

# **An Exegetical Reading of the Abraham Narrative in Genesis**

**Semantic, Textuality and Theology**

by

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**Promoter: Prof. Jurie le Roux**

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## DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation/thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

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## Summary

- \* Title: AN EXEGETICAL READING OF THE ABRAHAM NARRATIVE IN GENESIS: SEMANTIC, TEXTUALITY AND THEOLOGY
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This thesis is basically an exegetical work investigating the Abraham narrative (Gen 11:27-25:11) in Genesis in a sense of a text-centered approach, which aims to the *Sitz im Text* not to reconstruct the early *Sitz im Leben* of the narrative. In other words, this study seeks primarily to interpret the final form of the narrative as the locus of revelation. Taking the adages ‘no text is an island,’ ‘let the text speak for itself’ as its point of departure, this study focuses on the question how the individual episodes in the Abraham narrative are played by texts in Genesis and in the larger literary units in the Pentateuch. In this vein, the work examines the narrative through careful attention to literary and rhetorical features such as narrative structure, recurring themes and motifs, allusion (or foreshadowing), wordplays, points of view, plot, and characterization by attempting to analyze and describe its structure and the semantics of the arrangement of source material in the pericope of the narrative. For it is believed that the literary tools used by the author (or the final composer) to establish continuity and link various constituent parts together in a unified literary composition.

Seen within such a context, two methodological approaches in this study will be offered promise for discovering possible the narrative function of the Abraham cycle: intertextuality and the composition criticism. The former provides the compositional

tactics mapped out by the author (or the final composer) for the recognition of narrative literary context of the Abraham narrative within the macro-structure and the micro-structure of the Pentateuch. While, the latter asks the right questions to discover textual correlations between the narrative and the rest of texts in Genesis and in the Pentateuch. As a result, this approach to the narrative reveals a distinct compositional strategy, which is to convey the author's (or the final composer's) theological considerations clearly and persuasively.

Methodological peculiarities for reading the Abraham narrative are considered in chapter 1. Chapter 2 is to examine in detail of the inner literary arrangement of the Abraham narrative in the narrative frame of Genesis and the Pentateuch. It is followed by a discussion of the inner textual integrity of logic, and syntax of the narrative in chapter 3. The intertextual relationships between the pericope and the remaining texts in the Pentateuch will be explored by syntactically examining of the texts at semantic and thematic level. The theological considerations of the narrative proceed by these scrutinized intra/inter-textual examination of the texts. The final chapter, chapter 5, summarizes some of the advantages of applying the method to the narrative and some exegetical suggestions in terms of pre-critical angle.

## Key words

- chiasmic structure (chiasm/ symmetry)
- composition criticism (*Kompositionskritik*)
- composition strategy
- intertextuality (text production/ text reception)
- intratextuality
- langue
- narrative typology
- parallelism
- parole
- pre-critical reading
- semantics
- signified
- signifier
- similarity (rhetorical link)
- text-centered approach
- the Abraham narrative
- the author/the composer
- תולדות structure

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To God, this book is dedicated with faith.

## Abbreviations

### Commonly Used Sources

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	Anchor Bible Dictionary, ed. D. N. Freedman, 6 vols., New York, 1992
AnBib	Analecta biblica
<i>AJS</i>	<i>American Journal of Semiotics</i>
<i>ASTI</i>	<i>Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute</i>
<i>BAR</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
<i>BBR</i>	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum lovaniensium
<i>BI</i>	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
<i>BibInt</i>	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
<i>BibRev</i>	<i>Bible Review</i>
BIRS	Bibliographies and Indexes in Religious Studies
BIS	Biblical Interpretation Series
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BL	Bible and Literature
<i>BR</i>	<i>Bible Review</i>
<i>BR<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>Biblical Research</i>
<i>BSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
<i>BZAW</i>	<i>Beihefte zur ZAW</i>
BZAW	Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
<i>CANE</i>	<i>Civilizations of the Ancient Near East</i> (ed. J M Sasson; New York, 1995)
CBC	Cambridge Bible Commentary
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
<i>CL</i>	<i>College Literature</i>
<i>CurTM</i>	<i>Currents in Theology and Mission</i>
EBC	The Expositor's Bible Commentary, ed. F. E. Gaebelein, 12 vols., Grand Rapids, 1976-1995.



<i>EvQ</i>	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
<i>EvT</i>	<i>Evangelische Theologie</i>
FOTL	The Forms of the Old Testament Literature
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
<i>GTJ</i>	<i>Grace Theological Journal</i>
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
<i>HTS</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Studies</i>
<i>HTS<sup>l</sup></i>	<i>Hervormde Teologiese Studies</i>
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>IBS</i>	<i>Irish Biblical Studies</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IDB	The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, ed. G. A. Buttrick, 4 vols., New York, 1962
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
ISBL	Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature
ITC	International Theological Commentary
<i>JAAR</i>	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JBQ</i>	<i>Jewish Bible Quarterly</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JLS</i>	<i>Journal of Literary Studies</i>
JPS	Jewish Publication Society translation
<i>JR</i>	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>MLN</i>	<i>Modern Language Notes</i>
NAC	New American Commentary
NEB	New English Bible
<i>NGTT</i>	<i>Nederduits gereformeerde teologiese tydskrif</i>
NIBC	New International Biblical Commentary
NICOT	The New International Commentary on the Old Testament

<i>NIDOTTE</i>	<i>The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i>
OBT	Overtures to Biblical Theology
OTG	Old Testament Guides
OTL	Old Testament Literary
<i>PT</i>	<i>Protestantische Texte</i>
PTMS	Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series
<i>RQ</i>	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series.
SSEJC	Studies in Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity
<i>StudBT</i>	<i>Studia biblica et theologica</i>
<i>TDOT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> , ed. G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren
<i>ThDig</i>	<i>Theology Digest</i>
<i>TNB</i>	<i>The New Blackfriars</i>
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
<i>TTod</i>	<i>Theology Today</i>
<i>TWAT</i>	<i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament</i> , ed. G. J. Botterweck, H. Ringgren, 8 vols., Stuttgart, 1970-1995.
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
<i>WW</i>	<i>Word &amp; World</i>
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZB	Zürcher Bibelkommentare

### **Bible Books with Apocrypha**

Gen	Isa	Luke
Exod	Jer	John
Lev	Lam	Acts
Deut	Dan	1, 2 Cor



Josh	Hos	Gal
Judg	Joel	Eph
Ruth	Amos	Phil
1, 2 Sam	Obad	Col
1, 2 Kgs	Jonah	1, 2 Thess
1, 2 Chr	Mic	1, 2 Tim
Ezra	Nah	Titus
Neh	Hab	Phlm
Esth	Zeph	Heb
Job	Hag	Jas
Ps (pl. Pss)	Zech	1, 2 Pet
Prov	Mal	1, 2, 3 John
Eccl	Matt	Jude
Song	Mark	Rev
Sir (Sirach, Ecclesiasticus)		

### General abbreviations

cf.	<i>confer</i> (compare)
ch(s)	chapter(s)
conj.	conjecture
consec.	consecutive
ed(s)	editor(s), edited by
e.g.	<i>exempli gratia</i> (for example)
esp.	especially
ET	English translation
et al.	<i>et alii</i> (and others)
f(f).	<i>folio(foliis)</i> ([and] on the [following] page[s])
hi.	hiphil
idem	the same
i.e.	<i>id est</i> (that is)
impf.	imperfect
masc.	masculine
p(p)	page(s)



pf.	perfect
q.	qal
sing.	singular
tr.	translation, translated (by)
v(v).	verse(s)

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Rationale for this study: A Peculiarity of Methods For Reading the Abraham Narrative

Any work has to start somewhere, and not everything that is stated can be proved in detail. Thus, this study, too, has its presuppositions. It will take for granted the fact both literarily and historically, that the Pentateuch was originally composed as a single book (cf. Harrison 1969:531-541; esp. 541).<sup>1</sup> It will be assumed that its themes and central ideas were presented by the author/the final composer.<sup>2</sup> In reading the

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. O. Eissefeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction*, trans. P. R. Ackroyd (Oxford & Basil: Blackwell, 1974), 156; G. Fohrer, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, trans. D. E. Green (Nashville: Abingdon, 1968), 103; W. H. Schmidt, *Old Testament Introduction*, trans. M. J. O'Connell (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 43; H. B. Swete, *An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek* (New York: KTAV, 1968), 215, especially for the earliest references to the Greek Pentateuch. Meanwhile, in his work, T. D. Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land* (Grand Rapids: Paternoster Press & Baker Academic, 2002), 97-100, gives some reasons with various factors why the Pentateuch should be read as a whole:

- A. The idea of the promised land, which penetrates from Genesis to Deuteronomy.
- B. Thematic relevancies between the five individual books (e.g., the fulfillment of Joseph's will in Gen 50:25 and Exod 13:19; dedication and appointment of priests in Exodus 29 and Leviticus 9; the death of Moses in Num 20:12 and Deut 34).
- C. Genesis is clearly integrated into the overall plot. For instance, the Joseph narrative presents a crucial parallel between the patriarchal narratives and their posterities.

In this context, one may affirm the unity of the Pentateuch, though the books consist of very diverse components and even superficially give the impression of disunity.

<sup>2</sup> Although the entire Pentateuch is anonymous, larger portions of the legal material (Exod 24:4; 30:11, 17; 33:1, 5; 39:1, 5, 29; Lev 1:1; 4:1; 6:1; Num 4:1; Deut 1:1, 5; 5:1; 31:22, 30; 33:1) in the Pentateuch, the common assumption of post-exilic Judaism (1 Chr 15:15; 22:13; 2 Chr 23:18; 24:6; 25:4; 30:16; 35:12; Ezra 3:2; 7:6; Neh 1:7; 8:1; 13:1; Sir 24:23; also Philo, Josephus, the Mishna and Talmud), even Jesus and his disciples (Matt 8:4; Luke 16:31; 24:27, 44; John 1:17; Acts 3:22), are respectively conclude that it is not irrational to assert that "Moses is the person primarily responsible for the writing of the Pentateuch." See, D. Garrett, *Rethinking Genesis: The Sources and Authorship of the First Book of the Bible* (Ross-shir: Mentor, 2000), 47. In this study, the term 'the author' of the Pentateuch is more properly understood as 'the final composer' as the one who gave the book its final shape with his own compositional strategy, rather than the editor/compiler or the redactor. Noted in J. H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zandervan, 1992), 33-35; id., *Introduction to Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zandervan, 1995),

Pentateuch, it is evident that when one views the Genesis narratives to the exclusion of the rest part of the Pentateuch there is appreciable loss of the major theme or sense as well as a susceptibility for missing the details of the book.

With regard to discussion of the disparate nature of the materials that have been used in the Pentateuch (the composition of Genesis in particular) this work does not intend to raise the question of the peculiarity of the literary strata.<sup>3</sup> Rather, the particular focus

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206-15. This use rests on the observation suggesting the premise that the author is a real person who writes with a certain compositional strategy, bending the different sources (whether oral or literary) for a designed purpose in the text. For convenience, the term 'the author' thus shall generally be referred to as 'the final composer' as well. Thus, these terms will be used together in this study. For further more authorship of Genesis, cf. R. B. Dillard & T. Longman III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: ZondervanPublishingHouse, 1995), 38-39; R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 497; R. N. Whybray, *The Making of the Pentateuch: A Methodological Study* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 221-22; S. Sandmel, "The Haggada Within Scripture," *JBL* 80 (1961): 105-22.

<sup>3</sup> Most studies by modern biblical critics have consistently focused on the various literary strata (fragmentation) reflected in such differences within the Pentateuch, especially the book of Genesis. A common feature of biblical-critical interpretation has been to interpret the contents of the book as a literary composite, which is divided into small sections in isolation from one another. It is, of course, important to discover the anatomy of a text by dissection, but such an approach puts too much emphasis on discovering sources rather than interpreting whole texts. More important, however, is how the component parts relate to each other, namely, what literary relationship exist which were intended by the author/composer. In fact, as R. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York & London: Basic Books & Allen & Unwin, 1981), 133-40, illustrated inconsistencies and narrative gaps can be turned into literary virtues easily seen and transcribed by the sensitive reader. M. Sternberg, *The Poetics of Bible Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* ISBL (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 365-440, regards the 'gaps' and 'doublets' as important expression of a sophisticated literary technique. Some scholars (e.g., H. C. Brichto, "The Worship of the Golden Calf: A Literary Analysis of a Fable on Idolatry," *HUCA* 54 [1983]: 1-44; B. S. Child, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary* OTL [Philadelphia & London: The Westminster Press & SCM, 1974]; R. W. L. Moberly, *At the Mountain of God: Story and Theology in Exodus 32-34* JSOTSup 22 [Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1983]) also accept the coexistence of seemingly disparate elements in the text and strive to absorb these elements in the order indicated by the textual organization, even though they represent different methodological standpoints (i.e., different views on the character of the text and the literary processes which shaped them), and refer to different categories of analysis. On their common character as well as the inherent significance of their special and questionable type of approach, cf. M. S. Smith, *The Pilgrimage Pattern in Exodus* JSOTSup 239 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 176-79. Whybray, *The Making of the Pentateuch*, 235, 237-42, on the one hand, seems to equate the impact of the 'controlling genius' with influence upon the textual shape. Cf. D. J. A. Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch* JSOTSup 10 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 17-21. He raises doubts for the existence of parallel J and E sources underlying this section of Genesis as some critics have argued (e.g., G. W. Coats, *From Canaan to Egypt: Structural and Theological Context for the Joseph Story* CBQMS 4 [Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1976], H. Donner, *Die literaturische Gestalt des alttestamentlichen Josephgeschichte* [Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1976]; D. B. Redford, *A Study of the Biblical Story of Joseph* VTSup 20 [Genesis 37-50] [Leiden: Brill, 1970]. J. Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975], not merely

(or, greatest concern) in this study is about the role that a particular literary unit played in the compositional strategy of the author/the final composer of the Pentateuch as a whole.<sup>4</sup> It is still necessary to understand how these different literary parts are compositionally related to each other.<sup>5</sup> In short, this means that serious reflection on the nature of the textuality of Scripture is needed.<sup>6</sup> Such an interpretive premise implies that this study of Genesis, which has been the eye of a storm of biblical

rejects the source analysis of the Abraham narrative, suggested by the Documentary Hypothesis, but offers also an interesting alternative. M. A. Fishbane, "Composition and Structure in the Jacob Cycle (Gen 25:19-35:22)," *JJS* 26 (1975): 15-38, and J. P. Fokkelmann, *Narrative Art in Genesis: Specimens of Stylistic and Structural Analysis* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), call the accepted source analysis of the Jacob cycle into serious question. Cf. R. Rendtorff, *The Problem of the Process of Transmission of the Pentateuch*, trans. J. J. Scullion (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990).

<sup>4</sup> In this respect, J. H. Sailhamer, "The Canonical Approach to the Old Testament: Its Effect on Understanding Prophecys" *JETS* 30 (1987), 307-15; id., "The Mosaic Law and the Theology of the Pentateuch," *WTJ* 53 (1991): 241-61; id., *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 33-59; *Introduction to Old Testament Theology*, 206-15, maintains that the distinct textuality between texts in the Pentateuch strongly argues the fact that the Pentateuch scrupulously composed with a discernible compositional strategy, which encompasses the entire texts of the Pentateuch. The final shaping of the Pentateuch not merely reveals such a compositional scheme, but indicates of the hermeneutic of the author/the final composer of the Pentateuch, uncovering the central concerns, namely inherent relationship between the past and the future, which could call it an eschatological reading of the historical narratives. The compositional strategy of the Pentateuch presents the final shape of the books:

NARRATIVE	POETRY	EPILOGUE
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On the recent works of the integrity of Genesis as a whole under the literary-critical readings, see, B. S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979); Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch*; B. T. Dahlberg, "On Recognizing Unity of Genesis," *ThDig* 24 (1976): 360-67; T. E. Fretheim, "The Book of Genesis: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 1, ed. C. Simpson (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 1996; T. W. Mann, "All the Families of the Earth: The Theological Unity of Genesis," *Int* 45 (1991): 341-53.

<sup>5</sup> In connection with the idea, T. D. Alexander, "Genealogies, Seed and the Compositional Unity of Genesis," *TynBul* 44 (1993): 257, trenchantly summarizes as follows:

Why did the author/editor select and arrange the material to form the present text? What overall intention underlies the final composition of Genesis? In this regard, it is perhaps helpful to compare Genesis to a collage made of different types of materials and colors. Merely to note the origin of the different parts or their particular features is insufficient. We need also to observe the way in which they interrelate and the effect which they produce as a whole.

<sup>6</sup> In fact, on over the last two centuries scholars have been shown their ignorance of the importance of the nature of the textuality of the Bible. They have mostly concentrated on historical concerns, namely the study of nontextual entities – historiography, archaeology, and the nature of historical events. As a result, the recognitional significance of the text as the locus of revelation and the focus of theology were relatively forgotten. Attention must be devoted to answering the questions which can result in a better understanding of texts: What is a text?; How does a text work?

criticism in the twentieth century, should be focused on the need to develop a synthetic (as opposed to analytic) approach towards the text of the book (Anderson 1978:23; Polzin 1975:82-83).<sup>7</sup> This suggests that to fully appreciate the biblical material it is necessary to emphasize and to seek the final form of the text as a literary product, worthy of attention in its own right (cf. von Rad 1972:440; Whybray 1977:14). This does not, of course, imply that traditional approaches applied to the book of Genesis have no direct bearing on the validity of the results attained by examining these interpretive placements at all, but it surely does imply that, at least, primary weight should be laid on the final form.

In fact, with regard to the Pentateuch, past biblical scholars have generally presented it in a way of both an easily discernible unity and a perceptible lack of uniformity by their neglecting the final form of a literary work in favor of hypothetical reconstructions.<sup>8</sup> Though the bold historical undertaking of the nineteenth century<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> It is the fact that in this period when the source-critical approach was still dominant, attention was concentrated on the historical questions of the text and consequently the importance of the present form of our texts was neglected. Although the advent of form criticism led to more concern with the present text (e.g., G. von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, trans. J. H. Marks & J. Bowden OTL [London: SCM Press, 1972], basically the study was oriented by historical concern [i.e., oral/written tradition or history of the religion of Israel]). Therefore, this has created a climate in which scholars have fortunately advocated the need to develop a synthetic and synchronic approach to the biblical text (cf. R. Alter, "A Literary Approach to the Bible," *Commentary* 60 [1975]: 70-77; id., *The Art of Biblical Narrative*; Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch*; Fishbane, "Composition and Structure," 6-27).

<sup>8</sup> Modern biblical exegesis attempts to determine the meaning of biblical texts by means of both diachronic and synchronic methods. The diachronic methods, such as those of redaction criticism and tradition criticism and the historical-comparative methods, are aimed at an explanation of biblical texts based on the study and reconstruction of oral and written geneses or traditions. The synchronic methods, such as form criticism and literary criticism, seek to provide an explanation of the text on the basis of the study of the genres to which a text belongs and the study of the stylistic and literary composition of the text. The commentary of C. Westermann, *Genesis*, trans. D. E. Green (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1987) on the book of Genesis may serve as an example of such modern exegesis. It is generally accepted as a good exegetic study which combines a diachronic – that is traditional critical, and a synchronic – namely form critical approach. In his work, he tries to explain the irregularities and contradictions in the text of Genesis on the basis of various traditions that have preceded the formation of the text. The explanation of what he considers to be irregularities in the text is not based on the text itself, but on the notion that various traditions have supplied the textual elements and as a consequence have determined the meaning of the text.

has made important contributions to our knowledge of the biblical text, it has, however, tended to see the lack of consistency of style, theological emphasis, logical consistency and vocabulary of the Pentateuch as a sign of a lack of unity in the structure and message.<sup>10</sup> It is these textual inconsistencies that have consistently caused scholars to question the unity of the text.

In particular, the application of form criticism (*Formgeschichte*, *Gattungsgeschichte* or *Literaturgeschichte*, lit., a history of [literary] types or “genres” or history of literature)<sup>11</sup> to Genesis has divided and atomized the texts. Hermann Gunkel (1862-1932) who was a pioneer of an important new development in approaching the biblical literature, sought to go beyond the work of earlier source critics by examining the development of the Israelite traditions in their oral stage. He hypothesized that before the present account of Genesis there were numerous independent sagas, which originally circulated in poetic form. He sought thus to rediscover the original setting in life of these material (*Sitz im Leben*), as well as these separate sagas. Gunkel’s

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<sup>9</sup> In this regard, there was an effort to distinguish sources in the Epic of Gilgamesh in terms of only depend on comparison with other, known, texts (A. Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1983): 132-34; cf. J. H. Tigay, *The Evolution of the Gilgamesh Epic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982); W. Moran, “The Gilgamesh Epic: A Masterpiece from Ancient Mesopotamia,” *CANE IV* (1995): 2327-336.

<sup>10</sup> In this sense, McEvenue’s appraisal of traditional approach is pertinent (“Reading Genesis with Faith and Reason,” *WW 14* [1994]: 137-38):

What is right about historical research is, first, that it is truly attentive to the physical text of the Bible and truly obedient to the data. Second, by searching for the historical contexts of biblical texts, it establishes in advance the existential nature of biblical messages, preserving interpreters from deriving simplistic doctrinal meanings. Third, historical research has won respect by its sheer brilliance – making inferences from what is often inadvertent in the text, detecting specific constraints and focuses in the horizon of the author, speculating about life situations that could evoke a text, relating these to real moments in Israel’s history, and so forth.

<sup>11</sup> In fact the term was used first by M Dibelius who is a student of Gunkel in his work, *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums* (Eng., From [Oral] Tradition to Gospel [London: Ivor Nicholson & Watson, Ltd., 1934]); cf. J. Clarke, “The Flood and the Structure of the Pre-patriarchal History,” *ZAW 83* (1971): 184-211.

judgment, in particular, is that there is a single correct or natural classification for literary texts (cf. Gunkel 1964:vii-xii, 159).<sup>12</sup> He noted that Genesis consists of numerous episodes (the variants types of material), which originally existed as independent oral stories (e.g., legend, concerns the life of a family, and tends to be poetic). Fundamental to his method to Genesis is that these materials appear to have been collected together at the oral state to form a longer narrative comprising various episodes, for example, the story of Abraham<sup>13</sup> and Lot, because he believed that the

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<sup>12</sup> In his commentary on Genesis, first published in 1901(esp. in an introduction entitled “*Die Sagen der Genesis*”) Gunkel divided Genesis into two portions: Genesis 1-11, mythical in nature, and Genesis 12-50, the legends of the patriarchs. Genesis is, thus, for him a folk book, a collection of legends. Consequently, he discussed the question of the nature of the literary materials in Genesis and the materials’ relationship to oral tradition in terms of operating two categories: *history* (*Geschichte*) – always transmitted in writing, concerns a political environment, and is prosaic, and *saga* – preceded the writing of history and reflected an earlier stage in the development of a people (cf. H. Gunkel, *The Folktale in the Old Testament*, trans. M. D. Rutter [Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1987], 21-27; P. G. Kirkpatrick, *The Old Testament and Folklore Study JSOTSup 62* [Sheffield: JSOT Press 1988], 24). In particular, he suggested that the episodes in the patriarchal narratives were collected and edited over long period of time. He acknowledged the existence of pre-canonical collections, the J, E, and P strata, and while he considered the editors of these strata to have had an active role in the editing of the text (pp. LXXXff.), he considered their role to be limited essentially to collecting the material, material which they often did not fully understand (p. LXXXV). The earliest written forms may have rearranged and supplemented the materials, but to some extent, they merely reproduced the oral tradition. Thus, his analysis actually tended toward tracing the diverse forms into the recesses of history, and so the emphasis fell not on any unity but on the idea of original diversity. In the perception of Gunkel, Genesis appeared radically splintered. Besides, in his influential work, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972), 44, Martin Noth, thought that the Pentateuchal traditions, a saga-tradition had received a fixed form in the oral stage. He viewed the tradition “emerged, developed, and was transmitted through the mouths of ‘narrators’ within the anonymous totality of the tribes and their several clans at those times when they were gathered together, that is, pre-eminently on cultic occasion” (*A History of Pentateuchal Traditions*, 44). This is a diverse aspect from Gunkel, but he followed Gunkel in the view that the rise of the state fosters the tradition from saga tradition to history. The two scholars are agreed that the traditions of Israel were transmitted orally, especially in the pre-monarchic period, when the traditions began as simple tales, individual episodes, which were subsequently collected and elaborated. Meanwhile, the two scholars, Thompson and Van Seters have reexamined the patriarchal materials and have concluded that very little can be known about the patriarchs and have raised serious doubts about the antiquity of the patriarchal traditions. See, Thompson’s archaeological issues concerning the patriarchs (esp. the Nuzi materials as a means of explaining the matriarchal marriage customs), *The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narrative: The Quest for the Historical Abraham* BZAW 133 (Berlin: W de Gruyter, 1974) and Van Seters’ examination of the non-literary arguments and the literary analysis of the Abraham tradition, and its pre-literary form and its subsequent development (*Abraham in History and Tradition*). Van Seters agrees with previous scholars that the patriarchal tradition is clearly not a unity, because of the presence of doublets and internal inconsistencies within some of the stories. He regarded the repetition of words or phrases as indications of differing sources only when the repetition is awkward and breaks the continuity of thought and action.

<sup>13</sup> For convenience, the names Abraham and Sarah shall be used the familiar longer form of their names

materials in Genesis originated orally. He thus proposed that during the oral stage of transmission some of them were collected together to form larger units. According to his argument, these episodes represented short, separate stories, which are designated their genre, for instance, Sagen (e.g., legends, fables, myths, tales, sing, [heroic] sage, sundry “report”).<sup>14</sup> As a result, in Gunkel’s opinion, Genesis was composed of short episodes that once circulated orally within an ancient society storytelling initially involved the use of Sagen, short oral account, and only later did this primitive form develop into ‘history’ (*Geschichte*).<sup>15</sup> An important implication of Gunkel’s approach was that he came to view the sources J and E as collections of oral material. Accordingly, it was no longer appropriate to think of Yahwist and Elohist as ‘authors’; they were merely collectors, who brought together material that was not entirely homogeneous, while he viewed P as an ‘author’ who clearly shaped into his own mould any traditional material that he received.<sup>16</sup>

He, and even more, some of adherents (e.g., Albrecht Alt<sup>17</sup>, Gerhard von Rad<sup>18</sup>, Martin

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throughout this study in spite of the fact that these are first introduced in Gen 17:5 and 17:15 to replace the earlier designations Abram and Sarai respectively.

<sup>14</sup> This method has been seriously challenged, and the form categories assigned to the individual units have been found to be anachronistic or meaningless (cf. Garrett, *Rethinking Genesis*, 31-46; B. K. Waltke, “Oral Tradition,” in *A Tribute to Gleason Archer*, ed. W. Kaiser & R. Youngblood [Chicago: Moody, 1986], 17-34; Whybray, *The Making of the Pentateuch*, 133-219). For a various list of the genres in Genesis, see, G. W. Coats, *Genesis: With an Introduction to Narrative Literature* FOTL 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 317-20.

<sup>15</sup> See, Warner’s helpful summary of Gunkel’s approach, “Primitive Saga Men,” *VT* 2 (1979): 329.

<sup>16</sup> According to some critics, the two major strands (J and P) reflect particular historical situations, most likely the rise of the Davidic-Solomonic in the tenth century and the fall of the state of Judah to the Babylonians in the sixth (cf. R. E. Friedman, *The Exile and Biblical Narrative: The Formation of the Deuteronomistic and Priestly Works* [Chico: Scholars Press, 1981] and R. B. Coote & D. R. Ord, *The Bible’s First Historian: From Eden to the Court of David with the Yahwist* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989]).

<sup>17</sup> Alt produced influential studies on the religion of the patriarchs as cult founders (“The God of the Fathers,” in *Essays on Old Testament History and Religion* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1966], 3-77), which is about the evolution of Israelite religion prior to the time of the monarchy, and Israelite law, which is about the two main types of law found in the Pentateuch; casuistic (If a man...) and apodictic (Thou shalt (not)...). See, for the former, *Der Gott der Väter*, Stuttgart, 1929; reprinted in *Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israel I* (München: C H Beck’sche, 1953), 1-78. E. Nicholson, *The Pentateuch in*

Noth<sup>19</sup>, The Scandinavian Scholars<sup>20</sup>, and Van Seters<sup>21</sup>) who came under the profound

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*the Twentieth Century: The Legacy of Julius Wellhausen* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 54-58, has summed up Alt's views on early Israelite religion. Also, see the latter, *Die Ursprünge des israelitischen Recht*, 1934; reprinted in *Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israels I* (München: Beck'sche, 1953); ET in *Essays on Old Testament History and Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1966). Some critics criticize both Alt's method and his proposal, Alt's use of historical analogy (reconstruction), that is, the religion of the Nabateans as an analogue (Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition*, 158-61) and his inconsistent criteria of a pre-literary tradition (Kirkpatrick, *The Old Testament and Folklore Study*, 36). In fact, there is not objective grounds for the isolation of the El deities from their literary contexts as oral traditions, to say nothing of substantiating the highly complex, multi-layered history of tradition Alt has proposed hypothetically and subjectively.

<sup>18</sup> *Das formgeschichtliche Problem des Hexateuch* (Stuttgart: W Kohlhammer, 1938); ET, *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1966). In this work, He asserted that J was composed along the lines of an outline of Israel's history contained in early creedal forms, for example, Deut 6:20-24; 26:5b-9; Josh 24:2b-13, used in cultic celebrations. According to him, these had been originally used in cultic worship related to the Festival of Weeks held at Gilgal during the initial period of Israel's settlement in Canaan. However, his thesis faces one major criticism, which concerns the dating of the short historical credos. For his position to be substantiated it is necessary that these credos be dated earlier than J. However, the evidence suggests that on each occasion the credo occurs in passage which are usually dated later than J. It is therefore impossible to demonstrate that J was based upon such creedal confessions. Some critical scholars also hold that it is not possible to determine with certainty the presence of orally transmitted narrative in a written text, that the 'creed' (esp. Deut 26:5b-9) are not necessarily independent of other themes. von Rad's methodological legitimacy that it is possible that pre-history of the text, the tradition can be extract the early Israelites' interpretation of history from the text and used it to develop the theological model of *Heilsgeschichte* (salvation history) has been challenged by them (cf. D. A. Knight, "The Pentateuch," in *The Hebrew Bible and its Modern Interpreters* [Chico: Scholars Press, 1985], 268-72).

<sup>19</sup> *Überlieferungsgeschichte des Pentateuch* (Stuttgart: W Kohlhammer, 1948); ET *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1972). This work describes on the pre-history of the sources J, E and P adopting the tradition or tradition-historical approach, which concerns with outlining the history of the traditions prior to their final redaction. In order to argue von Rad's position Noth employed the five themes as a central of the traditions passed independently for a long process to combine the various traditions contained in J: 1) the guidance out of Egypt, 2) the guidance to the arable land, 3) the promises to the Patriarchs, 4) the guidance in the wilderness, and 5) the revelation at Sinai. Noth holds that the central cult of the amphictyony was the place where the themes were merged (For the critical view on Noth's amphictyony, see Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 332-34. Noth's supposition that he can distinguish earlier from later material in the text on the basis of style and uses the dubious criterion that short and concise narratives are the earliest have critically observed by Knight, "The Pentateuch," 265-68, and Whybray, *The Making of the Pentateuch*, 187-90, 194-96).

<sup>20</sup> Cf. their skepticism regarding the possibility of recovering a complex oral tradition (see, Whybray *The Making of the Pentateuch*, 202).

<sup>21</sup> Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition*, 158-61, accepts three major areas of concerns in Olrik's laws: 1) general structural characteristics, 2) internal structural characteristics, and 3) characterization. Developing Olrik's laws and following some criteria, including the notion that the simple forms are the earliest and complex forms are the most recent. A second account may both summarize and add new details, that a story may assume knowledge of an earlier version of the same story (the 'blind motif'), and that verbal similarity indicates literary dependence. Cf. his, *In Search of History: Historiography in the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 38. For instance, he holds that Gen 12:10-20 is a primitive folktale piece of oral literature. In addition, he views that Genesis 20 is a literary account dependent on Gen 12:10-20 because of 'blind motifs', and that Genesis 26 is a literary conflation of the previous two accounts (*Abraham in History and Tradition*, 162-63, 167-83). For the different view on Van Seters' own criteria for oral literature and his assertion on oral composition variants, see T. L. Thompson, *The Origin Tradition of*



influence of Gunkel, believed it possible to reconstruct oral antecedents for the written texts present in the Bible on the assumption that such antecedents indicated the stamps of a single genre “purely” and “simply.”<sup>22</sup> Due to his brilliant surgical work of Genesis, a number of scholars who fractionalize the book from the angle of academic (or scientific) and critical (e.g., Driver; Eissfeldt; Speiser) methods, have generally treated the book simply as a collection of once independent pericopes.<sup>23</sup> They have fundamentally viewed the interpretive task as both analytic and diachronic [as Anderson (1978:23) pointed out early]. In putting their own interpretive premise in this way, they have reduced texts in Genesis to a group of various documents and/or redactional strands in order to determine the origins of the book.<sup>24</sup> As a result, they have concluded that that nothing much may be gained from an attempt to examine the unity of the book (cf. Mann 1991:341-353).<sup>25</sup> It is appear that such a reading of the text

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*Ancient Israel : I. The Literary Formation of Genesis and Exodus 1-23* JSOTSup 55 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987), 53-55, and Kirkpatrick, *The Old Testament and Folklore Study*, 62-64.

<sup>22</sup> Gunkel’s basic position is that in literature there are three aspects - that is, a characteristic content, a definite linguistic form, and life setting (*Sitz im Leben*) – reacting against a purely particularist way of looking at the texts. Yet, the question remains, in literature, do these three aspects strictly cohere with one another as Gunkel suggests? Can a certain idea be expressed in more than one linguistic form and under different external conditions? Is there a clear classification and only one that is appropriate for the biblical text? Gunkel’s mistaken belief in the regularity of genres on an oral level produced a special, historical twist in his study. Over the last several decades it has ultimately become apparent that the form criticism, as a tool for reconstructing early forms, has little basis for speculative reconstructions because of its rejection of the simplicity of oral forms.

<sup>23</sup> However, some critics have recently suggested that Genesis is clearly more than a collection of diverse elements (e.g., J. P. Fokkelman, “Genesis,” in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, eds. R. Alter & F. Kermode [Glasgow & Cambridge: William Collins Sons & Co/Belknap, 1987], 36-55; E. Fox, “Can Genesis Be Read as a Book?” *Semeia* 46 [1989]: 31-40; T. L. Brodie, *Genesis as Dialogue: A Literary, Historical, and Theological Commentary* [Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2001a], 5-25). They argue that, despite its complexity and diversity, Genesis is a single unified text, not a collection of disparate episodes.

<sup>24</sup> In this respect, to give an extreme example, Speiser’s, *Genesis*, AB1 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 293-94, comments are representative. Some scholars, however, have pointed out the failure of assertions, which seek to dissociate the narrative sections which comprise Genesis; see, Kirkpatrick, *The Old Testament and Folklore Study*; Warner, “Primitive Saga Men,” 335, and Whybray, *The Making of the Pentateuch*, 133-219.

<sup>25</sup> For they basically allege that “Genesis is a rich composite of many different oral traditions, written sources, and editorial hands” so that they “can identify scores of different literary genres deriving from as many sociological settings” as Mann stated. The main reasons for rejecting unity of the book are

of Genesis would seem to have a unique tendency to highlight apparent discrepancies and to attribute repetition to different sources reflecting actual historical events and authorial situations (cf. von Rad 1972:119-121; Speiser 1964:54-56).

This type of exegesis, which not only attempts to explain the unproblematic parts of texts on the basis of their present state but also the ambiguous parts of these texts on the basis of earlier oral and written stages, however, is often unsatisfactory and leaves the need for an approach which takes as its object the text in its final form and in relation to its (intended) functioning with respect to a certain reading public or religious community. Thus, two aspects can be described about the weakness in such a reading:

1. It is the lack of appreciation for their relationship to the many other episodes that comprise the rest of the book (cf, Muilenburg 1969:4; Polzin 1975:82-83).<sup>26</sup>

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sixfold:

- A. Variation in style and language in the description of creation (Gen 1:1-2:4a and 2:4b-24);
- B. Variation in the name of God (Gen 1:1-2:4a – “God”; Gen 2:4b-Genesis 3 – “YHWH God”; Gen 4:1-16 – “YHWH”);
- C. Variation in viewpoint or theology (Gen 1:1-2:4a – God’s elevation and distantness; Gen 2:4b-4:16 – God’s anthropomorphic);
- D. Repetitions and doublets (Gen 45:3-4 – Joseph’s revealing his identity; Gen 12:10-20; Genesis 20; Gen 26:1-11 – episodes about an endangered wife);
- E. Internal contradictions (Gen 38:25-28, 36 – the description of the passers-by [Ishmaelites/Midianites] in the sale of Joseph); cf. A. F. Campbell & M. A. O’Brien, *Sources of the Pentateuch: Texts, Introduction, Annotations* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993), 225;
- F. The diversity of stories in content and especially in form: Genesis seems episodic that is like a series of stories or episodes. The stories in Genesis are diverse in content, and even more so in form, because of the dynamics of oral tradition. Genesis therefore can be perceived as a disparate collection of orally transmitted stories (cf. H. Gunkel, *The Stories of Genesis. A translation of the introduction to the third expanded edition [1910] of Gunkel’s commentary on Genesis. With an added introduction by the translator, J. J. Scullion* [Vallejo: Bibal, 1994], 63-92.

<sup>26</sup> Eissfeldt in his work, *Die kleinste literarische Einheit in den Erzählungsbüchern des Alten Testaments* Kleine Schriften I (Tübingen, JCB Mohr, 1962), 49, had emphasized the necessity of studying the inter-relationships between text sections in Genesis rather than simply to multiply these sections by repeatedly dividing the text.

2. By concentrating on the genetic development of the text material, there is a tendency to neglect the compositional strategy by an author or a composer.<sup>27</sup>

Happily, in this regards, the final form of the book of Genesis currently receives more attention and the traditional idea of a somewhat haphazard arrangement is being questioned (Adar 1990:9; Baker 1980:197-215; Cassuto 1973:197-215; Dahlberg 1976:360-367, 1982:126-133; Fokkelman 1987:36-55; Fox 1989:31-40; Greenstein 1982:114-125; Sarna 1981:76-82). This paradigmatic shift is due partly to the fact that the gains of atomistic methods like form criticism have begun to diminish. However, on the one hand, it is now appropriate to turn to a kind of historical-critical method that goes more clearly beyond the older orientations, while, on the other, accepting useful insights that have been reached by work within them.<sup>28</sup>

### 1.1.1. Aim and Objectives

As discerned above, it must be acknowledged that historical-critical approach in exegesis has tended to ignore the question of why Genesis was composed, and why the larger and smaller narrative units in the book should be understood within the compositional strategy of the entire Pentateuch. These questions, indeed, are as

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<sup>27</sup> As stated earlier in this work the aim of using form criticism is to reconstruct the early *Sitz im Leben* (i.e., 'life setting') of a specific literary unity. When using form critical tools in the analysis of textuality of a passage, however, the aim is always the *Sitz im Text* (i.e., 'text setting'). Thus, D. W. Baker, "Diversity and Unity in the Literary Structure of Genesis," in *Essays on the Patriarchal Narratives*, eds. A. R. Millard & D. J. Wiseman (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1980), 189, asserts that each passage must be seen in its objective *Sitz im Text* before it can be studied in its often more vague and subjective *Sitz im Leben*. Isolating a distinct literary form is of value only to the extent that it elucidates the present text strategy. Cf. M. Kessler, "A Methodological Setting for Rhetorical Criticism," *Semitics* (1974): 22-36. In conjunction with the idea, along with some eclectic methodologies (i.e., intertextuality and the narrative approach), composition criticism as a pivotal method for this study will be discussed in greater detail in the section of the methodological considerations.

<sup>28</sup> On the basic interpretive stance of this work, see n. 27.

important as the issue of how Genesis originated.<sup>29</sup> To be sure, there are good reasons for a historical-critical approach, due to the fact that the Abraham narrative offers several textual tensions and transitions which are likely to be explained from different sources and textual layers. However, as Westermann (1980:57) fittingly observed, “the various types of presentation in the Abraham narrative reveals a surprising organization that cannot simply be written off as accidental,” despite his thorough form critical and, a tradition-historical approach of the patriarchal cycles under the rubric of “promises to the fathers.” In other words, each section maintains its own integrity in terms of both structural (i.e., consistent and chiasmic) and thematic aspects (i.e., the blessing of the descendant and the land). This fact reflects an indication of an architectonic whole, which means that, far from being a mere collection of traditions about Israel’s beginning, the book is a text of considerable layering that has been scrupulously knit together with artistic tools of a high caliber.<sup>30</sup> In the sense, John H Sailhamer’s language (1992:24-25) is apt:

To sustain a realistic understanding of the book’s unity, an appreciation of the nature of its composition and an understanding of its structure are necessary.<sup>31</sup>

In this regard, one, in this study, may indicate not merely the traditional approach’s twist in a total lack of comprehensive planning in the composition of the Pentateuch,

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<sup>29</sup> Thus, this question is not so much about the parts or various layers of the text, but rather how the parts hold together and provide coherence to the whole. This is to recognize the structure of the composition, “the configuration of its component part,” how language and rhetorical devices (like parallelism, repetition and verbal registers) are used to illustrate sequence and movement of the text in the unfolding of its inner development. Cf. J. Muilenburg, “Form Criticism and Beyond,” *JBL* 88 (1969): 11.

<sup>30</sup> The consistent overlapping structures, that is, chiasms, spiraling (or tapering) stories, double dramas, and diptychs, are indications in varying ways that the structures of Genesis are complex, but they are so consistent that they indicate well-wrought unity – complex and sophisticated. See, Brodie, *Genesis as Dialogue: A Literary*, 11-35.

<sup>31</sup> Sailhamer’s such an interpretive suggestion will form the background to this work concerning the exegetical analysis of the Abraham narrative.

but also offers a hermeneutical and theological view of the Abraham narrative (Gen 11:27-25:11) in a more balanced reading of the Scripture.<sup>32</sup> For this reason, the center of the claim of this work, which is in some respects the point of disagreement with the traditional approaches that emphasize the division of a text into its constituent parts, basically is the contention that biblical texts should be studied as wholes.<sup>33</sup>

In such a fundamental interpretive premise, the primary emphasis of this study is on reading text as a seamless narrative, which renders the representation of its own world (cf. Barr 1976:1-17; Frye 1981:39-50, 64-65; Wicker 1975).<sup>34</sup> The method employed in the present work, thus, will be to analyze the narrative text in its received form; in other words, no interest will be taken in the source-critical or traditio-critical facets of

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<sup>32</sup> In fact this work is an exegetical attempt of biblical exegesis in the way of combining exegetical methods into a cluster of methods within a comprehensive exegetical approach in which one method supplements the other and one step serves to verify the findings of the precious one (cf. J. A. Loader, "Gedagtes oor gekontroleerde eksegesi," *HTS* 34 [1978]: 1-11).

<sup>33</sup> Yet this work does not agree with some of the more radical proponents of the approach (e.g., D. Robertson, "Literature, the Bible as," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Sup. vol [Nashville: Abingdon, 1976], 548, and M. Weiss, *The Bible from Within: The method of Total Interpretation* [Jerusalem: Magnes, 1984], 1-46) that downplay traditional approaches. There is no denial that the text has a prehistory, enquiry into which is legitimate. Nor is it ahistorical, inasmuch as it seeks to establish the meaning of the final form given by the author or composer as an ancient Israelite text. As W. G. Plaut, *The Torah: A Modern Commentary* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congressions, 1981), xxiii, pointed out, what is important to do interpretation of the text is a balanced reading balance. In this sense, Coats, *From Canaan to Egypt*, 59, has suggested that the analytic and synthetic approaches to the biblical material can be integrated in its structure to complement one another in order to arrive at a better understanding of the text, admitting that these two methods are quite distinctive. Cf. B. W. Anderson, "From Analysis to Synthesis: The Interpretation of Genesis 1-11," *JBL* 97 (1978): 38. Coats has recognized the importance of integrating these two methods in terms of "functional unity." By combining these two methods, the structural form of the final (received) text can be used as a useful guide for source analysis. Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition*, 156-57, also recognized the value of form and structure as a control for source analysis, but he confused this issue by directly equating the concepts of 'form' and 'structure' with 'form-criticism'. In any case, although a thorough examination of this hermeneutical premise that biblical text must be understood overall is part of a theological prolegomena that somewhat lies outside the scope of the present work here, it is accepted as a necessary, basic proposal to clear new ground in defining and in affecting the nature and the task of doing Old Testament theology. Old Testament theology is a restatement and explication of God's revelation, since God has revealed himself in ways that can be observed and restated in more or less precise language. It, in this sense, is a study and presentation of what is revealed in the Old Testament (cf. Sailhamer, *Old Testament Theology*, 16-17).

<sup>34</sup> In other words, it means that the key purpose of this work is to clarify the criteria for claiming that one known text depends on another.

chapter, but in its final canonical form (cf. Clines 1997). The goal is not reconstructing the ‘sources’ from which the Abraham narrative may have derived but rather the role that these various collections of narrative units play in the overall compositional strategy of the final form of the book of Genesis and the remainder of the Pentateuch. How and why has the author/composer put them where they are within the text? This study is concerned with the question of composition and literary strategy. For this exegetical stance presupposes that Genesis is both a document composed (written) and a unified narrative.

Accordingly, this study proceeds on the hypothesis that the Abraham narrative, in the final form of Genesis, functions as a synthetic interaction between the other texts in Genesis and the rest of the texts in the Pentateuch at semantic, textual and theological levels. The thesis is based on the observation that various elements contained in the narrative interact narratively within the entire structure of the Pentateuch (in some respects despite the diversities with the rest of the Patriarchal narrative) in both its forms and the characters.<sup>35</sup> For this, it is necessary to attempt to describe the semantics of the arrangement of source materials in the book of Genesis at first. The aim of this study, therefore, is to trace the narrative function of the Abraham narrative within the overall compositional strategy of the Pentateuch and the theological perspective of the author/ the final composer.

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<sup>35</sup> For a different characteristic of the narratives in Genesis, see, Fox, “Can Genesis Be Read as a Book?,” 32-33.

### 1.1.2. Central Theoretical Argument

This study, in fact, began with an interest in the striking similarities between the Abraham narrative and the remainder accounts in Genesis, (also including the rest of the text of the Pentateuch) in terms of semantic, textual, and theological dimensions, and in the question whether these textual relevancies had anything to say about the composition of the Pentateuch. Since the striking parallelisms<sup>36</sup> (or the abundance of intra- and inter-texts) [inter]textually appear in these narrative parts,<sup>37</sup> it seemed instructive to track them in terms of the compositional strategy for contributing to a better understand its role in Genesis and in the Pentateuch. These remarkable interrelations and cross-references between narratives primarily reflect closed thematic relevancies.

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<sup>36</sup> In a stricter sense of intertextuality the reader perceives similarities and these function as signs pointing to the intertextual relationship between the texts. In this sense, an inventory of the repetitions that can be made in compared texts might be read as signs, iconic pointers to intertextuality relationships. On the one hand, a text components in a general sense of intertextuality are viewed as in indices as signs that are directly and causally determined by earlier texts. For detailed information, see pp. 26-39.

<sup>37</sup> As above mentioned, the text of the Abraham narrative can be approached as single literary units composed of many smaller units of texts. By interweaving these literary units of text, it is possible to trace a discernible compositional strategy, which reflects the basic hermeneutic of the author/composer of the Pentateuch thematizing his basic message or his theology. This literary strategy can be found at various levels within the pentateuchal narrative. In this regard, Sailhamer, *Old Testament Theology*, 206-15 (cf. S. Schmidt, *Texttheorie, Probleme einer Linguistik der sprachlichen Kommunikation* [München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1976], 150) distinguishes three kinds of their own cohesive nature of strategy according to the scale of the literary units in the text, called in-, inner-, inter-, and con-textuality. Sailhamer's in-textuality and con-textuality, broadly speaking, can be categorized into intra-/inter-textuality, therefore two levels of textual relations (and thus two phrases in the analysis of any given text) is acknowledged (cf. J. M Lotman, *Die Struktur literarischer Texte* [übersetzt von Rolf-Dietrich Keil] [München: Wilhelm Fink, 1972], 81-91). These are:

- 1) Intratextuality: it implies of *all textual relations within* a given text, which mean that a text consist of different building blocks that contribute separately, but also through their interrelatedness, towards the meaning of the text (cf. Lotman, *Die Struktur literarischer Texte*, 81-91).
- 2) Intertextuality: it denotes of the relationship between a given text and other, similar, texts. it indicates that no text is an island but belongs to a web or matrix of texts that is expanding with every new utterance. Intertextuality thus is not merely referring to the interconnections among texts, but signifying the shared webs of meaning and association that enable communication between people (cf. P. K. Tull, "Rhetorical Criticism and Intertextuality," in *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application*, eds. S. L. McKenzie & S. R. Haynes [Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999], 165).

The crucial themes to the composition of the Abraham narrative are the divine promises of posterity (Gen 12:2; 15:4; 17:16; 18:10-15), of land (Gen 12:2, 7; 13:14, 15, 17; 15:7-12; 17:8; 22:17; 24:7), of numerous descendants (Gen 12:1-3; 13:16; 15:5; 16:10; 17:5, 6, 16, 20; 18:18; 21:13, 18) and of blessing (Gen 12:2-3; 17:16, 20; 22:17). Although the basic theme of the narrative, however, is the promise of Abraham's inheritor (Wager 1972:138),<sup>38</sup> the most significant aspect is that the Abraham narrative contains all these thematic elements that the Pentateuch has suggested. Have the themes been randomly combined together? The various themes, which are decisive factors to form the plot underlying the cycle, obviously perform important function in terms of providing striking link between the narratives in Genesis and in the Pentateuch. Thus in its present form the Abraham cycle must be considered an integral part within the larger literary framework of the Pentateuch. The two kinds of hermeneutical methods (i.e., the composition approach and intertextuality), which are employed in this study, will be useful to reflect this proposal to verify that the narrative has the abundance intra and inter-textual interrelatedness.

## 1.2. Methodological Considerations

Taking the adage 'let the text speak for itself' as its point of departure, this study focuses on the question how narrative units in the Abraham cycle are played by texts in Genesis and in the larger literary units in the Pentateuch.<sup>39</sup> The idea suggests that this

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<sup>38</sup> Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch*, 48-50, sees the primary theme in Genesis 12-50 is the promises of the prosperity, he regards the thematic elements of the land as a subsidiary one, with the divine relationship.

<sup>39</sup> As stated in the earlier section, this is premised on the striking similarities (i.e. the author's/the composer's intertextuality) between the Abraham narrative and the rest of Genesis, even including the



study seeks primarily to interpret the final form of the text as the locus of revelation, that is, text-oriented<sup>40</sup> (Frei 1974; cf. von Rad<sup>41</sup> 1962).<sup>42</sup> Along the way, this work

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Pentateuch. Every single word, phrase, and clause comes in to play as part of a larger interconnected whole. Every part is construed in a specific and particular way as a meaningful, integral piece of the text. Thus, text-oriented interpretation focuses on the intertextual relations motivated by the parts of the text in compositional strategies. Meanwhile, the justification for this option fundamentally begins with an acceptance of the notion of the Abraham narrative is an inspired text (2 Tim 3:16). Although biblical scholars from the period before the rise of historical criticism in the eighteenth century, holding belief in the inspiration of Scripture often, unfortunately, went unnoticed or became a foil within the context of what later came to be known as new historical methodology (or criticism), there remains much that must be considered worthwhile theological reflections on the unique problems of the OT. See, H-J. Kraus, *Die Biblische Theologie: Ihre Geschichte und Problematik* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1970), 93. In this regard, S. Holthaus, *Fundamentalisms in Deutschland, Der Kampf um die Bibel im Protestantismus des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts* (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 1993), 140-44, specially describes the views of conservative biblical scholars and theologians. For a further brief, historical survey of the study of OT theology in the eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, see J. H. Hayes & F. Prussner, *Old Testament Theology: Its History and Development* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 2-34, 36-71, 136-42) as well as Kraus, *Die Biblische Theologie*, 17-18.

<sup>40</sup> The text-oriented theory, so-called, as an objective theory of interpretation as opposed to a mimetic or expressive theory appeared in 1940's as a reaction against the extreme cases of the traditional approach (i.e., the historical approach). Text-oriented theory studies every thing but the work of literature itself (cf. J. Barton, "Classifying Biblical Criticism," *JSOT* 29 [1984], 19-35). Here on the account of limited space, the brief description of text-oriented theory will be simplistic with two typical major schools of the theory: *New Criticism* and *Structuralism*. New Criticism may be traced to the work, 'The New Criticism' by John Crowe Ransom in 1941 and faded as the dominant force in literary studies in the late 1950s. It basically views that the author's intention and background are unimportant to the critic who regards the literary text as an artifact or verbal icon because the literary work is self-sufficient. In this sense, the self-sufficiency of the literary text implies the denial of the author. In addition, it demands a close reading of the text (see, M Weiss' work, *The Bible from Within*) in order to analyze the complex interrelationships within the work itself (cf. J. Barton, *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996]; Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation*; D. M. Gunn, *The Story of King David: Genre and Interpretation* JSOTSup 6 [Sheffield: JSOT, 1978]; The Fate of King Saul: An Interpretation of a Biblical Story JSOTSup 14 [Sheffield: JSOT, 1980]). Especially, Barton, *Reading the Old Testament*, 140-57 points out a close formal resemblance between B Childs' 'canonical method' and the principle of New Criticism, in terms of his treatment of biblical texts as self-sufficient and as understood within a literary tradition [or canon], even though he distances himself from any literary justification for his approach. Meanwhile, Structuralism as a diverse collection of methods, paradigms and personal preference (cf. V. S. Poythress, "Structuralism and Biblical Studies," *JETS* 21 [1978]: 221) and as general theory about human culture – language, social life, and art is of major importance in contemporary research on the biblical studies than New Criticism. It asserts that meaning is a function of the structure of a cultural system (Barton *Reading the Old Testament*, 112). What lends impetus to develop Structuralism in the area of literary criticism was the desire to be 'scientific' in order to provide literature with a method of analysis that could be demonstrated and repeated (R. C. Culley, "Exploring New Directions," in *The Hebrew Bible and Its Modern Interpreters*, eds. D. A. Knight & G. M. Tucker [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985], 174; cf. R. M. Polzin, *Biblical Structuralism: Method and Subjectivity in the Study of Ancient Texts* [Philadelphia & Missoula: Fortress & Scholars Press, 1977], 174). Structuralism, influenced by linguistics, derived its origin from Ferdinand de Saussure's (1857-1913) insight into the nature of the sign in linguistics (or semiotics) in his major work, *Cours de linguistique générale* (Eng., *Course in General Linguistics*). He proposed a series of distinctions of the sign nature of language:

- *langue* as 'a system, an institution, a set of interpersonal rules and norms' (J. Culler, *Structuralist Poetics* [Ithaca: Cornell, 1975], 8).

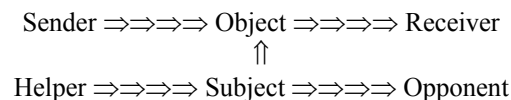
- *parole* as an actual sentences used in writing or speaking.
- *signifier* – the word, or acoustical image.
- *signified* – the concept evoked by the signifier; syntagmatic analysis and paradigmatic analysis.

In this sense, Structuralism may be defined as the extension of the linguistic metaphor to other semiotic system. Literature is considered by structuralists to be a “second-order semiotic system,” in that literary texts are constructed from language. Thus, the analogy between linguistics and literature leads to two major insights into the nature of literature: ‘literary competence’ and ‘literature as systemic.’

The conception of literary competence may be traced back to Saussure’s foundational distinction between *langue* and *parole* as stated above (Barton, *Reading the Old Testament*, 11-18; Culler, *Structuralist Poetics*, 9). Deep underlying structures may be discerned that cut across literature as a whole. These rules may be described ‘literary conventions.’ In short, authors (or writers) are not seen as original contributors to their work but as users of previous devices. Their work is a conglomeration of previous works. The meaning of a text resides in the conventional code, which has a public meaning, not in the author’s intention or in the reader’s preunderstanding (Culler, *Structuralist Poetics*, 9; cf. A. C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980], 15-17). On the one hand, the notion of literature as systemic is another characteristic feature of structuralism in the name of *binarism*. It suggests that Structuralists look for functional oppositions (i.e., binarism) in whatever material they are studying. Since structuralists view that, like computers, the human brain perceives and processes data according to the principle of binarism (Barton, *Reading the Old Testament*, 111). Structuralism has emphasized prose narrative over against poetry. Structuralist study of plot and character in prose stories has had major impact on the analysis of biblical texts. The representative figures in the survey of structuralist approaches to prose narrative are Propp and Greimas. In, *Morphology of the Folktale*, trans. L. A. Wagner (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968), 21, Propp analyzes the folktale as consisting of two elements.

1. (seven) *roles* (or spheres of actions) – the villain, the donor, the helper, the sought-for person and her father, the dispatcher, the hero, and the false hero.
2. (thirty-one) *functions* as ‘an act of a character defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of the action.

Greimas’s analysis based on Propp’s and influenced by Lévi-Strauss made an actantial model, which biblical scholars have particularly used (cf. E. V. McKnight, *The Bible and the Reader: An introduction to literary criticism* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985], 49-58). Meanwhile, Lévi-Strauss described the oppositional character of Propp’s ‘spheres of action and referred to these spheres as *actants*.



There is a benefit in the fact that these approaches focus on the text than on the author in interpretation. However, it is important to not that there is also danger in moving away from authorial intent. In fact, biblical interpreter do not have to choose between text’s meaning and authorial intent. The absolute importance of both should and must be affirmed. All that is need is a more balanced reading of the Bible.

<sup>41</sup> By arguing the impossibility to speak of a historical event behind the biblical narratives, von Rad induces a fundamental reversal of the biblical theologian’s attention from the historical focus of biblical theology to the narrative text. It does not mean that he excluded an historical event that served as the historical foundation of Israel’s faith. He argued that the historical event is not the event referred to by the text but the actual process of referring by means of the text. In other words, for him a real historical event was the communication situation – that is *Traditionsgeschichte* – the process by which the Old Testament was formed.

<sup>42</sup> The text as a depiction of the event is the source of divine revelation in terms of giving an accurate access to the event. There are three motivations for attempting such a reading.

1. The words of Scripture and the biblical author’s (or composer) intended meaning are the first and primary goal. The only way it is possible to access divine revelation now is by interpreting the inspired writers in the text of Scripture. A text is an embodiment of an author’s intention, namely a strategy designed to convey the author’s intention. In their work, R-A. de

investigates the structural features of linguistic actions of (or between) communication partners in the Abraham narrative with the rest of the Pentateuch (cf. Schmidt 1976:144). This approach offers an interpretation that aims to find (the meaning of) the narrative function of the cycle within the canonical context, and is also theological, i.e., takes into account the fact that the narrative is a coherent whole testifying to the promise of God.<sup>43</sup>

Seen within such a context, two methodological approaches in this study will be offered premise discovering the narrative function of the Abraham cycle. The first, composition approach, provides the compositional tactics mapped out by the author/composer for the recognition of narrative literary context of the Abraham narrative within the macro-structure and the micro-structure<sup>44</sup> of the Pentateuch.

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Beaugrande and W. U. Dressler, *Introduction to Text Linguistics* (London: Longman, 1981), 113-38, call this idea “acceptability” which means “intentionality” in texts. It lays emphasis on the reader’s own cooperation in receiving a text as a cohesive and coherent unit plays a major role in textuality. The recent text theory regards a text as a system of signs bearing the information in an act of communication. Here the term *information* can be generally understood as any message, which the speaker intends to transmit to the hearer. Seen within such a context a text and its communication situation can be illustrated with the following diagram.



2. If we may not be able to reconstruct prehistory for the text we must take seriously the fact that the written text as we have it in its final form is the locus of divine revelation insofar it represents what the author (or composer) intends it to mean (cf. G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. 1, trans. D. M. G. Stalker [New York & Edinburgh: Harper & Row & Oliver & Boyd, 1962]).
3. The textual meaning is mediated through the verbal meaning of the language of the text (i.e., words as a *reference* to things [*res*]), which functions of the author’s intention as it is realized in the rendering of a particular text. To understand a text, one must read it.

<sup>43</sup> It is not intend, however, that the hermeneutical attempt employed in this study, however, is to be understood as the only possible way of interpreting texts (esp. Genesis). This is not a case of trading a suit of worn clothes (i.e. historical-critical hermeneutical approach to the Abraham narrative) for new fashionable garments (i.e. intertextuality). In short, this study is merely a forum for intertextual reading of the Abraham narrative.

<sup>44</sup> The ‘macro-structure’ means the smaller literary sections, and the ‘micro-structure’ denotes the devices used to mark the internal divisions of text and indication of the unity (cf. Kessler, “Rhetorical Criticism,” 22-36).

While second, the literary theory of intertextuality asks the right questions to discover textual correlations between the narrative and the rest of text in Genesis and in the Pentateuch.<sup>45</sup> Both methodologies deal with the final form of canonical text, look for harmony rather than diversity, and take seriously the notion that unity in the sum total of the book is possible. These have not been applied to the Abraham narrative in such a blended combination before. Such an understanding might be properly called a reformed-canonical proposal (or approach), which is similar to a *pre-critical* reading of the text (cf. Frei 1974:17-50, 90).<sup>46</sup>

### 1.2.1. Composition Criticism

The method (*Kompositionskritik*<sup>47</sup>) was coined by Ernst Haenchen (1968. *Der Weg*

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<sup>45</sup> A fuller detailed discussion of the method will be provided in the following section.

<sup>46</sup> The understanding of biblical text reflects an attitude of taking the Bible at face value and reading it as it was originally intended, namely looking within the narrative text for its clues to meaning. Before the rise of historical criticism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Western Christian reading of the Bible was usually strongly realistic. In other words, the Bible was read literally and historically as a true and accurate account of God's acts in real historical events (H. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* [New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1974], 1). For the limited application by Frei on the aim of biblical realism, see Sternberg, *The Poetics of Bible Narrative*, 82. In the precritical view of Scripture, the course of the actual historical events (i.e., the historical events depicted by the biblical narratives [ostensive reference]) is precisely that which is depicted in the biblical narratives and is understood as such by the precritical reader. In short, the precritical reading is to find the meaning of the Bible in the biblical narratives themselves. However, it should be obviously noted here that for special revelation to be real history, there must be a providential link between the narrative text and the event. In this sense, the concept of divine providence is the matting that held together the depiction of events in the biblical narratives and the occurrence of those events in history. Meanwhile, a historical reading of the Bible is one, which looks for meaning beyond the narratives themselves to the events they recorded. Consequently, the focus shifted from the text to the event in terms of attempting to reconstruct historical events (cf. von Rad's argument, 1962). From this view, one can clearly see that there are fundamental differences between the critical and the precritical view of biblical narrative.

<sup>47</sup> Some German critics draw a distinction between 'literary criticism' and '*Kompositionskritik*.' While literary criticism is taken in a narrow sense as the analysis of single, usually brief literary units, *Kompositionskritik* is defined as the analysis of those larger texts composed of at least two preexisting (whether oral or written) units. In this respect it is likely that the defined 'composition' would occur at any of three stages:

1. At an oral or written state prior to adoption by a writer.

*Jesu*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter; cf Moore 1989:4-7) in the 1960s is a hermeneutical attempt to depict how the various pieces fit into the whole (cf. Fohrer 1983:139ff). According to Soulen & Soulen (2001:38) this approach was used as an analytical method, where identifiable sources are present within a composition, to refer to the total effect of the redactional techniques employed by an author to investigate a redacted biblical text. In other words, it is an attempt to explain how partly literary and partly preliterate units were joined together and how the compositor made changes in the pre-existing material, and how and why he added his own. In this sense, it denotes a holistic variation of redaction criticism (*Redaktionskritik*). When composition criticism investigates the redactional treatment of units or compositions and their function in larger works or books, it becomes virtually identical with redaction criticism. However, the composition approach here must be distinguished from redaction criticism, even though the latter may concern itself with the text's final form. For redaction criticism asks after the redactor's purpose in composing the text from the determined extent and nature of the various redactional elements within a text, while the composition approach treats the composition as a whole.<sup>48</sup>

This analysis of a literary composition works on the premise that the text's purpose is reflected in its composition. The idea implies that the author's (or composer's) intended motif and meaning determine the structure and content in the shape of the work (cf. Eissfeldt 1965:156-157; Knierim 1985:395-415). Consequently, it attempts to describe the semantics of the arrangement of various source materials in the biblical

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2. At the time when the writer joins the units together in the process of composition.

3. When a 'redactor' reworks a text, adding material to a preexisting literary unit.

<sup>48</sup> In New Testament studies, this method has representatively employed by R. F. O'Toole, *The Unity of Luke's Theology: An Analysis of Luke-Acts* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1984) for the study of Luke-Acts.

text in terms of describing how the various pieces fit into the whole.<sup>49</sup> That is, it is trying to trace the ways the biblical writers organized and fashioned literary units into complete unified literary texts and whole books, as well as to understand the theological characteristics of the smaller and larger compositions and the direction, goal, and tendency of an author/a composer of the whole finished work (Fohrer 1983:142). Thus, it is an approach to trace the literary strategy of text that was employed by an author/composer to interweave these smaller literary parts into a whole throughout the entire work.<sup>50</sup> In this sense, it may be conceded that in the compositional process, the author/composer of Genesis would have used certain existing literary materials (or records) as were generally known, which were of reliable authority in his time, and also interweave them into his narrative conformably with that unity of design which so manifestly pervades the entire work (Jamieson, Fausset &

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<sup>49</sup> Actually, there is little agreement in the study of Pentateuch regarding the origin and diversity of raw materials, in particular, their hypothetical shape and extent in each book. Currently, however, there is a growing consensus among scholars today on the nature of the material in its present shape and that these five books exhibit a unified structure with a common purpose. In the recent years, the attention of biblical scholarship has focused as much on textual strategies in the Pentateuch as on textual strata, instead of source criticism, which had long been dominated in the study of Genesis (and well as in the Pentateuchal studies). For more information of this notion, see E. Blum, *Studien zur Komposition des Pentateuch* BZAW 189 (Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1990), 1ff; G. Fohrer, *Exegese des Alter Testaments* (Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer, 1983), 139ff; R. P. Knierm, "Criticism of Literary Features, Form, Tradition and Redaction," in *The Hebrew Bible and Its Modern Interpreters*, eds. Tucker, G & Knight, D (Philadelphia: Fortress Press; Chico, Calif: Scholars, 1985), 123-65.

<sup>50</sup> Composition criticism asks the two basic questions:

1. What are the steps of composition?
2. What is the function of the units within the composition?

It may seek to determine the theological content of the various units (for they can vary greatly) along with perspective and intention. In this respect, Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 34-35, in his work suggests some crucial aspects to trace the compositional strategy of a author:

1. What methods and techniques does an author employ in producing a final text?
2. What large units of text has the author employed to build the final text?
3. What functions do the individual units within the final text play in the light of the completed whole?
4. Does the author give any final touches to the text that determine how the text will be read and received?
5. What is the religious and theological viewpoint of the final text?

Thus, the strategy is the key to grasp a theological denotation of text.

Brown 1945:1:xxxii, xxxv; cf. Harrison 1969:543-553).

R. Alter defines this kind of literary analysis as a study of the “artful use of language ... the kind of disciplined attention, in other words, which through a whole spectrum of critical approaches has illuminated, for example, the poetry of Dante, the plays of Shakespeare, the novels of Tolstoy.”<sup>51</sup> Such literary interpretations have often been applied to the narratives of Genesis.<sup>52</sup> Exemplary of this has been the early work of J. P. Fokkelman and more recently H. C. White’s study in the function of narrative discourse in Genesis.<sup>53</sup>

This work is a hermeneutical enterprise to demonstrate the narrative nature of the Abraham cycle based on the approach of compositional criticism.<sup>54</sup> Employing the interpretive method, this study will attempt to show, that when viewed as a whole, the narrative is a single literary unit composed of many smaller units of episodes which are relating to the larger narrative units – narrative, poetry, and law codes – in the rest of Genesis and the Pentateuch, as explained earlier. In the interweaving of these parts into a whole, a discernible compositional strategy can be traced throughout the whole narrative. Several reflections of a narrative strategy can be traced in relation to the

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<sup>51</sup> Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 12-13.

<sup>52</sup> E.g., K. R. R. Gros Louis, et al., eds., *Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narrative*, vol. I (Nashville: Abingdon, 1974), and Gros Louis & Ackerman, eds., *ibid.*, vol. II (Nashville: Abingdon, 1982); R. Alter & F. Kermode, eds., *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987); A. Preminger & E. L. Greenstein, *The Hebrew Bible in Literary Criticism* (New York: Ungar, 1986); D. M. Gunn & D. N. Fowell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>53</sup> Fokkelman, *Narrative Art in Genesis*; H. C. White, *Narration and Discourse in the Book of Genesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

<sup>54</sup> Obviously, redaction criticism, which considers how an author modified his source(s), proves extremely useful in studying Genesis where we know the sources he used, but it would be much less useful in tracing the compositional strategy of the author of the whole work. The author/composer of Genesis did compose the Abraham narrative, and he wove his ideas throughout the narrative within the whole narrative framework of the book. Therefore, the use of composition approach, which like literary criticism analyses the whole of an author’s work, seems often to be the better method.

Abraham narrative in Genesis.<sup>55</sup>

**1. The textual function of the Terah's genealogy (Gen 11:27-32):**

Terah's genealogy provides four kinds of information to understand the events in the life of Abraham which follow – the relevance of all individuals except “Iscah (Gen 11:29) to understand the events of the following narrative; the infertile of Sarah (Gen 11:30) with connection with the wordplay on Isaac's name (קִיץ, he laughs – Gen 17:17; 18:12-13, 15; 19:14; 21:3, 6); the uncompleted journey to Canaan of the Abraham family; and listing only eight names, unlike a customary generations formula of listing ten names in order to anticipate the two sons of Abraham, Ishmael (Gen 16:15) and Isaac (Gen 21:3). From these details, it is apparent that the genealogy functions to provide the reader with the essential background for understanding the events of the narrative to follow.

**2. The narrative placement of the call of Abraham (Gen 12:1-9):**

The episode is deliberately placed after the dispersion of the nations at Babylon (Gen 11:1-9) within the geographical setting of Ur of the Chaldeans, in order to picture Abraham's call as God's gift of salvation in the midst of judgment.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> If one looks at these episodes below within the larger scope of the purpose of the Pentateuch, and the pains by the author/composer to construct a whole narrative out of just these smaller units of discourse, much more appears to lie in these passages. For a detained discussion of the reflections of a narrative strategy will be provided in chapter 3.

<sup>56</sup> Thus, the author/composer has arranged the episode of Abraham's call and blessing after an earlier account of a similar gift of salvation in the midst of judgment, the conclusion of the Flood narrative (Gen 8:15-19). In this view, Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 137-39, appropriately argues that by putting Abraham's call in the context of Ur of the Chaldeans the author of Genesis is trying to harmonize with the central view of the prophet in the later prophetic literature (Isa 13:19; 48:14; Jer 24:5; 25:12; 50:1, 8, 35, 45; 51:24, 54; Ezek 1:3; 12:13; 23:15, 23)



**3. The intentional alignment of the Abraham narrative with the reiterate passages regarding the divine blessing (Gen 9:1; 12:1-3; 13:15-16; 15:5, 18; 17:6-8; 18:9-19; 22:17-18; 25:11; 26:2-4; 27:27-29; 49:28; cf. Gen 1:28):**

The author/composer emphasizes the central theme of Genesis, the promise of the way of life and blessing (Gen 1:28; cf. Gen 2:17 – the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; Gen 7:23 – the ark) though the narratives of Abraham and his posterity who are prefigured as a new beginning in God's plan of blessing.<sup>57</sup>

**4. The positioning of the Lot story (Genesis 13) between these two remarkably similar narratives of Abraham's telling a falsehood on his wife (Gen 12:10-20 and Genesis 20)<sup>58</sup>:**

The arranging of the account of Lot between the similar story of Abraham's sojourn in Egypt (Gen 12:10-20<sup>59</sup>) and his sojourn in Gerar (Genesis 20) is

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<sup>57</sup> By putting the reiteration of the blessing after the representative list of 'all humankind' in Genesis 10 and their dispersion as the result of Babylon's rebellion (Gen 11:1-9), the author/composer accentuates the fact that all the families of the earth shall be blessed, revealing the goal of Israel's existence (cf. von Rad, "The Form-Critical Problem of the Hexateuch," 66; cf. also n 107). In this context, the identity of the 'seed' of Abraham as a sign of the 'seed who is to come (Gen 49:8-12) will be one of the key themes of the following narratives. Cf. T. W. Mann, *The Book of the Torah: The Narrative Integrity of the Pentateuch* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988), 29-31.

<sup>58</sup> For the intertextual relationship between two narratives, see, I. N. Rashkow, "Intertextuality, Transference, and the Reader in/of Genesis 12 and 20," in *Reading Between Texts: Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible*, ed. D. N. Fewell (Louisville: Westminster & John Knox Press, 1992), 57-73.

<sup>59</sup> The composition of Gen 12:10-20 has been deliberately patterned to parallel the later account of God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt (Genesis 41-Exodus 12) to prefigure or foreshadow the events. Through such a compositional strategy, the author/composer intends to present the implications of God's past deeds with his chosen people. One might be called this narrative feature 'narrative typology' which the future events are portrayed or foreshadowed as like the past events (cf. U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis. Part II: From Noah to Abraham. A Commentary on Genesis VI9-XI32 with an appendix: a fragment of part III*, trans. I. Abrahams [Jerusalem: The Magnes Press & The Hebrew University, 1992], 334-44). Such a striking similarity, thus, is a part of a larger typological scheme. From this, Abraham is portrayed as a picture or type of the future of Israel. It is in this sense that

apparently as a kind of inclusio, a reflection of a compositional strategy.<sup>60</sup>

##### **5. The striking similarities between the introductions to both narratives of Abraham and Isaac (Gen 25:19-26):**

The author/composer wove these two introductory part of stories as related with several contextual paralleling aspects to provide the essential setting of that four elements – the premature death of Haran (Gen 11:28) and Ishmael (Gen 25:17-18); the two key characters, Nahor (Gen 11:29; 24:15; 24), the grandfather of Rebekah, and Laban (Gen 25:20; 28:2), the father of Jacob, regarding the quest for a bride for Isaac and Jacob; the barrenness of the two women, Sarah (Gen 11:29-30; cf. Gen 15:2-3; 16:1; 17:17; 18:11-12) and Rebekah (Gen 25:20-21); the accompany, conflict<sup>61</sup> and separation,<sup>62</sup> Abraham and Lot (Gen 11:27; 13:7, 9, 11, 14), and Jacob and Esau (Gen 25:22-24; Genesis 25-28; Gen 25:23).

##### **6. The definite linkages between Lot's separation (Gen 13:7, 9, 11, 14) and**

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typology is intertextual, because characters and scenes symbolically prefigure later events. For example, according to Rosenberg, "Biblical Narrative," in *Back to the Sources: Reading the Classic Jewish Texts*, ed. B. W. Holtz (New York: Summit, 1984), 51, "the descent of Abraham to Egypt in time of famine and his exit from Egypt with great wealth anticipate the events of the Exodus story." Thus, intertextuality exists on several levels, not only in narratives, which seem repetitive.

<sup>60</sup> For the study of narrative relationship between the episode of Lot's separation from Abraham (Gen 13) and the entire section of the Abraham narrative, and its significance, see L. R. Helyer, "The Separation of Abram and Lot: Its Significance in the Patriarchal Narratives," *JSOT* 26 (1983): 77-88.

<sup>61</sup> The conflict between brothers or within families (Genesis 4; Gen 9:20-27; 13:7-12; 21:9; 25:22; Genesis 29-31; 37-50) is a central motif in Genesis. Chapter 4 that describes the struggle between Cain and Abel has already foreshadowed a whole series of such conflicts within the book. The emphasis on enmity and struggle appears to stem from the first words of judgment in Genesis; namely, God's statement: "I will put enmity between your seed and her seed" (Gen 3:15).

<sup>62</sup> In particular, most importantly in these narratives are the striking verbal parallels between the narrative of the struggle, which arose between Abraham and Lot (Gen 13:6), and Jacob and Esau (Gen 36:7). Such a manner is one of many ways in which the author/composer carefully guides the reader toward the focus of his narrative, in order to reinforce of central theme of Genesis, the fulfillment of the blessing (Gen 1:28). In this regard, the both themes, 'blessing' and 'separation' centrally play to thrive the narrative purpose of the author/composer in Genesis.

**the nations' separation at Babylon (Gen 11:1-9) and the judgment of the nations at Sodom (Genesis 19):**

One can see a tie between Genesis 13 and Genesis 19 in Gen 13:10, which informs the state of Sodom and Gomorah before the destruction and Gen 13:12-13, which describes Lot's place in Sodom and the wickedness of Sodom's people against God. The linkage between Genesis 13 and the narrative event of the destruction of Babylon can also be detected in the similar description of the traveling in the same geographical direction, the journey eastward (מִקְדָּם<sup>63</sup>, Gen 11:1-2; 13:11).

**7. The verbal and thematic connection between God's calling Abraham (Gen 12:1-7) and that of Noah (Gen 8:15-20):**

In both narratives, calling Noah out of the ark and that of Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldeans, we see the remarkable ties. Abraham, like Noah, marks a new beginning as well as a return to God's original plan of blessing "all humankind" (Gen 1:28).

**8. The textual relationship between the birth of Ishmael (Genesis 16) and Hagar and Ishmael sent away (Gen 21:8-21):**

The author/composer's close attention to the textual relationship in the details

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<sup>63</sup> Although it is still unclear how the reference to 'east' in Gen 2:8, which seems positive, is to be associated with the references to 'eastward' in the subsequent narratives, which are all to be taken negatively, several references to the notion of 'eastward' in Genesis is by and large connection with judgment and separation from God (e.g., Gen 3:24; 11:2; 13:11). He presents 'eastward' to be the direction of the city of Babylon (Gen 11:2) and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 13:11) where human beings take in their search for a home. The author/composer is paying close attention to geography in working out his key themes.

of both Genesis 16 and 21 can best be seen by the frequent use of foreshadowing which allows him to draw connection between important narratives. The author/composer uses foreshadowing as a literary technique to develop his central themes in Genesis and he continually draws them to the reader's attention. In this case, the Lord's promise to Hagar (Gen 16:10-12) was recounted in a strikingly similar fashion to the actual fulfillment of the promise (Gen 21:18-21). Thus, the promise foreshadows the fulfillment.

**THE PROMISE (16:10-12)** ▶▶▶▶ **THE FULFILLMENT (21:18-21)**

#### **9. The relations between Genesis 13 and 14:**

There appears but little connection between the two chapters on the surface, but in reality, several indications within Genesis 14 suggest that the author/composer intends the narrative to be read closely with Genesis 13. Shortly after reporting on what happened to Lot in the international war of the four kings (Gen 14:1-12), the narrative makes the reader's eye turn to Abraham's geographical situation in Hebron (Gen 14:13; cf. Gen 13:18). The geographical mention of 'Mamre' at the end of the narrative in Gen 14:24 is placed there to remind the reader of the last verse of Genesis 13. In putting these two narratives together in this way the author/composer appears to have deliberately illustrated the promise that, as stated early in Gen 12:3, those who accompany with Abraham (Gen 14:13) will be blessed (Gen 14:24), but those who separate from him (e.g., Lot in Gen 13:12), will be cursed as Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 14:11-12).

#### **10. Several similarities between Abraham (Gen 12:10-20; 20:1-18) and Isaac**

**(Gen 26:6-11):**

It can be argued that there are several textual ties between the events in Genesis 26 and those in the life of Abraham (Gen 12:10-20; 20:1-18). Each of the brief narratives in Genesis 26 portrays Isaac in a situation or circumstance that has a parallel in the life of Abraham. In Genesis 26, the author/composer precisely illustrates how Isaac's entire life was a repetition of that which happened to Abraham. It suggests that not only is the author/composer fully cognizant of the textual affinities, but also appears to use them to emphasize the central theme of divine faithfulness to his promises. From this viewpoint, we gain the following lesson: God's faithfulness in the past can be counted on in the present and the future.<sup>64</sup>

**11. The same covenant of promise to Abraham (Genesis 15) and Jacob (Genesis 28):**

In the two narratives, we find a remarkable similarity of divine confirmation of the promised blessing. The same covenant promises are given to both characters, Abraham and Jacob, in the very similar situation (cf. Gen 15:1, 12; 28:11-12) – the gift of the land, the promise of great posterity,<sup>65</sup> and blessing to all the nations. In an extremely similar fashion, both narratives look forward to the future 'exile' of Abraham's seed and the promise of a 'return.' From this, the promise was that God would not forsake them and would return His people to their land.

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<sup>64</sup> A detailed investigation of the textual relevancies between the two narratives will be provided in chapter 3.

<sup>65</sup> In fact, the substance of the covenant is the promise of abundant descendants.

## 12. A thematic interplay between Genesis 17 and 34:

By contrasting the rite of circumcision with the deception of Shechem by Jacob's sons (i.e., Simeon and Levi), one becomes aware of the thematic interplay between two chapters. In Genesis 17 the rite of circumcision, which was originally given a sign of the covenant promise to Abraham to be the father of a multitude of nations (Gen 17:5), has become a sign of the unity of the covenant people and their separation from the rest of the nation. Thus, perversely, Jacob's sons carry out the rite on the Shechemites as a means for the two families to become 'one people' (Gen 34:16).

A further indication of this narrative interrelationship is the wordplay in the two chapters between the word אֹת [sign] (Gen 17:11) and אֹת [consent (of the two families to live as one people)] (Gen 34:15, 22-23). All of this reveals a larger thematic development within the Jacob narratives. The overall and ultimate purpose of these narratives is to show that, in spite of the fact that Jacob and his family's own plans and schemes ran counter to God's own, they could not thwart the eventual success of his intentions.

This fuller understanding of the literary strategies of the Abraham narrative helps the reader not merely to see the pivotal themes in the narrative, but also provides the means for an appreciation of the basic structure of the whole Pentateuch. These textual interrelationships can be understood in terms of both divine causality and divine retribution, both of which can be found in Genesis. To develop these two crucial aspects in Genesis (esp., the Abraham narrative) the author/composer employs three

major narrative techniques: recursion<sup>66</sup>, contemporization<sup>67</sup> and foreshadowing<sup>68</sup> (Sailhamer 1993:110-117). It is obvious that an awareness of such narrative techniques enhance one's reading of the narrative placement of the Abraham cycle within the compositional strategies in the Pentateuch. The analysis of the compositional strategy of the narrative can then be executed at various levels<sup>69</sup> with the context of its

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<sup>66</sup> It is a narrative technique in which the author deliberately shapes narrative events so that key elements of one narrative are repeated in others. An example of recursion in the Abraham narrative can be seen in the way in which the two stories of deceiving of Abimelech by Abraham in Negev (Genesis 20) and Isaac (Gen 26:1-11) in Gerar follow the same pattern and order as the earlier account of Abraham's tricking Pharaoh in Egypt (Gen 12:10-20). For further examples of recursion in Genesis, see the story of the restoration of the land after the great Flood (Gen 7:24-9:17), which follows the account of Creation in Genesis 1 in the respect of pattern and order, and the short narrative of Noah's drunkenness (Gen 9:18-27) which emulates the account of the Fall (Genesis 2-3). The implication of such similarities and recursions in narrative structure is that the narrative world depicted by these narratives also has this same design and purpose.

<sup>67</sup> In this technique, the past is often portrayed in light of events and institutions of the present. The story of Abraham's battle with the four kings from the East (Genesis 14) reflects the same concerns as those of Deut 20:1-15 (the instructions concerning carrying out wars with foreign nations) is a good instance of this narrative trait. As the detail of the narrative show, Abraham's dealing with the kings of the East in the aftermath of the battle and his response to the king of Sodom matches what would be expected of the Israelites from Deuteronomy 20. The sign given to Cain as divine protection (Gen 4:15-24) represents the provisions for the cities of refuge where there is the rule of law. Further detailed discussion of this issue will be given in chapter 3.

<sup>68</sup> This is a narrative technique in which a narrative recounts an event in such a way as to foreshadow and anticipate. In the note 30, this trait was also designated a narrative typology. This means that the events of the past anticipate the fulfillment of the event in the future. Thus, early things are read as pointers to the last things. However, the technique must be distinguished from recursion in terms of foreshadowing anticipates fulfillment and not mere repetition of the past. By means of foreshadowing, central themes are developed and continually drawn to the reader's attention, with the result that a further sense of purpose is added to the reader's understanding of events. From this point of view the account of Abraham's visit to Egypt (Gen 12:10-20) has been intentionally structured to shadow, or anticipate, the sojourn of the Israelite in Egypt (Genesis 41-Exodus 12).

<sup>69</sup> S. Bar-Efrat, "Some Observations on the Analysis of Structure in Biblical Narrative," *VT* 30 (1980): 157-70, presents four levels of structures:

- A. *The verbal level* (based on **words** or **phrases**, e.g., the Creation account in Ge 1, and the narrative of Samson and Delilah in Judg 16:4-31).
- B. *The level of narrative technique* (based on **variations** in narrative method – narrator's account as opposed to character's speech [dialogue] in the narrative of David and Achish at Aphek in 1 Sam 29:1-11; **scenic presentation versus summary** in the story of Samuel's birth in 1 Sam 1:1-2:11 and 2 Sam 11:2-27); **narration as against description; explanation; comment.**
- C. *The level of the narrative world* – **characters** (its identity, nature [i.e., characteristics: virtuous versus vicious, hospitable versus inhospitable, loyal versus disloyal, fruitful versus barren] and function [i.e., distinctions: hero and opponent, assistants to either side, instigators, obstacles, pursuer and pursued] in the story); **events** (making up the plot which has a structure).
- D. *The level of conceptual content* – the **themes** (defining the central issues of the narrative) and **ideas** (i.e., the meanings and lessons contained in the narrative) of the narrative

textuality (i.e., the cohesive nature of the strategy of the individual literary unit within the narrative).<sup>70</sup>

### 1.2.2. Intertextuality: A Theoretical Inquiry for Its Meaning and Praxis

All text (i.e., including any system of signs, not simply a literary text) has its own unique peculiarity, which means their inseparability from association with other texts. From this, a text thus is more than the sum of its words. It is designed to maximize its persuasive powers as a signifier to acquire meaning only when compared to a code already known. That is to say, the text assumes a network of anonymous prior texts whose origins and exact forms are, for all practical purposes, unknown or incidental (cf. Barthes 1977:156-161; Kristeva [Fr. 1969]1980:64-70). In this sense, the text has its integrity, sovereignty and individuality. In this broader understanding of text, all communication is seen as inherently ‘intertextual,’ which means that any act of communication always occurs in the context of other signs. This property of texts is known as ‘intertextuality.’ It is now a *sine qua non* of biblical scholarship that texts should never be interpreted in isolation.<sup>71</sup> In this section, we thus will discuss of the

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<sup>70</sup> According to Schmidt, *Texttheorie, Probleme einer Linguistik der sprachlichen Kommunikation*, 144, textuality as a distinct “illocutionary act” performed by a segment of a text is “structural features of socio-communicative (and thus linguistic) actions of or between communication partner.” With regard to textuality in communication, A. B. Du Toit, “Die toekoms van die Skrifgesag in die moderne eksegese: ’n hoofsaaklik Nuwe-Testamentiese perspektief,” *NGTT* (1990): 517-18, points out the important fact that “biblical science must not neglect the role of the text as the expression of the communicational meaning of the sender.” In this regard it is necessary to uncover the nature of the communication that happens in the biblical texts as such (e.g., the Abraham narrative as the highest and most independent linguistic unit) and to show the underlying order and structure of those texts (cf. de Beaugrande & Dressler, *Introduction to Text Linguistics*; G. Brown & G. Yule, *Discourse Analysis* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983]).

<sup>71</sup> Intertextuality may have become a tool of the self-named ‘new literary critics,’ but even scholars who do not align themselves with the new literary school noted the importance of quotations and allusions in the biblical text itself and between the Bible and other ancient Near Eastern documents. For the New



nature and the development of intertextuality in current literary theory.

### **1.2.2.1. Historical survey of intertextuality: Its quickening and dissemination**

As some circumspect scholars duly pointed out (cf. Muilenburg 1969:1-18; Robertson 1977:4-5), the birth of interest in intertextuality in biblical studies arose not from a revival of classical rhetoric or interaction with the ‘new rhetoric,’ but from dissatisfaction with historical-critical approaches of the Bible.<sup>72</sup> Aware of the shortcomings of historical-critical methods, some biblical scholars (e.g., Muilenburg who was a form critic whose perceived as limitation in the practice of form criticism.) have developed an interpretive enterprise alternative. As a result, in biblical studies, earlier biblical methods (esp. the objectivist claims of “Higher Criticism”) have been challenged by literary methods, which question its authority to produce the interpretation of a particular text (cf. Boyarin 1990:12; Krause 1992:191).<sup>73</sup> The

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Literary Criticism, see D. Clines and C. Exum, *The New Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible* JSOTSup 143 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 11-25. Meanwhile, E. J. van Wolde, “Trendy Intertextuality,” in *Intertextuality in Biblical Writings: Essays in honour of Bas Van Iersel*, ed. S. Draisma (Kampen: J H Kok, 1989, 43, believes that biblical scholars have produced “a number of biblical studies [that] seem innovative but, in fact, use intertextuality as a modern literary theoretical coat of veneer over the old comparative approach.”

<sup>72</sup> As Muilenburg, “Form Criticism and Beyond,” fittingly pointed out, historical critics (esp., form critics) had neglected the texts’ own unique qualities, i.e., failed the discernment of “the many and various devices by which the predications are formulated and ordered into a unified whole” (Muilenburg, “Form Criticism and Beyond,” 8). In addition, as P. D. Miscall, “Isaiah: New Heavens, New Earth, New Book,” in *Reading Between Texts: Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible* (Louisville: Westminster & John Knox Press, 1992), 41-42 and “A textual reader, and a textual writer,” in *Semeia (Intertextuality and the Bible)*, eds. G. Aichele & G. A. Philips (1995), 6, pointed out formerly, although essentially intertextual in analysis of “textual borrowings,” the individual historical-critical methods have inevitably resulted in a “loss of holistic dimensions of the text.”

<sup>73</sup> The historicist assumes that a scholar can uncover an author’s intentions, the sources of his/her ideas, and responses of contemporary readers. Key terms of this approach are “influence” (in which an earlier text has privileges over a later one for which it acts as a source) and “inspiration” (that conversely regards the later one as an innovative improvement over the previous one). As early as the 1940s, however, René Wellek and Austin Warren questioned the predominance of nineteenth-century influence studies by pointing out a dilemma in the historical investigation of a text: “There are simply no data in literary history which are completely neutral ‘fact’” (T. Morgan, “Is there an intertext in the text?:

paradigm thus shift may inevitable (cf. Tull 1999:156-180).

In recent years the idea of intertextuality , as a self-conscious literary-critical approach, emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s and has in significant ways informed the practice of criticism and contemporary understandings of literary history in North America and Europe.<sup>74</sup> Intertextuality generally understood to connote the structural relations between two or more texts, has gained popularity, since the late 1960s, as an

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Literary and interdisciplinary approaches to Intertextuality,” *American Journal of Semiotics* 3 [1985], 1). This shift from historicism with its tracing of literary origins and sources of influence, to intertextuality marked, as Morgan notes, a dramatically different approach to literary studies (cf. M. Landwehr, “Introduction: literature and the visual arts; questions of influence and intertextuality,” *CL* 2 [2002]: 2):

By shifting our attention from the triangle of author/work/tradition to that of text/discourse/culture, intertextuality replaces the evolutionary model of literary history with a structural or synchronic model of literature as a sign system. The most salient effect of this strategic change is to free the literary text from psychological, sociological, and historical determinisms, opening it up to an apparently infinite play of relationships with other texts, or semiosis (Morgan, 1).

In this regard, as R. P. Carroll, “Intertextuality and the Book of Jeremiah: Animadversions on Text and Theory,” in *The New Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible*, eds. D. J. A. Clines & C. Exum (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 76, notes, more traditional approaches might talk about ‘echo’, ‘influence’, ‘borrowing’, and ‘quotation’, though, to be fair to the concept of intertextuality. The following list of key concepts, which are interconnected with intertextuality, reveals that intertextual study is a multifaceted and elusive phenomenon indeed: quotation, source, influence, allusion, association, reminiscence, echo and reference. As D. Krause, “A Blessing Cursed: The Prophet’s Prayer for Barren Womb and Dry Breasts in Hosea 9,” in *Reading Between Texts: Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible*, ed D. N. Fewell (Louisville: Westminster & John Knox Press, 1992), 191, mentioned, intertextual reading strategies are often double-edged. It includes the fact that a particular text is placed in relationship with others to produce a fresh reading. Simultaneously this new reading is often aimed at displacing the text’s dominant interpretation according to critical consensus. In connection with this perspective, Miscall, *Isaiah*, 44, insists that the relationship between two texts is equivocal in terms of ‘acceptance and rejection,’ ‘recognition and denial,’ ‘understanding and misunderstanding,’ and ‘supporting and undermining.’ Thus, he maintains, “to recognize that a text is related to another text is both to affirm and to deny the earlier text.”

<sup>74</sup> M. Pfister, “How Postmodern Is Intertextuality?,” in *Intertextuality* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1991), 221, draws an important distinction between the deconstructivist theory of intertextuality of European vintage and the practice of intertextuality characteristic of American postmodernism:

While Bakhtin, Kristeva and the Tel Quel group have evolved their theory of intertextuality in order to deconstruct the bourgeois ideology of the subject and to undermine all traditional certitudes and authorities, the “random cannibalism” (Jameson 1984) of the American postmodernist movement [...] no longer threatens any authority; on the contrary, [it] is tolerated or even welcome by those in power, as it helps to take people’s minds off those life-endangering facts, which are in the meantime eagerly brought about by them, backstage.

alternative strategy to studying literary texts that would serve as an antidote to historically oriented approaches (Harty 1985:1-13).<sup>75</sup> In late 1960s and early 1970s, intertextuality was associated with an antagonism towards the contemporary hermeneutical struggle, characterized by a crisis of representation, which could no longer guarantee meaning, centrality and reference (cf. Hatina 1999:30-31). Beginning in the late 1970s and early 1980s, biblical scholars have increasingly used the methods of intertextual studies to interpret biblical texts. In the 1980s, intertextuality, in particular, was systematized on the basis of reflection on the demerits of Kristeva's usage of intertextuality (which was thought to be too broad and not a systematized concept; see below).

In his work in 1919, "*Tradition and the Individual Talent*," T S Eliot, the progenitor of contemporary intertextual studies, challenged and reclaimed the conventional assumptions of the backdrop of Romantic theories of poetic inspiration and the genius

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<sup>75</sup> In fact, the literary theory of intertextuality has been applied recently to Old Testament studies, where it has significantly broadened the horizons of investigation. However, we find a wide range of opinion among scholarship on the point of whether intertextuality as a hermeneutical method can be categorized or not (cf. S. E. Porter, "The Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament: A Brief Comment on Method and Terminology," in *Early Christian Interpretation of the Scripture of Israel: Investigations and Proposals*, eds. C. A. Evans & J. A. Sanders [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997], 84-85). D. C. Polaski, "Reflections on a Mosaic covenant: the eternal covenant (Isaiah 24:5) and intertextuality," *JSOT* 77 (1998): 58, firmly maintained that intertextuality is not so much a methodology as a theoretical term; or, rather, a theoretical term which may give birth to several different methodologies. In the same vein, I. Paul, "The Use of the Old Testament in Revelation 12," in *The Old Testament in the New Testament: Essays in Honour of J L North*, ed. S. Moyise (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 259, also argues, "intertextuality, as an approach, does not provide a method for interpretation, so much as highlighting the importance of considering the relation between the new context and the old in interpreting allusion and citation." D. Clippinger, "Intertextuality," in *Encyclopedia of postmodernism*, eds. V. E. Taylor & C. E. Winguist (London: Routledge, 2001), 190, however, holds a different angle on this. According to him, intertextuality refers to both a 'method' of reading that juxtaposes texts in order to discover points of similarities and differences, as well as the belief that all texts and ideas are part and parcel of a fabric of historical, social, ideological, and textual relations. In this framework, intertextuality can be considered as a 'mind-set' in which a methodology is employed. Articles in Draisma's work, *Intertextuality in Biblical Writings: Essays in honour of Bas van Iersel* (Kampen, J H Kok, 1989) provide examples of a variety of applications of the theory of intertextuality. For the diversity of understanding of intertextuality, see Tuckett's introduction, "Introduction," in *The Scriptures in the Gospels, xiii-xxiv*, ed. C. M. Tuckett (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1997).

of the poet, which claimed that the poet's originality is an expression of personality. His central thesis was that no poet or artist receives complete meaning in isolation, but must be set "among the dead" (1964:4). By doing so, he replaced the evolutionary model of influence with a model of literary interrelationships, because he conceived of literature as "a system of coequal, copresent texts" that hold "literature as history and literature as system" in balance (Morgan 1989:242). As a result, this emphasis on literature as a system of interrelated texts is his most lasting contribution to intertextual studies.<sup>76</sup> Here we may categorize a wide variety of methodologies employed by scholars in relation to studying intertextual relations in literary texts: philosophy and psychology, rhetorical criticism, and Semiotics.

1. The first category is the theories drew by Bloom (1973, 1975)<sup>77</sup> from modern philosophy and Freudian psychology in order to identify and explain the dynamics and motivations of literary borrowing. His study of "intra-poetic relationships" shares with Eliot similar conceptualizations of influence and the interaction of past and present in literary composition. In his view every reading of a text is a misreading the poetic precursors as a personal space, which is created by a new poet. Bloom depicts this misreading in terms of a Freudian struggle between fathers and sons. His psychological orientation leads him to focus on authorial intention.

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<sup>76</sup> Eliot has two distinct observations in his subsequent intertextual studies. His first stream of intertextuality focuses on literary interrelationships and patterns of literary borrowing within literature proper. The other stream broadens the understanding of 'text' to include a variety of linguistic phenomena and thus studies the interrelationship of text and culture.

<sup>77</sup> See, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973) and *A Map of Misreading* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975).

2. A second methodology can be seen in the work of J Hollander (1989)<sup>78</sup>, which belongs to the more general category of rhetorical criticism. He identifies allusions to and echoes of earlier poets in the work of their successors and studies the way those textual echoes create new meanings. For Hollander echo is understood as a rhetorical trope that establishes links between texts chronologically removed from one another. Under the general category of rhetorical approaches to intertextuality, one can also place studies that investigate the way various rhetorical figures are used (e.g., citation), the effects produced by literary borrowing, and the reader's experience of literary borrowing.
  
3. Finally, semiotic is a third methodology used to study intertextuality within literature proper. A semiotic approach basically focuses on text and culture.<sup>79</sup> Semiotics has a broader understanding of text differently from rhetorical and more traditional literary critics. They regard 'text' as a system of signs, not simply a literary text and thus any act of communication intertextually occurs in the context of other signs. Since the diverse approach to text and culture, semiotic approach splits into two divergent philosophical camps: the linguistic theory (R Jakobson) and the structural anthropology (C Lévi-Strauss), and the critical views on the stability of language and literature and the ambiguity and instability of communication (M Bakhtin, J Kristeva, J Culler, and J Derrida).

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<sup>78</sup> See, *The Figure of Echo: A Mode of Allusion in Milton and After* (Berkeley: University of California, 1989).

<sup>79</sup> In the meantime, some semiotics (e.g., M. Riffaterre, *A Semiotics of Poetry* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978]) assume that intertextuality is operative in all literature, for they focus on the act of reading specific literary texts. For a thorough discussion of them, see, T. Morgan, "The Space of Intertextuality," in *Intertextuality and Contemporary American Fiction*, eds. P. O'Donnell & R. C. Davis (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 262-71.

With these literary critics, intertextuality becomes part of a broader deconstructionalist reading of literature.

Indeed, an understanding of how biblical authors have used certain (oral/written) precursors in creating their works, according to their own compositional strategy, must be considered central to a correct interpretation of their works.<sup>80</sup> Intertextuality employed as a methodological strategy in this study thus is a significant and valuable method for approaching the Abraham narrative. Because this periscope has such a rich and complex web of textual relations with the other biblical texts, an intertextual approach is essential for discerning how it represents the author's unique compositional strategies.<sup>81</sup>

Therefore, in the following subsection, some aspects of intertextuality will primarily be described in its general and specific senses. In this process of debate, one may stress two things: that text obtains life and vitality because of their connections with other texts with which they share a particular world of meaning, as well as that each text has its own integrity, which must not be lost through any form of comparison.

#### **1.2.2.2. Intertextuality, Its Origin and Variety: 'No Text Is an Island'**

Although intertextuality has been presented as an alternative interpretive means in both a literary and hermeneutical category, few studies adequately reflect the complexity of

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<sup>80</sup> In a sense, as M. A. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press & Clarendon, 1985) maintains, the Hebrew Bible is full of examples of creative reinterpretations of earlier material.

<sup>81</sup> Biblical writers often cite passages in other parts of the Bible as they develop their own arguments and rhetoric. This Intertextuality creates a rich and complex web of relationships among biblical texts. Understanding how authors use the cited material is crucial to the interpretation of their work.

the field of intertextuality in literary discussions, relying instead on the reading strategies developed by a single literary critic, such as Julia Kristeva or Harold Bloom, who are much concerned with textuality<sup>82</sup> and intertextuality.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Textuality is basically indicated by According to J. Degenaar, “The text is an episode in an all-encompassing textuality,” in *Acta Academica Supplementum 1*, 3-21. (Bloemfontain: University of Orange Free State, 1995), 11, textuality refers to the nature of being a text in a textual world in which signs are dynamically interrelated allowing for new connection to be made continually. Thus, a text will be defined as a communicative occurrence. From this textuality is basically indicated by seven standards. (de Beaugrande & Dressler, *Text Linguistics*, 3):

- 1) First standard of textuality is *cohesion* of grammar and syntax. “The components of the surface text (i.e., the actual words) are mutually connected within a sequence. The surface components depend upon each other according to grammatical forms and conventions, such that cohesion rests upon grammatical dependencies.”
- 2) The second one is *coherence* at the semantic level. “The components of the textual world (i.e., the configuration of concepts, as a configuration of knowledge (cognitive content) and relations, the links between concepts, are mutually accessible and relevant. To put it concretely, the constituent themes of the text thus are meaningfully related so as to produce a thematic net which is woven out of the constituent themes of specific themes in a text.
- 3) The third standard of textuality is *intention (intentionality)* which concerns “the text producer’s attitude that the set of occurrences should constitute a cohesive and coherent text instrumental in fulfilling the producers’ intention” (e.g., legal texts).
- 4) Fourth is the standard of *acceptability* which concern “the text receiver’s attitude that the set of occurrences should constitute a cohesive and coherent text having some use or relevance for the receiver to acquire knowledge or provide co-operation in a plan.”
- 5) The fifth standard is *informativity* since a text is not wholly redundant. It concerns “the extent to which the occurrences of the presented text are expected vs. unexpected or known vs. unknown/certain.”
- 6) The sixth standard of textuality is *situationality* because a text is directed to a situation. Basically it concerns “the factors which makes a text relevant to a situation of occurrence. The interpretation of the text thus is in some measure related to the situation which gave rise to it, namely, precisely depend on its situationality.
- 7) Finally is the seventh standard, intertextuality, the existence of a body of texts in some sense analogous to the text under consideration. It concerns “the factors which make the utilization of one text dependent upon knowledge of one or more previously encountered text.” Cf. A. C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics: The Theory and Practice of Transforming Bible Reading* (London: HarperCollins, 1992), 80-81.

For this study, the first three of these seven standards have particular importance. They are grammatical and syntactical cohesion, semantic coherence, and intentionality. That is to say, an author produces a communicative text consisting of related strings across which there are certain constants (e.g., proforms having identifiable antecedents) and with the meanings of the strings related so as to produce a topic or theme or thematic net.

<sup>83</sup> Charlesworth in his work, “Intertextuality: Isaiah 40:3 and the Serek Ha-Yahad,” in *The Quest for Context and Meaning: Studies in Biblical Intertextuality in Honor of James A Sanders* (Leiden & New York: Köln: Brill, 1997), 199-200, presents some critics’ works which use quite similar methodologies to intertextuality; J. Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (London & Philadelphia: SCM & Trinity Press International, 1991); J. Licht, *Storytelling in the Bible* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1986). Licht argues, “repetitions and repetitive situations can be used to produce various mimetic effects in the narrative convention of the Hebrew Bible” (79); G. Schille, *Früchrichtliche Hymnen* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1965).

The term of intertextuality, like modern literary and cultural theory itself, can be said to have its origins in twentieth-century linguistics, particularly in the seminal work of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure.<sup>84</sup> This notion, however, also emerges from theories, which are more concerned, than de Saussure seems to be, with the existence of language within specific social situations. The history of the concept of intertextuality begins with the Russian literary theorist (formalist)<sup>85</sup> and philosopher, Mikhail M Bakhtin (1895-1975, writing mostly in the 1920s and 1930s, and died in 1975; cf. Lechte 1994:7-12). He initiated the concept<sup>86</sup> in the process of posing the question of the connection of literary texts with one another and with society. This was in contrast to contemporaries who plunged into the text-immanent approach. He introduced the notion of dialogicity (or dialogičnost), which means that someone who writes is not only led by text-internal considerations, but also enters into dialogue with other texts of the reader and reality. This understanding of dialogicity is to be situated within Bakhtin's general theory of language, in which linguistic expression and context are inextricably interlinked. Bakhtin regards context as a social, communicative situation, which is shared among people, and in which each utterance is in dialogue

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<sup>84</sup> Saussure's emphasis on the systematic features of language establishes the relational nature of meaning and, thus of texts (see F. de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, ed. C. Bally & A. Sechehaye with the collaboration of A. Riedlinger, trans. And annotated R. Harris [London & Duckworth: BBC Books, 1983]).

<sup>85</sup> It is here necessary to state the divergence between the Russian theoreticians and French theoreticians. The former accentuates the preserving functions of the intertext, while the later views intertextuality as a decentralizing function. However, explicit intertextuality can carry with it both 'disruptive' and 'reconstructive' features. This double movement of disruption and regeneration is precisely its *raison d'être* of intertextuality. Cf. D. Boyarin, "Old wine in new bottles: intertextuality and Midrash," *PT* 8 (1987), 539-56.

<sup>86</sup> For greater understanding of this concept, several of M. Bakhtin's works, written in English, can be consulted: *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship*, trans. A. Wehrle (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978); *Dialogic Imagination*, trans. C. Emerson & M. Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981a); *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Theory and History of Literature 8, ed., trans. C. Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984); P. Morris, *The Bakhtin Reader: Selected Writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev and Voloshinov* (London: Edward Arnold, 1994).



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 (cf. van Wolde 1997:426-427).

The work of Bakhtin, which influenced the theories of literature and language, is crucial here. In recent years, biblical scholarship has shown a growing interest in Bakhtin's work.<sup>87</sup> His thought was introduced to the West and employed by Julia Kristeva, and developed in theories of French (post) structuralists like Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida, and American postmodernists such as Stanley Fish and Harold Bloom.<sup>88</sup>

In the historical setting, the term, intertextuality as a technical literary term must be restricted to the so-called originators of the term, such as Julia Kristeva and Roland Barthes, writing within the Parisian cultural revolution of the 1960s and 70s.<sup>89</sup> In fact,

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<sup>87</sup> In her work, B. Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical Scholarship: An Introduction SemeiaSt 38* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 193-205, provides a list of scholars who employed Bakhtin's theory in their biblical studies. In addition, C. Newsom, "Bakhtin, the Bible, and Dialogic Truth," *JR* 76 (1996a): 292-94, and D. Olson, "Biblical Theology as Provisional Monologization: A Dialogue with Childs, Brueggemann, and Bakhtin," *BibInt* 6 (1998): 171, have made some suggestions of how Bakhtin's dialogical model could be of value for conceiving a biblical theology. In particular, Newsom proposes an important thesis: truth itself is dialogical (or dialogic), and much of the Bible is dialogical in nature. She maintains that the idea of dialogic truth helps to explain some of the most perplexing feature of biblical composition: the book of Job ("Bakhtin, the Bible, and Dialogic Truth," 297-98; *The Book of Job as Polyphonic Text. Paper delivered to the Society for OT Study, Winter meeting, Birmingham, England, January 4, 1996b*) and Genesis 1-11 as well as the patriarchal narratives ("Bakhtin, the Bible, and Dialogic Truth," 298-304, esp. 299).

<sup>88</sup> See, van Wolde's overview of the relation of Bakhtin to the broader field of intertextuality ("Intertextuality: Ruth in Dialogue with Tamar," in *A Feminist Companion to Reading the Bible: Approaches, Methods and Strategies*, eds. A. Brenner & C. Fontaine [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997b], 426-51). Meanwhile, Green identifies a number of areas where Bakhtin's thought might be especially valuable in terms of 'questions concerning history and genre' (*Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical Scholarship*, 60-65).

<sup>89</sup> To put it concretely, Kristeva came to employ the concept of intertextuality in the 1960s in France, at a time of profound social upheaval and change (i.e., the time of political infighting between the French Communist and the Leftist Parties) similar to the way Bakhtin's notion of dialogism arose in the context of the Soviet cultural revolution of the twenties. It was in the setting of the *Tel Quel* circle – a radical socio-literary group that sought revolutionary change in French political and cultural life – that Kristeva coined this term as a means of revolutionizing notions of art, literature, and texts (as a way of writing (*écriture*), and as a productive and subversive process), and subjectivity (T. Moi, *Introduction to The*

it was through her work as a poststructuralist literary critic that Kristeva casually introduced the concept of intertextuality in 1967.<sup>90</sup> The fancy jargon notwithstanding, she originally envisioned (and actually innovated) it as a new kind of hermeneutics. She gave a positive evaluation of Bakhtin because, he firstly replaced a static view of the text with a dynamic one (i.e., he did not study a text as something that stood on its own but as something that came about in relation to other texts). Thus, Kristeva, following Bakhtin, expressed the idea that a text stands in dialogue with other texts.<sup>91</sup> As a result, she coined the term ‘intertextuality’ in order to indicate that a text

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*Kristeva Reader* by Julia Kristeva [Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1986], 3-7; Pfister, “How Postmodern Is Intertextuality?,” 211). The so-called *Tel Quelians* included Roland Barthes, Michael Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Marcelin Pleynet, Jean Ricardou, Julia Kristeva, and Philippe Sollers, among others, who were active both intellectually theory, the concept of intertextuality was inseparately connected with political idealism. The agenda was nothing less than the subversion of the bourgeois establishment through the empowerment of the reader (or critic) to resist and combat the literary and social tradition at large (H-P, Mai, “Bypassing Intertextuality,” in *Intertextuality*, Research in Text Theory 15, ed. Plett [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co, 1991], 41; cf. J. Kristeva, “Semiotics: A Critical Science and /or a Critique of Science,” in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. T. Moi (New York & Oxford: Columbia University Press & Basil Blackwell, 1986a), 75). In the late 1960s and early 70s, intertextuality was particularly associated with an antagonism toward the contemporary hermeneutical struggle, characterized by a crisis of representation which could no longer guarantee meaning, centrality, and reference. Thus, the historical context of Kristeva's work – which is also the social background of intertextuality – is significant for understanding the importance of the systemic and transformative character of intertextuality. From this historical background, one may epitomize the historical characteristic of Kristeva's work by three factors:

- 1) Her work finds its roots in Russian formalism but is “a kind of poststructuralist *avant la lettre*” (Moi, *Kristeva Reader*, 3).
- 2) A second important factor in her work (and the poststructuralist movement in French) is its revolutionary character.
- 3) Her historical consciousness is a hallmark of the development of the theory of intertextuality. Thus, intertextuality is not some neutral literary mechanism, but rather, at heart, a means of ideological and cultural expression and of social transformation (G. Aichele & G. A. Philips, “Introduction: exegesis, eisegesis, intergenesis,” *Semeia* 69 [1995]: 7-18). The transformative role of intertextuality is most visible in the range of post-modern intertextual writers, who presuppose intertextuality as both the form and substance of post-modern writing. Hence, intertextuality is closely aligned with deconstruction in which language serves as the ground of existence and the world emerges as infinite text. Moreover, the poststructuralists’ focus on the role of the reader creates immediate discord with the historical critics, who focus on the author and the written text.

<sup>90</sup> See, Kristeva, J. “Bakhtine, le mot, le dialogue et le roman,” *Critique* 33 (1967): 438-465; ET available as “Word, Dialogue and Novel,” in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. L. S. Roudiez and trans. T. Gora & A. Jardine & L.S. Roudiez (New York; Columbia University Press, 1980a), 64-91; also in Moi, T. (ed.), *The Kristeva Reader*, 34-61.

<sup>91</sup> Basically, she states that every text is constructed like a mosaic of quotations; every text is an absorption and a transformation of another text.

intersects with other texts.<sup>92</sup> In addition, she attempted combining both Saussurean and Bakhtinian theories of language and literature, producing the first articulation of intertextuality theory in late 1960s (cf. Kristeva 1986).<sup>93</sup> The closest similarity with her concept of intertextuality is suggested by Féral (1980:275):

From Bakhtin Kristeva borrows the contextualization of any signifying practice ... in an historical or social frame. Attempting to replace the static subdivision of texts a model in which the literary structure does not merely exist, but elaborates itself in relationship to another structure, Bakhtin [postulated] that the word was no longer to be considered as a point of fixed meaning, but as a place – a place where various textual surfaces and networks ... cross.

In this sense, it is the fact that intertextual relationships in the biblical text had not been recognized before the first work of Kristeva (1980 [Fr. 1969]<sup>94</sup>; 1984 [Fr. 1974]<sup>95</sup>) in the 1960s.

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<sup>92</sup> Of Course, some critics even definitely deny any affinity between poststructuralism and Bakhtin's theories (e.g. A. Shukman, "Between Marxism and Formalism: The Stylistics of Mikhail Bakhtin," *Comparative Criticism* [1980], 223). Others merely assert a connection (C. M. Bové, "The Text as Dialogue in Bakhtin and Kristeva," *University of Ottawa Quarterly* [1983], 117-24). However, G. Pechey, "Bakhtin, Marxism, and Post-Structuralism," in *The Politics of Theory: Proceedings of the Essex Conference on the Sociology of Literature, July 1982*, 234-47, presents a contextual reading of Bakhtin, which helps to clarify his (Bakhtin's) relevance for Kristeva's poststructuralist, intertextual concept.

<sup>93</sup> Her work on Bakhtin occurred during a transitional period in modern literary and cultural theory. This transition is usually described in terms of a move from structuralism to poststructuralism. It is often characterized as one in which assertions of objectivity, scientific rigour, methodological stability and other highly rationalistic sounding terms are replaced by an emphasis on uncertainty, indeterminacy, incommunicability, subjectivity, desire, pleasure and play. G. Allen, *Intertextuality* (London & New York: Routledge, 2000), 217, provides useful information on poststructuralism in the glossary of his work:

"Poststructuralist theorists argue that Saussurean structuralism did not provide scientific objectivity and methodological stability, but rather demonstrated the unstable nature of language and of meaning. Poststructuralists deny any demands for a scientific study of texts or cultural sign systems, and insist that all texts are polysemous."

In this sense, the concept of intertextuality has been employed initially and vigorously by the critics of poststructuralism critics to disrupt notions of meaning, while structuralism critics adopt the same term to locate and even fix literary meaning, as proof enough of its flexibility as a concept.

<sup>94</sup> See, *Desire in Language*, 66, cf. also 36, 86-87.

<sup>95</sup> See, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, trans. M. Waller (New York: Columbia University Press)

She coined the term to depict Bakhtin's concept of 'dialogic orientation'<sup>96</sup> in her seminal essay (in 1966) explaining his notion of dialogism<sup>97</sup> and carnivalization<sup>98</sup>. She scientifically expanded Bakhtin's notion of dialogism beyond the literary text to encompass all cultural formations (Kristeva 1986b:37). For Kristeva, intertextuality signals foremost, systemic relationships and process "the transposition of one (or

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<sup>96</sup> 'Dialogic orientation' was Bakhtin's original term for what is now called 'intertextuality' (cf. T. Todorov, *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogical Principle*, trans. G. Wlad [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984], 62). Meanwhile, in his earlier work, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, originally published in 1929, Bakhtin argues, "a plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices is in fact the chief characteristic of Dostoevsky's novels." In his later work, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, ed. C. Emerson & M. Holquist, trans. V. W. McGee. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986) and his essay, *Discourse in the Novel*, in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, eds. C. Emerson & M. Holquist, trans. M. Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981b), 259-422, he develops these ideas into a more comprehensive theory of literature. He further maintains that the notion of dialogue is not only limited to literature but also provides a model for truth and life itself (*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 293). Within this theory of dialogue are, in a nutshell, six key points: 'dialogical' (Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 88; *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, 71, 72, 94, 106, 119-20, 124, 162; *The Dialogic Imagination*, 276, 284; cf. G. S. Morson & C. Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics* [Stanford: Stanford University Press 1990], 125-26), 'designer' (Bakhtin, *Discourse in the Novel*, 253; *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, 69, 125; Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical Scholarship*, 33, 62-63; Morson & Emerson *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 232), 'great time' (Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, 4-5, 169-170) 're-accentuation' (Bakhtin, *Discourse in the Novel*, 409-10, 420-22; Morson & Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 364-65), 'outsider' (Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, 6-7; Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical Scholarship*, 41; Morson & Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 230, 289), 'unfinalizable' (Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, 30; *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 166, 293; *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, 136-37; Morson & Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 60, 228, 241; cf. Olson, "Biblical Theology as Provisional Monologization," 172, 174). In conjunction with Bakhtin's view, Morgan, "Is there an intertext in the text?" 8-13, cites the following – "Each literary or aesthetic text produces a palimpsest, superimposing several other texts which are never completely hidden, but always hinted at." She explains that the literary palimpsest hovers between originality and imitation. Nevertheless, she judges "the idea that the other texts can be seen transparently through the centering text is highly dubious."

<sup>97</sup> The basic idea of Bakhtin's dialogism is that the open-ended, back-and-forth play between the text of the sender (subject), the text of the addressee (object), and the text of culture (cf. T. Beal, "Ideology and Intertextuality: Surplus of Meaning and Controlling the Means of Production," in *Reading Between Texts: Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible*, ed. D. N. Fewell [Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992], 29-30). It is the characteristic epistemological mode of a world dominated by heteroglossia which is the base condition governing the operation of meaning in an utterance. In this sense, Bakhtin "refers to the idea that all utterances respond to previous utterances and are always addressed to other potential speakers, rather than occurring independently or in isolation." "Words always contain a dialogic quality, embodying a dialogue between different meanings and applications." Thus, Bakhtin's dialogism undermines "any argument for final and unquestionable positions, since every position within language is a space of dialogic forces rather than monologic truth (cf. Allen, *Intertextuality*, 211).

<sup>98</sup> The term "relates to Bakhtin's term 'dialogicism', and is opposed to notions of single meaning and unquestionable authority" (cf. Allen, *Intertextuality*, 211).

more) system(s) of sign<sup>99</sup> into another” (cf. 1984:60), “an intersection of textual surfaces rather than a point a fixed meaning”<sup>100</sup> (cf. 1980:65; Mai 1991:47). To avoid any confusion with notions of literary borrowing (cf. Miscall 1992:41-43<sup>101</sup>) or poetic influence (cf. Eliot 1964:3-11<sup>102</sup>; Bloom 1973; 1984:3-14<sup>103</sup>), she understood the term intertextuality to describe every discourse, whether written or spoken. Drawing from Bakhtin, she asserts, “Any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations;”<sup>104</sup> any text is the absorption and transformation<sup>105</sup> of other texts”<sup>106</sup> (Kristeva 1980a:66). In her

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<sup>99</sup> Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics*, 28, observes, “whereas the hermeneutical tradition tended to focus on processes of human understanding within life-worlds grounded in historical inter-subjectivity, semiotic approaches tend to focus on processes in which sign-systems become operative as sub-systems grounded in contextualizing frames of intertextuality.”

<sup>100</sup> In contrast to the traditional hermeneutics (i.e., a work and author-oriented perspective) that hold literary works are something fit to be respected, something authoritative, she believed that meaning does not exist apart from meaning producers (i.e., readers or recipients).

<sup>101</sup> Cf. Speiser’s discussion on borrowing, in Gen 1:1-2:4a, from Mesopotamian models (i.e., the *Enuma Elish*, the Babylonian creation story), and his conclusion of the differences and the critical position in conjunction with an exposition of the unique aspects and tenets of Israelite monotheism which can be forcefully expressed by being contrasted against the Mesopotamian beliefs (*Genesis*, 9-11).

<sup>102</sup> Especially see, Eliot’s discussion of the conformity and continuity between the individual poet and precursive tradition (“Tradition and the Individual Talent,” in *Selected Essays, 1917-1932* [New York: Harcourt & Brace & Jovanovich, 1964], 5). Also, see D. Penchansky’s note on the “exchange of information between separate and seemingly independent texts” in time (“Staying the Night: Intertextuality in Genesis and Judges,” in *Reading Between Texts: intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible*, ed. D. N. Fewell [Louisville: Westminster & John Knox Press, 1992], 77).

<sup>103</sup> Cf. Bloom’s psychoanalytic overtone in his theory of reading and writing (i.e., the poetic influence). Especially see, the relationship between Satan and God in Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, and Christian supersessionism.

<sup>104</sup> This is derived from Bakhtin’s fundamental idea of a text as multilayered mosaic quotations, forming a dialogical and polyphonus structure.

<sup>105</sup> In this regard, H. F. Plett, “Intertextualities,” in *Intertextuality Research in Text Theory 15*, ed. H. F. Plett (Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter & Co, 1991:20-23) presents four transformations of intertextuality – that is, substitution, addition, subtraction, and permutation.

<sup>106</sup> In the poststructuralist’s and deconstructionist’s view, text is not restricted to written material as an object of textual criticism. It is a productive and subversive process. Kristeva’s notion of text stems from her interdisciplinary fusion. She tried to fuse ideas from philosophy (Husserl/Derrida), political science (Marx/Althusser) and psychology (Freud/Lacan) with linguistic-structuralist approaches (Chomsky) and formal logic (cf. M. Adriaens, “Ideology and Literary Production: Kristeva’s Poetics,” in *Semiotics and Dialectics: Ideology and the Text*, ed. P. Zima [Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1981]); Mai, “Bypassing Intertextuality,” 38. While she borrowed from these disciplines, at the same time, she tried to subvert them. The notion of text is described by Kristeva (“The Bounded Text,” in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. L. S. Roudiez [New York & Oxford: Columbia University Press & Basil Blackwell, 1980b], 36) as a “productivity” which means “first, that its relationship to the language in which it is situated is redistributive (destructive – constructive) [...]; and second, that it is a permutation of texts, an intertextuality: in the space of a given text, several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another.”

doctoral dissertation, she describes the term intertextuality as the transposition of one or several sign system(s) into another (Kristeva 1984:59-60). She thus eliminates the notion of authorial intention. For her, a text is permutation of texts,<sup>107</sup> the result of connection with other texts – the anterior literary corpus; it is an absorption of and a reply to another text (cf. Kristeva 1980a:69). With respect to the basic force of intertextuality, the “dialogical space of texts” of Kristeva (1980a:66) dynamites the autonomy and univocality of any particular text. It is for this reason that every text is polyvalent.<sup>108</sup> In this sense, intertextuality is inimical to current historical-critical inquiry. Consequently, Kristeva (1984:59-60) delineates two dimensions of intertextuality: 1) *the inner play* – that is ‘the web of relations that produce the structure of the text (or the subject); 2) and *the outer play* – that is, the web of relations linking the text (subject) with other discourse’ (1984:59-60).

In order to grasp the notion of intertextuality in a general sense, it is necessary to state the great differences between Bakhtin and Kristeva. Although Kristeva created the term intertextuality under Bakhtin’s influence, major differences between them are evident. According to van Wolde (1997:427), Kristeva restricts intertextuality to the relationship between texts. Yet, she also extends the concept of text further and further so that reality also becomes a text. Meanwhile, Bakhtin is concerned with the relationship between text and reality, as well as with the relationship between texts –

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<sup>107</sup> This idea, along with the concept of repetition, is one of intertextuality’s characteristic features. The notion of transformation will be discussed in the next section, which describes intertextuality in a specific sense.

<sup>108</sup> In this, T. R. Hatina, “Intertextuality and Historical Criticism in New Testament Studies: Is there a relationship?” *BI* 7 (1999): 29, presents three major characteristics of intertextuality in contrast to historical criticism: 1) the ideological context wherein the term was coined; 2) the inherently related concept of text; and 3) the distinction between influence and intertextuality.

intersection of texts and context.<sup>109</sup> In addition, whereas Bakhtin looks from the perspective of one text to other texts, Kristeva does not look from the text, but from within the “intertext” or “the book of the culture” of which a text forms a small part. Little by little, these differences between two have become bigger, because in the course of time the theories concerning intertextuality have been developed further by the French (post) structuralists (especially the members of the Tel Quel group [P Sollers, J Kristeva], J Derrida and R Barthes, and American postmodernists (S Fish, J Bloom and P De Man) into an ever vaguer concept. They insist that it is not the writer who is determinative of the intertext, but the reader. In their view, furthermore, they regard a text as an unending universe, from which no escape is possible. Everything is text and everything has become intertext. At this point intertext is the impossibility of living outside the unending, as Barthes (1977b:160-161; 1981:39)<sup>110</sup> maintained early. Within this unending universe, only the reader can make distinctions and giving meaning. Through their perspective, we realize that the phenomenon of intertextuality has gradually become, not merely general, but absolute as well. The concept of

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<sup>109</sup> Bakhtin seems to be considered mainly with regard to other contexts: sociology, formalism, general literary theory etc (e.g., D. Carroll, “The Alterity of Discourse: Form, History, and the Question of the Political in M. M. Bakhtin,” *Diacritics* 13 (1983): 65-83; M. Davidson, “Discourse in Poetry: Bakhtin and Extensions of the Dialogical,” in *Code of Signals: Recent Writings in Poetics* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1983), 143-50; D. LaCapra, “Bakhtin, Marxism, and the Carnavalesque,” in *Rethinking Intellectual History: Texts, Contexts, Language* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1983), 291-324; A. Swingewood, *Sociological Poetics and Aesthetic Theory* (Basingstoke & London: Macmillan, 1986); A. White, “Bakhtin, Sociolinguistics and Deconstruction,” in *The Theory of Reading*, ed. F. Gloversmith (Brighton & Totowa, N J: Harvester Press & Barnes & Noble, 1984).

<sup>110</sup> According to D. Patte, *Ethics of biblical interpretation: a reevaluation* (Louisville: Westminster & John Knox Press, 1995), 95, Barthes not only distinguishes a text from a work, but also argued that the metaphor of the text is that of network. In Barthes’ view, a text is a new tissue of past citations, that is, a text is a subjective construct: “the text is not a line of words but a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash” (“The death of the author, and from work to text,” in *Image-music-text: essays selected*, ed., trans. S. Heath [London, Fontana, 1997], 146). A text is, therefore, not an objective reality, but a subjective composition of which the existence is fleeting and forever changing. For him, in a strict sense, a text is constituted only in the moment of its reading. The reader’s own readings, experiences and position within the cultural formation form crucial intertexts. In this view, Barthes does not limit intertextuality to anterior texts. Meanwhile, according to him a work is the image of an organism, which grows by vital expansion, by development.

intertextuality has broadly developed into an idea in which everything becomes an intertext. Nothing functions as a distinct concept anymore, but as a general philosophical statement. It suggests that Bakhtin's emphasis on text production in interaction with other texts and with reality has become completely displaced in favour of an all-embracing view of text.

At two points, one should like to criticize the very broad view of intertextuality found with Kristeva and other critics in terms of the vagueness of the term, and the opposition between the unending universe of the text and the individual intertextual manner of reading (cf. Van Peer 1987:16-18). As van Wolde (1997:429) points out "The term 'intertextuality' can function only as an instrument of analysis and an explanatory model when it is defined more closely, and (the repetition of) the elements to which it refers are well articulated." It seems not very important to observe a few arbitrary repetitions or intertexts in such an unending universe, just as there is no point in distinguishing individual drops of water in a wide river. From this, intertextuality is useful in clarifying the fact that a text is a differential one, as well as a self-contained structure. In addition it can only be meaningful when its later conceptual vagueness and universalization is limited, because it is necessarily a more restricted notion of intertextuality for a productive use of it.

### **1.2.2.3. The Limited Sense of Intertextuality**

In recent years, discussions of intertextuality in biblical studies have come increasingly into vogue. At the same time, it is equally evident that competing and confusing



definitions of this poststructuralist<sup>111</sup> theoretical term, ‘intertextuality,’ are being employed.<sup>112</sup> In fact, the term cannot be contained or restricted because the linguistic phenomenon to which it points and the socio-literary contexts in which it occurs are large, more diffuse, and untraceable than any single definition or attribution could contain (cf. Plett 1991:3-29).<sup>113</sup>

In its broad sense, it is obvious that intertextuality refers primarily not to a text's dependence on another specific text but to its larger dependence on a whole cultural context (cf. Culler 1981:100-118). It is also worth noting that, in recent literary study, intertextuality<sup>114</sup> refers to “the fact that in any given use of language – text is intelligible only because and in terms of its interconnection with prior uses and understandings of its constituent metaphors, concepts, images, and symbolic world, etc” (Soulen & Soulen 2001:87-88; cf. O’Day 1990:259).

However, intertextuality can be defined in a specific sense as demonstrable relationships between texts (e.g., repetitions, cf. Riffaterre 1978). These demonstrable

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<sup>111</sup> For detailed information on poststructuralism [ist], see Allen's view, n. 93 in p. 43.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. R. B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Draisma, *Intertextuality in Biblical Writings*; C. A. Evans & S. Talmon, *The Quest for Context and Meaning: Studies in Biblical Intertextuality in Honor of James A Sanders* Biblical Interpretation Series 28 (Leiden & Boston & Köln: Brill, 1997); and see also K. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?: The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), especially the chapter 3. While the term's origin can easily be traced, its use among contemporary literary theorists and critics is diverse (cf. Plett, “Intertextualities,” 3).

<sup>113</sup> The boundless dissemination of intertextuality can be explained by two reasons: 1) it has been developed in poststructuralism as a theoretical rather than a methodological term (cf. J. Culler, “Presupposition and Intertextuality,” *MLN* [1976]: 1383-384) and 2) the term has been subjected to the very phenomenon it describes which means that it will not stay within the bounds of any definition, but continually spills over (cf. J. Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. B. Johnson [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981]). Because of its literal expansiveness, P. D. Miscall, “Isaiah,” 43-45, regards it as a “covering term” for various approaches to reading texts in relation to other texts.

<sup>114</sup> Etymologically, the term stems from the Latin *texere* (‘to weave’) and *intertexere* (‘to weave into,’ or ‘to intermix by weaving’), and is a sort of coinage in English formed under pressure from French *intertextualité*. Thus, R. Barthes, “The death of the author,” 161, expresses that “the metaphor of the text is that of the next work.” A text is a web, fabric, or network (cf. E. R. Harty, “Text, context, intertext,” *JLS* 1 (1985): 1-6).

relationships are usually based on a kind of repetition. It is not a question of repetitions of sounds and words, since these are necessary for any form of language use, but a question of the repetition of sentences and texts or parts of texts. In addition, intertextuality is based on transformations. In these aspects, intertextuality can thus be defined as the potential transferability of utterances (sentences or text fragments) beyond the borders of the text, and their assimilation in new text structures” (Van Peer 1987:20). In consequence, repetition and transformation are intertextuality’s two major characteristic features. At the same time, intertextuality has two distinctive visions: ‘text production’ and ‘text reception.’ The notion of intertextuality can be diagrammatised by the following figure (cf. van Wolde 1997:430):

Intertextuality: Text Production	Intertextuality: Text Reception
<p style="text-align: center;">Writer diachronic sources causality indexicality (i.e., indexical signs) compulsory relations</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Reader synchronic functions analogy iconicity (i.e., iconic signs) potential relations</p>

As stated above, a text is not only imported into other texts, but also absorbed by later one. When this happen, an intertextual relationship could be approached from two perspectives: from the original text (genotext/architext),<sup>115</sup> or from the later text

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<sup>115</sup> Since nineteenth century, biblical exegesis (i.e., historical-critical exegesis – esp. tradition, source, and redaction approach) has deemed a text as something, which is produced by one or more authors or editors. These exegetical approaches have concentrated upon the origin of the text and the intention of the author. In other words, they aim not merely to search for the oral or written sources and traditions, but also to investigate how they have been used by the writer as genotexts – the influences of sources. The same applies to many comparative studies, in which extra-biblical texts are often studied as

(phenotext). In this view, intertextuality is a phenomenon that is operative both in the *production* or in the writing process of a text, and in the *reception* or reading of a text.

In the view of the productive intertextuality, the presumed historical process (i.e., diachronic; e.g., historical-critical exegesis) is the most important consideration. Thus, from the diachronic standpoint, the writer has central importance, because he/she has used other texts in his or her writing, and has indicated these explicitly or implicitly, by means of quotations (or echoes<sup>116</sup>), allusions and so forth. The reader, then, knows or discovers which texts the author used when writing, because they form the very foundation of the origins of the text. In this case, the form of intertextuality is essentially historical in nature. From this, it is obvious that the text components are in fact viewed as indices (i.e., as signs), and, thus, are directly and causally determined by earlier texts.<sup>117</sup>

In the second view of the receptive intertextuality, the final text, which is compared with other texts in synchronic relationships, is significant. In contrast with the

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genotexts of biblical texts. These approaches have been concerned to recover the intention of the author by identifying the sources the writer has used and the intentional and historical relationships are considered to be compelling for the reader. In contrast to these older methodologies, intertextuality enables us to understand a text as a complex network both within itself as well as without in relation to other texts which are not only pretexts to it but intertexts to many others (cf. W. S. Vorster, "Intertextuality and Redaktionsgeschichte," in *Intertextuality in Biblical Writings: Essays in Honour of Bas Iersel*, ed. S. Draisma [Kampen: Kok, 1989], 15-26).

<sup>116</sup> Echoes in this work will be strictly defined as words in the quotation that appear either just prior to or just after the line in which the quotation appear. See, J. Hollander, *The Figure of Echo*, Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, 14-21 and J. C. Beker, "Echoes and Intertextuality: On the Role of Scripture in Paul's Theology," in *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel*, eds. C. A. Evans & J. A. Sanders JSNTSup 83; SSEJC 1 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 64-69. Beker rightly urges us towards constraint in the use of "echoes" so that those which are thunderous are not confused with those that are subliminal. In this sense, intertextuality helps scholars to understand the form, scope, and purpose of a finely chiselled literary unit of the Abraham cycle. Intertextuality thus performs a service to exegesis similar to that provided by rhetoric (cf. B. L. Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990], 21).

<sup>117</sup> Causality is always based on 'tangentiality' or indexicality, that is to say, on the actually existing connection or contiguity between signs and reality, or between signs or texts themselves. By calling one text a source and the other a text influenced by the source, the text components in the biblical texts were viewed as indexical signs.

productive intertextuality, the principle of causality is rejected; its place is taken by the principle of analogy. Words are viewed as iconic signs<sup>118</sup> which infers the principle that phenomena are analogous or isomorphic (cf. van Wolde 1989:43-49; 1994:160-199, esp. 165-168).<sup>119</sup> In this way, similar and different texts are explained as being indirectly related to each other and having a similar or iconic quality or image in common.<sup>120</sup> In such a case, the intertextual reading is a synchronic reading. By putting two texts side by side, the reader becomes aware of the analogies (repetitions and transformations) between the texts. The reader, then, is in the central position, based on the idea that it is the reader who allows the texts to interfere with one another (cf. Rashkow 1992:57-73). Intertextual relationships that are intertextual in the second meaning of the word are specific to the extent that they are more suited to text relationships than Kristeva's general understanding of intertextuality, but at the same time less restricted than the necessary indexical relationships, because they are free or possible (i.e., potential) relationship. The reader perceives similarities and lets these function as possible ways of (or as signs pointing to) relating texts to one another. In

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<sup>118</sup> Signs, iconic pointers to intertextual relationships, can be classified according to two qualities – stylistic and semantic nature, and narratological feature. Stylistic and semantic nature is comprised of:

1. The repetitions of words and semantic fields which refer to identical or similar areas of meaning;
2. Repetitions of larger textual units or structures (e.g., similarities in stylistic structures, in temporal or spatial arrangements, in sentences, in discourses or ways of expression);
3. Similarities in theme or genre, which create analogies in textual backgrounds.

Narratological feature can be described such as:

1. Analogies in character descriptions or in character types;
2. Similarities in actions or series of actions;
3. Similar narratological representations, meaning, the ways in which the narrator represents actions of the characters (cf. E. J. van Wolde, "Intertextuality: Ruth in Dialogue with Tamar," in *A Feminist Companion to Reading the Bible*, eds A. Brenner & C. Fontaine [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997, 432-33).

<sup>119</sup> Indexicality, on the other hand, works on the basis of the cause-effect sequence. Iconicity works on the basis of simultaneity and analogy.

<sup>120</sup> That is to say, agreements or differences in texts are not expounded from the point of view of direct causal or diachronic influence, but from a communal picture or similarity (iconic quality).

short, intertextuality is, in a specific sense, based on iconicity, synchronicity and the interaction between texts and reader.

In conclusion, intertextuality provides a more coherent methodology that opens up new vistas and perceptions of the originating force and creativity of a text, as well as its literary world (Clayton & Rothstein 1991:3; cf. Miscall 1992:43). The task of biblical exegesis is to focus on a particular text, without losing perspective of the social and literary context. Thus, we can understand the putative author and so comprehend his or her meaning, by careful, judicious, and where possible, perspicacious use of historical and philological methods (as well as other methods, such as sociology). We must avoid myopic a myopic focus on methodology in the concerted effort “to place textual and intertextual concerns within a comprehensive theoretical framework” (see, Phillips 1991:78-97). We must also see what is before us, a particular text, and not simply understand it as a mirror image of another text or family of texts. A text must be seen, first and foremost, as a distinct (if not necessarily unique) text, with its own integrity. Its own, unique voice must be heard, even if intertextuality helps us hear it within a chorus of supporting voices. Intertextuality must not become a substitute for older faithful methods, but an additional method in biblical historical criticism; and it must be employed using criteria and data provided only by the text. Thus, intertextuality must be used conservatively and with carefully defined criteria. Accordingly, the present work shall add intertextuality to another method, the composition approach, illustrated earlier.<sup>121</sup> However, this new literary method will be employed in a narrow sense. It is hoped that this work will demonstrate how this approach can create a

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<sup>121</sup> As M. A. Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 1, states: “The field of biblical criticism knows no methodology that circumvents the act of reading or hearing the text.”

greater appreciation for the literary qualities of the Abraham narrative.

### 1.3. Summary and Sequence

This study is an exegetical investigation of the Abraham narrative to trace the literary compositional strategy of it in the narrative structure of the Pentateuchal corpora, by attempting to analyze and describe its structure and the semantics of the arrangement of source material in the periscope as stated earlier. The greatest concern in this study thus is about the role of the literary unit played in the compositional strategy of the author/the final composer of the Pentateuch as a whole; the most interest in this thesis is to understand how these different literary units are compositionally arranged as the final form and related to each other. In order to read the Abraham narrative the two kind of methodology have employed, composition criticism and intertextuality. In terms of the narrative strategy, the author/the final composer employed some narrative techniques presented in Genesis: recursion, contemporization and foreshadowing (Sailhamer 1995:292).<sup>122</sup> On the one hand, it helps us to see not simply the lesson taught by the text; it also provides the means for appreciating the basic narrative structure not mere to the Abraham narrative, but to the whole Pentateuch. On the other hand, it will reveal textual interrelatedness between texts. This interpretive enterprise implies that the conscious decision in this work has been made to focus on the transmitted canonical the Abraham text and treat it as coherent, literary units,

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<sup>122</sup> The narrative techniques used in the Book of Genesis are recursion, contemporization and foreshadowing. Recursion is the composer's/the author's deliberate shaping of narrative events so that key elements of one narrative are repeated in others (e.g., the same pattern in Genesis 1 and Gen 7:24-9:17).

regardless of the original processes that may have brought the various strata into existence.<sup>123</sup> Put another way, the main concern is with the aesthetic qualities of the final form of the Abraham narrative, as it now exists. The study, thus, will be an exegetical proposal to the biblical text as holistic approach in an analytical, integrative, and thematic fashion (Chap. 1).

The following chapters thus examine in detail determining of the inner literary arrangement of the Abraham narrative in the narrative frame of Genesis and the Pentateuch as well (Chap. 2). It is followed by a discussion of the inner textual integrity of logic, syntax, and historical milieu of the Abraham narrative (Chap. 3), and intertextual relationships of the periscope by syntactically examining of the texts at semantic and thematic level (Chap. 4). Primarily, attention is given in these two chapters (Chap. 3 and 4) to the theories and methods of composition criticism and intertextuality, with attempts made to carry out these methods on the compositional strategy. The theological considerations of the narrative proceed by these scrutinized intra/inter-textual examination of the texts. The final chapter (Chap. 5) summarizes some of the advantages of applying the method to the narrative and some exegetical suggestions in terms of pre-critical angle.

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<sup>123</sup> Theories related to the probable text, sources and redacted elements of the Book of Genesis, see, J. Barton, "Form Criticism (OT)," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. N. Freedman (New York, New York: Doubleday, 1992a), 2:838-41; "Redaction Criticism (OT)," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. N. Freedman (New York, New York: Doubleday, 1992b), 5:644-47; "Source Criticism (OT)," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. N. Freedman (New York, New York: Doubleday, 1992c), 6:162-65; T. B. Dozeman, "OT Rhetorical Criticism," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. D.N. Freedman (New York, New York: Doubleday, 1992), 5:712-15; H. Gunkel, *Genesis*, Mercer Library of Biblical Studies trans. M.E. Biddle (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1997), xlviii-lxxxvi; D. M. Carr, *Reading the Fractures of Genesis: Historical and Literary Approaches* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 62-77; J. H. Sailhamer, "Genesis," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. F. E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1990), 2:6-10.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE STRUCTURAL AND LITERARY ANALYSIS OF THE ABRAHAM NARRATIVE

#### 2.1. Introduction

As aforementioned, the critical scholarships (the Documentary, Form-critical and Traditio-historical critics), who have been detected the lack of uniformity of style and vocabulary as a sign of the lack of unity in the structure and message of Genesis for the last two years, by dissecting the book into smaller and separate sections according to sources, forms and traditions. Especially, they have argued that the Abraham narrative was a collection of loosely related but narratively independent stories about Abraham (cf. Brodie 2001a:15).<sup>124</sup> They base their conclusion upon form critical and tradition history methodology with its presuppositions of extended literary development. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that very few attempts have been made to see a coherent structure or arrangement of the Abraham narrative in its present form (Skinner 1930; Speiser 1964). In it, the result of the diachronic approaches was that emphasis tended to be placed upon the individual units and original collections, thus missing the integrity of the final form of the text. The approaches by their very nature are not conducive to reading the book and the Abraham narrative in particular as a literary whole.

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<sup>124</sup> C. Westermann, *Genesis 12-36: A Commentary*, trans. J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985), 125, distinguished several different kinds of literary writing here including genealogies, itinerary travel accounts, a series of Lot stories, and a sequence of promise stories, which he contended, were edited into the text.



More recent literary analyses of the Abraham narrative, however, have shed new light on the composition of Genesis. Their works have led to a growing conviction among scholars that the overall structure of the narrative needs more elucidation and elaboration (cf. Adar 1990:9). In what follows, studies on the literary structure of Genesis are thoroughly reviewed and evaluated, and a new understanding of the literary unity is proposed (Alter 1981; Jeansonne 1989:33-52; 1990; 1995:145-152; Minor 1992; Powell 1992; Sternberg 1985; Teugels 1994:89-104; Watson & Hauser 1994). The literary methods have shown that the stories are a meaningful whole, demonstrating this form the many parallels and repetitive patterns that serve to give it order. Many scholarly studies have demonstrated the presence of patterns, especially chiasms (e.g., Alexander<sup>125</sup>). In this view, the Abraham cycle can be characterized by both an easily discernible unity and a noticeable lack of uniformity. Our approach to the present work in this chapter will follow the suggestions of the literary view to the narrative.

In order to sustain a realistic understanding of the unity of the Abraham narrative, it is necessary to appreciate of the nature of its composition and an understanding of its structure.<sup>126</sup> This chapter, therefore, is going to deal with some literary aspects of the narrative on the basis of the תולדות structure and the ‘chiastic’ or ‘symmetrical’ structure as well as anthropological pattern, character development, style or plot, and the use and development of key words or themes. In addition, this chapter will probe

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<sup>125</sup> T. D. Alexander, *A Literary Analysis of the Abraham Narrative in Genesis*, Unpublished Ph. D. Dissertation (Belfast: The Queen’s University of Belfast, 1982); cf. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 263, has shown the careful integration of the whole cycle by demonstrating that a chiastic arrangement is used to order the stories.

<sup>126</sup> For the material arrangement implies the purpose of the author/the final composer, and that in turn suggests a central concern or integration point that gives a unit its meaning and direction.

the fact that the whole of the narrative is carefully constructed and unified by palistropic writing and internal linking (cf. McEvenue 1971:185; Wilson 1997:73<sup>127</sup>).<sup>128</sup> Consequently, the cycle in this chapter will be treated as skillful works of art, maintaining the integrity of form and content in a way of appreciating its structural and unity features. By doing so, one is properly able to distinguish major and minor aspects of the narrative. Three considerations will undergird the procedure of literary analysis of the narrative itself in this chapter: 1) the narrative within the larger context of the Pentateuch; 2) the composition of the narrative, namely, its overall structure and unity; and 3) the demarcation of the each literary unit in the narrative in sequence.

## 2.2. The Abraham Narrative within the Larger Context of the Pentateuch

The meaning of a section or periscope is found not merely within the section or periscope but in its context especially when one read a literary work within a complex narrative structure (like the Pentateuch). For literary context is a clue both to meaning

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<sup>127</sup> V. M. Wilson, *Divine Symmetries: The Art of Biblical Rhetoric* (Lanham: University of America Press, 1997) comments on artistic design within text as follows:

It seems remarkable to us that a writer could have as many as three or four mutually compatible patterns, even conventions, overlaid in a single text, each with its own subtle lines of definition. But this is a quite common characteristic of Scripture, and indeed one familiar in our own times in the layered plot developments of modern novels.

His comment is striking because of its implications for the structuring of the Abraham narrative. While poetry is a different genre, it has been demonstrated that several kinds of parallelisms may be used by an author in a single text. See, A. Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 127, and J. Worgul, "The Quatrain in Isaianic Poetry," *GTJ* 11 (1990): 187-204.

<sup>128</sup> The literary pieces, for instance, narrative, genealogy, and itineraries, some previously written and some original compositions by the author/the final composer, have been brought together by him, who forms them an unmistakably coherent, unified story line. The organizing principle with these literary pieces for the Abraham narrative is palistropic.

and to origin. Although the Abraham narrative forms an extensive self-contained narrative unit, this narrative unit has links with both the preceding and the following narrative units in Genesis and in the Pentateuch. It, thus, is worth studying the relationship between the Abraham narrative and the surrounding texts in the book of Genesis and the Pentateuch. From this, the purpose of this section is both to indicate the immediate literary context of the Abraham narrative in Genesis and in the rest of the Pentateuch and examine the narrative location of the Abraham narrative within the context of Genesis 12-50, by analyzing both the interrelations between the various cycles of stories and the scale of each episode.<sup>129</sup>

Having investigated the literary constitution of the Abraham narrative (Gen 11:27-25:11), therefore, two preliminary remarks should be made in this section before discussing in detail its composition, structure and unity of the narrative section.

1. It is important to observe how this Abraham narrative functions within the larger context. Within the literary-theological structure of the book of Genesis, the Abraham narrative functions as a bridge between the Primeval history (Genesis 1-11) and the later sections of Genesis, including a collective future as a people (i.e., Exodus and beyond).
2. In its form, the Abraham narrative as part of a larger literary unit in the book of Genesis may be structurally considered as constituting one of four major sections, which marks the construction of the book.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> The detailed and comprehensive discussion on the intertextual relationships will be presented in chapters 3 and 4.

<sup>130</sup> In conjunction with constituting of the book of Genesis, we have some divergent opinions. On the one hand, Rendtorff, *The Problem of the Process of Transmission of the Pentateuch*, prefers to view

To begin with, as many critics have observed<sup>131</sup>, the book of Genesis can be into four narrative parts: the Primeval History (Gen 1-11:26), the Abraham cycle (Gen 11:27-25:18)<sup>132</sup>, the Jacob cycle (Gen 25:19-36), and the Joseph narrative (Genesis 37-50) by the תולדות formula.<sup>133</sup> Besides the the תולדות structure, however, there are some further attempts to delineate the overall structure and unity of Genesis, which are initiated and accelerated by a number of the literary critics. They have tried to establish the unity of Genesis through anthropological pattern (Carroll 1977:663-677; 1985:127-135)<sup>134</sup>, diptych style or plot (Brodie 2001a; 2001b)<sup>135</sup>, the development approach

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Genesis as composed of five blocks of material, including the Isaac cycle between the Abraham and Jacob cycles. On the other hand, G. J. Wenham, *Numbers*, TOTC (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1981), 17, presents that Genesis falls into three primeval story sections and three patriarchal cycles: the story of Abraham in Gen 11:27-25:11; the story of Jacob in Gen 25:19-35:29; the story of Joseph in Gen 37:1-50:26 (On the general structural division of Genesis, cf. Coats, *Genesis*, 14, 16, 28-29; J. E. Hartley, *Genesis*, NIBC 1 [Peabody: Hendrickson & Paternoster Press, 2000], 3-15; Speiser, *Genesis*, liii-lx). While differing in certain respects, however, both of the two scholars regard the Abraham cycle as a unified section. In its literary context, the book of Genesis can clearly be divided into four major narrative blocks which comprise the entire book: the primeval history of mankind (Gen 1-11:26), the Abraham narrative (Gen 11:27-25:11) that tells the life history of Abraham and his family, the Jacob Cycle (Gen 25:19-35:29) with a few details of his father Isaac and brother Esau, and the Joseph story (Gen 37:2-50:26). The unity of Genesis in particular has long been recognized and in recent years has attracted considerable attention. For instance, see Coats' work, *Genesis*, 259-315. For similar divisions, see von Rad, *Genesis*, 5-7; A. P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 7-9, 35, and C. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, trans. J. J. Scullion (London & Minneapolis: SPCK & Augsburg, 1984), ix-x.

<sup>131</sup> See, Fox, "Can Genesis Be Read as a Book?," 31-40; J. P. Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Narrative. An Introductory Guide*, trans. I. Smit (Louisville: Westminster & John Knox Press, 1999). 158-59; G. G. Nicol, "The Chronology of Genesis: Genesis XXVI 1-33 as "Flashback,"" *VT* 46 (1996): 330-38; and G. Rendsburg, *The Redaction of Genesis* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1986).

<sup>132</sup> For the dissimilar textual scope of the Abraham narrative adopted in this work, see the section of the literary delimitation of the Abraham narrative (2.3.1) in pp. 70-78.

<sup>133</sup> For the function of the the תולדות formula, see below notes 162-164 in pp. 76-77.

<sup>134</sup> His approach, so-called "modified structural anthropology" has been tried to find interrelated patterns and styles underlying a variety of myths by employing established structuralist principles put forward by Edmund Leach and Claude Lévi-Strauss. He applies the results of this research to find common patterns and styles beneath many of the similar stories in Genesis: the fall of man, Cain and Abel, Noah and Ham, Lot and his daughters, Esau and Jacob, and Joseph and his brothers. He restates it in the form of two propositions: the incest taboo and the incestuous relationship ("Leach, Genesis, and Structural Analysis: A Critical Evaluation," *American Ethnologist* 4 [1977]: 673). His observation that there some common patterns utilized by the author/the final composer tends to confirm that there was a deliberate plan for the book of Genesis.

<sup>135</sup> Brodie contends that the entire book of Genesis consists of twenty-six diptychs as a key to narrative unity and meaning. In other words, each of diptychs has tow parts or panels, which means that Genesis is binary in that it involves balance and a structure illustrated by the pattern, "AA', BB', CC', DD',...." (*Genesis as Dialogue*, 12, 18-19; "Genesis as Dialogue: Genesis Twenty-Six Diptychs as a Key to

(Cohn 1983:3-16)<sup>136</sup> in character (Brode 2001a:12-15) and in key or theme-words (Alexander 1993:255-270)<sup>137</sup>, and thematic connections (Mann 1991:341-353)<sup>138</sup> and so forth.

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Narrative Unity and Meaning,” in *Studies in the Book of Genesis*, BETL, ed. A. Wénin, [Leuven: Leuven University & Peeters, 2001b], 300). He also divides the book into four basic stories or dramas: Adam-Noah (Gen chs 1-11), Abram-Abraham (Gen 12:1-25:18), Jacob (Gen 25:19-37:1), and Joseph (Gen 37:2-50:26). According to Brodie (*Genesis as Dialogue*, 15), they in turn can be reduced to two complex groups, each of which contains a double drama: 1) the Adam-Noah and Abram-Abraham Cycles, which are connected by the idea of covenant (Gen 9:8-17 and Gen chs 15, 17); and 2) the Jacob and Joseph Cycles, which together recount the life of Jacob, womb to tomb (Gen 25:19-50:26). His analysis exposes the characteristic continuity and interconnectedness between materials in Genesis by means of structural, thematic or key-word relations despite the two weakness of his approach: presenting partially strong element of parallelism and lack of providing a unified message of the book.

<sup>136</sup> Cohn in his approach termed “developmental” suggests that Genesis displays in its final form a four or five stage development of divine presence and human character: 1) the story of Adam and Eve; 2) the story of Noah and Flood; 3) the Abraham Cycle; 4) the Jacob Cycle; and 5) the story of Joseph and his brothers. According to him, human character is being transformed from the simple and fragile (Adam and Eve) to the complex (Joseph). Divine character development moves from anthropomorphic and myth-like descriptions of direct actions by God to a God who is present silently within the events. The narrative styles among the human and divine character development also move from simple and episodic to complex and unified. The development theory demonstrates well that “Genesis is not a collection of episodes that are loosely connected or poorly edited” (Brodie, *Genesis as Dialogue*, 15), as well as that the continuous involvement of God from mythic world to real history. His approach exposes the inseparable relationship between world history (i.e., the Primeval history) and the history of Israel (i.e., the Patriarchal history). Thus, Cohn, in this sense, demonstrates well the literary and theological integrity of Genesis.

<sup>137</sup> Alexander, “Genealogies, Seed and the Compositional Unity of Genesis,” 258-59, states that Genesis has been carefully formed to accentuate an important family line from Adam to the sons of Jacob. This fact is underlined by two distinctive literary features: the תולדות headings and the repeated Hebrew word זרע (“seed”), which closely linked to the genealogical structure of Genesis. From this sense, he contends that when the book is viewed as a whole, it is very apparent that the תולדות structure and the concept of זרע (“seed”) are closely connected to underline a single, distinctive lineage, which will eventually become a royal dynasty. The two key-words play a crucial role by gathering all the events around them and offering a unifying narrative flow to the stories (“Genealogies, Seed and the Compositional Unity of Genesis,” 260, 269).

<sup>138</sup> Mann suggests that Genesis has a thematic and theological unity despite it consist of various different sources (“All the Families of the Earth: The Theological Unity of Genesis”). He holds that the central theological focus that unites the book is the divine promise of blessing (esp., Yahwistic and Priestly sources) that God makes to the patriarchs (Gen 12:1-3; Gen 26:2-4; Gen 28:13-14; Gen 35:9-12; Gen 46:1-4). Mann maintains that the divine promise to Abraham (Gen 12:1-3) is elaborated in the patriarchal narratives that follow, and anticipated in the Primeval stories that precede, where the promise of blessing contrasts with the motif of the curse (Gen 3:14-19; Gen 4:11; Gen 8:21; Gen 9:25-26) [“All the Families of the Earth: The Theological Unity of Genesis,” 344]. In his conclusion, he states that the promise of blessing through Abraham to all the families of the earth offers a resolution to the primeval cycle, which otherwise contains no narrative resolution, but just recurring problems (disobedience, fratricide, and curses, etc.). Thus, in his scheme, Genesis goes from tension (i.e., partial fulfillment) to resolution (complete fulfillment). In this way, the book of Genesis is closely connected to the larger corpus comprising the Pentateuch.

The other oft-discussed literary structure reconstructed by several other scholars is “the chiasmatic structure” or “chiasm<sup>139</sup>” (cf. Welch 1981:10), which was a deliberate literary device very often employed by ancient writers (cf. Welch 1981:9-10).<sup>140</sup> Most recently, David A Dorsey (1999), recognizing several structuring pattern in the Old Testament, such as chiasm (symmetry), parallelism<sup>141</sup>, and sevenfold patterns, has analyzed the structures of all the books of the Old Testament which are each organized, in his contention, mainly according to the laws of chiasmus.<sup>142</sup> Yet, chiasm<sup>143</sup> is a structural form developed primarily on the basis of parallelism but it is concentrically inverted parallelism (Breck 1999:254, 256). Thus, the laws of chiasm coincide in many ways with those of parallelism since both structures are basically fashioned by repetition (Dorsey 1999:28). Using chiasmatic structure as an interpretative tool biblical scholars

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<sup>139</sup> The term “chiasm” is derived from the crisscross shape of the Greek letter Chi (X). The uniqueness of the chiasmatic structure lies in its focus on a pivotal idea (either a singly central or two complementary central elements), around which the other parts of corresponding elements are developed in reverse order (cf. J. Breck “Biblical Chiasmus: Exploring Structure for Meaning,” *BTB* 17 [1987]: 71; D. A. Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis-Malachi* (Grand Rapids: BakerBooks, 1999), 30; R. E. Man, “The Value of Chiasm for New Testament Interpretation,” *BSac* (1984), 146-47.

<sup>140</sup> For more information of the chiasmus structure, see below note 148-149 in pp. 66-67.

<sup>141</sup> The term describes a very particular structural relationship between two lines. Thus, it refers to an analogously structural notion: the repetition of a syntactic pattern. In other words, it is understood the regularly recurring juxtaposition of symmetrically constructed sentences (cf. E. L. Greenstein, “How Does Parallelism Mean?” In *A Sense of Test: The Art of Language in the Study of Biblical Literature [Papers from a Symposium at The Draopsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning May 11, 1982]* [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1982b], 41-70.

<sup>142</sup> See, especially the introductory section (*The Literary Structure of the Old Testament*, 15-44) in his work. Meanwhile, J. Breck, *The Shape of Biblical Language* (New York: SVS Press, 1994), 235-39, presents four laws of chiasm: 1) Chiasmatic units are framed by inclusions; 2) The central element (or pair of elements) serves as the pivot and/or thematic focus of the entire unit; 3) A heightening effect occurs from the first parallel line of strophe to its prime complement; and 4) The resultant concentric or spiral parallelism, with progressive intensification from the extremities inward, produces a helical movement that draws the reader/hearer toward the thematic center.

<sup>143</sup> This term is also generally called “inverted parallelism.” It is commonly accepted as chiasm by most scholars (cf. M. Dahood, “Chiasmus,” in *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, Supplementary Volume [Nashville: Abingdon, 1976], 145; J. Limburg, “Psalms, Book of,” in *ABD*, vol. 5 [New York: Doubleday, 1992], 528-29; J. Staley, “The Structure of John’s Prologue: Its Implications for the Gospel’s Narrative Structure,” *CBQ* 48 [1986], 241-64; Bar-Efrat, *Some Observations of the Analysis*, 154-173), however, uses different names for the different forms of symmetry as follows: AA' (parallel pattern), ABB'A' (chiasmatic pattern), AXA' (ring pattern), and ABXB'A'.

have been able to explain and account for repetitions, doublets and inconsistencies such as conflicts in meaning, historical order and emphases that sporadically exist in the Bible. The Documentary Hypothesis and its variations have never given the proper explanations for these problematic textual elements. But with the intervention of chiasmic structural analysis we come to recognize the hand of the biblical writers at work, carefully organizing sources to achieve specific narrative goals. The discovery of the coherence of the chiasm in a text, therefore, suggests that the text, which is examined has an essential unity (Brodie 2001a:12; Dorsey 1999:31).

As seen above, each of these approaches to the structure of Genesis holds a certain amount of truth, but none of them can encompass all the aspects of literary features of Genesis. Thus, a crucial thing that needs to be verified is which one is the major structural device into, which other approaches are incorporated.

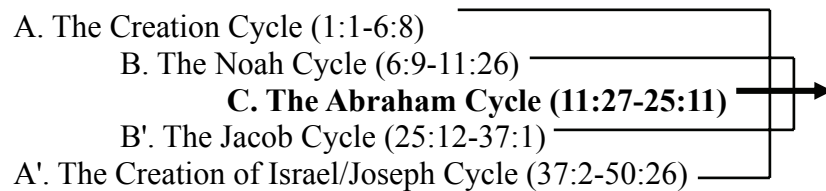
Having carefully attended to the comparisons and observations of the critics' structural analyses of Genesis presented above, the need of an alternative (chiasmic) structure recognizes and honors Genesis' status as a self-contained unit. Amid many scholars who have tried to reconstruct the structure of Genesis, the present work had mainly consulted the views of David A Dorsey (1999:47),<sup>144</sup> J P Fokkelman ([1975] 1991),<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> In his analysis, Genesis is divided into five major units: 1) Yahweh and the pre-Abrahamic ancestors of Israel (Gen 1:1-11:32); 2) Yahweh and Abraham (Gen 12:1-21:7); and 3) Yahweh and Isaac (Gen 21:8-28:4); 4) Yahweh and Jacob (Gen 28:5-37:1), and Yahweh and Joseph (Gen 37:2-50:26). Each major unit also has its own complex chiasmic structure and chiasmic sub-structures. The main peculiarity in his unit divisions is the careful treatment of the Isaac story as an independent unit, a notion that most scholars have abandoned.

<sup>145</sup> In the study of Genesis, which concentrates primarily on the interrelationship between materials in the Jacob story, emphasizes the use of key-words (i.e., theme-words), alliterations, assonances, and parallel and chiasmic structure. He demonstrates that theme-words, alliterations and assonances clearly illustrate that the author/the final composer of the story had a detailed design for his work and had a message to be delivered as effectively as possible. In the same vein, the parallel and chiasmic structures within a story also exhibit the artistic skill of the author/the final composer in selecting and arranging the materials at his disposal.

and Gary A Rendsburg (1986).<sup>146</sup> The system presented here divides the book of Genesis into five literary cycles. Consequently, in the larger context of Genesis, the structure of the book can be illustrated as follows:



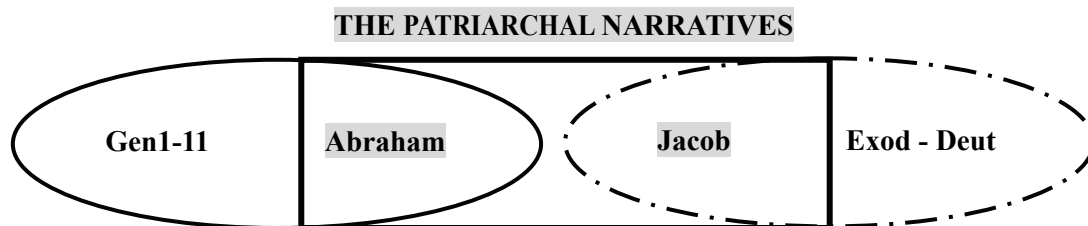
This chiasmic structure differs somewhat from the structures, which other scholars have reconstructed, who observed above. The Noah cycle (i.e., the Flood story) had dealt with independently from the Primeval History because it has its own life and quality (Wenham 1978:336-348). The Noah cycle concludes the previous cycle, that is, the Creation cycle with the annihilation and new creation of the world, and opens up a new horizon for the following cycle, the Abraham cycle, with a covenant theme. Thus the Noah cycle provides a hinge upon, which the previous and following cycles turn (cf. Alexander 1983:17-22; Steinmetz 1994:193-207). Although this arrangement collapses the genealogical list of Esau, it has the advantage of recognizing the Noah and Jacob accounts as the central episodes in each half of the early history and the patriarchal narratives (cf. Blenkinsopp 1992:58-59. 98-100). In this five-fold arrangement, the Abraham narrative situates in the pivotal position as the center of the chiasmic structure.

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<sup>146</sup> He deals with Genesis on its own and demonstrates two parallel and three chiasmic structures in it. He divides the book into four units: 1) The Primeval History (Gen 1-11:26); 2) The Abraham Cycle (Gen 11:27-22:24); 3) The Jacob Cycle (Gen 25:19-35:22); and 4) The Joseph Story (Gen 37:1-50:26). Two sections, namely, Gen 23-25:18 and Gen 35:23-36:43 is omitted from the major units and set aside as “Linking materials.” According to him the Abraham, Jacob and Joseph Cycles are each arranged chiasmically, while the Primeval History and the Linking materials are arranged in parallel fashion. Throughout the analysis, Rendsburg defines symmetrical units in terms of their shared vocabulary and theme.



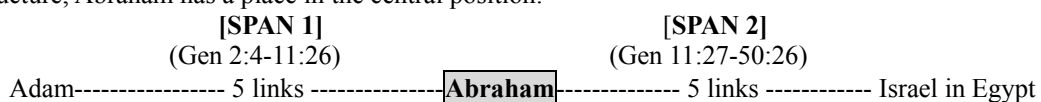
This structure demonstrates that the Abraham narrative contains strikingly explicit references to the Primeval history, in a way that scene after scene in the narrative receives its depth and precise nuance of meaning from the way they take up and repeat or transform themes and image anchored in the preceding chapters. If they seem to be implicitly referred to in the narrative that is because they are everywhere presupposed and echoed. The Abraham narrative within the larger whole literary units, the patriarchs (Genesis 12-50), therefore, has close links with both the preceding and the following narrative units and the remainder of the Pentateuch as well.<sup>147</sup> The linkage of narrative cycle can thus be sketched as follows:



In this sense, one may examine the interrelatedness between the Abraham narrative and the rest of the patriarchal narratives in terms of narrative framework. In very general terms, the תולדות formula, which functions as a signal to show the movement from creation to Israel in Egypt (Gen 2:4-50:26) in the narratives of Genesis, largely divides the narratives from Abraham to Jacob into five structural divisions: Abraham (Gen

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<sup>147</sup> W. VanGemenen, *The Progress of Redemption: From Creation to the New Jerusalem* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1988), 70-73, states that the תולדות formula as a linkage, which looks at the past as a series of interrelated events, forms a bridge between creation and the story of Israel in Egypt, using ten separate structural components. The first five components span the primeval history (Gen 2:4-11:26), whereas the last five components span the story of the Abraham till Israel arrives in Egypt (Gen 11:27-50:26). The bridge from Adam to Israel, thus, consists of two spans, each consisting of five links. In this structure, Abraham has a place in the central position:



11:27-25:11), Ishmael (Gen 25:12-18), Isaac (Gen 25:19-35:29), Esau (Gen 36:1-37:1), and Jacob (Gen 37:2-50:26). In this basic narrative skeleton of the patriarchal narratives, there is a possibility to examine some interrelations between the patriarchal narratives. First of all, the Abraham narrative has textual links in terms of being father of each patriarchs from Abraham to Joseph genealogically. Secondly, there are many thematically similarities rather than coincidence between the narrative and that of the patriarchal narratives in the plots of each episode, as Wenham (1987:256-264) pointed out. These parallels functions to recapture and appreciate the authorial intentions and motives. Thus, each cycle of the stories must be read in the light of the others and each episode ought to be compared with other similar episodes. Thirdly, the Abraham narrative structurally plays as a bookend of the patriarchal history with that of Jacob, which means that the narrative balances the cycle of Jacob. Since each of the patriarchal narratives strikingly shows the difference of the length. As it were, the two narratives for Abraham and Jacob each have fourteen chapters, and the Isaac's account is about ten chapters. While on the other, the narratives of Ishmael and Esau who are set aside as not being heirs to the covenant and promises are really no more than genealogies, occupying only seven verses and one chapter respectively. In view of that, one may have a chiasmic structure of the patriarchal narrative as a whole as follows:

- A. Abraham 11:27-25:11 (a long cycle: the outer frame)
- B. Ishmael 25:12-18 (a short cycle: the inner frame)
- C. Isaac 25:19-35:29 (a long cycle: the core story)**
- B'. Esau 36:1-37:1 (a short cycle: the inner frame)
- A'. Jacob 37:2-50:26 (a long cycle: the outer frame)

The structure presents the whole palistropic<sup>148</sup> (or chiasmic, concentric, symmetric

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<sup>148</sup> Adopted from S. E. McEvenue, *The Narrative Style of the Priestly Writer*, AnBib 50 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1971), 29, especially note 18. A palistrophe is the arrangement of material in a V-shaped

[also called alternating], or introverted) narrative arrangement of the patriarchal narrative structure of Genesis.<sup>149</sup> This symmetric structure suggests that when one considers the amount of material given to the patriarchs themselves, the literary feature of symmetry becomes important. As the structure seen above, the Abraham and Jacob narratives function as the beginning and end of the patriarchal story in terms of composing a longer story than that of Isaac in order to balance the two narratives in very general terms. In the other words, the structural development concentrates on the two major figures, whereas Isaac is a transition figure between them. This mode of narrative pattern reveals the sign of the transmission of divine blessing from Abraham through Isaac to Jacob. In it, Isaac’s account plays as a pivot or a hinge for the progress of God’s redemptive plan in spite of having no counterpart in the structure (VanGemeren 102-103).

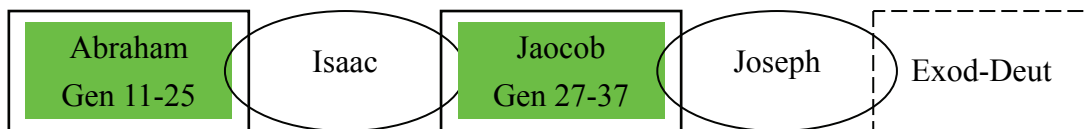
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pattern so that material in each step moving in toward the center mirrors material on the corresponding step moving out from the center as follows:

- A The Outer Frame
- B The Inner Frame
- C **The Core Story**
- B' The Inner Frame
- A' The Outer Frame

The center itself may or may not be mirrored, and there may be as many steps as an author desires.<sup>149</sup> One identifies a number of different patterns that are found in the Old Testament and Genesis in particular (Wilson, *Divine Symmetries*, 23, 27-28). These include: 1) a ‘parallel pattern’ (or “series episodes” structuring) – A-B-C- A'-B'-C' – consist of a series of independent episodes that are put together to create a narrative flow; 2) a “yoke episodes” format – AA'; B-B'; C-C1; D-D' – which is paired episodes whose mutual correspondence enhances each story; 3) a symmetric pattern (or a simple “chiasm” – A-B-C-D- C'-B'-A' – where each part of a story is paired with another part that turns about a center; and 4) an “episodic chiasm” – A-B-C-D-D'-C'-B'-A' – where each episode has its echo, again folded about a center. These terms are the literary arrangement schemes that the biblical writers might use in laying out a composition. The palistropic patterns have their unique propensity that material in each step moving in toward the center mirrors material on the corresponding step moving out from the center, which itself may or may not be mirrored, and there may be as many steps as an author desires. Chiasmus as “a literary figure, or principle means ‘a placing crosswise’ of words in a sentence” in particular (N. W. Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 1942], 31). It has employed in rhetoric by the biblical authors as a sort of literary device, designating inversion of the order of words or phrase, which are repeated or subsequently referred to in the sentence. For the detailed distinction of the arrangement schemes, see, Bar-Efrat, *Some Observations on the Analysis of Structure*, 170-72.

In the meantime, the overall structural framework also be sketched in a different way, one may fittingly scrutinizes that the cycles in which the central figures are Abraham (Genesis 11-25) and Jacob (Genesis 27-37), respectively, are the ones in which the use of the mode of linkage of narrative cycles is most marked (Vosloo 1982:15-22). In this sense, he (1982:15) schematically presents the interrelationships between the two major narratives (i.e., the Abraham cycle and Jacob cycle) and the two narratives (Isaac in Genesis 25-27 and Joseph in Genesis 37-50), which play a subordinate role in the framework. Even though there is no sharp transition on either side, the narrative with the Jacob cycle is closely bound up with its context. The arrangement may be diagrammatically represented as follows:



Furthermore, one may see the narrative location of the Abraham narrative within the overall structure of Genesis in terms of type of structure (i.e., parallel and chiasmic) and the recurring theme (the threat to the divine promise). In this aspect, Garrett (2000:113), on the one hand, analyzes the work of Rendsburg, *The Redaction of Genesis* (1986:8, 28-29, 53-54, 71, 80) on the structural peculiarity of Genesis, and synthesized attempts to synthesize the verbal parallels between the cycles to establish correspondence between them.

Narrative Sections	Textual Scope	Type of Structure
The primeval history	1:1-11:26	Parallel
The Abraham cycle	11:27-22:24	Chiasmic
Linking material	23:1-25:18	parallel with 35:23-36:43
The Jacob cycle	25:19-35:22	Chiasmic

Linking material	35:23-36:43	parallel with 23:1-25:18
The Joseph story	37:1-50:26	Chiastic

On the other, Garrett (2000:120-124) suggests another attempt at finding the structural key to Genesis. He considers the overall structure of Genesis from an angle of threats concerning the preservation of the Abrahamic offspring to improve on the work of Kikawada and Quinn those who attempt to relate Genesis to an attested ancient Near Eastern form with regard to origins (i.e., *Atrahasis*, the Babylonian myth of origins) as opposed to the theoretical form and tradition history reconstructions commonly attempted.<sup>150</sup> The series of perils that threaten the fulfillment of the promise of an heir is a recurring theme, which can be traced throughout the subsequent narratives in Genesis. Garrett's approach may be diagrammed as below:

Recurring themes	Contents	Texts
Prologue	Primeval History	1:1-11:26
Transition	Genealogy	11:27-32
Threat	Abraham Cycle	12:1-25:11
Transition	Genealogy	25:12-18
Threat	Jacob Cycle	25:19-35:22b
Transition	Genealogy	35:22c-36:43
Threat	Joseph Cycle	37:1-46:7
Transition	Genealogy	46:8-27
Resolution	Settlement in Egypt	46:28-50:26

However, it is noteworthy that the threats are not merely concerning the progeny, but regarding the blessing to all families of the earth, or the gift of the land; these themes are all placed in jeopardy by the actions of the characters of the narrative in nearly

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<sup>150</sup> See, I. M. Kikawada and A. Quinn, *Before Abraham Was: A Provocative Challenge to the Documentary Hypothesis*, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1987), 36-53. In this work, they recognize a similarity to some degree in the contents of Genesis 1-11 and *Atrahasis* and propose the thematic and structural parallels between two works to reflect an ancient literary convention.

every episode in the book. In a section of scholarly circles, still raise a question in argument that whether almost any story would not involve the idea of threat and final resolution, especially one including the flood account<sup>151</sup> even though Garrett's approach is helpful in terms of trying to work with the most obvious redactional element in the book (i.e., תולדות). As Garrett appraised his work, "the validity of this approach is shown by the way that the five major cycles each function separately as part of the structure of the whole."

To conclude the Abraham narrative relates to what follows in the Pentateuch on the analogy of the relation within the framework of the books as we examined above. The relation between the narrative and the rest of the Pentateuch is shown by the way that earlier events foreshadow and anticipate later events, namely, narrative typology as stated above in the section of methodological considerations. The following significant composition of the narrative, therefore, should be considered in the observation of the structure of Genesis.

### **2.3. The Composition of the Abraham Narrative**

#### **2.3.1. Literary Delimitation of the Abraham narrative**

Before considering in detail the narrative structure and unity of the Abraham, it is necessary to decide upon the textual scope of the material under investigation. Where does the Abraham narrative commence and conclude?<sup>152</sup> In fact, as Muilenburg

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<sup>151</sup> See, the critique especially in S. E. McCarter, "A New Challenge to the Documentary Hypothesis. Have Modern Scholars Failed to Appreciate the Overall Structure of Genesis 1-11?," *BibRev* (1988): 34-39.

<sup>152</sup> The first concern in analyzing any biblical text is to ascertain its limits, where it begins as a literary

affirms, it is most complicated to define the limits or scope of a complex cycle, and to recognize precisely where and how it begins and where and how it ends. For this reason, there exists great disagreement suggested by scholars on the literary scope of the present form of the narrative. (cf. Coats 1983:103-108<sup>153</sup>; Moberly 1992a:21-26). But with the help of the criteria, a cogent argument can be made for the demarcation of the Abraham narrative. Here can be presented the external and internal criteria for delimiting the Abraham narrative from another and for integrating the units of the cycle in a tight structural pattern.

The external (i.e., surface structures) criteria are easily visible in a text as it meets the eye, that is, literary marker: disjunctive and conjunctive, within the text, which indicate structural divisions and structural techniques. The disjunctive markers distinguish cycles and are of various kinds: the markers of the beginning and end of cycles, which separate one cycle from another, and mark transitions between them, by shifts in time, geography, genealogy and character, as well as in theological viewpoints (Hayes & Holladay 1982:70-71; Robertson 1976:549). Conjunctive markers link various materials within a cycle by maintaining the continuity of thought or unity of presentation. Among these markers are inclusio, the repetition of vocabulary or

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unit and where it ends. Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," 8-9, has established this as a first principle of rhetorical criticism, since a clear perception of limits focuses attention on the formal devices of language and narration employed in the text and so enables the content, substance or theme of the passage to emerge more clearly (cf. G. M. Tucker, "Prophetic Speech," *Int* 32 [1978]: 32-33). In this matter, Baker, "Diversity and Unity," 190, definitely indicates three general categories:

1. syntactical indications of a discontinuity: time, subject, venue.
2. structural indications of the framework of the text: headings, subscripts, summaries, repeated literary patterns or formulae.
3. rhetorical devices which point to a self-contained unit distinct from its context.

<sup>153</sup> Coats, *Genesis*, 97-102, sees the Shem's genealogy in Gen 11:10 as the starting point of the narrative, not that of Terah in Gen 11:27. As G. J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1987), 256, notes, however, there are difficulties with the proposal because "the same appears to be true of the genealogy of Gen 5:1-32, the last elements of which are found in Gen 9:28-29."

phraseology at the beginning and at the end of a cycle, and echo, the recapitulation of important points within a cycle (Baker 1980:207-211).

The internal criteria can be identified in a structuralist view with deep structures, which have been coded in the text. All literary texts contain distinctive structures, which are coded expressions of the deep structures of the human brain (Dorsey 1999:15; Robertson 1976:549). By decoding these deep structures in the text, one can not merely set the boundaries of a cycle with more certainty, but discover the message of the cycle. Broadly speaking, in Genesis there are two kinds of deep structures coded in the cycles, which can be used as internal criteria for proving unity: chiasm and parallelism as an indication of unity and disunity (Breck 1999:255-256). Chiasm helps the reader to see a story's boundaries that differentiate one story from another. In this sense, chiasm functions as a division marker (a framing device working) between (within) stories and the cycles and thus plays a crucial linking role within it. It also firms a complete story, a story with an identifiable beginning, middle, and end (cf. Wenham 1978:338). Meanwhile, parallelism both sets boundaries between cycles, and exhibits the thematic and theological connection between them. On the basis of these criteria stated above, the delimitation of the Abraham narrative will be discussed in what follows.

### **2.3.1.1. The Starting Point of the Abraham Narrative (Gen 11:27)**

It is a generally accepted fact that the narrative (or Patriarchal History) commences with Gen 11:27 (cf. Rendsburg 1986:27; Sutherland 1983:337-339; Vosloo 1982:15-17; Waltke 2001:193-341; Wenham 1987:256-264; Westermann 1987:96). A close



reading of Genesis actually reveals that the Abraham narrative forms an outer frame to the narrative.<sup>154</sup> The boundaries of the narrative are defined by the הולדות beginning at Gen 11:27 and the concluding report on Abraham's death and burial at Gen 25:1-11. Three evidences textually corroborate that v. 27 should be considered as a textual pinpoint of the Abraham narrative:

1. The genealogical formula in v. 26 has different form than that of others in vv. 10b-25, in terms of mentioning the names of three of Terah's sons like Adam and Noah, instead of only the chief descendant.<sup>155</sup> Furthermore, in verse 26 the identical formulaic language pattern is varied, by excluding referring to the individual life period after the birth of his son (cf. Sarna 1981:78):

וַאֲרִפְכָּשֶׁד הָיָה חָמֵשׁ וּשְׁלֹשִׁים שָׁנָה וַיּוֹלֶד אֶת־שֵׁלַח: 11:12  
 וַיְחַי־עֵבֶר אַרְבַּע וּשְׁלֹשִׁים שָׁנָה וַיּוֹלֶד אֶת־פֶּלֶג: 11:16  
 וַיְחַי־תֵּרַח שִׁבְעִים שָׁנָה וַיּוֹלֶד אֶת־אַבְרָם אֶת־נְחוֹחַ וְאֶת־הָרָן: 11:26  
 27 וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֵי תֵּרַח תֵּרַח הוֹלִיד אֶת־אַבְרָם אֶת־נְחוֹר וְאֶת־הָרָן הוֹלִיד אֶת־לוֹט:

As the passage presents above, verse 26 shows still similar in form to vv. 16-25 than vv. 27ff., although there are some textual diversities between verses 12-14 and 16-25 in the Shem genealogy.<sup>156</sup> These textual dissimilarities imply that

<sup>154</sup> In his study of Hebrew narrative, Fokkermann, *Narrative Art in Genesis*, 239, observes that in the Jacob cycle the genealogies form “an outer frame” to the cycle. Such also may be the case in the Abraham narrative in terms of the divine promise to Abraham. On this basis, there can be general agreement that the narrative begins in Gen 11:27 with the genealogy of Terah.

<sup>155</sup> In structure this genealogical formula is much like that of the formula in the Noah genealogy in Gen 5:32 where mentions Noah's three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth, in terms of mentioning method of their father's sons and functioning the verses in their textual context. Prior to these verses, each genealogical notice contained only the name of one son. However, the two verses similarly list three sons' name. Moreover, Gen 5:32 plays as a concluding mark to the genealogical list from Adam to Noah in Genesis 5. Gen 11:26 roles also as a closing point of the Shem genealogy in the textual context.

<sup>156</sup> In fact, the Shem genealogy in Gen 11:10-26 presents two different genealogical formulae in vv. 12 and 14, and 16, 18, 20, 22 and 24:

1) subject (with waw conj.) + היה (q. pf. 3masc. sing.) + the subject's age of childbirth of his son + ילד (hi. impf. 3masc. sing. with waw consec.) + the son's name of subject in vv.

the genealogy of Shem is disrupted before v. 27, which mean that the Abraham narrative would have originally commenced with v. 27.

2. Verse 27 which embarks on the literary formula, וַאֲלֵהּ הוֹלֵךְתָּ תֵרַח, imports that the Shem genealogy terminates with either v. 25 or v. 26.<sup>157</sup> Both in form and content they differ markedly from vv. 10-26. Nowhere in the preceding list does one find the family details, which occur in vv. 27ff. This impression reinforced by the introduction of the וַאֲלֵהּ הוֹלֵךְתָּ formula in v. 27 where presents a new beginning, the history that begins with Terah.<sup>158</sup> It suggests that v. 27 functions as a pinpoint of a new section of narrative. Putting aside these observations of textual peculiarities, it is apparent that v. 26 should be considered as part of the preceding genealogy rather than as part of the following Abraham cycle.
3. If one might agree with Clines' suggestion (1997:85) that the list in Shem's genealogy in Gen 11:10-26 creates a link between the primeval and the patriarchal history, then we would expect that the termination of the genealogy would be identical with the start of the Abraham narrative. The cumulative weight of these observations suggests that there can be little doubt that the

12 and 14.

- 2) verb היה (q. impf. 3masc. with waw consec.) + subject + the subject's age of childbirth of his son + ילד (hi. impf. 3masc. with waw consec.) + the son's name of the subject in vv. 16, 18, 20, 22 and 24.

<sup>157</sup> In style, Gen 11:27a as in Gen 6:8 apparently represents a compositional track by the author/composer to emphasis the beginning of a new phase in human history (cf. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 268). Verse 27 presents a characteristic formula, which introduces the major section throughout Genesis. Moreover, F. M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 301, shows that the formula found in the genealogy of Terah belongs to the type in the primordial history (Gen 5:1; Gen 11:10). In this, it certainly introduces the Abraham narrative. For this characteristic formula, see Cross's work in pp. 301-305.

<sup>158</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 268, pertinently enunciates this point that "Gen 11:27b is an abridged resumption of Gen 11:26 (a typical opening), and Gen 11:32 is a typical close (cf. Gen 5:5, 8, etc)."

Abraham narrative initiates in Gen 11:27.

### **2.3.1.2.. The End of the Abraham Narrative (Gen 25:11)**

In contrast, designating the close of the Abraham narrative is less problematic. Most commentators have assumed that the narrative closes with a description of the death of Abraham in Gen 25:11 (cf. Cross 1973:303-304; Westermann 1980:56).<sup>159</sup> The limits of the narrative are visibly defined by another *חילוקי* formula in Gen 25:12, which begin with the list of the descendants of Ishmael.<sup>160</sup> The genealogy contextually functions to separate the story of Abraham from the Jacob narrative in Gen 25:19 with the formula. This is an instance why genealogies in Genesis frequently play to separate narrative section (Fokkelmann 1991:239; Westermann 1987:95).

These textual evidences apparently suggest that in its present form the Abraham narrative can clearly be established from Gen 11:27 to Gen 25:11. From this, the Abraham narrative therefore may be roughly laid out as follows:

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<sup>159</sup> While one other, some scholars view Genesis 22 as the end of the Abraham narrative (R. M. A. Davidson, *Genesis 1-11, 12-50*, CBC, NEB [Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979], 98; Rendsburg, *The Redaction of Genesis*, 50-51; D. Sutherland, "The Organization of the Abraham Promise Narratives," *ZAW* 95 [1983]: 337-39).

<sup>160</sup> On the basis of Todorov's scheme for analyzing the structure of narrative plot in the family stories of Genesis with five-stage plan of movement from one state of narrative equilibrium to another (N. Steinberg, "The Genealogical Framework of the Family Stories in Genesis," *Semeia* 46 [1989]: 41-50) argues that the genealogical material in the family stories in Genesis has been organized into three cycles of literature which are structurally parallel: the genealogy of Shem (Gen 11:10-26); the genealogy of Ishmael (Gen 25:12-18) and the genealogy of Esau (Gen 36:1-37:1). If her analysis is correct, the author/composer may have arranged the close of the Abraham narrative cycle before the genealogy of Ishmael (Gen 25:12-18). Each of three family cycles begin with stereotypical language "These are the generations of ..." and detail the descendants of Shem, Ishmael, and Esau. These cycles textually and contextually link the genealogies of Terah, Isaac, and Jacob in terms of introducing to the narratives with regard to their progeny and contextually functions as the genealogical superscription to the genealogy of Isaac in Gen 25:19-26, just as the genealogy of Shem and the genealogy of Esau.

<b>The genealogy from Shem to Abraham (11:10-26) תולדת (v. 27)</b>	<b>The Abraham Narrative (11:27-25:11)</b>			<b>The genealogy of Ismael (25:12-18) תולדת (v. 12)</b>
	11:27 <sup>161</sup> -22:19	<b>(Nahor's lineage) (22:20- 24)</b>	23:1-25:11	

As the diagram has presented above, the Abraham narrative is clearly demarcated by the literary functional formulae (i.e. תולדות<sup>162</sup> - divisions) as the skeletal structure<sup>163</sup>

<sup>161</sup> As we shall observe in more detail later, the genealogy in Gen 11:27-32 not only primarily roles in its context to connect Abraham with the preceding events (cf. Thompson, *The Origin Tradition of Ancient Israel*, 83), as the previous genealogies have done, but to provide the reader with the necessary background information essential for a proper understanding of the Abraham narrative, especially, in terms of introducing the main characters of the narrative – Abram, Sarai and Lot (cf. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 137; cf. Dillard & Longman III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 53; Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament*, 54; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 259). In other words, the pericope is intended to mark the place in the succession of generations where the events that follow take place and also to introduce the family of Abraham. It links with the next unit by introducing the eight significant figures who all are relevant for understanding the events of the narrative to follow except Iscah in Gen 11:29. The pattern of listing eight names then is unlike that far in Genesis, the author/composer has followed a pattern of listing ten names. In doing so, the author/composer leaves the reader uncertain who the ninth and, more importantly, the tenth name who unfolds that their names are shown to be the two sons of Abraham, Ishmael in Gen 16:15, and Isaac in Gen 21:3 (cf. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 137).

<sup>162</sup> The term תולדות itself which occurs 39 times in the Old Testament is the feminine plural noun derived from ילד ('to bear,' 'to bring forth,' 'to beget') mostly in the qal and hiphil, and as such its most literal translation would be 'begettings.' Most often, it occurs in the context of formal genealogies (Genesis and 1 Chronicles) as denoting an account of a man and his descendants or of genealogical calculations for such purposes as that of a military census (e.g., Num 1:20-42; 1 Chr 1:29; 5:7; 7:9). The noun is probably closest to the Hithpael of the verb, a *hapax legomenon*, occurring only in Num 1:18, where it may be translated, 'to get one's descent acknowledged.' The LXX translation of the term γεννήσεις (from γεννάω) is an almost exact translation of תולדות. That γενέσεις which is used in classical Greek as the antonym of φθορά ('destruction,' 'ruin,' 'perdition,' 'mortality,' 'the decay of matter') instead is the more frequent translation of תולדות may indicate a broader understanding of the term γεννήσεις than that communicated by the word 'begettings.' The only other translations of תולדות are γενεά in Gen 25:13 and συγγένεια in Exod 6:19 and Num 1:20-42 (cf. M. D. Johnson, *The Purpose of Biblical Genealogies: with special reference to the setting of the genealogies of Jesus* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988], 14-36). תולדות in Genesis used a technical term for method of keeping family and clan records as well as played a signal to demonstrate the movement from creation to Israel in Egypt (Gen 2:4-50:26).

<sup>163</sup> According to VanGemenen, *The Progress of Redemption*, 70-77, the תולדות formula, which reveals structured repetition occurs symmetrically five times in the development from Adam to Abraham and five times in the development from Abraham to Israel in Egypt. The literary linkage is divided into two spans, each consisting of five links: Gen 2:4-11:26 (the first five components span) and Gen 11:27-50:26 (the last five components span), connecting the narratives and genealogies of Gen 11:27-50:26 with that of the primeval history (Gen 2:4-11:26), as well as bridging between creation (Gen 1:1-2:3) and the story of Israel in Egypt (Exodus 1).

in the larger context of Genesis (Buber 1968:25-26)<sup>164</sup>, and being framed on both sides by two genealogies (Gen 11:10-26 and 25:12-18) as well (Westermann 1987:95).<sup>165</sup> In addition, the narrative is clearly divided into two self-contained larger narrative units,

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<sup>164</sup> One may suggest the function of the תולדות formula in Genesis: 1) the formula throughout Genesis form not only an overall structural framework for the book, but display a partial attempt to link the variegated materials of Genesis into an overarching genealogical system; and 2) it is the תולדות formula combined inseparably with the narrative sections which does convey this message (for the meaning of the combination of the narrative within a genealogical framework; E. Blum, *Die Komposition der Vätergeschichte*, WMANT 57 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1984), 485-90; D. M. Carr, "Βίβλος γενέσεως Revisited: A Synchronic Analysis of Patterns in Genesis as Part of the Torah (Part One and Two)," *ZAW* 110 (1998a, 1998b): 159-72, 327-47, esp.170-72; U. Cassuto, *The Documentary Hypothesis* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961), 99; Steinberg, "Genealogical Framework," 45-47; J. Van Seters, *Prologue to History: The Yahwist as Historian in Genesis* (Louisville: Westminster & John Knox Press, 1992b), 197-99; R. R. Wilson, *Genealogy and History in the Biblical World* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1977), 137, and is a purposeful literary device balancing human free will and divine determinism, and Israel and the other nations, in order to declare Israel's centrality in the history of the world (R. B. Robinson, "Literary Functions of the Genealogies of Genesis," *CBQ* 48 (1986): 608; R. A. Oden, Jr., "Jacob as Father, Husband, and Nephew: Kinship Studies and the Patriarchal Narratives," *JBL* 102 (1983): 195-96; K. R. Andriolo, "A Structural Analysis of Genealogy and Worldview in the Old Testament," *American Anthropologist* 75 (1973): 1657-669). If we do not understand properly the meaning of the combination of narrative within a genealogical framework, we can not grasp the intended theological implication of the author/the final composer in Genesis. In short, it is in this sense that the תולדות formula and the narrative sections participate in the formation of a literary structure in Genesis. The formula which occurs thirteen in Genesis (Gen 2:4a; 5:1; 6:9a; 10:1,32; 11:10, 27a; 25:12a, 13a, 19a; 36:1a, 9a; 37:2a) in each context of Genesis function for two purposes (Fox, "Can Genesis Be Read as a Book?," 34; Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 543-47):

- 1) an introductory (or the opening) clause that plays as a heading to a major cycle of narratives or to a genealogy in Gen 2:4a; 6:9a; 11:27a; 25:19a; 37:2a (cf. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 145; D. S. DeWitt, "The Generations of Genesis," *EvQ* 48 [1976]: 196-211; P. J. Wiseman, *New Discoveries in Babylonia about Genesis* [London: Marshall, 1936] and id., *Ancient Records and the Structure of Genesis* [Nashville: Nelson, 1985]).
- 2) a conclusion of a preceding narrative segment in Gen 5:1a; 10:1a; 11:10a, 27; 25:12a, 19; 36:1a, 9a, where the formulae is followed by primarily by narrative material (cf. Mann, *The Book of the Torah*, 12).

In the former, the introductory note should read, "this is the story of ...." On the other hand, in the latter "these are the descendants (or generations) of ... seems better. The latter then fall into one of two types: 1) the vertical genealogy founded in 5:1ff., the ten-generation genealogy of Adam to Noah, and in Gen 11:10ff., the ten-generation genealogy of Shem to Abraham; and 2) a horizontal or segmented type founded in Gen 10:1, descendants of Shem, Ham and Japheth, in Gen 25:12, the twelve descendants of Ishmael, and in Gen 36:1, 9, Esau's family tree (cf. V. P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapter 1-17*, 2-11). However, it is not always clear whether the formula serves to conclude a section or to introduce a following section, but undoubtedly the formula "suggest a structure for the entire Book of Genesis" (Coats, *Genesis*, 36). Meanwhile, it is strikingly remarkable that whereas the formulae occur eleven times in Genesis (excepting occurs in Gen 10:32 and Gen 25:13), in the rest of the Old Testament it is used on only three occasions (Num 3:1; Ruth 4:18; 1 Chr 1:29).

<sup>165</sup> The genealogy in Gen 11:10-26 which traces the descendants of Shem down to Abraham and his brothers, Nahor and Haran, and the another one in Gen 25:12-18 which outlines the progenies of Ishmael play as a divider of the narrative at the both beginning and ending points. The narrative as a whole thus deals with a succession of generations.

Gen 11:27-22:19 and Gen 23:1-25:11, by the brief genealogy of Nahor in Gen 22:20-24 (cf. Alexander 2002:144).<sup>166</sup> It is, therefore, evident that the תולדות formula is a well organized plan as well as an integral to the whole the narrative.

### **2.3.2. Literary demarcation of the Abraham narrative: its narrative episodes and unity**

Once the extent of the narrative has been determined, the next step is to sketch the macro-structure of the narrative comprising the overall narrative, in order to look its construction and inner logic. Scholars have revealed observations concerning the organization of the Abraham narrative.<sup>167</sup> In the light of these examinations, it is disclosed that the Abraham narrative is so rich in meaning that it is no easy matter to determine the right arrangement or structure on the grounds of content because of the intertwined themes in the narrative.<sup>168</sup> The exact number of episodes is somewhat fluid depending upon one's reading of the text.

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<sup>166</sup> The two divine speeches in Gen 12:1-3 and Gen 22:15-18 compose syntagmatic axis (i.e., an inclusio) of Genesis 12-22 by proceeding linearly with the references to the divine promised in the call of Abraham (Gen 12:1-3). Since the two narrative sections are strikingly similar in substance in spite of their different terminology. As it were, the divine oath in Gen 22:15-18 contextually plays a conclusion to the divine promises in Gen 12:1-3 (cf. R. W. L. Moberly, "The Earliest Commentary on the Akedah [Gen. 22]," *VT* 38 (1988): 322-23 and id., *Genesis 12-50*, OTG [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992a], 73).

<sup>167</sup> For instance, Gunkel, *The Stories of Genesis*, 159-62) has argued the narratives in the Abraham cycle have a preconceived arrangement (i.e., a pre-literary arrangement), organized according to subject matter and structure. By proposing that the type of presentation and the types of narrative play a part in the development of the Abraham cycle Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, not only affirmed Gunkel's observation but also furthered his assessment.

<sup>168</sup> Scholars have identified a number of narrative episodes within the narrative. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 294-95, suggested ten divisions, each of which was a test with three transitional episodes at the end. Alexander, *Literary Analysis*, 24-26, suggests nineteen different episodes, which are subsequently lumped into seven blocks of material that form a chiasmus. Y. T. Radday, "Chiasmus in Hebrew Biblical Narrative," in *Chiasmus in Antiquity*, ed. J. W. Welch (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 1981), 104, opts for twelve episodes that again form an inverted parallelism (see, Breck, "Biblical Chiasmus," 70-74) plus some transitional stories at the end.

A close look, however, suggests that as mentioned earlier section the Abraham narrative is clearly divided into three sections, Gen 11:27-32 (the prologue), Gen 12:1-22:19 (the main cycle) and Gen 23:1-25:11<sup>169</sup> (the epilogue) by Nahor's genealogy (Gen 22:20-24) (cf. Waltke 2001:195).<sup>170</sup> The composition of the Abraham narrative can, therefore, be illustrated as below:

The prologue (11:27 <sup>171</sup> -32)	The main cycle (12:1-22:19)	The epilogue (23:1-25:11)
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In its narrative boundary, it is necessary to obtain a detailed outline of the episodes constituting the overall narrative, not only to provide a framework but also to examine the textual relationship to one another.<sup>172</sup> The actual division of the episodes has a significant bearing upon the text under consideration. Yet there are in effect some difficulties to determine exactly the inclusion or exclusion of a verse, which means where one episode ends and another begins. For this reason, every attempts have been made to determine as accurately as possible the limits of the individual episode. From this, the cycle, in turn, will be divided into thirteen episodes as the basic framework for

<sup>169</sup> In the basic תולדות structure in Genesis, Gen 23:1-25:11 functions as one of transitions (or the linking material) between the ten new divine initiative in salvation history linking these developments (see, B. K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001], 17-19). This narrative section parallels verbally with Gen 35:23-36:43 (cf. Garrett, *Rethinking Genesis*, 113-14).

<sup>170</sup> One of factors support this proposal is that the material in Gen 22:20-25:18 is a self-contained unit, forming a palistrophic pattern (A. Abela, *The Themes of the Abraham Narrative: Thematic Coherence within the Abraham Literary Unit of Genesis 11, 27-25, 18* [Malta: Studia Editions, 1989], 9). In addition, T. D. Alexander, "Royal Expectations in Genesis to Kings: Their Importance for Biblical Theology," *TynBul* 49 (1998): 202, esp. n. 26, in his work presents a concise explanation of why Gen 22:20-25:11 should be treated as an appendix to the main cycle of the Abraham narrative.

<sup>171</sup> Waltke, *Genesis*, 195, views Gen 11:27a as a typical superscription that separates the book of Genesis. Hence, he sees the first section of the Abraham narrative as from Gen 11:27b-32.

<sup>172</sup> Then here it is necessary to indicate that the division of the Abraham narrative into separate episodes does not automatically imply that these units once existed independently from each other. Of particular use in determining the extent of the individual episodes were the following works: F. I. Andersen, *The Sentence in Biblical Hebrew* (The Hague & Paris: Mouton, 1974), 39; D. W. Baker, "Diversity and Unity in the Literary Structure of Genesis," in *Essays on the Patriarchal Narratives*, eds. A. R. Millard & D. J. Wiseman (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1980), 197-215; J. T. Walsh, *Style and Structure in Biblical Hebrew Narrative* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2001).

the study of the structural analysis of the narrative as follows:<sup>173</sup>

Episode No.	Location	Essential Content
E1	11:27-32	Introduction: genealogy of Terah
E2	12:1-9	YHWH's commands and promises ( <i>progeny and land</i> )
E3	12:10-13:18	Threats to the promise of heir in Egypt: Abraham separation from Lot
E4	14:1-24	Abraham's militarily intercession for Sodom and Lot
E5	15:1-16:16	Covenant with Abraham: the promise of posterity
E6	17:1-18:15	Covenant with Abraham: the promise of posterity
E7	18:16-19:38	Abraham's spiritually intercession for Sodom and Lot
E8	20:1-21:34	Threats to the promise of heir in Gerar: Abraham separation from Ishmael
E9	22:1-19	YHWH's commands and promises: offspring and land
E10	22:20-24	Inclusion: genealogy of Nahor
E11	23:1-20	The death of Sarah
E12	24:1-67	The acquisition of a wife for Isaac
E13	25:1-11	Abraham's death and burial

These episodes constitute a unified story that spans Abraham's adult life in terms of the structural and thematic aspect. The narrative as a whole possesses matching episodes that form a chiasmic arrangement, though not a perfect one.<sup>174</sup> Each of episodes has

<sup>173</sup> Of particular use in determining the extent of the individual episodes were basically the following works: Andersen, *The Sentence in Biblical Hebrew*, 39; Baker, "Diversity and Unity," 197-215; Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*; N. M. Sarna, *Understanding Genesis: The Heritage of Biblical Israel* (New York: Schocken Books, 1970); Rendsburg, *The Redaction of Genesis*; Walsh, *Style and Structure. Alexander, Literary Analysis*, 17-19, in his work extends the division of the narrative to nineteen episodes at length.

<sup>174</sup> By gathering episodes into large blocks, Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 294-96, Rendsburg, *The Redaction of Genesis*, 28-29, and Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 129, "improve" on the



three closely intertwined main themes in conjunction with the divine promise of blessing heir and land (see, Abela 1989:15-125; McKeown 1991, 1997:51-64, 133-144; cf. Turner 1990:51-114), and the pressures and complications which challenge its validity and appear to threaten its fulfillment.<sup>175</sup> Simultaneously, these themes also form the three groups of sub-narrative blocks (E1-E13) and penetrate into these episodes respectively as well. The main cycle that consists of eight smaller units, each with its own parallel, which accordingly can be matched with four episodes, which are then symmetrized. The chief components of the whole, therefore, become clear as below<sup>176</sup>:

A. Genealogy of Terah (11:27-32)<sup>177</sup>

B. YHWH's commands and promises – offspring and land (12:1-9)

C. Threats to the promise of heir in Egypt: Abraham separation from Lot (12:10-13:18)

D. Abraham militarily intercedes with God for Sodom and Lot (14:1-24)

**E. Covenant with Abraham: the promise of posterity (15:1-16:16)**

**E'. Covenant with Abraham: the promise of posterity (17:1-18:15)**

D'. Abraham spiritually intercedes with God for Sodom and Lot (18:16-19:38)

C'. Threats to the promise of heir in Gerar: Abraham separation from Ishmael (20:1-21:34)

B'. YHWH's commands and promises: offspring and land (22:1-19)

A'. Genealogy of Nahor (22:20-24)<sup>178</sup>

chiasmus. Also, cf. Alexander, *Literary Analysis*, 24, 26; Coats, *Genesis*, 100; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 263. These scholars have observed that the feature of correspondences among the episodes is essential to the progression of the story.

<sup>175</sup> Yet not only are these themes significant with the Abraham narrative, but they may also be traced throughout the whole of Genesis (cf. J. McKeown, *A Study of the Main Unifying Themes in the Hebrew Text of the Book of Genesis*, Unpublished Ph. D. Dissertation [Belfast: The Queen's University of Belfast, 1991]).

<sup>176</sup> The concentric pattern is on the basis of Cassuto's the underlying structure (*A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 291-300), Sutherland's unique analysis fashion ("The Organization of the Abraham Promise Narratives," 337-43), and Rendsburg's detailed work (*The Redaction of Genesis*, 27-52). This study had merged and changed these structural analyses to arrange the individual subunits.

<sup>177</sup> The prologue includes genealogical material on Abraham and Nahor marriage.

<sup>178</sup> The epilogue includes genealogical material regarding Nahor's line, which is the story of securing a wife for Isaac from that line (Gen 24:1-67), and a list of Abraham's additional children by yet another line (Gen 25:1-4). The two genealogical lines are featured in the final search for a proper wife for Isaac (Genesis 24).

Following this chiasitic pattern, three entries bring the Abraham narrative to a close:

- A. Sarah's death and burial in the Cave of Machpelah (Gen 23:1-20)
- B. The acquisition of a wife for Isaac (Gen 24:1-67)
- C. Abraham's death and burial (Gen 25:1-11)

The final three episodes prepare the way for Father Abraham's successor, Isaac. Sarah's death precipitated two preparatory events: 1) the purchase of a burial plot for the Abraham family, his first legal claim to Canaan's soil (chap. 23); and 2) the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah, who took Sarah's place as matriarch (Genesis 24). The final step for Isaac's full succession is the endowment of gifts for and separation of Abraham's other sons by a collateral line (Keturah); this left Isaac as the sole beneficiary of the family fortune after the death and burial of Abraham (Gen 25:1-11). The completion of the transition is affirmed by the concluding verse of the Abraham cycle, "After Abraham's death, God blessed his son Isaac" (Gen 25:11).

### 2.3.2.1. The Prologue (Gen 11:27-32)<sup>179</sup>

The overture of the Abraham narrative is marked by the toledot formula (Gen 11:27a) at its beginning and by the formulaic summary, namely, Terah's obituary (v. 32).

The prologue (11:27-32)	The main cycle (12:1-22:19)	The epilogue (23:1-25:11)
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<sup>179</sup> Most scholars ordinarily view Gen 11:27-32 as the first literary unit of the Abraham, whereas Alexander, *Literary Analysis*, 19), Coats, *Genesis*, 103-09), C. Westermann, *The Promises to the Fathers: Studies on the Patriarchal Narratives*, trans. D. E. Green (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 132-37, and Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 267) preferably see Gen 11:27-12:9 as the opening section which sets out the background to and theme of the Abraham narrative and patriarchal narratives as well. Since the some information of Abraham's identity and of the geographical location of his original homeland in Gen 12:1 were supplied in Gen 11:27-32, it seems unlikely that Gen 12:1-3 was ever an independent as an introduction to the Abraham narrative. Thus, the Abraham cycle is introduced by Gen 11:27-32.

This narrative scene, in turn, consists of four phases:<sup>180</sup>

THE PRELUDE (11:27-32)			
The prefatory superscription (11:27a)	Terah's segmented genealogy (11:27b-30)	Terah's migration (11:31)	Terah's obituary notice (11:32)

This section reflects an intimate knowledge of the subsequent story, in terms of dealing primarily with essential information for understanding the event in the Abraham narrative, which follows: characters; geographical information; and Sarah's barrenness.

1. Three chief characters, Abraham, Sarah, and Lot (vv. 27, 31) are introduced in the introduction. Lot is the subject of and his important role in chaps. 13-14, 18-19. Milcah's marriage to Nahor (v. 29), who is a grandmother of Rebekah (Gen 22:20, 23; 24:15, 24, 47) possibly foresees the episode of Isaac's

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<sup>180</sup> Westermann, *Genesis*, 96, views Gen 11:27-32 as a composite text comprised of both J and P sources (cf. Emerton's the source analysis of Gen 11:27-32: vv. 27 and 31-2 from P, and 28-30 from J, "The Source analysis of Genesis XI 27-32," *VT* 42 (1992): 37-46). He demarcates the text two parts: the genealogy (vv. 27b-30) and the itinerary (v. 31). This position, however, is untenable in some respects how Gen 11:27-32 divides with two different elements of both J and P.

1. In the context of Genesis (esp. Gen 43:7; 48:6) and the parallelism from the other texts in OT (esp. Esth 8:6), the word מולדת ('birthplace') signifies 'the circle of relatives, the family'. From this מולדת ארץ connotes a single concept, 'the land in which the circle of relations dwells (i.e., native land). Once the man who wanders about from country to country leaves his homeland, he has no further connection with the former place. In this respect, Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 274-75, states "Hence, after the whole family of Terah had left Ur of the Chaldees (as the original home of Abraham) for Haran (as his native land), and all its ties with the former place were severed, the land of Haran could be referred to as 'the land of Abram's kindred' or 'his land and kindred'..." Thus, it is no more than a hypothetical assumption that the two different geographical names reflect the diverse origin of texts.
2. In the narrative context of Genesis, it should be noted that Gen 11:27-32 is intended to put the call of Abraham (Gen 12:1-3) within the setting of Ur of the Chaldeans in where Babylonian had dwelt (cf. Gen 15:7; Neh 9:7; Isa 13:19; 48:14; Jer 24:5; 25:12; 50:1, 8, 35, 45; 51:24, 54; Ezek 1:3; 12:13; 23:15, 23; Acts 7:2-3). In order words, the author/composer intends clearly to connect the call of Abraham and the dispersion of Babylon in Gen 11:1-9 (cf. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 137-39). Thus, the text emphasis on the geographical context of Ur of the Chaldeans rather than separates Abraham's religion from the pagan religion of his ancestors.

Opinion is even divided on the exegetical method of the text among the adherents of the documentary theory (cf. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 273).

matrimony to Rebekah in Genesis 24. The marriage report of Abraham and Nahor (v. 29) is inextricably linked to the following units concerning Isaac's marriage in Gen 22:20-24; 24:1-67 (cf. Emerton 1992:41-42), as well as setting up a genealogical structure that spans both the Abraham and Jacob sections (Gen 29:1-30).<sup>181</sup>

2. As already noted, the providing of the geographical context (Ur of the Chaldeans) suggests a significant view of the author's/composer's close attention to geography in working out his pivotal theme. By putting the call of Abraham (Gen 12:1-3) within the setting of Ur of the Chaldeans (Gen 15:7), not in Haran<sup>182</sup>, the author/composer intends to draw a line connecting the call of Abraham with the dispersion of Babylon (Gen 11:1-9). In addition, the location of Haran's death "in the land of his kindred" (Gen 11:28) appears to provide background for the report of God's later command to Abraham to leave "land, kindred and the house of your father" (Gen 12:1).
3. The most important textual particularity in this episode is Sarah's barrenness (v. 30, cf. Genesis 15, 16, 17, 18), which will create the tension that will dominate

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<sup>181</sup> As N. Steinberg, "Alliance or Decent? The Function of Marriage in Genesis," *JSOT* 51 (1991): 51-53 and *Kinship and Marriage in Genesis: A Household Economics Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 12-14, has particularly emphasized, the following transmission of the promise then occurs exclusively through these intermarriages within Terah's clan, between the lines of Abraham, on the one hand, and Nahor, on the other. Thus, the Jacob and Abraham sections are specifically linked not only by the Abraham-Isaac-Jacob genealogical sequence but also by a Nahor-Betuel-Laban sequence. As seen above, both Isaac (Gen 22:20-23; 24:1-67) and Jacob (Gen 29:1-30) marry descendants of Nahor. This emphasis on intermarriage within the clan is an important link between genealogy and promise, particularly the promise of the land. As Steinberg ("Alliance or Decent?", 49-53 and *Kinship and Marriage*, 26-34) points out, such emphasis on linear transmission of heirship through a limited family line is typical of cultures where inheritance of limited land resources is a major issue.

<sup>182</sup> However, here, one should not overlook the significance of the geographical role of Haran, where Abraham not only separates himself from the rest of his family, but he later sends in search of a wife for his son Isaac (Genesis 24).

the Abraham narrative. The barrenness of Sarah (אֵין לָהּ וְלֶדָה)<sup>183</sup>, the theme of Gen 12:10-20 Genesis 15-18, 20-21, 23 serves as an introduction to the narrative in view of anticipating the theme of the forthcoming stories, and achieves a certain emphasis through parallelism (Westermann 1987:96). In the other words, her infertility serves as a tension heightening element in a narrative that features a promise of a great nation (Gen 12:2) and the land (Gen 12:7).

In summary, each element of Gen 11:27-32 anticipates crucial elements of the rest of the Abraham narrative by manifesting certain specific themes that work themselves out in the following narratives. From this, this genealogical unit as the first introduction to the story of the patriarchs serves the narrative, both as a bridge from the previous cycle of episodes and setting the major ideas for the story that is to unfold. In other words, its purpose is to link them in retrospect with the primeval story and to outline in prospect the framework in which the narrative is to be played out. Dorsey (1999:54) appositely analyzes the structure of this section as follows:<sup>184</sup>

- A. Introduction: Terah and his offspring (11:27)
- B. The family lives in Ur of the Chaldeans (11:28)
- C. Abram takes (וַיִּקַּח)<sup>185</sup> Terah's daughter Sarai as his wife (11:29)

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<sup>183</sup> A word is necessary here about the barrenness of Sarah in Gen 11:30. The adjective עֲקָרָה is usually translated “barren” in a context. However, it neither means that she can't become pregnant nor that is sterile. Rather it should be translated that she can't have children. Thus, Gen 11:30 probably would be translated that ‘Sarah was unable to have children.’ Having done this, to add, ‘she had no children’ would be redundant. The single sentence in English, thus, contains the meaning of the two sentences in Hebrew (cf. NIDOTTE 3:509-510; TWAT 6:343-346).

<sup>184</sup> This chiasmic structure does provide a good basis for arguing against the Documentary Hypothesis that this narrative section (Gen 11:27-32) is not a later interpolation. However, this is not implying that this chiasmic pattern does prove that the whole narrative was composed at one time by one author, that is, that no separate, prior sources existed. This structure provides a backdrop for the passage but may not be the only determining factor in the shaping of the text.

<sup>185</sup> The parallel occurrences of וַיִּקַּח, which indicates the authority of Terah (v. 31) and Abraham (Gen 12:5) in vv. 29 and 31 imply that Abraham has two allegiances, his wife and his father.

#### D. Sarai's sterility (11:30)

- C'. Terah take (תָּרַח) Abram, along with Abram's wife Sarai and Lot (11:31a)
- B'. The family leaves Ur of the Chaldeans (11:31b)
- A'. Conclusion: summary of Terah's life; his death (11:32)

The palistropic construction suggests that this section have a further significance, which means this section presents a clue to understand the following subsequent stories. As it were, these verses immediately underscore the problem of barrenness (Gen 11:30) that prepares the way for the main plot involving Abraham's seed (Alexander 1997:363-367; Scullion 1992a:102-105).<sup>186</sup> Then following hard upon this problem comes the promise of making of Abraham a great nation (Gen 12:1), and of the progenies and the land (Gen 12:7). In this sense, the barrenness sets up a tension between the divine promise and the problem of exercising faith in this promise because of Abraham's lack of an heir. This tension is dexterously and artistically maintained throughout the entire cycle (Gen 11:27-25:11) by a series of eight crises, which threaten to nullify the promise, interspersed with a sevenfold affirmation of the promise of an heir (cf. Helyer 1983:82-85).<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> W. C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House & Academic Books, 1978), 35, 39-40, 84-99, discerns three primary aspects as the centrality of the promise to Abraham in Gen 12:1-3: an heir, an inheritance, and a heritage. The posterity out of these themes, in fact, is still at the center of its focus while it adds many new features in Genesis 12-50, especially Genesis 13, 15, 17, 22, 24, 26 and 28 (cf. Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch*, 29, 32-34). Indeed the Abraham narrative is dominated by this theme and more precisely with the question, Who will be Abraham's heir? (cf. C. Westermann, "Promises to the Patriarchs," in *The Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible*, Supplement Volume [Nashville: Abingdon, 1976], 690-93; *The Promises to the Father*, 56-73, 132-37, 165-77).

<sup>187</sup> Through a deep reading of the entire Abraham narrative, one may find a recurring theme, which threat to the divine promise in Gen 12:1-3 regarding a 'numerous seed,' 'blessing to all families of the earth,' 'or the 'gift of the land' can be traced throughout the Abraham narrative. The promise is placed in jeopardy by the actions of the characters of the narrative. For more discussion of threat to the heir, see, Helyer's work, "The Separation of Abram and Lot."

### 2.3.2.2. The main cycle (Gen 12:1-22:19)<sup>188</sup>

The main section, the heart of the narrative, in turn, is clearly framed by the two genealogies, namely, genealogy of Terah (Gen 11:27-32) and genealogy of Nahor (Gen 22:20-24) that act as a matching bookend for the narrative by the author/composer's literary mastery (cf. Rendsburg 1986:30).<sup>189</sup>

The prologue (11:27-32)	The main cycle (12:1-22:19)	The epilogue (23:1-25:11)
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This main cycle is chiasmically arranged, with the most corresponding subunits showing parallel internal arrangements. To put it concretely, numerous parallel themes, themes-words and the correspondences in verbal parallels,<sup>190</sup> which serve to establish nexuses

<sup>188</sup> Waltke's scrutinizingly analysis into the main cycle can be taken an alternative reference to understand it. He (*Genesis*, 202-47) structurizes the main section with two acts (i.e., act 1, Gen 12:1-15:21 and act 2, Gen 16:1-22:19). The first act consists of the five scenes as follows:

1. The call of Abraham and Abraham's migration to the promised land (Gen 12:1-9)
2. Deliverance from Egypt (Gen 12:10-13:2)
3. Separation of Lot from the land of promise (Gen 13:3-18)
4. Victory over eastern kings (Gen 14:1-24)
5. God's covenant with Abraham (Gen 15:1-21)

The second act, which can be divided into eight scenes, is dominantly relevant by the promise of progeny, scarcely stating land. The eight scenes can be sketched as follows:

1. Hagar and Ishmael rejected (Gen 16:1-16)
2. God's covenant to bless nations through Abraham's and Sarah's seed (Gen 17:1-27)
3. The visitation of the Lord and His angels: Abraham as prophet (Gen 18:1-33)
4. Judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:1-38)
5. Matriarch and patriarch delivered from Philistia (Gen 20:1-18)
6. Isaac's birth and blessings in land (Gen 21:1-21)
7. Covenant with Abimelech (Gen 21:22-34)
8. Sacrifice of Isaac and God's Oath (Gen 22:1-19)

Regarding W. Vosloo, *From Haran to Goshen*, in *From Eden to Rome*, eds. F. Deist & W. Vosloo & E. Pretorius & I. de Plessis (Pretoria: van Schaik, 1982), 15-17, suggests the four groups of narratives concerning the composition of the Abraham narrative: narratives about the promised land (Genesis 12-14), the promises (Genesis 15-17), the judgment (Genesis 18-19), and the offspring (Genesis 20-24). However, as below mentioned, it is not always easy to determine exactly what kind of theme does each of the episodes in the Abraham narrative has, according to the themes, for the entire complex is thematically intertwined regarding heir, land and blessing.

<sup>189</sup> These inclusive genealogies fill out the collateral lines of Abraham's family, the descendants of his two brothers: Lot, son of Abraham's brother Haran, who died before the family left Ur of the Chaldeans (Gen 11:27-32), and the descendants of his remaining brother, Nahor (Gen 22:20-24).

<sup>190</sup> The textual parallelism between the episodes in this section will be explored in more detail in subsequent chapters.

with the intervening material, reflect the literary texture of this narrative section. The chiasmic structuring of the whole narrative of the main section thus is undeniable. Evidence for chiasmus in this text is strong. The main section can be precisely divided by the most eight corresponding subunits as follows:<sup>191</sup>

*Terah's Genealogy (11:27-32)*

- A. YHWH's commands and promises – offspring and land (12:1-9)
- B. Threats to the promise of heir in Egypt: Abraham separation from Lot (12:10-13:18)
- C. Abraham intercedes for Sodom and Lot militarily (14:1-24)
- D. Covenant with Abraham: the promise of posterity and land (15:1-16:16)**
- D'. Covenant with Abraham: the promise of posterity and land (17:1-18:15)**
- C'. Abraham intercedes for Sodom and Lot spiritually (18:16-19:38)
- B'. Threats to the promise of heir in Gerar: Abraham separation from Ishmael (20:1-21:34)
- A'. YHWH's commands and promises: offspring and land (22:1-19)

*Nahor's Genealogy (22:20-24)*<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> This underlying structural analysis basically observes and accepts Rendsburg's chiasmic structure, which was expanded Cassuto's chiasmic arrangement of ten trials or ordeals that Abraham undergoes (cf. Rendsburg, *Redaction of Genesis*, 28-29), and is partly debt to Sutherland ("The Organization of the Abraham Promise Narrative," 333-43) as well. This study, however, has made some changes in Sutherland's presentation. In a later work, Waltke (*Genesis*, 20) analyzed the structure of the passage in a similar but not identical fashion. For other chiasmic arrangements of the Abraham cycle, see Kikawada and Quinn, *Before Abraham Was*, 96.

<sup>192</sup> This genealogy can be structurally divided into two subunits: the first pertaining to the eight sons by Milcah, Nahor's lawful wife (Gen 22:20-23) and the second the four sons by his concubine Reumah (Gen 22:24). From this, the twelve nonelect sons of Nahor parallel the twelve elect sons of Abraham through Jacob, and match the twelve sons of Ishmael (Gen 17:20; Gen 25:12-16). Commonly, source critics attribute this narrative to J source because of no bearing the linguistic features normally cited as P (instead of the use of the *qal* □□) and clearly anticipating the Yahwist's account in Genesis 24 (for example, the mention of Rebekah in v. 23) (see, G. J. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, WBC [Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1994], 119). From a literary point of view, this genealogy, however, is exquisitely incorporated in the present narrative arrangement. Two observations will be demonstrated concerning the textual constitution. Firstly, it as a buffer between two Gen 22:1-19 and Genesis 23 functions to separate the narrative of Abraham's test (Gen 22:1-19) in the triumphant ambiance (esp. in Gen 22:16-18) from the story of Sarah's death (Gen 23:1-20) in the solemn atmosphere. Secondly, this section provides the backdrop of the following episodes which means that sets the stage for the introduction both of the marriage of Isaac to Rebekah (Gen 24:1-67; Gen 25:20) into the family line of the patriarchs and of Jacob to Leah and Rachel (Gen 28:5) by establishing the union of Isaac and Rebekah who parent Jacob and his brother (Gen 25:21-26). Therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude that the central purpose of this narrative is to introduce the source of the future bride of Isaac, Rebekah (v. 23) and to show that she was of the lineage of Milcah and not of her concubine (□□□). As it were, the motif of marriage and offspring so essential to the thematic thread of the whole links Gen 11:29 and Gen 22:20-24 and Genesis 24, making it unnecessary to view Genesis 24 as a supplement (cf. Emerton, "The Source analysis of Genesis," 41-42 and also Car's view, *Reading the Fractures of Genesis*, 110,



As noted in the structural arrangement, the main cycle as a whole is a concentric pattern, which symmetrically arranged, with corresponding episodes showing parallel internal arrangements (cf. Kikawada & Quinn 1987:95).<sup>193</sup> Each of subunits in the cycle is unified by the theme of the promises of land and progeny and the series of peril that threaten its fulfillment. The two genealogies pertaining to Abraham's familial connection, Terah and Nahor dynamically function as the matching bookends. In other words, the genealogies structurally form *inclusio* in the narrative framework.<sup>194</sup>

This artistically literary feature reveals a texture of contrast and intensification when comparing the corresponding subunits, especially when combining with A, Abraham's geographical separation from his father, and with A', Abraham's intention to kill his son, that is, his hope of the promised heir. These two events must be read with both in mind for the reason that they are the occasion on which God speaks to Abraham (twice) about the divine blessing (Gen 12:1-3, the opening blessing and Gen 22:16-18, the closing blessing), the promise of an heir and the reference to a settlement in the land.<sup>195</sup>

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198-99, relying in part on Emerton's). In these respects, the genealogy of Nahor as an interlude is a transitions Abraham's story to the Jacob narrative (Gen 25:19-35:29) in providing information the narrative requires in order to ensure the reader that the promises were passed down to Isaac as required.

<sup>193</sup> Detailed textual relationship between subunits of the main section will be presented in chapter 3.

<sup>194</sup> Several reasons may be suggested as to why these genealogies form an *inclusio* around the main section concerning Abraham (Gen 12:1-22:19). Firstly, as in the opening episode (Gen 11:27-31) to the cycle, so also in the closing episode (Gen 22:20-24), Milcah and Sarah are mentioned in close proximity. Secondly, the genealogy of Nahor echoes the genealogy of Terah (Gen 11:27-31). Thirdly, as the epilogue to the entire Abraham narrative, it corresponds to the genealogical prologue (Gen 11:27-31) that previews the three family lines of Terah (Gen 11:27-29), as the genealogy of Nahor reestablishes the identity of the Terah ancestry under the תולדות of Terah in Gen 11:27 (Thompson, *The Origin Tradition of Ancient Israel*, 99). Finally, the Nahor's genealogy completes the details of the descendants of his and Milcah (Gen 11:29). For all these parallelisms, von Rad (*Genesis*, 240) simply sees the genealogy of Nahor (Gen 22:20-24) as 'an incorporated artless Aramean genealogy into the biographical context of the narrative.' These parallels, however, show that the author/the final composer of these narratives composed according to a coherent compositional scheme.

<sup>195</sup> The two passages, Gen 12:1-9 and Gen 22:1-19 can be tied by the odd phrase אֶל-אֱבְרָם, which has an alternating repetition of consonants, א-ב-א-ב, whose forward symmetry strengthens the force of the

Subunits B and B' where there is more strongly dynamic intensification each than previous subunits comprise three smaller corresponding sections<sup>196</sup>: Sarah's peril in the foreign harems (B<sub>1</sub>, Gen 12:10-20 and B<sub>2</sub>', Gen 20:1-18), termination of ordeals in peace and success (B<sub>1</sub>, Gen 13:1-4 and B<sub>2</sub>', Gen 21:22-34), and Abraham's separation from Lot and Ishmael (Gen 13:5-18<sup>197</sup> and Gen 21:1-21).<sup>198</sup> Here it should be noted that whereas the textual order in Gen 12:10-13-18 is B<sub>1</sub>, B<sub>2</sub>, B<sub>3</sub>, the order in Gen 20:1-21:34 is B'<sub>1</sub>, B'<sub>2</sub>, B'<sub>3</sub>, which means the textual arrangement between Gen 21:1-21 and Gen 21:22-34 were reversed. In this regard, Rendsburg (1986:38-39) provides twofold answers and clues for the reason. To begin with, the author/the final composer created a juxtaposition between Gen 20:17-18, where God heals Abimelech, his wife, and the maidservants of the household, so they could have children for having taken Sarah, and Gen 21:1-2, where Isaac was born, by placing the discourse of Ishmael's parting before the account of Abraham's achievement. Secondly, by interposing the story of Abraham's success, the author/the final composer "allowed for the passage of tie

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imperative verb *הָלַךְ*, Go!) and of the whole phrase (cf. Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, 160-61; B. Jacob, *Das erste Buch der Tora: Genesis* [Berlin: Schocken, 1934], 493). It is extremely rare in the Old Testament, occurring elsewhere only once, Genesis 22, where again Yahweh is speaking to Abraham.

<sup>196</sup> To be sure, nothing in the episode B (Gen 12:10-13:18) corresponds to the birth of Isaac (Gen 21:1-7). This case is an asymmetry as 'unmatched subunit'. Here it is necessary to observe asymmetry. Asymmetry, which can be one of the most forceful stylistic devices in biblical Hebrew, is a deviation within an otherwise clear symmetry. Three types of asymmetry can be schematized: 1) '**unmatched subunit**' (AB+CDD'C'B'A' or ABCDD'C'B'+A'). This occurs when a subunit in one sequence lacks a corresponding subunit in the other. Thus '+' is the extra subunit which may be in either sequence, and it may occur in forward or reverse patterns. However, '+' material might be considered part of the 'B' subunit that precede it; 2) '**non-correspondence**' (ABXCDD'C'YB'A'). This pattern involves lack of correspondence in two subunits that occupy corresponding positions in the pattern. In this case 'X' and 'Y' correspond in position but share no common elements; and 3) '**Transposition**' (ABCDEFF'E'D'C'A'B'). This form of asymmetry occurs where the order of subunits in one sequence does not correspond exactly to that of the other. For more discussion on asymmetry, for detailed discussion, see Walsh (*Style and Structure*, 101-18).

<sup>197</sup> In fact, one may have Gen 13:14-18 as another small corresponding section in the passage, which parallels with Gen 21:22-34 concerning the honor of Yahweh.

<sup>198</sup> For a fuller discussion of the textual analysis see, Cassuto (*A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, II, 291-300) and Sarna (*Understanding Genesis*, 161). These three smaller sections were quoted by Rendsburg (*Redaction of Genesis*, 35-39).

between Isaac the infant (Gen 21:1-21) and Isaac the grown lad.”

In both subunits C and C' comparison reveals both contrast and intensification, which means that both episodes are indubitably analogous, though in this case the contrast is stronger. This is reflected in the reverse order of the corresponding subunits (C<sub>1</sub>C<sub>2</sub>C<sub>3</sub>/C'<sub>3</sub>C'<sub>2</sub>C'<sub>1</sub>). To drive home this point one may sketch a chart as follow:

Abraham militarily intercedes with God for Sodom and Lot (14:1-24)		Abraham spiritually intercedes with God for Sodom and Lot (18:16-19:38)	
D <sub>1</sub> . 14:1-12	Nations at war in the Valley of the Salt Sea		D' <sub>1</sub> . 19:29-38
D <sub>2</sub> . 14:13-16	Abraham rescues Lot and tries to save Sodom		D' <sub>2</sub> . 19:1-28
D <sub>3</sub> . 14:17-24	Melchizedek blesses Abraham; Abraham refuses a tenth of Sodom's goods.  Abraham challenges God; God agrees to spare righteous in Sodom.		D' <sub>3</sub> . 18:16-33

Finally, the two parallel subunits D and D', which describes the covenant established between God and Abraham, and the annunciation of a son in fulfillment of that covenant, likewise involve both intensification and contrast. The sections consist of two subsections, namely the covenant portions<sup>199</sup> (D<sub>1</sub>, Gen 15:1-20; D'<sub>1</sub>, Gen 17:1-27) and the annunciation scenes (D<sub>2</sub>, Gen 16:1-16; D'<sub>2</sub>, Gen 18:1-15). The two covenants are both followed by annunciation scenes. YHWH makes a covenant with Abraham

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<sup>199</sup> For the peculiar comment on the difference of the two covenant narrations, see Von Rad (*Genesis*, 177, 192-93) and Speiser (*Genesis*, 126). However, the “several theme-words shared by the two chapters” and “more importantly the exact order of action, ideas, and motifs” in the two subunits (Gen 15:1-21 and Gen 17:1-27) are datum adequate to contravene their arguments, though there are some differences “in the names of the deity, the names of the patriarch, the ritual utilized” (Rendsburg, *Redaction of Genesis*, 41-45; cf. Davidson, *Genesis 1-11, 12-50, 54-56*).

(Gen 15:1-20; 17:1-27). The second covenant with the patriarch is more specific than the first: in E, Abraham is promised an heir who will be his own offspring; in D', he is promised an heir by Sarah, one from whom will descend “nations and kings of peoples” (Gen 17:16). Contrast is found between the two birth annunciations (Gen 16:1-16; 18:1-15). In the context of the promise Ishmael’s birth seems to fulfill promises made in Genesis 15, but the ensuing angelic visitation to Hagar makes it clear that Ishmael, though his destiny will be great (Gen 16:10), is not the expected heir (Gen 16:12). The second annunciation (D'₂), though it names Isaac only by allusion<sup>200</sup>, assures Abraham that this will be the long-awaited child of the promise. Accordingly, it is discernible that the cycle bears the stamp of having been intentionally shaped to parallel each subunit in this section.<sup>201</sup>

### 2.3.2.3. The epilogue (Gen 23:1-25:11)<sup>202</sup>

The prologue (11:27-32)	The main cycle (12:1-22:19)	The epilogue (23:1-25:11)
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<sup>200</sup> Sarah’s laughter (קקח, four times in Gen 18:12-15) is part of series of punning allusions to Isaac’s name קקח. See also Gen 21:6; Gen 26:8.

<sup>201</sup> As astutely noted by Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, II. 277, 296-97; see also Jacob, *Das erste Buch der Tora*, 493; Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, 160-61; Davidson, *Genesis 1-11, 12-50*, 94; S. R. Driver, *The Book of Genesis*, Westminster Commentaries (London: Methuen, 1905), 146; Speiser, *Genesis*, 86. Rendsburg, *Redaction of Genesis*, 29-52. Sarna shrewdly presents the eight parallels and theme-words shared by Gen 12:1-9 and 22:1-19. See, also Rendsburg, *Redaction of Genesis*, 32-33.

<sup>202</sup> Some scholars regard Genesis 22 as the end of the Abraham cycle and as the climax. See, Davidson, *Genesis 1-11, 12-50*, 98; Rendsburg, *Redaction of Genesis*, 50-51; Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, 166. They posit that the material, which comprises Gen 23:1-25:11 are merely used to link between the Abraham cycle and the Jacob cycle. Meanwhile, Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 366-67, proposed that the Abraham narrative began with the genealogy of Gen 11:27-32 and closed out with Gen 21:1-7 (birth of Isaac) followed by the genealogies in Gen 22:20-24 and Gen 25:1-18, listing the children born by Milcah and Sarah (Gen 11:29) as well as their concubines to Nahor and Abraham. Gen 21:8-24:67, excepting Gen 22:20-24, supplements the original narrative (cf. Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition*, 248). We have addressed already as to why we can’t admit the unfounded claims concerning the narratives arrangement.

As noted above the section as a concluding transition to the next units falls into three scenes based on content: scenes of purchasing burial site for Sarah's death (Genesis 23)<sup>203</sup>, the scene of securing a bride for Isaac and his marriage (Genesis 24)<sup>204</sup> and scenes of Abraham's death and burial (Gen 25:1-11).<sup>205</sup> These narratives can be arranged in a conspicuous symmetry with the structurally highlighted central, the episode featuring God's gracious and sovereign selection of the chosen couple with an emphasis on the wife: The divine election of Rebekah, Isaac's wife is bracketed by the death of their parents who divinely selected as well:

- A. The genealogy of Nahor: non-chosen family (22:20-24)
- B. The death of Sarah (23:1-20)
- C. The divine election of Rebekah as a matriarch (24:1-67)**
- B'. The death of Abraham (25:1-11)
- A'. The genealogy of Ishmael: non-chosen family (25:12-18)

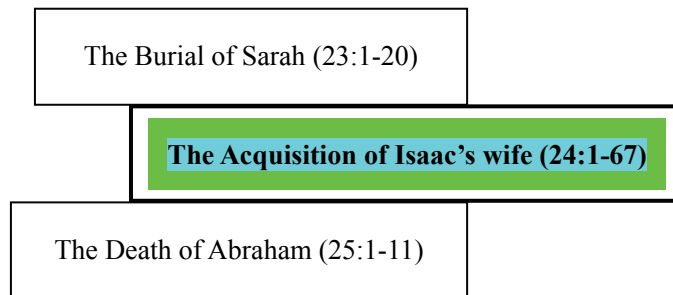
The divine election of Rebekah, Isaac's wife is bracketed by the death of their parents who divinely selected as well:

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<sup>203</sup> This narrative has a bearing on the divine promise of land in purchasing a particular piece of land, which is a suitable burial place for Abraham's family. The account of acquiring possession of the cave at Machpelah from Ephron the Hittite provides a link with three major patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in terms of entombed all at same burial place (Gen 25:9-10; 35:27-29; 49:29-50:14; cf. Gen 50:24-26). For this reason, this narrative not merely is a kernel story for Genesis 23, but centers round prominently in subsequent patriarchal narratives.

<sup>204</sup> In its present form one maybe find some allusions to the preceding sections in the Abraham cycle: 1) the reference to the village of Nahor in Gen 24:10 echoes Gen 11:27 or Gen 22:20; 2) the possession of Abraham described by the servant resembles Gen 12:16 or Gen 13:12; 3) Gen 24:36 alludes to the birth of Isaac recorded in Gen chap. 21; 4) the blessing of Rebekah in Gen 24:60 bears a remarkable resemblance to part of the divine oath in 22:17; and 5) Gen 24:67 assumes a knowledge of the death of Sarah (Genesis 23). Of all the connections, which exist between Genesis 24 and earlier sections of the Abraham narrative, perhaps the most significant is the link with the part of Gen 11:27-12:9 in terms of accomplishing the blessing in Gen 12:1-3 and Gen 24:1 (cf. Gen 24:35-36). Moreover, the reference to the call of Rebekah to leave her country and family bears a remarkable resemblance to part of that of Abraham (W. M. W. Roth, "The Wooing of Rebekah. A Tradition-critical Study of Genesis 24," *CBQ* 34 [1972], 178-179). Evidently, Genesis 24 highlights the fact that Abraham has prospered because of his obedience to God's call to leave his family and homeland. In its present form Genesis 24 is clearly familiar with many of the incidents, which occur earlier in the life of Abraham.

<sup>205</sup> The narrative provides a natural conclusion to the Abraham cycle with Abraham's death. Yet it not merely concludes the Abraham narrative, but also anticipates later developments involving Isaac and his sons, Jacob and Esau in verse 5 and verse 11 (cf. Davidson, *Genesis 1-11, 12-50*, 261).



In this narrative structure, the author/the final composer wants to show that one of the major concerns in the Abraham narrative relates how a wife is acquired for Isaac by Yahweh's sovereign determination. Since "without the marriage of Isaac the promises of numerous descendants and nationhood would remain unfulfilled. Thus, Genesis 24 forms an important bridge between the Abraham cycle and the subsequent Jacob cycle" (Alexander 1982:64).

#### **2.4. Conclusion**

As we have examined the unity and structure of the Abraham cycle, the first half of the narrative consist of five units in Gen 11:27-16:16, which are then duplicated by the latter half of the narrative, which composes another five units in reverse order in Gen 17:1-22:24. This composition forms the symmetric structure of the narrative helps explain much of the repetition and positioning of episodes. From this, it is apparent that the latter episodes frequently assume a knowledge of narrative events which occur earlier in the cycle, and earlier episodes often anticipate later developments in the story. Certain episodes thus are directly dependent upon others, which mean that the individual units can only be properly understood in the light of the narrative or narratives upon which it is dependent.

Accordingly, these observations of the structure of the Abraham narrative reveal that the narrative is not a loose collection of stories brought together in a more or less haphazard or ad hoc fashion as scholars have viewed it. Rather, in its present form it shows all the signs of being an intentionally constructed and closely integrated narrative. As a result, if we have correctly investigated the unity and structure of the Abraham cycle, then we may say that its primary purpose is to draw attention to the divine promised regarding land and seed, which are intended meaning within the entire cycle. These two pivotal themes particularly underlie the main section of the cycle (Gen 11:27-22:19). The implication of this present chapter for the literary materials of the Abraham narrative will be argued more fully in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE INTRA(INNER-)TEXTUAL RELATEDNESS OF THE ABRAHAM NARRATIVE

#### 3.1. Introduction: Methodological Indications

Methodologically, like the works of other synchronic scholars, this chapter seeks to examine the Abraham narrative through careful attention to literary and rhetorical features such as narrative structure, recurring themes and motifs, allusions (or foreshadowing), wordplays, points of view, plot, and characterization. For it is believed that these are the most common literary tools used by the author/the final composer to establish continuity and link various constituent parts together in a unified literary composition. Thus, it should be noted that the various sources that constituted the Abraham narrative must have been of a kind which, when gathered together, were suitable for composition into the unity of narrative. In this sense, the primary goal of the present chapter is to explore the narrative as an integrated whole and to interpret individual episodes, which form the narrative in light of the larger context can indeed be justified.<sup>206</sup>

To accomplish this goal, this chapter will focus on exploring whether significant rhetorical links (or similarities<sup>207</sup>) exist between the Abraham narrative and the rest

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<sup>206</sup> As Breck, "Biblical Chiasmus," 70, pointed out, critics have recognized "the intimate connection that exists between rhetorical form and thematic content, between the structure of a literary unit and its theological meaning." See, J. Breck, "Biblical Chiasmus: Exploring Structure for Meaning," *BTB* 17 (1987): 70-74.

<sup>207</sup> The basic presumption of such an approach to text(s) is that a crucial aspect in the interpretation of text(s) is that they should be studied and interpreted within a specific context for no text exists in a vacuum. Each text has links to a specific context and different sets of relations. The letters relate to one



sections of Genesis on the basis of language and plot parallels.<sup>208</sup> The source narratives themselves may have contained parallel episodes that could become components of parallelism.<sup>209</sup> The underlying assumption is that if such links indeed exist through which episodes from different sections of the book of Genesis interact to reinforce the same basic points of view and contribute towards the unfolding of the same continuous plot and the progressive development of the same themes and motifs, then such a display of unity of design will constitute a strong argument that a single creative mind stood behind the present form of the book, and that each constituent narrative is to be read as an integral part of the larger whole.

But still, given the larger number of individual episodes that make up the Abraham narrative, how does one go about exploring possible rhetorical links among them? In this matter, the task is actually made easier by some of the literary analysis of the composition of the narrative in the previous chapter. As is clear from the survey of the composition of the narrative in the chapter 2, it is apparent that the narrative in its current form is divisible into three narrative sections. The central section of the narrative (i.e., the main cycle, Gen 12:1-22:19) is chiasmically arranged, with the

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another to form words, words are connected to form sentences, sentences are combined to form paragraphs (or periscope), paragraphs (or pericopes) that have a connection form an episode, et cetera. Each text stands in relationship to other text within the same book, or forms an intertext with texts from other books. In this respect, this approach is an analysis of all textual relations within the book of Genesis. The contribution that each building blocks in the Abraham narrative and the remainders of Genesis make toward the understanding of the whole is determined. From this, the approach to text(s) can be named as intra-textuality, which is a quite literally text-centered to grasp the meanings of the texts in the Abraham narrative themselves rather than to reconstruct the texts in actual exegetical practice. (cf. M. G. Brett, "Intratextuality," in *A Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* [London: SCM Press, 1990], 320-21; Lotman, *Die Struktur interarischer Texte*, 81-91).

<sup>208</sup> To analyze the parallelism (i.e., similarities in the narratives context) three levels of intratextual relations (and thus, three phases in the analysis of the Abraham narrative), therefore, is acknowledged: thematic, structural, semantics [verbal] levels).

<sup>209</sup> A theory such as the Documentary Hypothesis, however, which reduces individual narrations to fragments and is hostile to parallel doublets in a single source, is incompatible with the chiasmatic structure of the Abraham narration.

numerous parallel themes, the themes-words and the correspondences in verbal parallels, which serve to establish nexuses with the intervening material, reflect the literary texture of this narrative section. The epilogue of the narrative (Gen 23:1-25:11) is the section as a concluding transition to the next units. The prologue of the narrative (Gen 11:27-32) reflects an intimate knowledge of the subsequent stories, in terms of dealing primarily with essential information for understanding the event in the Abraham narrative (i.e., characters, geographical information, and Sarah's barrenness). In light of this lens of methodology, all three subunits of the narrative section will be treated as integral parts of a unified work.

### **3.2. The Prologue: Terah's Genealogy (Gen 11:27-32)<sup>210</sup>**

With the rise of literary or rhetorical studies, the search for links between the Abraham narrative in the larger context of Genesis to justify an integrated reading has resulted in an awareness that certain aspects introduced in the prologue actually emerge again in the rest of Genesis. Several obvious examples are the selection of the events in terms of thematic, structural and semantic levels<sup>211</sup> as follows. Firstly, Abraham's movement into Canaan from their homeland in Ur of the Chaldeans geographically links the call

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<sup>210</sup> Van Seters (*Abraham in History and Tradition*, 225 and *Prologue to History*, 202) appropriately observes a number of recent studies of the connections of the Gen 11:28-30 regarding Terah's life in this passage. See, also Blum (*Die Komposition der Vätergeschichte*, 440-41) and H. Specht, "Von Gott enttäuscht – Die priesterschriftliche Abrahamgeschichte," *EvTh* 47 (1987): 397-400.

<sup>211</sup> It is abundantly clear that the matching units are related. Numerous parallel themes and theme-words serve to connect them, alerting the reader to the literary texture of the Abraham narrative. The author/the final composer utilized techniques to link these complex cycles in Genesis. These include the following categories: 1) the similarity of the sameness of topics and themes; 2) the sameness of the role and experience of the corresponding characters; 3) the repetition of key-motifs; 4) the similarity of geographical indication; and 5) the repetition of Keywords and common phrases or clauses in the corresponding cycles.

of Abraham to the Tower of Babel story. Secondly, the infertility of Sarah, which becomes a central theme for the Abraham narrative specifically thematically links up with Genesis 12-50. Thirdly, Lot, whose enigmatic place in the family the author/the final composer explores at key points (Genesis 13-14; 18-19). Finally, more generally, links with the family in Haran continue through the Abraham cycle (Gen 22:20-24; 24) and Jacob (Gen 27:43-28:7; 29-31), as both Isaac and Jacob return to marry members of their family, that is, Rebekah; Rachel (Alexander 1997:105; Rendsburg 1986:29-30; Wenham 1987:263).<sup>212</sup> Therefore, while some view such similarities as evidence that one unifying mind must have been responsible for the composition of the book in its present form, little attempt has been made to further validate this through careful consideration of the language and rhetorical significance of the links to see if they are in fact indicative of the authorship at the compositional level.

In such a view, in the following discussion, episodes in the prologue and the different sections of Genesis that seem to be textually related will be closely examined to determine if there is more to these links than superficial textual association. If there is, an attempt will then be made to determine whether such links point to conscious design, since that would imply a closer relationship between the two sections than is generally recognized. After all, conscious design is often indicative of single authorship. In addition, other distinctive feature that provides further indication as to whether the prologue and the remainder of Genesis are related at a compositional level will also be explored. This concerns the pervasive use of references in both sections to the book of Genesis. It thus is apparent the fact that the Abraham narrative as a part of the

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<sup>212</sup> For the variations of this format, see, Radday, "Chiasmus," 104, Sutherland, "The Organization of the Abraham Promise Narratives," 337-43, and Abela, *The Themes of the Abraham Narrative*, 2-3.

Pentateuch is put together in such a way that one can discern relationships among its parts. In other words, earlier events foreshadow and anticipate later events, which are written to remind the reader of past narratives.<sup>213</sup> In this sense, some cases of textual links will, thus, be closely examined to prove these textual relationships, they provide further indication as to whether the prologue and the remainder of Genesis are related at a compositional level.

### **3.2.1. Thematic Links**

When it comes to thematic unity, the certain themes can be identified in the prologue and in the remainder of Genesis for which textual links with episodes in the prologue seem to exist in thematically. In fact, as the following discussion shows, these links to the prologue seem to bring an extra interpretive dimension to the related episodes in the rest of the book, such that in each case, the episode in the rest of Genesis receives clarity or added significance when viewed in light of the corresponding episode in the rest of the book.

#### **3.2.1.1. Posterity: Sarah's Barrenness**

As stated in the section 2.3.2.1 in chapter 2, the Nahor's genealogy (Gen 11:27-32) functions not only to connect Abraham with the preceding narratives, as the previous genealogies have done, but to provide the reader with the necessary background for understanding the events of the patriarchal narratives in general and the Abraham

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<sup>213</sup> This feature has been called 'narrative typology.'

narrative in particular. The events in the narrative, thus, foreshadow the late events in the narrative and the remaining sections of Genesis. This is one of the literary devices in which the author/the final composer cautiously conveys his central theme, and also guides the reader toward the focus of his narrative – yet also holds the reader back in anticipation. In this sense, it is appropriate that the genealogy of Nahor largely anticipates the several events occurred in the Abraham narrative and the rest of Genesis. Above all this genealogical notice is thematically concerned with two essential details: Abraham married Sarah who was barren, and Abraham's clan left Ur for Canaan but stopped short and settled in Haran. As it were, this episode introduces the two major issues of the narrative: *offspring* genealogically and *land* geographically.

The problem of land is introduced by noting that the characters introduced are in the land of Mesopotamia. The larger context for this comment is the story of Babel. Abraham is in the land of rebellion and judgment, a most unlikely place for any hopeful future for God's salvation to arise. The problem of seed is raised in v. 30 in the remark about Sarah's barrenness.<sup>214</sup> These facts are the crucial components of the divine promise (or blessing), which drive the cycle within a promissory perspective.<sup>215</sup>

Within the context of Genesis 12-50, such two themes play prominently as main strand that serves to integrate the individual subunits into a cohesive whole since the divine

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<sup>214</sup> The creation and blessing of humankind in Genesis 1, with its accompanying motif of fertility, has come to sterility. Thus, to bless is to bestow the dynamism of fertility (Gen 1:27). In this sense, the promises given to Abraham and the respective covenant God made with him are a reiteration of God's blessing upon man in Gen 1:28.

<sup>215</sup> Among recent scholars to consider the themes of the Abraham narrative, Abela, *The Themes of the Abraham Narrative*, 15-125, pertinently see as an autonomous narrative, which is consisted of the prominent themes: 'blessing', 'son' and 'land.' He suggests that the narrative has the overall cohesion with these traditional themes in literarily, structurally, and theologically. In the meantime, Moberly, *Genesis 12-50*, 23, says, "the overarching concern of the Abraham cycle is God's promise to Abraham of a land and a son (Gen 12:1-3)." Cf. Van Seters, *Prologue to History*, 252, J. P. Fokkelman, "Time and the Structure of the Abraham Cycle," in *New Avenues in the Study of the Old Testament*, ed. A. J. van der Woude (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 103-04.

promises involve a numerous host of progeny for Abraham (Gen 12:2a; 15:4-5; 17:1-2; 18:10).<sup>216</sup>

Among these themes, the theme of posterity (or heir) is especially crucial to a proper understanding of each episode within the Abraham narrative and the remainder of Genesis (cf. Alexander 1993:255-270; 1994:10)<sup>217</sup> since the major issue of the narrative is the lack of an heir. The theme of heir, which is sounded in Gen 11:30 with the mention that “וַתְּהִי שָׂרַי עֲקָרָה אֵין לָהּ יֶלֶד”<sup>218</sup>, Sarai was barren, she had no child.” During the course of the Abraham narrative, this theme as a recurrent theme is developed in various way, with the relationship with Yahweh.

Significantly, one of the main themes running through the narratives involving Abraham concerns the fact he lacks a son. In Gen 11:30, one is informed that Sarah, Abraham’s wife, is barren. In large sweep, Sarah barrenness was noted on eight separate occasions (Gen 11:30; 12:1-3, 10-20; 15:4; 16:1-14; 17:15-21; 18:1-16a; 20:1-18; 21:1-7) in the narrative.<sup>219</sup> Her infertility, which stands, with foreshadowing

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<sup>216</sup> In fact, the two themes of posterity and land are linked by an indissoluble tie. In the treatment given to these two themes, one can distinguish clearly between two plot-lines, which deals with the fulfillment/nonfulfillment of offspring and that of land. However, though they are clearly distinguishable, these two plot-lines are interwoven into a singly thread that runs through the entire narratives in Genesis.

<sup>217</sup> The Hebrew word זרע occurs 59 times in Genesis as opposed to 229 uses in the whole Old Testament reflects the fact that the theme of seed centers on the divine blessing. In conjunction with this term, Alexander (“Genealogies, Seed and the Compositional Unity,” 260) has observed three factors of it: 1) זרע can be either singular (i.e., a single seed, Ishmael as Abraham’s ‘seed’ in Gen 21:13) or plural (i.e., many seeds, the descendants of Jacob in Gen 28:14); 2) זרע normally denotes an individual’s natural child or children (e.g., Eve’s comment on Seth in Gen 4:25; Abraham’s mention on Eliezer of Damascus as his heir in Gen 15:3); and 3) conveys the idea that there is a close resemblance between the ‘seed’ and that which has produced it (Gen 1:11-12).

<sup>218</sup> This word (rather than וְלֵדָה, “children” is a rare form, occurring elsewhere only as a kethib reading in 2 Sam 6:23 in a similar context, describing the barrenness of Michal (cf. Judg 13:2; Isa 54:1) underscores at the start the need for God’s help (Gen 17:17; 18:11-12; 21:1, 7; Rom 4:19; Heb 11:11). See, Westermann (*Genesis 12-36*, 139). This redundancy in the text occurs only for Sarah’s barrenness unlike Rebekah (Gen 25:21) and Rachel (Gen 29:31), where “barren” alone occurs.

<sup>219</sup> Thus, the statement of Sarah’s infertility plays as introduction to the Abraham narrative and achieves a certain emphasis through parallelism (cf. Westermann, *Genesis*, 96).

significance, at the highlighted center of the Abraham narrative, prepares the reader for the tension that will dominate the narrative. However, it not merely serves as tension heightening the promise that Abraham will be made “a great nation” (Gen 12:1-3) whose “offspring” will be given the land (Gen 12:7), but sets against the background of the narrative in particular and the remaining of Genesis.<sup>220</sup> The juxtaposition of Sarah’s barrenness in Gen 11:30 with the promise in Gen 12:1-3, 7, thus, sets up a tension that dominates much of the rest of the Abraham narrative. The promise, which is to be fulfilled, is put in danger in the wife-sister stories (Gen 12:10-20; 20:1-18; cf. 26:1-11).<sup>221</sup> In the case of God’s specific goals for a select nation headed by the patriarch Abraham, Sarah’s infertility most severely jeopardizes God’s plan. Not only does she impede the perpetuation of the Abrahamic line, her infertility also prevents the possibility of any progeny inheriting her husband’s legacy and breeds familial dissension in the house of Abraham (cf. Callaway 1986:13).<sup>222</sup> Genesis 15, where delineates the covenant of God with Abraham for a heir (esp. Gen 15:1-6) describes both Abraham’s complain to God because of no heir (עֲרִירָה)<sup>223</sup> and Yahweh’s assurance of heir for him. In Gen 16:1-4, Sarah tries to compensate for her inadequacy with a gesture that seems altruistic: she gives her maidservant (שִׁפְחָה), Hagar, to

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<sup>220</sup> W. Zimmerli, “Land and Possession,” in *The Old Testament and the World* (London: SPCK, 1976b), 18; C. Levin, *Der Jahwist*, FRLANT 157 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 133.

<sup>221</sup> According to Westermann (*Genesis 12-36*, 161-168, 318-329, 394-400) the repetitions of the story of the ancestress (or promise) in danger are best explained as the reworking of Gen 12:10-20 by authors who, respectively, had the narratives in Genesis 12 and then Genesis 20 before them.

<sup>222</sup> Thus, as G. A. Yee, “Sarah,” in *ABD*, vol. 1 (New York & London: Doubleday, 1992), 982, rightly pointed out, her infertility is a twofold stigma. “On one level, it represents a loss of status in a patriarchal, labor-intensive society with a high mortality rate. Here, a premium is placed on the ability to bear many sons. On another level, it seems to be an impediment to the fulfillment of God’s promise of posterity to Abraham.”

<sup>223</sup> According to V. P. Hamilton, “עֲרִירָה,” in *NIDOTTE* (1996b), 535, Gen 15:2 represents a lament of a childless father, which may be compared to the Ugaritic Epic of King Keret and Aqhat those who were childless husband. This term occurs in only four verses where, excepting Gen 15:2, it is indicative of divine displeasure or punishment (Lev 20:21-22; Jer 22:30). The absence of a fertility rite to reverse barrenness in the passage may reflect Abraham’s reliance on God’s will.

Abraham. However, all that does is circumvent her obligation, create rivalry, and produce an Abrahamic line that is divided and at war throughout the remainder of the book of Genesis. In this sense, the absence of an heir leads to the Hagar episode, which depicts the stories of the birth and expulsion of Ishmael (Gen 16:1-15; 21:9-21).

At the same time, Sarah's childlessness draws attention to the need for God's help (Gen 17:17; 18:11-12; 21:1, 7). The barren Sarah is brought into God's covenantal promise as the mother of many nations and kings (Gen 17:16); the covenant of circumcision with Abraham (Genesis 17) illustrates the scene that God repeats his assurance that Abraham and Sarah shall have their own son (esp. Gen 17:15-21; cf. Gen 12:4). The reassurance that Sarah will bear a son constitutes the narrative about the visitors to Abraham's tent in Gen 18:1-15. The tension between barrenness and fertility of Sarah has been set up and is resolved only in Gen 21:1-7, when Isaac is born to Abraham and Sarah, and he is circumcised.<sup>224</sup> In it, that Sarah was barren introduces a thread that leads to the birth and marriage of Isaac. Thus, the basic plot moves from profound tension to unexpected resolution. The promise is put in danger again and the binding of Isaac (Gen 22:1-19).<sup>225</sup> From the observations, one may affirm that the shape of the narrative itself is from the promise of an heir to the birth of an heir. In this respect, Sarah's barrenness is a trajectory of the Abraham narrative,

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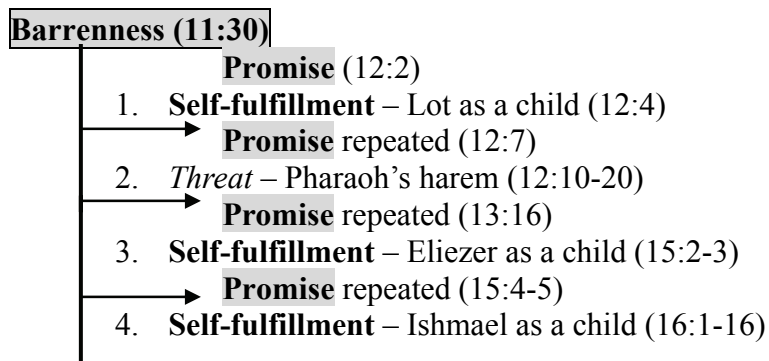
<sup>224</sup> T. E. Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament: A Relational Theology of Creation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 106-08, in his work, the theme of barrenness and the birth of Isaac views as the ongoing blessing work of God originated from the beginning (Gen 1:22, 28). He distinguishes between the creational blessing and the constitutive blessing.

<sup>225</sup> See, R. S. Hendel, "Genesis, Book of," in *ABD*, vol. 2 (New York & London: Doubleday, 1992), 936; L. Hicks, "Abraham," in *IDB: An Illustrated Encyclopedia* (Nashville & New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), 15-26; H. C. Leupold, Genesis, in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), 686-90; J. J. Scullion, "Genesis, The Narrative of," in *ABD*, vol. 2 (New York & London: Doubleday, 1992b), 949-50; C. Westermann, "Genesis, The Book of," in *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, eds. B. M. Metzger & M. D. Coogan (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 247-48.



concerning the continuation of a family's life from one generation to another among threats and tensions.<sup>226</sup>

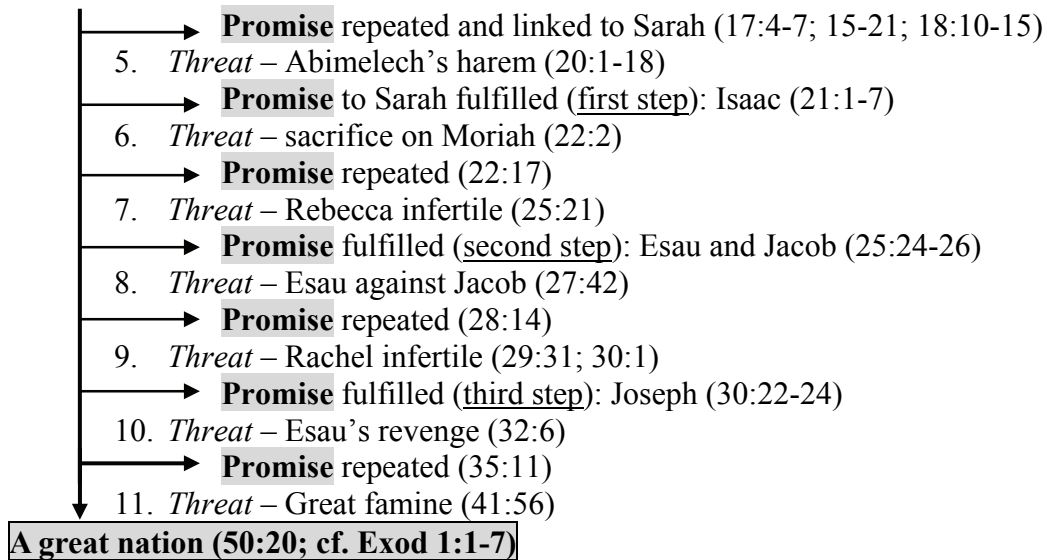
The infertility of Sarah in the narrative itself sets up a tension between the divine promises and the problem of exercising faith in this promise, at this point, together with her and Abraham's great age, is particularly emphasized to create a sharp contrast with the promise to them of a son of their own.<sup>227</sup> Arising from this contrast there is a steadily mounting tension about the fulfillment/non-fulfillment of this promise. In the Abraham narrative, the factors that generate this tension<sup>228</sup> are, on the one hand, the series of alternating threats to and self-fulfillment of this promise and, on the other hand, the belief that God in his own time was sure to make his promise good (cf. Kaiser 1978:263-269). Vosloo (1982:20) helpfully sets out the rhythmic alternation of promises and threats/self-fulfillment throughout the entire book of Genesis as follows:



<sup>226</sup> Thus, Terah's family (Gen 11:27b-30) history of early procreation in the Shem genealogy (Gen 11:10-26) not merely serves as a foil for Abraham and Sarah, who were childless but also introduces the tension of Sarah's barrenness.

<sup>227</sup> Although the Sarah's barrenness (Gen 11:30) is not etymologically related to the call to be fruitful and multiply in Gen 1:28, yet it is also emphasized to form a sharp contrast with the original blessing for humanity.

<sup>228</sup> The tension is built up when the fulfillment of the promise of a great posterity is delayed and is often only brought closer to fulfillment by divine intervention. The Abraham narrative, thus, is characterized by the basic element of tensions brought to resolution. This is crucial for Gen 11:27-22:24. The tension between promise and obstacle to promise systematically forms the underlying frame of reference, which links the sub-units together into their concentric pattern of arrangement as presented in chapter 2 (cf. Westermann, *Promises to the Fathers*, 69). Arrangement the material in this way suggests that a central concern of the author/the final composer is a tension between promise and obstacles to promise.



In this respect, as Mathews (2005:99-104) rightly mentioned, mention of Sarah’s infertility is a proleptic clue that Abraham was the chosen descendant in Terah’s household who would inherit the blessing. Barrenness was a distinguishing feature of the elect line, beginning with Abraham-Sarah and Isaac-Rebekah and continuing with Jacob, who cased this trial with his favored wife, Rachel.

The barren condition of Rebekah parallels the Abraham narrative in Gen 11:30 (cf. Gen 29:31, Rachel). Rebekah’s childlessness contrasts with the success of the search for her and the hopeful expectation of children (Gen 24:60). The barrenness of Rachel is a minor theme, while that of Sarah is a major theme in the Abraham narrative, since Jacob had many sons by his other wives. The infertility of Rachel, however, similarly jeopardizes God’s goals just as Sarah endures and, more particularly, their family legacy. She endures an infertility crisis not dissimilar to the former travails of her husband’s grandmother. Like Sarah, Rachel tries to overcome her infertility as a barren wife by offering her maidservant in her stead (Gen 30:3). However, this measure does not alleviate her grief, and the text goes on to describe a transaction wherein Rachel, in

the hope of conceiving, haggle with her sister Leah over a plant thought to be an aphrodisiac with fertility powers. Despite her willingness to bear children, Rachel presents an obstacle to the value of fertility. Although she does not pose the extreme threat that Sarah presented, since Jacob sires children through Leah and his two concubines, her infertility still represents a serious obstacle to both her universal and her particular function as child bearer.

In conclusion, Sarah's barrenness prepares the way for the main plot involving Abraham's heir. That is, possibly the thematic notice reflects an intimate knowledge of the subsequent accounts. In theological perspective, Sarah's infertility emphasizes the fact that God's sovereign grace is beyond human imagination, which means that she will conceive children not by natural generation but by supernatural life that faith engenders (cf. Gen 15:2-3; 17:17). Through the childless woman, the narrative eloquently describes the fact that God will bring into being a new humanity that is born not of the will of a husband but by will of God (cf. Waltke 2001:201).

### **3.2.1.2. Land: Ur and Canaan**

As stated above, this genealogical section reveals two essential details: the infertility of Sarah in matrimony with Abraham and the migration of Abraham's clan from Ur of the Chaldeans to Canaan and the settlement in Haran. These facts set the stage for the two itineraries that drive the Abraham narrative, that is, the metaphorical journey from barrenness to fertility and the geographical journey from Mesopotamia to the promised land. Among them, this genealogical report (Gen 11:27-32) makes clear the fact that

Abraham's family had begun a journey to Canaan from their home in "Ur<sup>229</sup> of the Chaldeans<sup>230</sup>" (i.e., southern Mesopotamia[Babylonia]<sup>231</sup> in first), where is probably the ancient center about 70 miles south of modern Baghdad, rather than Haran (cf. Gen 15:7; Neh 9:7; Acts 7:2).

A closer look suggests that the author/the final composer intends us to understand this genealogical section of Terah differently. In vv. 28, 31, we are explicitly shown that Ur of the Chaldeans, not Haran, was the place of Abraham's birth. The using same words, which are rendered "אֶרֶץ (land)" in Gen 11:28 and "אֶרֶץ (country)," also suggest that the place, where Abraham receives the divine call is Ur of the Chaldeans. Thus, when the command is given Abraham to leave 'the place of birth' (Gen 12:1), only Ur of the Chaldeans can be meant, despite the fact the narrative of Genesis 12 does not mention it and might suggest otherwise. The role of Gen 11:27-32 in providing the geographical context of Genesis 12, then, should not be overlooked, especially in view of the author's/the final composer's close attention to geography in working out his crucial themes. Therefore, one may state that the author/the final composer seems clearly intent on having the reader understand Abraham's call as a call to leave "Ur of the Chaldeans." That this is the view of the author/the final composer is confirmed by the

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<sup>229</sup> Some critics see the north Mesopotamian sites, the cities Urfa (Edessa, near Haran) in north Syria and Ura Armenia (Hittite) as the patriarchal אֶרֶץ (cf. C. H. Gordon, *Abraham of Ur, Hebrew and Semitic Studies: G R Driver FS.* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1963], 77-84, and "Where is Abraham's Ur?" *BAR* 3 [1977], 20-21, 52; Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapter 1-17*, 364-65). However, these identifications contradict Act 7:2.

<sup>230</sup> The Hebrew word, כַּשְׁדִּים is kaldu (Akk.) in Assyrian texts of the ninth century, and the Greek has καλδαίαι; the original *sd* has undergone a change to *ld* (see, R. S. Hess, "Childea," in *ABD*, vol. 1 [New York & London: Doubleday, 1992], 886-87). The geographical designation occurs three times in Genesis (i.e., Gen 11:28, 31; Gen 15:7) and once elsewhere in the Old Testament (Neh 9:7). Chaldea was a less ancient name of Babylonia from neo-Babylonian times (cf. Jer 50:1, 8).

<sup>231</sup> It can be translated Μεσοποταμία in Greek, cf. also that of the Hebrew word, נַחֲרָם אֶרֶץ as "the town of Nahor in Gen 24:10; cf. Deut 23:4[5]; Judg 3:8; 1 Chr 19:6; Ps 60:1[2].

later reference to Abraham's call in Gen 15:7<sup>232</sup> when one looks back to the call of Abraham, as stated above. This denotes that the author/the final composer already put the call of Abraham within the setting of Ur of the Chaldeans, drawing a line connecting the call of Abraham (Gen 12:1-3) with the dispersion of Babylon (Gen 11:1-9) and thus making Abraham prefigure all those future exiles who, in faith, wait for the return to the promised land (Sailhamer 1992:137-139).<sup>233</sup>

In this sense, the movement Abraham's clan links the call of Abraham to the Tower of Babylon story. The language "settled there" (Gen 11:31) significantly echoes<sup>234</sup> the Babel account (Gen 11:2, 8-9), where the residents of Shinar refused to "fill" the earth in accord with the divine mandate (Gen 1:28; 9:1). In other words, the language "settled there" is chosen by the author/the final composer to cast a shadow on Terah's decision to dwell in Haran (Gen 11:31), and it provides the negative contrast for Abraham's faithful answer to the call (Gen 12:4). This is one of many ways the faith of Abraham and his role in accomplishing the mandate to "fill" the earth are distinguished

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<sup>232</sup> Rendtorff (*Problem of the Process of Transmission*, 81) states "Gen 15:7-21 is formulated in quite obvious parallelism to Gen 11:31. The gift of the land is linked closely with the journey to the land. Gen 12:1, where Abraham is ordered to journey to the land, which YHWH will show him, fits nicely into this context."

<sup>233</sup> This is in harmony with the view of the later prophetic literature (esp. Neh 9:7) and the book of Acts (esp. Acts 7:2-3). For Isaiah the "glory of the Chaldeans" is the city of Babylon, which God will overturn "like Sodom and Gomorrah" (Isa 13:19; cf. 48:14). In Jeremiah (Jer 24:5; 25:12; 50:1, 8, 35, 45; 51:24, 54) and Ezekiel (Ezek 1:3; 12:13; 23:15, 23), the "Chaldeans are those who live in Babylon and who have taken God's people into captivity. In much the same way the prophet Micah pictures the remnant who await the return from exile as descendants of Abraham faithfully trusting in God's promise (Mic 7:18-20).

<sup>234</sup> Echo, which is used to link two or more units that are separated by a division marker in a cycle can be defined by McEvenue (*The Narrative Style of the Priestly Writer*, 38) as follows:

It is not easily defined, but it is a repetition of a key word, phrase, or clause, which has occurred in a previous unit, sometimes, as here, the phrase is really planted in the previous units, even somewhat artificially, in order to prepare echo. The echo serves to unite units, and further it suggests a hidden order and plan in the world. To be an echo, the repeated element must be sufficiently imposing to be really experienced by the attentive reader as echoing, as recalling something already heard, something familiar.

from those of his Shemite heritage (Gen 11:10-26). In it, Sailhamer (1990:111) also notes that the theme of “separation” (cf. Gen 10:5, 32) reinforces the author’s/the final composer’s purpose, connecting “blessing” and the command to “fill the earth.” In conclusion, the segmented genealogy (Gen 11:27-32) provides a geographical element, aligning the narrative section with themes that will prove central in the subsequent narratives in Genesis. The migration of Terah’s clan with his family presages Abraham’s pilgrimage to the promised land.

### **3.2.2. Textual Links**

The introduction (Gen 11:27-32) of the Abraham narratives has an internal relationship to the other segments of that narrative and to the narrative of viewed as whole in verbal parallel. When we speak of structure as the literary context, we are speaking of the total set of relationship within a narrative unit. In this regard, structure implies purpose, which in turn suggests a central concern or integration point that gives a passage its meaning and direction.

#### **3.2.2.1. Death of Terah (Gen 11:32) and Noah’s Obituary (Gen 9:29)**

The death of Terah in Haran (Gen 11:32) indicates the end of an era and closes out the role of Terah in the account, while he lived another sixty years. The obituary of Terah echoes of Genesis 5’s genealogy in drawing together the converging lines of exclusive lineal descent: from Adam to Noah’s son, Shem, and from Shem to Terah’s son, Abraham. This notice most likely comes as the case with Noah’s death, from the same

or similar source(s) as those of Gen 5:3-32 and 11:10-26, but the author/the final composer has chosen to announce Terah's death at Gen 11:32 just prior to Abraham's call (Gen 12:1-3).<sup>235</sup> From a literary perspective, the notice of Terah's death under the Terah תולדות (Gen 11:27-25:11) established the new era of Abraham just as Noah's passing marked the beginnings of the postdiluvian world. It transitions the primeval history ending with Terah to the patriarchal period beginning with Abraham.

### 3.2.2.2. Terah's and Nahorite Genealogy (Gen 11:27-32// Gen22:20-24)

As we had already discussed briefly in chapter 2, the Terah's genealogy which identifies the family members of the Terah clan and informs their relationship, is matched by the Nahor genealogy in Gen 22:20-24 but also by the concluding genealogy in Gen 25:1-11. In historical critical scholarship, the genealogy of Nahor (Gen 22:20-24) is generally taken to be artlessly incorporated into the biographical context of the narrative due to an Abramean genealogy in it.<sup>236</sup> However, one can recognize immediately that far from being carried out "artlessly," the author/the final composer had sophisticatedly arranged Gen 22:20-24 as the matching bookend to Gen 11:27-32.

Rendsburg (1986:29-30) presents four points of textual linkage of the two genealogies. Firstly, the two important grandchildren, Lot for Haran (Gen 11:27) and Rebekah for Bethuel (Gen 22:22-23) link in terms of the last-named offspring in the respective

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<sup>235</sup> In terms of concluding notices for the life of Abraham, Gen 25:7-11 parallels to the death of Terah (Gen 11:32) as the conclusion to the section as to Abraham. Thus, here, the passage serves double duty as the conclusion to the section of Abraham and as a conclusion to the Abraham narrative as a whole (cf. Carr, *Reading the Fractures of Genesis*, 124).

<sup>236</sup> von Rad, *Genesis*, 240.

narratives. They dominantly play as crucial characters in the subsequent chapters, which follow. Secondly, that Gen 11:29 introduces a character, Haran, who is not central to the narratives with the word, אָבִי, namely, וְאָבִי יִסְכָּה וְאָבִי מִלְכָּה (the father of Milcah, and the father of Iscah) parallels that of אָבִי אֲרָם (the father of Aram, Bethuel), who is also a minor character in Gen 22:21 in the same phenomenon. Thirdly, Gen 11:30, which reports Sarah's infertility ties to the very fertile Milcah and Reumah in Gen 22:20-24 in view of antithesis mutually.<sup>237</sup> Finally, there is a textual connection between two narrative for mentioning Abraham's father, Terah (Gen 11:27-32) and his brother, Nahor (Gen 22:20-24).

In the meantime, Westermann (1985:366-367) recognizes that the Nahorite genealogy (Gen 22:20-24) is parallel to the genealogy of Terah (Gen 11:27-32) because of the appearance of certain figures common in both: Nahor, Milcah, and Abraham. Therefore, these observations would suggest a certain structural pattern: Terah's genealogy (Gen 11:27-32) – Nahor's genealogy (Gen 22:20-24).<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> The appearance of the expression אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה, "after these things or events" in Gen 22:20 (cf. Ge 15:1; 22:1), which functions to connect what follows it with what precedes it connects the Nahorite genealogy (Gen 22:20-24) with the preceding events in the Abraham narrative, just as the phrase "Milcah also has borne sons" (Gen 22:20) in the Nahorite genealogy recalls the birth of Isaac reported in Gen 21:1-7 (cf. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 119). In addition, B. Jacob, *The First Book of the Bible: Genesis*, abridged, ed., trans. E. I. Jacob & W. Jacob (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1974), 147, also offers a plausible explanation concerning this phrase in Gen 22:20 in conjunction with its occurrence in Gen 22:1: "The paragraph begins with the same phrase as verse 1 in order to create a contrast. Not only had Isaac remained alive, but we shall already learn the name of his future wife." From these points it is clear that Nahor's genealogy (Gen 22:20-24) functions as a bookend following the inclusion of Gen 22:1-19, and at the same time prepares the way to the next cycle in which Isaac and Rebekah will be the main characters.

<sup>238</sup> In addition, according to von Rad (*Genesis*, 245), the twelve children of Nahor (Gen 22:20-24) has a particular parallel with the twelve children of Ishmael (Gen 25:12-18). Thus, one may suggest a triple structural pattern: Terah's genealogy (Gen 11:27-32) – Nahor's genealogy (Gen 22:20-24) – Ishmael's genealogy (Gen 25:12-18).



### 3.2.2.3. Two Introductions (Gen 11:27-32// Gen 25:19-26)

Sailhamer (1992:137-139) observes rightly marked similarities between the introduction to the narrative of Abraham (Gen 11:27-32) and the introduction to the narrative of Isaac (Gen 25:19-26), which indicate that the author/the final composer sees the two narratives as related.

Introduction to the Abraham narrative (11:27-32)	Introduction to the Isaac narrative (25:19-26)
<p>וַיָּמָת הָרֵן עַל־פְּנֵי תֵרַח אָבִיו (v. 28)<sup>239</sup> Haran's premature death for his father, Terah</p>	<p>וַיָּגוּעַ וַיָּמָת וַיֵּאֱסֹף אֶל־עַמְּוִי... עַל־פְּנֵי כָל־אֶחָיו נָפַל... Ishmael death before his brothers</p>
<p>נָחֹר (v. 29; cf. 24:24) A brief introduction of Nahor, a key character in the narratives concerning the quest for a bride for Abraham's son, Isaac</p>	<p>לָבָן (v. 20; cf. 28:2) A brief introduction of Laban, the father of the bride of Isaac's son, Jacob</p>
<p>The key characters: Abraham and Lot(vv. 27, 31)</p>	<p>The key character: Isaac, Jacob and Esau(vv. 19, 21, 25, 26)</p>
<p>וַתְּהִי שָׂרִי עֲקָרָה אֵין לָהּ יֶלֶד: (v. 30) Sarah's barrenness</p>	<p>וַיַּעֲתֹר וַיִּצְחָק לֵיהוָה לְנִכְחַ אִשְׁתּוֹ כִּי עֲקָרָה הִיא (v. 21) Rebekah's infertility</p>
<p>Abraham's companionship with and separation from Lot (vv. 27, 29; cf. 13:6-7)</p>	<p>Jacob's companionship with and separation from Esau (vv. 22-24; chaps. 25-28; cf. 36:7)</p>

These textual parallels suggest that the two narratives have closely relationship in key characters (Abraham and Lot/Isaac-Jacob, Esau) and thematic element of struggle between brothers. Significantly, in the latter, the introductions to both narratives are

<sup>239</sup> Haran's premature death for his father, Terah (Gen 11:28) indicates another textual link with the unexpected sorrow for Jacob to outlive his son, Joseph (cf. Gen 37:34-35) as well.

centrally concerned with setting forth the necessary background of theme: struggle and separation (cf. Gen 10:5, 32). In this sense, such parallels have the effect of drawing the themes of the two narratives together so that they reinforces a central theme, the fulfillment of the blessing (Gen 1:28) and separation, which continues to play a central role in the author's/the final composer's purpose.

#### **3.2.2.4. Semantic Ties (Gen 11:27-32// Gen 23:1-25:11).**

In the general pattern of referring to an individual and listing descendant(s) or clans, far in Genesis, the author/the final composer has followed a pattern of listing ten names between important individuals in the narrative (e.g., Gen 5:1-32; 11:10-26). The author in this short genealogical list, however, presents only eight names. By listing only eight names, the author leaves the reader uncertain who the ninth and, more importantly, the tenth name will be. It is only as the narrative unfolds that the ninth and tenth names are shown to be the two sons of Abraham, Ishmael (Gen 16:15) and Isaac (Gen 21:3). In his genealogical introduction, then, the author anticipates the central event in the forthcoming narrative: the birth of Isaac, who will mark the tenth name (Gen 21:1-7). This is one of many ways in which the author/the final composer carefully guides the reader toward the focus of his narrative – yet also holds the reader back in anticipation.

The same concern can be seen in the initial reminder that “Sarah was barren; she had no child” (Gen 11:30), and in the prominence given in the following narrative to the wordplay on Isaac's name (“he laughs,” Gen 17:17; 18:12-13, 15; 19:14; 21:3, 6). The unusual spelling of the word child (ילד) in Gen 11:30 may be an attempt to call

attention to this important element of the introduction. Later in the narrative, in Abraham's response to the announcement of the birth of this child, there appears to be a deliberate allusion to this unusual spelling, as well as to the name (יִצְחָק, "Isaac") of the child: "Abraham fell facedown; he laughed [וַיִּצְחָק] and said to himself, 'Will a son be born [וַיֵּלֶד] to a man a hundred years old?'" (Gen 17:17).

### **3.2.2.5. Characters Links: Abraham, Lot and Nahor**

This transition section (Gen 11:27-32), which introduces Terah's children and their relationships, mentions some those who are full and developing characters, Abraham, Sarah, and Lot as well as the other, agents. Lot who is the only male descendant from the Terah's clan, and is also Milcah's brother figures prominently in number of passages (Gen 11:31; 12:5; 13:1-12; 14:12-16; 19:1-38). Although he became a companion for Abraham in his early travels (Gen 12:4; 13:5), it is implicit that Abraham's regal heir is Eliezer of Damascus (Gen 15:2-3). Haran's premature death, which may have influenced Abraham's migration from Haran (Gen 12:4-5) suggests the fate of Haran's children in this closely knit family (cf. Gen 24:3; 27:46; 31:50). In a sense, Lot shows the continuous relationship with Abraham in Canaan. Thus, his role in the narrative context functions as a symbol of the relationship between the Abraham group in Canaan and the Nahor-Milcah group, the Aramean in Haran. This is striking since the Nahor-Milcah family constantly provides wives for the Abraham group in Canaan. The parallel description of endogamy of Abraham and Nahor's wives, thus, heightens the additional information given to Milcah's family connections.

In addition, Milcah's linkage with the Abraham branch in marriage to Nahor is

reinforced by her granddaughter Rebekah, born to Milcah's son Bethuel, who marries Isaac. Rebekah's marriage in the Abraham line of Terah, thus, reunited the two branches of Terah's descendants. The Aramean connection of the Nahor clan with Abraham is also achieved through Milcah's grandson, Laban, whose daughters, Leah and Rachel, marry their Hebrew cousin, Jacob. In both case, these grandchildren will play a prominent role in the chapters that follow (cf. Sarna 1981:78-80).

### 3.2.2.6. Geographical Shift

The genealogy of Terah (Gen 11:27-32), which involves Abraham as the main character starts with a brief genealogical introduction of Abraham and swiftly moves to a geographical change. In Gen 11:31, which makes a transition between the Noah Cycle (Gen 6:9-11:26) and the following the Abraham narrative, the geographical shift is abrupt and emphatic (cf. Baker 1980:206; Louis 1982:50<sup>240</sup>; Westermann 1985:159). Journeys, thus, become a leitmotif of the Abraham narrative: a journey from Haran to Canaan (Gen 12:1-9); a journey from Canaan to Egypt (Gen 12:10-20); a journey from Egypt through the Negev to Mamre at Hebron (Gen 13:1-18). In Isaac's account, there is a geographical shift apart from the Abraham narrative. While in Gen 24:19, it is reported that Abraham returns to Beer-Sheba from Mount Moriah and lives at Beer-Sheba, Gen 24:62 reports Isaac's movement from Beer-lahai-roi to the Negev, where he settles. Fokkelman (1999:159) recognizes a tripartite division of the Jacob Cycle (Gen 25:19-37:1), which is closely related to geographical shifts:

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<sup>240</sup> Especially, Louis states that the garden, the ark and the promised land of Abraham are settings identified by God as special, secure, and protected. In his statement, the geographical shifts between the three cycles are striking.

Jacob's birth and his youth in Canaan (Gen 25:28)  
Jacob starts a family in Haran, living with his uncles Laban (Gen 29-31)  
Jacob returns to Canaan

In the Joseph Cycle (Gen 37:2-50:26), there also appears a geographical shift from Canaan to Egypt. Nevertheless, in this case, the geographical shift has an effect exclusively on the life of Joseph, since he alone moves to Egypt.

### **3.3. The Main Section (Gen 12:1-22:19)**

It hardly seems likely that so many verbal parallels between the main cycle of the Abraham narrative and the remainder of Genesis could be a mere coincidence. The author/the final composer of Genesis, who frequently seizes on wordplays and the recounts wordplays within narratives, would not have been unaware of the parallels suggested by his narratives. The purpose of this section is to delineate and evaluate the validity of the textual relationship between the main section and the remaining of Genesis. In doing so one may expose and appreciate the compositional strategy and theological message of the book as it was originally intended by the author/the final composer, who deliberately recounting these various events in such a way to highlight their textual parallel through planned structure.

#### **3.3.1. Thematic Links**

One feature that serves to integrate the individual episodes into a close-knit whole is the prominent role played by divine promises in the Abraham narrative. Among these promises three above all – those of seed, land and blessing – are crucial to a proper

understanding of each episodes.<sup>241</sup> The fulfillment of the promise of offspring is made conditional on Abraham's obedience to the divine command to move away to a foreign land. Thus, throughout, the two themes of offspring and land are linked by an indissoluble tie. In the treatment given to these two themes, we can distinguish clearly between two plot-lines. One of these plot-lines deals with the fulfillment/non-fulfillment of the promise of offspring; the other plot-line deals with the fulfillment/non-fulfillment of the promise of land. However, though they are clearly distinguishable, these two plot-lines are interwoven into a single thread of divine blessing that runs through the entire patriarchal narratives.

### 3.3.1.1. Seed

The initial promises made to Abraham (Gen 12:1-3) possesses the three thematic materials, which as intertwined into one entity make up the book of Genesis' thematic-theological core and also provide the unifying center for the book's parts: the divine promises of blessing, seed, and land for Abraham and his successors (Mann 1991:34-53). The most frequent of the three promises is that of a seed. It is the first promise given by God to Abraham. Not only does this theme run through the Abraham narrative, but it may also be traced throughout the whole of Genesis as a prominent motif in Genesis (Gen 12:2; 12:7; 13:6,15-16; 15:4-5; 17:4-7,15-21; 18:10-15; 22:17; 26:3-4; 28:4,14; 35:11; 48:4).

This theme joins the motif of 'blessing and curse' to constitute the book's

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<sup>241</sup> D. J. A. Clines views the theme as the idea that explains the unity and structural development of the Pentateuch, which is not-yet realized promise of blessing for the patriarchs (*The Theme of the Pentateuch*).

preoccupation with inherited blessing. The genealogical tables in the book are pressed into service as the bridge for the ‘seed’ element between the earlier and later narratives. This is a natural vehicle for the ‘seed’ theme in light of its prominent metaphorical sense in Genesis, meaning ‘offspring’ (cf. Alexander 1989:5-19). However, its first appearance is literal, occurring in the creation account (Gen 1:11-12, 19; cf. Gen 47:19, 23-24), which establishes at the outset that the ‘seed,’ whether of creation or patriarchs, has a proper place as appointed by the sovereign Creator-Lord.

‘Seed’ has its first metaphorical sense in Gen 3:15, where the antipathy between an evil ‘seed’ and the ‘seed’ of the woman is the second programmatic statement in Genesis. This dual lineage of serpent’s family versus the woman’s family has its history evidenced throughout the whole of human and patriarchal narratives as they reveal the approved line of descent versus the outcast – as early as Cain and as late as Esau. The remarkable parallel in genealogical structure in Gen 5:3-32 and 11:10-26 distinguishes their heritage as the elect lineage (Seth-Shem-Abraham), bridging the antediluvian and postdiluvian eras as constituting the one tree of lineal blessing.<sup>242</sup> In the history of early humanity, the “seed” and sibling-rivalry theme is first found in the murder of Abel by brother Cain (Gen 4:1-16). Yet the birth of Seth provides another ‘seed’ to Eve in Place of murdered Abel (Gen 4:25), establishing a new line of descent (Gen 4:25-26). The parallel but separate lines of Cainites and Sethites (Gen 4:17-26;

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<sup>242</sup> Genealogical records for the excluded “seed” also are found, but the excluded family tree is usually presented first and passed over so as to pave the way for the appointed line that supersedes in the narrative sources: Cain precedes Seth (Gen 4:17-24; 5:3-32), Japheth and Ham precedes Shem (Gen 10:2-20; 10:21-31; 11:10-26), Nahor precedes Abraham (Gen 22:20-24; 25:1-4), and Ishmael precedes Isaac (Gen 25:12-18; 25:19-20). This pattern is altered with the Jacob-Esau rivalry, where the record of Esau’s Edomite offspring (Gen 36:1-43) follows Jacob’s twelve-son genealogy (Gen 35:22b-26). However, after dispensing with Esau’s family, the narrative interest is sustained on the twelve sons, particularly Joseph, in the remainder of the book (Genesis 36-50).

5:1-32) intermarry, coinciding with the last days of the wicked antediluvian age (Gen 6:5-7), leaving the aftermath recalled in the Noah תולדות (Gen 6:8-9:29). Although not as well represented, ‘seed’ occurs twice in the flood narrative, a slight echo of the antediluvian past (Gen 7:3, 9:9), but the vineyard debacle (Gen 9:20-27) resounds the earlier division in the Adamic family by the rejected Ham-Canaan clan that is envisioned as subservient to the Shemite-Japhethite tent (Gen 9:24-27). The Ham-Canaanite dishonor is anticipated at Gen 9:18 even before the sordid incident that leads to Ham’s rejection, implying that emerging from the ark Ham was already to be distinguished from his brothers. The table of nations spells this out in listing the descendants of the three brothers as people groups of which the Hamite tree includes later Israel’s notorious enemies (e.g., Egyptians, Canaanites, and Mesopotamians).

In the Abraham narrative, the theme of ‘seed’ is set against the backdrop of Sarah’s infertility (Gen 11:30). Every promise of a ‘seed’ describes either what the offspring will be like (e.g., Gen 13:16; 28:14) or what it will become (e.g., Gen 28:3).<sup>243</sup> In each case God’s use of language makes the promise of ‘seed’ a powerful vehicle for communicating the grand nature of his unconditional election of the patriarchs. The goal of the promise of a ‘seed’ goes beyond Abraham’s receiving a son, even beyond the nation of Israel, to the inclusion of the nations and kingdoms. Through Abraham and his descendants, the Lord plans to redeem to himself “a community of peoples”

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<sup>243</sup> In the promise of increase, Rendtorff, *Problem of the Process of Transmission*, 61-63, largely divided the description of the promise of offspring into two categories: in the one, a group of speaking simply of the increase of the ‘seed,’ in the other, a group of missing of the idea of ‘seed.’ See, Rendtorff, *Problem of Process of Transmission*, 61-64. He insists that there are two different lines of tradition, which differ in the use of the word ‘seed’ as well as in comparative images by means of which the numerous descendants are described. He views that the use of the two different verb, רבה (to increase, *hiphil*) in the first group and פרה (to be/make fruitful, *hiphil*) in the second group reflect the fact that we are dealing with traditions, which are independent of each other (*Problem of Process of Transmission*, 64).



(Gen 28:3; 48:4).

### 3.3.1.2. Land

In the promissory triad, this theme prominently figures in the patriarchal narratives, particularly the tension in the Jacob and Joseph narratives in which these patriarchs are estranged from Canaan (e.g., Gen 12:5-7; 15:8; 26:1-3; 28:13; 35:12; 48:3-4; 50:24). The ‘land’ component is alluded to in Genesis 1-11 as shown by the early attention to the “earth”/“land” in creation six days (Gen 1:1-2:3) and the garden חֶדְרָה (Gen 2:4-4:26). The theme is particularly dense in the central episode of the primeval history, which detail the increasing violence in the “earth” by violent mankind (Gen 6:5-13) and the subsequent purging by the flood waters (Genesis 7-8).<sup>244</sup> This violence is the habit of antediluvian man and results in the destruction of the earth (Gen 6:17) and its inhabitants (e.g., Gen 7:4, 21). Particularly, the flood episode demonstrates the inherent creaturehood of humanity and the interdependence of man and beast as well as humanity’s connection to the earth as both source and domain. Human sin brought on the fierce recompense of the Lord’s anger against all terrestrial life over, which humanity presided (Gen 1:28).

Beyond the divine outrage, however, the earth receives God’s persistent favor as shown by his re-creation of the new earth from the midst of the waters (Gen 8:7, 11-14) and by the reissuing of the creation command to replenish the earth (Gen 9:1, 7), assuring of a new beginning for the postdiluvian world. And in that new world is born

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<sup>244</sup> Cf. I. M. Kikawada, “The Shape of Genesis 11:1-9,” in *Rhetorical Criticism: Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg*, PTMS 1 (Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1974), 31.

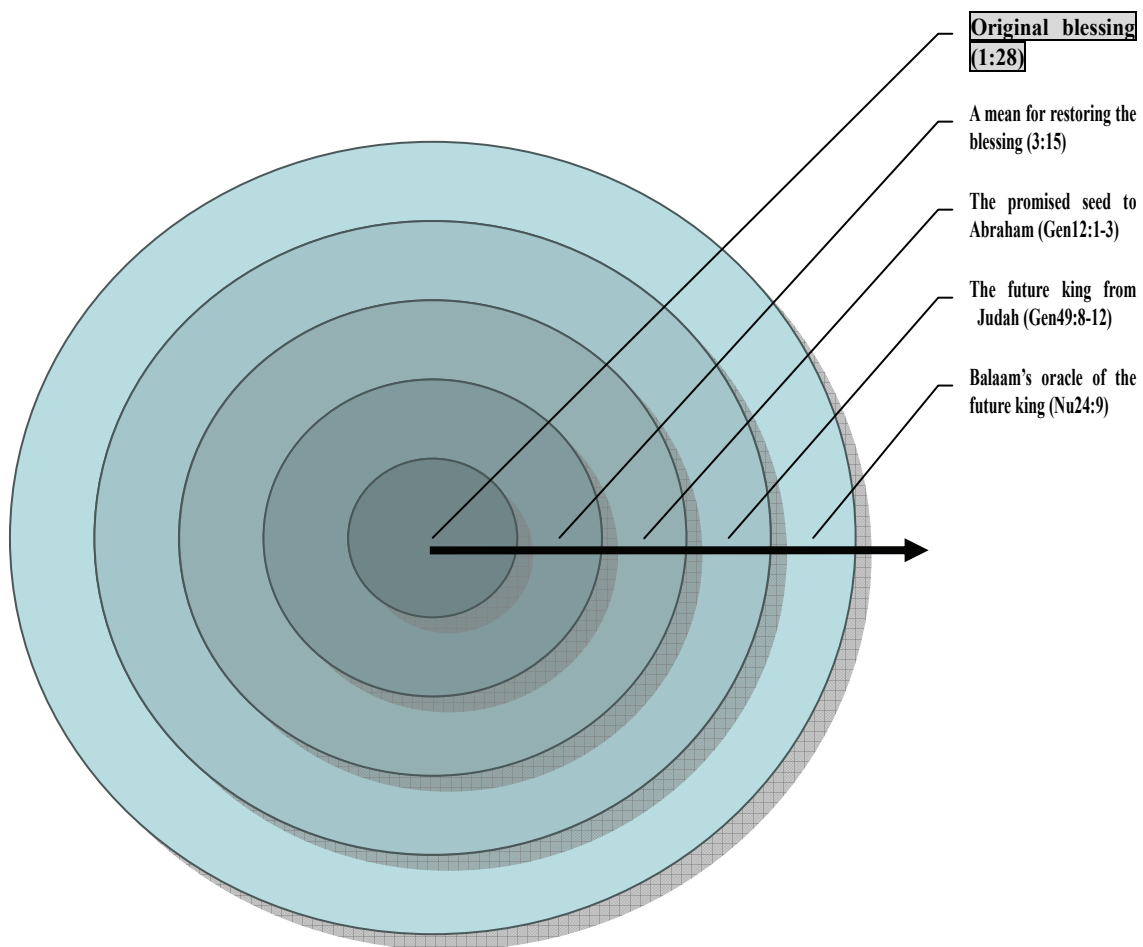
Abraham, who will bring renewal to all the peoples now scattered upon the earth (Gen 11:4, 8-9; cf. Gen 10:25, 32). The land language, “over the face of the whole earth” (Gen 11:4, 9), in the Babel account echoes creation’s charge to mankind (Gen 1:28-29), suggesting that the outcome of the dispersal at Babel in fact aided fearful man in fulfilling the divine charge to subdue the earth. In the aftermath of this dispersal arises the Terah clan whose member Abraham will bring blessing to those families of the earth (Gen 12:3).

### **3.3.1.3. Blessing**

Throughout Genesis (and the Pentateuch), the ‘blessing’ remains a central theme (Westermann 1978:75, quoted by Sailhamer 1992:96). The blessing itself is primarily one of posterity: “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the land” (Gen 1:28). Thus, the fulfillment of the blessing is tied to the two themes, the human “seed” and “life,” which laterly dominate the narratives of Genesis. In this sense, it is apparent the fact that the promises of descendants and land made to Abraham, the whole promise being categorized as ‘blessing’. The divine promise to Abraham should be read, thus, in conjunction with Genesis 1 as a reaffirmation of the divine intentions for humanity, (cf. Clines 1997:85). Since at the center of God’s purpose in creating humankind in Genesis 1 was to bless them (Gen 1:28).

Even after they fell away from God’s protective care in the Garden of Eden, God let it be known that his plan for their blessing would not be thwarted by this act of disobedience. God promised that he would provide a means for restoring the blessing: a future “seed” who would one day come and crush the head of the serpent (Gen 3:15).

Gen 3:15 shows plainly that God’s original intention for humanity was blessing and that his continual concern for them remains the same. When God chose Abraham as the channel of the promised ‘seed’ (Gen 12:1-3), his express purpose was to bless Abraham and all the nations of the earth through his ‘seed.’ Like his original intent for Adam in the beginning, God’s intent for Abraham was that he become a great people and enjoy God’s good land. When Abraham’s seed was on the verge of entering into Egyptian bondage, God furthered his promise by giving a prophecy to Jacob about one of his sons, Judah (Gen 49:8-12). The theme of the divine blessing may be diagrammed as follows:



In this respect, one may categorize God's activity in the world into saving and blessing, the divine blessing is given creation-wide scope from the beginning (Gen 1:22, 28), and continues Abrahamic world. Inasmuch as blessing belongs primarily to the sphere of creation, the non-elect peoples are not dependent upon the elect for many forms of blessing (cf. Westermann 1978). The genealogies of the non-elect, two of which bracket the story of Jacob, demonstrate this point (Ishmael and Abraham's other sons, Gen 25:1-18; Esau, Gen 36:1-42). This understanding of blessing in universal terms stands in some tension with the focus on blessing in Gen 12:1-3 and its mediation, by God and members of the ancestral family, throughout chapters Genesis 12-50. The phrase, "in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed," repeated throughout Genesis, seems to suggest that blessing must be mediated by the Abrahamic family.<sup>245</sup> Yet, it is to be emphasized that Gen 12:3 ("I will bless those who bless you." cf. Gen 27:29) immediately recognizes that blessing is not simply something that the elect are able to extend to others; the non-chosen can also mediate blessing to the elect. This point is illustrated several times in the larger narrative (Gen 12:16; 20:14; 26:12-14).<sup>246</sup> This reality raises a question: If God as Creator already blesses the world after Abraham but independent of the chosen family and if the non-elect can mediate blessing to the ancestral family, of what purpose is Abraham's election? Though the narrative is remarkably reticent about this question, it is helpful to see that blessing in Genesis encompasses two different though not unrelated realities:

1. The general, creational realities such as fertility, prosperity, and success in the

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<sup>245</sup> For instance, Gen 30:27, where Laban is blessed because of Jacob; Gen 39:5, where Pharaoh's house is blessed because of Joseph; so also Gen 47:7, 10.

<sup>246</sup> Melchizedek bears witness to the activity of God in Abraham's exploits and blesses him (Gen 14:18-20). Later, the foreign seer Balaam will be used by God to bless the people of Israel (Numbers 22-24).

sociopolitical sphere, which all of God's creatures can mediate and experience independent of their knowledge of God. The texts noted above illustrate this type of blessing, as do those cases where Joseph becomes a vehicle of blessing on Egyptian and other nonchosen communities. Even within the ancestral family, the blessing Isaac extends to Jacob in Gen 27:27-29 and may be so described.<sup>247</sup>

2. God's specific, constitutive promises to the elect family, initially through Abraham (son, land, many descendants, nationhood; Gen 12:1-3, 7; 13:14-18; 15:4-5, 18-21), and never mediated by the non-elect.<sup>248</sup> These promises are called "the blessing of Abraham" in 28:4, are repeated to Isaac (Gen 26:3-4, 24), and commended by Isaac to God on behalf of Jacob (Gen 28:3-4), who extends them to Jacob (Gen 28:13-15; 35:10-12).<sup>249</sup>

### 3.3.2. Textual Links

The subunits in the main section (Gen 12:1-22:1-19) of the Abraham narrative are connected thematically and structurally to the preceding and following episodes. In this section, one may examine thus such a textual relatedness between the main cycle and the remainder of Genesis.

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<sup>247</sup> Cf. T. E. Fretheim, "Which Blessing Does Isaac Give Jacob?" in *Jews, Christians, and the Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 279-91.

<sup>248</sup> Fretheim (*God and World*, 106-08) calls them "constitutive" because they are community-creating, without which Israel would not have come to be.

<sup>249</sup> One might also distinguish between communal promises (e.g., Gen 28:13-14) and personal promises (Gen 28:15). L. A. Turner, *Announcements of Plot in Genesis* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 116, is right to criticize the distinction between "religious" promises and "earthly" promises. The last two phrases of Gen 27:29 do refer to Gen 12:3, but this is the only time it is recalled in Genesis and hence not integral to the "blessing of Abraham." It may be a more personal reference (cf. Gen 28:15).

### 3.3.2.1. Divine Promissory Call and Abraham’s Obedience (Gen 12:1-9)

#### 3.3.2.1.1. Structure

The structure of the section (Gen 12:1-9)<sup>250</sup> can formally be divided into two parts and in turn subdivided into three subsections as Wenham has been outlined as follows:

- I. Divine word (vv. 1-3)
  - A. Command (v. 1)
  - B. Promise (v. 2)
  - C. Promise (v. 3)
- II. Abraham’s response
  - A. Journey (vv. 4-5)
  - B. Journey (vv. 6-7)
  - C. Journey (vv. 8-9)

The narrative section eloquently summarizes the divine word (i.e., the divine call) that prompted Abraham’s journey (Gen 12:1-3) and describes his response (Gen 12:4-9) as seen above. Each part begins with the keyword הֵלֵךְ (go, walk, vv. 1, 4): “Leave...” (v. 1) and “So Abram left...” (v.4), and this is also almost the final word of v. 9. Inclusions mark the beginning and end of paragraphs (e.g., אֲרָץ, v. 1, with אֲרָצָה, v. 3; אֲרָץ, vv. 4, 5). The fulfillment (v. 4) inverts the word order of the command (v. 1):

v. 1	The Lord		
		to	
		Abraham	
		“Go”	
v. 4		he went	
		Abraham	
		to him	
	The Lord		

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<sup>250</sup> Typically, critics have attributed this section to two sources, the Yahwist (J) in vv. 1-4a, 6-9 and the Priestly writer (P) in vv. 4b-5. The criteria of distinction of sources is based on the assumption that the age of patriarch (v. 4) and the travel itinerary (i.e. to Canaan) for P and the divine name “Yahweh” (vv. 1, 4, 7, 8) for J. For recent discussion of the sources in this section, see Carr, *Reading the Fractures of Genesis*, 104-05; Van Seters, *Prologue to History*, 202-03; Wenham, *Genesis*, 270-71.

The structural analysis of the two verses shows the fact that this section has been carefully composed and the each verse is integral to it (Wenham 1987:269).

The divine call of Abraham (Gen 12:1-3) has been the subject because these verses are so central to the understanding of the whole of Genesis in general and Genesis 12-25 as a whole in particular. This section is the pivotal episode, which turns the narrative interest from the universal setting of the human family, viewed as essentially one people before the tower event, to the singular family of Terah's son, Abraham. As it were, the divine speech in Gen 12:1-3 develops themes, which play an important role in the primeval history, commenting on the expression of "all families of the earth can gain a blessing in you" (12:3b).<sup>251</sup> A further connection between Gen 12:1-3 and the primeval history has been observed in the divine promise to make Abraham's name great in contrast to the attempt of men to make a name for themselves by building a tower in Gen 11:4ff (Jenkin 1978:46). In addition, Gen 12:1-3 is the conclusion to the primeval history (von Rad 1972:154). Finally, a link with the primeval history comes in Gen 12:6-7 in connection with the incident of the blessing (Shem and Japheth) and curse (Canaan) for the sons by Noah (Gen 9:20-27). Possibly some knowledge of this incident lies behind the promise that Abraham's descendants will inherit the land of the Canaanites (Gen 12:7). It is hardly a coincidence that Abraham, a descendant of Shem, should be granted land belonging to the descendants of Canaan. In this sense, it roles to bind the primeval history and the patriarchal narrative by presenting the call and blessing of Abraham as the answer to the calamities that have befallen mankind in

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<sup>251</sup> See, H. W. Wolff, "The Kerygma of the Yawhist," *Int* 20 (1966): 145. Cf. J. Muilenburg, "Abraham and the Nations," *Int* 19 (1965): 387-98.

Genesis 1-11<sup>252</sup> and look beyond it to the subsequent history of the nation. Thus, it is commonly observed that Genesis 11 (esp. the Babel story in Gen 11.1-9) provides a backdrop for reading the promises of Gen 12.1-3 (Turner 1990:52-53).

The patriarchal promises first found in Gen 12:1-3 are consciously pursued by the author/the final composer as they occur repeatedly in the Abrahamic narrative chain (e.g., Gen 12:7; 13:15-17; 15:1b, 4-5, 7, 9-21; 17:2, 4-8, 16, 19-21; 18:18; 22:16-18), again for Isaac (Gen 26:2-4) and Jacob (Gen 28:13-14; 32:29; 35:9-12), and in the Joseph narrative as well (Gen 46:1-4). Marvelous fulfillment of some of these promises is seen throughout Abraham's life and is particularly focused by the narrator towards the end of the narrative cycle (Gen 21; 23:1-1-25:11).<sup>253</sup> The narrative section possesses the three thematic elements, which as intertwined into one entity make up Genesis's thematic-theological core and also provides the unifying center for the book's parts: the divine promises of blessing, seed, and land for Abraham and his successors (cf. Clines 1997; Mann 1991:341-353), which are developed throughout the Abraham narrative and beyond. During the life of Abraham, these original promises are expanded (e.g., Gen 12:7; 13:15-16), specified (e.g., Gen 15:4; 17:16, 19), intensified (e.g., Gen 17:7; 18:18), and confirmed unconditionally with a covenanting ceremony as well as eternally with the covenant sign (e.g., Gen 15:17).

The passage (Gen 12:1-3) of the promises to Abraham consists of a command followed

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<sup>252</sup> Verbal and theological connections with the primeval history are numerous. Land (אֶרֶץ and אֶרֶץ), descendants, nation, name, greatness, curse and blessing, Canaan and the Canaanites have all already been broached in Gen chs. 1-11 and are here reintroduced with pregnant brevity.

<sup>253</sup> The whole literary unit of the Abraham cycle can be viewed as the outworking of the promises in Gen 12:1-3. A long list of scholarly works supporting this view is noted by Turner, *Announcements of Plot*, 51.



by seven clauses that entail the promises of the divine oath (vv. 2-3)<sup>254</sup> as follows:

Cluster	Texts	The divine promises and oath
	v. 1	לֵךְ (Leave), first imperative
The first cluster	v. 2a	גוי (A great nation) <sup>255</sup>
	v. 2b	Blessing Abraham
	v. 2c	Great name
	v. 2d	וְהָיָה (So that you will be a blessing) <sup>256</sup> , second imperative
The second cluster	v. 3a	I will bless those who bless you
	v. 3b	And whoever curses you I will curse
	v. 3c	And all peoples on earth will be blessed through you

There are two imperatives around which the promises cluster into two groups. The first command (לֵךְ, “Leave,” v. 1a) is followed by the first group of three promises (v. 2). These three employ a first-person verbal form (cohortative) conveying the Lord’s resolve to bless the patriarch and his family: 1) “I will make you into a great nation”; 2) “and I will bless you”; and 3) “I will make your name great” (v. 2abc). The second group of three promises pertain to Abraham’s mediation of the blessing for the world of nations (v. 3). The second imperative (וְהָיָה), which is itself a promise, transitions the passage from Abraham as the recipient of blessing (v. 2) to his mediation of blessing: “and you will be a blessing” (v. 2d). The use of the imperative instead of an imperfective verbal form heightens the certainty of the promise.

<sup>254</sup> The structure framework is similar with that of the promise to Isaac and Jacob (Gen 26:3-4; 27:28-29). Moreover, the fivefold use of the root בָּרַךְ (bless) in vv. 2-3 parallels with the five curses on man and his world pronounced in the preceding chapters (Gen 3:14, 17; 4:11; 5:29; 9:25).

<sup>255</sup> Although this promise plays a major role in the Abraham narrative, it rarely repeated using this form. Gen 18:18 provides the nearest equivalent (cf. Gen 17:4-6; 21:13, 18). Interestingly, the promise of a great nation contrasts sharply with the barrenness of Sarah in the preceding verse (Gen 11:30).

<sup>256</sup> Zech 8:13 has the similar construction וְהָיִיתֶם בְּרָכָה (“and you will be a blessing”), which involves an invocation. The idea in Gen 12:2d may be a blessing formula in which Abraham’s name appears (Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 276). For discussion of the syntactical options, see W. Yarchin, “Imperative and Promise in Genesis 12:13,” *StudBT* 10 (1980): 167-88.

The three promises in this second cluster consist of two more first-person verbal forms (cohortatives) in arrangement and a third-person verb (perfect with *waw*)<sup>257</sup>: 1) “I will bless those who bless you”; 2) “and whoever curses you I will curse”; and 3) “all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”<sup>258</sup> The third-person perfective verb (v. 3c) presents the final promise and is the ultimate goal of the previously stated intentions toward Abraham. From the observations Gen 12:1-3 establishes that by the Abrahamic lineage the nations (all humanity) will enter into the blessing envisioned for all peoples created in the “image of God” (Gen 1:26-27; 5:1b-2).<sup>259</sup>

As stated above, Gen 12:4-9, which relates Abraham’s response to the divine call is structurally divided into three parts, which express the journey of Abraham. After the

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<sup>257</sup> In the second cluster, the fifth and sixth promises are a chiasmic arrangement, which expresses explicitly as the actions of the Lord (“I will”): אָרַר/בֵּרַךְ (v. 3ab), which are integral motifs in Genesis. The chiasmus structure, however, shows imbalance at three points that many commentators have considered significant. First, unlike the clause concerning divine “curse” (v. 3b), the promise of blessing (v. 3a) is marked syntactically (cohortative with *waw*) as the purpose of the call, continuing the nuance of the previous clauses in v. 2 (וַיִּבְרַךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֱלֹהִים וַיִּבְרַךְ אֶת אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֱלֹהִים – v. 3ab; the verb אָרַר does not have the conjunctive *waw*). In this regard, P. D. Miller, Jr., “Syntax and Theology in Genesis XII 3a,” *VT* 34 (1984): 472-76, concluded that God’s command (v. 1) is not intended to bring about curse, only to bless; curse is subservient to the intent of blessing, included as a promise of protection for Abraham.

<sup>258</sup> The seventh promise reveals the inclusive character of the promissory blessing, “all peoples on earth.” The precise nuance of the verb (נִבְרַךְ, *niphal*) is disputed; the verb permits the passive (“will be blessed” – cf. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapter 1-17*, 374-75; In this translation, Abraham is the vehicle of the divine gift for the nation, which means that a specific plan is envisioned for the blessing upon the nations.) or reflexive voice (“will bless themselves” – cf. J. A. Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary On Genesis*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. ICC [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1930, 244-45; In this case, Abraham is a motivating example of faith, not the exclusive conduit; the promise therefore describes future nations who call for blessing in the name of Abraham as in Gen 48:20. A third possibility taken in the middle voice has received support recently: the verb נִבְרַךְ is rendered “shall find blessing in you.” This case focuses attention on the discovery of blessing, not the means (agent). In this view, Wenham (*Genesis 1-15*, 277-78) sees a progression of thought in the passage: Abraham is blessed (passive), people use Abraham’s name for a blessing (reflexive), and all families find blessing in Abraham (middle). The passive translation probably suits the context of the passage best, since God is the source and Abraham is the channel. It also is consistent with the idea of a divine plan, which the tenor of the entire book conveys by the motif of an exclusive family (cf. Ps 72:17b). Significant is how the construction of this last verbal clause (“will be blessed, v. 3c) differs from the previous promises, which are first-person verbs (cohortative); this final promise is introduced by the perfective form (נִבְרַךְ, “so that ... will be blessed,” *niphal*, perfect, 3<sup>rd</sup> person, plural).

<sup>259</sup> The repetition of ‘blessing’ human beings (Genesis 1-11 [esp. Gen 1:22, 28, 2:3; 5:2; 9:1] and Gen 12:1-3, five times each) and ‘cursing’ is an allusion to the creation account. These links imply that Abraham is of the seed of the woman (Waltke, *Genesis*, 203).

calling of Abraham, the account describes his act of obedience by detailing Abraham's departure (וַיֵּלֶךְ, v. 4), the members of the traveling party (v. 5)<sup>260</sup> and his itinerary in Canaan, where he erected altars of worship (vv. 6-9). Gen 12:4-5 recounts the first step of obedient faith, which is similar with that of Noah (Gen 6:22; 7:5, 9, 16; cf. Gen 17:23; 24:51; Exod 39:43; 40:16 for Moses' compliance). Also significant, it reflects how the patriarch must overcome the chief obstacles: his advanced age (seventy-five years), which establishes the timeline that measures his twenty-five-years wait for the gift of an heir (v. 4a) and Canaan's inhabitants (Canaanites). Thus, tension is created in vv. 6-7 by the close proximity of statements (v. 7). The possession of the promised land in Canaan by the other nations excludes the possibility of Abraham's descendants occupying it. The resolution of the tension with the Sarah's infertility provides the main plot for the Abraham narrative and beyond (Alexander 1982:34-37; Clines 1997:31-65).

Gen 12:6-7 expresses the theophany of God (at Shechem, Abraham's first residence in Canaan in v. 7b) and the response of Abraham (building an altar in 7b<sup>261</sup> [cf. Gen 28:10-19; 35:1; 48:3 for Jacob and Exod 3:2, 12, 16 for Moses]). In this passage, God reassures Abraham the promises by reiterating the two signal promises: offspring and land (v. 7a), and Abraham renders his act of obedience by building an altar (v. 7b).

The account of Abraham's entry into the land of Canaan is selective. The brief itinerary

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<sup>260</sup> As Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 278, points out, this verse closely parallels Gen 11:31 and also note the contrasts. Abraham's acquisition of wealth in Haran foreshadows his profitable visits to other foreign parts (cf. Gen 12:16; 20:14).

<sup>261</sup> In this sense, Y. Gitay, "Geography and Theology in the Biblical Narrative: The Question of Genesis 2-12," in *Prophets and Paradigms: Essays in Honor of Gene M Tucker* JSOTSup 22 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 209, states, "Canaan is not merely another new settlement," "but rather a sacred space."

of Abraham (Gen 12:6-9) presents his travelogue, which involved the three locations only: Schechem (oak of Moreh, 12:6-7), Bethel/Ai, the east of Bethel (v. 8) and the Negev (v. 9; cf. Genesis 23). In his itinerary, Abraham is portrayed as traversing the land of promise from end to end. The way of Abraham into Canaan has typologically the significance. As Cassuto (1964:303-306, 334-337) has pointed out, it can hardly be accidental that these are the same three locations visited by Jacob when he returns to Canaan from Haran (Genesis 34-35)<sup>262</sup> as well as the same sites occupied in the account of the conquest of the land under Joshua.<sup>263</sup>

<b>ABRAHAM</b>	Shechem (Gen 12:6) → Bethel and Ai (12:8) → Negev (12:9)
<b>JACOB</b>	Shechem (Gen 33:18-20) → Bethel (35:14-15) → Negev (35:27)
<b>JOSHUA</b>	East of Bethel and west of Ai (Jos 7:2; 8:9, 12) → Mount Ebal (next to Shechem [Jos 8:30]) → south of Bethel and Ai (Jos 10) and North of Shechem (Jos 11).

The route of Abraham into Canaan by way of the three sites is remarkably repeated by Jacob upon his return from Haran (Gen 33:18-20; 35:14-15, 27). The two patriarchs build altars of worship at Shechem and Bethel. The pattern of traversing these three regions is repeated in the conquest narratives of Joshua: Ai/Bethel (Josh 7:2; 8:9),

<sup>262</sup> Jacob's return from the east and his journeys in the land are like those of Abraham. First, he goes to Shechem and purchases a section of a field where he puts his tent and erects an altar to the God of Israel (Gen 33:18-20). Before he leaves this site, he commands his household to put away the foreign gods which are in their midst (Gen 35:2) and hides all the idols he has received from Shechem beneath the oak tree which is there (Gen 35:4). Then he journeys to Bethel and sets up there a pillar to the glory of his God (Gen 35:14-15). Finally, he travels on to the south, which is the Negev, and comes to Hebron (Gen 35:27).

<sup>263</sup> There it is noted that the first city which they themselves conquered was Ai (Josh 7:2; 8:9; cf. also v. 12), and it uses the same expression as Gen 12:8. Immediately after this the book of Joshua recounts that Joshua built an altar at Mount Ebal, that is, next to Shechem (Josh 8:30). From there, the Israelites spread out into two further regions: south of Bethel and Ai (Joshua 10) and north of Shechem (Joshua 11). This is precisely the same three regions, which we see with Abraham and Jacob. In Shechem Joshua commanded the Israelites to put away the foreign gods which were in their midst (Josh 24:23), using almost the same words as those of Jacob in his day. There Joshua erected a large stone under the oak which was in the sanctuary of the Lord (Josh 24:26) – under the oak as in Gen 35:4.

Shechem, where an altar is built (Josh 8:30), and south of Ai/Bethel toward the Negev (Joshua 10) and then north of Shechem (Joshua 11).

These parallels show clearly the method of demonstrating that the deeds of the patriarchs in former times prefigure those of their descendants in the present.<sup>264</sup> Its intention is to show that what happened to Abraham also happened to Jacob and then also to their descendants. This is to show that the conquest of the land had already been accomplished in a symbolic way in the times of the fathers, demonstrated by means of their building their altars and purchasing property. Thus, it shows that in the deeds of the fathers there is a source of trust that the Lord has cared for them from the very start and that will still remain trustworthy in the days of the descendants of the fathers later on.

#### **3.3.2.1.2. Call and Test (Gen 12:1-9// Gen 22:1-19)**

According to traditional source criticism, Gen 12:1-9, which uses “Yahweh” for deity is mostly from J and Gen 22:1-19, which uses “*Elohim*” is from E. Thus, these two accounts about Abraham were written one hundred years apart from each other, and in different parts Canaan: Gen 12:1-9 in the south, Gen 22:1-19 in the north. Most recently, some critics have observed the textual resemblances between Gen 12:1-9 and

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<sup>264</sup> As we observed early, Pentateuch in structure (cf. בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים “days to come” [Gen 49:1; cf. Num 24:14; Deut 31:29] and תּוֹלְדוֹת) and theme (not-yet realized blessings) looks beyond itself to the eschatological realization of the promissory blessings. In it, Genesis also must be viewed as a component of this eschatological perspective. This suggests that Genesis is read as an interpretation of the past with an eye on Israel’s future. It should not be surprising then to discover in the Genesis narratives precursory images that have their parallel in the experience of Israel. Genesis was cast so that the Mosaic community could draw the inferential analogies between the distant past and their present experiences. On the three major literary ‘seams’ (i.e., the three literary junctures) in the structure of the Pentateuch, see Sailhamer, “Genesis,” 6-8; *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 35-44.

22:1-19,<sup>265</sup> the event for which Abraham earns God’s promise and blessings. They have also come to recognize that these two episodes form a crucial *inclusio* and echo, which marks its beginning and end the Abraham narrative respectively. Sarna (1970:160-161) presents circumspectly several examples to demonstrate this thesis (so-called “spiritual odyssey”). Firstly, initially God commands Abraham “Go forth...to the land (לְךָ-לְאֶל־הָאָרֶץ) that I will show you” (Gen 12:1) and employs similar language at the end of Abraham’s journey “Go forth to the land (לְךָ-לְאֶל־הָאָרֶץ)<sup>266</sup> of Moriah...on one of the heights, which I will tell you” (Gen 22:2). In both cases, the exact destinations are not given. Secondly, the weighty demand on Abraham is evident in the threefold epithets of the command. In both situations, the tension of the story is built up by the accumulation of descriptive epithets: “...וּמְוֹלַדְתֶּךָ וּמְבֵית אָבִיךָ...”, “You land, your homeland, your father’s house” in Gen 12:1 and “...אֶת־יִצְחָק... אֶת־בְּנֶךָ אֶת־יְחִידְךָ אֲשֶׁר־אָהַבְתָּ” in Gen 22:2.<sup>267</sup> Thirdly, Abraham as a son leaves forever his father Terah in Haran (Gen 12:1-3) and at Moriah, father and son are prepared to see each other for the last time (Gen 22:9f.). From this aspect, von Rad (1972:239) states that while Abraham was cut off from his whole past in 12:1f., in 22:1f. Abraham must give up his whole future (cf.

<sup>265</sup> See, Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, II.310-11; Davidson, *Genesis 1-11, 12-50*, 94; Jacob, *The First Book of the Bible*, 143; Rendsburg, *Redaction of Genesis*, 30-35; Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, 160-61; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 274-75.

<sup>266</sup> The Hebrew phrase לְךָ-לְאֶל־הָאָרֶץ occurs in the Old Testament only in Gen 12:1 and Gen 22:2, strongly suggesting that the author/the final composer intends his reader to see the frame.

<sup>267</sup> To draw attention of the reader to Abraham, the author/the final composer intentionally used three times second person masculine singular pronoun suffix (ךָ/תָּ) in each case (cf. Rendsburg, *Redaction of Genesis*, 31). In conjunction with these passages, Y Avishur compares the gradation of this three-phrase of Isaac (אֶת־יִצְחָק אֶת־בְּנֶךָ אֶת־יְחִידְךָ אֲשֶׁר־אָהַבְתָּ) in Gen 22:2, from the general to the specific, with the first command to leave Haran, also three expression (מְוֹלַדְתֶּךָ וּמְבֵית אָבִיךָ) in Gen 12:1. See, Y. Avishur, “The Sacrifice of Isaac (Genesis 22): The Structure of the Narrative. Its Link to Genesis 12 and Its Canaanite Background,” in *Studies in Biblical Narrative* (Tel-Aviv-Jaffa: Archaeological Center Publication, 1999), 75-103 (esp. 92-93).

Jacob 1974:143; Rendsburg 1986:31).<sup>268</sup> Fourthly, in both passages, it is reported that at the very end of his journey Abraham builds an altar, one on the east of Bethel (Gen 12:8) and the other one on the heights of Moriah (Gen 22:9). Finally, the two episodes share in common strikingly similar divine blessings, so that the blessings given at the outset are finally confirmed by God at the end of Abraham's journey when he has demonstrated his absolute obedience to God: "Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son I will indeed bless you...and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice" (Gen 22:16-18; cf. Gen 12:2-3; 18:19)<sup>269</sup>. Sarna's final statement summarizes these aspects and presents the meaning of these two episodes in the Abraham narrative as follows:

The Torah, then, has used the ancient Akedah tale to encase the account of the spiritual odyssey of Abraham within a literary framework, opening and closing with divine communications that involve agonizing decisions carried to completion with unflinching loyalty, and culminating in promises of a glorious posterity (1970:161).

These two sections have the same command "Go (לך-לך) from God, which appears exclusively in both passages. More importantly, the promises in Gen 12:1-3 are repeated verbatim and confirmed in Gen 22:15-19. In this way, both episodes form an *inclusio* for the Abraham narrative.

In addition to the observations, Rendsburg (1986:32-33) presents sixteen parallels or

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<sup>268</sup> In this sense, they have regarded this divine imperative as a test of faith, namely, Abraham is to give up all he holds dearest for an unknown land promised by God.

<sup>269</sup> To put it concretely, the promise reiterated in Gen 12:2-3 is similar to that of Gen 22:15-19. The promise of 'blessing' (Gen 12:2) and 'curse' (Gen 12:3) are strikingly similar to that of Gen 22:17 (cf. Gen 13:16; 15:5; 17:2). The view of the 'nations enjoyment of and participation in Abraham's blessing (Gen 22:18) is similar to Gen 12:3 (cf. Gen 18:18). The reference to the gift of the 'land' is found throughout the earlier narratives (Gen 12:7. cf. Gen 13:15; 15:18; 17:8). Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 296-97, notes that these two blessings each contain seven expressions of benison (cf. Rendsburg, *Redaction of Genesis*, 32).

correspondences between two pericopes. The textual ties between two may be summed up as follows:

Texts	Key-words/expressions	Texts
12:4	וַיֵּלְכוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם יַחְדָּו / וַיֵּלֶךְ אִתּוֹ לוֹט (traveling together Abraham and Lot / Abraham and Isaac)	22:6, 8
12:5	וַיִּקַּח (Abraham took)	22:3
12:5	אֶת־שְׁנֵי נַעֲרָיו / וְאֶת־הַנַּפְשׁ אֲשֶׁר־עָשׂוּ בְּחָרָן (The people he acquired in Haran / the two servants)	22:3
12:6	מִמָּקוֹם / הַמָּקוֹם <sup>270</sup> (Place / the place)	22:3-4
12:6	וַיִּשְׂכֶּם / שֶׁכֶם (Shechem – prominent term in Gen 12:1-9 / he arose – echoing Shechem)	22:3
12:7	(יְהוָה יִרְאֶה) יְהוָה יִרְאֶה / וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה אֶל־אַבְרָם (the appearance of God)	22:14

Besides the similarities in key-words and expressions, it is possible to observe some textual relevance more in a way of similar phrases. Gen 12:1-9 ends with the report of Abraham’s traveling to the Negev, likewise Gen 22:1-19 ends with the account of Abraham’s dwelling in Beersheba. In Gen 12:1-9 the words of God to Abraham occur in two separate parts, in Gen 12:1-3 and 12:7 with action described in the intervening verses. Similarly, in Gen 22:1-19, the words of God to Abraham also occur separately, in Gen 22:12 and 22:16-18 with action again described in the intervening verses. The expression וַיִּאמֶר occurs before each speech, that is, twice in Gen 12:1, 7 and 22:2, 16. In each case, one speech is the conveyance of the blessing (Gen 12:1-3 and 22:16-18),

<sup>270</sup> The word is used with the connotation ‘hallowed site’ in both instances, namely “place which the Lord will choose” (cf. Deut 16:7). Some critics view Gen 12:6 as ‘hallowed site.’ See, Driver, *Genesis*, 146; Jacob, *Das erste Buch der Tora*, 341; Speiser, *Genesis*, 86.



and the other us a specific reference to the patriarch’s offspring in Gen 12:7 (זרעך), “your seed”) and in Gen 22:12 (את־בְּנֶךָ אֶת־יְחִידֶךָ, “your son, your favorite”).<sup>271</sup>

These textual linkages suggest that the two episodes are closely tied in theme, key-words, and expressions, which are used by the author/the final composer, so as to alerting the reader to the literary texture of the Abraham narrative.

### 3.3.2.1.3. Compliance (Gen 12:1-7) and Disembarkation (Gen 8:15-20)

There is a striking thematic parallel between the picture of God’s calling Noah out of the ark (Gen 8:15-20) and the call of Abraham (Gen 12:1-7).

Genesis 8:15-20	Genesis 12:1-7
8:15 וַיְדַבֵּר אֱלֹהִים אֶל־נֹחַ And God said to Noah	12:1a וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־אַבְרָם And God said to Abram
8:16 צֵא מִן־הַתֵּבָה Go out from the ark	12:1b לֵךְ־לְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ Go out from your land
8:18 וַיֵּצֵא־נֹחַ And Noah went out	12:4 וַיֵּלֶךְ אַבְרָם And Abram went out
8:20 וַיִּבֶן נֹחַ מִזְבֵּחַ לַיהוָה And Noah built an altar for the Lord	12:7 וַיִּבֶן אֲבְרָם מִזְבֵּחַ לַיהוָה and he (Abram) built an altar for the Lord
9:1 וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת־נֹחַ And God blessed Noah	12:2 וְאֶבְרָכְךָ And I [God] will bless you
9:1 פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ Be fruitful and multiply	12:2 וְאֶעֱשֶׂךָ לְגוֹי גָדוֹל I will make you a great nation
9:9 וְאָנִי הֲנִי מְקִים אֶת־בְּרִיתִי אִתְּכֶם וְאֶת־זַרְעְכֶם I will establish my covenant with you and your seed	12:7 לְזַרְעֲךָ אֶתֵּן אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת I will give your seed this land

Both Noah and Abraham represent new beginning in the course of events recorded in

<sup>271</sup> Rendsburg, *Redaction of Genesis*, 33.

Genesis. Both are marked by God's promise of blessing and his gift of the covenant. By placing the call of Abraham after the dispersion of the nation at Babylon (Gen 11:1-9), the author intends to picture Abraham's call as God's gift of salvation in the midst of judgment. As a way of sustaining this theme even further, the author has patterned the account of Abraham's call and blessing after an earlier account of a similar gift of salvation in the midst of judgment, the conclusion of the Flood narrative (Gen 8:15-19). The similarities between the two narratives are striking and show that the Abraham, like Noah, marks a new beginning as well as a return to God's original plan of blessing "all humankind" (Gen 1:28). The theme of Abraham and his descendants marking a new beginning in God's plan of blessing is developed in a number of other ways as well in Genesis. Most notable is the frequent reiteration of God's "blessing" in Gen 1:28 (and 9:1) throughout the narratives of Abraham and his descendants (e.g., Gen 12:1-3; 13:15-16; 15:5, 18; 17:2, 6-8; 22:17-18; 25:11; 26:2-4; 27:27-29; 49:28). The choice of the word פְּרֹי, *be fruitful* in Gen 17:6 and רָבַי, *multiply* in Gen 17:2 seems intended to recall the blessing of all humankind in Gen 1:28: "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the land." And its reiteration in Gen 9:1: "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the land." Thus, the covenant with Abraham was the means through which God's original blessing would again be channeled to all humankind. The "promise to the fathers" is none other than a reiteration of God's original blessing of humankind (Gen 1:28). To make this clear the author has given a representative list of "all humankind" in Genesis 10 according to their "families" (Genesis 10:32) and has shown how their dispersion was the result of Babylon's rebellion (Gen 11:1-9). These same "families of the earth" are to be blessed in Abraham and his seed (Gen 12:3). Abraham is represented in Gen 12:1-9 as a new

Adam and the “seed of Abraham” as a second Adam, a new humanity. Those that “bless” him, God will bless; those that “curse” him, God will curse. The way of life and blessing, which was once marked by the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Gen 2:17), and then by the ark (Gen 7:23), is now marked by identification with Abraham and his seed. The identity of the “seed” of Abraham will be one of the chief themes of the following narratives. At the close of the book, a curtain on the future is drawn back and a glimpse of the future seed of Abraham is briefly allowed (Gen 49:8-12). This one “seed” who is to come, to whom the right of kingship belongs, will be the “lion of the tribe of Judah” and “to him will be the obedience of the nations” (Gen 49:10). The importance which the author attaches to the connection of the fulfillment of the “blessing” and coming of this one from the tribe of Judah can be seen in the narrative framework given to the prophetic poem of Jacob in Genesis 49. At the conclusion of Jacob’s words (Gen 49:28), the author has repeated three times (וַיְבָרֶךְ, v. 28b, כְּבָרְכֶתּוּ, בְּרַךְ, v. 28c) that his words are to be understood as a renewal of the theme of the blessing (Gen 49:28):

### 3.3.2.2. Jeopardy and Separation (Gen 12:10-13:18)

#### 3.3.2.2.1. Structure<sup>272</sup>

It is not easy to decide whether this passage ends at Gen 13:1 or at Gen 12:20. The

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<sup>272</sup> Genesis 13 is essential to understanding the whole of the Abraham-Lot narratives, which has many textual relationships with the remainder sections of the Abraham narrative (e.g., v. 2 with Gen 12:16; v. 7 with Gen 12:6; 15:19-21; v. 10 with Gen 19:29). Although some critics (cf. Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 172, 178) have typically proposed that vv. 14-18 is a late addition because of no vital contribution to the narrative, some parallels in lexical item (e.g., ‘separation,’ vv. 9, 11, 14) oppose this assertion (cf. Wenham’s five parallel terms – ‘separate,’ ‘look around,’ ‘see,’ ‘all the plain [land],’ and ‘camped’ – between vv. 9-12 and vv. 14-15, 18). See, Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 294-95.

main arguments in favor of Gen 13:1 are descent of Abraham (Gen 12:10) matches ascent of Abraham (Gen 13:1) and that the verbal parallels (Gen 12:20//13:1) “him, his wife, and all who belonged to him” tie these two verses tightly together.<sup>273</sup> Gen 13:1 reiterates the outcome of the prior events by “his wife and everything he had” in Gen 12:20 (Mathews 2005:126). However, Wenham (1987:285-287) asserts “it seems slightly more natural to view the expulsion from Egypt as marking the conclusion of one scene, and the journeying to the Negev as signaling the start of a new episode. In confirmation of this reading is the fact that the final verb in Gen 12:20, ‘sent away,’ has no explicit subject, whereas Gen 13:1 reintroduces Abram.” In this sense, probably it is best to take Gen 12:10-20 as a discrete unit. Thus, this section can be divided two subsections: 12:10-20 and 13:1-18.

The pericope (Gen 12:10-20) contains thematic components, which anticipate that of Gen 20:1-18. Commentators from all sides of the theological spectrum have focused on historical and thematic dimensions of the well-known episode of Abraham’s sojourn to Egypt (Gen 12:10-20) to neglect of literary analysis.<sup>274</sup> Conservative interpreters have examined the passage with similar concerns.<sup>275</sup> Although these reflections are legitimate and important, they ignore the integrality of form and content

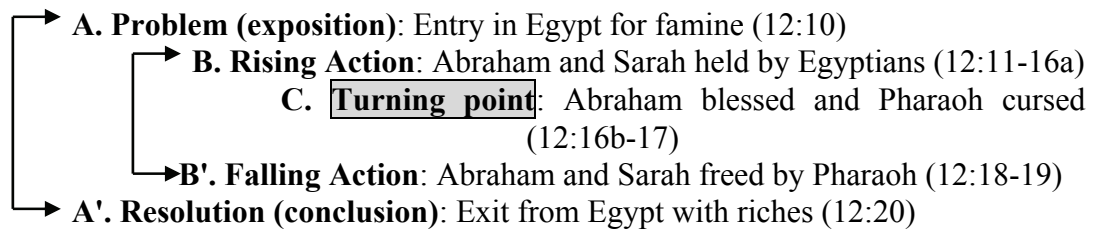
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<sup>273</sup> D. L. Petersen, “A Thrice-told Tale: Genre, Theme and Motif,” *BR* 18 (1973): 34, maintains “Gen 13:2 is yet another initial disjunctive clause; Gen 13:1 includes the phrases the phrase *וְהָיָה וְאִשְׁתּוֹ*, which is central to the tale; and the travel agenda is necessary to deposit Abraham back in the Negev.” For more thesis, see, the discussion of the extent of the wife-sister pericopes in the section of Abraham and Sarah in Foreign Harem (Gen 12:1-20 and 20:1-18) in p. 148 and also Alexander, *Literary Analysis*, 136-37; id., *Abraham in the Negev: A Source Critical Investigation of Genesis 20:1-22:19* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1997b), 32-34; K. A. Mathews, *An Exegetical Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Genesis 11:27-50:26*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Publishers, 2005), 126-30; Waltke, *Genesis*, 212.

<sup>274</sup> For instance, Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 248-50 and von Rad, *Genesis*, 168-69, who think that the text served primarily as a window to history and a mirror of their ethical interests

<sup>275</sup> C. F. Keil & F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament I: The Pentateuch*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 197 and D. Kidner, *Genesis*, TOTC (Chicago: InterVarsity, 1967), 117, who focused on historical and thematic dimensions of the pericope.

so vital to literary analysis of the passage. Thus, it is necessary to make an intrinsic inquiry, looking at the text itself, namely, the dramatic narrative flow. In it, formerly, the arrangement of Gen 12:10-20 is symmetrically organized as follows:



Gen 12:10 may be called the dramatic problem; it introduces the context out of which the narrative flows. Abraham goes to Egypt because of a famine and intends to stay there temporarily. The resolution (v. 20) balances with the beginning of the story. The author/the final composer contrasts the poverty of famine with the riches of Abraham as he completes his sojourn. Gen 12:11-16a contains the rising action. The plan to lie is carried through but leads Sarah into Pharaoh's harem. This section is balanced by the falling action of Gen 12:18-19. Both portions are predominantly dramatic dialogue and contain similar expressions – “you are my sister” (v. 13) and “she is my sister” (v. 19). Finally, the middle portion of Gen 12:16b-17, the turning point of the account, forms a skillful interlocking of perspectives. Abraham prospers but Pharaoh is cursed.<sup>276</sup>

These verses both foreshadow future action in the text and reflect on the previous events of the story. Gen 12:16b anticipates what will happen to Abraham; he will leave

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<sup>276</sup> The early portions of the narrative divide into four sections, each introduced by the marker וַיְהִי (“and it came about”). Verse 10 opens the story in this manner. The word occurs again in v. 11, and again in v. 14. The last appearances (וַיְהִי־לֵי) is found in v. 16b. Verses 16b-17 is best understood as a contrast between the prosperity of Abraham and the plagues on Pharaoh. The next sequence begins with v. 18. Without a doubt, v. 20 is to be closely associated with vv. 18-19, but the resumption of consecution after lengthy simultaneity (וַיְצַן) gives it some degree of independence.

with many riches from the Egyptians. Gen 12:17 deals with the problems that arose for Pharaoh “because of Sarah.” In this way, the turning point of the drama looks forward and backward, adding to the symmetry. Through such a structural analysis, one may not merely see how each part contributes to the section, but treat the passage a whole as the conceptual units rather than dissecting it into its small parts, so one can probe into its meaning and relevance. The movement of sojourn, captivity, intervention, release, and return becomes the focus of the interpretative reflection, anticipating other portions of Genesis and countless realities in the life of faith.<sup>277</sup>

As Alexander (1982:37-38) suggested, the pericope (12:10-20) has been cautiously integrated into the larger narrative cycle, although the narrative may once have existed as an independent story. This fact can be confirmed in two ways. First, the account of Abraham in Egypt is connected thematically to the preceding episode (Gen 11:27-12:9). Following the announcement of the divine promises, we might have expected the narrative to continue by describing their fulfillment. However, in actual fact the exact opposite occurs; instead of a description of their fulfillment we are given a picture of their non-fulfillment (or ‘anti-fulfillment’).<sup>278</sup> By highlighting the non-fulfillment (or anti-fulfillment) of the promises, the story of Abraham in Egypt is intimately connected to the preceding episodes. It is also possible to observe in the events of Gen

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<sup>277</sup> See, Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 375f. ‘Thus, in all these various forms Abraham came to serve as the prototype of Israel for later generation’. Cf. also R. W. L. Moberly, *The Old Testament of the Old Testament: patriarchal narratives and Mosaic Yahwism*, OBT (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992c), 142-46.

<sup>278</sup> In this regard, J. Goldingay suggests the “anti-fulfillment” (“The Patriarchs in Scripture and Tradition,” in *Essays on the Patriarchal Narrative*, eds. A. R. Millard & D. J. Wiseman [Leicester: IVP, 1980], 13; “Yahweh intends to make Abram a great nation, to make him a blessing to the nations, and to give the land of Canaan to his descendants. But as a result of an entirely human response to a real crisis, each element in this promise receives a kind of anti-fulfillment. Abram leave the land of Canaan, watches the potential mother of his descendants join the Pharaoh’s harem, and causes Yahweh to bring affliction on the Pharaoh and his howse.”

12:10-20 a connection with the promise of divine protection implied in Gen 12:3.<sup>279</sup> Viewed against the background of the divine promises in Gen 12:1-3, 7 the events in Egypt take on a deeper significance. Second, the episode is linked structurally to the preceding and following episodes. The initial journey of Abraham from Bethel to the Negev (Gen 12:8-9) and his return from the Negev to Bethel (Gen 13:2-4) also balance each other. Obviously, these verses function as bridges between Abraham in Canaan and Abraham in Egypt.

The next pericope, Gen 13:1-18 begins with an explicit mention of Abraham leaving Egypt, and a list of his fellow-travelers almost identical with Gen 12:20. This repetition serves to link the Egyptian affair with this following one. The one difference in the list of travelers is the addition of Lot's name, last mentioned in Gen 12:5. The episode also delineates the account of the separation of Lot from Abraham, which is connected to Gen 12:1-9 through the divine promises of the land (cf. Gen 12:7; 13:14-17).<sup>280</sup> Simultaneously, it also anticipates later developments and provides backdrop information essential for the inclusion of future episodes within the Abraham narrative (Alexander 1982:38-40). The episode then closes with Abraham building an altar in Hebron (13:18). The pericope can be arranged chiastically:

- A Abraham building an altar at Bethel with fellow-traveler Lot (vv. 1-7)
- B Abraham's speech: his offer of the land (vv. 8-9)

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<sup>279</sup> Pharaoh brings upon himself and his house the curse of God in the form of great plague.

<sup>280</sup> God not only reiterates the promise of land, but also clarifies the extent of the land promised. Gen 13:7, like Gen 12:6, introduces a certain tension into the narrative with regards to the possession of the land. Meanwhile, as G. C. Aalders, *Genesis*, 2 vols. trans. W. Heynen (Grand Rapids: Regency Reference Library, 1981), I:279, pointed out, the separation of Abraham and Lot also fulfills one of the requirements made by God in the call of Abraham (Gen 12:1). "As long as Abram kept Lot with him, he still maintained a close tie with his 'father's household.' It was imperative that those ties be completely severed. It was Abram alone who was chosen to be the head of a special people of God who were to be the recipients of God redemptive revelation."

### C Lot's choice of Sodom (vv. 10-13)<sup>281</sup>

B' Yahweh's speech: his offer of the land (vv. 14-17)

A' Abraham building an altar at Hebron alone (v. 18)<sup>282</sup>

A and A' indicate the geographical movement of Abraham from Bethel/Ai (the north) to Hebron (the south) in physically and spiritually. Since he is back at his altar in the heart of the promised land. Meanwhile the symmetric structure suggest that Lot's spiritual situation is blanked by Yahweh's and Abraham's speech. In this view, Lot appear to have made a poor choice spiritually. B and B' depict the scene that Abraham gives up his rights and offers Lot the pick of the land with an amazing generosity. The Lord in turn reaffirms his promise in the legal language of the time. Finally, C Lot's wicked decision marks their decisive separation: one to cursed prosperity, the other to true prosperity. Based on the structural analysis of the pericope, one may explore the textual links between the narrative (Gen 12:10-13:18) and the remainder of Genesis.

#### 3.3.2.2.2. Ordeals and Parting (Gen 12:10-13:18// Gen 20:1-21:34)

The section structurally consists of three subunits: the story of Sarah in Pharaoh's harem (Gen 12:10-20), an ordeal, which ends in peace and success (Gen 13:1-4), and the story of Abraham's and Lot's parting (Gen 13:5-18). These passages parallel another three corresponding pericopes in Gen 20:1-21:34 respectively: the story of

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<sup>281</sup> This section (esp., vv. 10 and 13) contain explicit references to anticipate the divine judgment of Sodom. The events of Genesis 19 are also anticipated in Gen 13:10. Obviously the full outcome of the events related in Genesis 18 and 19 is presupposed in Gen 13:2-18. Apart from this reference to Gen ch. 19, Gen 13:10 also alludes to earlier episodes in Genesis: "the garden of Yahweh" (cf. Gen 2:4ff.); "the land of Egypt" (cf. Gen 12:10ff.). Thus, the present episode performs a vital function by preparing the reader for later events (cf. Alexander, *Literary Analysis*, 38-40, 215-23). For the discussion of the relationship between Gen 13:2-18 and Genesis 18-19, see von Rad's comments (*Genesis*, 172, 225). He concludes that Genesis 13 never existed independently of Genesis 18 and 19.

<sup>282</sup> See, Waltke, *Genesis*, 218.



Sarah in Abimelech’s palace (Gen 20:1-18), the story of Abraham’s and Ishmael’s parting (Gen 21:1-21), and the conclusion of the Abimelech story leading to peace and success (Gen 21:22-34).

Abraham and Sarah in foreign palaces (12:10-20 // 20:1-18)
The peace and success accounts (13:1-4 // 21:22-34) <sup>283</sup>
Abraham’s separation from Lot and Ishmael (13:5-18 // 21:1-21)

The two passages (Gen 12:10-13:18 and 20:1-21:34), thus, are divisible into three smaller sections in that order. The textual ties can be illustrated as below in sequence.

### 3.3.2.2.3. Sarah in Foreign Harem (Gen 12:1-20// Gen 20:1-18)

The two episodes of Sarah in a foreign palace (Gen 12:10-20 and Gen 20:1-18) are universally recognized as duplicates, which share many key-words and expressions.

This may be diagrammatically represented as follows:

Text (12:10-20)	Key-words/Expressions	Text (20:1-18)
12:11	וַיֹּאמֶר (אֶבְרָהָם) אֶל-שָׂרָי אִשְׁתּוֹ (He said to his wife Sarai)	20:2
12:12	וְהָרְגוּ (they will kill me)	20:11, 18
12:13	הָאִשָּׁה (my sister)	20:2
12:14-15	הָאִשָּׁה (the woman)	20:3
12:15	לִקַּח (take)	20:3-4
12:16	Flocks and herds, and male and female	20:4

<sup>283</sup> For the reason why the story of Ishmael’s and Abraham’s separation (Gen 21:1-21) precede the verses dealing with Abraham’s success, which culminates in his invoking Yahweh (Gen 21:22-34) is rightly presented by Rendsburg with twofold: opening the womb contiguous and Isaac’s infant time and his grown lad (*Redaction of Genesis*, 38-39).

	slaves	
12:17	נגע (touch, afflict or plague)	20:6
12:17	עַל דְּבַר (on account of)	20:11, 18
12:17	אִשְׁתְּ אַבְרָם (אֲבִרְהָם) Abra(ha)m's wife	20:18
12:18	Pharaoh called to Abraham and said" (Gen 12:18)/Abimelech called to Abraham and said" (20:9)	20:9
12:18	זאת עשית (this you did, 12:18) עשית זאת (you did this, 20:6)	20:6
12:19	ועתה (now)	20:7

In Gen 12:11 and 20:2 Abraham said to Sarah his wife twice, Sarah is called “the woman” (Gen 12:14-15; 20:3), the use of the verbs “לקח, take” (Gen 12:15; 20:3-4) and “נגע, touch, afflict or plague” (Gen 12:17; 20:6), the description of Abraham’s property as “flocks and herds and male and female slaves” (Gen 12:16; 20:4), the words “עַל דְּבַר, on account of” (Gen 12:17; 20:11, 18), and the expressions “וְהָרְגוּ, they will kill me” (Gen 12:12; 20:11), “Abra(ha)m’s wife” (Gen 12:17; 20:18), “my sister” (Gen 12:13; 20:2), “Pharaoh called to Abraham and said” (Gen 12:18) and “Abimelech called to Abraham and said” (Gen 20:9), “now” (Gen 12:19; 20:7) and “you did this” (Gen 12:18; 20:6). The twelve theme-words and expressions suggest that the two narratives are closely tied.<sup>284</sup> In addition, in comparison with the narrative line of Gen 12:10-20 and the new element in the periscope of Genesis 20 (esp. Gen 20:3-7, Abimelech’s dream) Husser (1996:132-135) proposes the dream of the oneiric dialogue between God and man, a literary device as textual tie.

#### 3.3.2.2.4. Peace and Success (Gen 13:1-4// Gen 21:22-34)

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

Although these pericopes are not central to the Abraham narrative, they contain some textual links, which point to their in their connection within the narrative context. Gen 13:1 and 21:31 depict two regional etymologies, Negev and Beersheba, which is the most important city. We read of Abraham's possessions in Gen 13:2 (מִקְנֵהוּ, livestock) and Gen 21:27 (צֹאן וּבָקָר, flocks and herds) each other. Most significantly we find the phrases of Abraham's invocation in Gen 13:4 (וַיִּקְרָא שָׁם אַבְרָם בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה, Abram invoked there the name of Yahweh) and Gen 21:33 (וַיִּקְרָא-שָׁם בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה, he invoked there the name of Yahweh) respectively.<sup>285</sup>

### 3.3.2.2.5. Separation from Lot/Ishmael (Gen 13:5-18// Gen 21:1-21)

In these pericope, one may note some textual relevancies, which tie the two pericopes in verbally and thematically. Although they are from different verbal roots, both רִיב (quarrel, Gen 13:7) and רִבֵּה (archer, Gen 21:20), the assonance of the two words is unquestionable. Both Gen 13:10 and 21:19 occur a fair of expressional sameness of God's action and Lot's action: וַיִּשָּׂא-לֹט אֶת-עֵינָיו וַיִּרְא, "Lot lifted up his eyes and saw (Gen 13:10)" and וַיִּפְקַח אֱלֹהִים אֶת-עֵינֶיהָ וַתִּרְא, God opened up her eyes and she saw (Gen 21:19).

We read the word, מִצְרַיִם (Egypt), which occurs in Gen 13:10 and 21:19. The word זֶרְעֶךָ (your seed) appears in both Gen 13:15-16 and 21:13. One may find an analogy in God's promises made to Abraham (וַיִּשְׁמְתִי אֶת-זֶרְעֶךָ כְּעֶפְרַת הָאָרֶץ, I will make your seed

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<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 35-37. Rendsburg views the matter of inserting Abraham's invoking Yahweh in Gen 21:33, which is a redactional structuring that Speiser regards it as a excerpt from the source J (cf. Speiser, *Genesis*, 160).

like the dust of the earth, Gen 13:16) and Hagar (לְגֹי גְדוֹל אֲשֵׁימְנוּ , I will make him a great nation, 21:18). Both Gen 13:14-17 and 21:1-7 depict the central theme, the land and Isaac, which are inextricably intertwined throughout the Abraham narrative, and are specifically collocated at the establishment of the covenant in Gen 17:8-10. In this regard, the acquisition of the land of Canaan for Abraham parallels to Isaac’s birth that it is used to elicit a conflict, which leads to Ishmael’s leaving, just as a conflict caused Lot’s separation. (cf. Sarna 1970:171-172).

Moreover, in the thematic aspect, the reports of the separation in the two pericopes deal with an important theme concerning the promised seed. At the outset of his journey, Abraham must have considered Lot as his possible heir because Sarah was barren at that time (cf. Helyer 1983:77-88). Ishmael was also considered by Abraham as his legitimate heir in Gen 17:18. Thus, these two episodes deal with the separation of the illegitimate heirs from Abraham. These separations are fully compensated for by the birth of Isaac, which is placed between the stories of “Sarah in Abimelech’s palace” and Ishmael’s parting from Abraham” in the second of the two separation units (Gen 21:1-7). In Gen 12:10-13:18, the order of events is ordeal, peace and success, and separation, but in Gen 20:1-21:34, the order of events is ordeal, separation, and success ad peace. Rendsburg offers some reasons for the change of order in the second part. He contends that by switching the order of these two events, the author/the final composer tries to make the two passages dealing with opening the womb (Gen 20:17-18 and 21:1-2) adjacent to each other, which leads to separation. The success and peace event in Gen 21:22-34 allows for the lapse of time between Isaac the infant (Gen 21:8-10) and Isaac the grown lad who can carry sacrificial wood in Gen 22:6 (Rendsburg 1986:38-39).

In addition, one more goal the author/the final composer must have had in mind when he put the episode of Abraham and Abimelech (Gen 21:2-34) closer to the final event in Gen 22:1-19 is that he wanted to demonstrate the partial fulfillment of Abraham’s blessings given by God in Gen 12:1-3, when Abraham set out his journey. The partial fulfillment of these blessings must have been observed by the foreign king Abimelech. This can be assumed by Abimelech’s statement, “God is with you in all that you do (Gen 21:22),” and by the fact that Abimelech wants to have a relationship with Abraham through covenant.<sup>286</sup>

### 3.3.2.2.6. Conflicts: Abraham and Lot (Gen 13:6), Jacob and Esau (Gen 34:7)

There are striking verbal parallels between the accounts of the struggle that arose between Abraham Lot and the struggle between Jacob and Esau.

Abraham and Lot	Jacob and Esau
<p>13:6 <b>כִּי־הָיָה</b> <b>וְלֹא־יָשָׂא אֲדָמָה</b> <b>הָאָרֶץ</b> <b>לְשֵׁבֶת יַחְדָּו</b> <b>וְלֹא־יָכְלוּ</b> <b>רַב־כּוֹשֵׁם</b> <b>וְלֹא־יָכְלוּ</b> <b>לְשֵׁבֶת יַחְדָּו</b>׃</p> <p>The land was not able to support them both because their possessions were great; they were not able to live together.</p>	<p>34:7 <b>כִּי־הָיָה רְכוּשָׁם רַב</b> <b>מִשְׁבַּת יַחְדָּו</b> <b>וְלֹא־יָכְלָה</b> <b>אֶרֶץ מְגוּרֵיהֶם לְשֵׂאת אֹתָם מִפְּנֵי מְקִינָהֶם</b>׃</p> <p>Because their possessions were great, the land of their sojourning was not able to support them because of their cattle.</p>

Such parallels have the effect of drawing the themes of the two narratives together so that they reinforce a central them. The theme in this case is the fulfillment of the blessing: “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the land” (Gen 1:28).

<sup>286</sup> In this regard, Muilenburg (“Abraham and the Nations,” 376-378) argues that the nations will receive the divine blessing through their relationship to Israel.

### 3.3.2.2.7. Wife-Sister Episodes (Gen 12:10-20// Gen 20:1-19// Gen 26:1-13)

With the two pericopes, Gen 12:10-20 and 20:1-18 together, scholars have relegated Gen 26:1-13 to the wife/sister deception episodes, which are commonly termed ‘doublets’ or ‘duplicate narrative’<sup>287</sup> in the patriarchal history.<sup>288</sup> Since these provide important evidence for the existence of parallel documents. The episodes have naturally led scholars to consider their relationship to one another, as the close proximity of these incidents in Genesis and the complete absence of such

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<sup>287</sup> In ‘the Documentary Hypothesis’ U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis. Part I: From Adam to Noah*, trans. I. Abrahams (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press & The Hebrew University, 1989), 69, suggests “duplications and triplications” in the pentateuchal narrative “are of two kinds”. When “parallel sections appertain – or are considered to do so – entirely to one subject, which is depicted in each of them in a different form and with variation in detail”, he calls them “duplication.” When such parallel passages concern events, which are “unrelated to each other but yet are so similar in their principal motifs, that one may conjecture that they are simply divergent developments of a singly narrative,” they may be termed “repetitions.” The wife-sister stories would then fit the latter category, repetition, Cassuto suggests. He (84ff.) does not recognize the compositeness of stories such as the Flood narrative, but interprets the perceived duplications in terms of a “literary technique.” For Cassuto the real question concerning repetitions and duplications is not their possible prehistory, but why they appear in the Torah as it is (Cassuto I.82; II.339). The answer to this, he (72) suggests, comes from understanding the purpose of the Torah, namely that of religious and ethical instruction. Thus, in wife-sister stories the “teaching and promise” of the Genesis 12 episode was “corroborated and confirmed” by the events of Genesis 20, and finally “strengthened and consolidated” by Genesis 26, as “everything that is done twice or thrice is to be regarded as confirmed and established” (I.82-83).

<sup>288</sup> Critics have been examined the extent of the pericopes. Most scholars take Gen 12:10-20 as the basic Abraham/Sarah account (E. H. Maly, “Genesis 12, 10-20; 20, 1-18; 26, 7-11 and the Pentateuchal Question,” *CBQ* 18 [1956]: 255-62; Speiser, *Genesis*, 89-94; Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 159-68; W. Zimmerli, *I. Moses 12-25: Abraham*, ZB [Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1976a], 24-29). Some, however, wish to extend the final form of the narrative to include Gen 13:1 (Petersen, “A Thrice-told Tale,” 30-43; von Rad, *Genesis*, 167-70), and Cassuto and Weimar maintain that, in its form, the story concludes in Gen 13:4 (Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, II.334-365; P. Weimar, *Untersuchungen zur Redaktionsgeschichte des Pentateuch* [Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1977], 48-51). As regards Genesis 26, the variety of possibilities has been proposed by critics. Some base their comparison with Gen 12:10-13:1 on verses 7-11 (Maly, “Genesis,” 255-262; von Rad, *Genesis*, 271; Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 363-365). While some include verse 6 (H. Gunkel, *Genesis*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1910], 301; Speiser, *Genesis*, 91). Westermann uses for his comparison verses 1-11 (*Genesis*, 12-36, 424-25); K. Koch, *The Growth of the Biblical Tradition* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1969), 111-32) verses 1-13. Some scholars include all the material in Gen 26:1-14 (S. H. Hooke, *In the Beginning*, The Clarendon Bible [Oxford: Clarendon, 1947], 95-96; G. Schmitt, “Zu Gen 26:1-14,” *ZAW* 85 [1973]: 143-156), whereas R. C. Culley, *Studies in the Structure of Hebrew Narrative* (Philadelphia & Missoula: Fortress, 1976), 33-41, remains undecided as to whether verse 14 should be included along with verses 1-13. Thus, it is apparent that no consensus exists regarding how much of Genesis 26 should be compared with Gen 12:10-20 and Gen 20:1-18. In its present form, Gen 26:1 clearly commences with an ‘initial disjunctive clause’, whereas the start of the wife/sister episode in Genesis 26 is obvious.

circumstances elsewhere in the Old Testament.

Critics have long proposed various theories to the three episodes. With the development of source criticism it was suggested that the accounts, as ‘doublets’, reflect the existence of parallel documents in Genesis. The pericope in Gen 20:1-18 was assigned to the Elohist (except v. 18 to the Yahwist [J]), which was a compositional variant of the same Abraham story provided by the Yahwist in Gen 12:10-20 (or 13:1).<sup>289</sup> The accounts Gen 12:10-13:1 and 26:1-13 were widely held to originate from J (cf. von Rad 1972:226, 270; Skinner 1930:242-243, 315, 363; Speiser 1964:91). The two parallel narratives indicate that J itself is composed of two separate sources (cf. Sinner 1930:251, 363). Under the influence of form criticism, it was proposed that the three incidents developed as oral variants of one original story (cf. Koch 1969:111-132). In other words, form and tradition scholars observe that Gen 20:1-18 is neither a true parallel nor independent of Gen 12:10-13:1 but rather a moralistic adaptation of the story answering the question of “guilt” (Gen 20:9) raised in the former Abraham story (cf. Mathews 2005:124). More recently, however, some scholars have tended towards the opinion that account Gen 20:1-18 and 26:1-13 are literary compositions based upon and presupposing a knowledge of account Gen 12:10-13:1. They propose that Gen 26:1-13 reflects both stories, achieving a parallel between Isaac and his father (Van Seters 1975:167-191; cf. Biddle 1990:599-611; Carr 1996:200-201; Coats 1985:71-81; Westermann 1985:161, 318-320, 412, 424). In

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<sup>289</sup> Source critics see the Elohist as the one, who handed down an independent version of the “wife-sister” accounts. The use of *Elohim* and the appearance of supposed E vocabulary led to this opinion. Suspicion about the cogency of such criteria for discerning a distinctive E document resulted in offering another explanation. Many now view it as an adaptation or expansion of the J account of Abraham in Egypt (Gen 12:10-13:1). See, T. D. Alexander, “Are the Wife/Sister Incidents of Genesis Literary Compositional Variants?” *VT* 42 (1992): 145-53.

particular, Gen 20:1-18 has been argued to be an expansion of Gen 12:10-20 (cf. Coats 1983:151). In addition, Alexander (1997b:32-51; cf. 1982:134-159; 1992:145-153) in his literary analysis of this wife-sister accounts proposes that these narratives are best explained as independent stories that came from one author. He believes that the trio were composed and modified by the author during their incorporation into Genesis, they, thus, prove to be complimentary stories addressing the wife-sister motif and not literary duplicates or variants of the same episode avoiding unnecessary redundancy. Although there are differences between the three episodes, the similarities in plot and characters point to the same underlying event.<sup>290</sup>

Meanwhile, Petersen (1973:35-36) cautiously offers some interesting insights that the wife-sister motif, which clearly present in all three pericopes is comprised of the following features:

1. Travel to a place in which the husband and wife are unknown (if such travel were not present, the ruse could not be undertaken).
2. A claim that the man's wife is his sister *because of the fear of death*<sup>291</sup>
3. Discovery of the ruse;
4. Resolution of the situation created by the false identity.

Moreover, Garrett ([1991] 2000:129-135) suggests the probability of the triadic structure as a story, which once circulated together, separate from other material in the ancestor epic pattern.<sup>292</sup> He argues that the similarity in form and content with the two

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<sup>290</sup> For instance, Speiser proposes an “underlying tradition” drawn on by two written sources (Gen 16:1-16 and 21:8-21), see Speiser, *Genesis*, 156-57.

<sup>291</sup> This feature in the second element (italic phrase) was expanded by Alexander to include the reason why the husband acts as he does. Without this additional element, there is no rationale for the deception (*Abraham in the Negev*, 35).

<sup>292</sup> In the process of developing his own theory on how Genesis came into being, he perceives that one can isolate within the present text of Genesis a number of literary sources. He focuses on the genealogies and concludes that these witness to a set of תולדות sources. He also proceeds to develop the proposal of



wife-sister deception episodes (Gen 12:10-20 and 20:1-18) is obvious. He proceeds to propose the structural parallels in a way of matching the wife-sister episodes by ordering the narratives in sequence: migration-deception-abduction-deliverance-confrontation-conclusion:

Cycles (Sections)		Texts	Contents
A. 1 <sup>st</sup> cycle (12:10-20)	Migration	v. 10	Abraham goes to Egypt because of a famine.
	Deception	vv. 11-13	He sees Sarah is beautiful, so tells her to say she is his sister.
	Abduction	vv. 14-16	Pharaoh takes Sarah and rewards Abraham.
	Deliverance	v. 17	The Lord afflicts Pharaoh.
	confrontation	vv. 18-19	Pharaoh rebukes Abraham.
	Conclusion	v. 20	Abraham leaves with wealth.
B. 2 <sup>nd</sup> cycle (20:1-18)	Migration	v. 1	Abraham goes to Gerar.
	Deception	v. 2a	He tells Abimelech that Sarah is his sister.
	Abduction	v. 2b	Abimelech takes Sarah.
	Deliverance	vv. 3-8	The Lord rebukes Abimelech in dream.
	confrontation	vv. 9-13	Abimelech rebukes Abraham.
	Conclusion	vv. 14-18	Abimelech rewards Abraham, and Abraham prays for Abimelech.
C. 3 <sup>rd</sup> cycle (26:1, 7-17)	Migration	v. 1	Isaac goes to Gerar because of a famine.
	Deception	v. 7	He says that Rebekah is his sister when men of Gerar ask about her.
	Abduction		No abduction
	Deliverance	v. 8	Abimelech sees Isaac caressing Rebekah.
	confrontation	vv. 9-16	Abimelech rebukes Isaac, but God protects him; the Lord blesses Isaac.
	Conclusion	v. 17	Isaac separates from Abimelech when rivalry develops.

Garrent contends that “the three episodes are remarkably bound by a pattern in which a narrative element section is consistently present in two out of the three accounts.” He

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I. M. Kikawada and A. Quinn that Genesis 1-11 resemble the structure found in the ancient Mesopotamian cosmological myth of Atrahasis; that is, a prologue, followed by three major stories of threat, and finally, a resolution (Kihawada & Quinn, *Before Abraham Was*). Garrett not only accepts that Genesis 1-11 conforms to this pattern, but argues that the whole of Genesis reflects the same structure, a form which he designates ‘ancestor epic’. Furthermore, he argues that the same pattern explains the origins of the wife-sister epic (*Rethinking Genesis*).

also points out the fact that “the dominant concern of the triad is that of the full ancestor epic narrative – the survival of the race in the face of a threefold threat.” He concludes that the structure Genesis 26 was to some extent determined by the narrative purpose of setting Isaac’s life in parallel to that of Abraham. Gen 26:1-13 was integrated into the two episodes (Gen 12:10-20 and 20:1-18). The appearance that the last episode (Gen 26:1-13) is formally unlike the first two is misleading; it is the result of subsequent redaction (see, [1991] 2000:131-135). This pattern tends to debunk the view that these are doublets of the same event (cf. Rowley 1986:17-18). Yet, it can hardly be accidental that the three accounts have parallelisms.<sup>293</sup> We should note that the close similarity of the textual immediacies are contended that they share in this basic plot: 1) a problem arises; 2) a plan is devised; 3) the plan is carried out but with some complications; 4) an outside intervention occurs; and (5) good and bad consequences follow (Mathews 2005:124-125; cf. Van Seters 1975:168).

### **3.3.2.2.8. Abraham/Lot (Gen 13, 14) and Sodom (Gen 18:1-19:38)**

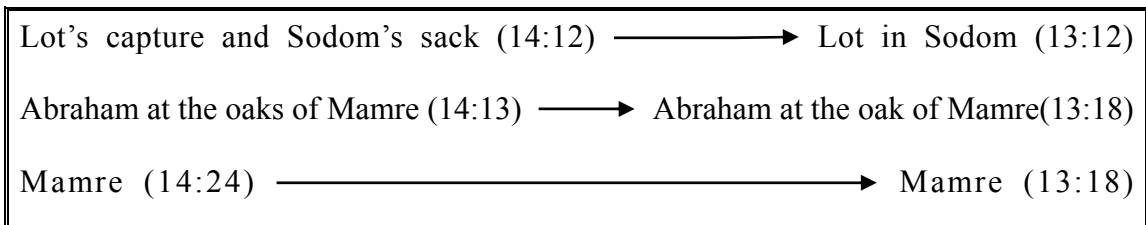
At first glance, the ties between Genesis 13 and 14 seem scanty. With respect to both the time (i.e., “in the days of Amraphel, Gen 14:1) and the place (i.e., from Abraham’s tent in Hebron in Gen 13:18 to that of an event of international wars of the four kings in Gen 14:1-11), the two narratives seem only distantly related. Several indications

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<sup>293</sup> In the meantime, Cassuto, *Documentary Hypothesis*, 78-81) finds a kind of parallelism, for which he does not suggest a specific term, between larger, less obviously interrelated passages, such as Abraham’s and Sarah’s journey to Egypt in Gen 12:10ff., and those of Jacob and his sons in Gen 43:1ff. and 47:1ff., as well as Abraham’s first journey to Canaan and Israel’s later conquest of the land. For instance, the motif of “famine” in Gen 12:10 and Gen 43:1, that of “danger to life” in Gen 12:12 and Exod 1:16, and the itinerary in Canaan first in relation to Abraham in Gen 12:1-9, then in relation to Israel in Josh 7:2, 8:9 and 8:30.

within the narrative, however, suggest that the author/the final composer intends Genesis 14 to be read closely with that which has preceded.

Firstly, in Gen 14:12, the focus of the account of the war between nations is quickly reduced to the scope of Genesis 13 by recounting that Lot had been captured and Sodom had been sacked. Secondly, immediately following the report of Lot's capture, the narrative returns to the scene of Gen 13:18, with Abraham dwelling at the "oaks of Mamre" in Hebron (Gen 14:13). At that point, Abraham is brought into the center of the account of the battle with the four kings and, somewhat surprisingly, is capable of marshaling his forces to defeat the kings (Gen 14:14-17). Finally, the mention of "Mamre" at the end of the account (Gen 14:24) returns the reader to the scene at the close of Genesis 13.



In putting these two narratives together in this way the author/the final composer has allowed an event of international importance to sweep past Abraham's tent in Hebron and thus to involve Abraham in an event that will show on an enormous scale the implications of Abraham's faith – yet without losing its simple and everyday character. In this narrative one can note the fact that as Gen 12:3 has forecast, those who join with Abraham (Gen 14:13) will enjoy his blessing (Gen 14:24), but those who separate from him, as Lot had done (Gen 13:2), will suffer the same fate as Sodom and

Gomorrah (Gen 14:11-12).<sup>294</sup>

Meanwhile, Garrett ([1991] 2000:135-141) proposes that the story of Abraham and Lot parting (Gen 13:1-18) and other sources concerning Abraham (Gen 14:1-24 and 18:1-19:38) would have shared material in the parallel structure of the epic of Lot.

Cycles	Sections	Texts	Formal Contents
1 <sup>st</sup> Cycle (13:1-18)	A	vv. 1-4	Initial setting
	B	vv. 5-7	Crisis (quarreling with other men/the first threat to Lot)
	C	vv. 8-13	Abraham saves Lot/Sodom very wicked
	D	vv. 14-18	The Lord blesses Abraham
2 <sup>nd</sup> Cycle (14:1-24)	A'	vv. 1-11	Initial setting
	B'	v. 12	Crisis (taken prisoner/the second threat to Lot)
	C'	vv. 13-16	Abraham saves Lot
	D'	vv. 17-24	Melchizedek blesses Abraham/Sodom very wicked
3 <sup>rd</sup> Cycle (18:1-19:38)	A''	18:1-15	Initial setting
	B''	18:16-21	Crisis (immanent judgment/the third threat to Lot)
	C''	18:22-19:29	The Lord and Abraham saves Lot/Sodom very wicked
	D''	19:30-38	Lot's accused end

Above all, each of the three cycles begins with an initial setting. In the first, Abraham moves to the region of Bethel and Ai, and emphasis is on his wealth (Gen13:2) and piety (Gen 13:4). In other words, this is an ideal situation for Lot; he is attached to a godly and prosperous man (Gen 13:1c).<sup>295</sup> The initial setting of the second cycle is a war (Gen 14:1-11). The third cycle sets out in Gen 18:1-15, the annunciation of Isaac. Secondly, the first crisis in the first cycle comes in the quarreling of the rival herdsmen over pasture (Gen 13:5-7). The second occurs in Gen 14:12, where the crisis is declared: Lot has been taken prisoner. The third crisis is set up after the visitors finish their business with Abraham (Gen 18:16-21). Thirdly, as the weaker party, Lot is the

<sup>294</sup> Cf. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 145-48.

<sup>295</sup> Cf. Helyer, "The Separation of Abram and Lot," 77-88.

one in jeopardy. Abraham, however, in an act of grace, saves Lot from the dilemma (Gen 13:8-13). He allows the younger Lot to take whatever he wants, but Lot, against propriety, greedily seizes what looks best to him. The text then sounds an ominous warning: ‘The men of Sodom were wicked...’ The Sodomites do not actually figure in the story of Genesis 13, but this verse forebodes disaster for Lot. In the second cycle, Abraham also saves Lot by military action (Gen 14:13-16) and then once again, the wickedness of Sodom emerges, even though it does not yet really figure in the story. In the third cycle, Abraham, knowing by intuition what lies ahead, lingers to intercede with the Lord. The reader recognizes concern for Lot behind this intercession, and the Lord fulfills the intention although not the letter of the intercession in delivering Lot. As the angels enter Sodom, the wickedness of the city, to which the earlier cycles had proleptically alluded, is laid bare to the reader in all its ugliness. In Gen 19:27-29, Abraham looks toward Sodom and sees the smoke rising. Finally, the first cycle ends with a promise that all the land, as far as Abraham can see, will belong to his offspring (Gen 13:14-18). In the second cycle, Melchizedek then appears as suddenly as the Lord had in the first cycle and blesses Abraham (Gen 14:17-24). Then the third cycle closes with a dramatic reversal and resolution. Instead of concluding with a promise of blessing to Abraham (Gen 13:14-18; Gen 14:17-24), it finishes with Lot meeting a terrible, accursed end. Instead of a blessing on the seed of Abraham, there is a curse on the seed of Lot.<sup>296</sup>

### **3.3.2.2.9. Abraham and Lot Parting (Gen 13) and Deconstruction of Sodom (Gen 19:1-29) and Babylon (Gen 11:1-9)**

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<sup>296</sup> Garrentt, *Rethinking Genesis*, 135-41.

Within the narrative context, one can see definite ties between Lot’s “separation” and the “separation” of the nations at Babylon (Gen 11:1-9) and the judgment of the nations at Sodom (Gen 19:1-29). The ties between Genesis 13 and the destruction of Sodom (Genesis 19) can be seen in Gen 13:10: “before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah,” and Gen 13:12-13: “And Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents in Sodom. Now the men of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the Lord.” This is the same information restated at the beginning of Genesis 19. One of the interesting implications of the author’s mention of the destruction of Sodom at this point in the text is that it shows that he assumes that his readers have already read Genesis 19.

The ties between Lot’s separation (Gen 13) and the destruction of Sodom (Gen 19)	
<p>לפני שחת יהוה את־סדם ואת־עמֹלה כגן־יהוה “before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah” (13:10)</p> <p>13:12b וְלוֹט יָשַׁב בְּעָרֵי הַפְּלִינָה וַיִּצֵּד עֵדֶי־סֹדֶם 13:13 וְאֲנָשֵׁי סֹדֶם רָעִים וְחַטָּאִים לַיהוָה מְאֹד ...and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom (13:12b). But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly (13:13).</p>	<p>...את־פְּנֵי יְהוָה וַיִּשְׁלַחֵנוּ יְהוָה לְשַׁחֲתָהּ ...before the face of the Lord; and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it (19:13b).</p>

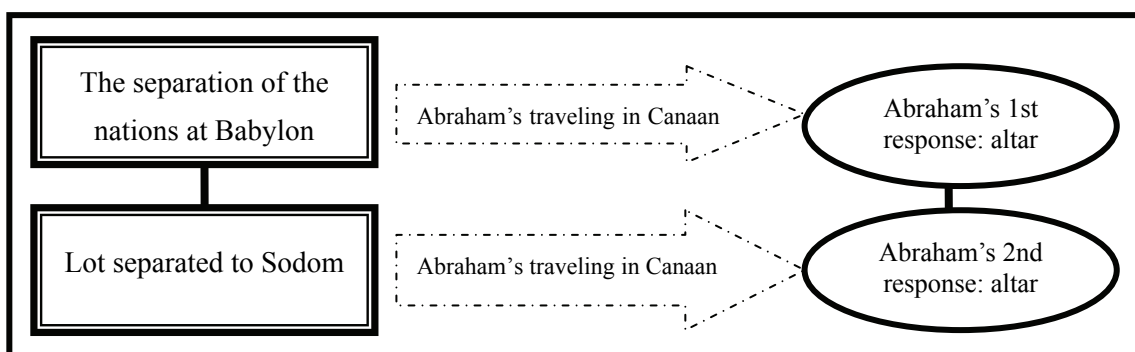
The ties between Genesis 13 and the account of the destruction of Babylon stem from the fact that Lot’s separation from Abraham and his journey eastward appear to have been consciously shaped by the account of the fall of Babylon in Genesis 11.

The ties between the destruction of Babylon (Genesis 11) and the Lot’s separation from Abraham (Genesis 13)	
<p>11:2 וַיְהִי בְּנִסְעֵם מִקְדָּם וַיִּמְצְאוּ בְקָעָה בְּאֶרֶץ שְׁנַעַר וַיֵּשְׁבוּ שָׁם:</p>	<p>13:11 וַיִּבְחַר־לוֹ לֹט אֶת כָּל־כְּפַר הַיַּרְדֵּן וַיֵּסַע לֹט מִקְדָּם וַיִּפְרְדוּ אִישׁ מֵעַל אָחִיו:</p>

And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.	Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other.
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In Gen 10:32, the author closes the account of the dispersion of the nations with the statement “From these the nations separated throughout the land after the flood.” Then the narrative of the dispersion of Babylon opens with the account of the people of the land “traveling eastward” (מִקְדָּם) into “the plain of Shinar,” where they set out to build the city of Babylon (Gen 11:1-2). In the same way Lot is said to have “traveled eastward” (מִקְדָּם) from the land into “the cities of the plain of the Jordan” when he “separated” from Abraham (Gen 13:11)

Following the “separation” of the nations at Babylon, the narrative resumes with Abraham traveling throughout the land of Canaan, receiving it as a promise and then building an altar in response to God’s promise (Gen 12:1-9). So also, after Lot “separated” to Sodom, Abraham traveled throughout the land of Canaan, received it a second time as a promise, and built an altar in response (Gen 13:14-18):



Lot, then, is the link connecting the author’s treatment of the two cities, Babylon and Sodom. The close parallels between the two which are created in the narrative of Genesis 13 suggest that the author intends both cities to tell the same story. As in the

case of parallels and repetitions throughout the book, the double accounts of God's destruction of the "city in the east" is intended to drive home the point that God's judgment of the wicked is certain and imminent (cf. Gen 41:32).<sup>297</sup>

### 3.3.2.3. Abraham's Intercession for Sodom and Lot (Gen 14:1-24)

#### 3.3.2.3.1. Structure<sup>298</sup>

The pericope fall into two main sections: the war reports of the kings (vv. 1-16) and Abraham's encounter with the king of Sodom and Melchizedek (vv. 17-24). The structure forms an alternating pattern:

- I. The war reports of the kings (vv. 1-16)
  - A. Dead Sea kings versus Eastern kings (vv. 1-4)
    - B. The Eastern allied forces conquer Transjordan and South (vv. 5-7)
  - A'. Dead Sea kings versus Eastern kings (vv. 8-12)
    - B'. The allied forces and Abraham conquer eastern allies (vv. 13-16)
- II. The king's greeting to Abraham and their speech and Abraham's response (vv. 17-24)
  - A. The meeting of king of Sodom and Abraham (vv. 17-18)
    - A'. Melchizedek's blessing, kind of Sodom's demand and Abraham's oath (vv. 19-24)

vv. 1-16 provide an extensive narrative, which delineate the two warring factions (vv. 1-4), the battle itinerary of the eastern kings (vv. 5-7), and their defeat of Sodom and Gomorrah (vv. 8-11) with the report of Lot's capture (v. 12). The battle of Abraham

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<sup>297</sup> Cf. Sailhamer, *Pentateuch as Narrative*, 143-44.

<sup>298</sup> This pericope has been the subject of extensive scholarly speculation because it presents a unique episode in Abraham's life and contains special interpretive problems. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapter 1-17*, 399, observes that this is the only portrayal of Abraham as a warrior and the only chapter in Genesis 12-22 in which no divine voice speaks and no explicit reference to the promises is found. One may conclude that the episode is a cohesive literary unit, not a patchwork of disparate narratives, which fits suitably in the present context of Genesis 13 and 15.

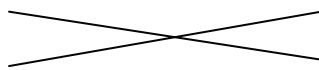



versus eastern kings (vv. 13-16) depicts how Abraham defeats the all-conquering eastern allies and intercepts Lot and his possessions. This forms the backdrop to the centerpiece of the story, the three-way discussion between Abraham, the king of Sodom, and Melchizedek (Wenham 1987:304-305). The second half of this pericope falls into two parts: the encountering with king of Sodom, Melchizedek and Abraham (vv. 17-18) and the blessing of Melchizedek and demands of king of Sodom (vv. 19-24). The mention of the king of Sodom in vv. 21-24 forms a stylistic *inclusio* with the king's first mention in v. 2, thus unifying the entire account (Waltke 2001:225-226). The encounters of Abraham with the king of Sodom and the priest-king Melchizedek provide a contrast between the spiritual characters of the two kings that will result in accenting Abraham's devotion to the Lord. In this sense, Melchizedek's words of blessing in Gen 14:19 are deeply significant.

Although of all the episodes, which combine to form the Abraham narrative, this pericope is the strangest, we have already observed the relationships between this episode and the other narratives in Genesis in earlier section. The most obvious connection between Genesis 14 and the preceding episodes is the reference to Lot living at Sodom (Gen 13:12). This account not only emphasizes the folly of Lot's choice, but reveals something of Abraham's attitude toward Lot, by placing the two accounts side by side. Meanwhile, that one may find a major feature of the episode is Abraham's ability to defeat the allied forces of the eastern kings. In this, it is possible to sate the fact that the divine promise of protection given in Gen 12:3 is fulfilled. Under God's protection Abraham is able to deliver Lot and the other captured inhabitants (including their possessions) of Sodom from the eastern kings. The episode can also be viewed in the light of the promise of making Abraham's name great in Gen

12:2-3.

Besides these connection with the preceding accounts, one should note the fact that a feature of the composition of this pericope reveals obviously the author's/the final composer's intent to link this narrative with the themes of the preceding episodes. At the outset of the episode of the war of the four kings, one may anticipate the author's/the final composer's intent, which consciously identifies 'Shinar' (Gen 14:1) as Babylon (Gen 10:10; 11:2, 9). He appears to have deliberately arranged the opening of this narrative so that the king of Shinar's name would come first in the list, thus aligning the narrative with the theme of "Babylon" introduced in Genesis 10 (10:10) and 11 (11:2). This point is suggested by the fact that the list of kings in v. 1 differs from the lists of the names of these four kings throughout the remainder of the chapter. Whereas in Gen 14:1 it is Amraphel king of Shinar who comes first in the list, throughout the chapter it is not Amraphel who is first among the four kings but Kedorlaomer king of Elam (vv. 4, 5, 9, 17) is always first. Thus, the break in the sequence of the names comes only at Amraphel's name as follows:

14:1	<b>Amraphel</b> ,	Arioch,		Kedorlaomer,	Tidal
14:9	<b>Kedorlaomer</b> ,	Tidal,		<b>Amraphel</b> ,	Arioch

If the sequence in v. 9 is the original one, then, at the beginning of the narrative the author/the final composer has apparently broken the list into two sections, putting the section beginning with Amraphel first and the other section second. In Gen 14:12 the perspective of the narrative changes markedly from the global scope of the war with the four eastern kings to the sudden change in the fate of Lot. In it, the account is brought into the larger context of the blessing in the land (Gen 12:1-3; 13:14-17) and

the fate of all those who separate themselves from Abraham (Sailhamer 1992:145-146).<sup>299</sup>

In addition, the sense of Genesis 14 within the larger context of Genesis can be seen in the similarity between Abraham's response to the offer of the king of Sodom (Genesis 14) and to that of the Hittites in Genesis 23. In both cases, the writer wants to show that Abraham would not accept a gift from the Canaanites. When the king of Sodom offered to reward Abraham, he replied that it should never be said that the king of Sodom made Abraham wealthy (Gen 14:23). In the same way, Abraham adamantly refused to accept the parcel of land as a gift. Apparently against the wishes of the Hittites, he paid the full price for the land. If viewed from the perspective of God's covenant promises to Abraham, both these narratives fit well within the overall themes of Genesis. God, not any human being, was the source of Abraham's hope of blessing. He would not seek to become wealthy or to own land apart from the promises of God. The same purpose also lies behind the note in Gen 33:19 that when Jacob returned to the land after his sojourn in the east, he purchased a portion of a field to pitch his tent. Wherever possible, the writer seizes the opportunity to show that the patriarchs came by their possession of the land fairly and that it was a gift from God, not from those who were dwelling in the land at the time. Accordingly, although this pericope shows some signs of having a quite different origin from other episodes in the Abraham cycle, it has been carefully integrated into the final form of the narrative (cf. Alexander 1982:223-233, on the actual origin of the pericope).

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<sup>299</sup> For the structural relationship between Gen 14:1-24 and 13:1-18 and 18:1-19:38, see Garrett's detailed analysis in the earlier section in p. 156.

### 3.3.2.3.2. War/Rescue (Gen 14:1-24) and Pleading/Judgment (Gen 18:16-19:38)

This pericope delineates Abraham's intervention into the affairs of Sodom resulting in the rescue of Lot. The two episodes in the content share numerous shared theme-words.

Gen 14:1-24	Theme-words	Gen 18:16-19:38
בְּרַע (son of evil, in evil), 14:2	the root of the name of Sodom's king	רַע/רַעָה (evil), 19:7, 9
בְּרָשָׁע (in wickedness), 14:2	The king of Gomorrah	רָשָׁע (wicked), 18:23, 25 (bis)
צֹעַר (Zoar), 14:2, 8	The place name, Zoar	צֹעַר (Zoar), 19:22
מֶלַח, 14:3	The etymology of 'salt'	מֶלַח, 19:26
הָרָה נָסוּ (fled to the hills/mountain), 14:10	the same stems of הָר ('hill') and נָס ('flee')	הָרָה...לָנוּס (to the hills...to flee), 19:19-20
הַפְּלִיט (refugee, escaped one, fugitive), 14:13	the similar sounding of two words semantically	הַמְּלִט (to escape), 19:17 (bis), 19:19, 19:22 [cf. אֲמַלֵּטָה (let me escape), 19:20]
בְּאֵלְנֵי מַמְרֵא (in the plain of Mamre), 14:13	the same locale	בְּאֵלְנֵי מַמְרֵא (in the plain of Mamre), 18:1 [cf. וְאַבְרָהָם שָׁב לְמִקְמוֹ (and Abraham returned to <u>his</u> place), 18:33]
הָעָם (the people), 14:16	referring to the general Sodomite population	הָעָם (the people), 19:4
מִלְכֵי-צָדֵק (righteousness), 14:18	the element of Melchizedek's name	צָדָקָה (righteousness), 18:19; צַדִּיק (righteous), 18:23-28 (seven times)
לֶחֶם וַיַּיֵּן (bread and wine), 14:18	similar meal served	מִשְׁתֵּה וּמִצּוֹת (drink/feast and unleavened bread/cake)
בְּרֹךְ אַבְרָם (blessed be Abram), 14:19	similar phenomenon	וְנִבְרַכְו בּוֹ (they will be blessed through him [Abraham]), 18:18
קִנְיַה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ (creator of heaven and earth), 14:19, 22	God's name and the territory of his power	עַל-הָאָרֶץ... (...upon the earth), 19:23; מִן-הַשָּׁמַיִם... (...from the heavens), 19:24
מֵעֲשָׂר (one-tenth), 14:20	Abraham's tithe (one-tenth) to Melchizedek and his negotiations with God (ten	הָעֲשָׂרָה (the ten [men]), 18:32

	righteous men)	
שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ (heaven and earth), 14:22	Heaven and earth	הָאָרֶץ, 19:23; הַשָּׁמַיִם, 19:24

As seen above, the key vocabulary items link not only parallel units but also link successive units as well. Such verbal repetitions help clear up many puzzling aspects of the texts.<sup>300</sup> In this respect, the two passages share numerous key-words and expressions as presented above.

### 3.3.2.4. Covenant with Abraham (Gen 15:1-16:16)

#### 3.3.2.4.1. Structure

The pericope divides naturally into two main sections: Gen 15:1-21<sup>301</sup> and 16:1-16. The first section (Gen 15:1-21) in turn consists of two roughly parallel sections (two parallel panels) involving two divine announcements (visionary oracles) in vv. 1-6 and vv. 7-21. It involves dialogue between the Lord and Abraham and powerful images symbolizing God’s presence and promises (Gen 15:1, 12). To put it concretely, Gen 15:1-6 focus on the subject of Abraham’s heir (esp., Gen 15:5). Gen 15:7-21 is

<sup>300</sup> Rendsburg, *Redaction of Genesis*, 39-41.

<sup>301</sup> Critical scholars have puzzled over the source and date of the pericope, resulting in widely diverse solution. For a comprehensive review of this passage’s interpretation, see J. Ha, *Genesis 15: A Theological Compendium of Pentateuchal History*, BZAW 181 (Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1989). In the meantime, Genesis 15 fits in the flow of Genesis 13-14, making it unnecessary to view the passage as independent. Shared motifs (land, descendants, blessing) and lexical allusions support the literary dependence of Genesis 14 and 15. Such lexical affinities include: “shield” (Gen 15:1) and “delivered” (Gen 14:20); “judge” (Gen 15:14) and the city Dan (Gen 14:14); and “possessions” (Gen 15:14) and “possessions, goods” (Gen 14:16, 21). The Lord is Abraham’s “shield” (Gen 15:1) who “delivered” (Gen 14:14) him from the eastern kings and will deliver his descendants from Egyptian enslavement (Gen 15:14). Also, as Abraham had overcome the kings at “Dan” (Gen 14:14) and obtained their “possessions” (Gen 14:16, 21), he will “punish” the Egyptians and enrich Abraham’s descendants with “possessions” (Gen 15:14). See, Carr, *Reading the Fractures of Genesis*, 164.

concerned with what will be inherited. This section enlarges upon the divine promise of land. These separate encounters in the first section run in close parallel structure:<sup>302</sup>

I. **First panel:** the divine promise of heir (15:1-6)

- A. First vision (בַּמְחֹזָה): the Lord makes a promise to Abraham, using the divine self-declaration formula – “I am”/“reward” (v. 1).
- B. Abraham’s apprehensive questions of the “Sovereign Lord, אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה” (vv. 2-3).
- C. The Lord’s reassuring Abraham by symbolic acts: the sign of stars with reference to the seed (vv. 4-5).

Linking verse: v. 6 – “Abraham believed the Lord” (וַיִּשְׁמַע אַבְרָהָם בְּיְהוָה)<sup>303</sup>

II. **Second panel:** the divine promise of land (15:7-21)<sup>304</sup>

- A'. Second vision: the Lord makes a promise to Abraham, using the divine self-declaration formula – “I am”/“this land” (v. 7).
- B'. Abraham’s apprehensive questions of the “Sovereign Lord, אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה” (v. 8).
- C. The Lord’s reassuring Abraham by symbolic acts: the instructions for preparing covenant sacrifice, prophecy and the sign of passing torch with reference to the land (vv. 9-21).

Each panel begins with a divine self-declaration formula “I am” (vv. 1, 7). One may infer the evidences of matching between the two panels from the parallel pattern of the pericope. Vv. 1 and 7 match in terms of depicting the divine theophany. Also the divine

<sup>302</sup> Many critics have acknowledged the parallels between Gen 15:1-6 and 15:7-21. See, Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 216; Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 305-306. This structural observation basically relies on the structural analysis worked by Mathews, *Exegetical Theological Exposition*, 159-61.

<sup>303</sup> Waltke, *Genesis*, 240-47, states “the narrator’s theological declaration (Gen 15:6) provides a janus between the two encounters. The human partner counts on God to give him offspring, and the divine partner credits that faith as righteousness. On the basis, the Lord grants Abraham his immutable covenant (Gen 15:7-21). Gen 15:1-21 also serves as a janus between the first two acts of the Abraham narrative, linking the two key themes: seed (Gen 15:1-6; Genesis 16-22) and land (Gen 15:7-21; Genesis 12-14).

<sup>304</sup> R. L. Pratt, Jr., *He Gave Us Stories: The Bible Student’s Guide to Interpreting Old Testament Narratives* (Phillipsburg: Reformed Publishing, 1990), 201, suggests an alternative structure of this pericope, emphasizing the turning point (or pivot).

- A. Problem: Abraham’s request of promised land of Canaanites (vv. 7-8)
- B. Rising action: Beginning of the covenant ceremony (vv. 9-11)
- C. Pivot (Turning point): Abraham receives promise in a dream (vv. 12-16)**
- B'. Falling action: Completing of the covenant ceremony (v. 17)
- A'. Resolution: Divine statement of covenant to give Abraham the land of Canaanites (vv. 18-21)

promise of the land (v. 7) clarifies the meaning of “reward” (v. 1). Another evidence of matching between the two sections is the answer, “to give you this land” (v. 7), to the initial question, “What can you give me?” (v. 2).<sup>305</sup> The divine promises of descendants (vv. 4-5) and land (v. 7) come together in the final divine message (vv. 18-21). By placing them alongside each other, the author/the final composer affirms that both hopes were certain because of the reliability of the Lord’s promises. The fulfillment of the first half requires the fulfillment of the second, for an innumerable posterity must have a great land; likewise the land promise presupposes the earlier oracle of descendants. Each of Abraham’s addresses requests confirmation of the Lord’s intentions (vv. 2, 8). The Lord reassures Abraham by symbolic acts displaying of the innumerable stars (v. 5) and passing of the blazing torch between the animal parts (v. 17), sealing the covenant promises. God’s divine speech (vv. 1, 18-21), the renewed promise of seed (vv. 4, 13), and the bestowal of land (vv. 7, 18) envelope the episode.

The second section (Gen 16:1-16) consists of two major sections followed by a closing summary of the pericope. The first subunit commences with the problem of Sarah’s barrenness (v.1; cf. Gen 11:30). After that, vv. 2-6 describe the occasion for Hagar’s flight. The second subsection (vv. 7-14) concern the divine promise regarding the future of her son, Ishmael, and vv. 15-16 present a summary (v. 15) and a conclusion (v. 16). Sarah’s inability to bear children (v. 1) forms an *inclusio* with the concluding notice that Hagar gave a child to Abraham (vv. 15-16). The structure of the passage can be summarized as follows:

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<sup>305</sup> Ha, *Genesis 15*, 49.

Introduction: Sarah's infertility to Abraham (v. 1)  
The incident involving Sarah and Hagar (vv. 2-6)  
The "angel of the Lord" promise Hagar a son (vv. 7-14)  
Conclusion: Hagar fertility to Abraham (vv. 15-16)

#### **3.3.2.4.2. Making Two Covenants and Annunciations (Gen 15:1-16:16// Gen 17:1-18:15)**

The two pericopes, which standing at the center of the Abraham narrative deal with two covenants making and two annunciations. Even though many differences are readily observable between the two covenants, such as the names of the deity, the names of the patriarch, the style of the rituals and so on, the issues of the promised seed and promised land are strikingly similar in both pairs: the promised seed in Gen 15:4 and 17:16 and the promised land in Gen 15:7 and 17:8. While Abraham considers Eliezer of Damascus born in his house as his legitimate heir in Genesis 15, Abraham takes for granted that Ishmael is his rightful heir in Genesis 17. However, in both cases, his choices are refuted by God, who designates Sarah's son Isaac as the promised seed (Gen 17:19). In Gen 15:4, when God refuses Eliezer as Abraham's heir, instead God asserts that Abraham's very own issue shall be his heir. But God does not designate who the mother of the rightful heir will be. For this reason, in Gen 16, Sarah forces Abraham to take her maidservant Hagar to bear Abraham's heir. Eventually, Ishmael is born (Gen 16:16). However, God also refuses Ishmael as Abraham's heir and now specifically designates the would-be mother of the rightful heir. Sarah must be the mother (Gen 17:19). The Lord appears to Abraham again (Gen 18:1-16) and announces the heir through Sarah. Gen 16 and 18:9-17 (cf. Gen 17:17) deal with the etymologies of the names of both Ishmael and Isaac. Finally, Ishmael who comes through a human plan (Genesis 16) is replaced by Isaac who come from a divine plan (Gen 17:15-22;



18:9-14). In both chapters, it is promised that Abraham's offspring will be numerous beyond measure (Gen 15:5; 17:6-8). In both cases, the directions for the rituals are specifically given by God (Gen 15:8-9; 17:10-14). Likewise, these two units employ perfectly parallel sequences of thought, speech, and action (Rendsburg 1986:41-44; Davidson 1979:54-56). Rendsburg also observes a progression in the cycle. In Gen 17, the reader encounters two new names. The name "God" (*Elohim*) is introduced for the first time in the Abraham narrative, only the name "Yahweh" having been used up to this point (along with two *El* names in Gen 14:20, 22; 16:13). Thus, as God is introduced as *Elohim*, the name of the human partner undergoes a name-change from Abram to Abraham. While in the first portion of the cycle, he is called "Abram," he is called "Abraham" throughout the second half of it (Rendsburg 1986:46; cf. Sasson 1984:307<sup>306</sup>).

#### **3.3.2.4.3. Two Covenants (Gen 15:1-21// Gen 17:1-27)**

Genesis 15 shares with Genesis 17 a structure entailing two parallel panels built around five successive speeches by God.<sup>307</sup> There is similarity in the narrative structures occurring in Genesis 17 and 15-16 (also 18-19). Genesis 17 has parallel units or panels as found in Genesis 15-16. Read together, the two chapters reveal a progression in the revelation of the covenant: the promises of land and descendants are clarified, the confirming rite of animal slaughter is carried out, and the covenant sign of

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<sup>306</sup> J. M. Sasson states, "This particular series of scenes is complicated by the fact the collection is, for theological reasons, allocated to materials concerning Abram and to those concerning Abraham" ("The Biographic Mode in Hebrew Historiography," in *In the Shelter of Elyon: Essays on Ancient Palestinian Life and Literature in Honor of G W Ahlström*, eds. W. B. Barrick & J. R. Spencer [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1984], 305-12.

<sup>307</sup> The structural analysis of Genesis 17 will be presented in the next section.

circumcision is ordained. The author of Genesis 17 is fully aware of the Abraham complex of stories, especially Genesis 15. It fits comfortably in the horizon of the promissory theme in the Abraham narrative, presupposing the promises of Genesis 12-13 and 15-16. Abraham's proposal of Ishmael as heir (Gen 17:18) makes sense only in light of the events in Genesis 15 and 16; further, the divine predictions respecting Isaac and his rival Ishmael (Gen 17:19-21) echo the same concerns raised by Abraham and Sarah in Gen 15:2-4 and chap. 16, pertaining to substitute heirs and a future for the outcast Ishmael. Rendsburg (1986:41-44) presents not only several theme-words, but the exact order of action, ideas, and motifs shared by the two chapters.

Text (Genesis 15)	Literary correlations	Text (Genesis 17)
מַחְוֶה (vision, noun), v. 1	God's appearance to Abraham	וַיֵּרָא (appeared, verb), v. 1
אֲנֹכִי מִגֵּן לְךָ (I am your shield), v. 1	The divine speech of protection	הִתְהַלֵּךְ לִפְנֵי (walk before me), v. 1
שְׂכָרְךָ הַרְבֵּה מְאֹד (your reward will be very great), v. 1	God's speaking of reward and increase	וְאֶרְבֵּה אוֹתְךָ בְּמְאֹד מְאֹד (I will make you exceedingly great), v. 2
הֵן לִי לֹא נָתַתָּה זָרַע (but you have given me no offspring), v. 3	Abraham's complaint about no offspring and God's response	וְהָיִיתָ לְאָב הַמְּדִין גּוֹיִם (you will be the father of a multitude of nations), v. 4
יֵצֵא מִמְּעִידְךָ (will issue from your loins), vv. 4-5	Many offspring	מִמְּךָ יֵצְאוּ (from you will issue), v. 6
...לָתֵת לְךָ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת לְרִשְׁתָּהּ (...to give you this land to inherit it.	The promise of the land of Canaan as an inheritance	וְנָתַתִּי לְךָ...כָּל-אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן לְאֶחְזָת עוֹלָם (I will give you...all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession), v. 8 <sup>308</sup>

<sup>308</sup> Concerning the promise of land to Abraham and his progeny in Gen 17:8, Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition*, 283, observes that this corresponds more closely to Gen 13:14-17 than to Gen 15:18, which mentions only Abraham's descendants.

vv. 9-11	The description of the ritual ceremony: animals and circumcision	vv. 10-14
וַיֹּאמֶר לְאַבְרָם (he said to Abram), v. 13	A similar phenomenon: a second communication from God to Abraham and a second speech to the patriarch	וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל-אַבְרָהָם (God said to Abraham), v. 15
Prophecy, vv. 13-16	The second communication concerning the promised offspring	The explanation of the covenant promises, vv. 15-22
בֵּין הַנְּזָרִים (between the pieces), v. 17	The completion of the ceremony	מִוֹל (circumcise), vv. 23-27

As Rendsburg mentioned (1986:42-44), one can easily find the striking similarities between the two pericopes in using “similar language, perfectly parallel sequences of thought, speech, and action. The paired units with the most affinities for each other within the Abraham narrative “may be by design, for these episodes are by far the most important within the collection of stories which comprise the narrative.”

Taken together, the evidence points to Genesis 15 and 17 are related, although some scholars maintain the discontinuity of the two chapters in the names of the deity, the names of the patriarch, the ritual utilized.<sup>309</sup> Alexander (1994:7-28) also has been

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<sup>309</sup> Alexander, *Literary Analysis*, 170-82 has demonstrated that the correlations between Genesis 17 and 15 (also Genesis 18) are not sufficiently clear to support a literary indebtedness. Carr, *Reading the Fractures of Genesis*, 82-85) believes that Genesis 17 exhibits an original independence of its present context. In this regard, among the arguments Carr puts forward are these: the appearance of *El Shaddai* indicates that the story comes from a literary layer in which the patriarchs do not know the name *Yahweh* (unlike Gen 15:7); mention is made of the promises of children and land, but Genesis 17 appears unaware of the same promises in prior stories (e.g., Gen 15:4-5, 7-18). Some scholars prefer to characterize Genesis 17 as a “confirmation” or “reaffirmation” of the initial covenant. In this view too, however, many admit that the covenant of Genesis 17 evidences some development or clarification of Genesis 15 (cf. P. R. Williamson, *Abraham, Israel and the Nations: The Patriarchal Promise and Its Covenantal Development in Genesis* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000]). What they hold in common is more important, namely, that there is one covenant in view, not two covenants, since the term “covenant” occurs thirteen times in nine verses (vv. 2, 4, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 19) and also the patriarchal promises of heir, numerous descendants, land, nations, and blessing all appear in Genesis 17. The chapter, at the center of the Abraham narrative (esp. Genesis 12-22), emphasizes the transformation of barrenness to fruitfulness at the personal, community, and national levels (cf. W. Brueggemann, “Expository Articles: Genesis 17:1-22,” *Int* 45 [1991]: 55-59). Unlike the covenant in Genesis 15, which

proposed that the two covenants related but different covenants existed. He explores the constituent differences between Genesis 15 and 17, concluding that the former is an unconditional covenant and the latter a conditional one. The “covenant of circumcision” is announced in Genesis 17 but is not established until Gen 22:15-18 by divine oath after Abraham meets the requirements. Each covenant are reflected a feature first promised in Gen 12:1-3. Genesis 15 focuses on the promises of nationhood (land, seed), and Genesis 17 concentrates on the promise of international blessing. The difference between the accounts of the covenant in Genesis 15 and 17, however, oppose the idea that Genesis 17 is a priestly retread (P) of chap. 15’s oath (E/J). The Abraham narrative describes the giving of the same covenant in successive narrative stages,<sup>310</sup> thereby maintaining the story’s tension and heightening the Genesis theology of divine provision expressed through human instrumentation (Gen 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 15:4-21; 17:1-22; 18:3-15; 21:1-7, 10; 22:15-18).

Meanwhile, one may find another literary correlation between the two chapters including Gen 16:1-16 in a sense of dramatic account. The dramatic account suggests that the author/the final composer arranges these texts according to topics in order to form large segment of narratives into dramatic accounts. Gen 15:1-17:27 forms a three-step dramatic account and deals with three principal subjects: covenant promises to Abraham (Gen 15:1-21), the patriarch’s failure with Hagar (Gen 16:1-16), and Abraham’s covenant fidelity (Gen 17:1-27).<sup>311</sup>

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had no requirements, Genesis 17 includes two demands: 1) to live uprightly before the Lord (v. 2); and 2) to practice circumcision faithfully (vv. 9-11).

<sup>310</sup> For instance, Kidner, *Genesis*, 128 and Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 16-17.

<sup>311</sup> Pratt, Jr., *He Gave Us Stories*, 222-29.

### I. Problem

#### God's Covenant Promises (15:1-21)

*Abraham assured of seed* (15:1-6)

- A. God promises reward (15:1)
- B. Abraham requests confirmation of seed (15:2-3)
- C. God confirms seed promise (15:4)
- D. God assures by pointing to stars (15:5)
- E. Abraham believes God's promise (15:6)

*Abraham assured of land* (15:7-21)

- A. God promises land; Abraham requests confirmation (15:7-9)
- B. Covenant ceremony is prepared (15:10-11)
- C. God confirms land promise (15:12-16)
- D. God demonstrates reliability by covenant ritual (15:17)
- E. God swears oath for land (15:18-21)

### II. Turning Point

#### Abraham's Failure with Hagar (16:1-16)

*Hagar becomes surrogate but is expelled* (16:1-6)

- A. Barren Sarah has Hagar as handmaiden (16:1)
- B. Sarah and Abraham talk about substitution (16:2)
- C. Hagar conceives and ridicules Sarah (16:3-4)
- D. Sarah and Abraham talk about ridicule (16:5-6a)
- E. Sarah expels Hagar (16:6b)

*Hagar returns and gives birth* (16:7-16)

- A. Angel finds Hagar in wilderness (16:7)
- B. Angel assures and commands Hagar to return (16:8-14)
- C. Hagar gives birth to Ishmael (16:15-16)

### III. Resolution

#### Abraham's Covenant Fidelity (17:1-27)

- A. God instructs Abraham on covenant requirements (17:1-21)
- B. God departs (17:22)
- C. Abraham fulfills covenant requirement (17:23-27)

In this passage the dramatic problem consists of Abraham receiving divine assurance of a seed and land. Gen 15:1-21 consists of two confirming parallel accounts. The first tells of God's assurance to Abraham regarding the seed; the second reports the covenant ceremony that assured Abraham of possessing the land. The beginning and end of this account balance each other in a number of ways. The opening mentions promises and covenant (Gen 15:1-21); the closing also mentions promises and covenant (Gen 17:1-27). However, the first story deals primarily with the divine promises, and the last episode speaks primarily of Abraham's obligations. In the

opening account, God obligates himself through a cutting ritual; in the closing episode, Abraham and his household undergo the cutting ritual of circumcision.

In short, it seems best to see the pericopes as two ratifications of the same covenant relationship. The first emphasizes divine promise and the second highlights human obligation as stated above. The tendency to treat Gen 15:7-21 as more essential covenantal structures in the patriarchal period hardly accords with the importance placed on circumcision and obligation throughout the Old Testament. Both passages should be given equal weight when reconstructing the features of the Abrahamic covenant.

#### **3.3.2.4.4. Two Annunciations (Gen 16:1-16// Gen 18:1-15)**

A comparison of the two pericopes reveals certain significant parallels between them, which continue the same order established in Gen 15:1-21 and 17:1-27. Rendsburg (1986:44-45) observes that “both episodes do not move directly to annunciation, rather Gen 16:1-6 and 18:1-8 each set the scene for the pronouncement of conception and each is characterized by a high percentage of dialogue. Only then do the actual annunciations follow, in Gen 16:7-16 and 18:9-16.” He also presents two important theme-words appeared in both episodes: the word, שָׁמַע (Gen 16:11; 18:10), which is a central to two episodes and the word, רָאָה (Gen 16:13-14), which is echoed at the end of Gen 18:1-15, with יִרְאָה (was afraid, Gen 18:15). “Although from different roots, these words, one dealing with Hagar and God and one dealing with Sarah and God, are assonant and accordingly link the stories.”

### 3.3.2.4.5. Episodes of Hagar and Ishmael (Gen 16:1-16// Gen 21:8-21)<sup>312</sup>

The two Hagar and Ishmael episodes are commonly explained as a literary “doublet,” that is, two independent narratives recalling the same event.<sup>313</sup> Source critics typically assigned Genesis 16 to J with P in vv. 1a, 3, 15-16 and Gen 21:8-21 to E.<sup>314</sup> They infer that a redactor modified the two accounts to accommodate the chronology and theological theme of the Abraham narrative (cf. MeEvenue 1975:64-80). Other critics, however, have questioned this source analysis by contending for the essential literary unit of each episode and, importantly, by demonstrating that Genesis 21 assumes a knowledge of and literary dependence on the prior narrative (Gen 16). Van Seters (1975:192-202) concluded that Genesis 21 is a literary variant that consciously made use of Genesis 16, simultaneously that it is not an independent account arising from an oral tradition. Alexander’s analysis explored eight significant differences and concluded that the stories are too dissimilar to be explained as modified reports of one

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<sup>312</sup> Both the positioning and the nature of the Hagar episodes point to their complexity and far-reaching effect upon the Abraham narrative. The reality is that the episodes of Hagar are their brevity might easily be subsumed in the Abraham cycle. Yet the messages proclaimed therein are distinct and specific (H. Gossai, *Power and Marginality, in the Abraham Narrative* [Lanham: University Press of America, Inc, 1995]). While the Hagar episodes traditionally have not generated significant attention in scholarly commentaries, more recently, under the feminist-literary works (cf. E. Fuchs, “The Literary Characterization of Mothers and Sexual Politics in the Hebrew Bible,” in *Feminist Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship*, ed. A. Y. Collins [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985], 117-36; S. P. Jeansonne, *The Women in Genesis: From Sarah to Potiphars Wife* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990]; S. J. Teubal, *Hagar the Egyptian: The Lost Tradition of the Matriarchs* [New York: Harper & Row, 1990]) and from the perspective of liberation theology (cf. E. Tamez, “The Woman who Complicated the History of Salvation,” in *New Eyes for Reading: Biblical and Theological Reflections by Women from the Third World*, eds. J. S. Pobee & B. von Wartenberg-Potter [Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986], 5-17), some important studies have been done.

<sup>313</sup> In her recent study of the doubled narrative and its role in the formation of critical method over the past three centuries, Aulikki Nahkola succinctly illustrates the nomenclature employed by scholars to describe the doubling of the Hagar stories of Genesis 16 and 21. For Astruc and Cassuto, the stories are referred to as “receptions”; for Gunkel they are “variants”; for the followers of Wellhausen they are “doublets,” while for Alter they represent a “type-scene.” See, Aulikki Nahkola, *Double Narratives in the Old Testament: The Foundation of Method in Biblical Criticism* BZAW 290 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2001), 164.

<sup>314</sup> Alexander’s the source analysis of Gen 16:1-16, however, points out the fact that the criteria employed in favor of assigning the two pericopes to J and E prove unconvincing. See, Alexander, *Abraham in the Negev*, 53-62.

event.<sup>315</sup>

Although such source-critical analyses of the Hagar episodes are plausible, we agree that the similarities between Gen 21:8-21 and the events in chapter 16 can hardly escape the attention of even the casual reader. Several connections between two episodes can be investigated at large. Above all, the title of ‘the angel of God’ in Gen 16:7 occurs in Gen 21:17, who also speaks from heaven to Hagar; in giving the promise of descendants, the angel’s language is authoritative like that of divine promises made earlier by God to Abraham. In Gen 16:11-12, the angel announces the pregnancy of Hagar, instructs her to name the child, and describes the hostility he and his descendants will manifest toward others. Similarly, God announces the birth of Isaac and directs Abraham to name the child (Gen 21:3; cf. Gen 17:19; 18:10). In this case, one may learn the fact that the author’s/the final composer’s close attention to the similarities in the details of the two episodes is perhaps best explained by the frequent use of foreshadowing in these narratives to draw connections between important narratives. In this sense, the Lord’s promise to Hagar (Gen 16:11-12) was recounted in a strikingly similar fashion to the actual fulfillment of the promise (Gen 21:18-21). Thus, the promise foreshadows the fulfillment. Verse 11 points forward by the similar play on Ishmael’s name in Gen 21:7, where both the mother and child bemoan their thirst (Gen 21:15-18). In addition, Hagar’s declaration of God as אֱלֹהֵי רָאִי (God of Sight, Gen 16:13a) and the naming of the well as בְּאֵר לַחַי רֹאִי (Beerlahairoi, v. 14) are verbally linked with Hagar’s miraculous sighting of the well (וַתִּרְאֶה, she saw, Gen

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<sup>315</sup> Ibid., 52-69: 1) the stories begin at different points; 2) the cause for the tension between Hagar and Sarah differs; 3) Abraham’s role differs in each event; 4) Hagar’s character differs significantly; 5) Hagar’s departures are dissimilar; 6) the well functions differently; 7) the names “Ishmael” and “Beerlahai-roi” are important to Gen ch. 16 but absent in Gen ch. 21; and 8) the conclusion of each episode differs.



21:19) in a sense of the pun “seeing.”<sup>316</sup> Finally, one may define some thematic similarity made by Garrett (2000:141-143), who views the two text as ‘a parallel epic’ in form and theme.

### 3.3.2.4.6. Human Plan for Blessing (Gen 16:1-16// Gen 3:6// 4:25// 12:3)

Genesis 16 alludes to three other important passages in Genesis: Gen 3:6; 4:25; 12:3. By bringing the events of Hagar and Abraham into the larger context of these other passages, the author/the final composer enlarges the reference of the story beyond Abraham and Hagar as individuals and ties their actions to the themes of the Pentateuch as a whole. The account of Sarah’s plan (Gen 16:1-6) to have a son has not only been connected with the list of nations in Genesis 15, but also appears to have been intentionally shaped with reference to the account of the Fall in Genesis 3. That is to say, the author/the final composer shows Sarah’s plan, like Eve’s scheme to be like God, to be an attempt to circumvent God’s plan of blessing in favor of gaining a blessing on her own. Sarah’s scheme was intended to head off that divine promise by supplying it with a human solution. Each of the main verbs (*wayyiqtol* forms) and key expressions in Gen 16:2-3 finds a parallel in Genesis 3.

Gen 16:2-3	Genesis 3
<p>... וַתֹּאמֶר שָׂרַי אֶל-אַבְרָם... 16:2a And Sarai said to Abram...</p>	<p>... וַתֹּאמֶר הָאִשָּׁה אֶל-הַנָּחָשׁ... 3:2a And the woman said to the serpent...</p>
<p>... וַיִּשְׁמַע אַבְרָם לְקוֹל שָׂרַי 16:2b and Abram heard to the voice of Sarai.</p>	<p>... כִּי-שָׁמַעְתָּ לְקוֹל אִשְׁתֶּךָ... 3:17 ...because you have heard to the voice of</p>

<sup>316</sup> S. Nikado, “Hagar and Ishmael as Literary Figures: An Intertextuality Study,” *VT* 51 (2001): 219-42.



	your wife...
16:3a וַתִּקַּח שָׂרַי אֵשֶׁת־אַבְרָם אֶת־הָגָר... And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar...	3:6a וַתִּקַּח מִפְּרִי וַתֹּאכַל... He took of the fruit and did eat...
16:3b וַתִּתֵּן אֹתָהּ לְאַבְרָם אִשָּׁה לוֹ לְאִשָּׁה and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife	3:6b וַתִּתֵּן גַּם לְאִשָּׁה עִמָּה... and gave also to her husband with her...
16:8 וַיֹּאמֶר הָגָר שִׁפְחַת שָׂרַי אֵי־מִזְוָה בָּאֵת וְאַנְהָ תֵּלְכִי And he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, where have you come from, and where are you going?	3:9... אֵיכָּה: ...where are you?
16:10 הַרְבֵּה אֲרַבְּהָ אֶת־זַרְעֲךָ... I will multiply your seed exceedingly... 16:11 הִנֵּךְ הָרָה וְיִלְדֶת בֶּן וְקָרָאת שְׁמוֹ יִשְׁמָעֵאל... Behold, you be with child, and shall bear a son, and shall call his name Ishmael 16:12 יָדוּ בְכָל יוֹד כָּל בּוֹ... his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him...	3:15 וְאִיבָהּ אִשִּׁית בֵּינֶךָ וּבֵין הָאִשָּׁה וּבֵין זַרְעֶךָ וּבֵין זַרְעָהּ הִיא יְשׁוּפֶךָ רֹאשׁ וְאַתָּה תְשׁוּפֶנּוּ עֶקֶב And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; it shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel

Sarah's scheme was intended to head off that divine promise by supplying it with a human solution. Meanwhile, these parallels establish an association between the Hagar episode and the Fall (Genesis 3), the repeated use of the verb קלל "curse" in Gen 16:4-5 appears also to mark an intentional association of the passage with the patriarchal blessing in Gen 12:3. It is mentioned twice within Gen 16:4-5 that Hagar the Egyptian "despised" Sarah, the very thing, which Gen 12:3 warned would end in God's curse (קלל / ארר, Gen 12:3). Furthermore, as in Gen 3:15, where a renewed hope of blessing was sounded amid the chords of despair, so also in Gen 16:10-12 the angel of the Lord offered a blessing to a distraught Hagar wandering through the wilderness.

Moreover, it is possible that the author/the final composer intends the narrative of

Sarah's barrenness to be read in the light of Eve's situation in Gen 4:25 where she gave birth to another son, Seth. The first words of Eve after the Fall raise many questions. Two diverse readings of the passage can be possible. First, in a way of positive impression it can be translated: "with the help of the Lord I have brought forth [or acquired] a man." Second, the other translation of it is in a sense of a less positive light: "I have created a man equally with the Lord" (cf. Cassuto, Genesis 1:201). Since throughout the narratives of Genesis, a recurring theme is that of the attempt and failure of human effort in obtaining a blessing that only God can give, the latter interpretation is more likely, though the immediate context offers little help to decide between two such diverse readings of the passage. God continually promised a person a blessing, and that person pushed it aside in favor of his or her own attempts at the blessing (e.g., the story of the building of Babylon in Genesis 11). In particular, Eve's situation brings to mind that of Sarah's attempt to achieve the blessing through her handmaiden Hagar. Just as Sarah had tried to bring about the fulfillment of God's promised "seed" (Gen 16:1-4) on her own, so also Eve's words expressed her confidence in her own ability to fulfill the promise of a "seed" to crush the head of the serpent in Gen 3:15.

### **3.3.2.5. Covenant with Abraham (Gen 17:1-18:15)**

#### **3.3.2.5.1. Structure**

The pericope of Gen 17:1-27 begins with the marking of Abraham's age "ninety-nine years old" (Gen 17:1, 24) forms an *inclusio* around the episode of Gen 17:1-27. The major section, the theophanic revelation (vv. 1b-22) dominates the passage, which can

be divided into three parts: the announcement of the general promise of many progeny (vv. 1b-8), instructions pertaining to the “sign” of the circumcision<sup>317</sup> (vv. 9-14), and the explanation of the covenant promise of the individual heir (vv. 15-22). Furthermore, this unit also consists of five divine speeches (vv. 1b-2, 3b-8, 9-14, 15-16, 19-21) and two responses by Abraham (vv. 17, 18).<sup>318</sup> The structure, thus, can be arranged as follows:

- Introduction: Abraham’s age (v. 1a)
- The Lord’s appearance (v. 1b)
- Lord’s self-identification (אֱלֹהִים) and preamble (vv. 1c-2)
- Abraham’s response: collapses (v. 3a)
- Lord: the renaming for Abraham and divine promise (vv. 3b-8)
- Lord: Sign of circumcision and obligations (vv. 9-14)**
- Lord: the renaming for Sarah and divine promise (vv. 15-16)
- Abraham’s response: collapses, laughs, and offers Ishmael (vv. 17-18)
- Lord’s rebuttal: future for Isaac and Ishmael (vv. 19-21)
- The Lords’ ascension (v. 22)
- Conclusion: Abraham’s and Ishmael’s age (vv. 23<sup>319</sup>-27)<sup>320</sup>

The introductory episode of Gen 18:1-15 elevates Abraham and Sarah as the appointed

<sup>317</sup> Van Seters, *Abraham in History*, 286.

<sup>318</sup> The first speech to Abraham, which is as a summary introduction to the second speech establishes the interpretive boundaries for the rest of the pericope representing the making of a covenant between the Lord and Abraham with regard to the promise of abundant descendants. The second speech is marked by the reintroduction of the clause “and God said” (וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים, v. 3b; וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים, vv. 9, 15). The third divine speech extends to the covenant of offspring to include Isaac and consequently excludes Ishmael identifying that the descendants of Abraham who are heirs of the covenant are those through Sarah, namely the offspring of Isaac. In this respect, God’s words to Abraham concerning Isaac in Genesis 17 already anticipated the reiteration of these words in the covenant with Isaac in Gen 26:3b. See, Sailhamer, “Genesis,” 137-41.

<sup>319</sup> V. 23 which depicts the inauguration of circumcision can be included in this unit since there is a similar description concerning the circumcision of Abraham’s family (v. 24-25). Thus, it is not necessary to eliminate this verse from the concluding section in the structure.

<sup>320</sup> Wenham in this structure presents the similarities with Genesis 16 in the opening and closing time references, namely Gen 17:1a, 24-27 and Gen 16:1,16, and in the content of the main section, that is, five divine speeches with Abraham’s two responses and four angelic speeches (Gen 16:8a, 9, 10, 11-12) with Hagar’s two comments (Gen 16:8b, 13). See, Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 16-8.

couple for future blessing; Abraham is the perfect host (Gen 18:1b-8), and Sarah is the subject of divine announcement (Gen 18:9-15).

- I. Introduction to the theophany (18:1a)
- II. Abraham the host (18:1b-8)
  - Abraham hosts the three visitors (18:1b-2)
  - Abraham's dialogue with the visitors (18:3-5)
  - Abraham and Sarah prepare the meal (18:6-8)
- III. Annunciation of Isaac's birth (18:9-15)
  - The Lord reveals Sarah will give birth (18:9-10a)
  - The Lord dialogues with Abraham and Sarah (18:10b-15)

Gen 18:1b-8, which delineates the arrival of three men at Abraham's tent is complicated by several uncertainties within the text: 1) the relationship between the three men and the appearance of the Lord (Gen 17:1a) is not explicitly explained; 2) there appears to be a conscious shift in the verbal forms between verse 3 (all masculine singular, including pronouns) and verses 4-9 (masculine plural); 3) there is the question of the nature of the relationship between the uncertainties just raised in chapter 18 and their apparent counterparts in Genesis 19 (e.g., the relationship between the "two angels" or "messengers," in Gen 19:1). Such features have left the impression that the text of these chapters has come down to us in a highly irregular and uneven form, leading many to suppose that more than one version of the story lies behind the present narrative (cf. Gunkel [1910] 1977:194).

Throughout the narrative the apparent irregularities in the text can be seen not as the result of a haphazard weaving together of divergent stories, but as the result of the author's/the final composer's careful balancing of two central theological positions with respect to the divine presence and power. Such irregularities as exist in the

narrative are best understood as the result of a conscious attempt to stress at one and the same time the theological relevance of the promise of God's presence along with his transcendent, sovereign power. Thus, the final unevenness of the narrative should be traced to the author's/the final composer's struggle to remain faithful to the central theological constraints of his task, namely, the need to reconcile two equally important views of God. In this sense, the close similarities between the two introductory sections (Gen 18:1-3 and 19:1-2) that the narratives should be explored further for clues regarding their interrelationship, will be presented below in the section of The Parallels Between Genesis 18 and 19 (see, p. 188).

The pericope of constitutes a larger literary unit with the annunciation of Isaac's birth (Gen 17:19-22) and its fulfillment (Gen 21:1-3). In this context, Gen 18:1-15 plays a bridge between these pericopes.<sup>321</sup> In addition, although Gen 18:1-15 does not appear to contribute to the tension of the Sodom (Genesis 18-19) narrative, the resemblances in setting, vocabulary, and narration between Gen 18:1-15 and Genesis 19 (esp. vv. 1-3) lead to the conclusion that chaps 18-19 are "a deliberate literary composition" (Mathews 2005:210).<sup>322</sup>

### **3.3.2.5.2. Abrahamic/Noahic Covenant (Gen 17// Genesis 6-9)**

The covenant of circumcision shares important features with the Noahic covenant (esp. Gen 6:18; 9:8-17). Genesis 17 employs the same literary form of covenant and share

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<sup>321</sup> R. Alter, "Sodom as Nexus: The Web of Design in Biblical Narrative," in *The Book and the Text: The Bible and Literary Theory* (Cambridge & Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 146-60.

<sup>322</sup> Cf. R. I. Letellier, *Day in Mamre, Night in Sodom: Abraham and Lot in Genessi 18-19* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), 30-70. The textual relationship between Genesis 18 and 19 will be presented below.

many covenant terms (Gen 9:8-17):<sup>323</sup> the covenants are patterned after a royal land grant; covenant אִוֶּת ('sign') are established (Gen 9:12-13,17; 17:11)<sup>324</sup>; the covenants are described as בְּרִית עוֹלָם ('everlasting' or 'eternal' covenant, Gen 9:12, 16; 17:7-8, 13, 19); and they share covenant vocabulary, "establish a covenant" (מָקַם בְּרִית, and variations; Gen 6:18; 9:9, 11, 17; 17:7, 19, 21; cf. Exod 6:4), "give a covenant" (נָתַן בְּרִית, Gen 9:12; 17:2; cf. Num 25:12), and a covenant "between me and you (pl.)" (בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיכֶם, Gen 9:12,15; 17:2, 7, 10, 11; Exod 31:13). In addition the observations stated above, there are further parallels between the covenants: the benefit, which each covenant brings for those with whom it is established is that they shall not be cut off (Gen 9:11; 17:14); the divine command in Gen 17:1, 'walk' (הִתְהַלֵּךְ) and 'blameless, perfect' (תָּמִים) correspond to the same words describing Noah in Gen 6:9<sup>325</sup>, 'blameless in his generation; Noah walked with God.' The word תָּמִים (blameless) is found only on these two occasions in the whole of Genesis. This list of similarities highlights the close parallels, which exist between the two covenants.

### 3.3.2.6. Abraham's Intercession for Sodom and Lot (Gen 18:16-19:38)

#### 3.3.2.6.1. Structure

The pericope of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 18:16-19:29) is closely

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<sup>323</sup> For Genesis 'covenant' occurs twenty-seven times, eight of those in the flood narrative (Gen 6:18; 9:9, 11-13, 15-17) and sixteen times in the Abraham narratives (Gen 15:18; 17:2, 4, 7 [2x], 9-11, 13 [2x], 14, 19 [2x]), especially pertaining to the rite of circumcision as a sign (Gen 17:9-14).

<sup>324</sup> In the case of Noah it is the rainbow (Gen 9:12-14), and in the case of Abraham it is circumcision (Gen 17:11). The rainbow is related to rain, which in turn would remind the people of the flood. Circumcision relates to the procreation of descendants, which is a point of emphasis in the covenant of Genesis 17.

<sup>325</sup> According to source theory, both pericopes are from the P material and so too the Enoch verses. For some critics this affords evidence of a flashback technique consciously employed. See, McEvenue, *Narrative Style of the Priestly Writer*, 39.

integrated. G. Wenham has presented the following analysis.<sup>326</sup>

1. Abraham's visitors look toward Sodom (18:16)
2. Divine reflections on Abraham and Sodom (18:17-21)
3. Abraham pleads for Sodom (19:1-3)
4. Angels arrive in Sodom (19:1-3)
5. Assault on Lot and his visitors (19:4-11)
- 6. Destruction of Sodom announced (19:12-13)**
7. Lot's sons-in-law reject his appeal (19:14)
8. Departure from Sodom (19:15-16)
9. Lot pleads for Zoar (19:17-22)
10. Sodom and Gomorrah destroyed (19:23-26)
11. Abraham looks toward Sodom (19:27-28)
- Summary (19:29)

As Wenham mentioned, the structure “is enhanced by the outer panels. Genesis 18-19 begins with the promise of Isaac’s birth (Gen 18:1-15) and closes with the story of the birth of Lot’s sons (Gen 19:30-38), thus enhancing the concentric organization of these two chapters.”<sup>327</sup> This literary device of imitation between parts of a composition is accepted by all for Genesis 18-19.

### **3.3.2.6.2. Sodom-Lot Episodes (Gen 18-19) and the Flood Narrative (Gen 6-9)**

Similarities between the story of Sodom’s destruction and the flood narrative have been noted. In thematic parallels, one may find many verbal similarities between the episodes. Abraham’s “going” (הלך) with them” in Gen 18:16 evokes Gen 6:9, “Noah walked (הלך) with God.” Noah’s righteousness (Gen 6:9; 7:1) is similar to Abraham’s

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<sup>326</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 41.

<sup>327</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.



teaching his family to do righteousness (Gen 18:19) and his argument for the sparing of Sodom on the presence of “righteous” in Sodom (Gen 18:23-32). We read the Lord’s self-reflection on righteousness in Gen 18:17-21, likewise the same phenomenon in Gen 6:5-8 (cf. Gen 6:11-13), where the Lord himself brings sanctions against all humanity because of their cooperative depravity. The word, שָׁחַת (“ruin”) is a key verb describing the destruction in both accounts (Gen 6:13, 17; 9:11, 15; 18:28, 31-32; 19:13-14, 29). The angel’s action in putting out their hand and bringing Lot back inside the house, shutting the door in Gen 19:10 (וַיִּבְיֵאוּ, “brought in” and סָגְרוּ, “shut”) is akin to that in Gen 8:9 Noah put out his hand and brought the dove into the safety of the ark, and in Gen 7:16 the Lord shut the door of the ark (בָּאוּ, “going in” and וַיִּסְגֹּר, “shut”).

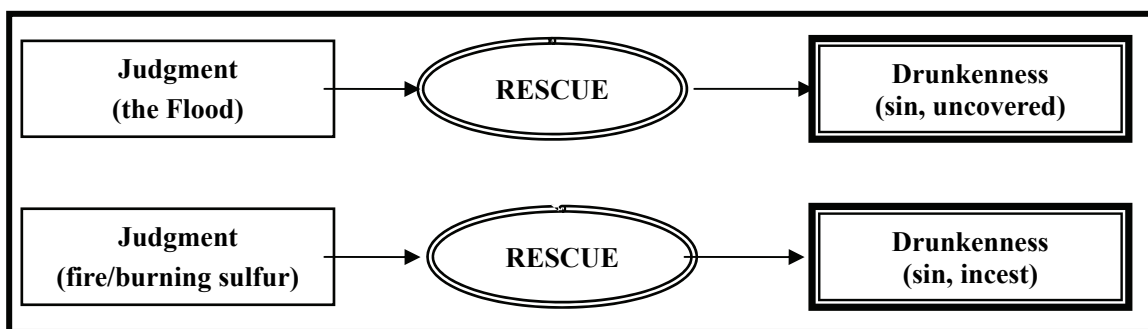
In addition, there are divine forewarning and instructions for escape (Gen 6:13-22; 19:15-22), and one family alone is preserved (Gen 7:21-23; 19:15, 25-29). In Gen 19:12-13,15-16 we read the angel’s warning Lot in the evening and then making him leave next morning; and in Gen 6:13-22 and 7:1-4 similarly we read God’s first warning Noah of the need to build and enter the ark before commanding him to enter. Both stories report the similar list of escapers: Lot, his wife, and his two daughters and Noah, his wife, his sons, and their wives. In Gen 19:19 we read מִצָּא עֲבָדָהּ חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ in Noah’s pleading with angels, we read a similar idiom phrase, חֵן בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה in Gen 6:19-20. In both stories, the Lord’s making rain (מִמָּטֵר, “rained” brimstone) and מִמָּטֵר, (“rained” floodwaters), occurs in Gen 7:4 and 19:24.<sup>328</sup> The phrase, וַיִּזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת־אֲבָרָהָם (“God remembered Lot”) in Gen 19:29 parallels to the phrase וַיִּזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת־נֹחַ (“God remembered Noah”) in Gen 8:1a since the Lord

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<sup>328</sup> See, Clark, “Flood and the Structure,” 184-211, esp. 194-95, and I. M. Kikawada, “Noah and the Ark,” 1129-130.

delivers Noah and Lot.<sup>329</sup> Both concern sexual improprieties as reason for the disaster (Gen 6:1-4; 19:1-11) and there is drunkenness by the survivor, which results in family shame (Ham’s sin, Gen 9:22-23; Lot’s incest, Gen 19:30-38). Finally, there are many shared lexical items: Also, each of the two narratives – the Noah account and the Sodom and Gomorrah – possesses a chiasmic structure as presented above.<sup>330</sup> These resemblances between two pericopes suggest that they are being deliberately exploited by the author/the final composer of Genesis.

Finally, in Gen 19:29-38 the author/the final composer is free to recount the events of the final days of Lot, events which cast Lot in a very different light. In tragic irony, a drunk Lot carried out the very act, which he himself had suggested to the men of Sodom (Gen 19:8) – he lay with his own daughters. The account is remarkably similar to the story of the last days of Noah after his rescue from the Flood (9:20-27). There, as here, the patriarch became drunk with wine and uncovered himself in the presence of his children. In both narratives, the act had grave consequences.



Thus, at the close of the two great narratives of divine judgment, the Flood and the

<sup>329</sup> See, Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 42-43. He also mentions that Lot’s salvation is the consequence of the patriarch’s intercession (59).

<sup>330</sup> For the structural analysis, see, Anderson, “From Analysis to Synthesis,” 23-29.

destruction of Sodom, those who were saved from God’s wrath subsequently fell into a form of sin reminiscent of those who died in the judgment. This is a common theme in the prophetic literature (e.g., Isa 55;66; Mal 1).

### 3.3.2.6.3. Parallels (Gen 18// Gen 19)

Gen 18:1-15 plays as an introduction, which supplies the necessary background information of a literary unit, Gen 18:1-19:29. Most critics have proposed so many parallels between the two chapters in focusing on parallel language. Letellier (1995:30-70) presents the most compelling case of parallels for the literary unit of Genesis 18-19. expands the levels of correlation to similar settings, motifs, and actions. On this basis, he demonstrates how this literary device reinforces the narrative movement from the initial actions in Genesis 18 to their denouement in Genesis 19. A representative sampling of the parallels between the two episodes here is sufficient, as the following table shows.<sup>331</sup>

Text (Genesis 18)	Contents	Text (Genesis 19)
וְהוּא יֹשֵׁב פֶּתַח הָאֵהָל Abraham was sitting at the entrance to his tent (v. 1)	Sitting place	וְלוֹט יֹשֵׁב בְּשַׁעַר-סְדֹם Lot was sitting in the gateway of Sodom (v. 1)
וַיֵּרָא וַיָּרֶץ לְקִרְיָתָם when he saw them, he hurried toward them (v. 2)	Seeing and meeting visitors	וַיֵּרָא-לוֹט וַיָּקָם לְקִרְיָתָם when Lot saw them, he got up to meet them (v. 1)

<sup>331</sup> Cf. Letellier, *Day in Mamre*, 64-66 and Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 40-45.

וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אֲרָצָה and bowed himself toward the ground (v. 2)	Making a bow to visitors <sup>332</sup>	וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אִפְּיִם אֲרָצָה he bowed himself with his face toward the ground (v. 1)
אַל-נָא תַעֲבֹר מֵעַל עַבְדֶּךָ please do not pass your servant by (v. 3)	Pleading for having the visitors	נָא אַל-בֵּית עַבְדְּכֶם Please turn aside to your servants house (v. 2)
וַרְחֲצוּ רַגְלֵיכֶם וְהִשְׁעֵנוּ and wash your feet and rest yourself (v. 4)	Taking a rest	וַרְחֲצוּ רַגְלֵיכֶם and wash your feet (v. 2)
אַחַר תַּעֲבְרוּ afterwards you can go on (v. 5)	Inviting them to sleep over	וְהִלַּכְתֶּם לְדַרְכְּכֶם and go on your ways (v. 2)
עַל-עַבְדְּכֶם כִּי-עָלִינוּ עִבְרָתָם For this is why you have come to your servant	The reason for hospitality	כִּי-עָלִינוּ בְּאוּרָבְכָם for they have come under my roof for this reason (v. 8)
He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them (v. 8)	Giving them hospitality	He prepared a meal for them, baking bread without yeast (v. 3)
וַיֹּאכְלוּ they ate (v. 8)	Dining	וַיֹּאכְלוּ they ate (v. 3)
אַיִה שְׂרָה אִשְׁתְּךָ Where is Sarah your wife? (v. 9)	Questions	אַיִה הָאֲנָשִׁים Where are the men? (v. 5)
וַחֲצַחַק שְׂרָה Sarah laughed (צחק, <i>qal</i> , vv. 12,13,15)	Laughing	וַיְהִי כַמְצַחַק בְּעֵינֵי חֲתָנָיו his sons-in-law thought he was joking (צחק, <i>piel</i> , v. 14)
זַעֲקַת סֹדֶם וְעִמּוֹרָה כִּי-רַבָּה the outcry against Sodom/Gomorrah is so great (vv. 20-21)	Outcry	כִּי-גְדֹלָה צַעֲקָתָם The cry of them is great (v. 13)
Abraham's plea for Sodom (vv. 23-32)	Plea	Lot's plea for Zoar (vv. 18- 22)

<sup>332</sup> “The effect of these unmistakable similarities between two accounts is to highlight the one primary difference between them: the way the visitors are greeted. Abraham addressed the visitors as “Lord” and appropriately used the singular to address all three men in verse 3. Lot, however, addressed the visitors as “lords” and thus used the plural to address the two angels/men. The reason for making this difference here is that the author/the final composer wants the reader to see that Abraham, who had just entered the covenant (Genesis 17), recognized the Lord when he appeared to him, whereas Lot, who now lived in Sodom, did not recognize the Lord. The lives of the two men continue to offer a contrast” (Sailhamer, *Pentateuch as Narrative*, 161-65).

ספה (gal) sweep away (vv. 23,24)	Destruction	ספה (niph'al) sweep away (v. 13)
להמית to slay/put to death (v. 25)	Death	ומתי and I die (v. 19).
ונשאתי לכל המקום בעבורם Then I will spare all the place for their sakes (v. 26)	Assent to the request	נשאתי פניך I will grant this request (v. 21)
אהל tent (vv. 6,9,10)	Dwelling types	וישב במערה הוא ושתי בנותיו he dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters (vv. 30-38)
המכסה אני מאברהם אשר אני עשה Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do (v. 17)	The divine plan	וישלחנו יהוה לשחתה The Lord has sent us to destroy it (v. 13)
The Lord promises mercy to the few righteous (vv. 26-32)	God's mercy	Lot receives mercy (vv. 16,21-23,29)
The Lord will judge the guilty (vv. 21b,26-32)	Judgment	The Lord destroys the cities and Lot's wife (vv. 24-26)

These interesting similarities suggest that the two pericopes are correlated at the levels of similar settings, motifs, and actions.

Moreover, Genesis 18 is an extensively developed narrative showing clear signs of theological reflection at several key points. The issues that appear to be central to the pericope – the announcement of Isaac's birth and the question of the fate of the righteous amid divine judgment – are dealt with not only in this episode but also in Genesis 17 (announcement of Isaac's birth) and 19 (fate of the righteous amid divine judgment).

Genesis 17	Genesis 18	Genesis 19
The announcement of the birth of Isaac	The announcement of the birth of Isaac/ the question of the fate of the righteous amid divine judgment	The question of the fate of the righteous amid divine judgment

The author's/the final composer's treatment of these two themes in chapter 18, however, shows his concern to push beyond a mere reporting of the events to develop them into a lesson in theology. In the meantime, that the whole chapter of Genesis 18 is to be understood within the context of the Lord's appearance to Abraham can be seen in the final verse (v. 33), which recounts that after he had finished speaking, "the Lord went away." Elsewhere, the conclusion of the expression "the Lord/God appeared" is marked by a brief notice of the Lord's departure (cf. Gen 17:1b, 22a; 35:9, 13).

	Genesis 17	Genesis 18	Genesis 35
Started speaking	וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה אֶל-אַבְרָם 1b	וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו יְהוָה 1a	וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶל-יַעֲקֹב 9a
Finished speaking	וַיַּעַל אֱלֹהִים מֵעַל אַבְרָהָם 22a	וַיֵּלֶךְ יְהוָה 33a	וַיַּעַל מֵעַלְיוֹ אֱלֹהִים 13a

As Wenham pointed out, Genesis 18 and 19:1-22 are told in two parallel panels. In this regard, McEvenue drew attention to the use of this literary technique combined with a broad palistrophe in Genesis 17 as presented earlier section. It is striking that the same combination of techniques, palistrophe and parallel panel-writing, is found in the successive chapters, although according to traditional source analysis, Genesis 17 is commonly treated as a literary unity coming from the Priestly writer (P) because of its legislation of circumcision and the chapter's "P-like" vocabulary (e.g., "*El Shaddai*," "confirm" a covenant), whereas Genesis 18-19 are assigned to the Yahwist excepting 19:29 (P).<sup>333</sup>

<sup>333</sup> McEvenue, *Narrative Style of the Priestly Writer* is cited by Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 44.

### 3.3.2.7. Jeopardy and Separation (Gen 20:1-21:34)

#### 3.3.2.7.1. Structure and Textual Links

The narratives largely fall into three main sections: the story of Sarah in Abimelech's harem (Gen 20:1-18), the story of Abraham's and Ishmael's parting (Gen 21:1-21), and the conclusion of the Abimelech story leading to peace and success (Gen 21:22-34).<sup>334</sup>

Gen 20:1-18, which depicts the story of the abduction of Sarah by Abimelech, in turn, can be divided by the introduction (vv. 1-2), the two main parts (vv. 3-7 and vv. 8-17a) and the conclusion (vv. 17b-18). The introduction provides the background for making sense of the two main sections. In the main parts, the first one, which occurs during the night, the dream segment carefully forms a chiasmic pattern, and the second one, which occur during the day (in the morning), the encounter segment shapes parallel panels. The conclusion consists of the final two verses (vv. 17b-18), confirming Abraham as prophetic mediator whose prayer results in God healing the Abimelech household.<sup>335</sup>

**First section:** Introduction (20:1-2): Abraham – Abimelech (deception and abduction in Gerar)

**Second section** (20:3-7): God-Abimelech encounter in a dream by night

- A you are as good as dead (v. 3)
- B you have taken a man's wife<sup>336</sup> (v. 3)
- C Abimelech had not gone near her (v. 4)
- D Abimelech claims to be innocent (v. 4)
- E with a clear conscience (v. 5)

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<sup>334</sup> Cf. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis* II.334-61 and Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, 161. For the textual interrelationship between Gen 20:1-21:34 and 12:10-13:18, see, pp. 145 in this study.

<sup>335</sup> Cf. Alexander, *Abraham in the Negev*, 39 and *Literary Analysis*, 150. He proposes parallel panels between vv. 8-13 and vv. 14-17a but admits it is "less obvious."

<sup>336</sup> Within Gen 20:1-18, the key word "his wife Sarah" (v. 2, 3) and "Abraham's wife Sarah" (v. 18) forms an inclusio.

- F God said to him in a dream (v. 6)
- E' with a clear conscience (v. 6)
- D' God kept him from sinning (v. 6)
- C' I did not let you touch her (v. 6)
- B' Restore the man's wife (v. 7)
- A' You shall live; if not you shall die (v. 7)

**Third section (20:8-17a): Abraham-Abimelech encounter by day (morning)**

- A Abimelech reveals his dream to his servants (v. 8)
- B Abimelech questions Abraham (v. 9)
- C Abimelech again questions Abraham (v. 10)
- D Abraham explains his actions (vv. 11-13)
- A' Abimelech gives Abraham gifts (v. 14)
- B' Abimelech offers Abraham land (v. 15)
- C' Abimelech vindicates Sarah (v. 16)
- D' Abraham prays for Abimelech (v. 17a)

**Fourth section (Gen 20:17b-18): God – Abimelech (prayer and restoration)**

The relationship of this pericope (Gen 20:1-18) to the “wife-sister” tradition (Gen 12:10-20; 13:1; 20:1-18; 26:1-13) has been observed in our earlier discussion (pp. 150-155) in the present study. We concluded that although the three narratives are not duplicates from parallel sources but three originally independent accounts by one author who consciously penned each within the larger patriarchal framework so as to provide three complementary pictures of three similar events in the lives of the patriarchs, simultaneously, shouldn't be ignored the textual resemblances between the narratives.

In the present story the author/the final composer dwells on two features that are passed over quickly in the other two accounts: 1) the foreign ruler's discovery of the deception (Gen 20:3-7; 12:17; 26:8); 2) the confrontation between Abraham and the



ruler (Gen 20:8-16; 12:18-19; 26:9-10).<sup>337</sup> In the literary context of Genesis, many view Gen 20:1-18 as the beginning of an independent narrative tradition regarding Abraham and Gerar that concluded with the treaty at Beersheba (Gen 21:22-34).<sup>338</sup> In particular, Coats (1983:189,193) observes the parallel between Gen 20:1-18; 21:22-34 and Isaac's encounter with the Philistines (Gen 26:1-17; 26:17-33) as part of the narrative tradition pertaining to the king of Gerar. In this sense, it might possible that the author/the final composer interspersed the Abraham-at-Gerar narrative (Gen 20:1-18; 21:22-34) in the promised heir narrative in which the birth of Isaac (Gen 21:1-7) originally followed on Gen 18:1-15. The abrupt transition after Gen 20:17-18 (Abraham's prayer for the household of Abimelech) to Isaac's birth (Gen 21:1-7) led scholars to regard it an interruption in the Abraham-at-Gerar account (cf. Thompson 1987:57, 96-97).<sup>339</sup> However, the difficulty in this line of argument is the linkage chap. 20 evidences with the Abraham narrative and the immediate context of Genesis 18-19 and 21 as investigated in the earlier observation. The chapter is not loosely connected with its context. As we discussed above, it is clear that the author of Genesis 20 knows of Genesis 18-19 as they now appear.

Gen 20:1-18 continues the Sodom story (Genesis 18-19) by a geographical reference (Mamre [Hebron] – Gen 18:1; 19:27; cf. Gen 13:18; 14:13) and by addressing many of the same motifs. In the motifs, the motif of a traveling alien (*gēr*, a soundalike Gerar [*gērār*]), which dominant in Genesis 18-19 is reintroduced by Abraham's movement

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<sup>337</sup> Alexander, *literary Analysis*, 157-58, id., *Abraham in the Negev*, 42; id., "Wife/Sister Incidents?" 145-53.

<sup>338</sup> Coats, *Genesis*, 149, 155; T. L. Thompson, *The Origin Tradition of Ancient Israel*, 57, 96-97; Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition*, 185.

<sup>339</sup> Thompson contends that Gen 20:1-18 had no original relationship to any earlier Abraham narrative; the year's interim before the birth of Isaac (Gen 18:10, 14) provide the redactor opportunity to include the Gerar episode.

toward Gerar (Gen 20:1). The question of divine justice toward the “righteous” and “wicked” (Gen 18:23-32; 19:7), pertains to the fate of an “innocent” (צַדִּיק, Gen 20:4), which is central to the dream scene (Gen 20:3-7). The motif is addressed in the setting of a private dialogue between God and Abraham (Genesis 18) or Abimelech (Genesis 20). The motif of anxiety over “life”/“death” (Gen 19:19, 20) and to “preserve” one’s legacy (Gen 19:32,34) reappears in the dream sequence when the Lord declares Abimelech a “dead” man (Gen 20:3) whose life and legacy can only be spared by the prophet Abraham (vv. 3, 7, 17).<sup>340</sup> At this point, one should note the correlation between Gen 20:1-18 with Isaac’s birth (Gen 21:1-7). This suggests that the common feature is the healing of the barren women at Gerar (Gen 20:17-18) and the immediate pregnancy of Sarah (Gen 21:1-2). In this sense, one may propose that the juxtaposition of Sarah’s pregnancy with the outcome of Abraham’s prayer for the Gerarites suggest that the patriarch’s intercession shows that the blessing for Abraham’s descendants also extends to the nations (Gen 12:3). Thus, it is difficult to view the two narratives (Gen 20:1-18 and 21:1-7) as originally unrelated, since one can find that Gen 21:1-7 has many literary allusion to Genesis 20.

In addition, this fact can be verified in a sense of structural framework. Indeed, the narratives about the jeopardy of the matriarch in the foreign harems form an inner

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<sup>340</sup> In these verses, Abraham is explicitly called a “prophet.” In Genesis 15, the author/the final composer goes to great lengths to cast him in that role. In fact, in Gen 19:15-16 the author/the final composer reminds the reader that Lot’s rescue was an answer to Abraham’s prayer (Genesis 18). The point of Gen 19:17-22, which depicts Lot’s flight to Zoar is that in spite of the destruction of Sodom, Abraham’s prayer was answered at Zoar (cf. the picture of Abraham in this passage and Moses in the battle with Amalekites in Exod 17:11-12). Gen 19:29 is a clear reminder of the role of Abraham in Lot’s rescue. In Genesis 20 and 21, where focus on the relationship between Abraham and nations, Abraham’s role is a prophetic intercessors, as in the promise “in you all the families of the earth will be blessed” (Gen 12:3). He prayed for the Philistines (Gen 20:7), God healed them (v. 17). Thus, the author/the final composer is carrying through with the theme of God’s promise in Abraham and his seed (Gen 12:3).

frame around the Abraham narrative before the transition to the next cycle in Gen 22:20-25:11. After the divine promises pertaining to the seed, the land and a great nation, Sarah is immediately jeopardized by Abraham’s deception in Pharaoh’s harem. Now, immediately before the birth of the promised seed, Isaac, the ancestress is endangered by another ruse of her husband in Abimelech’s palace (Waltke 2001:285).

The Abraham Cycle (Gen 11:27-25:11)			
<b>The initial call to the promise of heir (12:1-3)</b>	Fist jeopardy of the promise (12:10-20)	Second jeopardy of the promise (20:1-18)	<b>The fulfillment of the promise of heir, Isaac’s birth (21:1-7)</b>

Thus, one may affirm that the pericope is structurally integrated in coherent scheme by author/the final composer with the earlier narratives in the Abraham cycle.

Gen 21:1-34 can customarily divided into the three distinct sections that are generally believed to be self-contained by critics: the nativity of Isaac and circumcision (vv. 1-7)<sup>341</sup>, the story of the feast and Hagar’s and Ishmael’s expulsion (vv. 8-21)<sup>342</sup>, and the account of the treaty at Beersheba (vv. 22-34). In the structural context, the second section (vv. 8-21), in turn, falls into the three settings in this pericope: the first setting,

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<sup>341</sup> Source critics view vv. 1-7 as a combination of two or three sources (J – vv. 1a, 2a, 6-7; P – 1b, 2b-5; particularly, for Westermann J – vv. 1-2, 6-7 and P – vv. 3-5, cf. Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 331, 333. However, one may not accept this theory of the two different sources for the textual relevance in both external and internal textual evidences: 1) as stated in earlier section (in p. 194), vv. 1-7 has many allusions to Genesis 20. Isaac’s postponed birth (vv. 1-7) by the intervening threat of Sarah’s abduction (Genesis 20) provides narrative tension and theologically reaffirm that the child was a miracle achieved by God. Most interestingly, the birth of Isaac and the rivalry with Ishmael (vv. 1-21) appear between two Abimelech episodes (Genesis 20; Gen 21:22-34), imputing a broader significance to Isaac’s birth. In the internal relationship, the repetition in v. 1 (“he had said”//“he had promised”) is a parallelism emphasizing the fulfillment of the divine promise, not the evidence of two different sources. Moreover, the repetition of the birth and naming of Isaac in vv. 2-3 is the result of adhering to set formulas rather than the consequence of two sources. See, Alexander, *Abraham in the Negev*, 62-65.

<sup>342</sup> For the relationship between this section (vv. 8-21) and Gen 16:1-16, see the section of “The Hagar and Ishmael episode (Genesis 16) and Gen 21:8-21” above in p. 175-77.

telling of the banquet celebration and provision for Isaac (vv. 8-13), the second setting, describing the expulsion and deliverance of Hagar and Ishmael (vv. 14-19), and the third setting, reporting desert life and marriage of Ishmael (vv. 20-21). In addition, the first setting consists of the two speeches: Sarah (vv. 8-10) and God (vv. 11-13). The second setting may be divided into two units: Hagar and Ishmael's expelling to the desert (vv. 14-15) and God's deliverance of them in the desert. Finally, the last section (vv. 22-34) consists of one scene (vv. 22-3), depicting the three speeches by Abimelech and Abraham's response, and the geographical notice of Abraham's stay as concluding note (cf. Wenham 1994:90). In the larger structural context of the pericope, one may find three inclusions framed the narrative. The first inclusion is the time reference, "at that time" (v. 22) and "for a long time" (v. 32). The second one is the approach and departure of Abimelech and Phical (vv. 22, 32). The final inclusion can be found in vv. 23 and 33, where depicts the acknowledgement of God.

Critics traditionally assigned Gen 21:8-21 to the Elohist (E), which contain a number of features that either resemble closely or presuppose a knowledge of Gen 22:1-14, 19 attributed to E.<sup>343</sup> In this sense, some links can be represented: 1) the angel's calling from heaven (Gen 21:17//22:11); 2) the discovery of the well and ram (Gen 21:19//22:13); 3) the geographical references to Beersheba (Gen 21:31, 32//22:19); and 4) the references to Isaac as Abraham's only son (Gen 21:14ff.// 22, especially vv. 2, 16). Further, David Dorsey, assisting his student David Carr, suggests that this episode representing the birth of Isaac opens up a new unit featuring Isaac (Gen 21:8) and

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<sup>343</sup> Alexander, *Abraham in the Negev*, 82-83. However, as Alexander admitted, the examination of the source analysis of Gen 21:8-21 are unsatisfactory. He stated that "If uncertainty exists regarding the attribution of Gen 21:8-21 to E, there remains no reason to assign Genesis 22 to E on the basis of similarities between the two chapters." Yet, the existing similarities between the two episodes is beyond the source analysis for them.

displaying the constituent episodes and narrative segments, which contains thirteen parts arranged in a conspicuous symmetry including most having well-marked introduction and conclusion. This chiasmic structure shows much of the repetition and positioning of episodes. One can find the two well-matched stories of the family tragic strife that resulted in the expulsion of one of the two sons in the family (Gen 21:8-13 and 27:1-28:4). Secondly, there are the two brief stories about the marriages of the non-chosen elder son to foreign women (an Egyptian and the Hittite) in Gen 21:20-21 and 26:34-35. Finally, one may find another textual resemblance in the two stories of making covenant with Abimelech at Beersheba. The episodes delineate the two treaties with Abimelech of Gerar and Phicol, involving Abraham's wells and the town of Beersheba.<sup>344</sup>

### **3.3.2.8. Divine Promissory Commands and Abraham's Obedience (Gen 22:1-19)**

#### **3.3.2.8.1. Structure and Textual Links**

The Abraham narrative (Gen 11:27-25:11), a pericopes devoted to the growth of Abraham's faith within the context of the divine call and promise to make him into a great nation, now reaches its denouement. On the one hand, this episode presents the radical nature of true faith: tremendous demands and incredible blessings (Waltke 2001:301) in content. On the other hand, the manner in which the narrative has been together evidence great literary artistry in structure. Two factors unite to make the case. First, the literary arrangement of the passage features particularly rich in complexity

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<sup>344</sup> Dorsey, *Literary Structure*, 57-58.

due to numerous repetitions within the narrative<sup>345</sup>, giving the passage a coherence by following the story line of problem to denouement. Second, there is a certain symmetry to the story, which is, in part, achieved through the use of both triplets (vv. 2, 3,6, 10, 17, 18)<sup>346</sup> and tensions/resolutions<sup>347</sup>. The pericope may be divided into the three main sections: presentation of the divine test (vv. 1-2), compliance with the instruction (vv. 3-10), and approval of the compliance (vv. 11-19). In addition, it is framed by the twofold repetition of Abraham in v. 1 and v. 19. The structural analysis, thus, will be done according to the following seven parts plot structure:<sup>348</sup>

**The prologue:** tension and irony introduced by the narratival report of the divine text (v. 1a)  
**Presentation of the test:** tension grew as God’s utterly ironic test specified (vv. 1b-2)

— Presentation of the divine test

**Progression of the test:** tension escalated and ironies permeated the test (vv. 3-10) — Compliance with the instructions

**Revelation of the test result:** tension began to ease as the turning point reached (vv. 11-12)  
**Resolution of the test:** tension further resolved and God centeredness highlighted (vv. 13-14)  
**Conclusion of the test:** tension completely resolved and ultimate climax reached (vv. 15-18)  
**The epilogue:** an irony filled narratival report of Abraham’s trip home (v. 19)

— Approval of the compliance

<sup>345</sup> The use of one such repetitions statement in vv. 1, 11 (אֲבָרָהֶם וַיֹּאמֶר הַגֵּנִי), which naturally divides the story into two general movements. The use of another “אֶת־בְּנֵה אֶת־יְהוָה” used three times (vv. 2, 12, 16) tends to increase the gravity of the situation.

<sup>346</sup> For instance, the use of the imperatives (“take,” “go,” and “offer”) in v. 2, 3, 6, 10 and the blessing formula in vv. 17, 18.

<sup>347</sup> The “only son” at the beginning is contrasted by the “greatly multiplied” seed at the conclusion (v. 17). Finally, the test (v. 1) is turned into a “blessing” (vv. 17-18).

<sup>348</sup> This structural analysis is based on the work of Ross. See, Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 392.

In the previous observation (pp. 134-137), we have already investigated that Gen 22:1-19 fits in the Abraham narrative within numerous echoes of the preceding accounts. This episode shares many parallels with Genesis 16 and 21 as well:

1. A parent and child on a difficult journey (Hagar and Ishmael in 16:6//Abraham and Isaac in 22:4-8)
2. The intervention from the angel of the Lord (16:7//22:11) with the promise of numerous descendants, using the key word, הַרְבָּה אֲרַבָּה (“I will [greatly] increase,” 16:10//22:17<sup>349</sup>)
3. The naming of the place of God’s provision, using the key word, רָאָה “to see” or “to provide” (“Living one who sees me,” 16:14//“The Lord will provide,” 22:14)<sup>350</sup>

Moreover, this passage also shares many features of significant similarities with the preceding expulsion episode (Gen 21:8-21), indicating Gen 22:1-19 originally was composed in concert with the Hagar-Ishmael episode. Both narratives contain a similar plot development and many striking correlations in comparisons and contrasts when analyzed together.<sup>351</sup>

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<sup>349</sup> Meanwhile, one should note that the importance of the blessing of Abraham by the Lord lies in similarity of the blessing of Rebekah to that which her family gave to her in Gen 24:60. The purpose is once again to show the Lord’s careful attention to detail in choosing this wife for Isaac. In God’s plan, the same blessing has been given to both Isaac and his bride. This is the way the author/the final composer shows that Rebekah had taken the place of Sarah in the line of the seed of Abraham.

<sup>350</sup> J. Lawlor, “The Test of Abraham, Genesis 22:1-19,” *GTJ* 1 (1980): 19-35, and Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 99-100, detail many parallels between Gen 22:1-19 and the Hagar-Ishmael stories (Genesis 16 and 21).

<sup>351</sup> This analysis is based on the work of Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 99-100, and of Lawlor, “The Test of Abraham” 33-35. In reference to this narrative pattern, Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 119-20, 321-23, notes that all patriarchal narratives have a similar sequence in concluding their stories: divine call to journey (Gen 22:1-2; 35:1; 46:2-3); obedience (Gen 22:3-14; 35:2-8; 46:5-7); divine promise reaffirmed (Gen 22:15-18; 35:9-14; 48:4), journey (Gen 22:19; 35:16; 48:7), birth of children (Gen 22:20-24; 35:17-18; 48:5-6), and death and burial of patriarch’s wife (Genesis 23; 35:18-20; 48:7); son’s marriage (Gen 24:1-67; 35:21-22; [48:8ff.] 49:3-4); list of descendants (Gen 25:1-6; 35:22-26; 49:3-28); and death and burial

Genesis 21	Genesis 22
<b>Contrasts</b>	
Crisis created as a result of a human directive: Sarah tells Abraham to cast out Hagar and Ishmael (v. 10)	Crisis created as a result of divine directive: God tells Abraham to offer Isaac as a burnt offering (v. 2)
Abraham shows real reluctance to follow through (v. 11)	Abraham shows no real reluctance to follow through (vv. 3ff.)
God refers to Ishmael as “Abraham’s seed,” זרע (v. 13)	God refers to Isaac as “Abraham’s son,” בן (v. 2)
Sarah aware of the circumstances; she was the “perpetrator” (vv. 9-10)	Sarah apparently not aware of the circumstances
Hagar, the mother of Ishmael, could not stand to watch her son die (vv. 15-16)	Abraham, the father of Isaac, did not shrink from observing (in fact, participating in the death of his son)
Action takes place in the wilderness of Beer-sheba (v. 14)	Action takes place in the land of Moriah (vv. 2-4)
<b>Comparisons/Similarities</b>	
God requires the dismissal of Ishmael (vv. 12-13)	God requires the dismissal of Isaac (v. 2)
God commands Abraham to take a journey of Hagar and Ishmael (vv. 4-8)	God commands Abraham to take a journey of himself and Isaac (vv. 2-8)
God promised to make a nation of Ishmael because he was Abraham’s seed (v. 13)	God promised to make a great nation of Isaac because Abraham had not withheld him (vv. 16-18)
The provision made for the journey (v. 14)	The provision made for the journey (v. 3)
Abraham “rose up early in the morning” (וַיִּשְׁכֶּם אַבְרָהָם בַּבֹּקֶר) to follow through (v. 14)	Abraham “rose up early in the morning” (וַיִּשְׁכֶּם אַבְרָהָם בַּבֹּקֶר) to follow through (v. 3)
Divine intervention occurs: angel of God calls out to Hagar; reversal of danger (v. 17)	Divine intervention occurs: angel of Yahweh calls out to Abraham; reversal of danger (vv. 11ff.)
The angel uses the key word, ירא “fear” (אַל-תִּירָאִי “Do not be afraid” in v.17)	The angel uses the key word, ירא “fear” (יִרָא אֱלֹהִים “fear God” in v. 12)
The verb שמע “hear” appears as a key word (v. 17)	The verb שמע “hear” appears as a key word (v. 18)
The promise of great descendants through the “lost” son is given to Hagar and Ishmael (v. 18)	The promise of great descendants through the “lost” son is given to Abraham (v. 17)

(Gen 25:7-10; 35:27-29; 49:29-50:14). These parallels imply that the author’s/the final composer’s the materials were composed according to a coherent scheme. Also, see J. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979); H C White, “The Initiation Legend of Isaac,” *ZAW* 91 (1979): 13-18.



The “eyes” of the protagonist are mentioned with reference to seeing the Lord’s provision: water (life-preserving) was providentially provided (v. 19)	The “eyes” of the protagonist are mentioned with reference to seeing the Lord’s provision: ram (life-preserving) was providentially provided (v. 13)
Hagar appropriates the water without a specific divine directive (v. 19)	Abraham appropriates the ram without a specific divine directive (v. 13)

In addition, in the view of Hagar’s role in Genesis as Sarah’s antagonist takes on a striking likeness to Abraham in his “trial” on Mt Moriah in Genesis 22.

Although some critical studies, which exhibit difference in their results and practice diverse methods of analysis, some based more on content and others relying on words and clause, they agree that the evidence of repetitions shows an artful design. The significance of such connections, therefore, shows the author’s/the final composer’s abiding interest in the inheritance theme as played out by the two sons, Isaac and Ishmael. The verbal affinities among the three narratives (Genesis 16, 21, 22) heighten the tension of what is at stake in the death of Isaac.

### 3.4. The Genealogy of Nahor (Gen 22:20-24)

This genealogical notice reports a brief details of Nahor’s family, who have been mentioned only in the genealogy of Terah (Gen 11:27-32).<sup>352</sup> At a glance, its present location awkwardly interrupts the flow of the episode of Isaac’s sacrifice (Gen 22:1-19) and Sarah’s burial (Genesis 23). However, the opening phrase (v. 20a) “some time later” (or “after these things) shows a formal connection chronologically between the

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<sup>352</sup> For the similarities between Nahor’s genealogy and that of Terah (Gen 11:27-32), see, the earlier section above in pp. 111-12.

preceding account (vv. 1-19), while “Milcah too has borne sons” make an explicit connection with Gen 21:1-7, the nativity of Isaac (cf. Wenham 1994:119).

Moreover, the special reference to Rebekah in v. 23 clearly anticipates the events recorded in Genesis 24, which narrates the betrothal of Rebekah as Isaac’s wife from the Nahor clan in Aram (Gen 24:10, 15, 24, 47). Thus, the author/the final composer brings forward the history of the Nahor family because of its importance for the Abraham-Isaac group. Reporting the productivity of the Nahor clan after the promise of blessing for “all nations” (v. 18) implies that the Nahor history is part of the beginning fulfillment; also, noting “Rebekah” (v. 23) refers to the future matriarch by whom blessing will be occur for Abraham’s family and, ultimately, all nations. In short, the status of the Abraham-Sarah family in Genesis 21-22 and 23, including the proleptic reference to Rebekah in Gen 22:20-24, prepare for the reunification of the Terah families in Genesis 24. In this sense, the genealogical connection between Rebekah, the granddaughter of Nahor, and Abraham’s branch explains the commissioning of his servant in Gen 24:3-4. By such genealogical accounting, the inheritance of the promise is shown to be passed down within the family.

The interest in the twelve children of Nahor (Gen 22:20-24) has a particular parallel with the twelve children of Ishmael (Gen 25:12-18).<sup>353</sup> In addition, the twelve non-chosen sons of Nahor (vv. 20-24) parallel to the twelve elect sons of Jacob as stated in our earlier discussion (see, note. 192 in p. 88). The Nahor genealogy structurally forms an *inclusio* around the main corpus of the Abraham narrative, as the Abraham’s test

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<sup>353</sup> This parallel was recognized by von Rad, *Genesis*, 245, although he hesitated to press it because the genealogy of Nahor was brief and, in recording a confederation of twelve Aramean tribes, apparently meant to be a literary link.

(Gen 22:1-19) echoes the Abraham's initial call to journey (Gen 12:1-8). This framework, thus, enhances the overall chiasmic arrangement of the major part of the Abraham cycle (Gen 11:27-22:24).<sup>354</sup> The borders of the episode itself consists of genealogies, the prominent fraternal lines of Terah's clan: Nahor and his wife and concubine (Gen 22:20-24) and Abraham and his wife and concubines (Gen 25:1-11). In this sense, this genealogical notice is an appropriate fit in the present narrative arrangement since it provides a buffer between the narrative's high point of Gen 22:1-19 and the low point describing Sarah's death (Genesis 23). And, as an interlude the episode easily transitions to Sarah's death by the genealogy's mention of Milcah (Alexander 1982:62).

### **3.5. The Epilogue (Gen 23:1-25:11)**

The present symmetry of the canonical narrative, understanding Gen 23:1-25:11 as the epilogue to the Abraham narrative provides information the narrative requires in order to ensure the reader that the promises were passed down to Isaac as required. The motif of marriage and offspring so essential to the thematic thread of the whole links Gen 11:29 and 22:20-24 and Genesis 24, making it unnecessary to view Genesis 24 as a supplement (Emerton 1992:41-42; cf. Carr 1996:198-199). In this sense, the epilogue transitions Abraham's story to the Jacob narrative (Gen 25:19-35:29) by establishing the union of Isaac and Rebekah who parent Jacob and his brother (Gen 25:21-26). Before taking up the next patriarchal narratives, the author/the final composer includes the Ishmael genealogy (Gen 25:12-18) so as to close out the former episodes of

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<sup>354</sup> See, the section of the main cycle (Gen 12:1-22:19) in chapter 2 of the study (pp. 87-92).

fraternal rivalry.

### **3.6. Concluding Summary**

In this chapter we have tried to uncover the techniques by which the skillful the author/the composer of Genesis has masterfully woven the Abraham narrative in the canonical text. Through the examining of the main body, it is abundantly clear that the main section of the Abraham narrative (Gen 11:27-22:24) has a self-sustaining unity articulated in numerous parallel themes, key-words and key-expressions, and also continues the major theme of the Creation and Noah Cycles. These features are intended to alert the reader to both the literary texture and religious message of the Abraham narrative. This we believe is best explained as the creation of one author. In the next chapter (Chap. 4), intertextual links between the Abram narrative and the remainder texts of the Pentateuch will be observed in terms of verbal, thematic, theological sense.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE INTERTEXTUAL RELATEDNESS OF THE ABRAHAM NARRATIVE

#### 4.1. Introduction: Methodological Considerations

The present work has been proceeding in favour of a hermeneutical hypothesis that the Abraham narrative is a single literary unit of the Pentateuch, which composed of the smaller and larger compositions (i.e., narratives, poetries, and law codes) according to the compositional strategy of the author/the final composer. The compositions are not simply the arrangement of sources, but are strategically composed in such a way that one can discern relationships among its parts. That strategy is the key to the theology of the Pentateuch. They, thus, reflect the theological characteristics and the direction, goal, and tendency of the author/the final composer of the whole work. As such, they are also a clear indication of the author's hermeneutic. In the interweaving of these literary components into a whole, a discernible strategy can be traced throughout the entire work.

In the compositional strategy of the Pentateuch, the Abraham narrative not merely has been effectively shaped, but has been intentionally structured to uncover an inherent relationship between the past and the future in lying behind the final shape of the Pentateuch. To say it another way, the narrative is a part of a larger typological scheme of the Pentateuch intending to show that future events are foreshadowed and anticipated in the past events (Cassuto 1992:309-344; cf. Samilhamer 1992:35-44).<sup>355</sup>

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<sup>355</sup> As stated already in the section of 'the composition criticism' in the chapter 1 (see, pp. 20-32, esp. n. 50 and 59), it has called this feature "narrative typology."

In this respect, one finds intertextual relationships between the texts in the Abraham narrative and the texts in the remainder of the Pentateuch, focusing on how the meaning of the earlier texts has remained the same. That is to say, the latter texts may be viewed as an explication or elaboration of the former texts, which become an assumed part of that of the latter texts.<sup>356</sup> Thus, it hardly seems likely that so many verbal and thematic parallels between the Abraham narrative and the remainder of the Pentateuch could be a mere coincidence. In this chapter, these textual correlations are more than mere happenstance will be investigated at the level of theme, structure and meaning. Given the extent of the Pentateuch and the complexity of the Abraham narrative, however, it would be an almost impossible task to examine in detail all the relevant texts. To keep the investigation within manageable boundaries, some selection is essential.

## 4.2. Thematic Links

Since we have recognized the essential homogeneity of Genesis and the remaining books of the Pentateuch, we must consider the unifying theme of the work. As Clines (1997) stated, the theme is not-yet realized promised of blessing for the patriarchs. The promissory blessing to Abraham in Gen 12:1-3 expresses the thematic material of the Pentateuch: 1) promise of descendants, and 2) promise of land. This blessing is repeated in varied forms for Abraham (Gen 15:4-5, 9-21; 17:4-7,19-20; 18:18; 22:17),

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<sup>356</sup> As stated earlier, texts do not exist in isolation but are always in relation with one another (cf. Carroll, *Intertextuality and the Book of Jeremiah*, 57). Texts echo and allude to each other. Similarities and difference between texts both invite ‘conversation’ between them and allow ‘each text to be affected by other’ (D. N. Fewell, “Introduction: Writing, Reading and Relating,” in *Reading Between Texts: Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible* [Louisville: Westminster & John Knox Press, 1992], 13).

Isaac (Gen 26:3-4), and Jacob (Gen 28:13-14; 32:29). This thematic linkage between the Abraham narrative and the remaining of the Pentateuch binds the whole in terms of the not-yet realized blessings of the patriarch.

#### **4.2.1. The Seed**

The theme concerning the promise of the son is found in the Pentateuch (Gen 12:1-3; 13:16; 15:2-4,5; 16:10,11; 17:2,5,6,15-16,19-21; 18:1-10,14,16,18; [21:3]; 26:2-5,24-25; 28:3,14; 32:12[Heb. 13]; 35:11; 46:3; [47:27]; 48:4,16,19; [Exod 1]; 32:10; Num 14:12, Deut 1:10,11; 6:3; 13:17 [Heb 18]’ 15:6). In the patriarchal narratives (Gen 12-50), the promise is confined to the Abraham narrative, where it dominates the accounts. This theme occurs in a variety of forms. It is not found alone but together with the promise of a son (Genesis 18) of land and blessing, of assistance and blessing. In particular, in Genesis 18, it is the central feature of the story, a promise made to a childless person in order to solve the problem the patriarch faced. In the announcement of pregnancy and of a birth, Gen 15:1-6 is closely connected with the promise of posterity in Gen 17:15:21, where the covenant promise states that Isaac will be preferred above Ishmael. The birth of a son is recounted in Gen 21:1-3, a short time after it had been promised (Westermann 1976:690-693). In it, the patriarchal narratives features the promise of descendants, and although the tension of a son born to Sarah is resolved, Genesis closes with a mere “seventy” persons descended through Jacob. Joseph’s final words announce the return of Jacob’s seed (Gen 50:24; cf. Exod 6:3-8). The prologue of Exodus (1:1-7) back-references the ending of Genesis by recalling Joseph’s death (Gen 50:26) again and describing the circumstances of Jacob’s

offspring in Egypt. It does so by including a genealogical listing of the sons of Jacob who migrated to Egypt, the favorite structural device of the Genesis composer. It is significant that the cessation of one generation, namely, Joseph's generation, and the inauguration of a new is at the juncture of Genesis and Exodus, for this is a thematic interest in Exodus-Deuteronomy, which portrays the succession of Moses' generation by Joshua's new wilderness generation.

In the meantime, the comparison of the number of Abraham's seed to that of the stars of the heavens occurs several times in the Pentateuch: twice the promise was reiterated to Isaac (Gen 22:17; 26:4), and then again by Moses at a crucial moment when God was on the verge of destroying the whole nation (Exod. 32:13). Deut 1:10 alludes to this promise in reference to the great multitude that came out of Egypt, but as Deut 28:62 makes clear, the promise remained to be fulfilled in a future generation. It is possible that the image of the "star" which is to arise out of the house of Jacob in Num 24:17 owes part of its sense to this particular feature of the promise to the fathers.<sup>357</sup>

#### **4.2.2. The Land**

In Genesis God promised a land to the ancestors of Israel (Gen 12:7; 13:14-15,17; 15:7-21; 17:8; 24:7; 26:3-5; 28:4,13-14; 35:12; 48:4; 50:24), a theme picked up in the Pentateuch that follow (Exod. 6:4,7-8; 13:5,11; 32:13; 33:1; Lev 26:42; Num 10:29; 11:12; 14:16,23; 32:11), especially Deuteronomy (Deut 1:8,35; 4:31; 6:10,18,23; 7:8;

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<sup>357</sup> In it, the narrative of Numbers also recounts the transition in the descendants of the promise, closing out the old generation, now dead and buried, save Moses himself, as the Lord had said at Kadesh (e.g., Num 14:29-35). Cf. D. T. Olson, *The Death of the Old and the Birth of the New: The Framework of the Book of Numbers and the Pentateuch*, BJS 71 (Chico: Scholars Press, 1985), 186-91.



8:1,18; 9:5,27; 10:11; 11:8-9,18-21; 26:3,15; 28:11; 31:7,20; 29:13; 30:20; 34:4). The Abraham narrative begins with a divine promise of the gift of land. At first, this promise is articulated in rather vague terms as the patriarch sets out from his homeland (Gen 12:1-3), but it is later made more specific (Gen 12:7), and is repeatedly affirmed, with varying formulations, both to Abraham himself (Gen 13:14-17; 15:18-21; 17:8) and to his descendants (Gen 26:3f.; 28:13-15; 35:11f.). The promise of land, although sometimes appearing in isolation, is frequently interlaced with other promises, which have been variously analyzed and categorized, namely, the promise of a son/descendants/progeny (Gen 13:16; 15:1-6; 16:10-12; 26:4), the promise of God's presence/blessing (Gen 26:24; 28:13-15), and the promise of a new relationship with God (Gen 17:4-8).<sup>358</sup> Of all the promises, however, it was the promise of land that was to prove the most important and decisive for Israel, for this promise was reiterated and reinterpreted from one generation to the next in such a way that it became a living power and a seminal force in the life of the people.<sup>359</sup>

As can be seen from Gen 15:7-21 and 13:14-17, the emphasis lies on the promise made to Abraham. The story in Gen 15:7-21 concerns only the promise of the land. The passage depicted God alone moving between the halves of the sacrificial animals after

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<sup>358</sup> The distinction between the promise of a son and the promise of many descendants is emphasized by Westermann, *Promise to the Fathers*, 11ff., and the promise of a new relationship with God as an independent category is advocated by von Rad. See, G. von Rad, "The Promised Land and Yahweh's Land in the Hexateuch," in *From Genesis to Chronicles: Explorations in Old Testament Theology*, ed. K. C. Hanson (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 59-60.

<sup>359</sup> From the viewpoint of the Pentateuch faith, the promise was significant for two reasons: 1) it emphasized the fact that the people did not dwell in a land to which the changes and chances of history just happen to have brought them, but in a land which had been destined for them by Yahweh before Israel even became a nation. Israel's occupation of Canaan was therefore not to be regarded as an historical coincidence, but as part of God's purposive action in history; and 2) the promise served to remind Israel that it was not native to the land of Canaan, but had been granted it by the will of God. Thus, the land that was to become Israel's possession was not one, which Abraham had inherited by natural right from his ancestors, but one, which had been freely granted as Yahweh's gracious gift. See, W. Zimmerli, "Land and Possession," 67-79.

sunsets as “a smoking furnace and a flaming torch” (v. 17). Thus, God obligated himself and only himself to fulfill the terms of this oath. Abraham was not asked or required likewise to obligate himself. The total burden for the delivery of the gift of the land fell on the divine provider but not on the devotion of the patriarch. As if to underscore the permanence of this arrangement, Gen 17:7,13,19 stress that this was to be a בְּרִית עוֹלָם (“an everlasting covenant”).<sup>360</sup> The promise is probably the basis for an accepted formula for the legal transfer of land (cf. Gen 48:22). Such an adaptation is suggested by Gen 13:14-17. In the formula “to your descendants I will give this land,” Abraham received a promise that would be fulfilled only for his descendants, and so this presupposes a period later than those of the patriarchs. This promise probably was formulated when possession of the land was a life-and-death matter for the tribes that settled in Canaan. At the end of the patriarchal stories (Gen 50:24), it is stated that the promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob refers to the gift of the land of Canaan to the Israelites who leave Egypt. Here, the promise functions to tie the history of Israel to the patriarchal narratives (esp. the Abraham cycle).

Numbers’ attention is given to the land promise as preparations are underway for departure to Canaan (Num 1:1-10:11). Although the book opens in Israel’s second year, it closes thirty-eight years later, and the people have progressed only as far as the banks of the Jordan (Num 1:1; 10:11). Their efforts to obtain the land were thwarted by unbelief (Numbers 13-14), and the remainder of the account tells of Israel’s vagabond existence in the desert. Nevertheless, the land remained its hope and goal (Numbers 20); a foretaste of their inheritance is enjoyed by the dispossession of Amorite kings in

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<sup>360</sup> W. C. Kaiser, “The Promised Land: A Biblical-Historical View” *BSac* 138 (1981): 302-11.

Trnasjordan (Numbers 22-24). After overcoming additional setbacks, the Israelites finally arrive on the plains of Moab (Num 33:48), anticipating the realization of the promises, and there they remain.

There is no doubt that one of Deuteronomy's central concerns is the land (cf. Mayes 1979:79-81). This theme is basic to the book and permeates all parts and levels of it. In the book, the promise of the land is formulated as an oath and has the function of legitimizing the occupation of the land by the tribes (cf. Westermann 1976:690-693). The final work of this book continues the emphasis on the land element of the promise: "In the land the Lord your God is giving you to possess as your inheritance, he will richly bless you" (Deut 15:4; also 3:2, 18, 20; 4:1; 12:1). It is described a a land "flowing with milk and honey" which was promised to the "father" (Deut 6:3; 11:9; 26:5, 15; 27:3). The last words of Moses reiterate the promise: "This is the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob when I said, 'I will give it to your descendants'" (Deut 34:4). In addition, Lev 25:23 (cf. Exod 19:5; Lev 20:22-24; Num 36:7), in a context dealing with the Year of Jubilee, declares that the owner of the land is none other than the Lord. Indeed the God of Israel is the giver of whatever the land yields (Deut 6:10-11). Thus, one of the central theological affirmations about the land is that it is the gift of God to Israel (Deut 1:8; 4:31; 11:9, 21; 26:3, 15; cf. Exod 6:4, 8). Eighteen times the book of Deuteronomy (1:8, 35; 6:10, 18, 23; 7:13; 8:1; 9:5; 10:11; 11:9, 21; 19:8; 26:3, 15; 28:11; 30:20; 31:7; 34:4) refers to the promise of the land made with the patriarchs, and all but three of these eighteen references emphasize the fact that God likewise "gave" it to them.<sup>361</sup> In fact, it was in view of "going into and

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<sup>361</sup> See, D. Miller, Jr., Patrick, "The Gift of God: The Deuteronomic Theology of the Land," *Int* 23 (1969): 454.

possessing this land” that Israelites’ exodus from Egypt and journey through the wilderness took place (Deut 1:7-8; 6:23; 26:3, 5-10).<sup>362</sup> This land was “a good land” (Deut 1:25,35; 3:23; 4:21-22; 6:18; 8:7,10; 9:6; 11:17), for it was filled with brooks, springs, wheat, barley, grapes, vines, figs, pomegranates, olives, honey, iron, and copper. Yet what God gave he then termed Israel’s נַחֲלָה (“inheritance”). It was “the good land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance” (Deut 4:21; cf. 4:38; 12:9; 15:4; 19:10; 20:16; 21:23; 24:4; 25:19; 26:1). Whereas the land had been granted to the patriarchs by virtue of the divine word and oath, it was still theirs in theory and not in actuality. For over half a millennium it was only the land of their sojourning; they did not as yet possess it. The under Joshua’s conquest the ancient promise was to be made a reality.

Since the land was a “gift,” as Deuteronomy affirmed in some twenty-five references (Deut 1:20,25; 2:29; 3:20; 4:40; 5:16),<sup>363</sup> Israel had but to “possess” (יָרַשׁ) it (Deut 3:18, 5:31; 12:1; 15:4; 19:2,14; 25:19). This does not mean that the idea of taking the land by force or conquest was contradictory to the idea of its bestowal as a gift. As Miller (1969:455) correctly reconciled the situation, God’s overthrow of the enemy would be the way in which God would finally allow Israel to take possession of the land. The two notions come together in the expression, “The land which Yahweh gives

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<sup>362</sup> von Rad, *Problem of the Hexateuch*, 1-78, has argued for a “historical credo” in Deut 26:5-10 from which the Hexateuch grew.

<sup>363</sup> The concept of the land as a gift is developed in Deuteronomy. Here, the land is described as a place filled in abundance with all the necessary provisions of life (Deut 8:7-10), which is compared with the land of Egypt, to which it is far superior (Deut 11:10-12). Its fertility is expressed by the recurring formula ‘a land flowing with milk and honey’ (Deut 6:3; 11:9; 26:9, 15; 27:3; 31:20). According to Deuteronomy, this land was the supreme gift, which Yahweh was to bestow upon Israelites, and it was a gift, which patently transcended all human expectation. Further, Deuteronomy emphasis that the land was a gift, which was imparted to all the people of Israel, which is the inheritance of them as a whole (cf. P. Diepold, *Israels Land* BWANT 95 [Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1972], 79f.; J. G. McConville, *Law and Theology in Deuteronomy* [Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984]).

you to possess.” Thus, corresponding to the notion of the land as divine gift, there was a human dimension, which was to manifest itself in Israel’s response. Yahweh’s gift to Israel implied a requirement on his part, and throughout Deuteronomy there is a continued demand for Israel’s obedience, and an emphasis on the obligations, which the people owed to God.

Meanwhile, it has frequently been observed by commentators concerning precise nature of the relation between the law and the land in Deuteronomy. In the laws (Deuteronomy 12-26) the theme is often expressed as the basis for the laws and institutions. The whole of the law code is viewed as a “constitution” given through Moses in anticipation to the people’s inhering the land. The law was viewed both as the norm of Israel’s life in the land and as the primary condition of its occupation. This view of the nature of the law, however, inevitably resulted in a certain tension between the concept of gift and that of commandment, for it is implied that without obedience to the law, there could be no land-gift, and consequently the gift itself appears to be made conditional.<sup>364</sup> The commandments were given prior to Israel’s entry into the promised land, but their observance became meaningful only after the conquest and settlement. Here again, therefore, the indicative is made the basis for the imperative, and observance of the law is presented as their thankful response to the privileges granted to them by Yahweh. Once viewed in this light, Deuteronomy can be absolved from the charge of legalism, for its covenant theology ‘prevents the indicative from being reduced to cheap grace, and prevents the imperative from degenerating into works of righteousness’ (Diepold: 1972:100). Israel cannot earn its salvation by

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<sup>364</sup> L. Peritt, “Motive und Schichten der Landtheologie im Deuteronomium,” in *Das Land Israel in biblischer Zeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Rupprecht, 1983), 46-58.

obedience to the law; yet, it is only when Israel hears and obeys God's commands that it can fully realize its existence as the chosen people in the promised land.

### **4.3. Textual Links**

As a literary unit, the Abraham narrative is not isolated, but forms a part of a greater narrative whole. Links to the following accounts in Genesis and the rest of the Pentateuch are particularly noticeable at the level of words and sentences. In this section, these connecting elements will be presented.

#### **4.3.1. The Divine Promise (Gen 12:1-9// Gen 49:8-21// Numbers 24)**

The divine promise made to Abraham (Gen 12:1-3) is a central not merely to the Abraham narrative but to the whole Pentateuch. Nevertheless, more important here is the question of the role the pericope plays in the overall purpose of the Pentateuch. When viewed in the light of their parallels with other parts of the books, the passage plays a strategic role in the overall message of the Pentateuch. Its placement in the books is part of the writer's plan to develop a central theological thesis.

In Gen 1:28, the author/the final composer reveals that at the center of God's purpose in creating human beings was his desire to bless them. Even after they were cast away from God's protective care in the garden caused by their act of disobedience, God promised that he would provide a means for restoring the blessing: a future "seed" would one day come and crush the head of the serpent (Gen 3:15). Gen 3:15 shows plainly that God's original intention for the humanity was blessing and that his

continual concern for them remains the same. When God chose Abraham as the channel of the promised “seed” (Gen 12:1-3), his express purpose was to bless Abraham and all the nations of the earth through this “seed.” In this respect, the author/the final composer has figured Abraham and his descendants, like Noah, as a new beginning in God’s plan of blessing as well as a return to God’s original plan of blessing all humankind (Gen 1:28). This idea is developed in a number of other ways as well in Genesis in the light of the frequent reiteration of God’s blessing in Gen 1:28 (cf. Gen 9:1) throughout the narratives of Abraham and his descendants (e.g., Gen 12:1-3; 13:15-16; 15:5, 18; 17:6-8; 22:17-18; 25:11; 26:2-4; 27:27-29; 49:28).<sup>365</sup> Like his original intent for Adam in the beginning, God’s intent for Abraham was that he would become a great nation and enjoy God’s good land. In this sense, Abraham is represented here as a new Adam and the ‘seed of Abraham’ as a second Adam, a new humanity.

At the close of the book of Genesis, the author/the final composer gives the reader a glimpse of the future seed of Abraham. That is to say, when Abraham’s seed was on the verge of entering into Egyptian bondage, God furthered his promise by giving a prophecy to the patriarch Jacob. The prophecy was about one of his sons, Judah (Gen 49:8-12). Through the family of Judah, one would come who would be a king and

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<sup>365</sup> Genesis shows that God has a blessing for all living creatures as a creation ordinance (Gen 1:22, 28; cf. Gen 5:2; 9:1) but the “blessing” for the nations will be realized only by those who bless Abraham and his seed (Gen 12:1-3). A “blessing” presupposes a relationship between God and the persons blessed. Especially, in the patriarchal narratives, God’s blessing means proliferation and success (e.g., Gen 12:2-3; 17:16; 22:17; 26:24; 39:5; 48:3-4). See, J. Scharbert, “ברך brk; בְּרָכָה b’rākḥāh,” in *TDOT* 2.279-308, esp. 284, 289, 294. Cf. also, e.g., Exod 20:24; Deut 1:11; 7:13; Ruth 2:4, 1 Chr 4:10; Isa 51:2; Pss 67:1, 6 [2,7]; 115:12-15. בָּרַךְ occurs in Genesis 8x in qal, 3x in niphāl, 59x in piel; the noun בְּרָכָה occurs 16x, giving 88 occurrences of the root in Genesis, more than any other biblical book.... See C. W. Mitchell, *The Meaning BRK “To Bless” in the Old Testament*, SBLDS 95 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), Table 1, 184.

restore God’s blessing to Israel and all the nations. This one “seed” who is to come, to whom the right of kingship belongs, will be the “lion of the tribe of Judah” and “to him will be the obedience of the nations” (Gen 49:10). The importance which the author attaches to the connection of the fulfillment of the “blessing” and coming of this one from the tribe of Judah can be seen in the narrative framework given to the prophet poem of Jacob in Genesis 49. At the conclusion of Jacob’s words, the author/the final composer has repeated three times that his words are to be understood as a renewal of the theme of the blessing (Gen 49:28):

כָּל-אֱלֹהֵי שְׁבַטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר וְזֹאת אֲשֶׁר-דִּבֶּר לָהֶם אֲבִיהֶם  
וַיְבָרֶךְ אוֹתָם אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר כִּבְרָכְתּוֹ בְּרָךְ אֹתָם

Having eliminated the older brothers as rightful heirs of the blessing, Jacob foretold a future for the tribe of Judah that pictured him as the preeminent son. In verse 9, Judah is portrayed as a “young lion,” which sleeping in its den after having just devoured its prey. In v. 10 the picture is filled out with a description of the young warrior as a king. He is the one who holds the “scepter” and the “ruler’s staff.” The point of Jacob’s words is that Judah will hold such a status among the tribes of Israel until one comes “to whom it belongs.” The most startling aspect of the description of this one from the tribe of Judah comes next: “and the obedience of the nations is his” (v. 10b). The use of the plural word עַמִּים (“nations”) rather than the singular suggests that Jacob had in view a kingship that extended beyond the boundaries of the Israelites to include other nations as well. There may be an anticipation of this view in the promise of God to Jacob in Gen 28:3 and 48:4: “I will make you a community of peoples.” As God had forewarned Abraham (Gen 15:13-16) his people would first undergo a time of bondage and oppression until when the sin of the Amorites had reached its full measure (v. 16).



However, God promised that after four generations Abraham's "seed" would return to the land and again enjoy his blessing. The future reign of this king and the blessing that is to ensue now is the focus of other poetic texts in the Pentateuch (cf. Numbers 24).

With this backdrop of the historical narrative, the author/the final composer takes interest in the prophecies of Balaam (Num 22:1-24:25). Underlying the narratives, which tell the story of Balaam, is the author's interest in the promise God had made to Abraham. According to that promise, those who bless his seed will be blessed and those who curse his seed will be cursed. The story opens with Balak's dread of the great numbers of Israel (Num 22:3). The king Balak of the Moabites had hired Balaam to curse the seed of Abraham (Num 22:5-41), but as the story unfolds, God permitted him only to bless them (Num 24:10; cf. Num 23:8-9, 20). They show that God has already begun to fulfill his promise to Abraham and that his seed had become "a great nation" (Num 22:6). They also show that God was about to fulfill his promise to give Abraham's seed the land. When Balak sent for Balaam to curse this people, Israel was poised on the plains of Moab ready to go into the land. Finally, the Balaam narratives show that the curses of the nations could not thwart God's promise to bless the seed of Abraham. In spite of the nations' attempts to curse God's people, all that could ultimately happen is their blessing. Through Balaam the seed of Abraham is blessed and the seed of Moab is cursed (Num 24:17). Thus, inside the texts themselves we have an assertion that God's will for a blessing to Israel cannot be resisted and certainly cannot be contradicted by a curse. In context, it is asserted that all the force of God's sovereignty is a blessing for Israel. Thus, the texts are related, in their final form, to the initial blessing God makes to Abraham (Gen 12:1-3). The text, moreover, picks up on the Genesis theme that not only is Israel blessed, but through Israel other peoples

are blessed as well: “Blessed is everyone who blesses you, and cursed is everyone who curses you” (Num 24:9b).

The narratives dealing with Balaam (Num 22:1-24:25), thus, play a strategic role in the overall message of the Pentateuch, particularly in the development of the themes of the Abrahamic covenant (Gen 12:1-3). Their placement at this point in the book of Numbers is part of the author’s/the final composer’s plan to develop a central theological thesis. As well as, they also serve as an inclusio to the Exodus-wilderness narratives. That is, the Balaam narratives restate the central themes of these narratives at their conclusion in a way that parallels the statement of these themes at their beginning. That is to say, the Balaam story, which lies at the close of Israel’s sojourn in the wilderness, parallels many of the events and ideas of the story of Pharaoh at the beginning of the book of Exodus. The parallels are striking.

1. Balak and Pharaoh – kings of large and powerful nations which represented a major obstacle to Israel’s entering the promised land.
2. Israel as a threat to Moabites and Egypt – Israel was a threat to these nations only because God kept his promise to the fathers and had given them great increase in numbers (Exod 1:7, 9; Num 22:3, 6).
3. The plans of the two kings – Pharaoh’s plans were an attempt to stop Israel from returning to their land (Exod 1:10); that is, his plan was to block the very blessing, which God had promised to Abraham (Gen 15:16) – enjoyment of the promised land. Thus, what the writer attempts to show is that the promise of a great nation to Abraham (Gen 12:2) and the blessing of humankind (Gen 1:28; 15:16) were beginning to be fulfilled in Israel’s sojourn in Egypt, and the

nations were set on thwarting that promise. Like Pharaoh's plans, Balak's plans in Numbers were also motivated by the fact that Israel had become "too numerous" (Num 22:6; כִּי-עָצוּם הוּא "for they are too mighty for me"). Also like Pharaoh, Balak was intent on keeping the Israelites out of the land (Num 22:6).

4. Pharaoh's and Balak's three attempts – Pharaoh made three attempts to counteract the blessing and hence to decrease the number of God's people. His first attempt was that he put slave masters over the Israelites to oppress them (Exod 1:11-14)<sup>366</sup>; his second attempt was that he commanded the Hebrew midwives to kill the male children (vv. 15-21)<sup>367</sup>; and in the third attempt he commanded that every male child be thrown into the Nile (v. 22).<sup>368</sup> Yet as the narrative unfolds, on each occasion, God intervened and Pharaoh's plan was turned into a blessing. Whatever the particular scheme of the Egyptians, Israel increased all the more. Moreover, within the structure of the story unfolding in

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<sup>366</sup> The account of Pharaoh's first attempt (Exod 1:11-14) is intended to show that "the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread" (Exod 1:12). In his first oracle, Balaam focused precisely on this point: "How can I curse those whom God has not cursed?" (Num 23:8), and he concluded by stressing the phenomenal growth of God's people: "Who can count the dust of Jacob or number the fourth part of Israel?" (Num 23:10).

<sup>367</sup> In Pharaoh's second attempt to thwart God's blessing the midwives, who feared God and disobeyed Pharaoh's command, express the central idea of the short narrative: "The Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women; they are vigorous and give birth before the midwives arrive" (Exod 1:19). To be sure, their words were a ruse to cover their disobeying Pharaoh's orders; nevertheless, they find an echo in the theme of Balaam's second oracle, Israel's mighty strength: God brought them out of Egypt; they have the strength of wild ox... The people rise like a lioness; they rouse themselves like a lion" (Num 24:8). It may be of interest to note that Pharaoh's plans were stymied by the apparent deception of the Hebrew midwives and that in Balaam's second oracle he states, "God is not a man, that he should lie" (Num 23:19).

<sup>368</sup> This third attempt also finds an interesting parallel in Balaam's third oracle. In an ironic reversal of the evil intended by Pharaoh's order to cast the seed of Abraham into the river, Balaam's third oracle use the well-watered gardens that spread out along the banks of a river to speak of the abundance of Israel's "seed." A literal reading of Balaam's remark in Num 24:7 is "Their seed is in the abundant waters." Thus, what was once the intended means for the destruction of the promised seed, that is, the "abundant water," has now become the poetic image of God's faithfulness to his promise.

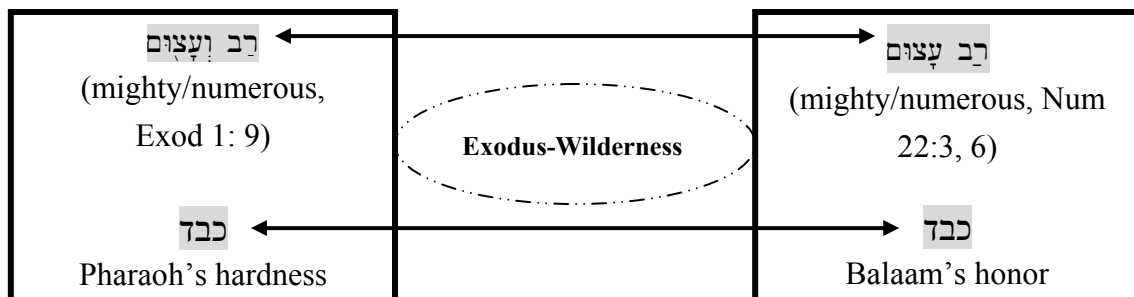
the narrative, it was as a result of Pharaoh's third plan, that of casting the male children into the Nile, that the writer was able to introduce the announcement of the birth of God's chosen deliverer, Moses. This narrative is remarkably similar to the narrative which deal with Balaam. Like Pharaoh before him, Balak also made three attempts to thwart God's blessing for Israel (Num 23:1-12, 13-26; 23:27-24:9), and each attempt was turned into a blessing (Num 23:11-12, 25-26; 24:10-11). It should be noted that though Balaam gave more than three oracles, the writer has arranged the oracles into three attempts to curse Israel. Balak himself reflects the writer's interest when he says, "I summoned you to curse my enemies, but you have blessed them these three times" (Num 24:10). As in the case of Pharaoh's three attempts, after Balak's third attempt the author/the final composer turns to the question of the birth of God's chosen deliverer, the prophecy of the star that was to arise out of Jacob (Num 24:12-25).<sup>369</sup> In view of this larger attempt by the author/the final composer to portray events at the beginning of Israel's sojourn in the wilderness as parallel to similar events at the end, it is not surprising to find that Balaam's first three oracles are thematically parallel to Pharaoh's three attempts to suppress God's blessing of Israel in Egypt, and that Balaam's last oracle focuses on the coming of a deliverer.

Other features in the verbal texture of the two narratives also suggest that the above

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<sup>369</sup> An interesting implication of the parallels presented here between the account of the birth of Moses in Exodus 2 and the announcement of the "star" to arise from the family of Jacob in Number 24 is that Moses thus appears to be portrayed in these narratives as a prototype of the "star of Jacob." Such a view Moses is consistent with the fact that elsewhere in the Pentateuch Moses is cast as a figure of the coming king (Deut 33:5) and prophet (Deuteronomy 18 and 34). This is also consistent with the fact that later biblical writers often saw in Moses a picture of the future Messiah (e.g., Hos 2:2).

parallels are part of the author's/the final composer's conscious intention. For example, the story line of both passages is guided by the same verbal pattern in the use of the Hebrew term for *heavy* (כבד).<sup>370</sup> The narrative of Pharaoh's opposition to releasing the Israelites is guided by the recurring reference to the "hardening" of his heart (Exod 7:14; 8:11, 28; 9:7, 34; 10:1). At the climax of the story, by means of a wordplay on the notion of hardening Pharaoh's heart, the Lord says, "I will gain glory for myself through Pharaoh" (Exod 14:4). It should be noted here that in Hebrew, the word for *glory* (כבד) has the same root as that for harden (כבד). Moreover, the story of Balaam is clearly guided by Balak's promise to "reward" him richly if he would curse Israel (Num 22:17, 37; 24:11). Again the Hebrew root is the same as that for "to harden" and "to glory." The two narratives, then, are linked at the thematic, structural, and verbal levels.<sup>371</sup>



The author's/the final composer's purpose appears to be to view the reign of the future king in terms taken from God's great act of salvation in the past. The future is going to be like the past. What God did for Israel in the past is seen as a type of what he will do for them in the future when he sends his promised king.

<sup>370</sup> Hebrew narratives are often guided by a thematic verbal pattern. In this regard, Sailhamer presents two key-words as instances, "Shem/name" and "Isaac/laughed" which link the narratives of Genesis 9-12 and that of Genesis 12-26 respectively. See, Sailhamer, *Pentateuch as Narrative*, 44.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid., 41-44.

Not only do Balaam's final oracles allude to his own earlier ones, but also in speaking of the future king, Balaam alludes to and even quotes the earlier poetic sections in the Pentateuch. In the oracles of Balaam, then, we find the central messianic themes of the Pentateuch restated and expanded. For example, in Numbers 24:9, Balaam says of the future king about whom he gives his oracle: "Like a lion he [singular] crouches and lies down, like a lioness – who dares to rouse him [singular]?" This entire section of Balaam's oracle is a quotation of Jacob's prophecy of the king who will come from the tribe of Judah: "Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness – who dares to rouse him?" (Gen 49:9). When Balaam says of this future king, "Those who bless you will be blessed and those who curse you will be cursed" (Num 24:9b). He clearly applies to this future king the blessing to the seed of Isaac: "Those who curse you will be cursed and those who bless you will be blessed" (Gen 27:29), and that of Abraham: "I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse" (Gen 12:3). Finally, Balaam's description of the future victory of the coming king, "He will crush the foreheads of Moab and the skulls of all the sons of Sheth" (Num 24:17), draw heavily on God's words of promise and judgment spoken to the serpent in Gen 3:15: "I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and hers; he will crush your head."

#### **4.3.2. Abraham's Itinerary to Egypt (Gen 12:10-20)**

One may find striking parallels and similar passages between the narratives of Abraham's sojourn (Gen 12:10-13:4) to Egypt and Israel's, concerning the migration of

the children to that land (Gen 42:5; 47:11-13).<sup>372</sup> Sailhamer (1992:141) states, “the account of Abraham’s sojourn in Egypt bears the stamp of having been intentionally shaped to parallel the later account of God’s deliverance of Israel from Egypt (Genesis 41-Exodus 12).” Abraham’s encounter with Pharaoh foreshadows the last years of Jacob, who with his sons take up residence in Egypt where they are enriched by the court and thereby avoid famine (Gen 45:16-20; 47:1-12). Abraham’s experience in Egypt also offered a typology for the Israelites who were enslaved and free only after the infliction of grievous plagues, the tenth touching Pharaoh’s house through the death of his son. Such a correspondence between father and descendants is underlying the prediction of the Egyptian sojourn in Gen 15:13-14. As with Abraham, the Hebrews emerged after their ordeal with many possessions so that it was Egypt that was “plundered” (Exod 3:21-22; 11:2-3; 12:35-36). Thus, the parallels are striking:

ABRAHAM (Gen 12:10-13:4)	JOSEPH (Gen 41:54b-Exod 12:42)
וַיְהִי רָעָב בְּאֶרֶץ (v. 10): a famine	וַיְהִי רָעָב בְּכָל-הָאֲרָצוֹת (Gen 41:54b): a famine
כַּאֲשֶׁר הִקְרִיב לָבוֹא מִצְרַיִם... (v. 11): when he drew near to go into Egypt...	וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶרֶץ גֹּשֶׁן (46:28): and they came into the land of Goshen
וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-סָרַי אִשְׁתּוֹ (v. 11): he said to Sarai his wife	וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל-אֶחָיו (46:31a): And Joseph said unto his brothers
יָדַעְתִּי כִּי... (v. 11): I know that ...	אֵעָלֶה וְאֵנִידָה לְפָרְעֹה וְאֹמְרָה (46:31b): I will go up, and show Pharaoh and say to him
וְהָיָה כִּי-יִרְאוּ אֹתְךָ הַמִּצְרַיִם וְאָמְרוּ	וְהָיָה כִּי-יִקְרָא לְכֶם פָּרְעֹה וְאָמַר...

<sup>372</sup> Cf. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, II.334, Sailhamer, *Genesis*, 116-17, and Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, 93. The case of Isaac, who also journeyed locally to Gerar differs from that of Abraham and Jacob, for the Lord prohibited him from descending to Egypt (Gen 26:1-2). In the Old Testament, famine is commonly understood as divine curse (e.g., Deut 28:23-24; Amos 4:6-8) or at least divine absence (Ruth 1:1, 6). However, there is no hint of divine disapproval of the patriarchs or any objection to their leaving Canaan in the light of the case of Jacob that it is specifically condoned by the Lord (Gen 46:3-4).

(v. 12): And it shall come to pass when the Egyptians see you, they will say אמרי... (v. 13): Say...	(46:33): And it shall come to pass, when Pharaoh shall call you, and shall say... ויאמרתם... (46:34a): Say...
(v. 13): that it might be well with me on account of you למען ייטב־לי בעבורך	(46:34b): that you might dwell in the land of Goshen תשבּוּ בְּאֶרֶץ גֹּשֶׁן
(v. 15a): and the officials saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh וַיֵּרְאוּ אֹתָהּ שְׂרֵי פַרְעֹה וַיְהַלְלוּ אֹתָהּ אֶל־פַּרְעֹה	(47:1): Then Joseph came and declared to Pharaoh... וַיָּבֹא יוֹסֵף וַיִּגַּד לְפַרְעֹה...
(v. 15b): and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house וַתִּקַּח הָאִשָּׁה בֵּית פַּרְעֹה	(47:5): And Pharaoh said to Joseph, saying, your father and your brothers are come into the land וַיֹּאמֶר פַּרְעֹה אֶל־יוֹסֵף לֵאמֹר אָבִיךָ וְאֶחָיִךְ בָּאוּ אֵלֶיךָ
(v. 16a): And he entreated Abram well for her sake; and he had sheep, and oxen, and he asses וּלְאַבְרָם הֵיטִיב בְּעַבְדוֹתָהּ וַיְהִי־לוֹ צֹאן־וּבָקָר וְחֲמֹרִים	(47:6): then make them rulers over my cattle וְשִׂמְתָם שְׂרֵי מִקְנֵה עַל־אֲשֶׁר־לִי (47:27): and they possessions therein, and grew, and multiplied exceedingly וַיֵּאָחֲזוּ בָּהּ נִיפְרוּ וַיִּרְבוּ מְאֹד
(v. 17): And the Lord plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues <sup>373</sup> וַיִּנְגַע יְהוָה אֶת־פַּרְעֹה נְגָעִים גְּדֹלִים וְאֶת־בֵּיתוֹ	(Exod 11:1): yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh עוֹד נֶגַע אֶחָד אָבִיא עַל־פַּרְעֹה
(v. 18): <sup>374</sup> And Pharaoh called to Abram and said וַיִּקְרָא פַרְעֹה לְאַבְרָם וַיֹּאמֶר	(12:31): And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said... וַיִּקְרָא לְמֹשֶׁה וּלְאַהֲרֹן לַיְלָה וַיֹּאמֶר...
(v. 19): Take and go קַח וְלֵךְ	(12:32): Take...and go קַח... וְלֵכוּ
(v. 20): they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had <sup>375</sup> וַיִּשְׁלַח אֹתוֹ וְאֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ וְאֶת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ	(12:33): to send them from the land... לְשַׁלְּחָם מִן־הָאָרֶץ...

<sup>373</sup> Gen 12:17 highlights the contrast between Abraham's welfare and that of Pharaoh. Meanwhile, "diseases" translates the Hebrew for "plagues," which is the same word describing the ten plagues against Pharaoh (Exod 11:1). Cf. the verb and its cognate accusative noun, נְגָעִים... וַיִּנְגַע, lit., "and (the Lord) plagued ... plagues."

<sup>374</sup> One may find the Pharaoh's double role of judge and of one of the contending parties in Gen 20:10; 26:9; 44:14-34; Exod 1:18-19. Furthermore, Pharaoh's two "why" questions, in which he shares his indignation with Abraham, are but one illustration of many in the Old Testament in which several "why" questions occur in sequence, always with לָמָּה (Gen 31:27, 30; 47:15, 19; Exod 5:22; Num 11:11). See, J. Barr, " 'Why?' in Biblical Hebrew," *JTS* 36 (1985): 29-30. Also, Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis 1-17*, 385.

<sup>375</sup> The Hebrew word, שלח, occurs in earlier when God "sent forth" Adam and Eve the garden (Gen 3:23) and also in later when Pharaoh releases the Israelites from his tight hold (Exod 6:1; 11:1; 12:33). See, Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis 1-17*, 386.



<p>וַיַּעַל אַבְרָם מִמִּצְרַיִם... הַנֶּגֶב (13:1): And Abram went up from Egypt toward the Negev</p>	<p>וַיֵּסְעוּ בְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל מִרַעַמְסֵס סֹכֶתָה (12:37): And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth</p>
<p>וְלוֹט עִמּוֹ (v. 1): and with Lot</p>	<p>וְגַם-עָרַב רַב עָלָה אִתָּם (12:38a): And a mixed multitude went up also with them</p>
<p>וַאֲבָרָם כָּבֵד מְאֹד בַּמִּקְנָה בַכֶּסֶף וּבַזָּהָב (v. 2): And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold</p>	<p>וּבִקְרֵי מִקְנָה כָּבֵד מְאֹד (12:38b): and flocks, and herds, even very much cattle</p>
<p>וַיִּקְרָא שְׁם אַבְרָם בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה (v. 4): and there Abram called on the name of the Lord</p>	<p>כֹּל-כֶּסֶף וְכָלִי זָהָב (12:35): silver, and gold</p> <p>הוּא-הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה לַיהוָה (12:42): the is that night of the Lord</p>

The author/the final composer “has carefully worded the account of Abraham’s sojourn in, and deliverance from, Egypt with the greater sojourn and deliverance in mind” (Ross 1988:273-4). From these parallels between two events, one may see that the author/the final composer intended to use this story as a paradigm to teach Israel the nature of her departure from Egypt and return to Palestine.<sup>376</sup> In this respect, it is noteworthy in the light such parallels that “by shaping the account of Abraham’s sojourn in Egypt to parallel the events of the Exodus, the author/the final composer permits the reader to see the implications of God’s past deeds with his chosen people. The past is not allowed to remain in the past. Its lessons are drawn for the future” (Sailhamer 1992:142). In addition to the similarities between two texts, one may also find some elements of contrast. Indeed, the texts are inverted in terms of “good guys” and “bad guys.” The Egyptians are not oppressors in Gen 12:10-20; they are not “hard-

<sup>376</sup> Instruction, teaching, and inculcation are for Cassuto frequently the essence, the true meaning of biblical narrative. The analogy between Gen 12:10-20 and the Exodus teaches that “the bandage of the children of Israel In Egypt was not an accidental calamity, but part of a plan prepared beforehand” and “that the Lord is ever ready to protect his faithful ones” (*A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, II.336-37). One the other hand, Westermann’s reliance on form critical reconstruction leads him to conclude that “there is certainly no direct link” between Gen 12:10-13:4 and the exodus events. See, Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 166.

hearted.” Indeed, Pharaoh is aware of the moral issues entailed once he learns that Sarah is Abraham’s wife. The Egyptians in Genesis are far from the Egyptians in Exodus. In conclusion, the relationship between Gen 12:10-20 and the Exodus suggests that Gen 12:10-20 is a powerful example of the effects of the paradigmatic possibilities of biblical narrative, of how it overloads a text and frustrate an attempt at clear, univocal reading, a final, definitive reading. The text explodes in all directions.

#### **4.3.3. The Instruction of War with Foreign Nation (Gen 14:13-16// Deut 20:1-15)**

In a number of points, the events of Genesis 14 reflect the same concerns as those of Deut 20:1-15, the instructions concerning carrying out wars with foreign nations: 1) Abraham’s actions are described in ways reminiscent of the conduct of warfare against “cities that are afar off and don not belong to the nations nearby” (cf. Deut 20:15); 2) He does not hesitate to go into battle against an army greater than his (Gen 14:14; cf. Deut 20:1; cf. Judg 7:7, MT[6]); 3) Abraham went into battle specially with only the “dedicated young men in his house” (Gen 14:14). The Hebrew expression used here for “קָדְשָׁם, dedicated” is not found elsewhere in the Bible, nor is its meaning clear within the context of ancient history and customs. The use of the word here, however, provides another link with Deut 20:5, which states that one who goes into battle should only be one who has already “קָדְשָׁם,<sup>377</sup> dedicated” his house; 4) Though he rejected the offer of a reward from the king of Sodom, Abraham laid claim to own rightfully that which his young men have eaten (Gen 14:24) as was prescribed in Deut 20:14, where

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<sup>377</sup> Since within the Pentateuch the verb occurs only in this passage of Deuteronomy, a link between the two texts by means of the terminology seems likely.

says explicitly that those who go into war with nations afar off may “eat” of the spoils taken in battle. Abraham also recognized that his three friends had their own rightful share in the spoil (Gen 14:24), which corresponds to the provisions of Deuteronomy 20:14; 5) Nevertheless, Abraham flatly rejected the offer to take from the possessions of the king of Sodom (Gen 14:23), as was prescribed in Deuteronomy 20:17 for the spoils of those nations who live within the boundaries of the land of inheritance; and 6) Along these same lines it is to be noted that Deuteronomy 20:2 assigned to the “priest” the role of reminding the people that “the Lord your God is the one who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory” (cf. Deut 20:13, “When the Lord your God delivers it into your hand”). In much the same way, Abraham was met by Melchizedek, “a priest” of the Most High God, who proclaimed to him that it was “the Most High God who delivered your enemies into your hand” (Gen 14:20).

In the light of such similarities, it appears that the author has intended to show that Abraham lived a life in harmony with God’s will even though he lived long before the revelation at Sinai. Abraham was one who pictured God’s Law written on his heart. He obeyed the Law, though the Law had not yet been given. Such an understanding of the life of Abraham is not foreign to the author of Genesis. Indeed, one of the last statements made about Abraham in Genesis is that he kept God’s “commandments, statutes and laws” (Gen 26:5). These terms are well-known from the pages of Deuteronomy (e.g., Deut 11:1; 26:17), where they are the stock vocabulary for describing the keeping of the Torah revealed at Sinai. The author’s point appears to have been to show that Abraham, as a man of faith, “kept the law.” He did not have the Law written out before him; nevertheless, he kept it. In this respect, the picture of Abraham that emerges from Genesis 14 and 26 is much like that of the new covenant

promise in Jer 31:33, in which God has promised to write the Torah on the heart of his covenant people so that they will obey it “from the heart.” This is the same picture of Abraham that later emerges as the central figure in the NT writer’s portrayal of lie under the new covenant (e.g., Romans 4, Galatians 3).

#### 4.3.4. Gen 15:7-17 and Exod 19:1-24:11 (the Sinai Covenant)

After Abraham confessed his reliance on the Lord in response to the king of Sodom (Gen 14:22-24), Abraham received a vision in which two divine speeches expand on the two earlier promises (Gen 12:1-3; 13:14-17) of a son whose prodigious progeny (vv. 1-6) will possess the land of Canaan (vv. 7-21). Only here are the covenant elements of land and children coupled by God with an elaborate ritual.<sup>378</sup> Abraham receives righteousness through faith (v. 6),<sup>379</sup> and divine oath and the rite of בְּרִית (“covenant,” vv. 9,18) confirm the promises. As for the significance of Genesis 15 for the Abraham narrative as a whole, Westermann remarks on its importance: “Genesis 15 not only stands at the center of the external structure of the Abraham narrative, but also it regarded in the history of exegesis right down to the present as the very heart of the Abraham story.”<sup>380</sup> It not merely provides a theological commentary on the promises foundational to the theme of the Abraham narrative, but establishes the promises in a

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<sup>378</sup> Cf. R. W. L. Moberly, “Abraham’s Righteousness (Gen 15:6),” in *Studies in the Pentateuch*, ed. J. A. Emerton (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 119.

<sup>379</sup> Most important in the dialogue between Abraham and God in Gen 15:1-6 is the statement expressed in the third person in v. 6 that because Abraham believed what God had said, “the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness.” This is the only place in the Bible where the two Hebrew words for אָמֵן (“believe”) and צְדָקָה (“righteousness”) are used together in a single sentence. Abraham’s faith in 15:6, which arches both forward and backward to cover both sections of Genesis 15, is his acknowledgement of Yahweh corresponding to that in Exod 6:7 and 7:5.

<sup>380</sup> Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 230.

broad historical vista by relating them to the exodus and conquest (vv. 13-16). As 15:18 shows, vv. 7-17 recounts the establishment of a covenant between the Lord and Abraham. it is fitting that in many respects the account should foreshadow the making of the covenant at Sinai.

Gen 15:7-17	The Covenant at Sinai (Exod 20)
<p>אֲנִי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאוּר כַּשְׁדִּים I am the Lord, who brought you up out of Ur of the Chaldeans (15:7).</p>	<p>אֲנֹכִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם I am the Lord your God, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt (20:2).</p>
<p>...וְהָיָה אִימָה חֹשֶׁכָה גְדֹלָה נִפְלְתָה עָלָיו ...and an horror of great darkness fell upon him (15:12) וְעָלְטָה הָיָה וְהָיָה תְנוּרָה עֹשֶׂן וְלֹפִיד אֲשֶׁר עָבַר בֵּין הַגְּזָרִים הָאֵלֶּה and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces (15:17)</p>	<p>יָרַד עָלָיו יְהוָה בְּאֵשׁ וַיַּעַל עֲשָׁנוּ כַעֲשָׁן הַכִּבְשָׁן... the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace... (19:18) וְכָל-הָעָם רָאוּ אֶת-הַקּוֹלֹת וְאֶת-הַלְפִידִם... וְאֶת-הַהָר עֹשֶׂן And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightings, ... and the mountain smoking (20:18)</p>
<p>...כִּי-יִגְרָו יְהוָה זְרַעְךָ בְּאֶרֶץ לֹא לָהֶם וְעִבְדוּם וְעָנּוּ אֹתָם אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה ...that your seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years (15:13) ...וְאַחֲרֵיכֵן יֵצְאוּ בְרֶכֶשׁ גָּדוֹל ...and afterward shall they come out with great substance (15:14)</p>	

The opening statement in Gen 15:7: “I am the Lord, who brought you up out of Ur of the Chaldeans,” is virtually identical to the opening statement of the Sinai covenant in Exod 20:2: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you up out of the land Egypt.” The expression “Ur of the Chaldeans” refers back to Gen 11:28, 31 and grounds the present covenant in a past act of divine salvation from “Babylon,” just as Exodus 20:2 grounds

the Sinai covenant in an act of divine salvation from Egypt. In addition, the formulation of Gen 15:7 of reflecting a basic tenet of Israel's faith together with Yahweh's self-predication is found only in Exod 6:6; 7:5; 20:2; 29:46; Lev 19:36; 25:38, 42, 55; 26:13; Num 15:41 and Deut 5:6 (Ha 1989:101-103).<sup>381</sup> Particularly, its formulation of Abraham's exodus bears a very close affinity with Lev. 25:38 not only in the choice but also in the order of words.<sup>382</sup> The coming of God's presence in the awesome fire and darkness of Mount Sinai (Exod 19:18; 20:18; Deut 4:11) appears to be intentionally reflected in Abraham's pyrotechnic vision (Gen 15:12, 17). In the Lord's words to Abraham (15:13-16) the connection between Abraham's covenant and the Sinai covenant is explicitly made by means of the reference to the four hundred years of bondage of Abraham's seed and their subsequent "exodus" ("and after this they will go out." V. 14<sup>383</sup>).

In addition, Gen 15 bears several major points of contact with the Sinai narrative. The first one has to do with the close association of the fire and smoke/cloud with the divine theophany on Sinai (Exod 19:18; 20:18). In fact, Exod 20:18 uses the words **לְפִידִם** and **עָשָׁן** in the description of the theophany. This calls to mind the significance

<sup>381</sup> From the texts listed above, it is obvious that the exodus tradition has acquired a somewhat stereotyped formulation: **אֲנִי (אֱלֹהִים) יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר-הוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם**

<sup>382</sup> Cf. N. Lohfink, *Die Landverheissung als Eid. Eine Studie zu Gen. 15*, Stuttgarter Bibelstudien 28 (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholischer Bibelwerk, 1967), 61; M. Anbar, "Genesis 15: A conflation of Two Deuteronomical Narratives," *JBL* 101 (1982): 45.

<sup>383</sup> Gen 15:14 presents the exodus as a consequence of Yahweh's judgment: **וְאַחֲרֵי־כֵן יֵצְאוּ בְרַכְשׁ גָּדוֹל** **אֲנִי** clearly refers to the exodus event (cf. Exod 12:42; 14:11), the connection between v. 14ab and the events that led up to the exodus is not so obvious. The key word of v. 14ab is **כֵּן** – a word not found in the narration of any of the events. On the one hand, there is an analogous situation between Gen 15:14 and Exod 6:2-8 and 7:1-5. In all three texts, the Israelites were oppressed and Yahweh was bent on delivering them. On the ground of the analogous situation in the three passages as well as their reference to the same exodus event in the history of Israel, it seems clear that Yahweh's act depicted by **כֵּן** in Gen 15:14 refers to the whole series of plagues leading up to the utter destruction of the Egyptians in the sea that Exod 6:2-8 and 7:1-5 announce. The point of Gen 15:14 is **יֵצְאוּ** ("afterward shall they come out"). Thus, Gen 15:14 reflects the author's/the final composer's intention to recapitulate the entire exodus tradition.

of the flaming torch (לפיד אש) and the smoking firepot (תנור עשן) in Gen 15:17 as representing Yahweh's presence. Secondly, the Sinai narrative presents the Mosaic covenant being not only sealed but also renewed within the setting of a theophany (Exod 24:1-11; 34). The technical expression כרת ברית is used in both passages to depict the act of "making" the covenant (Exod 24:8; 34:10,27). Gen 15:18a couches the divine promise of land donation in v. 18b in the same technical term כרת ברית. V. 17 of course sets this covenant making within a theophany so that the parallelism with the Sinai narrative is reinforced. The use of כרת ברית in Gen 15:18a is significant. For, here it clearly refers to the divine oath promising donation of land to Abraham's descendants. Elsewhere in the Pentateuch it denotes a bilateral covenant – either as a mutual pact between two human partners (Gen 21:27,32; 26:28; 31:44; Exod 23:32; Deut 7:2) or as the covenant Yahweh made with the Israelites binding both in a God-people relationship (cf. Deut 26:17-19; 29:12) with obligations for both partners. Interpreting in this way, Gen 15:17-18 sum up Israel's entire history recapitulated in vv. 13-14, 16. For the two verses explicitly refer to the exodus and Sinai traditions through the use of the cultic implements to represent the divine theophanies in both traditions and the כרת ברית that goes back to the covenant at Sinai.

Such considerations lead to the conclusion that the author intends to draw the reader's attention to the events at Sinai in his depiction of the covenant with Abraham. If we ask why the author has sought to bring in the picture of Sinai here, the answer lies in the purpose of the book. It is part of the overall strategy of the book to show that what God did at Sinai was part of a larger plan which had already been put into action with the patriarchs. Thus, the exodus and the Sinai covenant serve as reminders not only of

God's power and grace but also of God's faithfulness. What he sets out to accomplish with his people, he will carry through to the end.<sup>384</sup>

#### **4.3.5. The Compositional Resemblance (Gen 15-17// Exod 24-34)**

The choice of words in Gen 17:2 ("I will make my covenant," RSV) poses a question of the coherence of Genesis 17 with the preceding narrative. Why did the author/the final composer include two accounts of a divine-human covenant? What function in the overall narrative does each pericope serve? How significant is this for the interpretation of the theological theme(s) of this section of Genesis and the book as a whole? With regard to these questions, Williamson (2000:26-77) represents four identifiable interpretations of the relationship between Genesis 15 and 17: 1) progressive states in the establishment of the same covenant; 2) the making and renewal of a single covenant; 3) different oral or literary traditions about the establishment of the same covenant; and 4) two separate covenant, each with its own particular emphasis. Clearly the degree of continuity and discontinuity is important for determining the relationship between the two covenant pericopes. Thus, it is reasonable to conclude – from the elements continuity and discontinuity – that these chapters focus on two distinct, yet related, covenants established between God and Abraham. In other words, when examined the context of the narrative as a whole, the divine-human covenants in the Abraham narrative are best understood as relating to different promissory aspects, which are held together by a common thread: God's plan to

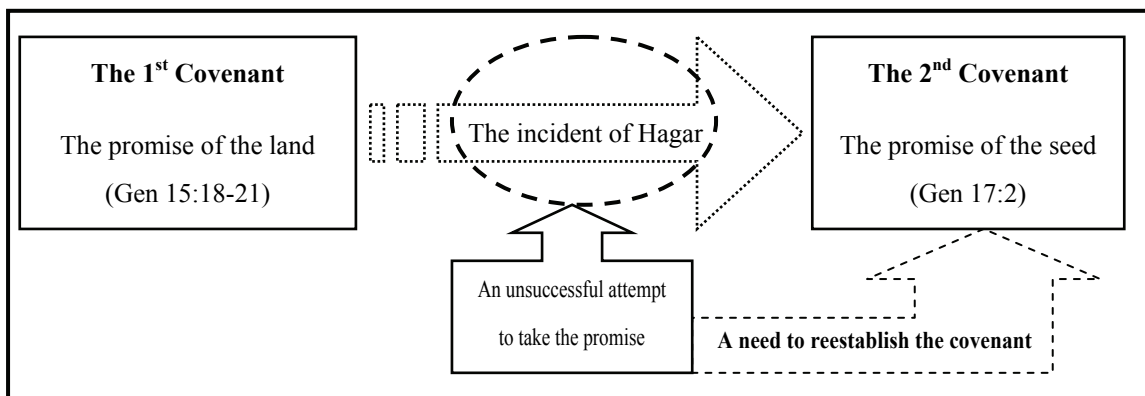
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<sup>384</sup> See, Sailhamer, *Pentateuch as the Narrative*, 152-53.



mediate blessing to all the nations of the earth through Abraham and his ‘seed’.<sup>385</sup>

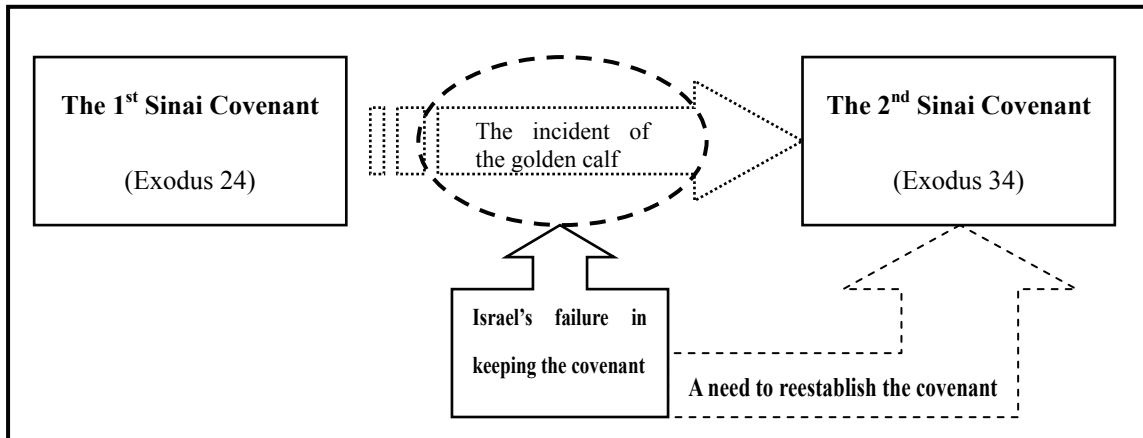
In this respect one may condensed that the former covenant in Genesis 15 concerns the promise of the land (Gen 15:18-21) and latter covenant concerns the promise of a great abundance of descendants (Gen 17:2).<sup>386</sup> However, it should be noted that between these two covenants was the incident with Hagar. There may thus have been a need to reestablish the earlier covenant after that unsuccessful attempt to take the promise into their own hands.



A similar line of argument can be seen in the narratives of the covenant at Sinai. The covenant is first established in Exodus 24 and then, again, in Exodus 34. Between these two accounts, however, is the narrative of the incident of the golden calf (Exod. 19:16; 32:1-35), which implied a failure on Israel’s part in keeping the covenant.

<sup>385</sup> See, Williamson, *Abraham, Israel and the Nations*, 260-67.

<sup>386</sup> Cf. Victor H. Matthews, *Old Testament Turning Points: The Narratives That Shaped a Nation* (Grand Rapids: BakerAcademic, 2005), 44-53.



#### 4.3.6. The Analogies Between the Hagar Episodes (Gen 16:1-16// Gen 21:8-21) and Related Texts in the rest of the Pentateuch

The Hagar episodes in the Abraham narrative is a highly episodic nature. The pericopes, to some extent, stand on their own, and their contribution and relation to the rest of the Pentateuch in terms of inversion. Indeed, the annunciation and career of Hagar foreshadows Israel's exodus (cf. Deut 26:6-7). The reversal between two texts is in evidence in the Hagar episodes. Hagar and Ishmael typify in reverse Israel's experience of Egyptian hostility (Gen 16:6; Exod 1:11-12), expulsion (Gen 21:10; Exod 12:39), and flight (Gen 16:16; Exod 14:5). To put it concretely, Sarah, the Israelites, deals harshly with or "oppresses" Hagar, the Egyptian,<sup>387</sup> who subsequently "flees" into the "wilderness" where she encounters the "angel of the Lord" (Gen 16:7-14). There are parallels with both Israel and Moses. The Israelites are "oppressed" (Exod 1:11-12), subsequently "flee" (Exod 14:5) in the "wilderness" (Exod 13:8;

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<sup>387</sup> Plaut notes an Arabic tradition that Hagar was in fact one of the maidservants provided by Pharaoh. See, W. Gunther Plaut, *Genesis The Torah: A Modern Commentary* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1974), 131.

14:3,5,11) where the “angel of God” (Exod 14:19; 32:34) goes before them. In the second Hagar episode, Sarah demands that Abraham “cast out” (גרש) Hagar (Gen 21:10). Abraham complies and “sends her away” (שלח); Hagar leaves and wanders in the wilderness (Gen 21:14-21). Moses and Aaron go to Pharaoh and demand, “Send my people away, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness” (Exod 5:1). Eventually, the people are “cast out” of the land of Egypt (Exod 6:1; 11:1; 12:39). In addition, Hagar and Moses share in a pattern of events: oppression (Exod 2:11-15a), flight in the desert where theophany occurs (Exod 2:15b; 3:2), return and expulsion when miraculous deliverance occurs (Exod 10:11; 11:1, 15:22-27).<sup>388</sup> The historical irony in Hagar’s revenge is the Egyptian enslavement of Sarah’s descendant (cf. Gen 15:13; 16:6). In addition, Hagar’s son, who taunts Isaac, foreshadows the Egyptian purge of the Hebrew children (Gen 15:13; 21:10; Exod 1:16). This observation does demonstrate that any reading of the Abraham narrative cannot be simple and limit itself to the narrative.

Moreover, Genesis 16 alludes to three other important passages in the Pentateuch: Gen 3:6; 12:3; and Deut 7:1-6.<sup>389</sup> By bringing the events of Hagar and Abraham into the larger context of these other passages, the author enlarges the reference of the story beyond Abraham and Hagar as individuals and ties their actions to the themes of the Pentateuch as a whole. The first sign of an intentional interdependence of the Hagar story on surrounding texts is the notice at the beginning of the narrative that Hagar was an “Egyptian” maid of Sarah (Gen 16:1, 3). The second reference to Hagar as “the Egyptian” is strikingly different from the first. The adjective does not modify “the

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<sup>388</sup> T. B. Dozeman, “The Wilderness and Salvation History in the Hagar Story,” *JBL* 117 (1998): 23-43.

<sup>389</sup> Sailhamer, *Pentateuch As Narrative*, 153-55.

maiden” as in verse 1 (“Egyptian maid”), but stands alone as a substantive along with “maid” in apposition to the personal name Hagar (“Hagar, the Egyptian, her maid”). In verse 3, then, “the Egyptian” serves as a conspicuous reminder of Hagar’s identity in verse 1, “an Egyptian maid.” The mention of Hagar’s geographical origin appears to function as a connecting link with the geographical list immediately preceding the story (Gen 15:18-21), since in that list, the first geographical name is Egypt (Gen 15:18). If such a connection is intentional, then it appears that the author is attempting to position the account of Hagar (Genesis 16) so that her story is representative of those nations in the preceding list. A way was thus opened for the events in the life of Hagar and Abraham to be interpreted within the larger theological context of Genesis and the Pentateuch where these lists of names occur. Particularly important in this regard are the similarities between Genesis 16 and Deut 7:1-6, the prohibition of taking foreign wives, a text, which had enormous importance to later generations of Israelites.<sup>390</sup> The account of Sarah’s plan to have a son has not only been connected with the list of nations in Genesis 15, but also appears to have been intentionally shaped with reference to the account of the Fall in Genesis 3. Each of the main verbs (wayyiqtol forms) and key expressions in Gen 16:2-3 finds a parallel in Genesis 3:

Gen 16:2-3	Genesis 3
16:2a וַתֹּאמֶר שָׂרַי אֶל-אַבְרָם... And Sarai said to Abram...	3:2a וַתֹּאמֶר הָאִשָּׁה אֶל-הַנָּחָשׁ... And the woman said to the serpent...
16:2b וַיִּשְׁמַע אַבְרָם לְקוֹל שָׂרַי and Abram heard to the voice of Sarai.	3:17 ...כִּי-שָׁמַעְתָּ לְקוֹל אִשְׁתֶּךָ... ...because you have heard to the voice of your wife...
16:3a וַתִּקַּח שָׂרַי אִשְׁת־אַבְרָם אֶת-הַגֵּר... And Sarai took Hagar, the Egyptian, as her concubine...	3:6a וַתִּקַּח מִפְּרִי הָאֲדָמָה... And she took of the fruit of the tree...

<sup>390</sup> See, Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 114ff.

And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar...	He took of the fruit and did eat...
<p>וַתֵּתֵן אֶתְהָ לְאַבְרָם אִשָּׁה לּוֹ לְאִשָּׁה 16:3b</p> <p>and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife</p>	<p>וַתֵּתֵן גַּם לְאִשְׁתָּהּ עִמָּהּ... 3:6b</p> <p>and gave also to her husband with her...</p>
<p>וַיֹּאמֶר הָגָר שְׁפַחַת שָׂרַי אִימָנוּהָ 16:8</p> <p>בָּאת וְאַנְהָ תֵלְכִי</p> <p>And he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, where have you come from, and where are you going?</p>	<p>... 3:9 אֵיכָּה:</p> <p>...where are you?</p>
<p>וְהִרְבֵּה אֶת־זַרְעֲךָ... 16:10</p> <p>I will multiply your seed exceedingly...</p> <p>וְהָיָה הַרְבֵּה וְיִלְדָתְךָ בֶן וְקָרָאתָ שְׁמוֹ יִשְׁמָעֵאל... 16:11</p> <p>Behold, you be with child, and shall bear a son, and shall call his name Ishmael</p> <p>וְיָדוּ בְכָל יוֹד כָּל בּוֹ... 16:12</p> <p>his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him...</p>	<p>וְאִיבָהּ אִשִּׁית בֵּינֶךָ וּבֵין הָאִשָּׁה וּבֵין זַרְעֶךָ וּבֵין זַרְעָהּ הוּא יִשׁוּפֶךָ רֹאשׁ וְאַתָּה תִשׁוּפְנוּ עָקֵב 3:15</p> <p>And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; it shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel</p>

From the author's vantage point, he shows Sara's plan to deal with her own barrenness, like Eve's scheme to be like God, to be an attempt to circumvent God's plan of blessing in favor of gaining a blessing on her own. By placing the Hagar story after the story of affirming the promise of a child (Gen 15:4), the author suggests that Sarah's scheme was intended to head off that divine promise by supplying it with a human solution. Thus, the story falls in line with the theme of the stories, which preceded it in demonstrating the unacceptability of human effort in fulfilling the divine promise.<sup>391</sup> At the same time that these parallels establish an association between the Hagar narrative and the Fall (Genesis 3), the repeated use of the verb קלל ("curse", "despise) in 16:4-5 appears also to mark an intentional association of the passage with the

<sup>391</sup> Sarah's plan (Gen 16:1-6), though successful, does not meet with divine approval (Gen 17:15-19), just as the plans and schemes of those in the previous narratives had ended in failure (e.g., Gen 3:6-8; 4:3-7; 11:1-9; 12:10-20; 13:1-12; 14:21-24).

patriarchal blessing in Gen 12:3. This word (“to curse”) occurs with a similar meaning only in these two passages in Genesis. It is mentioned twice within Gen 16:4-5 that Hagar the Egyptian “despised” Sarah, the very thing which Gen 12:3 warned would end in God’s curse: “Those who despise you I will curse.” It is noteworthy that one of the few other occurrences of the verb is Deut 23:5, a passage with longstanding association with Deut 7:1-6 and the theme of “foreign wives” within the OT canon. In Deut 7:1-6, where is an explication of the second section of the first Commandment about separation from the gods of other nations, Moses accentuates the fact that Israel is called to forsake any possibility of following after the idols of the nations and to remember the only God who keeps “his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him” (Deut 7:9). Moses appears intent on stressing the notion that separation from the gods of other nations necessarily entails separation from the nations themselves (Deut 7:2-3). Indeed, Deut 7:3 stressed the threat of marriage to “foreigner.” Moses’ concern, thus, is with the effect of joining in marriage and treaties with the Canaanites, who practice idolatry (Deut 7:4).

#### **4.3.7. “Walk with God” in the Pentateuch**

The genealogical list in Genesis 5 is nearly identical in form to the one in Gen 11:1-26, the genealogy of Shem. A comparison of the formal elements of the two genealogies shows that the only difference between them is the inclusion of the clause “and he died” at the end of each of the names in Genesis 5. Why would the author have felt it important to remind the reader specifically of the death of each of these patriarchs, whereas in the other genealogical lists he allows the matter of the individual’s death to

remain implicit in the statement of the total number of the years of his life? The answer is not hard to find in Genesis 5 because in this chapter alone one of the patriarchs, Enoch, did not die. The total number of the years of his life is given, as with the other genealogies, but only here is there an exception (Gen 5:24). In other words, the author purposefully underscores the death of each patriarchs in Genesis 5 in order to highlight and focus the reader's attention on the exceptional case of Enoch. Why does the author want to point to Enoch so specifically as an exception? The author's purpose can better be seen in the way he has emphasized, through repetition, that Enoch "walked with God" (Gen 5:22, 24). The phrase "walk with God" clearly has a special meaning to the author since he uses the same expression to describe Noah as "a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time" (Gen 6:9), and Abraham and Isaac as faithful servants of God (Gen 17:1; 24:40; 48:15). The sense of the author is clear. Enoch is an example of one who found life amid the curse of death. One can find life if one "walks with God." For the author, then, a door is left open for a return to the Tree of Life in the Garden. Enoch found that door in his "walking with God" and in so doing has become a paradigm for all who seek to find life. It is significant that the author returns to this theme at the opening of Genesis 17, where God establishes his covenant promise with Abraham (Gen 17:1-2). To "walk with God" is to fulfill one's covenant obligations. Abraham's final response in Gen 17:23 shows that he obeyed the covenant as commanded in Gen 17:9 – he circumcised all male members of his household, "as God had spoken to him" (v. 23). This final remark about Abraham's obedience carries the reader back to the beginning of the narrative where the injunction was given: "walk before me (הִתְהַלֵּךְ) and be blameless (תָּמִים, v. 1)." This portrait of an obedient Abraham is reminiscent of the picture of Noah, who also "walked with God" (הִתְהַלֵּךְ)

and was “blameless” (תָּמִים, Gen 6:9). In the light of the scarcity of these terms in Genesis, it seems likely that the author expects the reader to make an association between these two great men based on the close recurrence of both terms. “Blameless” occurs in Genesis only in these two texts; “walk before God” occurs more frequently, but in carefully chosen contexts (Enoch, Gen 5:22, 24; Noah Gen 6:9; Abraham, Gen 17:1; 24:40; 48:15 [with Isaac]). Thus Abraham and Noah are presented as examples of those who have lived in obedience to the covenant and are thus “blameless” before God, because both obeyed God “as he commanded them” (Gen 17:23; cf. 6:22; 7:5, 9, 16).

For the author/the final composer, “walking with God” is the way to life as Moses tells the people in the wilderness (Deut 30:15-16). It is important to see that for the author of the Pentateuch “walking with God” could not have meant a mere keeping of a set of laws. Rather, it is just with those who could not have had a set of “laws” that the author associates the theme of “walking with God.” By choosing such individuals to exemplify “walking with God,” the author shows his desire to teach another way to life than merely a legalistic adherence to the Law. We must not lose sight of the fact that from the author’s perspective the way of the Law at Sinai has not proved successful (e.g., Deut 31:27). A better way lay still in the future (Deut 30:5-16). For him the way to life is exemplified best in people like Enoch (“he walked with God,” Gen 5:22), Noah (“he walked with God,” Gen 6:9), and Abraham (“he believed God and he reckoned it to him for righteousness,” Gen 15:6). The point is clear enough: God delivers those who “walk with” him and who do not “corrupt his way.” In the repetitions, the author’s/the final composer’s message comes through most clearly.



Thus when the author repeats four times that those who survived the Flood were those who had done “as the Lord had commanded” (Gen 6:22; 7:5, 9, 16), his point is clear. Obedience to the will of the Lord is the way to salvation. In the way that Noah is here (Gen 7:6-24) an example of obedience and salvation, later narrative figures, such as Abraham (Gen 21:4) and the Israelites (Exod 12:28), will be called upon to exhibit the same lesson.

#### **4.3.8. The Woman-at-the-Well (Genesis 24, 29// Exodus 2)**

The parallels between the Rebekah story (Gen 24:1-67, esp. vv. 11-20) and the accounts in Gen 29:1-10 and Exod 2:16-22, where a wife is obtained in a foreign land have been observed by some critics.<sup>392</sup> It is apparent that the author has related Genesis 24 to the whole of the Abraham narrative and knows also of the Isaac-Rebekah and Jacob-Laban narratives, indicating that the composition was conceived in light of the former. J. G. Williams has pointed out a literary conventions in the biblical text, such as that of the betrothal to a woman at a well (as in Genesis 24 and 29, Exodus 2).<sup>393</sup> He has isolated the example of the woman-at-the-well motif in the biblical texts. The three passages all contain the motif of meeting the wife-to-be at a well.<sup>394</sup> Indeed, from analyses of the episodes meeting at a well, it is clear that in such encounters the

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<sup>392</sup> These intertextual relationships are usually attributed to a secondary editor whose purpose was to integrate disparate patriarchal stories into the epic account, e.g., Thompson, *Origin Tradition*, 102; Van Seters, on the basis of chronological and other links, believes that the original arrangement was possibly Gen 22:20-24; 25:1-6; 24:1-67; and 25:11 (*Abraham in History*, 248).

<sup>393</sup> See, James G. Williams, “The Beautiful and the Barren: Conventions in Biblical Type-Scenes” *JSOT* 17 (1980): 107-19.

<sup>394</sup> Kenneth T Aitken, however, has concluded, after a detailed study of the structure of Genesis 24 that aside from the marriage itself, therefore, the basic structure of the plot in Genesis 24 has no parallel in either Genesis 29 or Exodus 2. See, Aitken’s work, “The Wooing of Rebekah: A Study in the Development of the Tradition,” *JSOT* 30 (1984): 3-23.

emphasis is particularly on the main character who meets a woman (a daughter) coming to draw water. The main character does something for her and receives an invitation to come to her father's home; a marriage ensues.<sup>395</sup>

The similarity can be traced at the level of word choice and its theme. Firstly, at the level of word's choice, וַיֵּשֶׁב עַל-הַבְּאֵר ("he remained at the well," Exod 2:15) suggests a similarity to the well stories in Genesis 24 and 29. In Gen 24:10-27, the servant of Abraham found Rebekah to be Isaac's wife; in that pericope שָׁקָה (*hiphil*, "to give to drink") occurs seven times (vv. 14[x3], 17, 18[x2], 19) and הַבְּאֵר ("the well") three times. In Gen 29:1-14, at the meeting between Jacob and Rachel, matters are presented the other way around: הַבְּאֵר occurs seven times and שָׁקָה thrice. Similarly, in Exod 2:15, Moses is sitting at הַבְּאֵר and gives the flock to drink (שָׁקָה, thrice). Secondly, there is also a thematic analogy between the accounts: a bride is acquired (for Isaac, Jacob and Moses) and a safe home is found after fleeing as the result of an unforgivable deed (Jacob and Moses). In addition, the servant (Gen 24:26-27) testifies that it was the Lord who "led" (נָחָה) him successfully (cf. v. 48). The servant may well be cast by the author in the image of Moses. In the song of victory Moses says similarly, "In your unfailing love (חֶסֶד) you will lead (נָחָה) the people" (Exod 15:13), and the divine command to Moses, "go (הֲלֹךְ), lead (נָחָה) the people...and my angel (מַלְאָכִי) will go before you (לְפָנֶיךָ)" in Exod 32:34 recalls the servant's exultation (v. 27) and Abraham's promise of a guiding angel (v. 7)

Further, the textual resemblance can be presented in terms of the continuation of life for a son. In Genesis 24 and 29, animals were given water: camels (Gen 24:14ff.) and

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<sup>395</sup> Cf. G. F. Davies, *Israel in Egypt. Reading Exodus 1-2*, JSOT 134 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 146-52.

the flock (Gen 29:3). In the first place, to be given water signifies life to these animals. Nonetheless, the context in which the stories take place and the special role of the daughters (cf. Gen 24:13; 29:6) make it clear that there is a more critical issue involved here. The continuation of Abraham's line is at stake. The special place of **הַבְּאֵר** in the architecture of the biblical texts indicates that, besides being a source of life for the flock, it particularly has to do with the continuation of life for the 'son'. This notion is also present in the story of Hagar, who named a well Lahai-Roi (Gen 16:14). The fact that Ishmael, the son of Abraham, could be born is due to the fact that this well was there. In this regard, H C White correctly maintained that the name of the well does not refer to the fact that 'Hagar lived after seeing God, but rather to the life given to her child because of the sight.'<sup>396</sup> The well Lahai-Roi is again mentioned in connection with Isaac. Coming from that well when he saw the camels approaching, Isaac went to meet them and to receive Rebekah as his wife (Gen 24:62, 67). He was living nearby that well when Elohim blessed him (Gen 25:11). Between these two occurrences, the story of the death of Abraham is related (Gen 25:1-11), so that the well Lahai-Roi forms an enclosing framework around Abraham's death and burial. At the well Lahai-Roi, the critical issue concerns the life of Abraham's offspring. In Exodus as well, more is involved than providing a flock with water. The announcement of the birth of a son, Gershom (Exod 2:22) and the scene at the well form an *inclusio* around Moses' meeting with the priest of Midian.<sup>397</sup>

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<sup>396</sup> H. C. White, "The Initiation Legend of Ishmael," *ZAW* 87 (1975): 267-87 (esp. 286, n 61).

<sup>397</sup> This analysis is heavily on the basis of Jopie Siebert-Hommes' work, *Let the Daughters Live!: The Literary Architecture of Exodus 1-2 as a Key for Interpretation*, Biblical Interpretation Series 37 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 77, 121-23.

#### **4.4. Conclusion**

In this chapter, we have recognized the essential homogeneity of the Abraham narrative and the remaining books of the Pentateuch. The close textual relationships between the Abraham narrative and the remainder of the Pentateuch, which we had observed above allude that the author/the final composer of the Pentateuch has deliberately shaped the texts in such a way that one can discern relationships among its parts. As stated in the section of the introduction, the narrative is composed as a part of a larger typological scheme of the Pentateuch, foreshadowing the future events. The episodes in the Abraham narrative, thus, prefigure events in the life of Israel in the eschatological perspective of the Pentateuch; it is ever looking forward to future generation, where appropriation of the promissory blessings can be reexperienced.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

#### 5.1. Hermeneutical Reflections

We have investigated the Abraham narrative in a sense of a text-centered approach. The purpose of this study is to offer a proposal for reading the Abraham narrative. That is, it is a suggestion that the words of the text and the meaning of the author/the final composer is the first and primary goal of interpretation. “Every word, phrase, clause comes to the reader as part of a larger interconnected whole. It is a whole in which every part has been construed in a specific and particular way. The parts are pieces of meaningful texts, not discreet utterances of a neutral language.”<sup>398</sup> In this sense, the locus of revelation for this approach of the Abraham narrative remains that meaning which is derived from the texts themselves. From this, the task of this work is to understand “the text itself as a pattern of meaning and effect.”<sup>399</sup> This study is thus dependent on an understanding of the biblical languages as parts of texts and stages in compositional strategies. On the basis of such an understanding of text(s), this study had employed two hermeneutical tools: composition criticism and intertextuality.

##### 5.1.1. Composition Criticism

This method focuses on formal literary features of the Abraham narrative as clues of the author’s/the final composer’s message. Earlier in this work we discussed it attempts

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<sup>398</sup> Sailhamer, *Old Testament Theology*, 206.

<sup>399</sup> Sternberg, *Poetics of Bible Narrative*, 15.

to trace the ways the author/the final composer of Genesis organized and fashioned literary units into unified texts and whole book as well as to understand the theological characteristics of their finished works. We have approached the Abraham narrative as single literary units composed of many smaller units of the narrative text. We have also confirmed a discernible strategy in the interweaving of these parts into a whole throughout the entire work of Genesis and the remainder of the Pentateuch. The apparent overall strategy of the author/the final composer in the Abraham narrative suggests that one of the central concerns lying behind the final shape of the Pentateuch is an attempt to uncover an inherent relationship between the past and the future. The Abraham narrative is put together in such a way that one can discern relationships among its parts in the Pentateuch. That is to say, the earlier events are presented as pointers to future events. This compositional strategy is to provide an eschatological and messianic interpretation of the historical narratives due to the terminology used, viz. “the end of the days.”<sup>400</sup> This feature is called “narrative typology” This compositional strategy of the Abraham narrative can be traced at the level of the cohesive nature of the strategy of the various literary units in the narrative.

### **5.1.2. Intertextuality**

This literary analysis looks at how inherently narrative units intersect with each other on a “literary,” which means that concerning the artistic use of language in its broadest sense, including motif, structure, verbal techniques, etc.<sup>401</sup> It provides a theoretical

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<sup>400</sup> Sailhamer, *Pentateuch as Narrative*, 35-37.

<sup>401</sup> Cf. B. D. Sommer, “Exegesis, allusion and intertextuality in the Hebrew Bible: A response to Lyle Eslinger,” *VT* 46 (1996): 486-88. See also Fewell, *Reading Between Texts*.

basis for dealing with textual similarities between the Abraham narrative and the remaining of the Pentateuch, on the one hand, cannot readily be labeled as “borrowed” (e.g., citations) but, on the other hand, are obviously more than mere happenstance. It allows us to discuss the comparability of literary elements even if we cannot explain exactly how they came about. By choosing an intertextual approach we can explicate elements in the Abraham narrative. A text-centered approach adapted in this work is, thus, not to reconstruct the early “life setting” or *Sitz im Leben* of the Abraham narrative just as form critics have done. Rather, this approach aims to the *Sitz im Text* or “text setting.” As a result, this approach to the narrative reveals a distinct compositional strategy, which encompasses the entire narrative:

*Terah’s Genealogy (11:27-32)*

- A. YHWH’s commands and promises – offspring and land (12:1-9)
- B. Threats to the promise of heir in Egypt: Abraham separation from Lot (12:10-13:18)
- C. Abraham intercedes for Sodom and Lot militarily (14:1-24)
- D. Covenant with Abraham: the promise of posterity and land (15:1-16:16)**
- D’.Covenant with Abraham: the promise of posterity and land (17:1-18:15)**
- C’.Abraham intercedes for Sodom and Lot spiritually (18:16-19:38)
- B’.Threats to the promise of heir in Gerar: Abraham separation from Ishmael (20:1-21:34)
- A’.YHWH’s commands and promises: offspring and land (22:1-19)

*Nahor’s Genealogy (22:20-24)*

What this analysis of the Abraham narrative demonstrates is that there is a distinct intertextuality to the narrative. It has shape and a strategy.

## 5.2. Theological Reflections

The most influential yet subtle feature of the author’s/the final composer’s work in

relating historical events in the Abraham narrative is the overall framework (i.e., ‘the literary context’ or ‘structure’) within, which he arranges his account. As stated in chapter 1, structure (or the literary context) implies purpose, which in turn suggests a central concern or integration point that gives a passage its meaning and direction. In this regard, the author/the final composer of the Pentateuch employs the overall complex chiasmic structure for the Abraham narrative in order to convey his theological characteristics clearly and persuasively. This recognition of the chiasmic features in the narrative certainly helps the reader to identify the author’s/the final composer’s theological or ideological message by determining where his emphasis, criticism, and approval lay and where they do not. Thus, one may assert, “the structure is the message.”<sup>402</sup>

In the overall structure of the Pentateuch, the most prominent event and the most far-reaching theme in the Pentateuch is the covenant between God and Israel at Mount Sinai. The meaning of this event may go by the name “theocracy” or the kingdom of God. To say it another way, it means the rule of God among his people Israel. This is the central concern of the Pentateuch. To put it concretely, it can be described based on Sailhamer’s view as follows: “1) God comes to dwell with Israel; 2) Israel is a chosen people; 3) God gives Israel the land; 4) Israel must obey God’s will; and 5) salvation or judgment is contingent on Israel’s obedience.” In other words, the author/the final composer of the Pentateuch views the Sinai covenant as God’s plan to restore his original blessing to humanity through the descendants of Abraham (Gen 12:1-3; Exod 2:24). In this respect, Sailhamer continues to argue that the author/the final composer

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<sup>402</sup> John T. Walsh, “Gen 2:4b-3:24: A Synchronic Approach,” *JBL* 96 (1977): 161-77, states that “the ‘meaning’ of a work of literature is communicated as much by the structure of the work as by surface ‘content.’”



“wants to show that the covenant at Sinai failed to restore God’s blessing to humanity because Israel failed to trust God and obey his will.” Further, “the author wants to show that God’s promise to restore the blessing would ultimately succeed because God himself would one day give to Israel a heart to trust and obey him (Deut 30:1-10).” In other words, the entire outlook of the Pentateuch, then, might be described as eschatological, in that it looks to the future as the time when God’s faithful promise would be fulfilled.”<sup>403</sup> Although the past, Mount Sinai, had ended in failure from the author’s perspective, the message of the Pentateuch is hope, namely, God’s people should trust and obey him and, like Abraham, have faith in his promises. “Thus, the primary subject matter of the Pentateuch is the Sinai covenant.”<sup>404</sup>

In this sense, Gen 12:1-3 exhibits the three elements of the promise around, which the theme of the Pentateuch is built: descendants (seed), relationship (blessing), and land.<sup>405</sup> As for the patriarchal narratives, these divine promises are repeated for Abraham (Gen 12:7; 13:15-17; 15:7-21; 17:4-8; 22:16-18), Isaac (Gen 26:2-4), and Jacob (Gen 28:13-14; 35:9-12; 46:1-4). In particular, the theme of Abraham and his descendants marking a new beginning in God’s plan of blessing is developed in a way of the frequent reiteration of God’s blessing in Gen 1:28 throughout the narratives of Abraham and his descendants (Gen 12:1-3; 13:15-16; 15:5,18; 17:6-8; 22:17-28; 25:11; 26:2-4; 27:27-29; 49:28). Throughout the patriarchal narratives, the promises

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<sup>403</sup> Thus, Genesis concerns God’s promissory blessings upon Israel’s ancestors that have their partial realization in the lives of the patriarchs and the rise of the nation Israel. Genesis ends with Jacob’s sons in Egypt, not Canaan, just as the Pentateuch concludes with the burial of Moses and with Israel not yet in the “Promised Land.” See, Clines, *Theme of the Pentateuch*; Mann, “All the Families of the Earth,” 341-53.

<sup>404</sup> J. H. Sailhamer, “Genesis,” in *NIV Compact Bible Commentary*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 11.

<sup>405</sup> Together, the theme and motifs of the patriarchal stories enable an interlacing of the narratives and reveal their theological emphases. For more on the theology of the patriarchal narratives, see, P. R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998).

are of first concern; even in the Joseph narrative, where they are not as readily seen, the tension of the story.<sup>406</sup> In the Abraham narrative, the promise made to ancestors is none other than a reiteration of God's original blessing of humankind (Gen 1:28). Similarly, the verbal parallels between the accounts of the struggle that arose between Abraham and Lot (Gen 13:6) and the struggle between Jacob and Esau (Gen 36:7) have the effect of drawing the themes of the two narratives together so that they reinforce this central theme, which is the fulfillment of the blessing: "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the land" (Gen 1:28). Gen 12:10-13:4 reveals a recurring theme that it is the threat to God's promise in Gen 12:1-3. In nearly every episode in the Abraham narrative, the promise of a "numerous seed," "blessing to all families of the earth," or the "gift of the land" is placed in jeopardy by the actions of the characters of the narrative. The promise looks as if it will fail. In the face of such a threat, however, the narrative show that God always remains faithful to his word and he himself enters the arena and safeguards the promise. The purpose of such a recurring narrative theme is to show that only God can bring about his promise.<sup>407</sup>

Meanwhile, in the Abraham cycle, the chief tension is the question of "seed." This comes specifically only in Genesis 15 and provides the focus for Genesis 16-21. This

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<sup>406</sup> W. Brueggemann, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 47, states "The ancestral narrative are of decisive important for Israel's faith and understanding; they provide ballast for life in a world that kept this community endlessly off balance and in jeopardy."

<sup>407</sup> In this regard, Sailhamer's analysis of the theme of separation is explicit. According to him, several narrative in the Abraham narrative are governed by the theme of struggle and shaped around the separation (Gen 13:9, 11, 14), which results from the struggle (e.g., Gen 13:5-18). At its conclusion stands the second statement of the promise (e.g., Gen 13:14-17). Just as the first statement of the promise was preceded by Abraham's separation from among the nations (Gen 10:32) and from his father's house (Gen 12:1), so the second statement of the promise is put in the context of Abraham's separation from his closest kin, Lot (Gen 13:14). It is not without purpose that the final statement of the promise to Abraham comes immediately after he has demonstrated his willingness to be separated from his only son and heir, Isaac (Gen 22:15-18). See Sailhamer, *Pentateuch as Narrative*, 137-179.

theme does not let up even with the birth of Isaac, for the story keeps before the reader the potential threat of rival Ishmael. Genesis 12 and 22 are literary bookends that establish Abraham's credentials, his call to Canaan, and his love for God as shown by his offering of Isaac (Gen 22:15-18). For the account's continuing interest in offspring, the story includes the lengthy chapter on obtaining an appropriate wife (Rebekah) for Isaac (Genesis 24), and the matter ends with Abraham's sons by Keturah safely exiled to the east (Gen 25:1-6). Intertwined with the question of the "seed" is the second issue of "land," for burgeoning nation must secure for itself territorial sovereignty to thrive (e.g., Gen 15:7-21). The gift of the land assumed that the Lord God owned the land and could dispose of it as he pleased (cf. Lev 25:33; also Exod 19:5; Lev 20:22-24; Num 36:7). Abraham did not possess the land in his lifetime but obtained portions of it, such as a well and its adjacent property by cultivation (Gen 21:25-30; cf. Gen 26:19-32) and a cave with its field by acquisition (Gen 23:9-20; cf. Gen 33:19; 48:21-22). The building of altars, securing land usage, and the purchase of properties show symbolically Abraham's claim to the land and point to the future possession of the land that his descendants will someday enjoy.<sup>408</sup> The blessing intended for all humanity was cradled in the arms of the mothers of Israel as the successors to the primeval promise (Gen 1:26-28; 3:15; 9:1-3). The people who met the patriarchs recognized by the patriarchs' testimony that God blessed them and those favorably related to them (e.g., Gen 21:22-24; 24:31, 50; 26:26-29; 30:27; 41:39).<sup>409</sup> The mediation of the blessing to those outside of the chosen family becomes a centerpiece in the Abraham

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<sup>408</sup> The land promise at Gen 15:8 by the use of the perfect *נתתי* ("I give") indicate the grant to Abraham's descendants is immediate (Gen 23:11; cf. Gen 20:16). Westermann views the perfect form of the verb here as the enactment of a legal agreement (cf. Gen 20:16). See, Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 229.

<sup>409</sup> For the view of the patriarch's calling as the church's missiological imperative, see M. D. Carroll, "Blessing the Nations: Toward a Biblical Theology of Mission from Genesis," *BBR* 10 (2000): 17-34.

narrative (e.g., Gen 12:10-20; 14; 16; 21; 18-19; 19:30-38; 20:1-18; 21:22-34).

To conclude, the promises are made by God unconditionally. This element of unconditionality is sounded clearly both in the promises themselves and in the covenant God makes with Abraham, and by extension with his descendants, which instituted in Gen 15:1-21 and confirmed in Gen 17:1-27. Nowhere does God ever add a conditional if clause to any promise he makes to Abraham that suggests that obedience or faithfulness is a *sine qua non* for the fulfillment of that promise.<sup>410</sup>

### 5.3. Conclusion

This study is an exegetical investigation of the Abraham narrative to trace the literary compositional strategy of it in the narrative structure of the Pentateuchal corpora, by attempting to analyze and describe its structure and the semantics of the arrangement of source material in the periscope of the Abraham narrative. The central concern of the present work is about the role of the literary unit played in the compositional strategy of the author/the final composer of the Pentateuch as a whole. That is to say, it is understanding how these different literary units are compositionally arranged as the final form and related to each other. In order to read the Abraham narrative the two kind of methodology have employed, composition criticism and intertextuality. These hermeneutical helped us to see not simply the lesson taught by the text; it also provides the means for appreciating the basic narrative structure not mere to the Abraham narrative, but to the whole Pentateuch. These methods revealed textual interrelatedness

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<sup>410</sup> Victor P. Hamilton, "Genesis: Theology of," in *NIDOTTE*, vol. 4 (Carlisle: Paternoster Publishing, 1996), 663-75.

between the Abraham cycle and the remainder of the Pentateuch. In this sense, this study is a holistic approach in an analytical, integrative, and thematic fashion.

Initially, we have determined of the inner literary arrangement of the Abraham narrative in the narrative frame of Genesis and the Pentateuch as well. Having examined the unity and structure of the Abraham cycle, it is apparent that in its present form it shows all the signs of being an intentionally constructed and closely integrated narrative. The two pivotal themes, “seed” and “land,” particularly underlie the main section of the cycle (Gen 11:27-22:19). In the following section, it is followed by a discussion of the inner textual integrity of logic, syntax, and historical milieu of the Abraham narrative, and intertextual relationships of the periscope by syntactically examining of the texts at the semantic and thematic level. From this observation, it is abundantly clear that the main section of the Abraham narrative (Gen 11:27-22:24) has a self-sustaining unity articulated in numerous parallel themes, key-words and key-expressions, and also continues the major theme of the Creation and Noah Cycles.

We have recognized the essential homogeneity of the Abraham narrative and the remaining books of the Pentateuch. The close textual relationships between the Abraham narrative and the remainder of the Pentateuch, which we had observed above allude that the author/the final composer of the Pentateuch has deliberately shaped the texts in such a way that one can discern relationships among its parts. The narrative is composed as a part of a larger typological scheme of the Pentateuch, foreshadowing the future events in the eschatological perspective of the Pentateuch. In conjunction with the theological characteristic of the Abraham narrative, we have observed the structural character of the narrative. Structure (or the literary context) implies purpose,

which in turn suggests a central concern or integration point that gives a passage its meaning and direction. By employing the overall complex chiasmic structure, the author/the final composer of the Pentateuch conveys his theological characteristics clearly and persuasively. In the narrative framework, he wants to deliver the central concern of the Abraham narrative, namely, God's plan to restore his original blessing to humanity through the descendants of Abraham (Gen 1:28; 12:1-3; Exod 2:24). In short, the present work is thus an exegetical proposal to the Abraham narrative as a holistically in the pre-critical angle.

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