and mother is described as a joint responsibility. However, in the period of Judah's family, this pattern continues on the one hand, but changes slightly on the other. That is, Judah's children are named by Judah and his wife, but Judah is only interested in his first son, Er (Gen. 38:3).

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[113] When Jacob woke up the next morning after his marriage, there was Leah with him. Jacob complained about this to Laban his father-in-law and Laban explained their custom in which the older sister should be given in marriage first (Gen. 29:26). Then, Jacob's action changes to being passive. It is interesting to say that, 'Jacob remains silent, and agrees to terms. Jacob usurped the birthright of the eldest, and now an eldest daughter is forced upon him'. Paul Borgman, *Genesis: The Story We Haven't Heard* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001), pp. 156-57.

Tamar

In the light of all this, it is time to investigate how Tamar's own name and her involvement in the naming of children accords with the suggestion that she could be called the last matriarch in the book of Genesis. First of all, the meaning of the name תָּמָר is 'palm tree' which conjures up fruitful and sexual images. We can see the meaning of her name in biblical poetry as follows:

> The righteous will flourish like the palm tree [תָּמָר, Tamar], and grow like a cedar in Lebanon. (Ps. 92:12 NRSV [Heb 92:13])

> You are stately as a palm tree [תָּמָר], and your breasts are like its clusters. I say I will climb the palm tree [תָּמָר], and lay hold of its branches. Oh, may your breasts be like clusters of the vine, and the scent of your breath like apples. (Song 7:7-8 NRSV / Heb 7:8-9)

The first quotation in effect reminds the reader of Tamar who is judged as righteous by her father-in-law (Gen. 38:26). The next sexual image shows Tamar's beauty and youth. In the ancient society, as the ability to bear children is regarded as the blessing of the Deity, the meaning of Tamar designates these abundant features both in her personality and in her physical appearance. If these images are not irrelevant to the character in her story in Genesis 38, the name of Tamar is probably linked to them. Generally speaking, considering the importance of a character's name, to be sure, the meaning of Tamar is potentially fertile. Nonetheless, she had a difficult experience of enforced barrenness just as the previous matriarchs were barren.

If her own name seems to fit the pattern of suggesting narrative themes, on the other hand, the course of the naming of Judah's sons is confused in its pattern and partly unclear. The use of the verb קרא in connection with naming in the story shows two patterns: in both there is no explicit indication of the subject (יִקְרָא for Er, תִּקְרֶאִ for Onan and Shelah, and again יִקְרָא for Perez and Zerah). Who, then, is it who names Judah's sons? Sarna, following the Samaritan version and Targum Jonathan, accepts that 'the mother [Judah's wife] names all

three sons [Er, Onan and Shelah]' and furthermore even opens the possibility of a woman naming Perez and Zerah, if we follow some ancient versions.[114] Literally, it may seem that Er, the first son, is named by Judah (וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ עֵר Gen. 38:3) as the only option for the masculine subject of the verb. The feminine form of the verb equally suggests that the Canaanite wife of Judah certainly named the younger two sons, Onan (וַתִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ אוֹנָן v. 4) and Shelah (וַתִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ שֵׁלָה v. 5). In the naming of Perez and Zerah, the fourth and fifth sons of Judah, we again find the use of יִקְרָא, the qal imperfect, third person masculine singular. But there could be some debate over the naming of Perez and Zerah, as mentioned above. As a matter of fact, the character of Judah does not appear in verses 27-30. The only characters around at this point are female. It may be suggested that the author uses this enigmatic verb pattern without an obvious subject deliberately. The masculine form may indicate a sort of passive meaning 'they were named'. By this reasoning, the interpretation of the verb pattern could encompass a female character as the agent. If we accept that, Perez and Zerah could be named by a woman, it could have been Tamar.

We can conclude, thus, that the meaning of a character's name (or nickname), whether they are male or female, and the words used to describe them in the patriarchal narrative are closely related to the storyline. The description of Rebekah as a נַעֲרָה is an example of this point. As for the naming of children by their mothers, the pattern undergoes change. To begin with the fathers (Abraham and Isaac) named their children, but later that role is shared with the mother (Rebekah, in the case of Esau). After that, Leah and Rachel as mothers named their children, with the exception of Benjamin. In Genesis 38, although the firstborn is named by the father, the subsequent children are named by their mother. That is, Er is named by Judah, but Onan and Shelah are named by Judah's wife. However, in the case of Perez and Zerah, the text is ambiguous. This could harmonise with Tamar's transitional role from a childless widow to the mother-figure of her heirs and the significance of that in

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[114] Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis-*בראשית, pp. 265, 270.

the story.

6.2.4. Tamar's Implied Image as the Fifth Matriarch in the Patriarchal Narrative

It is now time to investigate Tamar's function as given in the patriarchal narrative of Genesis. What is Tamar's most distinctive role as a woman in Genesis 38? Furthermore, what contribution can the character of Tamar ultimately make to the reader's understanding of the progression of the larger story beyond that chapter? Answers to these questions will help show how to read the last scene (vv. 27-30) in chapter 38 in line with our contention that, in the final form of the Hebrew Bible, this chapter is meant to be read as a small episode in the longer story around it. This is because, as Peter F. Lockwood succinctly states, 'every segment of a larger unit has been assigned its place within the whole for a good reason.'[115] This seems to harmonise with Tamar's role as mother in the last part of Genesis 38. In the interest of genealogy, it is highly probable that the author exploits Tamar as part of the literary and thematic motif of births of important heirs alongside the stories of the four matriarchs (Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel and Leah) in the patriarchal narratives.

Tamar's role as a maternal figure is more significant in the long term development of the narrative than her other roles – wife, daughter-in-law, widow, and disguised prostitute (from Judah's point of view); Genesis 38 conveys the first two of Tamar's roles simultaneously, depicting her as the wife of Er (v. 6) and the daughter-in-law of Judah (v. 11). Then, Tamar's status changes to that of widow when Judah orders Tamar to move back to her father's house (v. 11). Following this, Tamar's final position given by the narrator is as a mother-figure (v. 27-30). It seems to me that the final image of Tamar having a maternal role in the building of Judah's family is by no means a coincidence to the reader. However, it is not the first time that a mother-figure, who gives birth to a distinguished son who will eventually

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[115] Peter F. Lockwood, 'Tamar's Place in the Joseph Cycle', *LTJ* 26 (1992), pp. 35-43 (35); Bar-Efrat argues about this similarly, 'In the Bible narratives which are more or less complete in themselves link up with one another so as to create larger literary units'. Shimon Bar-Efrat, 'Some Observations on the Analysis of Structure in Biblical Narrative', *VT* 30 (1980), pp. 154-73 (156).

become an ancestor of Israel, is mentioned. That is, as each of the preceding matriarchs in the patriarchal stories has served as an ancestress, Tamar also carries out the same role in 'the major themes of the patriarchal and matriarchal cycles'[116] in the book of Genesis.

In her article on the mothers of Israel, Exum points out that in the narratives of Genesis 12-50 the matriarchs such as Sarah, Rebekah, Leah and Rachel, 'are not so ordinary after all, and their influence is far-reaching'[117] due to their roles as mothers to the next generation. In the ancestor stories of Israel in the book of Genesis, these women go through difficulties in having a child at the beginning of their stories, but finally they accomplish God's promise, which has already been predestined. The stories of the three matriarchs, except Leah (she is not barren), share three common factors: a barren wife, the birth of a child, and the continuation of the ancestry. These elements constitute the 'endangered ancestress' motif where the matriarch is in peril of losing her status as the wife of a patriarch in Genesis 12:10-20, 20:1-18 (Sarah), 26:1-11 (Rebekah).[118] Rachel, was not in as dangerous a situation as Sarah and Rebekah, but she was also childless for a while (Gen. 29:31).[119] The table below sets out some common motifs between the matriarchs and Tamar:

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[116] Bos, 'Out of the Shadows: Genesis 38; Judges 4:17-22; Ruth 3', p. 48.

[117] On the importance of the matriarchs in the narratives of the book of Genesis, Exum writes, 'It is worthwhile to look at the matriarchs only in their role as mothers, not only because motherhood so often defines a "woman's place," but also because of the ordinariness of the role-mothers *per se* are not major characters. These women derive their significance from the fact that they gave birth to famous sons. But closer examination reveals that these mothers are not so ordinary after all, and their influence is far-reaching. A striking paradox emerges in these stories. Although the important events in Israelite tradition are experienced by men, they are often set in motion and determined by women'. See J. Cheryl Exum, 'The Mothers of Israel', Harvey Minkoff (ed.), *Approaches to the Bible: the Best of Bible Review* (vol. 2, A Multitude of Perspectives; Washington, D.C.: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1995), pp. 273-79, especially 273-74.

[118] According to Exum, these tales are called the 'thrice-tale' and 'the tales [about the women] are variants on the same theme'. J. Cheryl Exum, 'Who's Afraid of 'The Endangered Ancestress?' in *Fragmented Women: Feminist (Sub)versions of Biblical Narratives* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1993), pp. 148-69; for a source critical view on these stories as the 'endangered ancestress triplet', see Mark E. Biddle, 'The "Endangered Ancestress" and Blessing for the Nation', *JBL* 109 (1990), pp. 599-611.

[119] Carol Smith considers Rachel to be the closest to Tamar. She says, 'Of all the patriarchal wives Tamar probably most resembles Rebekah. Rebekah, like Tamar, gives birth to twin boys after Yhwh has intervened on her behalf, and as in Gen 38:27-30, there is some ambiguity about which of the twins is to be the more important.' Smith, 'The Story of Tamar: A Power-filled Challenge to the Structure of Power', p. 22.

<Table 5> Common Motifs between the Matriarchs and Tamar in the Patriarchal Narratives

Matriarchs / *Motifs*	Sarah	Rebekah	Leah	Rachel	Tamar
Barrenness	o	o		o	o (enforced)
The Birth of Child	o	o	o	o	o
The Continuation of the Lineage	o (Isaac)	o (Jacob)	o (Judah)	o (Joseph)	o (Perez)
Given Away to Others	o				o
Veiled Herself		o	(?)		o
Twins		o			o

If the patriarchs of Israel – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – in attempting to build their house are considered, it is no wonder that Judah's leaving from his father's house is to build up his new family. Among Jacob's sons, except for Joseph who is taken to Egypt as a slave, the narrator reveals that only Judah determines to start a family (Gen. 38:1). Nonetheless, the continuation of the family could only be preserved due to Tamar's plot,[120] and Judah did not recognise his daughter-in-law when they had sexual intercourse together. Indeed, the mission of building up the family could finally be accomplished only by Tamar, and not Judah. Thus, this pattern of Tamar's actions is similar to the previous matriarchs. In order to demonstrate this, Exum's arguments are useful:

> When the matriarchs appear as actors, they come to life as fully developed personalities, whose struggles and determination are deftly sketched and whose joys and sorrows become real for us. In such stories, they are not appendages of the patriarchs but rather persons in their own right – women participating in a patriarchal culture but sometimes pictured as standing over against it. This is our paradox: though frequently ignored in the larger story of Israel's journey toward the promise, the matriarchs act at strategic points that move the plot, and thus the promise, in the proper direction toward its fulfilment.[121]

As seen in the table above, Tamar's character shares many common motifs and similar features with the matriarchs in Genesis.[122] For example, firstly, when Abram's own life is

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[120] 'Tamar, like them [Sarah, Rebekah and Rachel], needs to become pregnant, or the line of Judah will die out'. See Smith, 'The Story of Tamar: A Power-filled Challenge to the Structure of Power', p. 22.

[121] Exum, '"Mother in Israel": A Familiar Story Reconsidered', in Letty M. Russell (ed.), *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1985), pp. 75-6.

[122] Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible: A New Interpretation of Their Stories*, p. 276.

threatened, Sarai (Sarah) is given away to Pharaoh (Gen. 12:15) and Abimelech (Gen. 20:2). This happens because Abram is afraid of what the kings might do to him. Tamar also loses her husband and is given away to another brother in levirate marriage. In these cases, both Sarah and Tamar are merely passive characters. But, as Sarah 'initiates the action and controls events throughout the six verses [of chapter 16 from verse 1 to 6] in which she appears',[123] Tamar also initiates her plan as a mother-figure to conceive a baby. Secondly, as Rebekah veils herself as Isaac comes near her (Gen. 24:65), Tamar covers herself with a veil (Gen. 38:14).[124] In Rebekah's case, her veil hints at her marriage to Isaac;[125] yet, in Tamar's story, the veil functions to hide her real identity as Judah's daughter-in-law. It can be inferred, according to Frymer-Kensky, that 'Leah disguised herself, pretending to be Rachel in order to marry Jacob'.[126] Later, Leah actively manages to sleep with Jacob, instead, giving Rachel Reuben's mandrakes. This ruse results in Leah having a baby (Gen. 30:14-17).[127] Thirdly, the account of Rebekah bearing the twins, Esau and Jacob (Gen. 25:21-26), parallels that of Tamar's twins, Perez and Zerah (Gen. 38:27-30).

Furthermore, Exum's contentions as to the previous major women characters as matriarchs may be profitably applied to Tamar as well, who becomes an ancestress of King David (Ruth 4:18-22; cf. Mt. 1:1-6).[128] The ancestry is acknowledged by those who attended

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[123] Exum, 'Mothers of Israel', p. 276.

[124] For further information, see Jan William Tarlin, 'Tamar's Veil: Ideology at the Entrance to Enaim', in George Aichele (ed.), *Culture, Entertainment and the Bible* (JSOTSup, 309; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), pp. 174-81.

[125] George W. Coats, 'Widow's Rights: A Crux in the Structure of Genesis 38', *CBQ* 34 (1972), pp. 464-65; *idem*, *Genesis, with an Introduction to Narrative Literature* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1983), p. 274; it is interesting that Fewell and Gunn say on the veil: 'The veil she [Tamar] puts on is the same kind of veil that Rebekah wears when she first encounters Isaac. Is it the veil of a bride? Is it the veil of a woman betrothed? Is it the veil of a young woman available for marriage?,' in Fewell and Gunn, *Gender, Power, & Promise: The Subject of the Bible's First Story*, p. 88.

[126] Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible: A New Interpretation of Their Stories*, p. 276; see Gen. 29:23.

[127] There are also some parallels between Leah and Tamar, in that Leah, like Tamar, is denied the right to have sons by being prevented from sleeping with her husband and resorts to trickery to achieve her rightful status as a mother.

[128] Frymer-Kensky also observes the descent of King David in the book of Ruth 4:18-22 in her *Reading the Women of the Bible: A New Interpretation of Their Stories*, p. 264; for further discussion about the relationship between David and Gen. 38, Gary A. Rendsburg, 'David and His Circle in Gen 38', *VT* 36 (1986), pp. 438-46; Craig Y.S. Ho, 'The Stories of the Family Troubles of Judah and David: A Study of Their Literary Links', *VT* 49 (1999), pp. 514-31; A. Graeme Auld, 'Tamar between David, Judah and Joseph', in Margaret Barker (ed.), *Samuel at the Threshold: Selected Works of Graeme Auld* (SOTSMS; Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited,

Boaz's and Ruth's wedding place.[129] In Frymer-Kensky's argument, Ruth is 'the agent of the continuation of this lineage' and, 'Without Tamar, there would have been no Perez and no Boaz; without Ruth, no Obed and thus no King David'.[130] Indeed, in the narrative of the patriarch-centred period, as Fuchs makes clear, 'Her [Tamar] association with the Davidic dynasty is itself an implicit valorization of her audacious temptation of her own father-in-law.'[131] In relation to the role of the matriarchs who give birth to the children of promise, like other patriarchs since Genesis 12, it can, therefore, be claimed that Tamar is at least one of the focal matriarchs in the setting of the ancestral narratives. As Exum has demonstrated:

> Whereas the important events in Israelite tradition are experienced by men, they are often set in motion and determined by women. This is especially clear in the matriarchal stories of Genesis 12-36, where the famous sons represent Israel personified and their mothers are responsible for Israel's becoming what it becomes.[132]

In this way, the story of Tamar in Genesis 38 is more about her role as a matriarch[133] than her status as a lonely widow or a helpless daughter-in-law who has to face her father-in-law in a patriarchal social context. Even though she is not called the wife of a patriarch in the text like the other matriarchs, I have included Tamar as one of the matriarchs in the patriarchal narrative because she shares parallel motifs with them; she is the mother of heirs of promise and a heroine who acquired her righteousness. These roles indicate her importance as well as

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2004), pp. 213-24.

[129] Ruth 4:11-12 reads: Then all the people who were at the gate, along with the elders, said, 'We are witnesses. May the Lord make the woman who is coming into your house like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you produce children in Ephrathah and bestow a name in Bethelehem; and, through the children that the Lord will give you by this young woman, may your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah.' (NRSV)

[130] Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible: A New Interpretation of Their Stories*, p. 264; cf. Exum argues the importance of the mothers of the Exodus such as Jochebed, the natural mother, and Pharaoh's daughter, the adoptive mother, of Moses, saying, 'Without Moses there would be no exodus, but without these women, there would be no Moses!,' in her '"Mother in Israel": A Familiar Figure Reconsidered', p. 81.

[131] Fuchs, *Sexual Politics in the Biblical Narrative: Reading the Hebrew Bible as a Woman* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), p. 72.

[132] Exum, '"Mother in Israel": A Familiar Figure Reconsidered', p. 74.

[133] Exum, 'The Mothers of Israel', p. 275; in chapter 9 of her book, Athalya Brenner also deals with 'Mothers of Great Men (The Hero's Mother)', in *The Israelite Woman: Social Role and Literary Type in Biblical Literature* (JSOT Supp.; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), pp. 92-105; Esther Fuchs, 'The Biblical Mother: The Annunciation and Temptation Type-Scenes', in her *Sexual Politics in the Biblical Narrative: Reading the Hebrew Bible as a Woman*, pp. 44-90.

her role in the family of Judah does.[134] In the book of Ruth, Tamar is, in effect, presented as the mother and Judah the father (Ruth 4:11-12).[135] Tamar was responsible for building up the house of Israel just as the previous matriarchs were. Consequently, this approach to reading the story may enable us to see the story along with the establishment of Judah's family and Tamar's new status within her relationship to the Judahite line.[136] Tamar is one of the most ordinary mothers, yet her story tells she is not a regular mother, but, in effect, the fifth matriarch along with the previous four matriarchs in the patriarchal narrative of Genesis.

6.3. Tamar's Relationship with Other Specific Women in the Story of the Davidic Line

This section seeks to explore how the character of Tamar in Genesis 38 has intertextual relationships and shares literary features with a group of other female characters. The specific women are not all characters from the patriarchal period so they are distinct from the matriarchs, in a sense, but they are closely connected literarily with Tamar in the wider context of the Davidic line. Thus, the 'intertextual'[137] method used in this section is based, according to Ellen van Wolde, on the concept of reading such that, 'Any text can be imported into other texts.'[138] This approach, in particular, could be even more readily applied to a larger narrative like the Primary Narrative because the individual stories are likely to share an ideological bias. An intertextual approach helps read the different stories in the larger

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[134] On Tamar as a biblical heroine, Fuchs writes, 'The only thing that saves her life and turns her into a biblical heroine is the fact that the man she sleeps with, Judah, is directly related to Er, her deceased husband, who left her with no children'. Esther Fuchs, 'The Literary Characterisation of Mothers and Sexual Politics in the Hebrew Bible', in Adela Yarbro Collins (ed.), *Feminist Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship* (Biblical Scholarship in North America, 10; Chico: Scholars Press, 1985), pp. 117-36 (130).

[135] Ellen van Wolde, 'Intertextuality: Ruth in Dialogue with Tamar', in Athalya Brenner and Carole Fontaine (eds.), *A Feminist Companion to Reading the Bible: Approaches, Methods and Strategies* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), pp. 426-51 (441).

[136] Tamar and Ruth are non-Judahite women. See van Wolde, 'Intertextuality: Ruth in Dialogue with Tamar', p. 451; cf. Yairah Amit, 'A Different Approach to the Story of Judah and Tamar', 2009 SBL International Meeting Paper in Rome.

[137] van Wolde states, 'The history of the concept of intertextuality begins with Michael Bakhtin...He introduced the notion of *dialogičnost* or dialogicity, by which he meant that someone who writes is not only led by text internal considerations but also enters into dialogue with other texts and with reality...Bakhtin regards context as a social, communicative situation, which is shared among people, and in which each utterance is in dialogue with previous utterances. This dialogue gives rise to a text that forms a microcosm of polyphony or multivalency and is a reflection of earlier texts and of reality.' van Wolde, 'Intertextuality: Ruth in Dialogue with Tamar', pp. 426-27.

[138] van Wolde, 'Intertextuality: Ruth in Dialogue with Tamar', p. 430.

narrative where there is a single ideological point of view.

Recently, a number of scholars have insisted that the story of Tamar in Genesis 38 has many common literary features with other stories centred on women such as that of Lot's daughters in Genesis 19,[139] Ruth in the book of Ruth,[140] the story of Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11,[141] and the stories of the other women named Tamar in 2 Samuel 13 and 14[142] and so forth. The reason why I am concerned with intertextuality or intertextual resemblances is because, as Kristen Nielsen puts it, '…just as no text comes into being independently of other texts, so (do) we never read any text independently of other texts. Each and every text forms part of a network of texts from which it derives its meaning.'[143]

On the other hand, John Barton, who supports the historical-critical interpretation, warns that, 'Any text within Scripture can illuminate any other text, not because the texts form a rhetorical unity, but because Scripture forms a kind of compendium or thesaurus of terms and turns of phrase and word associations…After all, we are not worried, and therefore do not formulate complex hypotheses to explain inconsistencies between texts that we do not in any case think form part of some larger whole – a bundle of letters of different authorship, for example.'[144] Barton's arguments derive from his diachronic point of view as a source critic. He rejects Rabbinic [or holistic] readings and is against reading the text in its final form as a whole literary artistry. Instead, Barton attempts to read the Bible 'as a communicative

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[139] Allen P. Ross, 'The Daughters of Lot and the Daughter-in-Law of Judah: Hubris or Faith in the Struggle for Women's Rights', *Exegesis and Exposition* 2:1 (Summer 1987), pp. 71-82; Melissa Jackson, 'Lot's Daughters and Tamar as Tricksters and the Patriarchal Narratives as Feminist Theology', *JSOT* 98 (2002), pp. 29-46.

[140] Johanna W.H. Bos, 'Out of the Shadows: Genesis 38; Judges 4:17-22; Ruth 3', in J. Cheryl Exum and Johanna W.H. Bos (eds.), *Reasoning with the Foxes Female Wit in a World of Male Power* (Semeia, 42; Atlanta: SBL, 1988), pp. 37-67; Ellen van Wolde, 'Texts in Dialogue with Texts: Intertextuality in the Ruth and Tamar Narratives', *BibInt* 5 (1997), pp. 1-28; Yitzhak Berger, 'Ruth and the David-Bathsheba Story: Allusions and Contrasts', *JSOT* 33.4 (2009), pp. 433-52.

[141] Yitzhak Berger, 'Ruth and the David-Bathsheba Story: Allusion and Contrasts', pp. 433-52.

[142] Fokkelien Van Dijk-Hemmes, 'Tamar and the Limits of Patriarchy: Between Rape and Seduction (2 Samuel 13 and Genesis 38)', in Mieke Bal (ed.), *Anti-Covenant: Counter-Reading Women's Lives in the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield: The Almond Press: 1989), pp. 135-56; William Rosenblum, 'Tamar Times Three', *JBQ* 39 (2002), pp. 127-30; Athalya Brenner, 'A Double Date: We Are Tamar and Tamar', in *I Am…: Biblical Women Tell Their Own Stories* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), pp. 133-46.

[143] Kirsten Nielsen, 'Intertextuality and [the] Hebrew Bible', in A. Lemaire & M. Sæbø (eds.), *Congress Volume Oslo 1998* (VTSup, 80; Brill: Leiden, 2000), pp. 17-31 (17).

[144] John Barton, 'Intertextuality and the "Final Form" of the Text', in A. Lemaire & M. Sæbø (eds.), *Congress Volume Oslo 1998* (VTSup, 80; Brill: Leiden, 2000), pp. 33-37, especially 35-36.

unity'.[145] This methodology only accepts historical assumptions of the final text as being composed of 'pre-existing documents'.[146]

However, as modern readers, if we can find common motifs or literary connections in the texts or stories using the narratological approach, these need not be accidental as Harold Fisch points out, '...we are not likely to remain entirely satisfied with "mere" source-criticism and form-criticism.'[147] On the contrary, they may be evidence that these stories can also be reckoned to be 'a chain of narratives'[148] in terms of their thematic parallels and linguistic similarities. For instance, in Brenner's words, 'The narratives about Lot's daughters, Tamar and Ruth can be read as three instalments in a series that supplies King David with a genealogy. The first story narrates the birth of the maternal forefather Moab. The second story depicts the birth of the paternal forefather Perez. The third story brings together Ruth the Moabite and Boaz of Perez's line'.[149] In addition to this, I shall add the story of Bathsheba to this category as well because she belongs to 'the history [or narrative] of a single family'[150] of David. This can be also called 'the bearer[s] of the [Davidic Dynastic] line of the Abrahamic promise'[151] as a chain of narratives within the Primary Narrative. See the diagram below to understand this concept:

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[145] Barton, 'Intertextuality and the "Final Form" of the Text', p. 35.

[146] Barton, 'Intertextuality and the "Final Form" of the Text', p. 36.

[147] Harold Fisch, 'Ruth and the Structure of Covenant History', *VT* 32 (1982), pp. 425-37 (425).

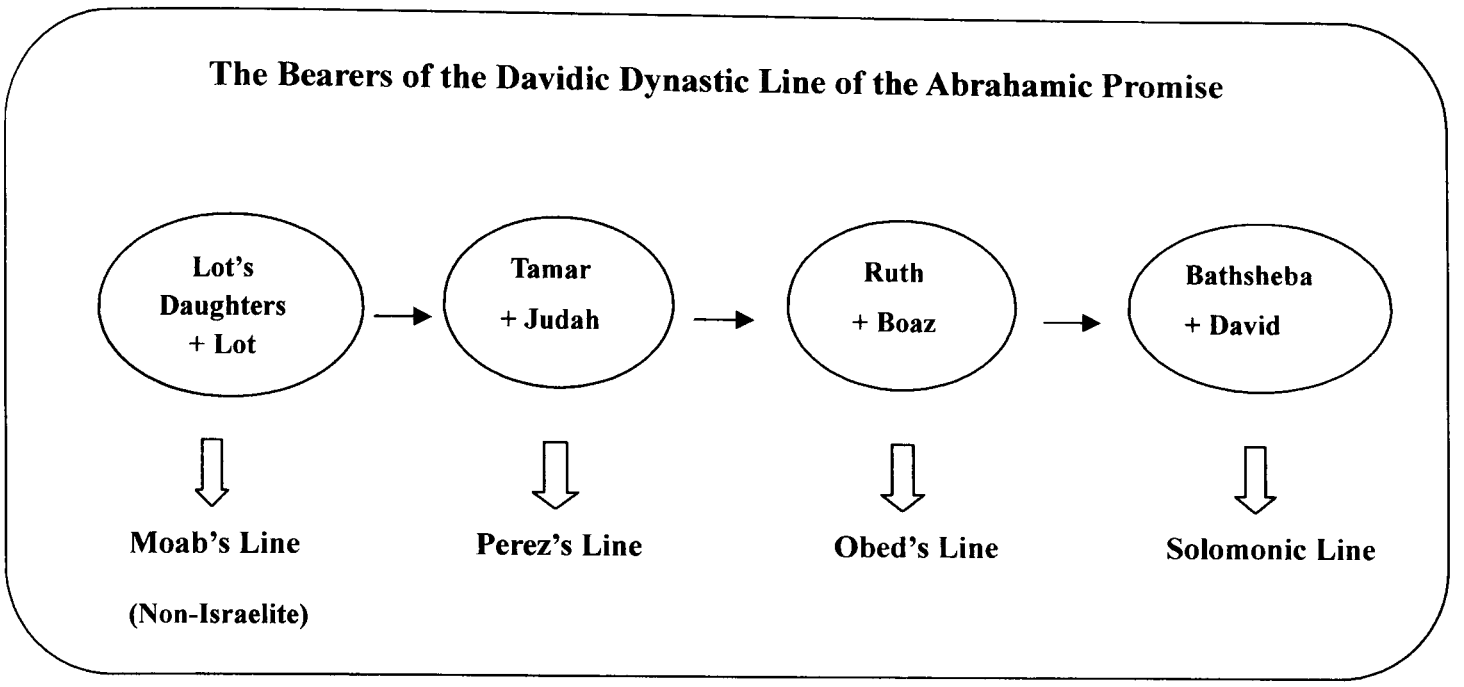
[148] Aschkenasy says, 'The three tales [Lot and his daughters, the Tamar-Judah story, and the Ruth tale] can be viewed as a chain of narratives that exemplify stages in the evolution of attitudes toward sexual taboos and mores.' Nehama Aschkenasy, *Woman at the Window: Biblical Tales of Oppression and Escape* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998), p. 154.

[149] Athalya Brenner, *The Intercourse of Knowledge: On Gendering Desire and 'Sexuality' in the Hebrew Bible* (BIS, 26; Leiden: Brill, 1997), p.102; Fisch states, 'There is a larger symmetry to be considered also, viz., that revealed when the Book of Ruth is placed beside the parallel narratives of Lot, Abraham and the daughters of Lot (Gen. xiii and xix) and of Judah and Tamar (Gen. xxxviii),' in his 'Ruth and the Structure of Covenant History', p. 427.

[150] Fisch, 'Ruth and the Structure of Covenant History', p. 427.

[151] Lindsay Wilson, Joseph *Wise and Otherwise: The Intersection of Wisdom and Covenant in Genesis 37-50* (PBM; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2004), p. 87.

FIGURE 10



As will be seen in the following, the story of Lot's daughters, the story of Ruth and the story of Bathsheba are closely associated with the story of Tamar-Judah from a narratological viewpoint. This is because, in a broad perspective, these women constitute the ancestors of David with the exception of Bathsheba, who becomes his wife. In light of the recurrent motifs,[152] the story of Lot's daughters prefigures the Tamar story, which anticipates the story of Ruth as well. Furthermore, the story of Tamar seems foretelling even the Bathsheba story.[153] Basically, these stories are thematically connected within the larger narrative.

Viewed from this perspective, the purpose of this section is to argue that the Tamar-Judah story in Genesis 38 plays a pivotal role as a bridge between the stories of other women within the ancestral stories of the Davidic dynasty in the Primary Narrative. It is shown that, as Dan W. Forsyth states, Genesis 38 recapitulates earlier stories and is reviewed in subsequent stories throughout Genesis 37 to 50.[154] In particular, the claim will be made that

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[152] Alter uses this 'type-scene' in his book, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, pp. 47-62.

[153] Berger argues that the story of Ruth alludes to the story of David and Bathsheba. For further information, see Yitzhak Berger, 'Ruth and the David-Bathsheba Story: Allusions and Contrasts', *JSOT* 33.4 (2009), pp. 433-52.

[154] Dan W. Forsyth, 'Sibling Rivalry, Aesthetic Sensibility, and Social Structure in Genesis', *Ethos* 19 (1991), pp. 453-510, especially see the section, 'Chapter 38: Recapitulation and Preview', p. 491-96.

Tamar as a clever woman affects other female characters in their stories by supplying the model of core elements which these characters have in common. That is, in order to produce their children (heirs), these women exhibit a clever resourcefulness over against their male counterparts. Their resourcefulness ensures the Davidic line.

Another intriguing point is that among these stories, it seems that the Tamar story in Genesis 38 is more concentrated and representative than the others, and all of the shared literary devices and themes scattered here and there in the other stories are contained in it. As will be shown in the following sections, the story of Tamar in Genesis 38 tends to integrate diverse characteristic factors from the stories of other selected women, foreshadowing the stories of these other women.[155] What it may mean is that Tamar's influence as both the fifth matriarch and a mother of Israel is greater than we might have expected. That is, as the mother of the Judahites, 'Tamar on the throne of motherhood'[156] who gave birth to two male children is important as an example for her own safety in the patriarchal structure. The story of Lot's daughters, the story of Ruth and the story of Bathsheba are ultimately focused on mother figures and their heirs for the next generations. On this level of the story, Tamar's story describes her status as a mother figure who built her family for herself and the family line of the Davidic Dynasty.

In the same way, it has been claimed that the character of Tamar in Genesis 38 challenges 'the very patriarchal structures that dominate the narrative landscape'[157] and the impact of this challenge is far-reaching with regard to other female characters like Yael and Ruth.[158] Besides, Tamar can be seen as an archetypal marginal heroine among the mothers of Israel due to her ethnic background. Although her origin is not clear in the text, it is certain

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[155] According to Cowan, '...foreshadowing does not play a significant role within the story [Gen. 38] but may provide insight into its relationship to other ancestral narratives,' Cowan, *Genesis 38: The Story of Judah and Tamar and Its Role in the Ancestral Narrative of Genesis* (Unpulished PhD Dissertation; Vanderbilt University, 1990), p. 76.

[156] Johanna W.H. Bos, 'Out of the Shadows: Genesis 38; Judges 4:17-22; Ruth 3', p. 48.

[157] Exum, '"Mother in Israel": A Familiar Story Reconsidered', p. 74.

[158] Bos notes, 'Three women [Tamar, Yael and Ruth]. Each one goes to meet a man outside. Three women reason with the foxes. Each woman is successful in what she sets out to achieve. They outwit their masters and accomplish survival. Three tricks and events change their course.' Bos, 'Out of the Shadows: Genesis 38; Judges 4:17-22; Ruth 3', p. 37.

that she is a non-Israelite woman. The issue of the marginal woman continues to Ruth's story[159] and even Bathsheba's.[160]

Thus, my contention in this section is to argue that Tamar is a *transitional figure* between the so-called four matriarchs (Sarah, Rebekah, Leah and Rachel) in the book of Genesis and the other specific mothers of Israel throughout the story of the Davidic Dynasty within the Primary Narrative. In order words, in the patriarchal stories, Tamar plays a key role as the fifth matriarch and functions as a typical mother figure among the foremothers in the Davidic genealogy. The significance of this section is that, as Yitzhak Berger puts it, 'the author's allusion to other biblical texts'[161] reaches through beyond the book of Genesis. Accordingly, I have selected some female characters from the patriarchal narrative, the Judges' narrative and the Davidic dynasty narrative as comparisons: Lot's daughters from the patriarchal texts, Ruth from the period of the judges and Bathsheba from the monarchic period.

6.3.1. The Motif of the Incestuous Seduction: Tamar and Lot's Daughters as Deceivers

The first example of stories about women that can be compared to the story of Tamar, apart from the matriarchs, is the story of Lot's daughters. These two stories contain common themes. Then, how can we read the story of Tamar and the story of Lot's daughters intertextually? And, what are the similarities or differences between them? If we consider these stories to be connected to each other thematically or linguistically, how are these connections to be defined?

With regards to the literary genre, Melissa Jackson has argued that both the story of Lot's daughters in Genesis 19 and the story of Tamar in Genesis 38 can be viewed comically

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[159] van Wolde, 'Texts in Dialogue with Texts: Intertextuality in the Ruth and Tamar Narratives', p. 451.

[160] J. D'Ror Chankin-Gould, *et al.*, 'The Sanctified "Adulteress" and her Circumstantial Clause: Bathsheba's Bath and Self-Consecration in 2 Samuel 11', *JSOT* 32.3 (2008), pp. 339-52 (350-51).

[161] Berger, 'Ruth and the David-Bathsheba Story: Allusions and Contrasts', p. 434. Here, the author is the author of the book of Ruth. Berger states that the book of Ruth alludes to the Judah-Tamar narrative and also alludes to the related narrative of David and Bathsheba. However, this principle can be applied to the story of Tamar conversely. That is, the story of Tamar alludes to other female stories at the same time.

in the trickster genre.[162] The comic genre interprets stories through the subversive comic lens. According to her, both these stories show the reader 'why these two particular stories are parallel and should be studied together'.[163] For instance, in the story of Lot's daughters the narrator tells the reader that Lot did not know what happened in the cave with his daughters on those two nightly occasions. Similarly, Judah also did not recognise his daughter-in-law Tamar when he talked with her and even had sexual intercourse with her, although they had presumably lived in the same house as one family for a long time. The storylines are similar in terms of events that would not usually happen but turn out to be dangerous, shocking, and even desperate in their nature. At the same time, Lot's daughters' and Tamar's stories both include daughter tricksters who deceive their own father or father-in-law.[164] For these reasons, it is no mistake that the two stories have some similar motifs.[165]

Even if the issue of the female character as trickster is not uncommon in the Hebrew Bible narrative, these particular tricks involve male characters in an incestuous[166] relationship as their target.[167] In effect, in Gershon Hepner's words, the implication of this already begins with the story of Abraham's incest (?) with Sarah in the first patriarchal narrative.[168] According to Abraham, Sarah is his half-sister (Gen. 12:13; 20:12) and the Leviticus code reads: 'If a man takes his sister, a daughter of his father or a daughter of his mother...it is a disgrace...' (Lev. 20:17). However, there is no mention of the law by the narrator. No matter whether this relationship turns out to be incestuous, it is clear that for the male character it

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[162] Melissa Jackson, 'Lot's Daughters and Tamar as Tricksters and the Patriarchal Narratives as Feminist Theology', *JSOT* 98 (2002), pp. 29-46.

[163] Jackson, 'Lot's Daughters and Tamar as Tricksters and the Patriarchal Narratives as Feminist Theology', p. 30.

[164] Jackson, 'Lot's Daughters and Tamar as Tricksters and the Patriarchal Narratives as Feminist Theology', pp. 33-5.

[165] Ross, 'The Daughters of Lot and the Daughter-in-Law of Judah: Hubris or Faith in the Struggle for Women's Rights', pp. 71-82.

[166] In Smith's words, incest means '...a sexual relationship between two people who are members of the same family and probably closely related to one another'. Carol Smith, 'Challenged by the Text: Interpreting Two Stories of Incest in the Hebrew Bible', in Athalya Brenner and Carole Fontaine (eds.), *A Feminist Companion to Reading the Bible: Approaches, Methods and Strategies* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), pp. 114-35 (114).

[167] Nehama Aschkenasy, *Woman at the Window: Biblical Tales of Oppression and Escape*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998), p. 154.

[168] Gershon Hepner, 'Abraham's Incestuous Marriage with Sarah a Violation of the Holiness Code', *VT* 53. 2 (2003), pp. 143-55.

was at least not fatal. In the case of Judah in Genesis 38, the narrator also does not mention the ethics of the situation. Rather, in this androcentric society, male characters were considered to be heroes. However, as is common with the chief male character in the stories of the Hebrew Bible, the heroes experience a reduction in status sometimes, but are not lost and finally survive. Just as with Abraham, both Lot and Judah may present their moral weaknesses or shame to the reader, but the improper actions of Lot and Judah towards Lot's daughters and Tamar respectively enabled each of them to beget children and solve their immediate problems. The focus in these stories is usually centred on solving the problem of begetting their heirs rather than on the ethics of their actions.

Lot's daughters and Tamar were in hopeless situations at the time of their stories.[169] This is because they had no heirs for the next generation or to protect them in their social status as widow or suchlike. However, these cases are different from those of the other barren matriarchs, such as Sarah, Rebekah and Rachel considered thus far, in that neither Lot's daughters nor Tamar have real husbands at the relevant moments. To be sure, Tamar was an *enforced* widow who was told to return to her father's house by her father-in-law (Gen. 38:11) and the daughters of Lot were also *inevitably* childless women[170] who had already been assigned their husbands but had not yet married (Gen. 19:14). Lot's daughters had sexual intercourse with their own father on successive nights and Tamar did the same thing with her father-in-law. In the former case, 'the narrator's explicit views about the potential violence to them and their incestuous relationship are not directly revealed; nonetheless, the development of the narrative itself presents a powerful portrait of the effects of threatened sexual violence.'[171] In the case of the latter, the narrator describes this event in a similar way. Judah did not acknowledge his daughter-in-law like Lot, while the expression that Judah did not sleep with her again appears openly in the unfolding of the story. Instead, the narrator does

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[169] Aschkenasy, *Woman at the Widow: Biblical Tales of Oppression and Escape*, p. 154; Jeansonne, *The Women of Genesis: From Sarah to Potiphar's Wife*, p. 32.

[170] Jeansonne, *The Women of Genesis: From Sarah to Potiphar's Wife*, p. 31.

[171] Jeansonne, *The Women of Genesis: From Sarah to Potiphar's Wife*, p. 31.

not enquire as to Judah's guilt or his responsibility for the events.

The story of Lot's daughters depicts 'radical actions' that were taken due to the potential of the extinction of Lot's family line in a special event (Gen. 19). When two men (or angels) were invited to Lot's house, all the men from the city of Sodom came there, demanding that they be turned out of doors so they could have sex with them (Gen. 19:1-5). Surprisingly, Lot suggests to the village men that he hand over his own daughters for the purpose of protecting his guests (Gen 19:8). What does it mean that Lot attempted to keep two men safe from the villagers in place of his daughters? Whatever the case, if Lot's actions were natural to the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, including his daughters, abnormal sexual intercourse at least may not be strange to them, either. Thus, it might be thought that Lot's daughters who had lived in Sodom and Gomorrah were themselves used to sexual sins (Gen. 18:20). After the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot's daughters and their father broke the taboo on incest. From another point of view, their actions have been called 'an initiative to ensure their survival'.[172] It may also mean that this story endorses women's rights to make sure of their lives. From the point of view of Lot's daughters, their father was the last person who could preserve his pedigree on earth.[173] Their situation is similar to Tamar's. Tamar realised she would not be given Judah's third son Shelah as a *levir* (Gen. 38:14). Accordingly, this provoked her detailed plans to trick her father-in-law. There could be two options for Tamar; a decisive resolution to act with initiative to escape the hardship at her father's house, or to wait to be called by her father-in-law Judah in the absence of any promise that would ever happen. Tamar finally chose the former; to take her own initiative to ensure her survival, just as Lot's daughters did, when the chance came.

Nevertheless, there is a difference between Lot's daughters and Tamar. Brenner maintains that in the case of female pairs such as Sarah and Hagar, Lot's daughters and double

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[172] Ken Stone, 'Daughters of Lot', in Carol Meyers (ed.), *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, and Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2000), p 179.

[173] Brenner, *The Israelite Woman: Social Role and Literary Type in Biblical Narrative*, p. 94.

pairs, that is, Leah and Rachel and the respective maidservants, both members belong to the 'Matriarch' or 'Hero's Mother' paradigm in terms of the 'Birth of the Hero' paradigm'.[174] But Lot's daughters are not called matriarchs of Israel and it is dubious to say that the fact that Moab and Ben-ammi, the children of Lot's daughters, are the fathers of the Moabites and the Ammonites respectively is as significant as the provision of heirs to the line of Abraham. In this vein, at least, Lot's daughters are neither 'Matriarchs' nor 'Mothers of Heroes' in Abraham's line. Instead, Lot's daughters became the mothers of the Moabites and the Ammonites.

However, Tamar is very different in this respect from Lot's daughters. She gave birth to two sons of Judah, the eponymous ancestor of the tribe of Judah (Num. 1:26-27; 26:19-21). For this reason, Tamar carries out her role as the so-called matriarch and, in a sense, as a hero's mother. Although Tamar's actions in sleeping with her father-in-law are against the law in Leviticus (18:15), they could also be understood in relation to her right to ensure the family's survival, as with the case of Lot's daughters, or as a means to getting justice for herself.[175] The role of Tamar is to arrange to bear the heir of Judah among whose progeny will be King David. Both Lot's daughters and Tamar have the same motive for seducing their father (or father-in-law) in acts which could be considered as incest, although the case of Tamar is certainly only 'quasi-incest'.[176] But the fates of the children indicate the different purposes by the narrator; the father of the Moabites, the father of the Ammonites and the father of Judah's tribe and David. This difference is really a similarity. They both give birth to important lines, only Tamar's ranks higher because the Hebrew Bible is not about Moabites and Ammonites but is about Judahites .

The two stories are also distinct from the stories of the matriarchs with respect to the child-bearing aspect. In order for the matriarchs to give birth to children, Yhwh usually

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[174] Brenner, *The Israelite Woman: Social Role and Literary Type in Biblical Narrative*, p. 95.

[175] Sharon Pace Jeansonne, 'Tamar: the Woman Who Demanded Justice', in *The Women of Genesis: from Sarah to Potiphar's Wife* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), pp. 98-106.

[176] André LaCocque, *The Feminine Unconventional: Four Subversive Figures in Israel's Tradition* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), p. 107.

intervenes in their conceptions or deliveries. However, the cases of Lot's daughters and Tamar describe slightly different situations. At first, Yhwh intervened in both families, but Lot's daughters' and Tamar's conceptions were designed by themselves and just as successful. On the role of human agency in Yhwh's plan, Smith writes as follows:

> Thus, it is not Yhwh's direct intervention which is required to remedy the situation, but some action on the part of the human beings who have brought it about. Yhwh's will is still carried out, and the promise remains effective, but the agency is human rather than divine...They [Lot's daughters] resort to an unusual pattern of sexual behavior – in order to become pregnant, a course of action which provides the desired result without the direct intervention of Yhwh.[177]

In both cases there is an intervention by Yhwh, but this causes the problem rather than offering the solution: Lot's daughters lose their husbands because of Yhwh's destruction of Sodom, and Tamar loses her husbands because Yhwh kills them. Only human endeavour to achieve their pregnancy can ensure their future welfare and security. Accordingly, the author employs Tamar and Lot's daughters as deceivers who seduce their fathers as part of plans to conceive. Although in both cases the women were seeking the same results through the dubious means of incest, the story of Lot's daughters may reflect an aspect of the culture of Sodom, while Tamar's story is connected to the levirate custom and is, therefore, within the spirit of the law of Israel.[178]

6.3.2. Ruth the Second Tamar?: The Intertextual Stories

Before arguing the literary relationship between Tamar and Ruth, we need to briefly expand further the definition of intertextuality (or 'inner-biblical allusion'[179]). This terminology has been used by both historical-critical interpreters and literary critics, but they understand it

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[177] Smith, 'The Story of Tamar: A Power-filled Challenge to the Structure of Power', p. 22.

[178] Ross, 'The Daughters of Lot and the Daughter-in-Law of Judah: Hubris or Faith in the Struggle for Women's Rights', pp. 71-82.

[179] Paul R. Noble, 'Esau, Tamar, and Joseph: Criteria for Identifying Inner-Biblical Allusions', *VT* LII, 2 (2002), pp. 219-52.

differently due to their own overarching perspectives.[180] Nielsen, one of the literary critics. points out:

> ...no text comes into being or can be read as an isolated unit. It is always part of a network of texts...The differences only appear when we begin to discuss which role to attribute to the author, the text and the reader, respectively...we cannot just go ahead and identify the text in question with the author's opinion and intention. For how can we be sure that the author says precisely what he or she intended, or that there is nothing more in the text than what the original author intended? We cannot, of course. The meaning of a text cannot be limited to its author's intention. The text contains meaning potentials that are only realized in the meeting with its reader – both readers of its own time and those much later.[181]

Both approaches rely on the reader to sort out consistencies from inconsistencies in the text when reading intertextually. The present thesis focuses on the literary artistry by the (implied) author. That is to say, my concern is not for the text's origin or the traditional notions of the writer(s)'s (or redactor(s)'s) intention, but for the text in its final form as it stands and the 'dynamic of relationships between texts'.[182] So, I am interested in the synchronic level of analysis in the texts. Thus, '...the reader is in the central position, on the basis of the idea that the reader is the one who allows the texts to interfere with one another.'[183]

This being the case, why should we pay attention to any possible similarities between the story of Tamar and the story of Ruth? It is not a new proposition that the resemblances and the comparison between the character of Tamar in Genesis 38 and the character of Ruth in the book of Ruth should be reviewed. According to some literary critics, Ruth is assessed as the second Tamar of Genesis 38 outside of the book of Genesis. André LaCocque points out, 'Ruth is a second Tamar – foreign, childless, widowed, transplanted within the people of

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[180] van Wolde introduces this, 'From a diachronic point of view, intertextual relationships are necessary relationships: the writer has put them in there, and the reader must discover them, because they formed the very foundation of the genesis of the text. From a synchronic point of view, intertextual relationships are specific to the extent that they are more suited to text relationships than Kristeva's general understanding of intextuality [for example, 'every text is absorption and transformation of other text'] but, at the same time, less restricted than the necessary indexical relationships because they are potential relationships.' See 'Intertextuality: Ruth in Dialogue with Tamar', pp. 428-30.

[181] Nielsen, 'Intertextuality and Hebrew Bible', p. 18.

[182] Fisch, 'Ruth and the Structure of Covenant History', p. 436.

[183] van Wolde, 'Intertextuality: Ruth in Dialogue with Tamar', p. 431.

Israel – who, like her model, goes to considerable lengths, indeed to prostituting herself, to obtain justice: the levirate marriage to which she is entitled.'[184] Furthermore, the book of Ruth has been paralleled with the story of Tamar because of the comment on Tamar and Perez in the concluding part of both books as well as the commonality between Ruth and Tamar as marginal women in the genealogy of David (Ruth 4:12-22). Frank Anthony Spina says that 'Like Tamar before her, Ruth the outsider has acted to save her own future, Naomi's future, Boaz's future, and Israel's future.'[185] Due to these similarities, Ruth's story inevitably reminds the reader of the Tamar-Judah story in Genesis 38.

Others argue that the three stories, Lot's daughters (Gen. 19), Tamar (Gen. 38) and Ruth, not only depict a common theme with the 'bed-trick[s]'[186] but also reveal a gradual historical development in the story as a series in the process of events.[187] For example, Brenner insists that the story of Lot's daughters is dedicated to the birth of David's maternal, forefather Moab, whereas the story of Tamar is that of the birth of David's paternal forefather, Perez. Finally the story of Ruth brings together Ruth the Moabitess and Boaz of Perez's line to establish the mixed ancestry of David.[188] That is, Moab, the son of Lot's first daughter, becomes the father of the Moabites and Ruth is a Moabitess. As Harold Fisch states, 'Judah is the father of Perez and thus the ancestor of Boaz.'[189] Genealogically speaking, the story of Lot's daughters and Ruth's story, with the story of Tamar in the middle, show the historical progression of the interrelatedness of the families.[190] Consequently, the story of Lot's

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[184] LaCocque, *The Feminine Unconventional: Four Subversive Figures in Israel's Tradition*, p. 105; cf. Ramona F. West, *Ruth: A Retelling of Genesis 38* (Unpublished PhD Dissertation; Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1987).

[185] Frank Anthony Spina, *The Faith of the Outsider: Exclusion and Inclusion in the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2005), p. 136.

[186] Fisch, 'Ruth and the Structure of Covenant History', pp. 430-31.

[187] Aschkenasy calls this 'the progress from barbarism to civilization'. For further information, see Nehama Aschkenasy, *Eve's Journey: Feminine Images in Hebraic Literary Tradition* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1986), pp. 85-92.

[188] Brenner, *The Intercourse of Knowledge: On Gendering Desire and 'Sexuality' in the Hebrew Bible*, pp. 101-03.

[189] Fisch, 'Ruth and the Structure of Covenant History', p. 427.

[190] '...the story of Ruth stands in relation to the two stories in Genesis 19 and 38 and reflects the role of the book of Ruth as a Davidic apologetic.' Gow, *Book of Ruth*, p.137. Quoted by Berger in, 'Ruth and the David-Bathsheba Story: Allusions and Contrasts', p. 435; 'The stories [Gen. 19 and 38, Ruth] are also tied genealogically: Ruth is a descendant of Moab ("from the father," Moab being the issue of the incestuous

daughters is connected to the story of Ruth through the issue of Moabite ethnic background, and the story of Tamar is related to the book of Ruth through Perez. On the one hand, as mentioned above, the story of Tamar contains a sort of incestuous event as does the story of Lot's daughters. One the other hand, Tamar's story is associated with the story of Ruth in terms of the levirate custom. As a whole, Tamar's story functions as a link between the other two stories.[191] Fisch also puts it aptly, 'There is a larger symmetry to be considered also, viz., that revealed when the Book of Ruth is placed beside the parallel narratives of Lot, Abraham and the daughters of Lot (Gen. xiii and xix) and of Judah and Tamar (Gen. xxxviii).'[192] The three stories enable the reader to recognise 'striking resemblances'[193] between the patriarchal narrative and the larger Primary Narrative. In order to understand these relationships better, let us have a look at the diagram below:

<Table 6> The Commonalities between Lot's Daughters, Tamar and Ruth

Women / *Motifs*	**Lots's Daughters**	**Tamar**	**Ruth**
Bed-tricks	○	○	○
Fertile mother	○	○	○
Marginality	Non-Abrahamite	**Canaanite (?) Non-Judahite**	Moabite Non-Judahite
Incest	○	○	
Levirate Law		**Husband's brother**	Kinsman
David's foreign connections	David's maternal forefather, Moab	**David's paternal forefather, Perez**	Mixed ancestry

Returning to our female characters, Ruth and Tamar, the question remains, 'Why draw so close a parallel between her [Ruth] and Tamar?'[194] In her article on the intertextuality, or the

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relations between Lot and his daughter), and Boaz is a descendant of Perez (one of the twins born to Tamar from her incestuous sexual encounter with Judah).' Nehama Aschkenasy, 'Reading Ruth through a Bakhtinian Lens: The Carnivalesque in a Biblical Tale', *JBL* 126 (2007), pp. 437-53 (448).

[191] Similarly, Wojcik argues that the story of Ruth functions as a bridge between the stories of Jacob and David, admitting that, 'scholars are not sure that the events in the story record a historical bridge between the age of Perez, Tamar's sons – in the time of Jacob – and the age of David, Ruth's great-grandson'. See Jan Wojcik, 'Improvising Rules in the Book of Ruth', *MLA* 100 (1985), pp. 145-153 (145).

[192] Fisch, 'Ruth and the Structure of Covenant History', p. 427.

[193] LaCocque, *The Feminine Unconventional: Four Subversive Figures in Israel's Tradition*, p. 104.

[194] LaCocque, *The Feminine Unconventional: Four Subversive Figures in Israel's Tradition*, p. 107.

dialogue between these texts, van Wolde deals with the striking similarities between the stories of Tamar and Ruth as non-Judahite women.[195] However, she is only interested in the similarities and not the differences between the two stories.[196] For instance, one of the big differences is that, while 'the theme of God's work and human responses' is the main theme in the whole Ruth story, Tamar's story gives this a minor and marginal role.[197]

Nonetheless, as mentioned above, the most distinctive parallel between Tamar and Ruth is the issue of levirate marriage. Tamar and Ruth are both rejected by the surrogates; Onan in the case of Tamar and the next of kin in the case of Ruth. Deuteronomy 25:8-9 says that the woman hears the refusal of the dead husband's brother to perform the custom and she spits in his face and declares that he does not want to exercise his right in front of the elders. However, Tamar's story does not refer to the procedure or the results of the custom, while Ruth's story describes how the kinsman-redeemer rejected Ruth as a wife and took off his sandals publicly (Ruth 4:1-8). The story of Ruth goes into more detail about the practice of the custom than does the story of Tamar.

There are big discrepancies between the law of levirate marriage in Deuteronomy 25:5-10 and the legal picture given by the story of Ruth.[198] For example, according to the legislation, the candidate for the dead husband's surrogate is limited to his brothers, but the story of Ruth does not apply this. Mahlon and Kilion, Elimelich's two sons, died in Moab (Ruth 1:3-5). The surrogate for Ruth's dead husband is described as a kinsman of Elimelech, who is the husband of Naomi and the father-in-law of Ruth (Ruth 3:9, 12; 4:1, 3, 6, 8). Boaz asked the man to buy the land from Naomi and from Ruth and to carry out levirate marriage with Ruth, the dead man's widow. But he rejected the proposal and Boaz took over the role as

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[195] van Wolde, 'Intertextuality: Ruth in Dialogue with Tamar', pp.426-51.

[196] Westermann has also argued that van Wolde did not investigate the differences but only the comparisons between them. Claus Westermann, 'Structure and Intention of the Book of Ruth', *WW* 19.3 (trans. Frederick J. Gaiser; 1999), pp.285-302, especially 288-92.

[197] Westermann, 'Structure and Intention of the Book of Ruth', p. 290.

[198] LaCocque, *The Feminine Unconventional: Four Subversive Figures in Israel's Tradition*, p. 94.

the kinsman next in line (Ruth 4:1-10). In Hebrew, the kinsman is called גֹּאֵל[199] not יָבָם (*levir*, husband's brother).[200] Although in the story of Tamar, Onan, the brother of Er who was the husband of Tamar, did not carry out the levirate marriage, he was called יָבָם (Gen. 38:8) as it says in Deuteronomy 25:7. Thus, the story of Ruth does not recount the exact terms of the law of levirate marriage.

However, the case of Tamar's story indicates that the surrogate has changed from the dead husband's brother to his father; from Onan or Shelah to Judah. In addition, although the law of levirate marriage in Deuteronomy 25:5-10 does not stipulate what should happen after the dead husband's widow has a son to continue the dead man's line, that might be why Judah did not lie with Tamar because 'the connubium ceased inmmediately when the woman is pregnant'.[201] The text may also imply the importance of the birth of a child rather than the relationship between Tamar and Judah itself. Of course, by means of the levirate institution, Boaz and Ruth are to remain husband and wife, but what the relationship between Judah and Tamar was once they got pregnant, is not clear. However, it should be noted that in Genesis 38 it is Tamar who conceived by Judah and gave birth to two boys just as Ruth became pregnant from Boaz and was delivered of a son, who was called Obed, the grandfather of King David. According to Nehama Aschkenasy, 'The biblical Ruth is not seen as a mother, since the tale ends when she gives birth to a son. But she is perceived of as an ancestress, a founder of a dynasty, thus enfolding in her maternal function not only a biological reality, but a historical role.'[202] Likewise, from the beginning of the scene, Tamar is not seen as a mother but she accomplishes her pivotal role as a mother when she gives birth to the twins. She is one of the builders of Judah's family and contributes to the first part of the Davidic genealogy.

The two women, Tamar and Ruth, were both non Hebrews but both become foremothers of David. In effect, the relationships between the story of Tamar and the story of

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[199] BDB, p. 145.
[200] BDB, p. 386.
[201] LaCocque, *The Feminine Unconventional: Four Subversive Figures in Israel's Tradition*, p. 94.
[202] Aschkenasy, *Eve's Journey: Feminine Images in Hebraic Literary Tradition*, p.91.

Ruth are intimate not only in terms of the institution of levirate marriage but also through their identities as ancestors within the same genealogy. It is no wonder that literary features in the stories of the two women are closely comparable even though one story is in Genesis and the other is based in the time of the Judges. The characters echo each other.

So, what makes us examine these two women in the wider context of the Primary Narrative? It is because the meaning and impact of Genesis 38 could reach beyond the patriarchal age and even the period of the Judges. In addition, it may mean that Tamar's immediate story ends in Genesis 38, but the impact of her story does not ever finish. The recurring motifs presented in both stories show not only the author's literary artistry but also the implications of them. In other words, they function each 'as whole units' in the wider narrative because 'the structure of one must be seen alongside the structure of the other'.[203]

6.3.3. The Beginning and Ending of the Judah-David Line: from Tamar to Bathsheba

There are some literary relationships between the story of Tamar and the story of Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11-12) just as there are between Tamar and Ruth. As the character of Naomi in the book of Ruth is compared to Judah in Genesis 38, David can be set beside Judah. For example, Judah originally acknowledged the levirate law and attempted to carry it out after the death of his first son, Er, but he gave up trying to observe it after Onan's death because he feared Shelah would die, too (Gen. 38:6-11). Just as Judah failed to stick to the law, it seems that David also ignored the law of adultery in Deuteronomy 22:22.[204]

David as the Israelite King is certainly less faithful than Uriah the Hittite. In order to cover up the fact that he had slept with Uriah's wife, David tried to encourage Uriah to go home and sleep with his wife (2 Sam. 11:6-13) in the hope that Uriah would think he was the father of any issue. Uriah did not go home and David had to take more serious action. He arranged to have Uriah placed in the line of direct fire and he was killed in battle the next day.

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[203] Westermann, 'Structure and Intention of the Book of Ruth', p. 289.

[204] The Bible reads: 'If a man is caught lying with the wife of another man, both of them shall die, the man who lay with the woman as well as the woman…' (NRSV)

Right that from the beginning, 2 Samuel 11:1, the fact that David did not go off to war but remained in Jerusalem 'serves as a foreshadowing of David's inappropriate behavio[u]r'.[205] Similarly, this mode of behaviour reminds us of Judah who went away from his father and brothers resulting in an unsuitable sexual relationship between father-in-law and daughter-in-law. In the case of Bathsheba, she became pregnant by the King of Israel, David, and not her husband, Uriah. However, ironically, Bathsheba lost her husband due to David (2 Sam. 11:5-17).

Traditionally, it has been understood that Bathsheba's bath in 2 Samuel 11:2 is connected to 'menstrual purification, thereby opening the door for numerous interpretations about Bathsheba and her character'.[206] Bathsheba's actions in the episode with her in the bath may be related to her new status as a widow in the patriarchal culture. She needed a new husband and King David assumed the role. Bathsheba took the chance to marry for her safety, although the responsibility for her husband Uriah's death lies squarely with David. A widow without a son at the time of the ancient monarchic system of Israel was a powerless person as was also the case in the patriarchal period. Finally, Bathsheba gave birth to Solomon, one of the royal heirs of David.[207] However, Bathsheba could be seen as a schemer or planner, who became queen mother because she was not made pregnant by Uriah.[208]

It is true that Bathsheba's options were limited as a woman at that time. When Bathsheba lost her husband, as Alice L. Laffey has aptly observed, 'She had become the[a] truly powerless person [widow] in ancient Israel.'[209] The story of Tamar in Genesis 38 contains similar essential elements; first, being a widow, Tamar could bring herself to have sexual intercourse with someone. The narrator says nothing about whether Judah and Tamar got married. The text only says that Judah did not sleep with her any more (Gen 38:26).

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[205] Alice L. Laffey, *Wives, Harlots and Concubines: The Old Testament in Feminist Perspective* (London: SPCK, 1990), p. 119.

[206] Chankin-Gould, *et. al.*, 'The Sanctified "Adulteress" and her Circumstantial Clause: Bathsheba's Bath and Self-Consecration in 2 Samuel 11', pp. 339-52, for some books on this contention, see footnote 1.

[207] Laffey, *Wives, Harlots and Concubines: The Old Testament in Feminist Perspective*, p. 120.

[208] On the contrary, Laffey believes that Bathsheba was basically an innocent victim, in her *Harlots and Concubines: The Old Testament in Feminist Perspective*, p. 121.

[209] Laffey, *Wives, Harlots and Concubines: The Old Testament in Feminist Perspective*, 120.

Second, when Tamar became a widow, there was nothing that she could do and she had to wait at her father-in-law's disposal. As Bathsheba, she 'is widowed because of the manipulations of the man who will become her future husband'.[210] so Tamar had to manipulate Judah. Finally, Tamar delivered Perez and faced a new phase in her life and it could mean that the author means to emphasise him as the first ancestor of the royal line of King David (Ruth 4:18-22). It could be considered that the cases of Tamar and Bathsheba reverse the positions of the male and female characters:[211] the hegemony changes from male to female: Judah to Tamar and David to Bathsheba.

Returning to the theme of David's line, Brenner has pointed out that, 'Indeed, the three stories [of Lot's daughters, Tamar, and Ruth] anticipate David's foreign connections and his weakness for women by overtly claiming that these two things were in the king's blood.'[212] Similarly, Berger argues that throughout the intertextual relationships between Tamar, Ruth and Bathsheba, the female characters 'play essential roles in the Bible's portrait of the royal bloodline'.[213] On the basis of these contentions, the female characters are related to each other genealogically, and the relatedness climaxes with David. Then, what does the royal bloodline mean to Tamar and Bathsheba in their stories?

Among those who are interested in the literary relationship between Genesis 38 and the Succession Narrative [or the David story, 2 Sam. 11- 1 Kgs 2] are Gary A. Rendsburg[214] and Paul R. Noble.[215] In particular, Noble's methodology is based on Alter's type-scene and he notes that '...allusion is discovered through identifying shared patterns of interconnected

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[210] Laffey, *Wives, Harlots and Concubines: The Old Testament in Feminist Perspective*, p. 121.

[211] Mieke Bal, *Lethal Love: Feminist Literary Readings of Biblical Love Stories* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 26; Bellis, *Helpmates, Harlots, and Heroes: Women's Stories in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 132.

[212] Athalya Brenner, 'Naomi and Ruth', in *idem* (ed.), *A Feminist Companion to Ruth* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), pp. 70-84 (81).

[213] Yitzhak Berger, 'Ruth and the David-Bathsheba Story: Allusions and Contrasts', *JSOT* 33.4 (2009), pp. 433-52 (437); on intertextual relationships Noble notes, 'They could be purely coincidental; or, each text might have independently drawn upon the same stream of traditions (written or unwritten); or, the second, later text may be alluding to yet a third text, which independently treats of themes similar to those in the first text.' Paul R. Noble, 'Esau, Tamar, and Joseph: Criteria for Identifying Inner-Biblical Allusions', *VT* LII, 2 (2002), pp. 219-52 (220).

[214] Gary A. Rendsburg, 'David and his Circle in Genesis xxxviii', *VT* 36 (1986), pp. 438-46.

[215] Noble, 'Esau, Tamar, and Joseph: Criteria for Identifying Inner-Biblical Allusions', pp. 219-52.

resemblances'.[216] He uses the term 'inner-biblical allusions' and accepts the views of scholars who take this line, for instance, 'Genesis xxxviii intentionally alludes to, and comments upon. the story of David'.[217] It is interesting to see that Rendsburg has already suggested character parallels between the story of Genesis 38 and the story of David in 2 Samuel 11-13:

Judah = David

(*hyrh*) Hirah = Hiram (*hyrm*)

(*bt-šw'*) the daughter of Shua = Bathsheba (*bt-šb'*; variant: *bt- šw'*)

Er = deceased firstborn son of David and Bathsheba

(*'wnn*) Onan = Amnon (*'mnwn*)

(*šlh*) Shelah = Solomon (*šlmh*)

(*tmr*) Tamar = Tamar (*tmr*)[218]

According to the amazing list above, the daughter of Shua parallels Bathsheba in terms of the linguistic homophony of consonants. Tamar's name appears three times in the books, Genesis 38 and 2 Samuel 13, 14.[219] For this reason, Rendsburg says that, 'Various scholars have correctly noted that much of Genesis mirrors the events of the United Monarchy of David and Solomon.'[220] If we accept this assumption, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the parallels of Tamar's and Bathsheba's names each seem closer than the other combinations. One of the intriguing things is that, although the daughter of Shua has no actual name, the expression for that very anonymousness is what makes the parallel with Bathsheba's name.

This being the case, how can the reader draw out any implications from this? First, the list indicates that the two families show that out of the seven combination only the four female characters [the daughter of Shua, Bathsheba, Tamar and Tamar] are that close. Second,

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[216] Noble, 'Esau, Tamar, and Joseph: Criteria for Identifying Inner-Biblical Allusions', p. 252.

[217] Noble, 'Esau, Tamar, and Joseph: Criteria for Identifying Inner-Biblical Allusions', p. 222.

[218] Rendsburg, 'David and his Circle in Genesis xxxviii', p. 441; see also A. Graeme Auld, 'Tamar between David, Judah and Joseph', in Margaret Barker (ed.), *Samuel at the Threshold: Selected Works of Graeme Auld* (SOTSMS; Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004), pp. 213-24 (214).

[219] William Rosenblum, 'Tamar times three', *JBQ* 30 (2002), pp. 127-30.

[220] Rendsburg, 'David and his Circle in Genesis xxxviii', p. 438.

in Judah's family, Judah and Tamar are both main characters. Bathsheba is also the chief character along with David in the family of David. This is why there is no name for Shua's daughter. So the focus of the narrator is on Tamar rather than the daughter of Shua in Genesis 38. Finally, Tamar and Bathsheba are both mothers of heirs for the next meaningful generation in their families. These heirs have a special relationship; they are the ancestor or son of the royal bloodline; Perez is the first forefather in the family line of King David and Solomon is the son who succeeds to the throne of King from his father David in the united monarchy of Israel. That is, Tamar, as a clever mother, stands at the beginning of the Judah-David line and Bathsheba is the fulfilment of it. Furthermore, identifying 'her role as (queen) mother of the Solomonic line',[221] Bathsheba as the wife of King David also becomes the beginning of the Solomonic line. Therefore, the two foremothers, Tamar and Bathsheba, announce the beginning of the two Kings (David and Solomon).

6.3.4. Tamar's Implied Image as the Prototype of 'the Marginal Mothers of Israel' in the Story of the Davidic Dynasty

Next, we move to elucidate Tamar's real identity which is also her function in the larger narrative of the Primary Narrative as well as in her story in Genesis 38; that is on 'both micro- and macro- levels'.[222] The connections between the levels in each story link up as 'sequential narrative episodes' and their interrelationships can be shown by means of the intertextual methodology. It is said that the concepts of micro- and macro- level(s) in the intertextual approach are usually related to the smallest linguistic levels and lexical similarities and differences and the like.[223]

However, here, by 'level' I mean the span or length of a narrative; for example.

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[221] D'Ror Chankin-Gould, *et al.*, 'The Sanctified 'Adulteress' and her Circumstantial Clause: Bathsheba's Bath and Self-Consecration in 2 Samuel 11', pp. 339-52 (340).

[222] Alter uses 'microscopic' and 'macroscopic' level(s) of the text. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, p. 49.

[223] Ilona N. Rashkow, 'Intextuality, Transference, and the Reader in/of Genesis 12 and 20', in Danna Nolan Fewell (ed.), *Reading between Texts: Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), p. 57.

Genesis 38 corresponds to the micro-level (or story) and is a complete short story, but beyond that chapter itself it can be viewed as part of the macro-level (or story). Of course, there could be various macro-level stories beyond Genesis 38; for instance, as we have discussed in chapter 2 of the present study, the novella, 'Jacob and his Sons Story' from Genesis 37 to 50 and, the long patriarchal stories from Genesis 12 to 50 and so on. Conversely, these medium-length or long stories also constitute some of the parts of 'one main, single story' or 'metastory',[224] because I define the Primary Narrative as a metastory about the Israelites that runs from Genesis to 2 Kings in the Hebrew Bible.

Tamar's Image between the Two Different Macro Levels: as a Marginal Mother

As far as Genesis 38 is concerned, this chapter is located between at least two macro-levels (stories) in relation to the female-centred stories. That is, it can be suggested that the first macro-level in the patriarchal narrative is the story of the matriarchs (Sarah, Rebekah, Leah and Rachel) and the second one is the story of the marginal mothers of important Israelites (Lot's daughters, Tamar, Ruth, and Bathsheba) in the Primary Narrative. Fuchs points out these mothers who are marginal by reason of their foreignness as follows:

> Lot's daughters, Tamar, and Ruth are presented as naturally fertile mothers, and in this respect their characterisation is congruent with the characterisations of the fertile contestants...All three mother figures are 'foreign', in that they do not belong to the Abrahamite line...we keep in mind the association of fertility and foreignness, we shall notice that Ruth is said to be Moabite, for the same reason that Hagar is said to be an Egyptian, and Tamar a Canaanite [not clear]. As a foreigner, and especially as a foreigner who is willing to disavow her national identity (like Ruth), a woman is permitted to become a mother of Israelite male heirs, and even to give birth to the prospective ancestors of King David.[225]

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[224] Spina defines this term as follows: 'There are obviously many stories in the Old Testament [Hebrew Bible], but they are virtually all related to and contextualized by one main, singular Story. The latter has sometimes been called a *metastory*, referring to a sweeping narrative that reflects a fundamental worldview and thereby subsumes all of the smaller stories...' Frank Anthony Spina, *The Father of the Outsider: Exclusive and Inclusion in the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2005), p. 1.

[225] Fuchs, *Sexual Politics in the Biblical Narrative: Reading the Hebrew Bible as a Woman*, p. 83.

Nonetheless, Fuchs has missed something: the story does not mention Tamar's background and Bathsheba's identity is not mentioned in her story and instead she is described as the wife of Uriah the Hittite (2 Sam. 11:3). Indeed, both Tamar's and Bathsheba's identities are not clarified. If they are 'non-Abrahamite', as Fuchs says, can we simply assume them to be Canaanite and Hittite? In both cases, what is the meaning of not knowing their ethnic backgrounds? The answer may be they are both the first and the last of the mothers of the Davidic line and marginal women in the larger story. It is true that the interval of time and space between the two macro-levels (stories) is considerable. In addition, these marginal women differ from the matriarchs who come from the extended family of Abraham (Sarah, Rebekah, Leah and Rachel).

Another aspect level starts with Tamar's character as a female *outsider* in the family of Judah. The presupposition of this part is that Tamar of Genesis 38 is an example of a marginal woman who came into the ancestral family of Genesis from outside. It seems that Tamar presumably comes from Canaanite (?) stock although the narrator does not say so directly. In relation to this, Laurence A. Turner points out, '...Tamar's significance is clear. Like Sarah, Rebekah and Rachel before her, she has moved from barrenness to childbearing...she is, quite likely, a Canaanite. If so, then she is yet one more example of a foreigner who betters a member of the ancestral family...'[226] However, Turner does not suggest the influence and function of Tamar as a model for other marginal women. With respect to the issue of marginality, Ruth, who is called the second Tamar, is also a Moabite, and Bathsheba as a non-Israelite (?) was the wife of the Hittite. They are representative forerunners as marginal women in their respective historical periods.

Tamar's Double Roles in her Overlap Stance among Israel's Mothers

In the case of Tamar, it is intriguing that her role as a leading woman is meaningful on both

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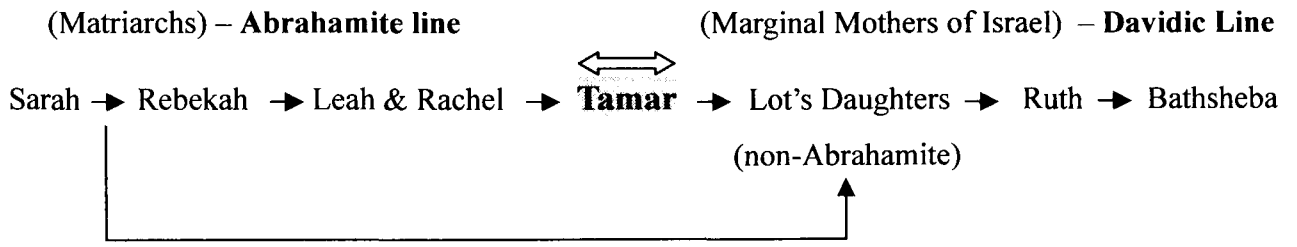
[226] Laurence A. Turner, *Genesis* (2nd edn; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009), p. 172.

macro levels (stories); Tamar's character appears at both the end of the matriarchal stories and the beginning of Israel's mothers as marginal women stories[227] and simultaneously in the Davidic genealogy. That is, Tamar bridges the gap between the four matriarchs (Sarah, Rebekah, Leah and Rachel) and Lot's daughters and the two marginal women (Ruth and Bathsheba). Lot's daughters are slightly different because they belonged to Abraham's family, but the elder daughter is the mother of Moab who will become an ancestor of Ruth. Lot's daughters are not counted as matriarchs but they are closely connected to Ruth so I have intentionally altered their position and put them between Tamar and Ruth. To aid in understanding the situation this way, it would be helpful to look at the figure below, which depicts the two macro levels, that of the matriarchs and the marginal mothers of Israel:

FIGURE 11

The Matriarchs in the Patriarchal Narratives and the Marginal Mothers of Israel



The stories of the women above present Tamar in the centre; the positions of Tamar and Lot's daughters are in reverse chronological order. The reason for changing the order and inserting Lot's daughters between Tamar and Ruth is that although their stories (Gen. 19:30-38) belong to Sarah's story (Gen. 12-23), they are not counted as Israelite matriarchs but they are closely connected to Ruth in terms of origin. At first glance, the women's stories are divided into two groups in the larger story: the matriarchs (in the patriarchal narrative) and the marginal mothers of Israel in the Davidic genealogy. According to John Goldingay, 'It [the larger story] is told in such a way as to work for an audience [reader], *e.g.* by means of the order in which

[227] The story of Lot's daughters (Gen. 19), however, precedes the story of Tamar (Gen. 38).

it relates events (commonly not the chronological one) and the rate at which it releases information.'[228] Consequently, we can enquire again as follows, 'What audience [reader] is presupposed by it? How does it communicate with them? How do they go about making sense of it? Do texts have meaning at all, or are they only dots on paper which readers provide with their meaning?'[229] Then, is this figure persuasive enough when we read the longer and the larger stories?

In section 6.2.4., I have already argued that Tamar's role is as the fifth matriarch within the patriarchal narrative. She shares various features with the earlier matriarchs (Sarah, Rebekah, Leah and Rachel). However, in this section the discussion turns to Tamar's portrayal as representative of other female characters such as Ruth and Bathsheba beyond Genesis. It is because Tamar's image is not simply derived from her short appearance in Genesis 38, but is also reflected through interplay with others in her story. Furthermore, the boundary of the perception of Tamar's character spreads over the patriarchal narrative in the book of Genesis in that some selected female characters are compared to her. For this reason, the investigation into Tamar's image or her characterisation can be expanded in the same way because she still affects other female characters and resembles them in many respects. In the smaller narrative of Genesis 38 (that is on the micro-level), Judah and the other flat characters can be understood better through their interactions with her. On the other hand, in the larger narrative, the Primary Narrative (that is on the macro-level), although the Tamar character does not appear in the text apart from in Genesis 38, the significance of the character is reflected in the three female characters (Lot's daughters, Ruth and Bathsheba) selected above because they echo each other in the single larger narrative that is the Hebrew Bible.

If we have discovered similarities and differences between Tamar and these other selected female characters from the Davidic lineage, it is natural that modern readers might have several questions; first, if there are common features between them, what is the most

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[228] John Goldingay, 'How Far Do Readers Make Sense? Interpreting Biblical Narrative', *Themelios* 18.2 (1993), pp. 5-10 (5).

[229] Goldingay, 'How Far Do Readers Make Sense? Interpreting Biblical Narrative', p. 5.

customary distinctiveness? Second, what does Tamar's character imply for other selected female characters within the larger story of the Primary Narrative? Finally, is there any inference to be drawn from this connection between Tamar and these other women?

First of all, the common denominator linking these female characters - Tamar, Ruth and Bathsheba in the Primary Narrative - is that of being marginal mothers of Israel, in particular in the lineage of King David. Lot's daughters are non-Abrahamite, buy they also function as marginal, that is, non-Israelite (non-Abrahamite or non-Judahite). Abraham is the first father of the Israelites, but the direct line (or tribe) of David starts with Judah. Judah and Tamar are the parents of Perez. The name of Perez comes first in the family line which ends in David (Ruth 4:18-22). Obed, the son of Ruth is the grandfather of David. Bathsheba becomes David's wife. These genealogical features are not significantly different from the previous matriarchs who gave birth to the early ancestors of Israel. However, Tamar, Ruth and Bathsheba along with Lot's daughters are all marginal widows. What makes them important is that these three women (Tamar, Ruth, Bathsheba) are plainly shown as standing chronologically at the beginning, middle, and end of the Davidic genealogy, although there are many other mothers of Israel in the Primary Narrative. That is to say, they are examples in the patriarchal period (Tamar), the period of the Judges (Ruth), and the monarchic period (Bathsheba).

Second, Tamar should count as the last matriarch in the book of Genesis because she bore a significant successor for Judah. In other words, she is the first female who came into the inner family of Judah up to David although Tamar was neither Judah's first partner nor the mother of his first three sons. Likewise, Bathsheba 'was not David's first wife or the mother of his first child'[230] but she becomes the queen mother of King Solomon who is the successor of King David.

Finally, what is important here is to recognise that Tamar and the two other women,

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[230] Bellis, *Helpmates, Harlots, and Heroes: Women's Stories in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 140.

Ruth and Bathsheba present hidden origins (Tamar and Bathsheba) or a foreigner (Ruth). Unlike in Judah's case, his fathers - Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob - had sought and married wives from their own extended family. However, Judah, and Joseph, who lived in Egypt, were exceptions. While Joseph was forcibly sold to Egypt by his brothers, Judah went to the Canaanite area by choice. It is Judah himself who found himself a foreign wife and daughter-in-law as brides to build his family. In the book of Ruth, it is Elimelech who went with his wife and two sons to live for a while in Moab in order to avoid the famine in his country. His wife, Naomi, was an Israelite but, his two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth, were Moabite women (Ruth 1:1-5). In effect, Bathsheba's identity is unclear like Tamar's; '…Bathsheba daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite' (2 Sam. 11:3 NRSV). Tamar's origin is not clearly expressed in the story, while Judah's wife is described as follows: '…the daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua…' (Gen. 38:2 NRSV). Thus, both Tamar's and Bathsheba's identities are inferred indirectly. Why does the narrator not state their origins clearly? The answer to this question requires 'gap-filling' in the story and is a matter for a reader's interpretation. Filling the gaps and implicit hints strengthen tension within a story when the reader's knowledge of the background is incomplete. The Tamar-Judah story in Genesis 38 is an example of this device.

6.4. Concluding Remarks

Up to now we have discussed the character of Tamar along with other women characters such as the matriarchs in the patriarchal narrative and the mothers of Israel as marginal women from an intertextual perspective. From this, we have looked at the thematic relationships between Tamar and the four matriarchs (Sarah, Rebakah, Leah and Rachel), and between Tamar and the other specific women (Lot's daughters, Ruth and Bathsheba). This perspective on Tamar's character along with these women belongs in the macro level of the Primary Narrative (Genesis – 2 Kings). We have seen that Tamar shares various common factors with the four matriarchs such as *hidden origin of genealogy*, *trickster*, *naming* and so on. Tamar

also exhibits the common motifs (*barrenness*, *the birth of child*, *the continuation of the lineage*, *given away to others*, *veiled herself*, *twins*) as well as the matriarchs do. Moreover. Tamar's character shows commonalities (*bed-tricks*, *fertile mother*, *marginality*, *incest*, *levirate law* and *David's foreign connections*) with the three specified women. In particular, as a marginal widow Tamar becomes the first ancestress of the Judahites; that is the family of David.

From this intertextual study, therefore, we come to the conclusion that Tamar could be called the fifth matriarch in the patriarchal narrative of Genesis and at the same time the prototype of the marginal mother of Israel in the story of the Davidic Dynasty in the Primary Narrative. Tamar in Genesis 38 has an essential significance as a bridge which links these two groups, matriarchs in the patriarchal narratives and mothers of Israel as widows in the larger Primary Narrative.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

In the present thesis, it has been argued that the Judah-Tamar story in Genesis 38 functions as the type narrative of the genealogical tensions throughout Genesis 37-50 as part of the Primary Narrative (Genesis – 2 Kings) of the Hebrew Bible. By means of the narrative approach, I have shown that the main characters of the Judah-Tamar episode in Genesis 38 are significant in terms of 'David's Judahite'[1] lineage because they are the first ancestors within the tribe of Judah as well as part of Abraham's family. The depiction of their genealogical connections demonstrates that they are both prominent characters in the Davidic line in the larger narrative (Gen. 38:27-30; Ruth 4:18-22; cf. 1 Chron. 2:1-17). Genesis 38, far from being some rather awkward insertion into the story of Joseph, is an integral part of *The Story of Jacob and his Sons* (Gen. 37-50) in the Primary Narrative. Through the kind of genealogical twists which Genesis 38 epitomises, this wider story turns out, unexpectedly, not so much to be the story of Abraham's descendent as the story of David and his line. On this basis, in this final chapter, I firstly summarise the conclusions that I have offered at the end of each chapter and then discuss the contributions of this research to current biblical scholarship. Finally, some prospects for further study are suggested.

7.1. Summary of the Present Study

First of all, as an introduction, I referred to the statements of the main issue relating to discontinuity or continuity in the placement of Genesis 38 and questions as to why the chapter needs to be re-read. The debate on the placement of Genesis 38 in the text has been a melting pot in scholarship. In effect, the way the chapter is understood depends on different

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[1] For this term, see footnote 6 in chapter 5 of this thesis.

viewpoints that rely on either 'diachronic' or 'synchronic'[2] methods. This thesis is primarily concerned with the latter perspective based on the literary coherence of the text. My presupposition is that Genesis 38 is an essential partner to the surrounding chapters and has a key function, given the significance of genealogy, in the larger narrative. For this reason, it is not appropriate to read this chapter in terms of one particular character, either Judah or Tamar, as scholars have tended to do when they simply examine it in connection with the so-called 'Joseph story'.

Then, in chapter 1, I have dealt with narrative criticism as a methodological approach. The narrative critical approach depends on synchronic and synthetic analysis and the implied author and the implied reader function in relation to each other to shape the meaning of the text. Elements of any narrative consist of plot, character, setting and point of view. Detailed examination of these elements is essential for a better understanding of the text. I introduced a brief history of research into biblical Hebrew narrative and defined my terminology *Primary Narrative* as implying a fundamental focus on the nature of the story as discoursed in the largest narrative of Genesis through 2 Kings of the Hebrew Bible. In this context, the foremost interest of the present study is about story and its storyline rather than history or event itself as a fact.

Chapter 2 examined the position of Genesis 38 and its literary context. Almost all historico-critical commentators insist that the episode of Judah-Tamar in Genesis 38 is a strange interruption within the so-called Joseph story (Genesis 37-50) and evidence of a (rather clumsy) conflation of sources. On the other hand, literary critics are interested in the literary features of the chapter and how they help to link this chapter to the surrounding chapters. Still, the latter group usually consider Genesis 38 only within the unit of the Joseph story. Going beyond both groups, I have argued Genesis 38 needs to be read systematically in the larger narrative aspect as well as in the context of Genesis 37-50. For this reason, I have

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[2] For further argument on this, see Johannes C. de Moor (ed.), *Synchronic or Diachronic?: A Debate on Method in Old Testament Exegesis* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995).

shown the placement of Genesis 38 in the literary context on different levels, from its role as part of the literary unit which is Genesis 37-39 up to forming part of the whole Primary Narrative (Genesis – 2 Kings). This research is focused on the linguistic and thematic connections between Genesis 38 and the surrounding narratives as a way of understanding such serial narratives. As a result, the story of Judah and Tamar should be comprehended within a series of wider narrative contexts, which ranges from the surrounding chapters up to the largest literary unit in the Hebrew Bible to show the complex ways a single narrative works.

To support this assumption, I have performed a literary analysis of the characters of Judah and Tamar in chapters 3 and 4 respectively. First, Judah's activities within the so-called Joseph story are more crucial than we may expect. Judah's character is developed throughout the wider narrative of Genesis 37-50. Judah's activity as one of the leading characters is presented both at what I have termed the micro level and the macro level. The former concerns only Genesis 38 and the latter is composed of Genesis 37-50 as a whole. That is, we can see two angles on Judah's character in the text. In the immediate context of Genesis 38, Judah's character can be considered as negative by the reader because he attempts to avoid giving his daughter-in-law Tamar to his third son Shelah, which he should have done according to levirate law. In the wider context of Genesis 37-50, however, his character is developed through the following stages: 'Departure-Transition-Return.'[3] Even though Judah looks as if he lacks moral judgment in the smaller narrative (Gen. 37 or 38), in the wider narrative his character changes into a courageous man and family spokesman (Gen. 43-44) and his change of mind over Tamar's fate can thus be seen as a crucial turning point in a wider context. Judah, in effect, succeeds to the birthright of his father Jacob (or Israel). The evidence is to be found in the twofold competition with his elder brother Reuben (Gen. 37 and 43-44) as a result of which Judah is finally evaluated as the most blessed among his brothers

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[3] Anthony Lambe, 'Judah's Development: The Pattern of Departure – Transition – Return', *JSOT* 83 (1999), pp. 53-68.

(Gen. 49). Furthermore, the reversal in the bestowal of the birthright between Perez and Zerah (Gen. 37:27-30) and of Manasseh and Ephraim (Gen. 48) is not irrelevant to Judah's new status. While Joseph represents Egypt as its governor, instead of his father and his brothers, Judah acts as the deputy of Jacob's family in Canaan and in the end it is his lineage that inherits the patriarchal promises through to David's line. Judah's role could have been extended into the Primary Narrative, and that could be a project for further study. I have extended the role of Tamar into the Primary Narrative instead.

As far as Tamar is concerned, the narrator describes her in detail in Genesis 38. Although Tamar was a childless widow and was living apart from Judah's house, she overcame the difficult situation by dint of her deliberate plan to deceive her father-in-law, Judah. Tamar finally conceived Judah's children and gave birth to twins (Perez and Zerah) who would be ancestors of David (Gen. 38:27-30). The author employs Tamar's character as an example of a clever woman who endures a period of loneliness and isolation. However, the more important thing is that Tamar becomes one of the mothers within both Abraham's and Judah's lineage. The role of Tamar's character ends in the immediate (or micro) context of Genesis 38, but it is of profound significance to Judah's family and beyond it, as I explain in chapter 6.

In chapter 5 we present a structural analysis of Genesis 37-50 in which the roles of Judah and Tamar in this medium range level are highlighted. The outlook of the Primary Narrative leads us to understand the role of Genesis 38 which prompts the suggestion that the traditional titles of 'the Joseph Story' or 'the Jacob Story' would be more usefully changed to *The Story of Jacob and his Sons*. Through narratological analysis, I have shown that Genesis 38 is neither a clumsy chapter nor simply a part of the Joseph story. The story of Judah and Tamar should be located as it stands. According to the *bucket-shaped* structure of the Judah-Tamar story (see fig. 7), the exchange of roles can be seen clearly between Episode I (vv.1-5, Judah; vv. 6-11, Tamar; vv. 12-19, Tamar) and Episode II (vv. 2-23, Judah; vv. 24-26, Judah; vv. 27-30, Tamar). The two characters share three themes: family building (+), shame (-) and

deceit (-). The first one is positive in the eyes of the reader, but the second and the third are negative. These two episodes display a dialectic process which is worked out in the course of the story: Thesis – Antithesis – Synthesis. Thus, the dialectic process ends in the building of their family. As far as Judah's family is concerned, Judah as a father opens the door and Tamar as a mother closes it.

Next, in the wider context of the Primary Narrative, the symmetry of *The Jacob and his Sons' Story* within Genesis 37-50 demonstrates a chiastic structure with seven steps (A-G, A'-G', see fig. 9). The inner parts of GG' (Gen. 42:1-43:14; 43:15-44:34) in figure 9 are parallels with the double themes of *Jacob's sons going to Egypt and Judah's plea*. Jacob's sons go to Egypt twice and Judah's plea is also twofold: one for Jacob (Gen. 43:3-5, 8-10) and one for Joseph (Gen. 44:16, 34). That is, the centre of the symmetrical structure is GG' and here Jacob and all his his sons appear. From this, we can see that Genesis 37-50 is not focused on the single character of Joseph, but on Jacob and all his sons. They all contribute to the storyline of the novella. In particular, however, Genesis 38 and Genesis 49, the blessing of Jacob, belong to Judah because these stories are closely related to him. The former has Judah as its main character and the latter talks about Judah as the most blessed person among his brothers (Gen. 49:8-12). In effect, the quality of the blessing of Judah is superior to Joseph's. Nonetheless, Genesis 37-50 is not devoted only to Judah and the novella contains many kinds of small stories. The role of Genesis 38 is to introduce Judah and Tamar within Genesis 37-50, in order to validate the heirs of David's Judahite ancestry in the context of the Primary Narrative. Genesis 38 is the story of the first ancestors of the Davidic line.

In chapter 6, I have investigated the relationships between Tamar and other women characters, in order to show, how the less likely of the two main characters in Genesis 38 extends into the Primary Narrative. This is a sort of macro angle within the larger perspective of the Primary Narrative. I divided the women into two groups: the matriarchs and the mothers of the Davidic line as marginal and widowed women. One the one hand, Tamar's character can be compared to the previous stories of the matriarchs such as Sarah, Rebekah,

Leah and Rachel. Tamar shares various common factors with the four matriarchs: *hidden origin of Genealogy*, *trickster*, *naming* and so on. Six common motifs are also suggested that link them: *barrenness*, *the birth of child*, *the continuation of the lineage*, *being given away to others*, *veiling themselves* and *twins* (see table 5). The character of Tamar exhibits all these motifs. Therefore, it is no wonder that Tamar can be called the fifth matriarch in the patriarchal narrative. On the other hand, her character shows many parallels with other specific women such as Lot's daughters, Ruth and Bathsheba in the Primary Narrative, that is, in the story of the Davidic Dynasty. Among Lot's daughters, Ruth and Tamar, the common motifs are *bed-tricks*, *fertile mother, marginality, incest, levirate law* and *David's foregin connections* (see table 6). Although the story of Lot's daughters in Genesis 19 (vv. 30-38) is located in the patriarchal narrative, they also represent outcast non-Abrahamite widows who are part of Davids' ancestry, albeit as the ancestors of Moab, and thus of Ruth. Their story, however, has a similarity with respect to inappropriate sexual relations within a family, which finds continuity in Tamar's story in Genesis 38. The story of Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11-12 shows an intimate connection with the story of Tamar in Genesis 38. These narratives reverse the traditional positions of the male and female characters as initiators of action. The hegemony is changed from males into females: Judah to Tamar and David to Bathsheba. Finally, the two stories comprise the beginning and culminating scenes of the lineage from Judah to David.

As a result, Tamar becomes a prototype of the mother-figure as marginal, 'outsider'[4] woman and widow in the Primary Narrative. All the women in this latter group are capable of bearing children, but have no access to the '*right*' husband, unlike the matriarchs, who have the right husband but are initially barren, with the exception of Rachel. Tamar's significance is that she uniquely combines features of both the matriarchs and this latter group. The way

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[4] For example, Spina says, 'Like Tamar before her, Ruth the outsider has acted to save her own future, Naomi's future, Boaz's future, and Israel's future.' See Frank Anthony Spina, *The Faith of the Outsider: Exclusion and Inclusion in the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2005), p. 136.

Tamar is portrayed in Genesis 38 as the mother of Perez and as building Judah's family sheds light on the stories of other women which are pivotal in the genealogical viewpoint of the larger narrative.

7.2. Contributions to Contemporary Biblical Scholarship

What is the contribution of the present study to biblical scholarship? And what is the difference between the contentions of the previous interpreters and my main arguments?

First, the story of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38 has usually been considered as an interruption or a necessary chapter with surrounding narratives within the Joseph story in the book of Genesis. The former is mainly claimed by the historical commentators and the latter by the literary critics. While they debated the significance of the perceived discontinuities between the chapter and its surroundings, both groups still tended to read the chapter in the context of an overall narrative centred on Joseph. Although the position this thesis adopts is more in line with the literary critical defences of the apparent discontinuities as part of the communicative strategies of a wider narrative perspective, I criticise the fact that these studies did not explain clearly the role of Genesis 38 in the wider perspective of the Primary Narrative. For this reason, I have argued that Genesis 38 is a story with a genealogical function in the sense that both Judah and Tamar as leading characters built their family in cooperation with each other. Their roles are not distinct from the overarching storyline or confined to the designated chapter by the author.

Second, in relation to the title of Genesis 37-50, some studies have discussed Genesis ideologically as retrospective propaganda for David.[5] For example, Joel Rosenberg says, '...regardless of the alleged multiplicity of its [the Hebrew Bible's continuous narrative] sources, it formed a single, coherent, and integrated argument, of what I would call today

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[5] For instance, see Robert B. Coote and David Robert Ord, *The Bible's First History* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), pp. 167-86, especially p. 181; Keith Bodner, *David Observed: A King in the Eyes of His Court* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2005).

"political" import.'[6] I partly agree with this, but I have not been concerned in this thesis with the political implication of David in the text. Rather, I have an interest in its literary relationships. Rosenberg has not explained sufficiently how to incorporate Genesis 38 into a wider narrative related by literary commonalities in Genesis 38, Genesis 48 and 49 together with Genesis 37-50 and beyond Genesis. For the most part, this is because these stories are not about Joseph: Genesis 38 is the Judah-Tamar story, Genesis 48 is the story of Jacob's reverse blessing of his two grandsons, Manasseh and Ephraim, and Genesis 49 is the blessing of Jacob's twelve sons. Among these three chapters, the first and the last chapters are directly related to Judah and the second reminds us of the birthright of Perez and Zerah in Genesis 37:27-30. Of course, the motif of 'A Younger Son Prevails'[7] is not unique here and is also immediately connected to Judah. Judah also prevails over his elder brothers (Reuben, Simon, Levi) and becomes their leader (Gen. 49:8-12). If we do not elucidate the function of these chapters (Gen. 38, 48 and 49) the novella of Genesis 37-50 cannot be understood sufficiently. I tried to associate these chapters with Judah and his ancestry (or the Judahite lineage). Thus, I, as a researcher, have a proper reason to re-read the story of Judah and Tamar. Reading the episode in Genesis 38 in the way we have in this thesis as part of the immediate surrounding narratives and as part of the Primary Narrative could act as a stimulus for readers to adopt a new perspective for reading other biblical narratives.

Third, in line with patriarchal assumptions, most scholars of Genesis 38 have usually focused only on Judah's character. In reaction to this, there are those, including feminist interpreters, who focus on Tamar's character and have emphasised on her role and identity as a woman. Sometimes such readings become almost offensive in their depiction of Judah's negative characteristics. Even if some of these readings have their own biases, it cannot be

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[6] Joel Rosenberg, *King and Kin: Political Allegory in the Hebrew Bible* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), p. ix.

[7] Coote and Ord, *The Bible's First History*, pp. 139-45; see also Roger Syrén, *The Forsaken First-Born: A Study of a Recurrent Motif in the Patriarchal Narrative* (JSOTSup, 133: Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993).

denied that the importance of Tamar's character in Genesis 38 is clearly revealed by the author. In contrast to either of those positions, by elucidating the binary thematic-symmetrical patterns (see fig. 6) and what I call the *bucket-shaped* structure of the Judah-Tamar story (fig. 7), we can see that Tamar stands out as not just a feminist hero but as a female character fully equivalent to Judah. These figures indicate the importance of Tamar's character as important as Judah's. This is because Tamar, together with her father-in-law Judah, built their family. She accomplished her role as a mother of the heirs of Judah in a difficult situation. Furthermore, Tamar went through equivalent experiences to Judah of family building, shame and deceit. From this, it becomes clear that the significance of Tamar's role in Genesis 38 should not be ignored. Tamar's character is equivalent to the character of Judah in their respective stories.

Finally, the thematic chiasmus of Jacob and his sons' stories (fig. 9) sheds light on a new perspective for reading Genesis 38 and Genesis 37-50 in the context of the Primary Narrative. This structure provides a fresh focus on Jacob's sons going to Egypt and Judah's plea. These two components embody the author's main interests because the contents include every character and represent the climax. The main character in the events is neither Jacob nor Joseph but Judah. However, Judah does not need to be singled out as the main character because the storyline of Genesis 37-50 is based on the group interactions between Jacob and his sons. Even so, Judah is the representative of Jacob's family in Canaan, while Joseph is a deputy in Egypt. As Judah's role is as inclusive as Joseph's, Tamar's image as a marginal and widow woman and at the same time the mother of the heirs of Judah spills over into David's story. Like the relationship between David and Bathsheba, Tamar's marginal identity is not abnormal in the whole story of the Primary Narrative. In the case of Ruth, too, this motif of marginality continues and the text also presents the climax of the Judahite genealogy in David (Ruth. 4:18-22). This prospect comes from the wider perspective of the Primary Narrative.

Accordingly, I suggest that the story of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38 is neither 'an

interpolation that interrupts the Joseph story'[8] nor that there is 'no easy answer to why this story, characteristic of J' is inserted here [between Genesis 37 and Genesis 39], interrupting the Joseph narrative'.[9] On the contrary, Genesis 38 is an essential chapter in a narratological sense encapsulating the genealogical function of Judah's family under the title of *The Story of Jacob and his Sons* in Genesis 37-50, connecting up to David's Judahite line as part of the Primary Narrative. According to this thinking, the *bucket-shaped* structure of the Judah-Tamar story in Genesis 38 on the symmetry of the Jacob and his sons' story in Genesis 37-50 is like a *mise en abyme*,[10] a smaller story within a larger story. This literary tool shows a sort of repeated pattern in the same structure. For instance, the birthright reversal motif of Perez and Zerah (Gen. 38:27-30) echos the scene of the reversal of the blessing of Jacob to his two grandsons, Manasseh and Ephraim (Gen. 48). As such, the Judah-Tamar story in Genesis 38 opens a door to interpreting the long story of the Davidic line.

7.3. Prospects for Further Study

This thesis has shown a fresh perspective on the reading of Genesis 38 within Genesis 37-50 in the context of the longest block of narrative in the Hebrew Bible, the Primary Narrative, but I cannot deny there are some limitations at the same time. First, this research started with the presupposition that the Primary Narrative has a specific perspective. I, as a researcher,

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[8] R. Norman Whybray, 'Genesis', in John Barton and John Muddiman (eds)., *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University University Press, 2001), pp. 38-66 (61).

[9] Richard J. Clifford and Roland E. Murphy, 'Genesis', in Raymond E. Brown, *et al.* (eds.), *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (2nd edn; London: Geoffrey Chapman, 2000), pp. 8-43 (38). According to the notes, 'The introduction and comment on [Gen.] 1:1-25:18 are by R.J. Clifford; the comment on [Gen.] 25:19-50:26 is by R.E. Murphy' (p. 8).

[10] The technical phrase, *mise en abyme*, was used by the French writer and critic, André Gide, in 1893 (Lucien Dällenbach, *The Mirror in the Text,* trans. by Jeremy Whitely with Emma Hughes, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989, p. 7). This was originally applied to literature and visual art and it means literally 'placed in the abyss' or 'narrative moments of infinite regression' (Dominic Head, (ed.), 'Mise en abîme', in *The Cambridge Guide to Literature in English,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 750.), even though 'this term does in fact have a rather precise English equivalent…' (Moshe Ron, 'The Restricted Abyss: Nine Problems in the Theory of *Mise en Abyme*?' *Poetics Today*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (1987), pp. 417-438 (418); cf. Dällenbach, *The Mirror in the Text*, p. 187). According to Dällenbach, the expression can be defined as 'any internal mirror that reflects the whole of the narrative by simple, repeated or "specious" (paradoxical) duplication' (Dällenbach, *The Mirror in the Text*, p. 36). In a similar way, David A. Bosworth defines this tool as 'a device in which a part reduplicates the whole', in his book, *The Story within a Story in Biblical Hebrew Narrative* (CBQMS, 45; Washington: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2008, p. vii).

attempted to read Genesis 38 on this basis. The Primary Narrative of the Hebrew Bible contains ten books (Genesis to Kings) and so many smaller stories exist and are inter-related. Some scholars insist that this unit is called the 'Primary History'[11] and leave out of the discussion the book of Ruth. This is because the nine books are considered as an exact copy of Herodotus' *History*, which is composed of nine books in total.[12]

However, in my view the Primary Narrative should include the book of Ruth because it gives a clue to a consistent genealogical trend from Perez up to David in the Judahite line (Ruth 4:18-22). While the 'Primary History' can be considered as the chronological order of the history of Israel in a sense, the Primary Narrative is focused on the narrative order of a series of stories or events as discoursed and as a unified literary composition from a narratological viewpoint. Sometimes, 'Narratives do not always present events in the chronological order of their occurrence.'[13] For instance, the Primary Narrative reflects several types of plot such as unified and episodic plots.[14] Genesis 38 has a unified plot. The Primary Narrative, as well as the story of Genesis 37-50, can be described as having episodic plot(s). Thus, this is the key to how the long story can bridge the chronological distance covered by Israel's history. In a narrow sense, the question of how Genesis 38 can be read together with the wider narratives up to the Primary Narrative including Genesis 37-50 is about a reading method within the same contextual storyline. In this thesis, my supposition is that the Primary

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[11] For the definition of this, see 1.5.2. in this thesis.

[12] Wesselius maintains that there are some parallels between characters in the two books. In relation to Genesis 38, he says, 'Judah, who in his function as saviour of the key figure can be compared to Harpagus in Herodotus's work, and who took the initiative for deceiving Jacob about Joseph, is then deceived in the episode of Tamar, where the kid (g^{e}*dī'izzīm*) is mentioned again as the fee she is to receive for her services (Gen. 38.17, 20, 23).' See Jan-Wim Wesselius, *The Origin of the History of Israel: Herodotus's Histories as Blueprint for the First Books of the Bible* (JSOTSup, 345; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), p. 39; see Sara Mandell and David Noel Freedman, *The Relationship between Herodotus' History and Primary History* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993).

[13] George Aichele, *et al.*, *The Postmodern Bible: The Bible and Culture Collective* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 74.

[14] Ska says, 'In a unified plot, all the episodes are relevant to the narrative and have a bearing on the outcome of the events recounted. Every episode supposes what precedes and prepares for what follows. In an "episodic plot" the order of episodes can be changed, the reader can skip an episode without harm; every episode is a unit in itself and does not require the clear and complete knowledge of the former episodes to be understood...' Jean Louis Ska, *"Our Fathers Have Told Us": Introduction to the Analysis of Hebrew Narratives* (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1990), pp. 17-33.

Narrative is the largest episodic story in the Hebrew Bible. However, this is a grand claim and this study cannot manage to give detailed consideration to the whole spectrum of the narratives within the limits of a single doctoral thesis.

For these reasons, I would like to suggest next prospects for further study in the near future. First of all, this thesis lacks a section on the role of Judah in the Primary Narrative and there is no room to make this argument here, so that would be the first step in strengthening my position that the Primary Narrative is about David's Judahite genealogy. To support another part of the Primary Narrative, the book of Ruth could be studied to see how its artistry and message function within the larger block of texts and how Ruth's place in the final form is as significant as that of Genesis 38. The relationship between Naomi and Ruth can be compared to that of Judah and Tamar. This is because Yhwh's promise given to the patriarchs is traced successively via genealogy through the family of Judah and Tamar (Gen. 38:27-30), it continues with the family of Boaz and Ruth (Ruth 4:13-22),[15] and finally reaches the family of David and Bathsheba (2 Sam. 12:24). This does not seem to be a coincidence but part of the larger strategy and message being conveyed to the implied audience. These sequential family related events in each of the three historical periods, those of the patriarchs, the Judges and the United Kingdom, may contain literary connections in their inter-texual development.

Second, taking the literary concept of *mise en abyme* which can trace a literary intimacy between smaller and larger narratives, we could examine the literary function of the relationship between Genesis 38 and Genesis 37-50. Recently, David A. Bosworth has shown this using 1 Samuel 25 (David, Nabal and Abigail's Story) and 1 Kings 13 (the Story of the Man of God from Judah).[16] In a similar way, Lindsay Wilson says, '...the [Judah and] Tamar story [in Gen. 38] is a kind of microcosm of the larger Joseph story [Jacob and his sons' story], and that its function in the final form of Genesis 37-50 is to anticipate themes in the

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[15] Moshe Reiss, 'Ruth and Naomi: Foremother of David', *JBQ* 35 (2007), pp. 192-97.

[16] For this adventurous study, Bosworth shows this pattern in his book, *The Story within a Story in Biblical Hebrew Narrative* (CBQMS, 45; Washington: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2008).

subsequent chapters.'[17] For example, 'Prolepsis [foreshadowing or anticipation] is no more plausible, requiring all the events of chapter 38 to happen before Judah goes to Egypt with the rest of Jacob's family in chapter 46, and to be made to fit with various appearances of Judah in chapters 42-45.'[18] As a matter of fact, however, it is not easy to accept that this literary tool could be applied to the whole range of the Primary Narrative, but if we attempt to find out other evidence, this technical tool may serve to strengthen the arguments in my thesis which aim to relate that the Judah-Tamar story becomes a kernel of the larger narrative of the Davidic royal line (Ruth 4:18-22).

Finally, in relation to character and characterisation we could attempt to compare the characters of Judah and Tamar to other characters with the help of *mise en abyme.* Concerning the relationships between the narrative and character, Hugh S. Pyper writes that 'If the *mise en abyme* represents the wider narrative, then the character is effectively speaking in the name of the narrator.'[19] He goes on, 'A given character in the text can act the part of the producer or receiver of a discourse within the text, imitating the production or reception of the wider text by its author or reader. Such a discourse is often termed an "embedded text" and it can stand in a variety of relationships to the wider "primary" text.'[20] Accordingly, if the 'embedded text' could be assumed within the larger narrative, the *embedded character* can be also supposed in it. This is a sort of foreshadowing [prolepsis] of the character within the larger narrative. To illustrate, in Aaron Wildavsky's phrase, '...the story of Judah and Tamar is a preview of the lesson of the Joseph stories [the story of Jacob and his sons], which is that leaders cannot save their people by violating the moral law.'[21] That is, it means that Judah's negative image in Genesis 38 is similar to Joseph's in terms that they 'seek survival through sin rather than

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[17] Lindsay Wilson, *Joseph Wise and Otherwise: The Intersection of Wisdom and Covenant in Genesis 37-50* (PBM; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2004), p. 290; cf. Paul Borgman, *Genesis: The Story We Haven't Heard* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001), pp. 189-92.

[18] Aichele, *et al.*, *The Postmodern Bible: The Bible and Culture Collective*, p. 75.

[19] Hugh S. Pyper, *David as Reader: 2 Samuel 12:1-15 and the Poetics of Fatherhood* (Biblical Interpretation Series 23; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), p. 29.

[20] Pyper, *David as Reader: 2 Samuel 12:1-15 and the Poetics of Fatherhood*, pp. 28-29.

[21] Aaron Wildavsky, *Assimilation versus Separation: Joseph the Administrator and the Politics of Religion in Biblical Israel* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1993), p. 31.

obedience to the moral law'.[22] The negative image of Judah deceiving Tamar (Gen. 38:11) is like that of his father Jacob who deceived his father Isaac (Gen. 27:1-29): 'Like son, like father'[23] and 'deceiving the deceiver'.[24] In this respect, it is may also be applied to the characters and the narrator in Genesis 38 in the wider narrative such as the larger framework of the patriarchal narratives in the book of Genesis and even further in the Primary Narrative. Therefore, it will become clear that the two characters of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38 may provide good examples as *type-characters* of the Davidic line in the larger narrative of the Hebrew Bible.

We turn now to close this thesis. My research on the role of Genesis 38 in the context of the Primary Narrative has been exciting and provides a prelude to understanding the longest biblical Hebrew narrative as a unified work by opening a new perspective to the reader. The Judah-Tamar story shows the characters' various emotions such as joy, anger, sadness and delight and it also proceeds through gradual steps of conflict, tension, struggle and resolution. Time markers also indicate the change of different scenes (v. 1, 12, 34 and 27) and these create a serial narrative. But Genesis 38 does not remain as an isolated chapter as its characters and its narrative shape are both developed in the wider narrative. Listening to the text itself has proved 'further to open the field of investigation and to preclude too rapid closure'.[25] This is because, in relation to Abraham, Judah and his son Perez's genealogy, even in the New Testament, as Lou H. Silberman states, 'The same genealogy [Ruth 4:18-22] with the same purpose is found at the beginning of the Gospel according to Matthew.'[26] This is also connected to the promise of Yhwh given to the patriarchs in Genesis (Gen. 12:2-3; 15:18;

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[22] Wilson, *Joseph Wise and Otherwise: The Intersection of Wisdom and Covenant in Genesis 37-50*, p. 87; cf. Wildavsky, *Assimilation versus Separation: Joseph the Administrator and the Politics of Religion in Biblical Israel*, p. 41.

[23] Aaron Wildavsky, 'Survival Must not be Gained through Sin; The Moral of the Joseph Stories Prefigured through Judah and Tamar', *JSOT* 62 (1994), pp. 37-48 (40).

[24] Borgman, *Genesis: The Story We Haven't Heard*, p. 190.

[25] Lou H. Silberman, 'Listening to the Text', *JBL* 102 (1983), pp. 3-26 (11).

[26] Silberman, 'Listening to the Text', p. 24; for further information on Tamar's ancestry, see Richard Bauckham, 'Tamar's Ancestry and Rahab's Marriage: Two Problems in the Matthean Genealogy', *NovT* 37 (1995), pp. 313-29.

17:2; 26:24; etc.) and the purpose of Genesis 38 as a genealogical bridgehead is naturally fitted to the wider narrative from a narratological viewpoint.

כִּי־פָקַד יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת אֶת־עֲדְרוֹ אֶת־בֵּית יְהוּדָה

'…for the LORD of hosts cares for his flock, the house of Judah…' (Zech. 10:3b NRSV)

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