The Lot Complex: The Use and Abuse of Daughters in the Hebrew Bible

by

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Abstract

This study explores the daughter stories of the Hebrew Bible from literary, psychoanalytic, structuralist, and deconstructionist perspectives. In seeking to understand how daughters and daughterhood are presented I provide close readings—paying attention to the rhetorical strategies, themes, motifs, and symbols—of discrete narratives of daughters and consider how they function within the biblical text at large as well. Because the biblical text assumes that a woman must always be defined in subordinate position to her patriarch, this is also a study about the daughter-father pair. These two family members are the most juxtaposed to each other in terms of gender, authority, and cultural privilege, and thus provide rich insight into the gender ideology of the Hebrew Bible.

The story of Lot and his daughters serves as a paradigmatic example. The daughters are initially presented as passive objects, fully under the control and power of their father—by the end of the narrative, the daughters are active agents while the father is the object of their seduction intended to preserve his seed. In between the mother and sons-in-law are introduced and erased, typifying the absence of biblical mother-daughter relationships and the fraught triangular affinity between fathers, sons-in-law, and daughters. Full of ambivalence and irony, this story reveals many of the symbols and patterns, projections and (repressed) desires, and fears and fantasies that characterize biblical daughter stories.

From the Lot story, I proceed to analyze the narratives of the first woman of the Hebrew Bible (eventually named Eve), Rachel and Leah, Dinah, the daughters of Judges (Achsah, Jephthah's daughter, the Timnite daughter, the Levite's *pilegesh*, and the daughters of Jabesh-Gilead and Shiloh), Tamar (Gen 38), Ruth, Merab and Michal, Tamar (2 Sam 13), and the Daughter of Zion. Each story is read on its own but also in regard to how it corresponds and

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contrasts to the other stories and the broader themes and concerns that are associated with

biblical daughters. Like Lot's daughters, these women display how biblical daughters both affirm

the patriarchal ideology of the biblical text while disturbing and problematizing it as well.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Peter J. Sabo. Some of the research conducted
for the thesis appears in revised and expanded form in peer-reviewed publications by the same
author.

Portions of Chapter 1 appear in Peter J. Sabo, "Blurred Boundaries in the Lot Story." Pages 433-44 in *History, Memory, Hebrew Scriptures: A Festschrift for Ehud Ben Zvi*. Edited by Ian D. Wilson and Diana Edelman. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2015; and in Peter J. Sabo and Rhiannon Graybill, "Mythical and Biblical Caves: A Speleology." *Biblical Interpretation* (forthcoming, 2017).

Portions of Chapter 3 appear in Peter J. Sabo, "Drawing out Moses: Water as a Personal Motif of the Biblical Character." Pages 409-36 in *Thinking of Water in the Early Second Temple Period*. Edited by Ehud Ben Zvi and Christoph Levin. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014.

Portions of Chapter 5 appear in Peter J. Sabo, "Poetry Amid Ruins." Pages 141-57 in *Poets, Prophets, and Texts in Play: Studies in Biblical Poetry and Prophecy in Honour of Francis Landy*. Edited by Ehud Ben Zvi, Claudia V. Camp, David M. Gunn, and Aaron W. Hughes. New York: Bloomsbury, 2015.

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Introduction

What is man that the itinerary of his desire creates such a text?
        --Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

Unknown to her, a daughter keeps her father awake,
The worry she gives him drives away his sleep:
In her youth, in case she never marries,
Married, in case she should be disliked,
As a virgin, in case she should be defamed
And found with child in her father's house,
Having a husband, in case she goes astray,
Married, in case she should be barren.
Your daughter is headstrong? Keep a sharp look-out
That she does not make you the laughing stock of your enemies,
The talk of the town, the object of common gossip,
And put you to public shame.
        --Sirach 42.9-11

So we'll live,
And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh
At gilded butterflies and hear poor rogues
Talk of court news; and we'll talk with them too—
Who loses and who wins; who's in, who's out—
And take upon us the mystery of things
As if we were God's spies
        --Shakespeare, *King Lear*, 5.3.11-17

The dominant ideology of the Hebrew Bible assumes that father and son are structurally homologous. This is the central presumption by which the text proceeds, as the line from one generation to another is imagined through a "chain-male" linkage. The typical biblical genealogy, for example, moves along quite nicely without the mention of women. Of course, the Hebrew Bible is not exclusively homosocial—it is, after all, a corpus deeply concerned with family and ancestry—and women appear at strategic points to play important roles.

What strategic purpose is played by daughters, the most absent and invisible member of the biblical family?[1] This study will explore this question by offering a literary and comparative analysis of the stories of daughters in the Hebrew Bible. Unsurprisingly, daughters are not as prominent as mothers. A daughter as such does not participate in extending the family, and until she has transitioned to a wife and mother she plays an ambivalent role in the father's house. Indeed, there is no daughter story in the Hebrew Bible that does not also feature a father, for the biblical text assumes that a woman must always be defined in subordinate position to a patriarch. Thus, a study on biblical daughters is almost by default a study on the biblical daughter-father pair as well.

This is the reason why I have chosen the title "The Lot Complex."[2] The use and abuse of daughters in the Hebrew Bible is directly linked to their relationship with father figures—or, more generally, the patriarchal ideology of the biblical text. Thus, the Lot complex refers to the biblical presentation of daughters and the pattern of desires, fears, and themes that surround it. I use the story of Lot and his daughters in Gen 19 as a paradigmatic model of these patterns and the daughter's subjugation to patriarchal ideology. Lot's daughters are first introduced as commodities of exchange; it is not the typical circumstance of a father giving away his daughter(s) in marriage, and it occurs during a time of crisis, but the underlying assumptions

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[1] The only family member who might "compete" with the daughter for the least powerful position is the sister. There is, of course, a certain amount of overlap between the two terms, as a daughter may also be a sister. For an excellent work on sister stories in the Hebrew Bible, see Amy Kalmanofsky, *Dangerous Sisters of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014).

[2] I borrow the phrase "Lot complex" from Robert Polhemus, *Lot's Daughters: Sex, Redemption, and Women's Quest for Authority* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005). Polhemus's engrossing book examines how the father-daughter, older male-younger female, relationship has shaped modern culture in the areas of history, psychology, and art (ix and 8). My own concern is obviously different. I focus almost exclusively on where he begins: the Lot story of the Hebrew Bible. From there, instead of reaching out to modern culture, I concentrate on other biblical daughter-father stories.

behind the value of daughters remains the same. At the end of their story, the daughters transition to active subjects while the father becomes a passive object—on successive nights, the daughters get their father drunk and sleep with him. The expressed concern for this seduction, however, is to "preserve the seed of our father" (Gen 19.32, 34), which is one of many hints that the actions and desires of the biblical daughter, even when they appear to be most independent, are still dictated by patriarchal concerns.[3]

The stories involving daughters in the Hebrew Bible are full of such hidden desires and repression. On one level, therefore, I use the Lot complex in the Freudian sense: an unconscious pattern of emotions and perception organized around a common theme.[4] I do not, however, wish to imply that daughter-father incest plays a central role in every biblical story with a daughter. To be sure, incest plays an important part of many of the texts which I will analyze in this study, but using the Freudian-like term Lot complex is not meant to imply that I adhere strictly to a psychoanalytic framework. The authors of *The Postmodern Bible* argue that the "challenge that

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[3] Otto Rank, after surveying a variety of daughter-father myths, offers a similar conclusion:

> Even in the few mythological passages in which the loving passion seems to be represented from the viewpoint of the daughter, one has the impression that this is only a justification of the father's shocking desires; an attempt is made to shift the blame for the seduction onto her (*The Incest Theme in Literature and Legend: Fundamentals of a Psychology of Literary Creation* [trans. Gregory C. Richter; Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1992], 300).

[4] To be sure, Freud's thoughts on complexes and the Oedipus complex changed throughout his lifetime. See Simon Bennett and Rachel B. Blass "The Development and Vicissitudes of Freud's Ideas on the Oedipus Complex," in *The Cambridge Companion to Freud* (ed. Jerome Neu; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 161-74, and Peter L. Rudnytsky, *Freud and Oedipus* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987). The Lot complex, I should state, is also not to be equated with the so-called Electra complex, which focuses on daughter-mother competition for the father. Freud never used the term Electra complex (it was coined by Jung) but preferred the "feminine Oedipus attitude" or "negative Oedipus complex." See J. Scott, *Electra After Freud: Myth and Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

future psychoanalytical work on the Bible faces is to tread the line between a naïve anachronistic imposition of psychoanalytic categories upon the biblical world, on the one hand, and a no less naïve dismissal of psychoanalysis as irrelevant to the critical reading of literary and religious texts, on the other hand."[5] Psychoanalytic interpretation, given its dependence on a modern concept of the self, is obviously anachronistic when applied to the Bible. But every critical discussion is an interaction between the modern interpreter and the ancient text. So at the same time that we impose our modern presuppositions onto the text, we still, as Francis Landy puts it, "share with the authors of the text the cognitive architecture of the brain and primary human experiences and drives, otherwise we would not read it. Especially a text that concerns primary human relations—e.g. fathers and daughters, mothers and sons—cannot but suggest psychoanalytic possibilities."[6] With this in mind, I read Freud's work not as a master-discourse to the biblical text, but as an intertext and companion piece. Read together the ancient and

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[5] The Bible and Culture Collective, *The Postmodern Bible* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 222-23. A list of some of the influential works on this study in terms of combining psychoanalytic and feminist insights includes: Mieke Bal, *Lethal Love: Feminist Literary Readings of Biblical Love Stories* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987); idem, *Death and Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988); Ilona Rashkow, *The Phallacy of Genesis: A Feminist Psychoanalytic Approach* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1993); idem, *Taboo or Not Taboo: Sexuality and Family in the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000); Cheryl Exum, *Fragmented Women: Feminist (Sub)Versions of Biblical Narrative* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1993); idem, "Desire Distorted and Exhibited: Lot and His Daughters" in *"A Wise and Discerning Mind": Essays in Honor of Burke O. Long* (eds. Saul Olyan and Robert C. Culley; Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2000); 83-108; Ilana Pardes, *The Biography of Ancient Israel: National Narratives in the Bible* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000) and Julie Kelso, *O Mother, Where Art Thou? An Irigarayan Reading of the Book of Chronicles* (London: Equinox, 2007).

[6] Francis Landy, "Between Centre and Periphery: Space and Gender in the Book of Judges in the Early Second Temple Period," in *Centres and Peripheries in the Early Second Temple Period* (eds. Ehud Ben Zvi and Christoph Levin; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 133-62 (140-41, n.23).

contemporary discourses are to be likened to a dialogue, in which the respective texts mutually illuminate and criticize each other.

Psychoanalytic insights are part of my larger literary approach, looking at patterns and wordplay and paying attention to the shifting play of ideas and imagery in a text—the type of reading in the vein of Robert Alter that has influenced biblical studies since the 1970s.[7] By reading the biblical stories of daughters collectively, I look for common themes and concerns that shape these texts. This collective reading, of course, is shaped by a close reading of each discrete narrative. This creates a complementary circularity in which the interpretation of each individual story is read in light of how it contrasts and corresponds to the broader patterns and themes of the collective reading and vice versa. By doing so the critic can seek to decode, and consider, the conflicted relationship of the text to the ideology or ideologies that it embodies.[8]

This reading strategy reveals the Structuralist component in this study. I am interested in the systemacity, the folkloristic elements, and the mythemes of the text. Structuralist theory

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[7] That is, this is a synchronic literary reading of the Masoretic Text (MT) as it is construed in the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS). This does not amount to a strict adherence to the MT in every circumstance, as I will indeed discuss text-critical issues from time to time; however, it does display that text-criticism (as well as source criticism) is not a primary point of focus in this study.

Alter is often placed at the center of this literary "paradigm shift" because of the popularity and large number of copies sold of *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981). See also his seminal essay, "A Literary Approach to the Bible," *Commentary* (1975): 70-8. One could just as well look at the pioneering work of David Gunn, J.P. Fokkelman, Francis Landy, James Kugel, Meir Sternberg, Robert Polzin, Adele Berlin, David Jobling, and many others. For an overview of this "modern" turn toward literary approaches to the biblical text, see Steven Weitzman, "Before and After the Art of Biblical Narrative," *Prooftexts* 27 (2007): 191-210 and Burke O. Long, "The 'New' Biblical Poetics of Alter and Sternberg," *JSOT* 51 (1991): 71-84.

[8] See Gale A. Yee, *Poor Banished Children of Eve: Woman as Evil in the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 24.

regards myth as a way to resolve or think through cultural paradoxes and contradictions.[9] This takes place at different intersecting levels—linguistic/textual, theological, political, and sexual—as Wendy Doniger suggests.[10] Such insights are particularly important in regard to the role daughters play in the intertextually linked stories of Lot's daughters, Tamar (Gen 38), and Ruth, or how the book of Judges utilizes its many daughters. Like Roland Barthes though, what really interests me about these structural elements is "the abrasive frictions, the breaks, the discontinuities of readability, the juxtaposition of narrative entities which to some extent run free from an explicit logical articulation."[11] These fissures are in fact part of the structural elements and patterns—how else could a text work through the paradoxes and contradictions from which it stems and to which it gives voice? We will see, for instance, how the biblical text uses daughters for patriarchal purposes even in the most extreme circumstances. At the same time, this discloses the fragility of a system that relies on the members it most subjugates to ensure its proper functioning.

Previous Scholarship, Influential Studies

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[9] See Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth," in *Myth: A Symposium* (ed. T.A. Sebeok; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955), 81-106; Robert Segal, ed., *Structuralism in Myth: Lévi-Strauss, Barthes, Dumézil, and Propp* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996). Early influential works on structuralism and biblical studies include: Edmund Leach, *Genesis as Myth and Other Essays* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1969); Robert Polzin, *Biblical Structuralism Method and Subjectivity in the Study of Ancient Texts* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977); David Jobling, *The Sense of Biblical Narrative: Three Structural Analyses in the Old Testament* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1978).

[10] Wendy Doniger, *The Implied Spider: Politics and Theology in Myth* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2011).

[11] Roland Barthes, "The Struggle with the Angel: Textual Analysis of Genesis 32:23-33," in *Image/Music/Text* (trans. Stephen Heath; London: Collins, 1993), 125-41 (141). See also Jacques Derrida's, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," in *Writing and Difference* (trans. Alan Bass; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 278-93.

There is not a great wealth of literature in biblical studies that specifically focuses on daughters in the Hebrew Bible. Indeed, in 1994 Karla Shargent spoke of a "world of biblical scholarship which still has difficulty even recognizing the presence of daughters in biblical narratives," for even feminist biblical scholars tended to ignore the category of daughter as daughter.[12] She does, however, point to Mieke Bal's *Death and Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges* as an important exception. Indeed, to my knowledge *Death and Dissymmetry* is the first sustained academic analysis of some of the important themes, motifs, and patterns surrounding biblical daughters (as such). For Bal, the stories of Jephthah's daughter (Judg 11), the Timnite woman (Judg 14-15), and the Levite's "concubine" (Judg 19), provide a counter-narrative to the politics of coherence that the narrator and master-narrative attempt to formulate in order to keep control over disintegration, both political and literary. The problem of coherence is thus related to the threat that the female body poses to patriarchal domination. The real problem, therefore, is with the fathers, as the murders of the young daughters of the book are caused by uncertainty and anxiety about fatherhood.[13] Bal's insights are applied in this study to biblical daughters in general, who are powerful rhetorical figures simultaneously displayed as objects of desire and subjects who cause fear and anxiety.

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[12] Karla G. Shargent, "Living on the Edge: The Liminality of Daughters in Genesis to 2 Samuel," in *A Feminist Companion to Samuel and Kings* (ed. A. Brenner; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994): 26-42 (29). As a pointed example, Shargent points to Phyllis Trible's influential book *Texts of Terror* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984). Trible covers the stories of many women of the Bible applying a feminist approach that was rarely embraced at the time but never once makes a sustained reflection of any of these characters *as daughters* (even characters like Jephthah's daughter).

[13] Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry*, 5. *Death and Dissymmetry* is also important to the present study for its similar use of Freud. Freud's work on "virginity," for instance, is used to shed light on the Bible's fear of post-virginal woman precisely because this fear is also found in Freud.

Another influential work on daughters in the Bible comes from outside biblical scholarship (though Bal herself does not identify as a biblical scholar either) in Lynda Boose's essay, "The Father's House and the Daughter in It: The Structures of Western Culture's Daughter-Father Relationship."[14] This essay traces "Western culture's ideology of the family" back to the Hebrew Bible with a central interest in the daughter-father pair. Using Lévi-Strauss's kinship model, Freud's psychoanalytic model (and to a certain extent Lacan's as well), literature like Beowulf and the works of Shakespeare, and the Bible, Boose find a common thread in which daughters are consistently depicted as "sexual property belonging exclusively to the father…to be bartered for economic profit."[15] Accordingly, Boose calls attention to the liminal status of daughters in such a system—she belongs neither properly in the father's house nor outside of it. Daughters are meant to be subsumed by mothers. Granted, the mother is not given much weight in this system either, as she is considered an "empty vessel through whom, in psychoanalytic terms, the father's phallus and sign of the father's authority is passed to the son."[16] But even this is a sign of placement and value, a way in which the mother is able to obtrude into cultural narration, a disruption of the ordered maleness of things. The daughter lacks even this value. The father's phallus, his authority, is passed on to the son, through the mother—and the daughter, therefore, is the one person who is decidedly deprived of this.

Two German books in the 1990s were devoted exclusively to daughters and fathers in the Bible. Elke Seifert's *Tochter und Vater im Alten Testament*, for instance, surveys every main

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[14] Lynda E. Boose, "The Father's House and the Daughter in It: The Structures of Western Culture's Daughter-Father Relationship," in *Daughters and Fathers* (eds. Lynda Boose and Betty S. Flowers; Baltimore; London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1989), 19-74.
[15] Boose, "The Father's House," 45-6.
[16] Boose, "The Father's House," 21.

passage in the biblical text in which daughters and fathers play a role.[17] Seifert's expressed goal

is to read against the tendency of the biblical text to silence the voice and perspective of the

daughter. A good example of her approach is found in her analysis of the Lot story, which she

views as a story of father-daughter abuse covered over by the narrator to blame the victimized

daughters.[18] Hildegunde Wöller's *Vom Vater verwundet* similarly interprets biblical daughter-

father stories as dysfunctional, and as examples of the harmful effects of patriarchy.[19] For

Wöller, the biblical text in its present form is patriarchal but it contains glimpses of a

matriarchate celebrating women's life-giving role that predates patriarchy. Her main aim,

therefore, is to expose the damaging patriarchal ideology and reveal how it may be resisted

through a return to matriarchal thinking. While I share Seifert's and Wöller's feminist concerns, I

differ with them on many points. Perhaps the most important is that I do not suppose that it is the

task of the biblical scholar to redeem the text. Their theological/ideological imperative assumes

that the Hebrew Bible is important for moral standards today (whether good or bad). Far more

convincing, in my opinion, is an approach like that of Bal or Boose, which seeks to illuminate

some of the shared ideologies between discourses of today and the biblical text.

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[17] Elke Seifert, *Tochter und Vater im Alten Testament: Eine ideologiekritische Untersuchung zur Verfügungsgewalt von Vätern über ihre Töchter* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1997).

[18] Thus, she writes in an earlier essay:
> From a feminist standpoint it therefore strikes me as absolutely necessary to reconstruct the reality behind Genesis 19:30-38 so that the father-daughter incest emerges as that which it truly is for girls and women: an abuse of paternal power, a manipulation and exploitation of relationships of dependency and something that leaves deep wounds on its victim ("Lot und Seine Töchter: Eine Hermeneutik des Verdachts," in *Feministische Hermenutik und Erstes Testament* [ed. Hedwig-Jahnow-Forschungsprojekt; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1994]: 48-66 [64-5] [translation my own]).

Seifert also draws much of her insight from a book by Josephine Rijnaarts devoted entirely to the Lot story, *Lots Töchter: Über den Vater-Tochter-Inzest* (trans. Barbara Heller [Dutch original]; Düsseldorf: Classen, 1988).

[19] Hildegunde Wöller, *Vom Vater verwundet: Töchter der Bibel* (Stuttgart: Kreuz, 1991).

This leads me to Johanna Stiebert's *Fathers and Daughters in the Hebrew Bible*.[20] To date, Stiebert's book stands as the only extensive English language study devoted to the daughter-father relationship in the Hebrew Bible. Accordingly, it offers many valuable insights and analyses that I have followed—in particular, I appreciate Stiebert's effort to draw attention to the "richly varied and nuanced" father-daughter imagery of the biblical text.[21] I do, however, take issue with her overall thesis. She writes:

> I agree with the majority of feminist interpreters of the Hebrew Bible that its constituent texts are androcentric, by men, and for men. Because the perspectives are those of men we glean more about how fathers imagine, perceive, stereotype, and value daughters and nothing reliable as to how daughters regard, experience and value fathers. But I have also tried to make clear that when assessments of fathers and daughters are not extrapolated from a single narrative (such as Judg 11:29-40) or even biblical book (such as Genesis), but based on the context of the wider canvas, the idea that daughters are either habitually denigrated by fathers, or virtually invisible, is difficult to maintain.[22]

As a type of counter to the works of Seifert and Wöller, therefore, Stiebert maintains that patriarchy does not always mean "bad for women," as sometimes the biblical daughter is depicted as the most prized and cherished family member (and the father likewise is depicted as loving and nurturing). The oddity of such a conclusion, however, is displayed in the way she interprets texts to support her points. She views Laban, for example, as a paternal and caring father, since he ensures both his daughters are married (Gen 29.26-30), are provided with a

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[20] Johanna Stiebert, *Fathers and Daughters in the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[21] Stiebert, *Fathers and Daughters*, 5.

[22] Stiebert, *Fathers and Daughters*, 210.

handmaid (Gen 29.24, 29), and are sent away from home with a fatherly blessing (Gen 31.26-8, 55). But this is to gloss over the fact that the sisters are both married because of the father's bed-trick (a way to extract more value out of the son-in-law—or at least to extract the only value the son-in-law had to offer), Rachel steals her father's idols, and in the only recorded expression of what the daughters think about their father they express their unhappiness and disappointment in him (Gen 31.14-16). Similarly, Stiebert's analysis of the more "distasteful" stories of biblical fathers and daughters (like that of Lot's daughters or Jephthah's daughter) seeks to argue that the text means to highlight the lack of paternal affection or security provided. This too, however, misses the point that a passive father like Lot may still be used for the purposes of patriarchal ideology. To be sure, I agree with Stiebert that simply labelling every biblical daughter story as patriarchal can result in surface level readings of texts that do not adequately appreciate the diverse imagery and characters found within them; however, close analysis can also reveal how the text can condemn what it desires, how it covers over fears and anxieties, and how it works through these desires and fears in repetitions and subtle traces.

What I find missing most of all from these previous studies on biblical daughters (and fathers), with the noted exception of Bal, is a detailed attention to the literary artistry of the text. This entails not only an exploration of the key motifs, themes, and wordplays of each story but also an intertextual analysis of how many of these stories connect and relate to each other. Exploring these connections reveals some of the desires and anxieties behind such repetition. It also reveals the fissures and disseminations that hold the text's *significance* (Barthes' term for that which exceeds signification) fully open.

The Primary Features of Biblical Daughter-Father Stories

Concerning much of Western literature, as well as the Hebrew Bible, Lynda Boose writes:

> It says something telling…that of the possible structural permutations of parent-child relationships inscribed in our literary, mythic, historical, and psychoanalytic texts, the father and the son are the first pair most frequently in focus, and the mother and the son the second…Of all of the binary sets through which we familiarly consider family relationships, the mother-daughter and father-daughter pairs have received the least attention, a hierarchy of value that isolates the daughter as the most absent member within the discourse of the family institution.[23]

The single biggest piece of evidence in support of this (in regard to the Hebrew Bible) is the complete absence of any daughter-mother story. (The closest one comes to this is the story of the in-laws Ruth and Naomi, see ch.5.) Daughter-father stories, in comparison, are found throughout the biblical text, sometimes quite prominently (as is the case with the book of Judges). But since daughters are the most absent familial member, there must be some disturbance to the normal pattern of things for them to appear. Below are some of the textual structures that account for the presence of biblical daughters.

1.) The Giving Away of Daughters

Daughters often appear in the biblical text in response to a "need by male characters for wives,"[24] or as commodities offered in return for payment or services. Achsah (Judg 1.10-15)

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[23] Lynda Boose and Betty S. Flowers, "Introduction," in *Daughters and Fathers* (ed. Lynda Boose and Betty S. Flowers; Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1989): 1-18 (2).

[24] Karla G. Shargent, "Living on the Edge: The Liminality of Daughters in Genesis to 2 Samuel," 30.

and Merab (1 Sam 18.17-19) and Michal (1 Sam 18.20-21) are all introduced as prizes or

rewards for military defeat. Rachel and Leah (Gen 29-31), likewise, fulfill Jacob's obligation to

find a wife who is not a Canaanite. And the Timnite daughter (Judg 14-15) initiates the pattern of

providing foreign women/wives for Samson.

In each of these cases, it is the father who controls the giving away of the daughter. For to

be a father is to have control over your family, as evidenced by the fact that the very term for

biblical families is "the father's house" (בית אב).[25] This exchange of daughters, however, is at

once the essence of social cohesion and structure and its potential for fragmentation.[26] The

daughter must be protected and kept a virgin if she is to be a valuable commodity of exchange.

Thus, a daughter outside of the father's house is a consistent point of anxiety. In certain biblical

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[25] This kinship group usually encompasses two to three generations of blood kin, marital kin, and dependants, and then eventually splits off into other "houses." See J. David Schloen, *The House of the Father as Fact and Symbol: Patrimonialism in Ugarit and the ancient Near East* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2001); S. Bendor, *The Bet Ab in Israel from the Settlement to the End of the Monarchy: The Social Structure of Ancient Israel* (Tel Aviv: Afik and Sifriat Po'alim, 1986); Naomi Steinberg, *Kinship and Marriage in Genesis: A Household Economics Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993). For a feminist reading see, Carol Meyers, "To Her Mother's House," in *A Feminist Companion to Ruth* (ed. Athalya Brenner; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 85-114.

It is also important to mention here Cynthia Chapman's *The House of the Mother: The Social Roles of Maternal Kin in Biblical Hebrew Narrative and Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016) which focuses on maternally defined subgroups of kin which disrupt the neatness of patrilineal genealogies and paternal lines. In other words, Chapman seeks to explore the complexity of biblical houses, which, though they have a patriarch, also include wives, concubines, slaves, second-born sons, daughters, and sisters. In contrast to the "the father's house," therefore, Chapman speaks of "the mother's house" as "an indigenous Hebrew kinship designation for the 'uterine family.' Comprising a mother and her biological and adopted children, the house of the mother is distinct within yet supportive of the house of the father on which it depends (51). (See also, Carol Meyers, "To Her Mother's House," in *A Feminist Companion to Ruth* [ed. Athalya Brenner; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993], 85-114.)

[26] Lévi-Strauss in *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (trans. James Harle Bell; ed. Rodney Needham; Boston: Beacon, 1969), defines daughters as the most valuable gift that can be given, marriage as the most basic form of exchange, and the incest taboo as the mechanism that can ensure such exchanges.

books, moreover, the danger of exogamous marriages threatens to erase identity and is linked to apostasy. Daughters, as the epigraph from Sirach at the beginning of this text reveals, are more than passive objects of exchange but active subjects who can demand more for their price as a commodity, spoil their worth, and generally complicate things in a way that would not be present in a simple exchange of lifeless commodities.

2.) Absence of Sons and Presence of Sons-in-Law

What happens in the "chain-male" linkage of the biblical text if a father has no sons? With no sons, the Oedipal triad of father/mother/son breaks down and the father's seed must be preserved in a different way. Similarly, the normal line of possession by inheritance to the (first-born) son is upset. These disturbances allow daughters to play a role (if only to provide grandsons to inherit and restore the balance), as the Hebrew Bible displays several creative ways in which the daughters build up the father's house and pass on his inheritance.

Daughters cannot do this alone, as another male is still needed. With the exception of incestuous stories like that of Lot and his daughters, this male is the son-in-law. There is often a tension between fathers, sons-in-law, and daughters, exemplified in the story of Laban, Jacob, and Rachel and Leah. The son-in-law is both an intruder and a necessary figure. He represents a threat to the father's exclusive possession of his daughter, but also a means by which the father can build up his house.[27] The son-in-law may thus be an extension of the father's authority or a threat to it.

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[27] According to Boose, that fathers (for the most part) give their daughters away is not necessarily a sign of their desire to do so:

> For fathers compelled by cultural dictates to lose their daughters, the rationale of "gift-giving" in order to acquire kin-group benefits might better be understood as being not necessarily the *cause* for such an exchange but an invaluable defense *against* its

3.) The Erasure of the Mother

"Where is Clytemnestra?" asks Bal in her study of women in Judges.[28] The question

could be expanded to all the daughter-father stories of the Hebrew Bible. The triangular relations

of such stories—between father, daughter, and husband—reveal the exclusion of the mother (just

as the triangular relations of the Oedipus complex reveal the exclusion of the daughter).

Especially in stories like those of Lot's daughters (Gen 19), Dinah (Gen 34), Jephthah's daughter

(Judg 11), the Timnite Daughter (Judg 14-15), and Tamar (2 Sam 13), one wonders what would

happen if a mother were present—would she avenge like Clytemnestra? would she punish

herself like Jocasta?

The looking back of Lot's wife, which turns her into an inanimate object and eliminates

her from the narrative, might serve as a metaphor for the place of mothers in biblical daughter-

father stories. She is metamorphosed into salt, a symbol of barrenness and sterility, perpetually

looking away from her daughters' advance to the cave with their father.[29] In the case of Lot's

daughters, this symbolizes the daughters' supplanting of the mother. In other texts, this

symbolizes the mother's absence altogether.

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necessity. Such a rationale would serve as a powerful way by which the loss of a
daughter through marriage could be psychologically reconstrued as an investment. For
losing one's daughter through a transaction that the father controls circumvents her
ability ever to choose another man over him, thus allowing him to retain vestiges of his
primary claim…The bestowal design places the daughter's departure from the father's
house and her sexual union with another male into a text defined by obedience to her
father—not preference for an outside male ("The Father's House," 31-2).

[28] Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry*, 197.

[29] For discussion on the association between salt and infertility, see F.C. Fensham, "Salt
as Curse in the Old Testament and the Ancient Middle East," *Biblical Archaeologist* 25 (1962):
48-50; D.A. Aycock, "The Fate of Lot's Wife: Structural Meditation in Biblical Mythology," in
Structuralist Interpretations of Biblical Myth (ed. E. Leach and D.A. Aycock. Cambridge:
Cambridge University Press, 1983), 113-19.

4.) Preserving the Seed of the Father

The transition from daughters to mothers points to the recurring theme of the desire to preserve the seed of the father. Lot's daughters again stand as examples of this, as they twice express the need and desire to preserve Lot's seed (Gen 19.32, 34). In the stories of Tamar (Gen 38) and Ruth, this is also an important theme, though it is progressively more subtly presented. In contrast, none of the daughters of Judges become mothers, a telling sign of their purpose and use in the book.[30] The expectation for daughters to become mothers as soon as possible reveals their liminal position in both time and space. The daughter role is confined to the narrow span of time that marks the move from childhood to adulthood. Similarly, while she is confined to the father's house she is not quite proper to it, since she is expected to be given to another man. Jephthah's daughter, in particular, is a symbol of what happens to daughters who do not transition to mothers, for the very moment she exits her father's house she becomes perpetually confined to it.

Summary of Chapters

The first chapter of this study looks at the story of Lot and his daughters. This is not only the first (explicit) daughter-father relationship in the Hebrew Bible, but also one that I use as a primal and archetypal example. For this reason, I do not read through the text linearly but according to theme—though special attention is given to the incestuous cave scene in Gen 19.30-38. Chapter 2 then examines the potential characterization of the first woman (later named Eve)

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[30] To be sure, Achsah has a biblical presence outside of the world of Judges that suggests a larger genealogy (see 1 Chr 2.49; 4.13)—confined to just the book of Judges though, there is only the suggestion of reproduction and no explicit mention of progeny.

as a daughter in Gen 2-4. The daughter is typically excluded from myths of origins, unless, of course, she is also a mother (as is the case with Lot's daughters). The genealogical ambiguity of the Bible's first "family," however, casts the woman in a variety of roles, thereby leaving open the possibility to explore her portrayal as a daughter. Chapter 3 looks at the story of Rachel and Leah in Gen 29-31. As I mention above, their interaction with Laban and Jacob provides the best example in the Hebrew Bible of the tension between fathers and sons-in-law, and the role that daughters play in this triangular relationship. At the end of this chapter, there is a section on Dinah, a story similarly concerned with daughters and sons-in-law but also on the danger of exogamy and the ability of daughters to preserve or destroy group identity. Chapter 4 explores daughters in the book of Judges, a book in which they are more concentrated than anywhere else in the Hebrew Bible. The book is framed by stories of daughters, beginning with the narrative of Achsah and Caleb (Judg 1.10-15) and ending with the stories of the daughters of Jabesh-Gilead and Shiloh (Judg 21.8-13, 19-23). In between are the episodes of Jephthah and his daughter (Judg 10.17-12.7), the daughter of Timnah (Judg 14.1-15.8), and the "concubine" from Bethlehem (as well as the old Ephraimite's daughter) (Judg 19). The reason for this abundance of daughters in one book relates to the daughter's potential to symbolize both social cohesion and fragmentation. Thus, the daughter whose role is so important for the patriarchal ideology of Judges also poses a genuine problem for it. Chapter 5 covers three sets of daughters: the story of Ruth and Naomi—ancestresses of David; the stories of Merab, Michal, and Tamar—daughters associated with the David story; and the Daughter of Zion—the city of David. While the connecting thread is David, each section is somewhat intended to stand on its own. In the first, my concern relates to the intertextual links that the book of Ruth shares with the stories of Tamar (Gen 38) and Lot's daughters. I read this corpus of texts as a thrice repeated working through of

primal repressions and desires found in the Lot story. In the second section I transition to stories of daughters that play an important part in David's own story: Merab, Michal, and Tamar (and by extension Bathsheba). The moral of this section might be that just because daughters may be princesses, it does not mean they will fare better than other biblical daughters. In the third section I look at the Daughter of Zion. The focus of this section is the reading I offer of two texts, Ezek 16 and Lam 1-2, in which the city as a daughter plays an important part. In the Ezekiel text, the prophetic marriage metaphor dominates and the focus is on Jerusalem's recalcitrant and perverse ways. In Lamentations, the city is a devastated figure, calling out for sympathy, but also boldly criticising the injustice of her punishment. Thus, I end the chapter with her voice, imagining how her words might apply to other daughters of the Hebrew Bible.

Chapter 1: Lot and His Daughters: Incestuous Origins

The story of Lot begins in the final verses of Gen 11 and ends in Gen 19. It is only in Gen 13 and 19, however, that Lot plays an extended role, and in chs.15-18 he plays no (explicit) role whatsoever. In this short space, the story deals with some of the following topics: barrenness and procreation, and the anxiety that goes along with both; justice and righteousness, the problem of just discernment, and the issues surrounding divine judgment and salvation; kinship, familial, and marriage issues; sexual deviancy, including incest and gang rape; boundary issues, rural versus urban life, and the responsibilities of hospitality; destruction and (re)creation, and the human responsibility and ability to adapt and survive.

In what follows I proceed through the Lot story according to theme and not the linear progression of the narrative. These themes are: Lot's wife and the erasure of the mother, Lot and his sons-in-law, Lot and the father's house, and Lot and his daughters. The Lot story is full of rich imagery and symbolism, ambivalence and irony, representation and repression. Thus, my focus throughout is to pay attention to the literary details of the text, especially intertextual connections, certain thematic key-words, and the various puns and wordplay—all of which climax in the concluding scene of Lot and his daughters in the cave.

Lot's Wife and The Erasure of the Mother

Memores estote Uxoris Lot…Remember Lots *Wife…The words are few, and the sentence short; no one in Scripture so short. But it fareth with* Sentences *as with* Coines*: In coines, they that in smallest compasse containe greatest value are best esteemed: and, in sentences, those that fewest in words comprise most matter, are most praised.*[1]

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[1] Excerpt from a sermon preached by Lancelot Andrewes before Queen Elizabeth, as quoted in Paul Hallam, *The Book of Sodom* (New York: Verso, 1993), 158.

Only Lot and his daughters make it to the cave. All the other characters in this story have fallen off along the way, most notably Lot's wife and his sons-in-law. Lot's story, therefore, makes explicit what is implicit in other biblical daughter-father stories: namely, the removal of the mother and (future) bridegrooms.[2]

The looking back of Lot's wife resists a merely literal reading. The location of the eyes at the front of the head marks the space behind us as one fraught with danger, with what is unseen and unknown.[3] Looking back, undoubtedly, can carry a variety of meanings. Accordingly, the story of Lot's wife has been multifariously interpreted as a sign of nostalgia or home-sickness, anxiety of the unknown, a metaphor for clinging to the past, religious scepticism, possessiveness, or even promiscuity.[4] All of these interpretations attempt to address the underlying motive for why Lot's wife looked back. Was it because she could not detach herself from Sodom? Did she doubt the divine prohibition? Or did she wish to see that which was prohibited to be seen?[5] Of course, the biblical text does not provide a reason, which is precisely why the text opens itself up to a variety of interpretive possibilities.

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[2] There are, of course, exceptions. One notable example is the book of Ruth, where Naomi plays the social role of mother to Ruth, her daughter/daughter-in-law.

[3] See Shimon Sandbank, "The Look Back: Lot's Wife, Kafka, Blanchot," *Condito Judaica* 50 (2004): 297-306 (297-99).

[4] See Antti Laato, "'Remember Lot's Wife': Gen 19:1-29 Rewritten in Early Judaism and in the New Testament," in *Rewritten Bible Reconsidered: Proceedings of the Conference in Karkku, Finland, August 24-26, 2006* (eds. Antti Laato and Jacques Van Ruiten; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 125-47; and Shimon Sandbank, "The Look Back," 297-99. For an exploration of Lot's wife in Patristic literature and pilgrimage tales, see Blake Layerle, "Lot's Wife on the Border," *HTR* 107 (2014): 59-80.

[5] In an engaging book that continues with the rich reception history of Lot's wife, Martin Harries uses the looking back of Lot's wife as a template for modern engagements that involve the idea that looking (back) at disaster can petrify the spectator (*Forgetting Lot's Wife: On Destructive Spectatorship* [New York: Fordham University Press, 2007]). Thus, the story of Lot's wife relates to the fear, as well as the desire for, "an experience of spectatorship so

In spite of such a rich interpretive history, it may be surprising that Lot's wife appears as an explicitly active agent in only one verse (Gen. 19.26, she is first introduced in 19.15). In concrete terms, we know very little of her; we do not know, for instance, her origins or her history with Lot.[6] At the very moment she becomes an active character she is turned into a pillar of salt for disobeying the divine command not to look back; she is never heard of again in the Hebrew Bible.[7] On the other hand, the image cast before the reader is certainly a powerful one. The verse on Lot's wife stands out in the text like the pillar of salt into which she is metamorphosed.[8]

As I hope to show, the text itself exposes the injustice of her punishment, not only because of its severity and permanency but also because of how her fate contrasts with some of the other characters. The verse on Lot's wife contains several thematic allusions and linguistic

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overwhelming that it destroys the spectator" (15). It relates to the sublime, a pleasure from awe that could cause death or suspend one in an infinite moment of marvel.

[6] In 14.16, however, Abraham brings back Lot, his possessions, his people, and his women, and so we might assume that "his women" includes his wife and daughters. If this were the case, then it is probable that Lot's wife may have come from Sodom, and indeed we will see that this is a theme played upon in the text.

[7] Of course, the Hebrew Bible only mentions Lot three times after Gen 19 (Deut 2.9, 19; Ps 83.9), and even other prominent characters—say Samson, Jephthah's daughter, or Ruth—are only mentioned in their main story and do not appear elsewhere. Thus, my point is not that one should be surprised that Lot's wife is never mentioned again but rather to emphasize her ephemerality. She pops up ever so briefly and then is gone, but still manages to leave such an important mark.

[8] Anna Akhmatova's poem, "Lot's Wife," offers a touching reflection on this backward glance. I quote the last stanza:
> Who will grieve for this woman? Does she not seem
> too insignificant for our concern?
> Yet in my heart I never will deny her,
> who suffered death because she chose to turn.

As quoted in Jan Bremmer, "Don't Look Back: From the Wife of Lot to Orpheus and Eurydice," in *Sodom's Sin: Genesis 18-19 and Its Interpretation* (ed. Edward Noort and Eibert Tigchelaar; Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2004), 131-45 (45). The translation is by Stanley Kunitz (with Max Hayward).

connections to its surrounding material and thus plays a significant role within the Lot story and beyond. It relates, for instance, to the multiple images revolving around sight that run throughout Genesis 18-19 and to the motif of prohibited sight found in the Noah and Eden narratives. Lot's wife also functions as a mediating figure between the two messengers and the two daughters; moreover, by contrasting and comparing her with other characters, like Sarah, one can highlight the important themes of sexuality in the text and reflect on the significance of the symbolism of salt. Such analysis reveals how Lot's wife embodies many of the key themes of the Lot story.[9]

Lot's Successful Bartering and Abraham's Sanctioned Sight

The action of Lot's wife is one of many images revolving around sight in Genesis 18-19. Ch.18 begins with Abraham lifting up his eyes and three men appearing (ראה) before him. When Yahweh and the messengers prepare to depart, they look down (שׁקף) (Gen 18.16) upon the face of Sodom and decide to tell Abraham of their plan to go down and see (ראה) the outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah—that is, gain knowledge of the moral state of the cities. Ch. 19 begins in a similar way as Lot lifts up his eyes and sees (ראה) the messengers approaching. This leads to the fateful

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[9] This attention to the significance of literary context also highlights where I differ from two of the more prominent interpretations of Lot's wife: the etiological, which focuses on the relation of Lot's wife to the human-like rock formations that surround the Dead Sea; and the comparative, which looks for analogies to the story of Lot's wife in other mythic material (e.g. the story of Orpheus and Eurydice). Both interpretations tend to bracket the role that the metamorphosis of Lot's wife and the taboo against looking back play in the story as a whole. For a brief analysis of the etiological approach (and whether it is a primary or secondary concern of the narrative), see Claus Westermann, *Genesis 12-36* (trans. J.J. Scullion; Minneapolis: Ausburg, 1985), 307. For analysis of the comparative approach, see Robert Ignatius Letellier, *Day in Mamre, Night in Sodom: Abraham and Lot in Genesis 18 and 19* (New York: Brill, 1995), 229-32; Bremmer, "Don't Look Back," 131-45. Of course, this is not to say that the folkloristic motifs surrounding Lot's wife are completely peripheral to this reading. It is certainly important that Gen 19 incorporates the taboo not to look back (as well as a great many other mythemes), but my concern is not to do a comparative approach—rather, it is to analyze how the taboo works within the Lot story.

events of ch.19 in which the cities of the plain are destroyed, the remnants of which Abraham

looks down (שׁקף) upon in 19.28 (from the very place that Yahweh and the messengers looked

down upon Sodom in 18.16).[10] Within ch.19 itself, this looking down of Abraham and the

blinding of the Sodomite mob frame the looking back of Lot's wife.

In its most immediate context, however, the looking back of Lot's wife is sandwiched

between Lot's bargaining to save Zoar and Abraham's survey of the ruins of Sodom. In Lot's

meandering departure from Sodom, the messengers are forced to take Lot, his wife, and his

daughters by the hand and bring them out of the city. Once outside, the messengers continue to

urge Lot to make haste and escape the city:

> Flee for your life! Do not look (נבט) behind you (אחריך), and do not stop anywhere in the
>
> plain; flee to the mountains or you will be swept away (Gen 19.17).

When Lot's wife looks back in v.26, she is presumably punished for transgressing the command

not to look back. This is enforced by the repetition of the verb נבט (to look) and the adverb אחר

(behind):

> And his wife looked (נבט) from behind him (מאחריו) and she became a pillar of salt.[11]

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[10] While the two scenes are linked through the repetition of "looking down" (שׁקף) and the text even notes that this looking is done from the same place, what is looked upon is different. In 18.16, Yahweh and the other men only look down upon Sodom; in 19.28, Abraham looks down upon "Sodom and Gomorrah, and upon all the faces of the land of the valley."

In both cases שׁקף is in the *hifil*, apparently emphasizing the strong intent and force of the action—it is not a glance but a purposeful surveying (see Gen 26.8; Lam 3.50). There may even be a moral element to this "looking down" as well.

[11] The *BHS* suggests that מאחריו "from behind him," be changed to מאחריה "from behind her," so as to make it more explicit that Lot's wife is looking back. I do not see the meaning of the sentence being radically changed one way or another and thus prefer to leave the text as it is. This precise phraseology, moreover, may allude to the connection between Lot's wife and Sarah, who eavesdrops on Yahweh at the entrance of the tent 'behind him' (אחריו) (Gen. 18.10).

A reason for the taboo against looking back is not explicitly provided. Theodor Gaster asserts that the prohibition means that "they [Lot and his family] must set their faces hopefully toward the future, not nostalgically toward the past."[12] There is no evidence within the narrative, however, to suggest that this is the case. In the immediate context, the rationale appears to be that looking back would delay fleeing (as would stopping in the plain). Thus, a variety of verbs and expressions are used in vv.15-22 to emphasize that Lot and his family should leave the city quickly: מלט (escape), נוס (flee), קום (arise), אוץ (urge), and מהר (hasten).

If hesitation and delay constitute transgression of the divine commands though, then what does one make of Lot's lingering (מהה) (v.16)? Moreover, Lot ends up breaking the second of the messengers' prohibitions, namely, not stopping in the plain. To be sure, in a fumbling speech Lot barters with the messengers/Yahweh and they accordingly spare the city of Zoar from destruction. This has the effect of highlighting the mercy and divine favour granted to Lot (see vv.16 and 19), but then creates a sense of dissonance with the lack of grace shown to his wife. The contrast is particularly forceful in comparison with the inhabitants of Zoar, for they were also transgressors but were saved because of compassion for Lot. If bartering could save them, then why not Lot's wife? For the success of Lot's bargaining suggests that the commandment that condemns Lot's wife is not absolute. If Lot had looked back would *he* have turned to a pillar

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[12] Theodor Gaster, *Myth, Legend and Custom in the Old Testament* (2 Vols.; New York: Harper & Row, 1969) 1:159-60, 366, and 159. Letellier offers a similar interpretation: "Within the context of the story [the taboo not to look back] means that they should set their faces towards the future and not look back to the hampering past" (*Day in Mamre, Night in Sodom*, 230).

We might also mention here Jesus' famous use of the story of Lot's wife: "On that day [the day of the son of man], let him who is on his housetop, with his goods in the house, not come down to take them away; and likewise let him who is in the field not turn his back. Remember Lot's wife. Whoever seeks to gain his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will preserve it" (Luke 17.31-33). Thus, the injunction to remember Lot's wife, is an injunction against clinging to worldly possessions, and to forget the past (i.e. remember to forget).

of salt? Or would the mercy of Yahweh (and the messengers) have saved him again? To pose a related hypothetical question: Would Lot's wife have been spared if she had first pleaded with the messengers to allow her the chance to have just one final glimpse back?[13] Of course, this assumes that there was a certain amount of purposeful agency to her decision, something which the biblical text leaves unanswered. Whatever the case, there seems to be a discrepancy between Lot's lingering and his successful bargaining, and the fate of his wife.[14] The text may even offer another hint of this unfairness in the disturbing wordplay of Lot being shown mercy (חמל) despite his lingering (19.16) while Lot's wife is turned into a pillar of salt (מלח) because she looked back.

Another possible reason for the taboo is that it relates to the broader motif of forbidden sight. Thus, after reviewing the story of Lot's wife, E.A. Speiser concludes: "God's mysterious workings must not be looked at by any [hu]man."[15] Certainly this folkloric motif of divine actions that should remain unseen plays a part, but then what about the fact that Abraham too looks (שקף) at Sodom and Gomorrah (19.28)? Granted, in terms of the fabula of the narrative, the looking of Abraham and the looking back of Lot's wife are a fair distance apart, as Lot's wife looks back during the very moment in which the cities are being destroyed while Abraham looks down at the aftermath of the destruction the next morning. In other words, Lot's wife looks while

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[13] See Elie Wiesel, "Lot's Wife," in *Future of Prophetic Christianity: Essays in Honor of Robert McAfee Brown* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993), 76-87.

[14] Perhaps it is worthwhile to note that the command in v.17 was given in the second person masculine singular and may have been directed to Lot alone. To be sure, it is not uncommon for biblical Hebrew to use the second person masculine singular to refer to a collective, but it does, at the very least, leave open the possibility that Lot's wife did not even know she was disobeying a divine command. In the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, for instance, the command not to look back is given solely to Orpheus. Eurydice, who follows him out of Hades, can presumably look wherever she wants.

[15] E.A. Speiser, *Genesis* (AB 1; New York: Doubleday, 1964), 143.

the taboo against looking back is in effect, while Abraham looks after the prohibition is no longer in force. In terms of the syuzhet of the narrative, however, the two ocular acts occur right after each other and invite comparison. Abraham's looking down is a survey-like gaze while the looking back of Lot's wife is but a mere glance, as her transformation into salt appears to occur simultaneously with it. More significantly, Abraham's looking down has a sense of divine sanction about it, as if to suggest Abraham is the privileged spectator.[16] Alter describes the look down as "the equivalent of a cinematic long shot."[17] The tempo of the narrative slows down in vv.27-29 leaving the reader to ponder Abraham's thoughts as he gazes over the destruction.

Thus, the story establishes a contrast between Abraham's sanctioned survey and the transgressive backward glance of Lot's wife. On the one hand, this is a contrast in terms of obedience versus disobedience. This is somewhat mitigated though by the divine mercy shown to Lot in his lingering and bartering (and by the ambiguous reasons for why she looked back or even if she purposefully meant to do so). Lot's wife stands in between Abraham and Lot (and the Sodomites and Zoarites). Unlike Abraham, she is not allowed to look at Sodom without punishment; unlike Lot, she is not shown mercy for breaking a divine command. When the narrator informs us that Lot was saved because God remembered Abraham (v.29), nothing is said of Lot's wife—it seems that even deliverance by association will only go so far.

Sight, Sexuality, and Salt

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[16] An interesting comparison could also be made between the call to Abraham to leave his country and father's house (12.1-3) and the looking back of Lot's wife. Abraham displays no signs of doubt and simply follows the divine decrees. Abraham does not look back and therefore does not yield to the temptations of the senses, nostalgia, etc. See Shimon Sandbank, "The Look Back," 289-99 (n.3).

[17] Alter, "Sodom as Nexus," 153.

Lot's wife not only stands in between Abraham and Lot, but also the messengers and Lot's daughters. Her story is placed between the two sexually transgressive scenes that frame Genesis 19: the attempted gang rape of the messengers, and then the daughters' seduction of Lot. In the first scene, we might note that Lot does not offer his wife to the Sodomite mob, but rather his daughters "who have not known a man." The emphasis here, at least from Lot's perspective, is on the daughters' virginity, something that does not apply to Lot's wife. Indeed, the offer of the daughters over the mother reveals the way that each belongs to the patriarch of the father's house. In terms of honour, there is less shame in offering a daughter than a wife—for the wife is already properly the husband's and she has been known by him.[18] The virgin daughter is expected to be known by another man, and thus is presented as the more viable option (even as this clashes with the father's duty of protection). In the second scene, the daughters replace Lot's wife and therefore render her obsolete again. She is, as D. Alan Aycock asserts, anomalous in both situations, "her mediating position, therefore, must be one of immobilization, since she would be in a contradictory situation were she to go either forward or back."[19]

From the perspective of framing it is helpful to look at yet another key moment of sight, or the lack of sight, in addition to Abraham's sanctioned look down: the blinding punishment of the Sodomite mob. In this case, the messengers save Lot by bringing him back inside his house and away from the mob, which, unsatisfied with his offer of his daughters, now poses a direct threat to Lot. Once Lot is safely inside the house the messengers smite the Sodomites with blindness. Insofar as there are sexual implications in the Sodomites request "to know" the

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[18] We will see though the Levite's offer of his *pilegesh* (often translated s "concubine") in Judg 19, which the Gibeahite mob does indeed rape (and thus "know") throughout the night.

[19] D. Alan Aycock, "The Fate of Lot's Wife: Structural Mediation in Biblical Mythology," in *Structuralist Interpretations of Biblical Myth* (eds. Edmund Leach and D. Alan Aycock; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 113-19 (117).

messengers, the punishment, both psychoanalytically and literarily, suggests a measure for

measure sequence, as blindness carries connotations of castration.[20] In his offer to the mob,

moreover, Lot had stated that the Sodomites may do to his daughters "whatever is good in your

eyes" (19.8). The sexual imagery is also enforced by the aside that the blinded mob "wearied

themselves to find the door (פתח)" (19.11). פתח may even carry a sexual sense, as in Proverbs

exhortation to stay away from the פתח "door" of the loose woman's house (5.8).[21] It is as if the

mob's groping in vain for "the opening" represents their frustrated attempt for power and

domination through sexual knowing.

This theme of forbidden sight (with sexual implications) brings us to an important

intertext: Ham's sight of his father's nakedness in Gen 9.22. Though the connections between the

deluge story and the Lot story are numerous, for now I will restrict myself to connections that I

think play a prominent role in relation to the look back of Lot's wife.

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[20] Letellier (*Day in Mamre, Night in Sodom*, 228-29) notes the mythological motif of loss of sight as a punishment for sacrilege, impiety, or evil behaviour (see also Gaster, *Myth, Legend and Custom in the Old Testament*, 158). Two prominent Greek examples—Tiresias losing his sight for seeing Athene naked in her bath and Oedipus' self-induced blindness—are used to support the common psychoanalytic connection between blindness and castration (see Sigmund Freud, The Uncanny', in *The Uncanny* [trans. D. McLintock; New York: Penguin Books, 2003], 123-62.

In biblical texts, of course, there may not be the same level of connection between blindness and castration that one finds in Greek literature (and thus psychoanalytic tradition). Samson, however, serves as at least one prominent example where this same connection may be in place. See Exum, *Fragmented Women*, 60; Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry*, 194. See also Jacques Derrida's discussion of the blind characters of the Bible, which he reads from a psychoanalytic and literary perspective in *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self Portrait and Other Ruins* (trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

[21] See also Song 7.14 and the verbal use of פתח in Song 5.2-6 (note also the related use of דלת "door" in Song 8.9). For an example of this argument, see Exum, "Desire Distorted and Exhibited," 91.

After the flood, Noah plants a vineyard and gets drunk from the wine which he produces. In his drunken state, he lies uncovered in his tent (9.21). Finding him there, Ham sees (ראה) "the nakedness of his father" and proceeds to declare this fact to his two brothers, Shem and Japheth. Then, in symmetrical contrast to Lot's wife, Shem and Japheth walk backwards with a cloak, ensuring they will not see Noah, and cover their father's nakedness.

In Gen 9 there is a similar association between sex and sight. To "see the nakedness" of someone is a biblical expression for intercourse, often with incestuous implications (see Lev. 20.17). This, of course, parallels the incest between Lot and his daughters. And just as Ham's crime of sight (I will explore this illicit act further below) leads to the cursing of the Canaanites, so the looking back of Lot's wife leads to the establishment of the Moabites and the Ammonites. Importantly though it is not Lot's wife who gives birth to the ancestral fathers of these people groups, just as it is not Ham who is cursed. Thus, the punishment of Lot's wife sterilizes her, so to speak, as the reproduction of sons is left to her daughters. Salt, from this perspective, is a symbol of barrenness and infertility.[22] When Abimelech razes Shechem he also sows it with salt (Judg 9.45), thereby ensuring the infertility of the land.[23]

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[22] See F.C. Fensham, "Salt as a Curse in the Old Testament and the Ancient Middle East," *BA* 25 (1962): 48-50.

[23] This symbol can also be found in Job 39.6, Jer 17.6, and Zeph 2.9. The last of these examples deserves further comment as it compares the progeny of Lot to Sodom and Gomorrah:

> "Therefore, as I live," declares Yahweh of hosts, God of Israel, "Moab shall become like Sodom and the sons of Ammon like Gomorrah, a place possessed by weeds and salt pits, and a desolation forever. The remnant of my people shall plunder them and the survivors of my nation shall possess them."

The prophetic text thus declares that the fate of the offspring of Lot's daughters will mirror the fate of Sodom, and thus of Lot's wife.

There is another possible implication of the symbolic nature of salt. The mineral is also a sign of sacrifice and covenant. In Lev 2.13 and Exod 30.35, for example, salt is associated with offerings. Purity also relates to permanence and perpetuity, as, for example, the "covenant of salt" in Num 18.19 and 2 Chr 13.5. Thus, insofar as the fate of Lot's wife symbolizes infertility and the discontinuity implied by the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, it might

The infertile fate of Lot's wife contrasts with Sarah's miraculous birth to Isaac, and presents Lot's wife as a type of foil to Sarah (as Lot is to Abraham). For Sarah represents the reverse of the fate of Sodom and thus also of Lot's wife.[24] Sarah is described as barren and without child almost as soon as she is introduced (11.30). Her barrenness reflects the famine in the Negev in ch.12 but is expressed most obviously in her reaction to the divine claim that she will have a child despite her having entered menopause: "After I have become old shall I have pleasure/become moist (עדנה),[25] even though my lord is old?" (18.12). The noun for pleasure (עדנה) (*'eděnāh*) recalls the Garden of Eden (עדן) in which a mist came up from the ground and watered (השקה) the land. Thus, when the initially barren Sarah eventually defies old age and conceives a child, she becomes as lush and fertile as the Garden of Eden. In contrast, the initially well-watered valley, likened to the garden of the Lord (Gen 13.10), is rained down upon with fire and brimstone and is left to smoke and ashes. Since Lot's wife is associated with and shares a similar fate to that of Sodom and the cities of the plain, she too contrasts with Sarah and comes to symbolize infertility and barrenness.[26] This final image of Lot's wife, as a saline symbol of

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also symbolize the continuity implied by new-life after destruction. It is as if her metamorphosis hints at sacrifice only to reveal that it is not one. See D. Alan Aycock, "The Fate of Lot's Wife," 113-19.

[24] See Nachman Levine, "Sarah/Sodom: Birth, Destruction and Synchronic Transaction," *JSOT* 31.2 (2006): 131-46 (134-8).

[25] See Jonas C. Greenfield, "A Touch of Eden," in *Orientalia J. Duschene-Guillemin Emerito Oblata* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1984), 219-24. Greenfield argues that עדנה means "abundant moisture" and is the exact antonym of "withered". He bases his argument on an Ugaritic cognate which means "luxuriant rainfall," as well as Rabbinic Hebrew where עדן can mean lubricating skin with oil or rain moistening.

[26] Nachman Levine makes another connection on the level of wordplay. In 18.2 Abraham sees guests standing (נצב) before him and thus offers them bread (לחם) which Sarah bakes. Lot's wife, who is not mentioned in the opening hospitality scene in ch.19 and thus did not make bread for the guests, looks back at Sodom and turns into a pillar (נצב) of salt (מלח), the word for salt being a metathesis of bread. See, "Sarah/Sodom: Birth, Destruction, and Synchronic Transaction," 133.

infertility, is perhaps an appropriate place to end this discussion of her, for it is her removal, her erasure, which leads to the dark scene of Lot and his daughters.

Lot and his Sons-in-Law

The verse on Lot's wife stands out in the text despite its brevity; the opposite seems to be the case with Lot's sons-in-law. In terms of word-count and verses (19.12-14), the sons-in-law are given more weight than Lot's wife; in terms of reception history and scholarly commentary, however, Lot's wife dwarfs the sons-in-law. Exploring their presence, however, reveals a great many insights into the complexities of the Lot story, as well as one of the more prominent themes in the Lot complex: discordance between fathers and their sons-in-law.

After the divine messengers have saved Lot from the Sodomite mob they reveal to him that they are about to destroy Sodom and that he should bring his family out of the city:

> And the men said unto Lot: "Is there anyone else of yours here? A son-in-law, your sons and daughters, and all of yours in the city? Bring them out of the place, for we are about to destroy this place (Gen 19.12-13a).

These verses, as Bruce Vawter notes, create a complex scene of "shadowy sons, ambiguous sons-in-law, and putative daughters."[27] We have already been introduced to Lot's daughters earlier in the narrative, but have not heard anything of sons or a son-in-law. The mention of sons, in particular, is peculiar, as there is no other reference to Lot having any. On the other hand, the messengers are not presented as omniscient and so the question could be asked out of sincere intent. It might also be a question asked out of politeness—that is, the messengers know very well that Lot has no sons but do so out of custom and civility. Either way, their question draws

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[27] Bruce Vawter, *On Genesis: A New Reading* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977), 237.

attention to the absence of sons in the Lot story—for there are only daughters and sons-in-law. Indeed, the sequence of family members lists the son-in-law prior to sons and daughters— interestingly highlighting this secondary kinship relation over primary ones.[28]

The word for "son-in-law" comes from the root חתן and is used three times in these verses, once in the singular (19.12) and twice in the plural (19.14). חתן denotes relationships of affinity, in contrast to those of consanguinity.[29] In Hebrew, the distinction between "son-in-law" and "bridegroom" is not so rigid, and often the term is used in the latter sense as well (e.g. Isa 61.10; 62.5; Jer 7.34; 16.9; 25.10; 33.11; Ps 19.6[5]; Joel 2.16). The two potential meanings of the word serve as a reminder of the complex triangular relationship between fathers, daughters, and sons-in-law that are played upon in these verses—is the חתן a "son-in-law" defined in relation to the father or a "bridegroom" defined in relation to his betrothed?

Evidence of such antagonism can be found in the following verse, which relates Lot's failed attempt to bring his sons-in-law out of the city.

And Lot went out, and spoke unto his sons-in-law, the ones taking his daughters (לקחי בנתיו), and said: "Arise, go out from this place, for Yahweh will destroy the city!" But he was like one who laughs in the eyes of his sons-in-law (19.14).

While the atypical word order in 19.12 signaled the importance of the son-in-law it is perhaps still surprising to learn that Lot does indeed have two of them. Earlier in the narrative Lot had offered his daughters to the Sodomite mob declaring that "they have not known a man" (19.8).

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[28] Additionally, son-in-law is the only familial term here in the singular and without a (second person, masculine) suffix attached. The Septuagint has the plural and the Syriac has the pronominal suffix. See Speiser, *Genesis*, 140. Westermann suggests that חתן "son-in-law" is a later intrusion, probably inserted by error from v.14 (*Genesis 12-36*, 296 and 303).

[29] With the base meaning of "son-in-law" other permutations of the root emphasize other relationships of affinity, as in חֹתֵן (father-in-law) (e.g. Judg 19.4, 7, 9; Exod 3.1; 18 [*passim*]) and חֹתֶנֶת (mother-in-law) (e.g. Deut 27.37). See E. Kutsch, חתן, *TDOT* 5: 270-77.

How are the daughters virgins if they have husbands? Moreover, why are they still living in their

father's house?[30] Perhaps the marriage between the sons-in-law and Lot's daughters is virilocal

and the daughters stay in the house of the father. But while this solves the problem of why the

daughters are still in Lot's house, it does not explain how they are still virgins. It is also possible

that Lot is lying to the mob about his daughters' virginity, but this is a matter of conjecture and

would clash with the overall characterization of Lot as a tragi-comic figure (and not a quick-

thinking heroic type). Speiser, following traditional readings, asserts that the sons-in-law were

married to two older daughters who had not previously been mentioned.[31] This interpretation has

the benefit of explaining why Lot offered virgin daughters within his home (as there were other

daughters). But the text does not say "other daughters" and consistently refers to Lot having two

daughters (19.8, 15, 30). Moreover, the elder daughter is referred to as the "first-born" (19.31,

33, 34, 37), and it would be unlikely that the "first-born" is one of the unmarried virgin daughters

still in Lot's house while two younger daughters are betrothed.[32] Finally, literarily, the theme of

two daughters is important for the contrast and comparison with the two messengers, and also for

the overall characterization of the daughters (offered by their father but betrothed to husbands—

and eventually making their own father the father of their children). In my reading, therefore, I

understand חתן here to refer to men betrothed to Lot's daughters but not officially married. This

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[30] George Athas offers the interesting reading that Lot's daughters were, in fact, never in his house. The concealment of Lot having sons-in-law until this point thus forces the reader to re-evaluate the negative conception of him as a father who would willingly offer his daughters to a mob outside his house. Instead, Lot is a quick-thinking host who tries to outsmart a dangerous mob ("Has Lot Lost the Plot? Detail Omission and a Reconsideration of Genesis 19," *JHebS* 16.5 [2016]: 1-18).

[31] Speiser, *Genesis*, 140.

[32] See also Laban's statement that it is not his people's custom to give the "younger" before the "first-born" (Gen 29.26) and Saul's offers of Merab and Michal to David which proceeds from first-born to younger (1 Sam 14.49; 18.17; 18.20).

maintains the single daughter-pair throughout the story and I also find this to be the best explanation of the additional comment לקחי בנתיו, "the ones taking his daughters," which carries a futuristic sense.[33] It thus relays the idea that these are not necessarily sons-in-law "proper" but sons-in-law to be.

Even if this is the case, however, the presence of these (future) sons-in-law/bridegrooms still calls into question whether Lot's previous offer of his daughters to the Sodomite mob was his (alone) to make (based on the assumption that biblical daughters are fated to be under control of either their father or husband). Exum, for example, notes that according to the regulations set out in Deut. 22.23-7 fathers do not have unlimited control over a betrothed daughter's sexuality.[34] One could argue though that Exum has perhaps overextended her argument, in that Deut. 22.23-27 does not stipulate that the rights of the daughter are transferred to the future husband's domain, but only that her innocence and guilt is to be made a public affair.[35] Moreover, there is the example of the Timnite father handing over his daughter to another man after she had been betrothed to Samson (see Judg 15.1). Samson is even called the Timnite

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[33] See, Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 295-6 and Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), 219. The ancient Versions express disagreement. The Vulgate, for instance, interprets the text in a futuristic sense, while the Septuagint interprets it to be a past action. See Vawter, *On Genesis*, 237.

[34] Exum, "Desire: Distorted and Exhibited," 90.

[35] An interesting intertext in regard to honour/shame of the father, his daughter, and potential husbands is Josephus's account of the marriage between Joseph, son of Tobias, to his niece in *Ant*. 12.186-189. The story centers around Joseph's desire for a foreign (dancing) woman even though he is already married. He solicits his brother Solymius to help him in this endeavour. Solymius ends up sending his daughter to a drunken Joseph one night under the illusion that it was the foreign woman (somewhat playing upon Laban's bed-trick to Jacob in Gen 29). The ploy thus saves Joseph from disgrace (for having sex with a foreign woman) while also fulfilling Solymius's desire to marry his daughter to a high-ranking Jew in Alexandria. That is, Solymius's honour is actually enhanced by the offering of his daughter and not diminished. The pattern here is that honour/shame applies first to the world of men—and the "sacrifice" of the daughter by the father may result in greater honour for the father.

father's חתן (son-in-law) after his bride has been given to the other man (Judg 15.6). Like Samson, however, it is hard to see the sons-in-law being pleased about Lot's offer to the mob (should they have known about it). It may even be one of the reasons why the sons-in-law are not convinced of his plea for them to flee the city.[36] Indeed, Lot's statement to the Sodomite mob to do to his daughters "whatever is good in your eyes," (19.8) points forward to 19.14 in which "[Lot] was like one who laughed in the eyes of his sons-in-law." By using another reference to the eyes and sight, the narrator directs the reader to the perspective of the sons-in-law.

The root of the word for laughter/joking is צחק; it is used throughout the Abraham cycle (cf. Gen 17.17; 18.12, 13, 15; 21.6, 9) often as a pun on Isaac's name (יצחק). When Abraham and Sarah laugh at the announcement of Isaac's birth (17.7 and 18.12, 13), their laughter (presumably) reflects their incredulity. One assumes that a similar situation occurs with Lot's sons-in-law; just as Sarah had laughed at her predicted childbirth, the sons-in-law view the destruction of Sodom with skepticism. While the two laughing scenes might share an underlying rationale, however, they are in fact reverse images of each other: the former concerns miraculous birth, the latter supernatural destruction. One reflects incredulity at a miracle too good to be true, old age and barrenness turning to youth and fertility. The other reflects the overturning of youth and potential fertility. The idea of the sons-in-law as future sons-in-law adds to the sense of potentiality thwarted. These bridegrooms never become fathers; when they meet their end, their brides are still virgins.

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[36] Then again, these sons-in-law could be part of the mob, as it apparently consists of "all the men of Sodom…both young and old" (19.4). Either way, there is some confusion about just how far these sons-in-law are integrated into Lot's house. The ambiguity, in fact, is a fitting characterization of Lot—was he so negligent to give his daughters to one of the evil Sodomites, or was he clairvoyant enough not to betroth his daughters to sons from the evil people of the city? The issue is just how far Lot and his family were integrated into Sodom, and the answer is not entirely clear.

Still, we must admit that nothing is said of what the sons-in-law were thinking. Were they not persuaded because they truly did not believe Lot? Or was the situation comical to them—because Lot was a defective messenger? because of their own obtuseness? (because the idea seemed absurd? or laughably tragic?) Laughter may be driven by skepticism as much as it is by intolerable anxiety, sometimes by a mixture of both. Often we laugh without knowing why; or, according to Freud, we laugh because we do not wish to know why.[37] Francis Landy reminds us that laughter is a "Dionysiac experience, opposed to rationality and order," and that it "expresses an anarchic delight in nonsense…One of the messages of laughter is that behind the sense of the world is nonsense; one of its motivations is a resistance to the effort of making it cohere."[38]

Sarah's response to Yahweh's assertion that she will bear a son in her old age in ch.18 is a good example of laughter's ambiguity, as incredulity may only play a part. Sarah's thought that accompanies her laughter, let us recall, focuses on עדנה, a word rich in meaning: "And Sarah laughed to herself, saying 'After I have become withered, shall I have עדנה (pleasure/moistness), and my husband being old also?'"[39] She wonders about the very mechanics of the process that will lead to Isaac's birth. There is even a hint that what she really wonders about is the "pleasure" associated with עדנה and not the actual conception, as if she would be laughing with giddiness at the prospect of future sexual delight—or that she would be laughing at the mere

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[37] See Francis Landy, "Humor as a Tool for Biblical Exegesis," in *On Humour and the Comic in the Hebrew Bible* (ed. Athalya Brenner and Yehuda T. Radday; Bible and Literature Series 23; JSOTSup 92; Sheffield: Almond Press, 1990), 99-115.

[38] Francis Landy, "Are We in the Place of Averroës? Response to the Articles of Exum and Whedbee, Buss, Gottwald, and Good," *Semeia* 32 (1984): 131-48 (133-34).

[39] See Leo Bersani, *The Culture of Redemption* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 201. Compare her response to Abraham's parallel scene in which, after hearing Yahweh announce the birth of a son to Sarah, Abraham falls on his face laughing and asks: "To a hundred-year-old will a child be born, will ninety-year-old Sarah give birth?" (Gen. 17.17). Abraham too expresses a certain sense of bafflement and disbelief, perhaps even amusement at the absurdity of the idea, but highlights conception and birth, not pleasure.

thought that pleasure would be a possibility, given that she is a post-menopausal woman (and her husband perhaps being too old to even make penetrative sex a possibility). The laughter would then proceed from a moment of *jouissance* (a term which also links laughter and sex). This may be part of the reason why, when Yahweh repeats to Abraham that Sarah laughed, he makes no mention of עדנה and simply asks: "Why did Sarah laugh and say shall I indeed bear a child when I am so old?" (18.13). It is as if the pleasure needs to be covered over in much the same way that Yahweh tactfully edits out Sarah's reference to Abraham's old age as well as the mention of Sarah's vanished menses and withered flesh.[40]

That no answer is provided to Yahweh's question, however, leaves the answer open. Laughter's rhetorical function in the text may simply be to draw attention to the etymological resonance with the name Isaac, which may be the primary reason for the back and forth dialogue between Yahweh and Sarah in 18.15: "And Sarah denied, saying, 'I did not laugh,' for she was afraid, but [Yahweh] responded, 'No, for you did laugh.'" Sarah wants to cancel her laughter but Yahweh does not allow this. His firm stance may be a suggestion to Sarah that she is to reflect further upon her laughter, something that she must have kept in her mind even until the naming sequence of Isaac: "God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh concerning me" (21.6).[41] But even here we might ask what type of laughter God has made for Sarah? Is Sarah expressing joy at becoming an object of laughter or is she expressing fear that she has become an object of ridicule and mockery? Whatever the case, she is concerned primarily about laughter, and it is directed to her and not the son whom she has named after the phenomenon.

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[40] Alter thus comments, "after all, nothing anaphrodisiac is to be communicated to old Abraham at the moment when he is expected to cohabit with his wife in order at last to beget a son" (*Genesis: A Translation and Commentary* [New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996], 79.

[41] See Westermann, *Genesis 12-50*, 282.

To return to the laughter in 19.14 then, we might note similar polyvalence. This laughter is in the *piel*, already suggesting a different type of laughter than Sarah's. The two other occurrences of צחק in the *piel* in the Abraham story are when Sarah sees Ishmael "laughing/playing" (with Isaac?) (21.9) and when Abimelech sees Isaac "laughing/fondling" with Rebekah (26.8).[42] While I am not convinced that a firm semantic difference exists between the *qal* and *piel* conjugations of the root, these examples suggest a particularly intense form of laughter in 19.14 or something that is not laughter in the common sense but associated with it through common bodily experiences and manifestations (like Ishmael's "playing" and Isaac's "fondling").[43] Additionally, there is the rather peculiar phraseology of the verse: "but [Lot] was like one who laughs in the eyes of his sons-in-law." The text directs the point of view to that of the sons-in-law by referring to their perspective of Lot ("in the eyes of his sons-in-law"). The emphasis, however, is not on the sons-in-law, but on Lot, as the participle is directed toward him (the verse ends on an open-ended note with the implication that the sons-in-law stayed in Sodom as a result of their perspective on Lot, though it does not explicitly say this). Finally, it is interesting to note that strictly speaking Lot does not laugh/jest/play, but that he is *like* (the Hebrew particle *kaf*, כ) one who does this. Coats thus concludes: "in just this particular collocation, the participle with *kaf* suggests that the sons-in-law see Lot as the play itself, the

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[42] Of course, what both Ishmael's "playing" and Isaac's "fondling" may share with Sarah's laughter is sexual implications.

[43] See R. Bartelmus, צחק/שׂחק, *TDOT* 58-72. Bartelmus suggests that the basic meaning of the root in *piel* is "cheerful activity" which could consist of a variety of different actions (62), though as he lists the separate uses of the root he rarely distinguishes between *piel* and *qal*. Alter, likewise, argues against a firm difference between the root in the *qal* and *piel* (*Genesis*, 98).

If there is a difference between the two stems, then perhaps it is a hierarchical one. That is, the *piel* use of צחק would emphasize that there is a subject who "laughs" and an object who is "laughed at"—and thus would lend itself to the more sexual use of the word (as may be the case in Gen 21.9 and 26.8).

laugh, the one who in himself is the object of ridicule."[44] Indeed, one sense of the passage is that Lot is being laughed *at* by his sons-in-law. Or at least the sons-in-law might sense the dissonance between Lot's message (divine destruction of the city) and the way in which they perceive he presents it (with laughter/jesting/sportiness)—and thereby assume that it must be a joke. And if Lot is the real fool then perhaps we cannot hold the sons-in-law responsible for their grave decision to stay in Sodom.

Exum offers another possible reading, one which passes over the comedic implications of the story and focuses on an even darker reason for the laughter associated with Lot. Following with her interpretation of the narrator as covering over and hiding the desires of Lot (see below), she suggests that Lot is playing around with his sons-in-law on purpose; his "jesting" is evidence that he really does not want them around, for they represent obstacles to his acting out of his unconscious fantasy.[45] So while the text portrays the sons-in-law as somewhat obtuse, for Exum this only hides the fact that Lot is not truly trying to convince them to escape out of the city. The implications of this reading will be explored in more detail below, but is worth noting now in connection to the ambiguity of Lot's laughing.

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[44] George Coats, "Lot: A Foil in the Abraham Saga," in *Understanding the Word: Essays in Honor of Bernhard W. Anderson* (eds. J.T. Butler, et al.; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), 112-32 (123).

[45] Exum, "Desire Distorted and Exhibited," 90, 92. Exum distinguishes, importantly for her, between the voice of the narrator and the character of Lot. She does not believe that one can psychoanalyze characters as was common practice in early psychoanalytic literary readings. Instead, one can only psychoanalyze "the cultural or collective unconscious that finds its expression in such literary creations" ("Desire: Distorted and Exhibited," 86). Thus, it would be more accurate to summarize her interpretation here as evidence of the narrator's (the narrator being defined as a kind of collective, androcentric unconscious of the text) conflicting desires, not Lot's.

The discord between Lot and his sons-in-law may be interpreted as a paradigmatic example of the troubles that exist between fathers, their sons-in-law, and daughters in the Hebrew Bible. This contentious relationship may even be found in the details of the Hebrew language itself; since the same word can mean both son-in-law and bridegroom, one is never quite sure to whom the חתן is most connected: the father or the daughter. Lot and his sons-in-law never see eye to eye; it is a laughing matter in both the comic and tragic sense. Lot, for his part, shows evidence that he desires to retain his daughters and assumes that their sexuality is under his control (even after betrothal). On the darkest level, he may even wish for removal of the sons-in-law from the picture altogether. In this sense, the sons-in-law parallel Lot's wife, as their erasure is necessary in order for the incestuous cave scene to take place. On the other hand, the sons-in-law serve a very different purpose. Within the broader theme of justice and injustice in Gen 18-19, it is quite significant that the sons-in-law are presented with the opportunity to escape the destruction. Their decision not to heed to Lot's warning is of their volition. But whether one can fault them for this decision is not clear—was the problem with the messenger (Lot), the message, or the recipients? Does Lot fail as the messenger of the messengers, who, for their part, constantly reminded Lot of the urgency of the situation and ordered him to help those close to him escape? Or is the problem with the sons-in-law who perceive Lot to be joking? As with Lot's wife, there is no clear answer as to whether the death of the sons-in-law was justified or not.

The House of the Father (The Giving Away of the Daughters)

The father's house has both a spatial (physical) and a social (abstract) function in the Hebrew Bible, and both of these concepts are played upon in the Lot story.[46] In the overall structure of the saga, Lot is associated with multiple households and his place within Abraham's house is never entirely clear. The social and familial movement from Haran's house to Terah's to Abraham's and finally to his own, correlates with Lot's geographical movements from Ur to Haran to Canaan to Sodom to Zoar. In the structure of ch.19, Lot's excursions become more localized, focusing on Lot's movements in and out of Sodom. In the hospitality scene in Gen. 19.4-11, the focus becomes even more specific as the episode revolves around Lot's physical house.

My analysis in this chapter will follow this progression, first dealing with the large structure of the Lot saga, then focusing on ch.19, and ending with the hospitality scene. In each of these sections Lot is portrayed as a character that suffers from "boundary issues," and not just in the geographical/locational sense, but also in the sexual and moral sense.[47] His constant movement between houses (both architectural and familial ones) thus reflects not only his movement between territories and cities, but also his blurring of kinship identities, and, regarding Lot's character, his ambiguous categorization.[48] Lot is thus portrayed as a liminal, in-between

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[46] For analysis of the "house of the father," see J. David Schloen, *The House of the Father as Fact and Symbol: Patrimonialism in Ugarit and the ancient Near East* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2001). See also Cynthia Chapman, *The House of the Mother: The Social Roles of Maternal Kin in Biblical Hebrew Narrative and Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

[47] Of course, the climax of Lot's representation as a character that suffers from sexual and moral boundaries occurs in vv.30-38, which I will not deal with in this section but in the one below.

[48] Abraham too shuffles between houses and territories and offers his wife to foreign men (e.g. the offering of Sarah to Pharaoh and Abimelech). There are, however, several differences to keep in mind. One is the situational context that Abraham is in when he offers Sarah—namely, he is driven by famine and desperation to a foreign land in which he is in danger. Moreover, there is the divine calling and blessing associated with him. Abraham leaves his father's house

type of character. Moreover, Lot's ambiguous place in his own story—both physically and metaphysically—mirrors the place of the Lot story within the larger Abraham cycle. In this sense, Lot is evidence of biblical narrative's tendency to show how stories, and the characters within them, reflect a world that is "untidy…quirky…[and] precipitously changeable."[49] It would have been too simple, too tidy, for the story of Abraham to proceed uninterrupted from the divine promise at the beginning of ch.12 to the initiation of the covenanted people through the birth of Isaac in ch.21.[50] The narrative progresses through Abraham and his seed, but Lot (in addition to other others) plays an essential part of the story. Lot acts as a supplement in the story of Abraham, both a necessary and superfluous addition.

One of the connections to this liminal characterization is the portrayal of Lot as a flawed, even comical, figure. He is a foil, an always slightly farcical version of Abraham, and a complicated father figure. The multi-layered characterization of Lot as a father is displayed most obviously in the hospitality scene, in which the social and the physical aspects of the father's house are combined.

Lot's Beginnings: From House to House

Lot is part of three other houses (in the biblical sense of the basic familial unit) before he establishes his own. He is initially a part of his father Haran's household. Haran, however, dies

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because Yahweh commissions him to do so; Lot leaves Abraham's house because of a squabble and the prospect of better land.
    [49] Robert Alter, "Sodom as Nexus: The Web of Design in Biblical Narrative," in *The Book and the Text: The Bible and Literary Theory* (ed. Regina Schwartz; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 146-60 (160).
    [50] Alter, "Sodom as Nexus," 157.

before his own father Terah in the city of Ur. Thus, Lot becomes a part of his grandfather Terah's household and accompanies him in his departure from Ur to Haran (Gen. 11.27, 31).

Haran's death creates a significant alteration in the rhythm of the text from the preceding genealogical list (11.10-26). In this list the line from generation to generation is recounted in the same pattern: the father lives a specified number of years and begets a son after a specified amount of years, this father then begets other unnamed sons and daughters. Terah's line breaks from this pattern with the birth of three named sons; moreover, the offspring of one of these sons, Haran, is immediately mentioned: Lot. This fecundity, however, is undercut by the premature death of Haran.

To add to the disruption, Haran's death is followed by the report of Sarah's infertility (11.30).[51] Sarah's barrenness is the central focus of the passage, and a central motif of the Abraham story. The description of Sarah as having no child (אין לה ולד) is centrally important, as it marks a direct counterpart to the ceaseless flow of generations just listed, and especially to the introductory phrase "these are the generations (תולדת) of Terah." Avivah Zornberg explains:

> Toledot [תולדת], the word translated…as "generations," is rich with a sense of the power of generation, of the multiple birthings, the realized consequences of potentialities inherent in each lifespan. And, ironically, it is the root of this word (vlad) that is used to refer to Sarai's childlessness: it is precisely this that she has not: the vlad that is the barest notation for some expression of self that lives beyond the self, an essence projected toward eternity.[52]

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[51] I use Abraham and Sarah throughout for the sake of consistency, despite the fact that it would be more accurate to speak of Abram and Sarai in these particular passages.

[52] Avivah Zornberg, *Genesis: The Beginning of Desire* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1995), 73.

Lot stands in between the death of Haran and the barrenness of Sarah. So although Haran dies, disrupting the rhythm of the text, he is the only son of Terah to produce offspring in this introductory passage (11.27-32). As Haran's progeny—along with his sisters, Milcah and Iscah—Lot highlights Sarah's barrenness.

The mention of Milcah's marriage to her uncle Nahor (11.29) establishes the strong tendency toward endogamy in the Terahite genealogy. Isaac, for example, will marry Nahor's son's daughter, that is, his uncle's son's daughter. Jacob will marry two of Nahor's son's son's daughters, that is, two of his own father Isaac's father's brother's son's son's daughters.[53]

Nothing is said of Sarah's parentage in 11.27-32. The importance of this omission, however, becomes clear in the wife-sister episodes of 12.10-20 and 20.1-18. In both of these episodes, Abraham presents Sarah as his sister; in the latter he elaborates that Sarah is the daughter of his father but not the daughter of his mother (20.11)—though we have reasons to doubt the veracity of this claim.[54] Thus, two of Terah's sons have extremely close endogamous marriages: one by marrying his niece (the daughter of his brother) and one by (perhaps) marrying his half-sister (the daughter of his father).

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[53] See Vawter, *On Genesis*, 167-8, for a chart and a more detailed analysis of the Terahite genealogy. See also Julian Pitt-Rivers, *The Fate of Shechem: Or, The Politics of Sex. Essays in the Anthropology of the Mediterranean* (Cambridge Studies in Social Anthropology Series; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 155.

[54] For an excellent literary-psychoanalytic reading of the theme of the endangered ancestress, see Cheryl J. Exum, "Who's Afraid of the 'Endangered Ancestress'?" in *The New Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible* (eds. J. Cheryl Exum and David Clines; JSOTSup 143; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 91-113. See also, Robert Polzin, "'The Ancestress of Israel in Danger' in Danger," *Semeia* 3 (1975): 81-98.

In the wife-sister episodes, Abraham allows Sarah to go live in the house of another man. It is the first example in the patriarchal narratives of the giving away of a woman (or women) in order to preserve peace or save lives, something that will also occur in Lot's interaction with the Sodomite mob in 19.4-11.

It is no coincidence that one of these daughters comes from Haran, a father of two

daughters.[55] Lot, Haran's son, will eventually follow suit and have two daughters of his own,

thereby framing the Lot saga with families consisting of a father and two daughters.[56] Lot and his

daughters, however, will provide an alternative version of how genealogies might progress. On

the one hand, his wife is not mentioned in the Terahite genealogy and he (presumably) initially

offers his daughters to Sodomite men since he has sons-in-law. This projection toward exogamy,

however, is reversed in his eventual incest with his own daughters. Thus Lot's family line

represents a perverse version of the other close marriages of the Terahite genealogy; Lot takes

endogamy to its extreme.

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[55] Biblical women often appear in pairs, serving as a contrasting device between barren versus fertile, favoured versus unfavoured, older versus younger, and so on). See Phyllis Silverman Kramer, "Biblical Women that Come in Pairs: The Use of Female Pairs as Literary Device in the Hebrew Bible," in *Genesis: A Feminist Companion to the Bible* (Second Series) (ed. Athalya Brenner; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 218-32.
   For analysis of the midrashic tradition that identifies Iscah with Sarah, see Eliezer Segal, "Sarah and Iscah: Method and Message in Midrashic Tradition," *JBQ* 82.3 (1992): 417-29.

[56] This might help explain the presence of Iscah, who plays no significant role in the immediate context and is mentioned nowhere else; Milcah, in contrast, will be mentioned later, as she is married to Nahor. Westermann, among others, suggests that that there was an old tradition which mentioned the two daughters of Haran, arguing that Milcah and Iscah "must have occurred as sisters in a narrative of which we no longer know anything, just as Gen 19:30-38 tells of two sisters" (*Genesis 12-36*, 138).
   Another hypothesis, argued by C. Wynand Retief, is that Haran actually committed maternal incest with Terah's wife, and that the text has attempted to censor this, as it does in the Noah story (where Ham's offense is likewise to be interpreted as maternal incest, so Retief). See C. Wynand Retief, "When Interpretation Traditions Speak Too Loud for Ethical Dilemmas to be Heard: On the Untimely Death of Haran (Genesis 11:28)," *OTE* 23.3 (2010): 788-803. From this perspective, one could further conjecture that the old tradition about Haran's two daughters— which Westermann (among others) argues probably existed but we now know nothing about— could have been a tale about incest. There would then be an ethos of incest, doubling, daughters/sisters, and familial trouble framing the Lot story. While this is certainly an intriguing reading, and one that would have many implications for a study such as this, I remain unconvinced of its conclusions. At the same time, the theme of how Haran's line contrasts and corresponds with Abraham's line is certainly an important one, particularly in how Haran's line contrasts in terms of marriage and genealogy.

The third household with which Lot becomes associated (and the most important one) is

Abraham's. Immediately after the divine call in 12.1-3, we are told that Lot accompanied

Abraham with him in his departure from Terah's house from Haran to Canaan. In the first

occurrence, Lot is an active agent ("and Lot went with him [Abram]) (12.4); in the second, Lot is

the object of Abraham's action ("And Abram took…Lot his brother's son") (12.5). The latter

passivity, as we will see, is much more indicative of Lot's character as the story progresses. Why

did Lot accompany Abraham and leave Terah's house?[57] Is it a sign of Abraham's magnanimity

toward Lot, and thus a way to highlight his overall superior morality?[58] Does Abraham bring Lot

with him because he believes Lot to be his surrogate son, the one through whom the promise of

12.2 would be fulfilled,[59] or at least as a type of security deposit toward God's promise of

nationhood?[60]

Whatever the case, Lot eventually departs from Abraham in ch.13. Given the first choice

of land, Lot decides to dwell in the cities of the plain and pitches his tent near Sodom (13.12).

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[57] A comparison of the genealogies in 11.26, 32 and 12.4 reveals that Terah was alive at the time of Abraham's departure, and that he lived for another sixty years. So we are left not only with the question of why Lot accompanied Abraham but also with the issue of why Lot did not stay with Terah. All of this is made even more complex in that Terah's intended destination was Canaan (Gen 11.31).

[58] See Speiser, *Genesis*, 97

[59] See Larry R. Heyler, "The Separation of Abram and Lot," *JSOT* 26 (1983): 77-88 (82).

[60] Some scholars are unconvinced that Lot was a minor who needed his uncle's protection, and thus believe that the episode does not underline Abraham's kindness to his nephew but Abraham's own sense of insecurity about the fulfillment of God's promises in 12.1-3. See Frank Spina, "Lot," *ABD*, 4:373; L.A. Turner, "Lot as Jekyll and Hyde: A Reading of Genesis 18-19," in *The Bible in Three Dimensions* (eds. David J.A. Clines, Stephen E. Fowl, and Stanley E. Porter; JSOTSup 87; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 85-101; Daniel Rickett, "Rethinking the Place and Purpose of Genesis 13," *JSOT* 36.1 (2011): 31-53. In 12.5, plural forms of the verbs are used, suggesting that both Abraham and Lot had many possessions and slaves when they set out from Haran. Moreover, the separation of Lot and Abraham in ch.13, which occurs relatively quickly after their departure from Haran, assumes that Lot can very well take care of himself and that he is obviously of a mature age.

Immediately, the narrator informs us that the men of Sodom were evil and sinners against Yahweh, suggesting that Lot has made a very bad decision—the reader has also been informed a couple verses earlier (13.10) that Yahweh will eventually destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot's ill-fated decision is further accentuated by the fact that as soon as he departs Yahweh reveals to Abraham that he is now standing in the Land of Promise.

The geographical separation of Abraham and Lot, however, does not entail a full-scale split, as displayed in Abraham's continued concern for his nephew in ch.14, in which he rescues Lot from capture. On the other hand, their separation does establish the fact that the two men have now formed two separate households. It also initiates the thematic comparison of the two characters, in which Lot serves as a foil to Abraham. One of these points of comparison is rural, nomadic life versus sedentary, city life. As Lot moves further away from Abraham he becomes more closely connected with urban life as well as Sodom and the Sodomites, forming a pattern which is part of the larger anti-urban theme in Genesis.

The migrations of Lot (Ur to Haran to Canaan to Sodom to Zoar) as well as his movement from house to house (Haran to Terah to Abraham) are symbols of Lot's liminal characterization. He inscribes the first separation in Abraham's family and thus paradigmatically signifies the complex of difference and kinship that will come to constitute Israel's relationship with the other. As part of Terah's household, moreover, Lot reminds the reader of Abraham's origin in Haran, and also, therefore, of Israel's foreign origins. This continues after the Lot story proper through tales of Lot's progeny, the Moabites and the Ammonites. These peoples appear sometimes as foe (e.g. Deut. 23.3-6; Judg. 3.12-30; Judg. 11) and sometimes as friend (e.g. Deut. 2.9, 19; the book of Ruth) to the Israelites, always with a nagging reminder of their distant kinship in the background. Finally, Lot is a reminder of Sodom and the Sodomites: a place and

people that represent both civilization and anti-civilization. Alter, for instance, reminds us that "Sodom, firmly lodged in between the enunciation of the covenantal promises and its fulfillment, becomes the great minority model, the myth of a terrible collective destiny antithetical to Israel's."[61] And yet Lot, importantly, is not a Sodomite (not even the Sodomites accept him as one of their own), and he does not share their fate. He is caught in between the world of Abraham and the world of the Sodomites.

Genesis 19: In and Outside of the House

The aforementioned larger movements from place to place parallel the more localized movements and separate dwelling places for Lot in ch.19. The chapter begins with a series of elegant parallels and antitheses with the opening scene of ch.18, with several comparisons between rural versus urban life. Both Abraham and Lot sit at entrances, rise to offer guests hospitality, and make these guests a meal. There is an obvious contrast, however, between Abraham at the flap of his tent and Lot at the gate of Sodom. Abraham, living in a tent, simply asks that the strangers do not pass by and brings them under a tree. Lot urges the messengers not to stay in the plaza, invites them into his house, and brings them under the "shadow of his roof beam," all actions which highlight the urban setting and fixed structure of his residence.

Lot's position at the city gate accentuates his association with the city and even suggests that he is a prominent citizen of Sodom, as the gate was a place for commerce and city government. His location at the edge of the city might also symbolize his ambiguous role as both an insider and outsider. This becomes obvious in his interaction with the Sodomite mob, in which he disapproves of their request "to know" the two messengers whom he has taken in as

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[61] Alter, "Sodom as Nexus," 157.

guests. I will analyze these verses in more detail below, but for now I will focus on the repeated

use of the Hebrew words דלת and פתח in vv.6-11, which highlights the differences and

boundaries between Lot and the Sodomites. The words are often used in parallel and are largely

synonymous, though דלת is perhaps best translated as "door," while פתח denotes the more general

idea of "entrance," or "opening."[62] When the Sodomites call for Lot to bring out the messengers,

he seeks to reason with them and comes out of the פתח, closing the דלת behind him (19.6). Once

outside, however, the people turn against Lot and draw near to break down the דלת (19.9). The

messengers save Lot by pulling him inside of the house, again sealing the Sodomites out by

closing the דלת behind them (19.10). To solidify their safety the messengers then blind the mob

which stands at the פתח of the house, leaving them aimlessly groping to find the entrance (19.11).

In the span of five verses these two words are used three times each, suggesting that the

repetition is deliberate and significant. The text is playing with the concept of borders and on the

lines and structures that enforce and blur these boundaries. Doors and entrances, like gates,

establish the boundary between inside and outside but are themselves in-between, transitional

spaces, neither entirely inside nor entirely outside. Lot, of course, is the only character who

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[62] Brian Doyle thinks that the different connotations between דלת and פתח are significant in terms of how the physical relates to the spiritual. He argues that דלת functions only as a physical obstacle, whereas פתח refers to a point of access, even a place of encounter with the divine. See Doyle, "'Knock, Knock, Knockin' on Sodom's Door.': The Function of פתח/דלת in Genesis 18-19." *JSOT* 28 (2004): 37-56. Central to Doyle's argument is the use of פתח in ch.18, in which the word occurs three times (דלת is not used in ch.18). The first two occurrences of the word are used in reference to Abraham's encounter with Yahweh (18.1-2), while the third is used in reference to Sarah's learning, while eavesdropping, that she will give birth to a child (18.10). In all these instances, a divine encounter or sharing of divine knowledge is provided to Abraham or Sarah. Thus, the Sodomites, who are not privy to this divine knowledge, are blinded in 19.11 and left grappling for the פתח. Though it is illuminating on many levels, Doyle's interpretation seems to ignore the fact that one would not have דלת in ch.18 since it is talking about the entranceway of a tent. Thus, it seems more likely that the contrast between ch.18 and ch.19 in regard to the uses of דלת and פתח is one of country/rural versus city/urban and not one of spiritual insight versus spiritual depravity.

travels in and out of the דלת and פתח in the exchange, enforcing his role as an individual caught

in between worlds, or at least as someone who is out of place; his movement is a physical

demonstration of a social reality. The Sodomites stay outside, despite their efforts to break down

the door, and Lot's daughters stay inside, despite the father's offer to bring them out. The

messengers also stay inside, remaining apart from the Sodomites, and merely "reach out their

hands" in order to bring Lot back inside (19.10).

Immediately after he is securely back inside the house, the messengers urge Lot to sever

all ties with the city, as it faces impending destruction. Lot lingers in leaving, however, and the

messengers eventually have to actively lead him and his family outside the city. Once outside the

city, the messengers continue to urge Lot to flee, telling him to escape to the mountains. Lot is

not satisfied fleeing just anywhere though. In a flustered and somewhat discordant speech, he

begs the messengers (now also conflated with Yahweh, as in ch.18) to save the small city of

Zoar, believing that if he flees to the mountains some undefined evil will cling to him and he will

die.[63] Lot's plea is accepted—one can almost sense the sigh of exasperation from Yahweh and

the messengers—and he travels to Zoar. In the very next verses, however, Lot leaves Zoar (this

time because of fear) and settles in a cave in the mountains. The irony is, of course, that he now

departs from the very place he begged to save and dwells in the place to which he originally said

he could not escape.[64]

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[63] What exactly is the evil that Lot fears? Is it an idiomatic reference to general foreboding? Is it a foreshadowing of the "evil" that will cling to him in the hills when he eventually goes there with his daughters? Whatever the case, there certainly is something ironic in Lot being concerned about evil given the fact that he had just been living in a city that was the embodiment of it.

[64] Significantly, Lot's bartering to save Zoar is done for his own sake. That is, he does not wish to save more people, or even little Zoar, but rather is concerned solely about his own well-being. This is meant to contrast, of course, with Abraham's bartering with Yahweh in Gen 18 in which the patriarch shows a great concern for others and proper values of justice and injustice.

The constant switching between locations in this chapter—from the city gate to house to moving in and out of the doors and entrances of the house to outside Sodom to Zoar and then finally to the cave—serves as a symbolic parallel to Lot's larger migratory journeys from Ur to Haran to Canaan to Sodom to Zoar to the mountains. He has transitioned from nomadic herdsman with Abraham to urbanite with the Sodomites and ends up a troglodyte with his daughters, apart from both Abraham and the Sodomites.

These constant movements, moreover, highlight the unflattering (comical) aspects of Lot's character. The seeds of this characterization are first planted in the ill-omened choice of settling in the cities of the plain in ch.13. This is then reinforced in ch.14 when Abraham is forced to rescue his nephew from Chedorlaomer of Elam (and the kings in alliance with him). Lot again needs to be rescued in ch.19, when the messengers save him from the Sodomite mob. And even after he has already been rescued and informed of the impending doom of Sodom, Lot still lingers in leaving. The messengers have to resort to forcibly grabbing Lot (and his wife and daughters, since it was his responsibility to help save them as well) by the hand in order to lead him out of the city. The verb מלט "flee" is repeated five times in vv.17-22 and it plays upon Lot's

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As Letellier observes, Zoar functions as a link between the disparate parts and themes of the Lot episodes (*Day in Mamre, Night in Sodom*, 168-70). It is mentioned immediately in connection to Sodom and Gomorrah when Lot first looks upon the Jordan valley (Gen 13.10), as a place among the Sodomite alliance of kings (Gen 14.2, 8), and throughout this last section of Gen 19. Its inclusion is etiological but also further develops Lot's characterization and some of the themes of the story overall. Like the Ark in the Noah story, Zoar is where Lot flees with his family to survive divine destruction. It is a place of security—a womb of protection. And like the Ark it disappears after the destruction has taken place and those who will "preserve seed" emerge out of it. As such, it foreshadows the daughters' fertility in the cave, hinted at by the linguistic pun of Lot entering Zoar (צוערה) just as he will enter into his younger daughter (צעירה) in 19.35. This is more than just a "little" place in terms of narrative importance, therefore, as it stands between destruction and new life—symbolized by Lot's entering it at dawn, when light and dark intermingle.

name (לוט), which heightens the irony of Lot doing everything but "fleeing." He is constantly being put, or placing himself, in a position in which he needs deliverance.

Abraham is the one who provides this deliverance, since it is he who rescues Lot from imprisonment in Gen 14, barters for Lot's safety in Gen 18, and is the reason for the divine mercy shown to Lot in Gen 19—a theme which is laid out clearly in 19.29:

> And it happened when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in which Lot had been dwelling.

The significance of the verse is further highlighted when one explores some of the connections between the Lot and Noah stories. The two stories share many thematic parallels: both are tales of destruction (one by water, one by fire) brought about by the wickedness of humanity, a man and his family are saved by divine intervention, and the delivered man falls prey to intoxication and is subject to some sort of shameful action by his children.[65] In the centre of the flood account

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[65] In addition to these thematic parallels, there are many linguistic connections between the two stories. Noah is described as righteous (6.9), while Abraham teaches his family to do righteousness (18.19) and his dialogue with God likewise revolves around the issue of righteousness (18.23-32). Lot, importantly, is never described as righteous (though neither is he described as evil). In both stories the root שחת ("ruin") plays a key role (6.13, 17; 9.11, 15; 18.28, 31, 32; 19.13, 14, 29) and in both Yahweh makes it rain (מטר) destruction (7.4; 19.24). The divine self-reflection in 18.17-21 is reminiscent of the divine reflection in the deluge account (6.5-8), and the list of escapees in the Lot story (Lot, his wife, and his daughters) similarly reflects that of the survivors in the flood story (Noah, his wife, his sons, and the wives of his sons). Of course, the differences are also important, most significantly the fact that Noah has sons (and thus daughters-in-law) while Lot has daughters (and thus sons-in-law—though the sons-in-law do not survive the destruction). There are also several connections between how Lot and Noah are saved. The angels putting out their hand and bringing Lot back into his house (19.10) parallels Noah's putting out his hand and bringing the dove into the safety of the ark (8.9), and both accounts include a shutting in of the family for safety (19.6,10; 7.16). One of the reasons for Noah's deliverance is that he found favour in the eyes of Yahweh (6.8), which reflects Lot's bartering with the messengers and Yahweh in which he says he has found favour in their eyes (19.19), which itself reflects Abraham's plea to the three men not to pass him by if he has found favour in their eyes (18.3). In both stories the verb חיה ("to live," or "to preserve")

God remembers (זכר) Noah (8.1), just as he remembers (זכר) Abraham here. A more exact

parallel, as Wenham notes, would have been "God remembered Lot," for Noah and Lot are the

men saved from the destruction.[66] The substitution of Abraham's name for Lot's, however,

highlights Lot's deliverance through his association with Abraham.

Genesis 19.4-11: Hospitality and Hostility (Hostipitality)

Taking into consideration the preceding arguments helps analyze the so-called hospitality

scene more thoroughly. The episode begins with Lot bringing the messengers inside his house

(19.3) and ends with the messengers saving Lot by bringing him safely back inside the house

(19.11). It is framed by the arrival of the messengers at the city gate (19.1-2) and the messengers

warning Lot of the impending destruction and forcing him and his family outside the city (19.12-

16). The text could thus be divided into the following structure:

A- Lot greets messengers at city gate (19.1-2)

  B- Lot brings messengers into his house (19.3)

    C- Sodomites surround house (19.4-5)

      D- Lot exits house, condemns Sodomites, and offers daughters to them (19.6-8)

    C- Sodomites draw near to break door (19.9)

  B- Messengers bring Lot back inside his house and blind mob (19.10-11)

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plays a central role. Lot pleads with the messengers to save his life (19.19), while Noah is
instructed to take the animals into the ark in order to preserve their life (6.19, 20). Moreover, the
daughters' expression to "preserve the seed" of their father (combining חיה with זרע) (19.32, 34)
alludes to the separate set of divine instructions to Noah in 7.3 in which the bringing of the
animals into the ark will "preserve their seed" upon the face of the earth (another combination of
חיה with זרע) (7.3). For further analysis and comparison, see Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*
(Word Biblical Commentary 2; Waco: Word, 1994), 40-5.

   [66] Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 59.

A- Messengers warn Lot of destruction and bring him and his family outside city (19.12-16)

The chiasm shows movement from outside the city, to inside Lot's house to back outside the city again. The centre of the pericope revolves around Lot's house, particularly Lot's offer to bring his daughters outside his house to the Sodomite mob (19.6-8), which is itself framed by two reports of the Sodomites outside the house desiring to come in 19.4-5 and 19.9.

It is in the central scene in 19.6-8 that the issues of *hostipitality* (hostility and hospitality) come to the forefront, as the intimacy of the home and the responsibilities of hospitality are combined with hostility and sexuality—all revolving around issues of honour and shame. Lot, the character who moves in and out of the house (from דלת to פתח), is left with the dilemma of how to appease the mob while also protecting his guests. His solution is to offer his daughters to the Sodomite mob, prioritizing the importance of his guests.

Scholars like Vawter are quick to point out that modern readers should not anachronistically impose their morals upon the text:

> The spectacle of a father offering his virgin daughters to the will and pleasure of a mob
> that was seeking to despoil his household would not have seemed as shocking to the
> ancient sense of proprieties as it may seem to us.[67]

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[67] Vawter, *On Genesis*, 235-36. Vawter continues his overall assessment of Lot's character: "In all the stories about him the soundness of Lot's judgment is never the point at issue…He is a good and not a bad man, but neither is a he a hero in any way."
Skinner expresses a similar assessment of the matter:
> Lot's readiness to sacrifice the honour of his daughters, though abhorrent to Hebrew
> morality…shows him as a courageous champion of the obligations of hospitality in a
> situation of extreme embarrassment, and is recorded to his credit (*Genesis*, 307).
Westermann asserts that Lot's offer of his daughters is done so as to prevent a worse evil according to the ancient Israelite way of understanding, and that "one should neither explain it away…nor condemn it by our standards" (*Genesis 12-36*, 302). Thus, while scholars like Vawter and Skinner take historical context into account in order to offer a positive interpretation of Lot, Westermann takes historical context into account in order to remain agnostic on any moral interpretation whatsoever.

Ancient proprieties, for one, involve the patriarchal ideology in which the honour of men is prioritized above women. In this case, it also involves the high value placed upon hospitality, the social demand that one be a good host. Still, as Rashkow asserts, it is odd that many commentators are so quick to defend Lot's actions.[68] "Why," she asks, "instead of condemning the offer," do these scholars immediately point to "the 'mitigating circumstances,' the demands of 'hospitality' that excuse his behavior?"[69] My purpose here, however, is not to analyze the reasons for why scholars might feel inclined to defend (or accuse) Lot. Instead, I focus on how the narrator too suggests a condemnation, or at least ironic reversal, of Lot's offer by having the daughters subsequently seduce and exploit Lot. Thus, an act that seeks to secure the honour of his guests and thus the honour of himself will lead to the loss of Lot's social manhood. In a striking symbol of patriarchal ideology to define women solely by their sexual (or reproductive) purposes, Lot offers his virgin daughters to the mob—but by the end of the story, it is Lot himself who will be used solely for the purposes of his "seed," being denied any agency or even consciousness of the deed. What occurs in the cave is the climax of earlier events like this scene—a scene which leaves readers with a number of intriguing questions. What exactly do the Sodomites mean in their demand "to know" the messengers? How does Lot interpret their request and why does he offer his daughters to the mob instead? Why do the Sodomites reject this offer and what is the logic behind their declaration that Lot is unable to act the judge as he is a sojourner?

After they have surrounded his house the Sodomites call out to Lot: "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them" (19.5). Lot then exits

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[68] See Rashkow, "Daddy-Dearest," 105-6.
[69] Rashkow, "Daddy-Dearest," 105.

out of his house and responds: "Please do not, my brothers, act so wickedly. Behold now, I have two daughters who have not known a man; I will bring them out to you now, and do unto them as is good in your eyes; only unto these men do not do a thing, for they have come under the shadow of my roof" (19.7-8).

The root ידע "know" plays an important role in chs. 18-19. In 18.19 Yahweh decides to reveal to Abraham what he plans to do to Sodom, reasoning to himself that he has "known" Abraham (a reference to Abraham's divine election). In 18.21, Yahweh is again the subject of the verb as he explains that he is going down to Sodom in order to see and "know" if the outcry of Sodom is as great as it suggests. This creates a contrast between Abraham, as one who is known, with the unknown state of Sodom and Gomorrah, places of exceedingly grievous sin (18.20). There is also an ironic note in the Sodomites' demand to know the messengers in 19.5, for the very purpose of the messengers is to "know" (the wickedness of) the Sodomites. Whereas Yahweh and the messengers seek to be the subjective knowers, the Sodomites arrogantly wish to take this position (the fact that Abraham is the passive recipient of Yahweh's knowledge further contrasts righteous Abraham to the wicked Sodomites). Lot's response in 19.7-8 plays with the root again, bringing to the foreground the sexual connotations of ידע. Brian Doyle, among others, asserts that Lot misinterprets the Sodomites' demand "to know" the guests by assuming that their request is sexual in nature.[70] He assumes the Sodomites merely wanted "to test" or "to interrogate" the guests in order to see if they posed a threat to the city (this would also explain

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[70] See Brian Doyle, "The Sin of Sodom: *yada', yada', yada'*? A Reading of the Mamre-Sodom Narrative in Genesis 18-19." *Theology and Sexuality* 9 (1998): 84-100; Scott Morschauser, "'Hospitality', Hostiles and Hostages: On the Legal Background to Genesis 19.1-9," *JSOT* 27.4 (2003): 461-85; Ron Pirson, "Does Lot Know about *Yada'*?" in *Universalism and Particularism at Sodom and Gomorrah: Essays in Memory of Ron Pirson* (ed. Diana Lipton; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 203-13.

why they reject his offer). I do not share this interpretation, however, as the parallel use of ידע "to know" in 19.5 and 19.8 clearly plays with the sexual connotations of the word. The sexual connotation of ידע is also at play in its repeated use in vv.33-35 in which Lot does not "know" that he is sleeping with his daughters (see more below).

Nevertheless, it is clear that there is something more going on in Lot's interaction with the Sodomite mob than simply uncontrollable sexual lust. By wishing "to know" the messengers, the Sodomite mob is attempting to assert power over them. The Sodomites wish to be the knowers and thus make the messengers known objects.[71] In Gen 14 the Sodomites are depicted

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[71] Ken Stone offers a map of this network of assumptions concerning gender and male-male sexuality:

> Of the two men associated with homosexual intercourse, one of the men assumes a role that is, culturally speaking, allotted to the female gender alone. Stated another way, one male takes on the role of sexual object rather than sexual subject. Because the man who allows himself to be acted upon sexually shows himself to be the object of another man, he is "feminized." This man is without honor because he is, in a sense, no longer considered a man ("Gender and Homosexuality in Judges 19: Subject-Honor, Object-Shame?" *JSOT* 67 [1995]: 87-107 [96]).

Stone's observations touch upon the continued debate surrounding homosexuality in this text and the several queer readings of the story that have been offered in recent years. For one, as several scholars observe, the term "homosexuality" is not an appropriate term to use in this context, as the Sodomites misdeeds are gang rape and inhospitality. To interpret the Sodomites' sin as homosexuality is to confuse rape with consensual homoeroticism and same-sex love (such interpretations are also typically combined with exonerating Lot and his offering of his daughters). In other words, the sin of the Sodomites is not "sodomy" (at least how the term is used in reference to sexuality). For a summary and critique of these interpretations see Michael Carden, "Genesis/Bereshit," in *The Queer Bible Commentary* (eds. Deryn Guest, Robert E. Goss, Mona West, and Thomas Bohache; London: SCM Press, 2006), 21-61 (36-9). For an analysis of the mythical life and origin of the term "sodomy," see Mark D. Jordan, *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994); Jonathan Goldberg, *Reclaiming Sodom* (New York: Routledge, 1994). Finally, for an engrossing anthology of Sodom texts (ranging from literary works of authors such as Proust, Sade, Dostoyevsky, and Milton to court cases, magazine articles, and newspaper clippings) with an autobiographical essay of the author's experience with "sodomy" (presented as search for, and journey around, the city of Sodom), see Paul Hallam, *The Book of Sodom* (London and New York: Verso, 1993).

It should also be noted that female homosexuality is not mentioned at all in this text, a silence which is quite consistent with the assumptions about sex and gender in the Hebrew Bible as a whole (see Stone, "Gender and Homosexuality," 98). In light of such observations, Michael

as being in a state of war, and so beyond (in)hospitality the Sodomites may be concerned about the threat the messengers pose to the city. And this is not without warrant either. Like the Israelite spies in Jericho (Josh 2, see also Num 13), the messengers penetrate into the heart of the city with destruction on their minds.

So, on the one hand, Lot conforms to the expected norms of hospitality and attempts to protect and preserve the honour of his guests.[72] The Sodomites, however, are quick to point out that Lot is a foreigner, a guest. They assert that he has only come to sojourn (גור) in the city and does not, therefore, have the power to act as one that has citizenship rights. From the Sodomites' perspective, it is Lot who has failed to obey the hospitality customs of their city, for as a sojourner he has usurped privileges to which he has no claim.[73]

Carden has argued that one should refrain from using terms such as homosexual rape or homosexuality in connection to texts like Gen 19, and should instead use terms like male rape or male sexuality. For Carden, whose goal is to detoxify Gen 19 as a queer text of terror, the only truly homosexual issue in evidence in these stories is homophobia. See Michael Carden, "Homophobia and Rape in Sodom and Gibeah: A Response to Ken Stone," *JSOT* 82 (1999): 83-96; "Remembering Pelotit: A Queer Midrash on Calling Down Fire," in *Queer Commentary and the Hebrew Bible* (ed. Ken Stone; Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 152-68.

[72] See Victor Matthews, "Hospitality and Hostility in Genesis 19 and Judges 19," *BTB* 22.1 (1992): 3-11; Julian Pitt-Rivers, *The Fate of Shechem or the Politics of Sex* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 94-112.

[73] See Matthews, "Hospitality and Hostility," 6 (but compare with Scott Morschauser, "'Hospitality', Hostiles and Hostages: On the Legal Background to Genesis 19.1-9," *JSOT* 27.4 [2003]: 461-85 [474-82]). This adds to the importance of Lot meeting the messengers at the gate of Sodom. The city gate represents the passageway into the city, and Lot, as a foreigner, has been allowed permission to enter through it—but then Lot, through his own authority, has now let other foreigners through the gate.

Lot's role in allowing entry into the city displays his connection to Rahab. Lot and Rahab both receive messengers intent on destroying the city, both provide hospitality to these messengers, and both are saved form the eventual destruction. The stories, accordingly, display a number of thematic and linguistic parallels with references to men of the city, knowing and not knowing, commands to flee to the hills, and the demonstration of mercy. Lot meets the messengers at the open place (רחוב) of Sodom, which recalls Rahab's name (רחב) (also symbolizing her status as a "prostitute") and reveals both characters function as people who open the way to destruction of the city. An important difference to note, however, is that the traits of the characters are reversed. The Israelite spies in Josh 2 reflect Lot's passivity and fluctuation

Through the offer of his daughters, Lot's logic seems to be that it is better to hand over his daughters, who are at least proper sexual objects, instead of his guests, who are supposed to be sexual subjects, and, moreover, the recipients of his hospitality.[74] The Sodomites, of course, are not satisfied with this offer, as knowing Lot's daughters would only be a humiliation of Lot and not the messengers. Lot's presumptuousness only angers them further, and so while Lot has accused them of acting wickedly (רעע) (19.6) they flip this around and assert they will act even more wickedly (רעע) with Lot than with the messengers (19.9).[75]

What neither the Sodomites nor Lot know is that these messengers are not merely men but men of God. They are divine beings who earlier in the narration are (somewhat) equated with God (e.g. Gen 18.1-3). The implications of wanting to "know" divine men add to the Sodomites negative portrayal. This plays with the theme throughout the primeval history in Gen 1-11 in which the divine is that which cannot and should not be known by humans (e.g. Gen 3.22; 11.6)

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while Rahab reflects the messengers' initiative and urgency. For further discussion, see Daniel L. Hawk, "Strange Houseguests: Rahab, Lot and the Dynamics of Deliverance," in *Reading Between Texts: Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible* (ed. Dana Fewell. Louisville: Westminster/John Know Press, 1992), 89-97.

[74] See Stone, "Gender and Homosexuality in Judges 19," 95-7.

[75] It is significant that this is what ultimately prompts the Sodomites to break down the door (דלת) of Lot's house. This would be a poetic punishment (from the Sodomites' point of view) of Lot's unwarranted allowance of the messengers into his house.

There is a crux here, however, that many commentators have pointed out; namely, why do the Sodomites tell Lot to "stand back" (גש־הלאה) if they intend to do him harm (19.9)? I follow the minority position that the Hebrew here is best translated as "come closer/near, and then some more." My translation follows the argument made by Christopher Heard in his persuasive article, "What Does the Mob Want Lot to do in Genesis 19:9?" *Hebrew Studies* 51 (2010): 95-105. The difficulty in the translation involves several syntactical and contextual issues. The verb נגש implies a drawing near or approaching, but the adverb הלאה is typically understood as implying "yonder" or "out there." The problem then is that the two words seem to mean different things; does the mob want Lot to come closer or move out of the way? Heard contends that the typical understanding of הלאה obscures its more basic meaning of continued movement along a trajectory defined by the previous word(s). In this case then, the mob wants Lot to "move closer, and then some more," or to "move really close." This translation also appears to fit more nicely with the immediate context in which the mob wants to do harm to Lot.

and the related concern of the mixing of the divine and human, heaven and earth (e.g. Gen 6.1-4). Lot's offer of his daughters, unbeknownst to him, attempts to turn the focus of the human men away from men of God back to appropriate objects: the daughters of a man (human women).

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

Despite the fact that Lot's offer of his daughters is an attempt to take seriously the demands of hospitality and that it is an (unknown) attempt to avoid the mixing of the human and divine taboo, it still contributes to his flawed and ambiguous characterization. This is foreshadowed in his earlier decision to move to Sodom in the first place and his constant movements from place to place, house to house. By offering his daughters Lot creates a complex triangular quandary in regard to his relationship to the Sodomites (into whose gates he has entered as a sojourner), the messengers (whom he has allowed to enter into his home), and the daughters themselves (who are under his care and responsibility). In this hospitality scene, the portrayal of Lot as a flawed character is thus combined with the beginning of his characterization as a flawed father. This issue becomes the focal point of the final, climactic scene of the Lot story to which we now turn our attention.

Lot and His Daughters: From the Father

Gen 19.30-38 is not "tenuously connected to the preceding narrative," as Vawter asserts;[76] it is a fitting, climactic ending for the Lot story, as it contains a series of dramatic reversals, connections, and conclusions. For instance, the motif of the continuation of the family line, so prevalent in the Abraham cycle, deeply connects these verses with what precedes (and

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[76] Vawter, *On Genesis*, 242.

follows). A series of linguistic connections, exemplified by the use of ידע "to know," also ties these last verses to the rest of the Lot story. The birth of Moab and Ammon (eponymous ancestors of the Moabites and Ammonites) is not just nasty lore about the incestuous origins of Israel's close neighbours. These peoples are remembered as relatives, as part of the ancestral beginnings of Israel. This connection, despite the divide between the two peoples, functions as a nice analogy to how 19.30-38 relates to the narrative surrounding it.

The passage begins with a change of setting as well as character development. The scene is now back outside of Sodom, and Lot, the protagonist of 19.1-29, is left entirely voiceless while his daughters speak and dictate the action. There is also a certain sense of closure to 19.29, as the structure of the Sodom-Gomorrah episode is framed by the looking down (שׁקף) of Abraham's divine visitors in 18.16 and Abraham's looking down (שׁקף) in 19.28. Accordingly, 19.29 reads like a summary of the entire episode, reminding the reader of the importance of Abraham even here.[77] In some ways, this would be an appropriate conclusion not only to the Sodom-Gomorrah episode but also to the Lot story as a whole. The wicked have been justly punished, and righteous Abraham looks down upon their cremated remains. Lot is saved because of his

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[77] Wenham divides the Sodom-Gomorrah episode palistrophically, with 19.29 as a summary statement (*Genesis 16-50*, 43):
 1 Abraham's visitors look toward Sodom (18.16)
  2 Divine reflections on Abraham and Sodom (18.17-21)
   3 Abraham pleads for Sodom (18.22-33)
    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
     8 Departure from Sodom (19.15-16)
     9 Lot pleads for Zoar (19.17-22)
  10 Sodom and Gomorrah destroyed (19.23-26)
 11Abraham looks toward Sodom (19.27-28)
Summary (19.29)

association with Abraham, and since he has already been delivered and fled the city there does not seem to be anything left to be said about him. From Abraham's view in 19.29 the text would then transition smoothly into his sojourn into Gerar (ch. 20).

The narrative, however, does not do this—that would have been, as I assert above, too tidy and easy. True to form, the Lot story offers us another example of the return of the repressed. There are implications, for example, regarding the crucial dialogue between Abraham and Yahweh in the latter half of ch.18 (vv. 16-33) concerning the fate of Sodom, righteousness and wickedness, and the issue of just judgment. After learning of Yahweh's plan to destroy Sodom if it is as evil as the outcry suggests, Abraham questions how fair this punishment would be:

> Will you really wipe out the righteous with the wicked?…Far be it from you to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked. Far be it from you! Shall not the judge of all the earth do justice? (18.23-25)

Following this speech, Abraham succeeds in getting Yahweh to agree to a remnant of ten righteous being sufficient to save the whole city. Abraham implicitly assumes that the inhabitants of Sodom belong to one of two mutually exclusive groups: the righteous or the wicked. Imposing this logic on Gen 19, however, creates difficulties, foremost among them being the futility of assigning Lot to one category or the other.[78] Lot cannot be purely aligned with the evil Sodomites, but also does not appear to be righteous enough on his own accord to warrant deliverance. His rescue points to a possible fissure in Yahweh's logic of fair punishment and grace, as he evaluates the Sodomites because of their wickedness but then apparently brackets

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[78] See L.A. Turner, "Lot as Jekyll and Hyde: A Reading of Genesis 18-19," in *The Bible in Three Dimensions* (eds. David J.A. Clines, Stephen E. Fowl, and Stanley E. Porter; JSOTSup 87; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 85-101 (99-101).

this in his mercy shown to Lot. This fissure is accentuated in vv. 30-38 as Lot and his daughters appear to resort back to the type of morally complex behavior that evades any superficial analysis. The implication is that Lot is saved only to show that the repressed inevitably returns—even after incineration and petrification.[79] The Moabites and the Ammonites, accordingly, become a distorted representation of Israel's self. Their ancestors, Moab and Ammon, were born against the odds—including the obstacle of an old father, just like Isaac. If the epilogue in 19.30-38 is meant to be read slightly apart from the Lot-saga proper, then it reads like a post-script or codicil that modifies and colours the rest of the story. It simultaneously brings together the strands of the plot and unties them.

Analysis

> And Lot went up out of Zoar, and dwelt in the mountains, and his two daughters with
> him; for he feared to dwell in Zoar; and he dwelt in the cave, he and his two daughters
> (19.30).

In this verse the verb יָשַׁב, with the basic meaning of "dwell," is used three times; its repetition again draws attention to Lot's movements throughout his story and then focuses in on his final

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[79] See Robert Polhemus, *Lot's Daughters: Sex, Redemption, and Women's Quest for Authority* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 8-9.
    If one were to think in terms of balancing, then it could be said that Gen 19, particularly vv.30-38, may be seen as a critique of the "conventional theology" reflected in 18.22-33, namely, the assumption that all people can be classified as either righteous or wicked. See, Turner, "Lot as Jekyll and Hyde," 99-101. Another possibility is that 18.22-33 forms a critique of the retributive theology of ch.19, namely, the assumption that the righteous and the wicked are always blessed or punished fairly and justly. See Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis* (Interpretation; Louisville: John Know Press, 1982), 167ff. The text actually seems to hold both interpretations in tension, with retributive and conventional theology balancing each other out. For further exploration of this balancing of tension see Ehud Ben Zvi, ""The Dialogue Between Abraham and YHWH in Gen 18:23-32: A Historical-Critical Analysis." *JSOT* 53 (1992): 27-46.

abode. In the context of ch.19, the verse refers back to Lot's sitting (יֹשֵׁב) at the city gate in 19.1, which itself echoes Abraham's sitting (יֹשֵׁב) at the entrance of his tent in 18.1. The different dwelling sites for Abraham and Lot reaches back to ch.13, where יֹשֵׁב functions as a *Leitwort*. The land cannot support Abraham and Lot dwelling together (13.6), and so they separate— Abraham dwells in Canaan and Lot dwells in the cities of the plain (13.12). One implication of this repetition of יֹשֵׁב in 19.30 then is that it highlights Lot's separation from Abraham. This is further underscored in the verse's connection to 19.29, in which it is stated that since Yahweh remembered Abraham he sent Lot "out of the midst of the overthrow, when he [Yahweh] overthrew the cities in which Lot dwelt (יֹשֵׁב)."

Since the verse reminds the reader of Lot's constant movements, it also alludes to his flawed and ambiguous characterization. I have already commented upon the irony that Lot leaves Zoar (the place which he had just pleaded to save) only to end up in the mountains (the place which he had asserted earlier he could not stay). The interpretation that Lot is finally fulfilling the original order of the messengers to flee to the mountains (19.17) would be possible, were it not for the explicit note that his motivation for leaving Zoar is that he is afraid (ירא) of the place. In fact, Lot's fear probably accentuates the negative aspect of his characterization, as the messengers/Yahweh had stated that they would not overthrow Zoar in 19.21. Does he not trust the divine guarantee? Sarah's denial of her laughter in 18.15 is also motivated by fear (ירא), and might reflect a similar mistrust in divine promise.

More specifically, the text informs us that Lot settled in a cave in the mountains.[80] Caves are not typically understood as a noteworthy biblical symbol,[81] but in exploring some of the imagery and motifs associated with them I hope to show how appropriate the cave is as a final dwelling place for Lot (and his daughters).

One of the main functions of caves in the Hebrew Bible is to offer a place of refuge and security. Thus, when David is fleeing from Saul he frequently hides in caves (1 Sam 22.1-2; 24; Ps 57.1). Other prominent examples include: Obadiah hiding a hundred prophets in two caves in order to escape the wrath of Jezebel (1 Kgs 8.4, 13); Elijah similarly hiding from Jezebel in a cave (1 Kgs 19.9); and the Israelites hiding in caves and dens in the mountains because of the oppression of the Midianites (Judg 6.2). Certainly this function of the cave plays a part in Gen 19.30, as Lot settles here due to his fear of living in Zoar. Having just fled from a place of mass destruction, the embers from the still burning cities (at least in their minds) might cast baleful shadows on the wall of the cave.

The death and annihilation that lead up to this final scene point to the connection between Lot's cave and the cave of Machpelah (see Gen 23; 25.9; 49.29-32; 50.13). Almost all the patriarchs and matriarchs in Genesis are buried here: Sarah, Abraham, Isaac, Rebekah, Leah, and

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[80] The presence of the definite article ("the cave") perhaps signifies a cave that the author expected his audience to know, "the cave," or even "that cave" (see Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 313). Another possibility is that the article highlights the symbolic status of caves—the cave of mythology, the cave of dreams.

[81] The brief entry on caves in the Dictionary of Biblical Imagery serves as an example of this. See Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III (eds.), *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1998), 135. There is no entry for caves in general in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, though there is a brief article on the Cave of Machpelah. A brief conversation on the symbolic importance of the cave in this episode is found in Letellier, *Day in Mamre, Night in Sodom*, 232-33.

Jacob.[82] It is also the only piece of land that Abraham ever owns. Machpelah symbolizes, so von

Rad, that the patriarchs (and matriarchs) were no longer strangers or sojourners in death, for, "a

very small part of the Promised Land—the grave—belonged to them."[83] I do not wish, however,

to delve into the many issues surrounding Abraham's purchase of the cave of Machpelah.[84] My

purpose here is to focus on the possible connections between the cave of Machpelah and Lot's

cave—the only caves mentioned in Genesis—and the related connection between the cave and

the grave. In some ways, Lot's cave and the cave of Machpelah are uncanny images of each

other. Death lurks outside Lot's cave, as he flees there presumably to find shelter and refuge; it is

a dwelling place for survivors of a catastrophe. The cave of Machpelah is a resting place for the

dead. Although they might serve different purposes, in both instances there is an underlying

concern with mortality and posterity. Despite Lot's old age and the death that lurks outside,

progeny will come out of the cave in Gen 19.30. The cave of Machpelah, first a necessary

purchase for the practical purpose of burying Sarah, will become a hereditary burial site. That is,

this burial site actually becomes a memorial symbolizing the continuation of Abraham's line, a

place of the dead that also symbolizes generation and perpetuation.

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[82] For the curious exclusion of Rachel (and Joseph) from the list see Benjamin Cox and Susan Ackerman, "Rachel's Tomb," *JBL* 128.1 (2009): 135-48.

[83] Von Rad, *Genesis*, 250.

[84] See Meir Sternberg, "Double Cave, Double Talk," in *"Not in Heaven": Coherence and Complexity in Biblical Narrative* (eds. J. P. Rossenblatt and J. C. Sitterson, Jr.; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), 28-57; Francesca Stavrakopoulou's chapter "Abraham at Machpelah," in *Land of Our Fathers: The Roles of Ancestor Venerations in Biblical Land Claims* (New York: T & T Clark, 2010), 29-53; Ehud Ben Zvi, "The Memory of Abraham in Late Persian/Early Hellenistic Yehud/Judah," in *Remembering Biblical Figures in the Late Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods: Social Memory and Imagination* (eds. Diana Edelman and Ehud Ben Zvi; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 3-37; Rhiannon Graybill and P.J. Sabo, "The Caves of the Hebrew Bible: A Speleology," *Biblical Interpretation* (forthcoming).

This is all evidence of the common interpretation of the cave as a symbol of the tomb as well as the womb. As hollow cavities under the surface of the earth, wrapped in darkness in close quarters, with an opening to the outside world, it is easy to see how caves are associated with wombs, and thus are symbols of (re)birth. Placing the dead in a cave is a way to return them to the womb. Biblically speaking, it is an example of the cycle of life, as in Job's declaration, "naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return there" (1.21).[85] Psychoanalytically speaking, it is an example of primary narcissism defined by the wish to return to a place where one is fully taken care of and protected, to return to a state of stasis and bliss.[86]

The symbol of the cave as a place between worlds, at once a womb and a tomb, reveals how fitting it is as a final dwelling for Lot.[87] At the first mention of his name, Lot stands in between the death of his father Haran and the barrenness of Sarah (see above). In his final scene, in the wake of the mass death of the cities of the plain and his wife, he dwells in a symbolic womb/tomb with his two (so far) virgin daughters. The action of Lot and his daughters in the subsequent narrative will confirm the connection that the cave has to sexuality and fertility. Indeed, the Hebrew word for cave used here, מְעָרָה, can easily be associated with several other sexually suggestive terms, such as מַעֲרָה "naked place," and other related forms of the root ערה

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[85] See also Qohelet's declaration in Ecc 5.15, "as one comes naked from his mother's womb, so he will return as he came," and Yahweh's statement to Adam in Gen. 3.19, "You are dust, and to dust you will return."

[86] See, for example, Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," *SE* 14: 237-58.

[87] The cave is an appropriate final dwelling place for Lot in terms of geography/location as well, especially in regard to the rural/urban comparison with Abraham; it is not an urban residence like his house in Sodom, but it is not a tent, like Abraham's dwelling; it is outside the city in the mountains, but again, unlike Abraham's tent, it is a sedentary abode.

"to be naked, bare."[88] The cave foreshadows the sexual acts which will soon take place there, and the subsequent births of sons.[89]

In Luce Irigaray's famous reading of Plato's allegory of the cave in book 7 of *The Republic*, she uncovers a philosophical discourse that places woman in a subordinate position by primarily and inherently devaluing the feminine in favour of the masculine.[90] Having first established that Plato's description of the cave is reminiscent of female anatomy and the womb, Irigaray proceeds to show how Plato's cave suppresses and undermines the feminine. It is a theatre of representation, a womb of simulacra and falseness—for what is seen and experienced in the cave is but a shadow or echo of the original. Truth and (true) light are only found outside the cave; the womb-cave is the place of imprisonment.

Irigaray's reading of Plato's cave may help cast some more light into Lot's cave. We might initially be inclined to think of Lot's cave as an inversion of Plato's. Whereas Plato's cave suppresses the womb-cave as a place of origin, Lot's cave seems to display the opposite, given the motifs of birth and regeneration associated with it. This difference, however, is only a surface-level one; the two caves actually share a great many similarities.

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[88] J. Cheryl Exum, "Desire Distorted and Exhibited: Lot and His Daughters" in *"A Wise and Discerning Mind": Essays in Honor of Burke O. Long* (eds. Saul Olyan and Robert Culley; Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2000): 83-108 (96). See also Ilona Rashkow, "Daddy-Dearest and the 'Invisible Spirit of Wine,'" in *A Feminist Companion to the Bible* (Second Series) (ed. Athalya Brenner; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998): 82-107 (102).

[89] Levine notes the possible pun between Lot fleeing to the mountains (הר) (19.17, 19, 30) and his daughters being with child (הרה) there (19.36) ("Sarah/Sodom," 144).

[90] See "Plato's Hystera," in Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman* (trans. Gillian C. Gill; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985); *Spéculum de l'autre femme* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1984). For an excellent analysis of Irigaray's reading of Plato's cave see Kristi L. Krumnow, "Womb as Synecdoche: Introduction to Irigaray's Deconstruction of Plato's Cave," *Intertexts* 13.1-2 (2009): 69-93.

One theme of Irigaray's reading, for instance, is that Plato's allegory of the cave is an example of the unconscious wish of patriarchy for fathers to be able to produce offspring (that is, sons) on their own; it privileges paternal birthing over and above maternal birthing (in fact, it erases all memory of the role of the mother).[91] Only the Father/Sun/Idea can produce that which is authentic or real; the mother/cave can only produce copies of reality. To be born (again) into the realm of Truth, man must extract himself from the chains of the material, which shackles him to the inferior copies of the original for which he strives.[92] In other words, man must entirely erase the memory of the mother/cave. Whitford explains: "Truth becomes linked to the paternal metaphor, the Idea/Father engendering copies and reflections without apparent need for the other partner normally required in processes of reproduction."[93]

Lot's cave could be interpreted in a similar way. For even though Lot's wife, the mother, is ossified somewhere in between the cave and Sodom, it is in the cave that she is finally buried and erased. In the cave, Lot and his daughters reproduce without the mother, somewhat like Zeus's begetting of Athena (after Zeus had swallowed Metis). And yet, the maternal reproductive function is not entirely erased (as in Plato's cave); instead, the daughters replace the mother. From a strictly Freudian perspective, this would be an only slightly varied version of what all daughters do anyway. Kelso summarizes Freud's position: "Freud makes explicit, the mother-daughter tie must be severed so that woman can enter into desire for the man-father, to take the place of the mother while never having a relationship with her in that place, *ensuring the repetition of the social order*."[94] The biblical narrative mirrors this ideology: Lot's cave is a

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[91] See Irigaray, *Speculum*, 315-16 and 343-4.
[92] See Julie Kelso, *O Mother Where Art Thou?* 29-31 (30).
[93] M. Whitford (ed.), *The Irigaray Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 110.
[94] Kelso, *O Mother Where Art Thou?* 62.

reminder that mother and daughter cannot share the same place together in a symbolic order that only values the maternal function of woman.

<div align="center">***</div>

> And the first-born said to the younger: "Our father is old, and there is not a man in the earth to come into us as is the way of all the earth. Come, let us make our father drink wine, and let us lie with him, that we may preserve the seed of our father" (19.31-32).

Only the elder daughter speaks in these verses; she concocts the plan and it is to her point of view that we are drawn. According to Talia Sutskover, this is a sign that it is the first-born daughter who is to be held primarily responsible for Lot's rape and that the younger, since she needed to be persuaded (seemingly twice), is the more innocent of the two.[95] If this is the case, so Sutskover, then Lot's daughters diverge from the common pattern in Genesis which focuses on the younger sibling and his or her theological precedence. This may play a part, but it should be noted that the younger daughter shows no obvious resistance to the elder's plan and the fact that the elder daughter had to repeat her plan to the younger probably serves other purposes. It creates a sense of rhythm and repetition to the passage, as a plan is made in one verse (vv.32, 34) and then the execution of that plan is recorded in the following verse with almost verbatim repetition (vv.33, 35). The daughters do not act on the same night, but on successive nights, as if to draw out the process—rather dreamlike. The motif of doubles should not be overlooked as well; the doubling of the sentences is reflected in the two daughters (who are linked to the two messengers) and their two sons.

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[95] Sutskover, "Lot and His Daughters," 10. That the elder daughter becomes the ancestress of Moab may be an additional reason for this. While the Moabites and Ammonites are often a Transjordan pair in the Hebrew Bible, the former will play a larger role both in terms of frequency and symbolic importance.

The first declaration of the elder daughter focuses on the age of her father. The remark is somewhat obscure. Does the elder daughter think that because her father is old (זָקֵן) he ought to be looking for a husband for his daughters (cf. Gen 24.1), or that because of his age he might soon be incapable of sexual intercourse and reproduction?[96] The answer to these questions largely depends upon how one interprets the equally ambiguous phrase "there is not a man in all the earth." Does this actually mean that there are no men left in the entire world, or that there are no men left in this area/land? Both interpretations, however, are problematic due to the fact that Lot and his daughters had just departed from the nearby town of Zoar—and presumably there were some men in Zoar.

A key intertext to help understand 19.31-32 is Sarah's reaction to the divine promise of a son in 18.11-13:

> Now Abraham and Sarah were old (זָקֵן), advanced in age; the way of women had ceased to be with Sarah. And Sarah laughed to herself, saying: "After I have become withered, shall I have pleasure, my lord [husband] being so old (זָקֵן) also?" And Yahweh said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old (זָקֵן)?'"

The root זקן "old" is used three times in these verses, underscoring the miraculous circumstances that would need to take place for Sarah and Abraham to produce a child. The significance of this connection to 19.31 is that it again displays Lot as a foil to Abraham. Lot, like Abraham, will produce children in his old age, but his procreative actions will not have the divine authorization and miraculous undertones that the birth of Isaac will have. (It should be remembered, however,

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[96] See Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 61.

that at this point in the narrative Isaac has not yet been born, and thus Moab and Ammon, despite their dubious origins, could be yet another painful reminder of Abraham and Sarah's barrenness.)

Given the link between 18.11-13 and 19.31-32, the elder daughter's remark on Lot's old age is probably a reference to her father's sexual virility (or lack thereof). This is enforced by the connection between Sarah ceasing to be with "the way (ארח) of women" (18.11) and the daughters having no man to come upon them "as is the way (דרך) of all the earth" (19.31). While the words for "way" are different in each passage, they are essentially synonymous.[97] The "way of women" refers to Sarah's menopausal state, while the elder daughter complains that there are no more men to provide seed for them. The two expressions, therefore, refer to the reproductive capabilities of men and women respectively. There is an implicit comparison between Lot and Sarah, which results in the feminizing of Lot. That is, just as how Sarah is old and does not have the way of women, so Lot is old and thus might soon be incapable of coming upon them, as is the "way of men."[98] Indeed, the elder daughter's precise diction is that "there is no man" (אישׁ אין) to come upon them, as if to suggest that Lot will suffice, though he is not really a man.

Lot will suffice because, while he is not the active knower, he still has "seed" (זרע). Thus, the daughters' expressed motivation to "preserve the seed of the father." The term זרע "seed" is used throughout Gen 11-19, generally in regard to God's promises to Abraham (e.g., Gen 12.7; 13.15-16; 15.5; 16.10; 17.7ff.). The word is semantically rich, and may refer to both "offspring"

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[97] Rachel will, in fact, use דרך to describe "the way of women" in Gen 31.35.

[98] The use of דרך also echoes Lot's instructions to the messengers to stay at his house and then go on their way (דרך) in the morning. A more significant allusion, however, can be found in 18.19 in which the deity says Abraham will teach his children the way (דרך) of Yahweh. This perhaps suggests that Lot is a character who has lost his way, and is not really part of the chosen line that knows the way.

and "semen."[99] In 19.32 it most obviously carries the former meaning—to the daughters'

"desire" to continue the family lineage. The connotation of "semen," however, is certainly

present as well—this is what Lot can still provide even in his drunkenness. The twist though is

that the father's seed is preserved through no action of his own, but through the action of his

daughters. Lot is the passive object, possessed and exploited for his seed.

The expression "to preserve the seed," which combines the *piel* of חיה with זרע, is yet

another connection to the flood account, in which Noah is instructed to bring animals into the ark

in order to "preserve their seed" upon the face of the earth (another combination of the *piel* of חיה

with זרע) (7.3). The motif present in both stories is the creation and preservation of life after

destruction. This helps explain the ambiguous, "there is not a man in all the earth," as it

highlights the severity of the destruction and points to the desperate circumstances of the

survivors.

The other thematic connections between this passage and the Noah story are alcohol,

drunkenness, and a humiliating action of a child or children against the father. Alcohol, like

sexuality, is a symbol both of civilization and civilization's depravity. When Noah and Lot drink

wine after their respective catastrophes it is a sign that civilization will continue; their abuse of

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[99] The basic meaning of the noun refers to the seeds of plants, but this occurs less frequently than these "metaphorical" meanings (though to what extent "semen" and "offspring" are understood as metaphorical is not clear—the LXX usually renders the noun σπέρμα, "*spérma*"). The word plays an important part in the Primeval history of Genesis (chs.1-11) and occurs at key points in the story of the patriarchs as well (as is the case here). Since the word refers to male seed or offspring it is used to describe kinship relations between a father and his biological descendants. There are, however, three cases in the Hebrew Bible in which a woman's offspring is referred to as her "seed" (זרע): Eve's collective offspring in Gen 3.15, Hagar's offspring in Gen 16.10, and Rebekah's offspring in Gen 26.40. Without the text explicitly saying so, Moab and Ammon might also be thought of as the "offspring" of Lot's daughters (even though they were obviously created by Lot's "seed"). See H.D. Preuss, "זרע" *TDOT* 4:143-62 (esp. 150-54).

alcohol is a sign that humanity will continue to be corrupt in some sense (or at least allows for the possibility of corruption, since drunkenness is not a sin in the Hebrew Bible). Drunkenness also serves another (more important) purpose in both texts: it deprives one of knowledge. In Lot's case this seems to be permanent, while for Noah it is temporary.

I will speak further on Noah, Lot, and the motif of knowledge below, for now I would like to focus on the connection between Ham's seeing of his father's nakedness and the seduction of Lot's daughters. What exactly is the nature of Ham's crime? It has been interpreted as an act of voyeurism,[100] castration,[101] paternal incest,[102] or maternal incest.[103] The passage (Gen 9.20-29) is full of semantically fraught expressions (e.g., "to see nakedness" and "to uncover nakedness") and hints of sexual transgression; it leaves the reader with a number of questions beyond the ambiguity of Ham's offense. What was Ham's rationale, if any, for looking at Noah's nakedness? Why does Noah curse Canaan, Ham's son, instead of Ham, the one who committed the offense against him? Why does Ham go to tell his brothers that he saw Noah's

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[100] See, for example, Brad Embry, "The 'Naked Narrative' from Noah to Leviticus: Reassessing Voyeurism in the Account of Noah's Nakedness in Genesis 9.22-24," *JSOT* 35.4 (2011); 417-33; Victor Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmands, 1990), 322-3; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 198-201; Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 484-88.

[101] This is the traditional rabbinic view. See Albert Baumgarten, "Myth and Midrash: Genesis 9: 20-29," in *Christianity, Judaism, and Other Greco-Roman Cults: Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty* (ed. Jacob Neusner et. al; 4 Vols; Leiden: Brill, 1975), 3:55-71; Robert Graves and Raphael Patai, *Hebrew Myths: The Book of Genesis* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 121-22.

[102] Robert A.J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 63-71; Seth Daniel Kunin, *The Logic of Incest*, 173-4; Martti Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 53; Deborah Steinmetz, "Vineyard, Farm, and Garden: The Drunkenness of Noah in the Context of Primeval History," *JBL* 113 (1994): 193-207.

[103] Frederick W. Bassett, "Noah's Nakedness and the Curse of Canaan: A Case of Incest?" *VT* 21 (1971): 232-37; John Bergsma and Scott Hahn, "Noah's Nakedness and the Curse on Canaan," *JBL* 124 (2005): 25-40; Corrine E. Blackner, "No Name Woman: Noah's Wife and Heterosexual Incestuous Relations in Genesis 9:18-29," *Judaica Ukrainica* I (2012): 29-46.

nakedness? Why does Ham merely looking at his father's nakedness cause such a serious reaction from Noah? I will not attempt to answer these questions so much as I will seek to elucidate how they relate to the comparison of Ham and Lot's daughters.[104]

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[104] Answers to these questions have been offered by each interpretive option. Of course, it is beyond my scope to provide an extensive analysis of each position; this would entail not only a thorough exploration of Gen. 9.20-29, but also a study of its relation to a number of intertexts, particularly Lev.18-20, Gen. 6.1-4, Gen. 2-3, and, of course, Gen. 19.30-38. It is worthwhile, however, to briefly mention some of the strengths and weaknesses of each interpretation.

The greatest strength of the voyeurism interpretation is its conservatism. It does not have to resort to anything beyond the "natural" or most obvious meaning of the text. The Hebrew Bible does not shy away from reporting sexual misconduct, as is obvious in the case of Lot and his daughters, so why would it attempt to cover up something more than Ham looking at his father's nakedness? The primary criticism of this interpretation is that it does not explain why Noah curses Canaan and not Ham—or that it does not provide an adequate reason for the overall gravity of the curse.

The castration interpretation has the weight of rabbinic tradition behind it. The Babylonian Talmud, for instance, argues in *b. Sanh.* 70a that Ham either castrated or sexually abused Noah, and then concludes that both indignities were perpetrated. Both of these interpretations are attempts to address what is perceived as some of the inadequacies of the voyeuristic interpretation. For instance, in 9.24 the text records that Noah awoke and realized what Ham had "done" (עשׂה) to him; the use of this verb seems to suggest some action more substantial than passive viewing. This interpretation also helps explain the seriousness of Ham's offense, since castration would be a symbolic way for Ham to usurp his father's authority. It also offers a reason for Noah's curse of Canaan, as the curse of Ham's son would be a poetic punishment for a crime that deprived Noah of more sons. The problem with this interpretation is that it lacks any substantial textual evidence in support of it (the argument for the use of עשׂה does not lead one to automatically assume castration). Moreover, it again fails to explain why the text would refer to castration (euphemistically?) as "looking" (ראה) at another person's nakedness?

The interpretation of paternal incest carries a considerable amount of support. For one, the idiom "to see the nakedness" (ראה ערוה) of someone can be used as an expression for sexual intercourse, as it is in Lev. 20.17. This verse equates seeing somebody's nakedness to uncovering somebody's nakedness, and the idiom "to uncover the nakedness" (גלה ערוה) of someone is the typical expression for sexual intercourse in Lev.18-20. Both of these expressions are used in Gen. 9.20-29, in which Noah enters his tent and uncovers his nakedness, and then Ham sees his father's nakedness. In addition to these sexually charged idioms, the passage also contains other erotically charged undertones. The mention of wine and drunkenness, for instance, links this passage with the sexually illicit story of Lot and his daughters. Similarly, Gen. 9.20-29 could be linked chiastically with Gen. 6.1-4, in which the "sons of god" have intercourse with the "daughters of men." Thus, the flood story would be framed with two stories of sexual degradation.

Ham seeing his father's nakedness is reminiscent of all those key moments of sight in psycho-sexual development that psychoanalysis has brought to our attention. The origin of castration anxiety, for instance, occurs when the infant male first sees female genitalia, becomes aware of the differences between male and female sexual organs, and then assumes that the female once had a penis that has now been removed. The parallel reaction in regard to infant females, according to Freud, is penis envy. Both of these moments of sight typically occur in relation to the parents, when the young girl sees the nakedness of her father or the young boy the nakedness of his mother. Ham's looking is thus also evocative of the primal scene (the child's first witnessing or imagining of the sexual act of the parents), which also relates to the sight of parental nudity and child-parent sexuality. Fetishes, too, find their origin in the child's sight of the parents' naked body, this time specifically the mother's. Sexual fetishism is derived from the unconscious fear of the mother's genitals and from the assumption that the mother had a penis

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The interpretation of maternal incest shares many of the same arguments of the paternal incest hypothesis, but also diverges in important ways. The paternal incest interpretation, for instance, correctly equates the idioms "to see nakedness" and "to uncover nakedness," but could also go a step further. In Lev. 18.7-8 "the nakedness of the father" is defined as the same thing as "the nakedness of the mother." Thus, Ham's seeing of his father's nakedness could be an idiom referring, in fact, to intercourse between Ham and his mother. The significance of this connection is that it helps explain why Noah cursed Canaan (something lacking in the paternal incest interpretation), assuming that Canaan is the fruit of the mother-son intercourse. This would additionally account for why the text repeatedly refers to Ham as a "the father of Canaan" (vv.18 and 22). The mother-son incest of Gen. 9.20-29 would also create an interesting connection to the father-daughter incest of Gen. 19.30-38.

A significant problem with both incest interpretations, however, is that they have trouble explaining the actions of Shem and Japheth in 9.23. After Ham sees Noah's nakedness, he proceeds to tell his brothers of the fact. Shem and Japheth then take a garment and, walking backwards so as to avoid seeing Noah, cover their father's nakedness. All of this quite strongly suggests that seeing nakedness should be understood literally. The other major problem with the maternal incest interpretation is that it fails to explain why Noah's wife is never explicitly mentioned.

It is clear that no single interpretation is without difficulties. My own conclusion is that the best choices are the voyeuristic and maternal incest ones, though I also think it best to leave the issue open-ended, exploring the text from a variety of perspectives.

but that it had been removed. The fetish represents the last moment of the male child's view of his undressing mother, the last moment in which she could be regarded as phallic; the fetish thus relates to the last object the eye falls upon before it sees the mother's naked body.

These explanations relate to two important things to keep in mind when comparing the action of Ham to Lot's daughters: Who acts/looks? And upon whom is the act/look done?

In both cases, significantly, the children return to their father. In order to preserve seed, Lot's daughters turn back to him who begot them; Ham's seed is cursed because of his looking upon the site of his origin. Thus, unlike (male) sexual fetishes surrounding the mother, both the actions of Ham and Lot's daughters relate to the father's (naked) body. In a way then, these actions are a reversal, or uncanny imitation, of the desire to return to the womb. The father's body does not symbolize safety and security, like the mother's womb; rather, it is defined by the phallus, authority and power.

While the object in both stories is the same, however, the subject differs. There are some crucial differences between a son going back to the place of his origin and a daughter going back to the place of her origin. The interaction between Ham and Noah—regardless of whether Ham's misdeed was voyeurism, castration, or incest—is a thoroughly oedipal drama. Indeed, the only thing we are certain about in the text is that Ham did something terribly wrong in Noah's eyes, causing the father to curse his son's descendants to slavery. Accordingly, one of the few consistencies between all the interpretations is that Ham must have been motivated by a desire to usurp his father's authority. Of course, the castration and incest interpretations relate especially well to this, but it also clearly plays a part in the voyeuristic interpretation. Psychoanalytically speaking, Ham's looking at his father's nakedness and subsequent declaration of this to his brothers is no different than actually castrating Noah or sleeping with his mother. When a son

looks at his father's nakedness, as castration anxiety and the Oedipus complex inform us, it is always a matter of fear, conflict, and punishment.

The interaction between Lot's daughters and their father, on the other hand, is not an oedipal drama. The daughters' actions do not so much usurp the father's authority as make a mockery of it. It is telling that with Ham we are uncertain of the deed but certain of the moral, whereas with Lot's daughters we are certain of the deed but uncertain of the moral. Thus with Ham the emphasis is on the transgression and punishment, as sons usurping fathers (in a rebellious and untimely way) is one of the primary fears of patriarchy. With Lot's daughters the emphasis is on the action, as there is no curse; the story reads like a parody of the oedipal drama.

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And they made their father drink wine that night. And the first-born went in, and she lay with her father; and he knew not when she lay down, or when she got up. And it came to pass on the next day that the first-born said unto the younger: "Behold, I lay last night with my father. Let us make him drink wine this night also. And go in, and lie with him, that we may preserve the seed of our father. And they made their father drink wine that night also. And the younger got up, and lay down with him; and he knew not when she lay down, nor when she arose (19.33-5).

Ham did not force his father to drink wine and thus did not induce Noah's drunkenness. Moreover, when Noah awakes from his stupor he "knows" (ידע) what his youngest son had done to him. Lot, in contrast, is coerced into his drunkenness—again making him an object—and does not "know" (ידע) the comings and goings of his daughters. Certainly one would think that daughters seducing a father and symbolically usurping his phallus would be a patriarchal tragedy. In this particular example, however, the father is voiceless and passive, not really much

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of a father at all. It is an example of the common motif, found throughout the Hebrew Bible, in which a woman (or women) saves the day when men cannot do so (e.g. Gen 38, Judg 4, Ruth). One message of the story then is that patriarchy can survive even if some fathers fail to be patriarchs. For despite all of Lot's failures, the father's seed is still preserved.

This, however, does not counteract the feminization of Lot and the masculinization of the daughters. Such gender reversal becomes more evident when these verses are compared to the hospitality scene in 19.4-11. In the hospitality scene Lot was the active agent, offering up his silent daughters; now it is the daughters who plot while the father is utterly silent. There, the daughters are described as desirable because "they have not known (ידע) a man;" now, it is Lot who does not "know" (ידע) the action of his daughters. The metaphor of sex as knowing is not a euphemism but a "specification that sharpens the content."[105] The idiom stresses that the importance of sex is the knowledge that comes with it (a line of thought that begins in the Eden story, see the next chapter). One result of this knowledge is an awareness of difference; the sexual pair is divided into a knower and a known, a subject and an object.[106] Thus, as I have displayed above, the subject is defined in "masculine" terms (that is, masculine according to the norms of the Hebrew Bible) as the one who acts, experiences, and knows, while the object is defined in "feminine" terms as the one who is experienced, acted upon, and known. In 19.4-11 this revolves around male-male sexuality, as one of the members during intercourse would have to enact the feminine position. The same situation is represented in the narrative of Noah and Ham.

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[105] Mieke Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry*, 53.
[106] See Zvi Jagendorf, "Genesis and the Reversal of Sexual Knowledge," 51.

Lot and his daughters, however, represent a reversal of this situation. It is the man who does not "know," even though he performs the sexual act. (The text shows no concern for the matter of how Lot could be so drunk that he would not know what he was doing but could still sexually perform.) The daughters, on the other hand, display all the conventional masculine qualities. Granted, the text does not outright say that the daughters "know" Lot (it seems the reversal will only go so far), but it is clear that Lot performs only the carnal function and the daughters take the initiative and remain "in the know" the entire time. Again, the details of language highlight this. In v.33, for example, the first born "goes" (בוא) and "lies down" (שׁכב) with her father. The venereal meaning of the sentence is quite clear, but the use of בוא (even though it used without the preposition) with the daughter as a subject implies a reversal of another common biblical idiom for sexual intercourse in which a man "enters" (בוא) a woman, as in 19.31.[107]

Zvi Jagendorf believes that this comic reversal in the Lot story is evidence that Genesis plays upon, and undermines, its own construction of the power of men over women in sexual matters:

The man is true master in sex only temporarily—unless he loses himself in the sensual ecstasy, his orgasm. Then his mastery is gone and he has nothing to show for it. Now power goes to the woman who bears witness of the deed. She holds the seed in her womb…The comedy then lies in the contrast between a man's claim to sexual mastery (knowledge) and the facts of common experience which show this claim to be based on

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[107] A nearly identical collocation is used in v.34 for the younger daughter as well, though it comes in the form of imperatives from the first-born. In v.35, however, בוא is strangely absent and the younger daughter "gets up" (קום) and lies down with her father. See below for my discussion on the peculiar use of בוא with the preposition על in 19.31.

the unfounded hubris of a creature who is in fact a slave of his biological role, his women, and in Genesis his God.[108]

The initial simplicity of man's claim to mental and physical possession of his mate, so Jagendorf, is actually quite easy to undermine. In fact, Jagendorf asserts that "this striking fusion of body and mind in the verb to know contains the seeds of its own reversal," because "there is no way in which this pristine clarity, this strict division into sexual subject and object can withstand the facts of human experience in the world, the deviousness and duplicity, the lies and the illusions that mark the relations and especially the sexual relations between people."[109] The story of Lot and his daughters is a necessary parody; the text of Genesis needs it to balance out its own ideology, which cannot help but deconstruct itself.

The seduction of Lot, however, represents something more than sexual reversal. While it shares many similarities, for example, with the bed-trick played upon Jacob in Gen 29, it contains an important difference: incest. Lot presents his daughters in 19.8 as women "who have not known a man," and ironically becomes the one who first "knows" them (though only in the carnal sense). The father, therefore, takes away the virginity of his daughter; it is particularly odd considering the Hebrew Bible's assumption that the daughter's virginity is the property of the father until it is handed over to the husband.[110] In Deut 22.13-21, for example, when a son-in-law makes charges against a woman's purity it is the father who is placed in the role of defendant against these claims.[111] The daughter's virginity is directly related to the father and the

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[108] Jagendorf, "Genesis and the Reversal of Sexual Knowledge," 52.

[109] Jagendorf, "Genesis and the Reversal of Sexual Knowledge," 52.

[110] Tikva Frymer-Kensky, "Virginity in the Bible," in *Gender and Law in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East* (eds. V.H. Matthews, B.M. Levinson nd T. Frymer-Kensky; JSOTSup 262; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 79-96 (79).

[111] See also Deut 22. 28-29.

shame/honor of the father's house. That the punishment for the daughter (being stoned to death) in the case of unsubstantiated virginity takes place at the door of the father's house underscores this fact.[112] Lot conflates the role of father and husband/son-in-law. By doing so he again represents a perverse version of patriarchy, in which the father assumes control and power over her sexuality and chooses her groom for her.

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> Thus were both the daughters of Lot with child from their father. And the first born bore a son, and called his name Moab—he is the father of Moab unto this day. And the younger also bore a son, and called his name Ben-ammi—he is the father of the sons of Ammon unto this day (19.36-8).

The theme of incest comes to its climax in these final verses. The names of both sons, for instance, refer back to the incestuous act that produced them, thereby emphasizing their unusual origin. Moab (מואב) means "from the father," and Ben-ammi (בן־עמי), which is often translated as "son of my people," should be understood more specifically as "son of my own kin," or even "son of my own paternal kinsman."[113] The name Moab, moreover, is punned upon in v.36 in the statement that the two daughters of Lot were with child, "from their father (מאביהן)." This pun is then taken a step further in v.37 in the narratorial aside explaining that Moab is "the father of Moab (אבי־מואב) unto this day." One could translate the verse thus, "and she called his name

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from-the-father and he is the father of from-the-father unto this day."[114] The circularity of the language corresponds to the circularity of incest, of a family trapped in their own inward circuit.[115]

The movement from father to father contrasts with the usual movement from father to son. In these verses alone the word father (אב) is used three times, not including the two uses of Moab (מואב). Indeed, the entire passage seems to make a point of repeating the term, as evidenced in vv.31-33:

> And the first-born said to the younger: "*Our father* is old, and there is not a man in the earth to come upon us after the manner of all the earth. Come, let us make *our father* drink wine and lie with him, that we may preserve the seed of *our father*. And they made *their father* drink wine that night. And the first-born went in, and she lay with *her father*.

Another good example of this is v.30, though this time it is daughter (בת) that is repeated:

> And Lot went up out of Zoar and dwelt in the mountains, and his *two daughters* with him; for he feared to dwell in Zoar and he dwelt in a cave, he and his *two daughters*.

The repetition of the terms father and daughter in vv.30-38 serves an obvious purpose—highlighting the incest theme. The daughters are referred to more specifically as the first-born (בכירה) and the younger (צעירה). In his bartering with the messengers, Lot pleads with them to save Zoar (צוער) reasoning that it is but a little thing (מצער).[116] The root of the city name and the

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[114] The construction of using the name Moab to stand in metonymically for the people group helps underline the circularity of language. Thus, the parallel construction for Ben-ammi reads, "and she called his name son-of-my-people, and he is the father of the *sons* of Ammon unto this day."

[115] See Alter, "Sodom as Nexus," 154.

[116] Lot's reason for asking to save Zoar lacks is not exactly clear: why would a city be saved because of its "smallness"? Does he mean to emphasize that the city is small and therefore not worth the effort of divine destruction? Or that it is small enough to appeal to the Lord's generosity (cf. Amos 7.2 and 5)? See Vawter, *On Genesis*, 238.

noun used to describe it both derive from the same root used to describe the younger daughter (צעירה). In v.23 Lot enters into Zoar (ולוט בא צוער), and the use of בוא foreshadows the sexual idiom "to enter into" (בוא) someone, as used in 19.31. In v.23 Lot enters into Zoar, but in vv.30-38 he will enter into his younger daughter (צעירה)—or rather, given the thematic reversals so prevalent in these verses, she will enter into him.

Finally, we might note that the many kinship terms used in vv.30-38 (אב, בת, בכירה, צעירה) are mixed with a variety of sexual terms (בוא, שכב, ידע)—which is necessarily the case with incest.[117] Some of these terms were previously used with no reference to sexuality in Gen 19.1-29 (like בוא in v.23) but then carry a distinctly sexual connotation in vv.30-38 (like בוא in v.31). For example, in 19.4 שכב "to lie down" refers to messengers getting ready to sleep, but in 19.31 it refers to the elder daughter's idea to have intercourse with Lot.[118] This is reminiscent of words like זרע "seed" and מערה "cave," which we have commented upon earlier. Seed (זרע) wavers in between the semantic fields of kinship ("offspring") and sexuality ("semen" or "virility"), while cave (מערה) mixes the semantic fields of location and sexuality (by punning on terms for "nakedness").

The incest taboo establishes sexual boundaries by defining which relations are too close for intercourse and which are far enough away to be acceptable. The breaking of the incest taboo transgresses these boundaries; it results in an confusing mixing up of kinship names—

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[117] The messengers' charge for Lot to take "all that belongs to you in the city" (19.12), which does not necessarily refer solely to kinship relations, is constantly narrowed down as the passage progresses to kinship relations. The sons who do not exist, the sons-in-law who do not believe, the wife who looks back—all of these characters are gone by the time Lot enters the cave with his daughters.

[118] In 19.1 Lot rises up (קום) to meet the messengers and in 19.4 the Sodomites surround Lot's house before the messengers lay down (שכב); the two terms are combined in 19.33 and 35 to refer to Lot's lack of knowledge about when each daughter lay down (שכב) and rose up (קום).

particularly when it results in progeny. Lot's daughters, as mothers to his sons, play the role of wives, and are (half-)sisters to their own sons. These sons are both the sons and grandsons of Lot, as well as (half-)brothers to their own mothers. Lot, as father to his daughters' sons, plays the role of husband, is both father and grandfather to his sons, and is his own son-in-law. The daughters are the seed of Lot, but Lot's seed does not belong in them.

As such, incest can be thought of as a metaphor for Lot and the Lot story. As an act that transgresses sexual boundaries and confounds clear distinctions, incest mirrors Lot's crossing of land/geographical and familial/social boundaries. Insofar as Lot's seed both belongs and does not belong with his daughters, Lot both belongs and does not belong in Abraham's house, just as he both belongs and does not belong in Sodom. Lot is the close Other: not different enough to be totally other, but not similar enough to be the same.

The confusing kinship relations that incest creates points to perhaps the ultimate irony of Lot's story. The narratorial aside in vv.37-38 informs us that Moab is the father of the Moabites and Ammon is the father of the Ammonites. Thus, despite the circularity from father to father, Lot's incestuous act covers over his own patrilineal role, for the Moabites and Ammonites do not derive their name from Lot but Moab and Ben-ammi.[119] Lot's daughters do succeed in "preserving the seed" of the father, just not the seed of *their* father.

Daughters of Patriarchy

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[119] See James Nohrnberg, "The Keeping of Nahor: The Etiology of Biblical Election," in *The Book and the Text: The Bible and Literary Theory* (ed. Regina Schwartz; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 161-88 (65). Of course, in Deut 2.9 and 2.19 the Moabites and Ammonites are remembered as "children of Lot" (see also Ps 83.9).

The Lot story is characterized both by a great level of concern for morality and by an indifference to morality. On the one hand, as Alter points out, the Sodom story serves as a thematic nexus for the idea that "propagation and survival are precarious matters, conditional, in the view of the Hebrew writers, on moral behaviour."[120] Thus, the long gap between Yahweh's announcement of a future son for Abraham in Genesis 17 (though one could perhaps extend this as far back as ch.12) and the birth of Isaac in Genesis 21 displays some of the complications concerning progeny and survival for the first father of the future Israelites. The emphasis in Gen 18-20 on righteousness (צדקה or צדיק) and justice (משפט) (cf. 18.19, 25; 19.9; 20.4), for example, is evidence that a society or people-group that does not act righteously or justly will be swept away in a moment, like the Sodomites. On the other hand, as I have pointed out above, Lot complicates the matter. He is never once described as righteous; the text even seems to purposefully avoid this. Yet, neither is he ever described as evil or wicked, not even when he offers his daughters to the Sodomite mob or during his subsequent incestuous actions. Unlike the Sodomites, he is not swept away, and, moreover, his family line continues despite the dire circumstances.

Similarly, the text neither explicitly condemns nor praises the actions of Lot's daughters, even though it is Lot's daughters who do all the acting in vv.30-38. They seduce Lot, but, then again, it is due to them that Lot's line continues. Certain scholars thus view the daughters in a heroic way. Rainer Kessler, for example, argues that the daughters' initiative, given the circumstances, is worthy of celebration. Having escaped the threats of male violence in 19.4-11,

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[120] Alter, "Sodom as Nexus," 157.

they now ensure that new life comes out from a catastrophe precipitated by men.[121] Kessler even celebrates the actions of Lot's daughters as "women's finest hour."[122] A similar approach is taken by Wöller, who calls Lot's daughters "priestesses of life," as the creation that follows destruction is set in motion by them.[123] The daughters' actions, according to Wöller, show traces of those matriarchal tales in which goddesses assert sexual power and initiative, and thus play a dominant role in the creation of the world. Other scholars suggest that the daughters' actions are justified in the sense that desperate circumstances call for desperate measures. Brenner, for instance, notes that the daughters (like Tamar and Ruth) do not act out of lust, but out of survival and concern for the continuation of the family line.[124] It should be remembered that in the daughters' minds there are no men left in the world (or area). Indeed, the idea that not just Sodom but perhaps the entire world has been destroyed gives a distinctly mythical feel to the passage, and thus lends credence to the idea that the daughters are presented as matriarchs or ancestresses that enjoy mythic privileges over the incest taboo. Brenner elaborates on this apparent paradox:

> Incest is attributed to pagan goddesses and gods, and to humans of royal or similar
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> descent and social status; myths and legends from Mesopotamia, Canaan, Ugarit, and
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> Egypt are replete with such incestuous stories which are far from pejorative in tone. The

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[121] Rainer Kessler, "1. Mose 19 '…damit wir uns Nachkommen schaffen von unserem Vater—Lots Töchter,'" in *Feministisch Gelesen* (ed. Eva Renate Schmidt; Stuttgart: Kreuz, 1989), 22-8.

[122] Kesller, "1. Mose 19,'" 25.

[123] Wöller, *Vom Vater verwundet*, 150.

[124] Athalya Brenner, *The Israelite Woman: Social Role and Literary Type in Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), 109.

biblical narratives, to distinguish from the legal materials, seem to recognize this attitude in a matter of fact manner.[125]

In a way, this interpretation is the reversal of Alter's hypothesis that the survival of the group depends on righteous behaviour; instead, the survival of the group might depend on shrewd and adaptable behaviour, even that which breaks taboos or laws.

But the idea that women have a prominent role to play in times of crisis also opens the way for interpretations that assert this is part of a larger patriarchal purpose.[126] Scholars like Elke Seifert and Judith Herman, for example, interpret the story in light of findings from clinical studies in which a guilty father looks to absolve himself and blame the victim, that is, the daughter. Thus, the biblical tale reads like a typical story constructed by a father who has sexually abused his daughter in order to cover up his own guilt. Ilona Rashkow likewise notes that the Lot story has many similarities to clinical reports of father-daughter incestuous relationships: "the disintegrated family, the father who has lost his patriarchal role, the abuse of alcohol, the mother who looks away and the involvement of more than one daughter."[127]

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[125] Brenner, "On Incest," 116-17.

[126] See, for example, Judith Herman, *Father-Daughter Incest* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012, 3rd ed.), 36-8; Elke Seifert, "Lot und Seine Töchter: Eine Hermeneutik des Verdachts," in *Feministische Hermeneutik und Erstes Testament* (ed. Hedwig Jahnow Projekt [Elke Seifert, Ulrike Bail, et.al]; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1994), 48-65; Elke Seifert, *Tochter und Vater im Alten Testament: Eine ideologiekritische Untersuchung zur Verfügungsgewalt von Vätern über ihre Töchter* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1997); Ilona Rashkow, "Daddy-Dearest and the 'Invisible Spirit of Wine,'" in *A Feminist Companion to the Bible* (Second Series) (ed. Athalya Brenner; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998): 82-107; "Daughters and Fathers in Genesis…Or, What is Wrong with This Picture?" in *A Feminist Companion of Exodus to Deuteronomy* (ed. A. Brenner; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994): 22-36; J. Cheryl Exum, "Desire Distorted and Exhibited: Lot and His Daughters in Psychoanalysis, Painting, and Film," in *"A Wise and Discerning Mind": Essays in Honor of Burke O. Long* (eds. Saul Olyan and Robert Culley; Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2000), 83-108.

[127] Rashkow, "Daddy Dearest," 82.

Exum offers the best and most thorough reading of those that adopt the distortion interpretation. She examines the cultural or collective unconscious that finds its expression in the text. Her assumption, along with most biblical scholars, is that the biblical text is a communal product that has been controlled by men (both written by them and for them). Thus, she refers to the "collective androcentric unconscious" origin of the text as "the narrator," or even "the Father." The latter term is to be differentiated, however, from the father character Lot, as he simply represents a split-off part of the narrator (like all the characters in the story).

Having established these premises, Exum moves on to assert that Gen 19 represents the forbidden fantasies of this collective male unconscious, namely the fantasy of the Father's wish to have sex with his daughters. Traces of this fantasy are found in certain curious features of the text, though for her these traces can be found not just in vv.30-38 but throughout Gen 19. In vv.1-11, for example, the narrator entertains the wish for homosexual sex in a distorted form. This homoerotic desire is countered by Lot's offer of his daughters. Thus, one unacceptable wish (homosexual sex) is rejected in favor of another one (incestuous sex), the latter the lesser of the two evils. At this point in the narrative, however, the narrator is unable to carry out his incest fantasy and comes to a narrative solution by punishing himself with castration, symbolically represented by the blinding of the Sodomites.

The ongoing conflict within the unconscious of the narrator is displayed in vv.12-29. In these verses the sons-in-law and wife are necessarily removed from the picture, and the narrator again punishes his irrepressible libidinal desire—again represented by the men of Sodom—by raining down fire and brimstone upon it. Lot's lingering in leaving Sodom, his unwillingness to flee to the mountains, and his bartering to save Zoar are further evidence of the narrator's conflicted state. Lot's obscure reason not to flee to the mountains lest evil cling to him and he

die, for example, shows that "flight to the hills is both desired and feared: desired because that is where the narrator will entertain (in a distorted form) his forbidden desires (v.30); feared because the desire is repulsive to him and merits punishment."[128]

Finally, in vv.30-38 the narrator is able to create the ideal circumstances under which to imagine his fantasy. In the sexually evocative location of a cave, away from all other family members (perhaps even all residents of the earth), the father finds himself alone with his daughters. Exum cites the usual objections of the unlikelihood of Lot being able to sexually perform while not knowing what he was doing, along with the absurdity that this occurs twice on consecutive nights. Again, this is evidence that the narrator seeks to remove the guilt and responsibility of the father. Without feeling guilty the narrator is able to take pleasure in imagining himself as the object of sexual abuse, as well as the abuser. Thus the narrator repeats, "almost verbatim and in detail," both the oldest daughter's proposal as well as both daughters' actions, as if to replay the scene in his mind. The repetition of making the father drunk with wine (4x), having sex with the father (5x), and the father's lack of knowledge (2x) all seem to suggest that the narrator takes an ongoing excitement in repeatedly imagining the situation.

Exum ends her analysis by commenting on the unusual expression of the daughters' wish to "preserve the seed of the father." She notes that the phrase is unusual because it seems to be expressed in distinctly patriarchal terms, namely, why would the *daughters* care about preserving the seed of the *father*? For Exum, the sons and the reproduction of seed provide the narrator with a final justification for the incest, as a well as a desire "to perpetuate the paternal line in a way

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[128] Exum, "Desire Distorted," 93.

that ensures the greatest possible ethnic purity."[129] In other words, it is not the daughters who desire to preserve the seed of the father, but the father himself:

> Giving birth to a literary creation in which the father's own daughters bear his sons is the closest the collective patriarchal unconscious wish can come to displacing the universal mother, Eve, with a father of all the living.[130]

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Exum's interpretation reveals a text full of paradoxical features, hidden repression and projection, and curious details that call out for explanation. Her position that the text ultimately conforms to patriarchal ideology—despite the presentation of Lot's daughters as active, central characters—is a position that I will affirm throughout this study. Daughters are used and abused by the patriarchal text for its own purposes. Along with Exum, however, I would sprinkle in a bit of Jagendorf. That is, literary analysis also reveals the ultimate ambiguity of the text, the way that patriarchy ties itself in knots and undermines its own constructions of power. The text is too heterogeneous, too complex, to impose upon it a singular reading. This does not mean that the text is not thoroughly patriarchal, but rather that even as this patriarchy continually affirms itself, it also contains the seeds of its own undoing.

The interaction between Lot and his daughters reverses gender roles. It is the daughters who become founding mothers, while the father remains a passive, unknowing object. While Lot plays the feminine role, however, the father's seed is still preserved. Many of the other daughter stories in the Hebrew Bible are variations on this same theme—particularly the stories of Tamar and Ruth (see ch.5). If the father's seed is not preserved, then the daughter stories show the

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[129] Exum, "Desire Distorted," 97.
[130] Exum, "Desire Distorted," 97.

alternative options of exile and death. Lot's daughters also become the founding figures of the

Hebrew Bible's presentation of Transjordanian women, especially Moabite women, portrayed as

transgressive, hypersexual, and problematic (see ch.4). Similarly rebellious daughters are found

in the figures of Eve and Rachel, the focus of the next two chapters.

Chapter 2: In the Beginning, She Was a Daughter?

Before feminism, everyone in the Garden of Eden knew their place.
--David Clines

In the beginning, there is no "daughter." There is a male (זכר) and a female (נקבה) (Gen 1.27), a human/man (אדם) (Gen 2.7), a man/husband (איש) and a woman/wife (אשה) (Gen 2.23-4), and even mention of a father (אב) and a mother (אם) (Gen 2.24, see also 3.20), and sons (בן) (Gen 3.16; 4.17, 25-6). The word "daughter" (בת), however, is nowhere to be found.

The first use of the "daughter" is found in Gen 5.4, where it appears in the plural as part of the formulaic, genealogical phrase "and 'so and so' had other sons and daughters." The phrase appears many times in the rest of the chapter (5.7, 10, 13, 16, 19, 22, 26, 30) and is likewise found throughout the genealogy of Shem in 11.10-26 (11.11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25).[1] In between, is the archaic and much debated passage concerning the "sons of god(s)" and taking the "daughters of men" as wives for themselves (Gen 6.1-4). The passage relates to the previous mention of "daughters" in Gen 5, since it opens with the mention of men populating the earth and "daughters were born unto them" (6.1). Thus, the use of daughters relates to the growth of

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[1] It is significant that wives/mothers are not mentioned in Gen 5 and 11. The genealogies proceed from father to (firstborn?) son, and then refer to other sons and daughters, but do not include wives/mothers. The implication, of course, is that daughters will become wives and mothers to these other sons and so the genealogy will continue. The omission of women's reproductive roles in these genealogies though serves the purpose of placing "seed" purely with men. This is perhaps why daughters alone may be mentioned—it acknowledges women's role in the procreation while simultaneously covering over it. Such anxiety over the female power to give birth—the woman's role in preserving seed—is found throughout the Eden story as well (just as it was in the story of Lot's daughters).

human population (Gen 5 and 11), but also to the waywardness of divine-human relations (Gen 6.1-4)—themes that will connect these "daughters" to the woman of Gen 2-4.[2]

This is one of the reasons that the woman of Gen 2-4 may be thought of as a daughter. The text, moreover, prompts the reader to think of the primary characters—Yahweh, the man, and the woman—as a family by suggesting that their story serves as a type of model for families in general (Gen 2.24). In biblical terms, Gen 2-4 provides the initial framework of the father's house. Accordingly, it provides the first insight into the relationship between biblical fathers and daughters and the fatherly and daughterly roles within a family.

To be sure, the genealogy of the Bible's first family is not straightforward. Who is the woman's father? Yahweh, who brought her into being, or the man, who preceded her and from whose rib/side she was made? Does she have a father? (Did Adam and Eve have belly buttons?) And why would one assume father rather than mother?[3] To what extent, moreover, can one think of Yahweh as either father or mother, given the biblical text's separation between human and divine? So while the man and the woman may be differentiated in terms of gender, God and humans are differentiated in terms of species.[4] The parentage of each of the major characters,

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[2] The account of 6.1-4 parallels the actions of the first woman in other important ways as well. The sons of God see (ראה) that the daughters of men are good (טוב) and take (לקח) them as wives (the plural of אשה), while the first woman (אשה), sees (ראה) that the fruit of the tree is good (טוב) and takes (לקח) some to eat (Gen 3.6). In both stories, therefore, there is a transgression of boundaries by people taking something prohibited. The similarities suggest that the story of the sons of god and daughters of men is a continuation of their ancestors' troubled legacy. The daughters of men, unlike the first woman, are now passive recipients, reflecting perhaps both the man's passivity in Gen 3.6 as well as the woman's punishments in 3.16.

[3] The issue is further complicated, as is well-known, if one takes the first creation story into account: in Gen 1 man and woman are created simultaneously and thus seem to have a common parentage, whereas in Genesis 2 man and woman are created at different times and in different ways.

[4] This difference in species parallels that between humans and animals. So while all these hierarchies—God-human, man-woman, human-animal—are constructed and developed in the opening chapters of Genesis they are also deconstructed and played upon.

and their relation to each other, is ill-defined and ambiguous. This ambiguity, however, is part of the text's literary artifice. The woman's nebulous parentage, for example, allows her to be thought of as either the daughter of God or the man, as if she has two fathers. At the same time, the woman is called "the mother of all the living" (אם כל־חי) in 3.20 and thus is the only character to be given an explicit familial role—and a parental one at that—in the narrative.

The opaque genealogical picture, moreover, has significant implications as the family begins to multiply and be fruitful. The climax of this, for the purposes of this chapter, is found with the birth of Cain in 4.1. In this controversial verse, there may be a double case of father-daughter incest. The road to it has been paved by the discovery of sexual dimorphism and the beginning of (biblical) family and social hierarchies. The Eden story is a text obsessed with origins, and thus we find in it the roots of the Hebrew Bible's use and abuse of daughters.

The daughter-father relationship has not been a traditional focus for readers of Gen 2-4. Works by Lynda Boose, Ilona Rashkow, and Johanna Stiebert are exceptions to this rule that have been particularly helpful in regard to my reading of the text.[5] Perhaps the most influential

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The separation and connection between humans and animals in the Eden story is something that has become a point of focus in scholarship for the past 30 years or so. The question of the animal, moreover, relates to the question of the woman, as the two are both contrasted and compared to the human/man. Woman's hierarchical status below man mirrors that of the animals—but there in subtly enmity between the two as well, seeing as only the woman was a suitable helpmate for the man. For more discussion on this, see *The Bible and Posthumanism* (ed. Jennifer Koosed; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2014), especially the essay by Hannah M. Strømmen, "Beastly Questions and Biblical Blame," 13-28; Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (ed. Marie-Louise Mallet; trans. David Wills; New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), esp. 15-18; Aaron Gross, *The Question of the Animal and Religion: Theoretical Stakes, Practical Implications* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), esp. 154-60; and Michael J. Gilmour, *Eden's Other Residents: The Bible and Animals* (Eugene, OR.: Cascade Books, 2014).

[5] Lynda E. Boose, "The Father's House and the Daughter in It: The Structures of Western Culture's Daughter-Father Relationship," in *Daughters and Fathers* (eds. Lynda Boose and Betty S. Flowers; Baltimore; London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1989), 19-74; Ilona Rashkow, "Daughters and Fathers in Genesis, Or, What is Wrong with this Picture?" in *The*

has been Boose's essay, "The Father's House and the Daughter in It: The Structures of Western Culture's Daughter-Father Relationship." The pages this text devotes to the Eden narrative are packed with insightful observations that relate to the construction of the first woman as a daughter and her relationship to the man and Yahweh. Taking into account observations from psychoanalysis—as well as Lévi-Strauss's anthropological narration of the family, in which the father is the figure who controls the exchange of woman—Boose concludes: "At the deepest layer of the [Bible's] sacred myth of paternal generation, the (unacknowledged) daughter is the structural catalyst that enables both the myth and its masking. By consequence, however, she is also the figure that problematizes it and hence gets erased from it."[6] Generally speaking, I share this thesis, and thus hope to flesh it out in the following pages. My own analysis will look at some of the finer details of the text (the wordplay, diction, irony, and so on) that Boose does not explore. Such literary analysis reveals deconstructive patterns that are important to consider in the making of this "myth of paternal generation." For instance, Boose does not pay sustained attention to Eve's (at this point in the text, the woman is referred to with a proper name) relationship with Yahweh in Gen 4.1, and thus does not evaluate the entirety of the first woman's story and all the important connections this verse entails.

"There is no little girl" in Freudian psychoanalysis, argues Luce Irigaray, because there is no place for her in its phallic order.[7] One could also argue that there is no little girl in the Eden

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Phallacy of Genesis, 65-84, esp. 75-80; idem, "Throw Momma from the Garden a Kiss: Or Paradise Revisited," in *Taboo or not Taboo: Sexuality and Family in the Hebrew Bible*, 43-74. Johanna Stiebert, *Fathers and Daughters in the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 166-85.

[6] Boose, "The Father's House," 52. For Lévi-Strauss's views on the father as the figure who controls the exchange of women, see *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (trans. James Harle Bell et al.; ed. Rodney Needham; Boston: Beacon, 1969).

[7] Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, 25 ff.

story for the same reason. There is no little girl, therefore, not because she is not present but because she is rendered insignificant and powerless. In order to establish this, paradoxically, both the biblical myth and Freudian psychoanalysis require a daughter at their origins.[8]

Metaphor, God's Fatherhood, and the Theme of Similarity and Difference

Before analyzing the Eden narrative in further detail, it is necessary to comment upon the issue of God's fatherhood and metaphor. Stiebert, for example, presents a common opinion by asserting that Yahweh's fatherhood should be viewed as fundamentally different from human

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[8] For Freud's disavowal of the place of daughters in his theories, see David Willbern, "*Filia Oedipi*: Father and Daughter in Freudian Theory," in *Daughters and Fathers* (eds. Lynda Boose and Betty S. Flowers; Baltimore; London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1989), 75-96.

This chapter is also heavily indebted to a variety of works from the 1970's onward that can be broadly categorized as (literary) feminist. I list here the works with which I am most familiar: Carol Meyers, *Rediscovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); idem, *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Francis Landy, *Paradoxes of Paradise: Identity and Difference in the Song of Songs* (Second Edition; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2011); David Gunn and Danna Fewell, *Gender, Power, and Promise: The Subject of the Bible's First Story* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993); Ilana Pardes, *Countertraditions in the Bible: A Feminist Approach* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992); Mieke Bal, *Lethal Love: Feminist Literary Readings of Biblical Love Stories* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987); David Jobling, *The Sense of Biblical Narrative: Structural Analyses of the Hebrew Bible*, *II* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986); Phyllis Trible, "Eve and Adam: Genesis 2-3 Reread," in *Womanspirit Uprising: A Feminist Reader in Religion* (eds. Judith Plaskow and Carol P. Christ; San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979), 74-84; idem, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978).

For a general survey of feminist studies of Gen 2-3, see Alice Ogden Bellis, *Helpmates, Harlots, and Heroes: Women's Stories in the Hebrew Bible* (2nd Edition; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 37-56. See also Athalya Brenner (ed.), *A Feminist Companion to Genesis* (1993), 24-203; idem, *A Feminist Companion to Genesis* (Second Series, 1998), 22-81.

For works with copious references to other scholarship, see Tryggve Mettinger, *The Eden Narrative: A Literary and Religio-Historical Study of Genesis 2-3* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2007); Terje Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden: Genesis 2-3 and Symbolism of the Eden Garden in Biblical Hebrew Literature* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000); and Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 178-279.

fatherhood.[9] The biblical God, she asserts, is like human fathers in that he guides and protects, punishes and disciplines, and desires to be respected and obeyed. On the other hand, "God-the-father" is not depicted as a human father: "although he controls conception, he does not conceive like a human and he stands beyond and outside humanity."[10] Thus, God is understood in these anthropomorphic terms in order to emphasize and organize certain features of his character but should not be fully identified as a father.

The concession that God controls conception, however, is already an example of how the divine and human blur into each other in the biblical text.[11] That is, while it is obvious that God's fatherhood has a metaphorical aspect to it that is absent from the fatherhood of other human biblical characters, this does not mean that everything about God's fatherhood should be understood as metaphorical. Francis Landy, for instance, notes that for the term metaphor to have any force, it must be distinguished from non-metaphor, for "if everything we say about God is

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[9] Stiebert, *Fathers and Daughters*, 166-76. See also A.M. Böckler, "Unser Vater," in *Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible* (ed. P. Van Hecke; Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 249-62; Robert Hamerton-Kelly, "God the Father in the Bible and in the Experience of Jesus: The State of the Question," in *God as Father?* (eds. J.B. Metz and M. Lefébure; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1981), 95-102 (esp. 96-8); and Paul Ricoeur. "Fatherhood: From Phantasm to Symbol," in *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics* (trans. D. Inde; Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 464-92.

[10] Stiebert, *Fathers and Daughters*, 204. She goes on, interestingly, to describe God's fatherhood as "an ideal—not in the sense of his being a 'good' father but in the sense that he is a father who is all-powerful, all-honourable, and stands unopposed" (204-5). Each of these descriptions of the biblical God, however, are debatable—certainly the idea that God is all-powerful does not fit with the depiction of the deity in the Eden story.

[11] In his wonderful essay, "Wrestling the Bible," Hugh Pyper offers a short, but succinct, analysis of what it means to have Yahweh ultimately in control of things while also playing a character in the story (see *The Unchained Bible: Cultural Appropriations of Biblical Texts* [LHB/OTS 567; New York: T & T Clark, 2012], 151-56). As soon as Yahweh steps in the garden, there is a double Yahweh, "Yahweh as character and Yahweh as supreme guarantor of the narrative, with complex literary and theological consequences" (155). The character of Yahweh is thus a literary construct, as much as the deity's fatherhood, like all fatherhood, is a social construct.

metaphorical, one might as well say nothing at all."[12] He argues that there is a difference between biblical comparisons like "God is a warrior" and "God is a shepherd" that is often overlooked. In the former, there is nothing intrinsic in the phrase that requires one to understand it as a metaphor—God actually does fight wars for the Israelites in the Hebrew Bible. The phrase "God is a shepherd," however, is probably more metaphorical given the fact that people are not sheep.[13] The point is that there is a spectrum of metaphor, and understanding God as a father falls in between the two poles of literal and figurative.

This is especially the case in the first chapters of Genesis in which the delicate balance of similarity and difference is clearly thematized. God creates humankind in his own image and likeness (1.26-7) showing a desire for sameness that contrasts with the rhythm of binary opposites that have been established in the narrative thus far (light and darkness, day and night, etc.). This, granted, is a qualified sameness, since to be in the "likeness" of someone already qualifies sameness. Complete unity of divine and human is jealously guarded against, as exemplified in God's worry in the Eden narrative of the human becoming too much like him (3.5, 22) (as well as the story of the "sons of God," reproducing with the "daughters of men in Gen 6.1-4).[14] Likewise, God's assertion that the first human needs a "suitable helpmate" (2.18) seems to admit that God stands on a plane different than that of humanity.[15] And yet, God's

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[12] Landy, "On Metaphor, Play, and Nonsense," in *Beauty and the Enigma* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 252-72 (264).

[13] See also, David Aaron*, Biblical Ambiguities: Metaphor, Semantics, and Divine Imagery* (Leiden: Brill, 2001). To analyze such metaphors on a spectrum also concedes how little we might know of the inner imagination of the biblical authors (or any ancient writers)—perhaps they really did conceive of people as sheep.

[14] See also God's concern over the power of humans in the Tower of Babel story (Gen 11.5-7).

[15] It is interesting to note, in this vein, that it is in Gen 2-3, in which God displays his anthropomorphic qualities (his walking in the garden, his dialogue with the humans, his skinning

creating of humankind in his own likeness and image is then paralleled with Adam's fathering of

Seth in his own likeness and image in 5.3.[16] Presumably then, that which is passed on from father

to son—and also the other sons and daughters of Gen 5—is the same as that which God passed

on to the first male and female. At the very least this suggests that the qualified sameness

between the deity and humanity can be paralleled to the qualified sameness between human

generations.

The same theme is developed between the male and the female.[17] Originally the man

celebrates their likeness ("bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh"), though when sexual

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of the animals), that God guards his uniqueness. While in Genesis 1, in which God is presented as a transcendent deity, he creates in his own image.

[16] The comparison of Gen 1.26-7 with Gen 5.1-3 emphasizes another important theme: the erasure of the mother in procreation. In Gen 1.26-7 God creates male and female simultaneously, suggesting not only an equality between males and females but also that the image of God incorporates both feminine and masculine components (see, for instance, Phyllis Trible, *God and The Rhetoric of Sexuality* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978], 1-31). When Gen 5.1-3 recapitulates the creation of humanity of 1.26-7 and then transitions into a genealogical list, however, no mother (or wife) is mentioned. The genealogy progresses from father to children and then continues through one of the sons of these children. Thus, Ilana Pardes observes that while the participation of females in these begettings is implied by the reminder that "male and female" God created them, as well as the use of אדם as a generic reference to humankind in 5:1-2, there is little doubt that "procreation becomes primarily a male issue" in these verses, particularly when "the relentless listing of ancestors begins" (*Countertraditions in the Bible: A Feminist Approach* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992], 55-6). The potential paradox is thus worked around. Plurality blurs into singularity, humankind becomes Adam; male and female blurs into only male. The comparison between Gen 5.1-3 and Gen 1.26-7 highlights that while there is "certain symmetry between male and female on the cosmic level," procreation turns out be "the perpetuation of male seed in male seed," when dealing with the social realm (*Countertraditions*, 56).

[17] In connection with the footnote above, the difference between the perception of God in P and J should be noted here. In P (Gen 1 and 5), God is more transcendent and does not have a female counterpart—thus the creation of both male and female in the deity's image. In J (Gen 2-4), you can have a human without a female partner because God can be male and have a female counterpart. So while both texts create a number of gender construction issues (see below), they do so in a different way. For the purposes of a synchronic literary analysis of the text like my own, these differences are read in light of each other (as part of a single text), which creates an even more dizzying puzzle of how the human-divine, male-female, and human-animal relate to each other.

dimorphism is discovered the duality of gender becomes a source of shame (3.7).[18] Indeed, even in the very origin of the woman (in Genesis 2), the theme is apparent, for she is created as a "suitable helpmate" (2.18) through a process of division—a part of the human's body is taken to create her and the man and woman becomes two parts of a divided self. And the woman herself is only created because the animals, who are created from the soil just as the human was, are too different to be the desired "suitable helpmate." Gunn and Fewell aptly conclude: "Likeness is conjured by separation. Male and Female. Opposite and alike. Difference and sameness. Other and self."[19]

To return to the question of God's fatherhood then, there is no reason to understand it in either purely metaphorical or purely literal terms. Certainly there is nothing about God's fatherhood in the beginning chapters of Genesis that forces one to understand his creating (or "birthing") of humanity/the woman as solely metaphorical. There is, however, a level of obfuscation in the text. It should be noted, for instance, that God is never directly referred to as a father in these chapters. His fatherhood of the woman in Gen 2, moreover, is also obscured by the human's/man's (though certainly God plays the more active role). In short, the text plays with this tension and is best analyzed with it in mind.

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[18] See Landy, *Paradoxes of Paradise*, 212; 219-23. This entire sequence of the "opening of the eyes," the feeling of shame, and the covering with fig leaves requires much more detailed analysis than what I provide here. Landy notes that it is no coincidence that the first knowledge is that of nakedness, given the pun in 2.25 between "nakedness" (ערומים) and "subtlety" (ערום). Nakedness threatens to undo the sameness and differentiation that has been delicately constructed in the preceding narrative. But now knowledge prevents this dissolution, resulting in the curious emotion of shame and the covering of the genitals. Sexual dimorphism is only part of the problem, for the man and the woman now see that they are sexed creatures but have not yet used their genitals for procreation—the man has not yet "known" the woman (Gen 4.1). In other words, "sex" (the verb) does not explicitly appear in Eden, but sexuality and gender do.

[19] Gunn and Fewell, *Gender, Power, and Promise*, 27.

Genesis 2 and The Family's Genealogy

The story of the creation of woman begins in an oneiric world, in the deep sleep (תרדמה)

which God causes to fall upon the human. We are never told that the human wakes up from this

sleep, and perhaps the rest of what follows is meant to be interpreted as a dream—"the royal road

to the unconscious" as Freud famously called it. In order to understand the dream of 2.21-3,

however, one needs to trace the woman's lineage backward, beginning with the transition from

Gen 1.1-2.3 to the Eden narrative:

> These are the generations (תולדות) of the heaven and of the earth when they were created,
>
> in the day that Yahweh God created them (2.4).

The word תולדות stems from the root ילד, which refers to the process of begetting and birthing; it

is the first of the "generations" (תולדות) clauses of Genesis, and functions Janus-like as both a

conclusion to the creation story in Gen 1 and introduction to the Eden story that follows.[20] It is

the only "generations" formula that refers to general nouns (the heavens and the earth) rather

than a personal name. In the typical formula, a patriarch's name is listed followed by a genealogy

of that individual's (male) descendants.[21] In a grammatical sense, however, it is ambiguous

whether "heavens and earth" should be understood here as an objective or subjective genitive—

are these the generations of what the heavens and earth produced, or are the heavens and earth

what is produced? Either way, the next clause modifies this by having Yahweh (Elohim)[22] being

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[20] See Bill T. Arnold, *Genesis* (NCBC; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 55.

[21] See 5.1; 6.9; 10.1; 11.10, 27; 25.12, 19; 36.1; 37.2.

[22] In Gen 2-3, the designation for God as Yahweh Elohim both contrasts and corresponds to the designation of God in Gen 1 as Elohim. Yahweh Elohim as a divine epithet is found nowhere else in Genesis and its use here is another piece of evidence that Gen 1-3 are both connected and disjointed—and are certainly meant to be read together. See Arnold, *Genesis*, 56. For simplicity's sake, I will use the title Yahweh throughout this chapter.

the maker of "earth and the heavens." Thus, these "generations," on some level, are Yahweh's and he is an implied progenitor. It is a good example of how the fatherhood of God is implied without being explicitly stated, and in what follows God will be the active, creating subject. The ground/earth will be used as his medium for creation, as in the origin of the first human.

> And Yahweh God formed the earthling/human (האדם) from the clods of the earth/humus (האדמה), and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the earthling/human became a living soul (2.7).[23]

The wordplay between earthling (אדם) and earth (אדמה) displays the integral connection between the first human and the cultivated ground that provides subsistence. The grammatically feminine earth (אדמה) provides the first hint of maternal reproductive capabilities, but also serves to deny it since the ground replaces a woman—the creation of the human is done by the agency of the deity through the medium of the soil. On a related note, there is no reason to think the grammatically neuter/masculine human (אדם) is inherently gendered at this point in the narrative. Granted, this אדם will eventually turn into the proper name for the first man (Adam), which displays the default position of man over woman (for further discussion on this, see below); however, this is not evidence that the human is to be understood as socially masculine. Males and females will be differentiated from each other only in 2.21-3. Carol Meyers summarizes the progression thusly: "the first human of Genesis 2:7 is androgynous and sexually undifferentiated but basically male and then becomes the human male of Genesis 2:23."[24]

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[23] The translations of "earthling" and "earth," or "human" and "humus," reflect this, as opposed to the traditional "man" and "ground." See the KJV and RSV for examples of this "traditional" translation. See also Trible, "Eve and Adam: Genesis 2-3 Reread," 74-84 (esp. 76).

[24] Carol Meyers, *Rediscovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 73. In terms of modern scholarship, the model argument for this reading of the text dates back to Phyllis Trible's *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* ([Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978], 72-143). See also, Mieke Bal, *Lethal Love: Feminist*

In between these two passages, the text provides a narrative for this progression, explaining how man and woman came from the first human. Yahweh decides that is "not good" for the human to be alone and thus sets out to make a "suitable helpmate" (2.18).[25] The first plan, the creation of animals, fails—for after all the animals have been named the text again repeats that the human has not found a "suitable helpmate."[26] Gunn and Fewell suggest that the human may not recognize the animals as fit partners because, "like God, the human desires its own image," it desires sameness.[27] In keeping with the theme of sameness and difference, however, God reverts to an act of division in order to appease this desire.

> And Yahweh God caused to fall upon the human a deep sleep, and he slept. And he took
>
> from one of his ribs/sides (צלע) and closed up its place with flesh. And Yahweh God built

Literary Readings of Biblical Love Stories ([Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 197], 104-30). Landy comments that "what matters is not that the first human is androgynous, but that the female element in him is undeveloped" (*Paradoxes of Paradise*, 241). In other words, the point is not necessarily the earthling is part male and part female (as androgynous might connote) but that the first human is sexually undifferentiated (while being implicitly male).

[25] The verse clashes with the rhythm established in the first chapter in which God creates and then sees that this creation is "good" (טוב). For the first time, God sees that there may be a flaw to what has been created and that some adjustments should be made. It is not obvious, however, why it is not good for the earthling to be alone—who suffers from loneliness? Landy observes that the statement "ignores the one relationship that has mattered up to this point, that with God himself" (*Paradoxes of Paradise*, 178). Thus, despite the fact of God's presence, the human is still alone. The implication is that God is not a suitable helpmate for the human. There is also a subtle suggestion that the human is not an adequate helper fit for God, that God is deeming himself to be alone even after the creation of the human (see Gunn and Fewell, *Gender, Power, and Promise*, 27).

[26] The exact meaning of the phrase (עזר כנגדו) is subject to debate; a more literal translation might be "helper fit for him." For discussion, see David Clines, *What does Eve Do to Help? And Other Readerly Questions of the Old Testament* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 25-48; Meyers, *Rediscovering Eve*, 73-4. For a different interpretation, see David Noel Freedman, "Woman, A Power Equal to Man," *BAR* 9.1 (1983): 56-8.

[27] *Gender, Power, and Promise*, 27. The word for alone (בד) in 2.18 may support this idea as it is derived from the root בדד, and thus carries the connotation of separation, of being cut off or torn apart. The use of בד as "apart" or "separate" occurs, for example, in Gen. 21.28-9 and 30.40.

the rib/side which he had taken from the human into a woman, and he brought her to the human. And the human said:

This time—bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.

This one shall be called woman (אשה)

     For from a man (איש) she was taken—this one.

Therefore, a man (איש) shall leave his father and his mother and cling unto his woman/wife (אשה), and they shall be as one flesh (2.21-4).

The woman is constructed from the צלע (rib/side) of the human, a term that resonates with the צלם (image) of the first chapter.[28] The resonance is not just linguistic though, for just like the צלם of Gen 1.26-7, the צלע promotes the idea of unity through sameness/similarity. The man celebrates his common identity with the woman just as God deems "good" his creation of the man and woman in his image. At the same time, both the צלם and the צלע further divide things. The צלם is the medium used to create male and female; the צלע is the medium used to create man

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[28] For an overview of proposed suggestions for the meaning of צלע, see Ziony Zevit, *What Really Happened in the Garden?* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013), 137-50. Zevit himself offers the provocative suggestion that the term, in this context, refers to the penis, or more specifically, the baculum. In addition to the many metaphorical nuances this translation would suggest, therefore, the tale would also contain an etiological explanation for why humans lack a baculum (see Ziony Zevit, "Was Eve Made from Adam's Rib—or Baculum? *BAR* 41.5 (2015): 32-5.

    Carol Meyers looks at the use of צלע in architectural contexts, such as the tabernacle texts of Exodus, and the 1 Kings and Ezekiel temple texts. Meyers points to 1 Kgs. 6.34 as a particularly helpful example of the idea that צלע implies an equal "side." In this passage, the word is used to describe the two leaves of a double door. Together, the two leaves form a wide door; alone, they form only half the entryway. The door is not complete without both leaves/sides. The same applies for the man and the woman: "they are virtually the same, and their combination produces humanity, but a male and a female 'side' without the other could never produce the whole" (*Rediscovering Eve*, 75). For other interpretations, see Hans Goedicke, "Adam's Rib," in *Biblical and Related Studies Presented to Samuel Iwry* (eds., A. Kort and S. Morschauer; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1985), 73-6, and A.T. Reisenberger, "The Creation of Adam as Hermaphrodite and Its Implications for Feminist Theology," *Judaism* 42.4 (1993): 447-52.

and woman. When man and woman cling to one another, so the narrator asserts, they become

"one flesh"—but it is a flesh that is now sexually differentiated.[29]

Thus, the apparent symmetry of things becomes more complicated upon further analysis.

The introduction of the terms "man" (אִישׁ) and "woman" (אִשָּׁה) highlights this.[30] Their close

connection appears to reflect the "logical" idea that maleness and femaleness cannot exist

without each other, that one cannot supersede the other. There is an obvious slippage, however,

in this neat equation. The text, after all, only mentions that it is the "woman" (not the "man")

who is made out of the divided human: "And Yahweh God built the rib/side which he had taken

from the human (אדם) into a woman (אשה), and he brought her to the human (אדם)" (2.22). The

speech that follows can thus assert that the woman was taken out of the "man" (אישׁ) even though

strictly speaking she was taken out of the sexually undifferentiated human. What this amounts to,

in other words, is the blurring of the man with the human, so much so that it is as if (the) human

always was (the) man. David Jobling, for instance, astutely notes that while maleness and

femaleness are meaningless before sexual differentiation, the text nevertheless asserts the

"illogical," namely the originality of "maleness over femaleness."[31] Thus, the term אדם can be

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[29] Landy thus observes that while the woman supersedes the animals, and so is a suitable counterpart where they were inadequate, she is still human; man and woman are a divided self (*Paradoxes of Paradise*, 225-6). Humanity, therefore, is still alone, and the second experiment is likewise a failure. "The desire for a relationship with a like-opposite," state Gunn and Fewell, "is both fulfilled and unfulfilled, fulfillable and unfulfillable, in the case of the humans as the case of God" (*Gender, Power, and Promise*, 27-8).

[30] While the words are obviously similar, and therefore emphasize closeness, they are not etymologically related. It is as if the desire for sameness overrides the history of language itself. Alternatively, it reveals difference even in the appearance of sameness—the terms are only "like" each other, and beneath the surface come from different roots.

[31] David Jobling, *The Sense of Biblical Narrative: Structural Analyses of the Hebrew Bible, II* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), 41-2.

used to refer to only the man (2.25), and it may even refer to both the man and the woman (3.22, 24), but it is never equated with just the woman.[32]

The woman, therefore, is denied the role of progenitor, while the human/man and God (and even the "soil" [אדמה]) both perform creative life-giving acts. The irony is obvious: woman's biological function of childbearing is attributed to everybody else but her. And having been denied any generative role, the woman is, as Lynda Boose states, "positionally coded as 'daughter'" at this point in the narrative.[33] As a daughter, the woman does not intrude into the phallic authority of the human/man and God and this accordingly appears to be her default

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[32] Indeed, this gap is found throughout the opening chapters of Genesis. In Gen 1-4, אדם is used to refer to the human species in general (humankind), to its male component in particular (mankind), to a singular androgynous creature (the earthling/human), to a masculine individual (the man/male), or to a properly named individual (Adam)—but never to an exclusively female individual or the female component of humankind in particular. Gen 1.26-7 provides an especially good example of this:

> And God(s) said [sing.]: "Let us make humankind (אדם) in our image, after our likeness"…so God(s) created [sing.] the human (האדם) in his own image, in the image of God(s) he created him; male and female he created them.

In these verses אדם mirrors the switching of pronouns for God and the subject-verb disagreement with God's name (if even God is determined by grammar, as Nietzsche famously argued, then whatever is determined must be slippery). The term therefore wavers between not just singularity and plurality but also femininity and masculinity. In terms of linguistic gender, however, its (only) default position is masculine ("So God created the human in *his* own image, in the image of God he created *him*"). Thus, while the text grammatically allows for the duality of gender, for both humankind and God, it does not allow for the possibility of the exclusively feminine. For a thorough analysis of the uses of אדם in the opening chapters of Genesis, see Richard Hess, "Splitting the Adam: The Usage of *'ādām* in Genesis i-v," in *Studies in the Pentateuch* (ed. J.A. Emerton; Leiden: Brill, 1990), 1-15.

[33] Boose, "The Father's House," 50. This coding of the woman as daughter is determined by the familial context of the scene which becomes explicit in 2.24. The biblical text assumes that a woman must always be defined in subordinate relation to a patriarch. This is also the reason that both the deity and the human/earthling are implicitly male—thereby assuming that woman could not precede (both come before in terms of time and position) man. For a feminist critique of this ideology in origin stories, and an attempt to read otherwise, see Luce Irigaray's *In the Beginning, She Was* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013).

position. So why then is she not explicitly designated as such? At least one reason is that *the woman/daughter is also the woman/wife.*

This brings us to the narratorial summary in 2.24, for there is not just sexual differentiation in this verse but also (the traces of) sex.[34] Gen 2.7-23 tells of the creation of humankind and the eventual division into man and woman; Gen 2.24 (as well as verse 25) introduces, in a proleptic sense, a world concerning the relations between men and women.[35] It alludes to marriage, sex, and families—and to the issues of unity and division associated with them.[36] The Eden story is one of projection, both in the chronological and Freudian sense, and this is exemplified in 2.24.

The verse presents itself as a summary of the preceding narrative, as if Gen 2.7-23 should explain, or shed light upon, why it is that a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife (thereby becoming "one flesh"). The linguistic parallels—the pairing of "man and woman" (איש and אשה) and the mention of "flesh" (בשׂר)—further enforce this. The exact connection between 2.24 and the story that precedes it, however, is far from obvious. Verse 24 speaks of a

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[34] For discussions of this verse, see Paul Krueger, "Etiology or Obligation? Genesis 2:24 Reconsidered in Light of Text Linguistics," in *Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des Antiken Judentums, Volume 55: Thinking Towards New Horizons: Collected Communications to the XIXth Congress of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament, Ljubljana 2007* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 35-47; Angela Tosato, "On Genesis 2:24," *CBQ* (1990): 389-409; Robert Lawton, "Genesis 2:24: Trite or Tragic?" *JBL* 105.1 (1986): 97-8.

[35] Lawton argues that the verse should not be understood in a frequentative sense ("Therefore, a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his woman, and they become one flesh.") but rather as a statement of divine intention ("Therefore, a man should/was to leave his father and mother and cleave to his woman, and they should/were to become one flesh."). See Lawton, "Genesis 2:24," 97-8.

[36] Gerhard von Rad argues that the verse "is concerned not with a legal custom but with a natural drive" (*Genesis* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972], 85). That is, it is not about marriage but about physical attraction. I see no reason, however, why the verse should be interpreted exclusively about one or the other.

אִישׁ "man" leaving his אָב "father" and אֵם "mother" and clinging to his אִשָּׁה "wife," but who

leaves whom in the preceding verses? And who clings to whom? As we have seen, if anybody

can be seen to be "leaving" somebody else in 2.21-24, it would be the woman, as she is formed

from the rib/side taken from the man and then brought (בּוֹא) back to the man. Thus, if the text

would have spoken of a woman leaving her father and mother, then perhaps the analogy (if that

is the intended case) would have been more accurate.[37] It is similarly difficult to determine who,

if anybody, is supposed to represent the father and mother of verse 24. On the one hand, the

androgynous human of 2.7-21 would seem like the obvious candidate, given that it could, in a

way, encompass both genders. From this perspective, the man and woman are separate parts of

the human, which helps explain why their clinging back together results in "one flesh" (2.24). (It

is like the androgynous sex from Aristophanes' speech in *The Symposium* [189c-193e]: after

being divided into male and female parts, the parts desperately seek out their other half in order

to recover their primal nature.) But the conflation of the human and the man (of אָדָם and אִישׁ)

would complicate such a reading, for if the man (אִישׁ) can also be the human (אָדָם), then it is as if

the man is simultaneously son and father. The rib/side turns into an abstraction not from a

sexually undifferentiated body, but a masculine one—and the becoming of "one flesh" can be

imagined, as Boose puts it, "as a form of male re-union with male flesh rather than with flesh

that is totally separate, radically other, and conspicuously not-male."[38] (And thus, in a way, more

like Aristophanes' original wholly male sex who is divided into two male parts.) Another

potential issue with this interpretation is that it ignores the role of the deity. It is Yahweh, after

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[37] It is also commonly argued that the verse has things backwards in this regard on the
basis that the vast majority of marriages in the Hebrew Bible have the woman (and not the man)
leaving her family (see V. Hamilton, "Marriage," *ABD* 4:559-69.) This assumes though that the
verse is speaking specifically of marriage.

[38] Boose, "The Father's House," 51.

all, who is the common denominator in the creation of the human as well as the man and the woman. The deity creates the human from the medium of the maternal earth (אדמה), and then orchestrates the differentiation between man (איש) and woman (אשה). The feminine אשה coming out of the masculine איש thus reverses the creative process—and yet, the human/man is entirely passive (having been put into a deep sleep) while Yahweh constructs the woman.[39] More accurately, Yahweh "builds" (בנה) the side of the man into a woman, a verb that can have the special sense of building/establishing a family.[40]

The text, therefore, presents a complex genealogical picture, in which both the human/man and God are depicted implicitly as a father, but never explicitly so—just as the woman is depicted implicitly as a daughter. The reason for this ambiguous relationship between these characters becomes more apparent when these familial roles also blur into husband/wife.

In the immediate context, this is most apparent in regard to the human/man and the woman, for not only is the woman (metaphorically?) born out of the man, she also becomes his wife/sexual partner. The man's poetic expression in 2.23 that the woman is his "bone and flesh" (the likely source for the English idiom "flesh and blood") is not just a claim of being made of the same material, but is also a typical biblical kinship formulation.[41] There is a subtle transition,

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[39] In the man's speech in v.23, likewise, there is a clever circumvention of Yahweh's role by the use of the passive construction, "she *was taken* out of the man."

[40] Other important examples include Hagar's surrogate mothering for Sarah (Gen 16.2) and Bilhah's surrogate mothering for Rachel (Gen 30.3); in both passages, the handmaid will bear children so that the primary wife might "be established/be built up" (the verb is in the *niphal* in both cases). Similarly, Ruth 4.11 states that Rachel and Leah "built up" the house of Israel—a usage that relates to the levirate marriage in which a brother's house might be "built up" (e.g. Deut 25.9). All of this may even relate to the fact that the same root in Akkadian and Ugaritic can also mean "create." See 166-81S. Wagner, "בנה" *TDOT* 2: 166-81 (esp. 172-73); BDB בנה 2a.

[41] What is the exact relationship between people who identify as having the same "bone and flesh" (the order in which the idiom is typically presented)? On the one hand, it seems to align with our modern concept of "blood" relationship as in Laban's greeting to his nephew

therefore, from kinship to betrothal in 2.24. The effect, as James Nohrnberg points out, is that the man's kinship with the woman becomes "directly insulated from its incestuous consequences by the non-sequitur" of 2.24.[42] The union between the man and the woman, their being one flesh, therefore, "does not constitute an unlawful or impure intimacy between kin that confuses spouse and blood."[43]

Jacob "you are my bone and my flesh" (Gen. 29.14, see also Gen. 37.27; Judg. 9.2-3). In other cases, however, it carries other senses, as in the tribes of Israel's declaration to David that "we are your bone and flesh" (2 Sam. 5.1). Most often then it appears to refer to a link in horizontal contiguity, that is, not necessarily a link between generations but one of contemporaneous equality (which, by extension, can therefore refer to generational links). See N.P. Bratsiotis, "בשׂר" *TDOT* 2:317-32 (esp. 327-8); Karl-Martin Beyse, "עצם" *TDOT* 11:3-4-9 (esp. 306). This meaning of the idiom is further supported by comparing its use to another substance-based term for kinship relatedness in the Hebrew Bible: seed (זרע). Seed refers to the kinship relation between a father and his biological descendants and thus emphasizes vertical contiguity. "Bone and flesh," on the other hand, emphasizes horizontal relationships (but is also more malleable and ambiguous).

Seed (זרע) does not appear in Gen 2, but one may still question to what extent the first man and woman share the same seed. Sharing bone and flesh, for instance, casts them as horizontally related (even though in context it functions like a betrothal formulation), perhaps even as brother and sister. They would thus share the same "seed" as their father, implicitly the deity. On the other hand, it is clear that the human/man precedes the woman, and later they will copulate and produce their own "seed" with Cain, Abel, and Seth. Seth is even designated as "another seed" (4.25)—though crucially even here it is God who has appointed this seed, so the deity's role again prevents any neat genealogical line between the man and the woman (and their offspring).

For a thought provoking, and persuasive, essay that suggests that one might also add breastmilk as another substance-based term for kinship relatedness in the Hebrew Bible, see Cynthia Chapman, "'Oh That You Were Like a Brother to Me, One Who Had Nursed at My Mother's Breasts': Breast Milk as a Kinship Forging Substance," *JHebS* 12.7 [2012]: 1-41). For an engaging discussion on the development of the Hebrew Bible's "bone and flesh" to Paul's use of the idiom "flesh and blood" in the New Testament to the modern understanding of "blood-ties," see Gil Anidjar, *Blood: A Critique of Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

[42] Nohrnberg, "The Keeping of Nahor: The Etiology of Biblical Election," in *The Book and the Text: The Bible and Literary Theory* (ed. Regina Schwartz; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 161-88 (165-6).

[43] Nohrnberg, "The Keeping of Nahor," 165. Sarna notes the seeming contradiction of the man and the woman clinging to each other to become one flesh, for the verb "cling" (דבק), "essentially expresses the idea of two distinct entities becoming attached to one another while preserving their separate identities" (*Genesis: The JPS Torah Commentary* [Philadelphia: Jewish

This avoidance of the incest taboo, from a certain perspective, is fairly odd. Why, in a time "before the law," so to speak, should one expect any sexual regulation? The double-edged meaning of utopia, however, is played out in the inevitable projection into other worlds—in this case, brought about by 2.24 (and the foreshadowing of 2.25). That is to say, the incest taboo is present from the very beginning, even though, in the beginning, it must inevitably be broken. The only way it could be avoided would be for the narrative to go outside itself and import a woman whose genesis is completely separate from that of the human's/man's or God's (as is somewhat the case for the wife of Cain). This, however, is obviously not done; instead, the Eden story ends up presenting, as Boose asserts, "the paradigm of human procreation into a tacitly condoned but overtly disclaimed act between father and daughter…On one hand, the text acknowledges no authorization for incest; at the same time, it tacitly allows for what it then projects onto the unauthorized daughter it violates."[44] The biblical text, therefore, creates a story in which a daughter is necessary, and, moreover, where procreation must advance from (officially unacknowledged) father-daughter incest (thus affirming that the text projects in the Freudian sense as well).

Genesis 4: The Woman's (Pro)Creation

While 2.24 introduces the world of sexual relations, copulation does not occur until 4.1, after the man and woman have exited the garden:

Publication Society, 1989], 23). This is a reunification, therefore, that emphasizes oneness in the midst of being made up of two entities. So here again is the theme of sameness and difference in which the paradox is embraced. There is also the careful removal of "bone" (עצם) in describing the couple's unity—that is, the man first describes the woman as the same "bone and flesh" as him but their coming together refers only to "flesh." The couple thus becomes one "flesh" but not one "bone/substance," and their separateness is still affirmed.

[44] Boose, The Father's House," 52.

And the human knew Eve his woman; and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and

said: "I have (pro)created a man with Yahweh."

It is a puzzling verse, as almost every clause is subject to a number of interpretive difficulties.

There is, again, an ambiguous genealogy, allowing for both the human/man as well as God to be

thought of as the woman's partner in procreation. The two figures behind the woman's birth are

now the two figures behind her procreative act, furthering the conflation of father with husband,

and woman with wife.[45]

"And the human (הָאָדָם) knew (יָדַע) Eve his woman (אִשָּׁה)…"

The use of the verb "know" (יָדַע) has behind it the full weight of the drama of Genesis 3,

of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, of the woman's temptation to acquire

knowledge and her yielding to that temptation, and of the humans' newfound awareness of their

nakedness. It was knowledge that caused the opening of the humans' eyes and consequently the

awareness of sexual difference, and thus it is significant that knowledge is now equated with

copulation. The human/man is the subject of the verb while the woman is the object, a pattern

that, as we have seen, continues throughout the Hebrew Bible. So while it is the woman who is

more closely associated with knowledge in Genesis 3 (she is the one who takes the fruit and

gives it to the man), it is now the man who becomes the active "knower."

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[45] That such conflation may not be immediately apparent is perhaps due to the gap between the creation of the woman in 2.21-24 and the copulation in 4.1. This delay may serve precisely this purpose, for the incestuous features of the text would have been more obvious if the human/man had intercourse with the woman, or if God were proclaimed the woman's procreative partner, right after creating her.

The giving of fruit is a motherly, nurturing action, which leads us to the proper name "Eve" (חוה). The woman's name is used in 4.1, a detail which becomes more important considering its only other appearance is in the naming speech in which it is given.[46]

And the human/man called the name of his woman Eve (חוה), because she was the mother of all the living (אם כל־חי) (3.20).

The pun in this naming speech revolves around the noun חוה (Eve) and the adjective/noun חי (living), suggesting that Eve means "life-giver" or something of the like—which, of course, is further highlighted by her explicit description as a mother (אם).[47] The proper name, therefore,

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[46] That the woman is given a name at all is noteworthy, for women are named far less frequently than men in biblical narrative. In her study on anonymity and the naming of biblical characters, Adele Reinhartz lists four primary functions of biblical proper names: 1.) it may carry meaning in itself (either from naming speeches, etymology, or other contextual clues); 2.) it ascribes unity to a character; 3.) it provides a convenient label by which to refer to a character; 4.) it distinguishes characters from one another. Thus, the absence of a proper name (at least in reference to major characters) contributes to the "effacement, absence, veiling, or suppression of identity." See Reinhartz, *Why Ask My Name?" Anonymity and Identity in Biblical Narrative* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 6-9 [9].

In her tally of individual actors in the Hebrew Bible (excluding those who are only briefly mentioned, as in genealogies), Reinhartz finds 390 named males and 100 unnamed males as opposed to 50 named females and 46 unnamed females (*Why Ask My Name?* 190). So when a female biblical character is given a name, this is especially noteworthy. This is obviously the case with Eve, as her possession of a proper name clearly marks a transition point in her characterization. Mieke Bal, however, observes that the illusion of fullness which the proper name provides is so powerful that readers almost inevitably fall prey to the retrospective fallacy. This fallacy "consists of the projection of an accomplished and singular named character onto previous textual elements that lead to the construction of that character" (*Lethal Love*, 108) Thus, to refer to the woman in 2.22-3.19 as "Eve" (חוה) is inaccurate, for she has not been given a proper name yet.

[47] The emphasis in biblical naming speeches, as Speiser says, is on "aetiology rather than etymology," and thus "a correct or even plausible linguistic derivation would be purely coincidental, since the play on the name is the significant thing" (*Genesis*, 232). The LXX, for instance, translates the woman's name as Ζωή "life."

Looking beyond the text, however, scholars have offered other etymologies for חוה. The most popular suggestion being that the word could be derived from the Aramaic חויה, and similar Arabic cognates, which mean "snake" or "serpent" (see Howard Wallace, "Eve," *ABD* 2: 677). This has resulted in hypotheses of an earlier version of the Eden story in which Eve was a female

relates the woman's personal identity to a specifically maternal role. And perhaps this is why Eve's name is specifically mentioned in 4.1, for she is now truly a mother. That is, the use of "Eve" in 4.1 refers back to the naming speech in 3.20 because it completes the woman's transition into motherhood.

On the other hand, this also draws attention to the anachronistic order of things. For one, it highlights the fact that the woman is given a motherly title before she has given birth to anybody. She is given this name, moreover, by the human/man (האדם)—the single human of whom she is not a mother-ancestress. In fact, in 2.23, as we have seen, the human/man presents *himself* as the progenitor of the woman.

Exploring the connection between חוה (Eve) and חי (living) further enforces this disjunction. To what, for example, does the "living" (חי) refer in the phrase "mother of all the living"? The word (and variations of its root) is used most often in the first three chapters of Genesis to refer to animals (1.20, 21, 24, 25, 28, 30; 2.19, 20; 3.1, 14). In what way, however, could Eve be thought of as the mother of these living creatures? They have already been created, either directly by God (e.g. 1.20, 21) or through the earth (ארץ) or ground (אדמה) as God's medium for their formation (e.g. 1.24; 2.9). The woman does not even play a role in naming the living creatures, as this is the prerogative of the human (2.19-20).[48] If one attempts to confine חי

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serpent goddess (see Kaperlud, "חַוָּה," in *TDOT* 4: 257-60; Isaac Kikawada, "Two Notes on Eve," *JBL* 91 [1972]: 33-7).

[48] Duncan ("Adam and the Ark," *Encounter: Creative Christian Theological Scholarship* [1976] 37: 189-97) presents a different perspective:

> Adam calls his wife Eve because she is the "mother of all those who live." As it is peculiarly animals and men who are 'living beings" in The Book of Genesis, I see no reason why we should not interpret this passage as describing a *family* consisting of men and animals, with men in something of a parental role (192).

If "men" means "humankind" to Duncan, then the assertion is problematic, for the animals are obviously created before the woman (אשה), and much before the naming of Eve.

as a reference to solely human beings, the same inconsistency arises. This is not just because of the human's/man's role in the story, but also because of Yahweh's. It is Yahweh who first breathes the "breath of life" (נשׁמת חיים) into the human in 2.7, causing him to become a "living being" (נפשׁ חיה). Moreover, it is Yahweh who plants and controls the tree of life (חיים) (2.9; 3.22, 24), which could have secured the possibility of "living forever" (חי לעלם).

How then are we to understand Eve as "the mother of all the living" at a point in the narrative in which (so far) almost everybody and everything has given birth except her? God creates life and breathes life into the first human, the woman is taken from the man's body, and even the ground and earth similarly act as mediums for the formation of animals and man—up until 4.1 Eve is a mother in name alone. Why does the text seem to repress the woman's biological function of child-bearing? Following the work of others, I would assert that the answer is pregnancy/womb envy, the patriarchal desire to create without women.[49] The creative

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[49] See, for example, Erich Fromm, *The Forgotten Language* (New York: Grove Press, 1951), 233-34; Alan Dundes, "Couvade in Genesis," in *Parsing Through Customs: Essays by a Freudian Folklorist* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 145-66; Roland Boer, "The Fantasy of Genesis 1-3," *BibInt* 14.4 (2006): 309-31.

Fromm, in his analysis of the Eden narrative in comparison with Enuma Elish, offers his explanation of this reading:

> Women have the gift of natural creation, they can bear children. Men are sterile in this respect…In order to defeat the mother, the male must prove that he is not inferior, that he has the gift to produce. Since he cannot produce without a womb, he must produce in another fashion; he produces with his mouth, his word, his thought (*The Forgotten Language,* 233-4).

From this perspective, Fromm differs from some of the more traditional psychoanalytic interpretations. Freud referred to the opening chapters of Genesis as a disguise for the "well known motif of mother incest," (William McGuire [ed.], *The Freud/Jung Letters* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974], 288), which was an endorsement of Rank's interpretation of the text (see *The Incest Theme in Literature and Legend*, 247-8). This interpretation, which is obviously heavily dependent upon Oedipal desires, is most thoroughly explored by Geza Roheim, "The Garden of Eden," *Psychoanalytic Review* 27.1 (1940): 1-26 and 27.2 (1940): 177-99.

For Lacanian readings of the text, which similarly focus upon Oedipal desires (though also take into account the role of the daughter in a more thorough way), see Kim Parker, "Mirror,

acts of God and man are appropriations, and the mediums which they use for creation are

likewise "displaced metaphors for the female body."[50] Like the illogical assertion of maleness

existing before femaleness, the text assumes male creation to be original.

The man's naming speech of Eve in 3.20, therefore, is not only proleptic, but also, oddly

enough, belated. The text, according to Roland Boer, betrays its own secret in this verse: "unable

to hold back, it blurts out the truth, hoping we will not notice: the only ones who do in fact

create, who do give life, are women."[51] This is why the verse comes "not in the martial regularity

of Genesis 1, nor in the earthy potter's tale of Genesis 2, but after the disobedience and curses of

chapter 3."[52] Indeed, the first association of the woman with motherhood is not in 3.20, but in the

"punishments" of 3.16:

Mirror on the Wall, Must we Leave Eden, Once and for All? A Lacanian Pleasure Trip Through the Garden," *JSOT* 83 (1999): 3-17; A. Piskorowski, "In Search of Her Father: A Lacanian Approach to Genesis 2-3," in *A Walk in the Garden: Biblical, Iconographical, and Literary Images of Eden* (eds. P. Morris and D.F. Sawyer; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 310-18.

[50] Boer, "The Fantasy of Genesis 1-3," 320.

[51] Boer, "The Fantasy of Genesis 1-3," 319.

[52] Boer, "The Fantasy of Genesis 1-3," 319. Joel Rosenberg offers another perspective, asserting that the belated recognition of woman's motherhood may also be a sign of the human/man's greater insight into the human condition, given his newfound knowledge. He notes the significance of the fact that the man names the woman immediately after he has been aware of his own mortality (3.19). Now that his eyes are open, the man realizes that life will only continue through procreation and therefore names his woman/wife with an etymologically appropriate name. (See, Rosenberg, "The Garden Story Forward and Backward: The non-narrative dimension of Gen. 2-3," *Prooftexts* 1.1 [1981] 1-27 [esp. 14].)

The verses that follow, 3.21-24, display a new understanding between God and humankind. The providing of clothes (3.21) re-establishes the triangular relationship between God and man and woman, but with certain constraints and limits. On the one hand, clothing is a sign of restitution, the woman and the man can once again look at each other, and stand before God, without shame (see Landy, *Paradoxes of Paradise*, 249-50). However, clothing also symbolizes distance—no longer is the couple naked before each other and God; the immediacy and intimacy shown in the creation of the human in 2.7 and the naming of the woman in 2.23 are lost. The gap between human and the divine is assured by the banishment of the man and woman from the garden, preventing their access to the Tree of Life (חיים) and eternal life (חי לעלם). There is an obvious juxtaposition then between the woman's motherly, life giving title and the

Unto the woman [God] said:

"I will increase your toil and pregnancies;

with hardship shall you have children.

And to your man shall be your desire,

and he shall rule over you."[53]

In 3.1-6, the woman incorporated pleasing fruit on her own initiative; in 3.16, she produces

painful fruit according to divine decree.[54] The man then takes this curse and further solidifies it

in 3.20. Imagine, in comparison, if immediately after 3.17-19—in which the man is fated to work

in toil (עצבון) in order to eat—the woman pronounced the man's name as יעצב "he toils" (or

something of the like).

All of this complexity in the relationship between the man and the woman should be

taken into account when reading 4.1. This entails, for one, recalling the genealogical relationship

between the two—the man who knows Eve in 4.1 is, in fact, the (claimed) progenitor of her

(2.23). It is slightly ironic, then, that the man who had previously denied the woman a maternal

role is the same one who brings her into motherhood. The man also provides the proper name

"Eve" for the woman, which forever links her to motherhood. And yet, as we have seen, this

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prevention from access to the Tree of Life. The woman provides a certain type of life for
humanity, but not the immortality that the Tree of Life offers.

[53] The translation "I will increase your toil and pregnancies" follows Carol Meyers
argument in her extended discussion of the verse in *Rediscovering Eve* (81-102). The tendency
of some translations to interpret the two nouns (עצבון and הריון) as a hendiadys (which is often
reflected in a noun plus prepositional phrase, as, for example, the NRSV's "your pangs in
childbirth") is possible, but is not necessary. Moreover, the LXX and Vulgate also have two
nouns as the direct object of the verb "to increase/multiply." I also follow Meyers's assertion that
the second noun (הריון) refers to pregnancy and not childbirth (89).

[54] See Daniel Patte and Judson F. Parker, "A Structural Exegesis of Genesis 2-3," *Semeia*
18 (1980): 55-76. See also Landy, *Paradoxes of Paradise*, 245. One may also notice the possible
pun between tree (עץ), the object of the woman's initial desire, and the increase of pain/toil
(עצבון).

naming speech should be interpreted as much more than the man's pleasure in the woman's

procreative abilities. In fact, it may express his jealousy. Ilana Pardes, for instance, flatly states:

"The deferred emergence of the proper name 'Eve' may thus be seen as a narratological strategy

that enables Adam [the human/man] to act out his parturient fantasies, as a compensation for his

relatively minute share in procreation."[55] This postponed acknowledgement of the woman's

biological function of childbearing is, in fact, what positions her initially as a daughter. Later, the

man will acknowledge the power of the woman's dominant role in procreation, but only after he

has presented himself as the original progenitor, and as long as he is the active partner in

conception (that is, as long as he is the "knower" and not the "known").

The woman's daughterhood, therefore, is more of a side effect, a result of the delayed

affirmation of her motherhood. Accordingly, she is never explicitly presented as a daughter, but

remains an unacknowledged one. Eve's daughterhood is a placeholder—a necessary position

before motherhood, but unrecognized and uncelebrated in itself.[56]

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[55] Pardes, *Countertraditions*, 49.

[56] Supporting this is the possible connection between Eve's name (חוה), daughterhood, and space. The root חוה occurs nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible in the singular it does, however, appear as a plural meaning "tent village" (see Num. 32.41; Deut. 3.14; Jos. 13.30; Judg. 10.4; 1 Kgs 4.13; 1 Chron. 2.23). Stiebert perceptively relates this association between name and space to the way that the word בת "daughter" can also refer to an abode or village. This relates not just to the use of בת in phrases like בת־ציון "Daughter Zion," but also to the conflation between בית "house" and בת "daughter" (see especially Isa. 10.32). Johanna Stiebert pursues these connections even further by noting the network of associations in the names of "the daughters of one mother" in Ezekiel 23 who become Yahweh's Oholah (אהלה) and Oholibah (אהליבה), which mean "her tent" and "my tent is in her" respectively (*Fathers and Daughters*, 176, n.42). These daughters, too, are related to space, to a place in which one dwells.

"And she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and said: "I have (pro)created a man with Yahweh"

(קניתי איש את יהוה)"

After the human/man knows his woman, she conceives and gives birth to a son, Cain. In the woman's naming speech, however, the human's/man's role in this procreative process is noticeably absent. Instead, the woman focuses her attention on her other father (figure): Yahweh.

Every word of the woman's speech poses interpretive problems, beginning with the polysemic verb קנה (to create). Following the biblical pattern of naming speeches, the verb puns with Cain's name (קין). Beyond this phonetic link, however, the meaning of קנה in this context has been a matter of debate. Its primary connotation is "to acquire" or "to buy," but the notion that Eve literally acquired or bought a man would make little sense here. More preferable, therefore, is the secondary meaning "to create," as in Ps 139.13: "You have created (קנה) my inmost parts; you wove me in my mother's womb."[57] David Bokovoy points out that these two meanings of the verb are more related than one might think, particularly when it comes to divine creating. In most ancient Near Eastern conceptions (like the opening chapter of Genesis), a deity or deities would not create *ex nihilo* but rather would assume ownership, becoming a "master" in a sense, over pre-existent material, and thereby provide cosmic order to the primordial chaos. This accords nicely then not only with divine titles in the Hebrew Bible, as in Yahweh's being the "maker (קנה) of heaven and earth" (e.g. Gen 14.19, 22), but also other ancient Near Eastern parallels, as in the description of Asherah (the Ugaritic mother goddess) as "creatress of the gods" (the word for "creatress" being from the same root).[58] Indeed, in Bokovoy's analysis, the

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[57] See also Gen. 14.19, 22; Exod. 15.16; Deut. 32.6; Ps. 78.54, 139.13; Prov. 8.22

[58] David E. Bokovoy, "Did Eve Acquire, Create, or Procreate with Yahweh? A Grammatical and Contextual Assessment of קנה in Genesis 4:1," *VT* 63 (2013): 19-35, for the

evidence from ancient Near Eastern parallels actually shows that the verb can have the specific meaning of "procreate" and thus certainly would have been understood as such in a context like Gen. 4.1 in which קנה is used with reference to the production of life.[59]

To interpret קנה as "procreate" has implications on the meaning of the controversial final clause of the verse, את יהוה. Grammatically, one might first read the את as a sign of the accusative. The parallelism of the verse suggests this, as the first two clauses contain two other occurrences of את as markers of direct objects: 1.) Eve as the direct object (את חוה) of Adam's knowing (ידע), and 2.) Cain as the direct object (את קין) of Eve's begetting (ילד). If Yahweh is the direct object of Eve's (pro)creating (קנה), however, then how does one interpret the grammatical status of איש (which is the more logical direct object)? Thus, scholars like von Rad interpret the clause as a prepositional phrase with an instrumental sense, "with the help of Yahweh," despite the acknowledgment that את never carries this connotation in the Hebrew Bible.[60] There is no need, however, to assume the preposition is instrumental, as it could more simply carry a comitative sense, as in "together with Yahweh" or just, "with Yahweh."[61] In other words, the preposition brings about a sense of intimacy and accompaniment between two participants—as in Enoch and Noah's walking "with" (את) God (Gen. 5.22 and 6.9). The point is that Yahweh is

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ancient Near Eastern parallels, see pp. 22-6. The other oft-cited parallel is the title for the Akkadian goddess Mami, who is called "mistress of all the gods" and "creatress of humanity" (*Atrahasis* 1. 188-260). See Howard Wallace, "Eve," *ABD* 2: 677; Jan Heller, "Der Name Eva," *Archiv Orientální* 26 (1958): 635-56.

[59] Bokovoy, "Did Eve Acquire, Create, or Procreate with Yahweh?" 25-6.

[60] See von Rad, *Genesis*, 103. See also Bruce K. Waltke and Michael Patrick O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 177.

A parallel with the Atrahasis Epic is oft cited in conjunction with this verse in which the creatress Mami creates "with the aid" (*itti*)—the preposition is analogous to the Hebrew את—of Enki. See Isaac Kikawada, "Two Notes on Eve," *JBL* 91 (1972): 33-7

[61] Bokovoy, "Did Eve Acquire, Create, or Procreate with Yahweh?" 31-2. See also Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis, Part 1* (trans. Israel Abrahams; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1961), 198 and 201.

not merely an uninvolved instrument, but an active, participatory agent in Eve's first procreation. This, I would assert, goes beyond God's more typical participation in the procreative process— as in his opening and closing of wombs (e.g. Gen. 30.22). For in Gen. 4.1, "God is treated scandalously as a partner, not quite as the pivot around whom everything swerves," as Pardes puts it.[62]

This brings us to the peculiar use of איש, as one might have expected the text to read "child" (ילד) or "son" (בן) instead. Eve, however, might be taking pride in not just her role in the birth of Cain, but also in the generative power of the female body. There is even the implication of Eve as a *divine* creatress (comparable to the likes of Asherah), given that she views God as her partner.[63] One might note, additionally, the similarity between Eve's name (חוה) and Yahweh's (יהוה), which is perhaps suggestive of a phonetic pair (that 4.1 is the first place in which the divine name Yahweh (יהוה) stands alone further highlights this). There is even a connection between the woman's title as "mother of all the living" (אם כל־חי) and the association of God's

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[62] Pardes, *Countertraditions*, 44. Curiously, Bokovoy refrains from making this same conclusion, asserting that, "from a theological perspective," God "obviously did not engage in sexual relations with Eve" though he did have "a mysterious, albeit direct divine role to play in the first act of human creation" (33).

[63] It is somewhat common to assert that in an earlier version of the Eden story Eve was a female goddess and a consort to Yahweh (or that the Eden story is playing upon the presentation of Eve in comparison to ancient Near Eastern goddesses). See, for example, Kaperlud, "חַוָּה," in *TDOT* 4: 257-60; Isaac Kikawada, "Two Notes on Eve," *JBL* 91 (1972): 33-7; James Barr, *The Garden of Eden and the Hope of Immortality* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 65-6; Ilona Rashkow, "Throw Momma from the Garden a Kiss: Or Paradise Revisited," in *Taboo or Not Taboo*, 43-73.

Eve was demoted to a human female, according to this hypothesis, as the (masculine) monotheistic ideology of the text would not allow for another (feminine) deity. Traces of this earlier stratum, however, can be found, as in Eve's proclamation in 4.1 or her dominant role in 3.1-6. Of course, it is beyond the scope of the present study to enter into an extended discussion of the history of the formation of the text or the historically relevant comparative literature. What can be taken from these studies is the analysis of the complicated and ambiguous relationship between Eve and Yahweh, and the traces of sexual interaction between them.

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name with חי (life/living) throughout the Hebrew Bible (אלהים/אל/יהוה חי, e.g. Deut. 5.23; Jos. 3.10; Hos. 2.1; Ps. 18.47, 42.3, 84.3; 1 Sam 17.26; 2 Sam. 22.47; 2 Kgs. 19.4, 16; Isa. 37.4, 17; Jer. 10.10, 23.36).[64] From this perspective, איש refers to the human race in general, to the creation of "man" (humanity) as such. Pardes argues that there is another potential referent behind the use of איש in 4.1: the איש of 2.23. Thus, Eve's speech is seen as a rebuttal to the man's "almost dreamlike reversal of things, to his indirect claim to have created woman out of his body, to his celebration of the generative capacity of his flesh and bones."[65] So whereas the man (איש) declares childbearing as his own feat in 2.23, the woman now sets the record straight, going so far as to even (retroactively) claim that very man "as another product of her creativity."[66]

Pardes thus interprets Eve's celebratory boast as one of the ways that biblical patriarchy is "continuously challenged by antithetical trends."[67] It is important, however, to keep in mind what Eve is actually boasting about: her maternal power. In other words, she is able to attain this position of power only as a mother—without this, she is left as a powerless and out of place daughter. The human race is imagined as continuing through men, and thus the first son is designated an איש—so daughters are not worth mentioning as offspring either, for they are not agents of procreation. Boasting about the creation of the איש thus further reveals the phallocentricism of the text. Eve's speech is masculine desires projected onto the female character—what else could she desire but to produce a son? Mothering gives the woman a place in this phallocentric logic, the male child functioning as a phallic symbol of authority.[68] Men prize the phallus as the ultimate symbol of power and authority and thus ascribe this same desire

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[64] See Stiebert, *Fathers and Daughters in the Hebrew Bible*, 177; *BDB* חי 1a.
[65] Pardes, *Countertraditions*, 47-8.
[66] Pardes, *Countertraditions*, 48
[67] Pardes, *Countertraditions*, 51.
[68] This is laid out most explicitly in Freud's essay/speech "Femininity," *SE* 22: 112-35.

to women. It is how, so Irigaray says, men inscribe women into "the law of the *same* desire, of *the desire of the same*;" it is, paradoxically, how men symbolically castrate women.[69]

Thus, motherhood, from a certain perspective, fits within the patriarchal power structure that the Eden story lays out—daughterhood does not. Gunn and Fewell, for instance, note that those in power—men (fathers and sons) in the case of patriarchy—are always willing to cede some measure of power, equity, and so on, as long as it is controllable and does not disturb the overall system. The system, in fact, may depend on providing those in subordinate positions with some measure of power, or at least the appearance of it. 'Power," Foucault writes, "is tolerable only on the condition that it mask a substantial part of itself. Its success is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanisms."[70] The "power" in this case is the woman's motherhood.

The woman's transition into the "law of the same desire," her transition from daughterhood to motherhood, begins with the woman's dialogue with the serpent in 3.1-6. The main charm of the fruit of the tree, as the serpent presents it, is likeness to God. God has something that the woman lacks, and jealousy about possible equivalence is what the serpent cites as the reason for God's prohibition. Boose aptly remarks that from a psychoanalytic point of view these verses narrate "the daughter's desire to acquire the father's knowledge/power through acquiring the (phallic) sign that has been denied her." The serpent's words, therefore, are the first step toward the woman's symbolic castration. The serpent directs the woman's attention, her gaze, to the father's tree, which holds what she does not have. When the woman partakes of the fruit, however, she does not find likeness. Instead, she finds difference and the uncanniness

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[69] Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, 411 (also 55-63). For general discussion on penis envy as masculine projection, see Nancy Burke (ed.), *Gender and Envy* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 53-152.
[70] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Volume 1: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 86.

of sexual dimorphism—discovered by looking upon the genitals of her other father (the man). This recognition leads to gender roles, to the woman's desire for her man and his rule over her (3.16). It is a "punishment" that "turns out to be a confirmation of what the man has already claimed and God has already approved, namely, the hierarchical priority of man."[71]

According to the internal logic of the text, it really could not have ended any other way. The woman's part in the story (like the other characters as well) is already predetermined, for it must inevitably conform to an already existent familial and social network (thus the blurring of etymology and etiology). So while one might be led to believe that the woman's eating of the fruit is rebellious, perhaps even a Promethean act, this is only a façade. As soon as God commands the human not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in 2.16-17, it is inevitable that the command will be broken—for in the world of myth (as is often the case in our world) prohibition entails transgression. God, as much as the serpent, is to blame for the eating of the tree's fruit—he is, after all, the one who made the serpent subtle/wise (ערום) in the first place (3.1). The two characters are not antagonists; rather, the serpent, as Landy observes, "symbolizes a side of God (the tempter, good-and-evil) that he refuses to recognize."[72] This explains God's absence in 3.1-6 and why the deity—who is otherwise ever-present—does not directly intervene in the serpent and woman's dialogue. This absence keeps the façade in place, and absolves God of any direct responsibility in regard to the woman's "transgression."[73]

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[71] Gunn and Fewell, *Power, Gender, Promise*, 37.

[72] Landy, *Paradoxes of Paradise*, 178.

[73] The omission of God's responsibility is nowhere more evident than in the chain of blame outlined in 3.11-13. The man blames the woman (3.12), the woman blames the serpent (3.13), but then God stops the sequence. If God had allowed the serpent a response, it might have been quite telling, as the next logical character to blame would have been God.

The man's culpability, similarly, is covered over and seen as secondary to that of the woman's. He is implicated only because he follows the lead of the woman—otherwise, as is well

In the familial coded positions of the text, in which God is a father and the woman his daughter, this masking of culpability represents the protection of the father—much like Lot's drunkenness. It is God, ultimately, who directs the woman's gaze upon his (phallic) tree. It is somewhat ironic then that God is also the one who curses the woman in 3.16. Rhetorically speaking, it is a way to turn "natural consequences into divinely controlled repercussions."[74] That is, God is able to orchestrate the woman's desire, make her aware of her lack, and then confirm this lack by punishing the woman for acting upon it.[75]

The seduction is so complete that by the end of the story, the woman actually celebrates her place in the (phallic) social order. Eve's boast, in other words, is reminiscent of the concern that Lot's daughters show "to preserve the seed of the father" in Gen. 19.30-38. That is, it makes more sense coming from the perspective of the father, and what the biblical text presents is the projection of this desire given in the voice of the daughter/mother. Indeed, by the time of her second speech, Eve's role in procreation is more subdued:

> And Adam knew his wife again; and she gave birth to a son, and she called his name Seth, [saying] "for God has appointed another seed in the place of Abel, for Cain killed him" (4.25).

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known, he plays a completely passive role. God's rebuke in 3.17-19, for instance, is prefaced by the remark: "because you have listened unto the voice of your woman…"

[74] Gunn and Fewell, *Power, Gender, Promise*, 35.

[75] The oddity of the scene in 3.1-6—in which either the woman lacks the ability and knowledge to make an adequate choice, or she has no real choice—is explained by Gunn and Fewell:

How can the woman discriminate between God's words and the serpent's words until she has the experience of failure or the discrimination she seeks? Why should she believe that one peremptory command is in her best interests and not another? She seeks, reasonably, to make a choice. Or, alternatively, she merely responds to her programming: to eat the good food and to be like God (*Power, Gender, Promise*, 30).

Eve no longer presents herself as co-creator; God is now the lone subject, the one who "appoints" (שׁית) seed.[76] Seth is described as "another seed" (זרע אחר), replacing the triumphant description of Cain as a "man" (אישׁ). In between these two sons is Abel, described as neither seed (זרע) nor a man (אישׁ), who appears for only a breath, as his name foretold. The woman may have been able to build a human being with Yahweh but she could not control the violence among her own sons. Eve presents the birth of Seth as a type of replacement for Abel, and the force of "for Cain killed him" perhaps suggests grief on the part of Eve. The mother of all the living has now seen death; that she lives in a world with the knowledge of death, somewhat ironically, is a result of her own actions. Pardes takes this a step further and argues that Eve's second naming speech should be interpreted as a story of pride and punishment (as is common in Gen 1-11). Thus, the tragedy which befalls Abel "is meant, among other things, as a retributive deflation of her hubris. The son who was the object of her (pro)creative pride turns out to be the destroyer of her procreation."[77] Her second speech reflects Eve's realization about where she stands in the (pro)creative order of things. And yet, that she is given a speech at all reveals her importance in this order nevertheless. The woman's speech is less authoritative than her first, but

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[76] Eve's second naming speech creates a number of interesting issues when read in light of her first. For instance, the role of the human/man is again downplayed. Thus, whereas Eve no longer boasts of her role as the primordial mother, she still "treats procreation as if it were the outcome of a transaction between God and her alone" (Pardes, *Countertraditions*, 53). Further highlighting this is the human/man is now referred to with the proper name, "Adam" (the definite article is not attached to the noun). This אדם, therefore, is no longer a representative human being, no longer "man" as such. Contrasted with this, however, is the use of אלהים (God), which replaces the more personal יהוה (Yahweh) in 4.1. The implication perhaps is that God now plays more of a transcendent role, he distantly "appoints" in the place of his former "(pro)creating" with Eve. In a way, this paves the way into God's more typical role in the procreative process in the Hebrew Bible. That is, he is no longer presented as a partner but remains an active participant (and is ultimately in control of conception and birth).

[77] Pardes, *Countertraditions*, 53.

her maternal role remains. This is the power that the text is willing to concede to her. The woman as a daughter, however, is left behind in Eden, in the utopia (no-place) of paradise.

Chapter 3: Of Bed-tricks, Stick-tricks, and Body-tricks: Rachel and Leah, and Jacob and Laban

In regard to their father, Rachel and Leah turn out to be more like Goneril and Regan than Cordelia. The tension between Laban and his daughters, however, is part of another agon, that between the father and his son-in-law, Jacob. It is a bit of a paradox that the patriarchal ideology (common to both Shakespeare and the Hebrew Bible) of daughters belonging to either the house of their father or their husband, with no seemingly neutral or independent space, creates this very antagonism between fathers and sons-in-law. Cordelia, in fact, expresses this problem quite well when she points out to Lear the hypocrisy of her sisters professing that they love their father "the most" despite the fact that they both have husbands.

> You have begot me, bred me, loved me. I
>
> Return those duties back as are right fit,
>
> Obey you, love you, and most honor you.
>
> Why have my sisters husbands if they say
>
> They love you all?
>
> …I shall never marry like my sisters,
>
> To love my father all. (*King Lear* 1.1.98-104)[1]

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[1] There have been several psychoanalytic readings of *King Lear* that focus on the sexual and incestuous themes surrounding Lear and his daughters, particularly, of course, Cordelia. The most well-known is Arpad Pauncz's "Psychopathology of Shakespeare's 'King Lear,'" *American Imago* 9 (1952): 57-78. Pauncz speaks of a "Lear Complex" as a kind of a reverse Oedipus complex, referring to a father's being sexually attracted to his daughter (which, of course, offers a sort of parallel to the Lot complex). Freud's essay on King Lear, "The Theme of the Three Caskets," focuses on Cordelia as symbolized death and makes no reference to incest, though in a letter to J.S.H. Bransom, Freud agreed that "the secret meaning of the tragedy" has to do with Lear's "repressed incestuous claims on the daughter's love" (see J.S.H. Bransom, *The Tragedy of*

Such daughterly love is seen, on the one hand, as an ideal. On the other hand, there are the

cultural demands for the daughter to leave the father's house—without her expendability, the

father's house cannot be built (so the logic goes). There is a predicament, therefore, not only for

the daughter but also for the father. Even dimwitted Polonius has the capacity to recognize about

Ophelia, "I have a daughter—have while she is still mine" (*Hamlet* 2.2.106). The one who takes

the father's possession away is the son-in-law and therein lays the root of the tension.

It is with an eye to these issues that I explore the relationship between Rachel, Leah,

Laban, and Jacob in Gen 29-31. In the Lot story, the sons-in-law are mentioned and then quickly

erased from the text (much like the mother); in the Jacob story, the son-in-law is the protagonist.

As a result, these chapters provide perhaps the best example in the Hebrew Bible of the tension

between fathers and sons-in-law, and the role that daughters play in this triangular relationship.[2]

The father-daughter relationship between Laban, Rachel, and Leah is also explored in far greater

depth than that of Lot and his daughters. The three's relationship stretches from Laban's initial

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King Lear [Oxford: AMS Press, 1934], 221, 9). In an interesting essay that surveys many of the psychoanalytic readings of Lear, Alan Dundes offers the interpretation that *King Lear* is not primarily about incestuous desires of the father, but rather "a projection of incestuous desires on the part of the daughter." See Alan Dundes, "'To Love my Father All': A Psychoanalytic Study of the Folktale Source of King Lear," in *Cinderella: A Casebook* (ed. Alan Dundes; Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), 229-44 (236). See also Lesley Catherine Kordecki, *Re-visioning Lear's Daughters: Testing Feminist Criticism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

For sources that speak of the father-daughter relationship throughout Shakespeare's works, see Sharon Hamilton, *Shakespeare's Daughters* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2003); Lagretta Tallent Lenker, *Fathers and Daughters in Shakespeare and Shaw* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001); Diane Dreher, *Domination and Defiance: Fathers and Daughters in Shakespeare* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1986).

[2] The other extended example would be the relationship between Saul, David, and Saul's daughters, which will be discussed in chapter 5. The story of Dinah in Gen 34 also involves relations between a father, daughter, and son-in-law, but also involves a primary role for sons/brothers—moreover, Dinah and Jacob have no direct interaction with each other (see below for more analysis). A final example would be Jethro, Moses, and Zipporah. Again, however, the focus on the relationship of all three characters at once is largely absent.

use of his daughters as objects of deception in 29.15-30 to the final farewell of kisses and blessings in 32.1. In between, one finds the daughters' spiteful attack on the character of their father in 31.14-16 and Rachel's deception of Laban with the teraphim in 31.33-35. Thus while there are some possible signs of affection (or at least cooperation), Laban's relationship with his daughters is mostly one of tension and discord.

This conflict mirrors the relationship between Laban and Jacob, which is full of deceit and power games. There are two main concerns throughout Laban and Jacob's struggle with each other: wives/daughters and wages. The two are deeply connected as the wives/daughters and wages can often be substitutes for each other. Jacob's wages for his first fourteen years of service to Laban, for instance, are Rachel and Leah. The negotiating over wages and the flock in 30.25-43, similarly, reflects the men's competition for their wives/daughters (this is especially the case given Rachel and Leah's symbolic connection to the flock).

The transition from the house of the father to the house of the husband—essentially from one father's house (בית־אב) to another—is delayed and prolonged in this story, thereby underscoring the tension between Jacob and Laban over possession of Rachel and Leah. Until even their last moments of interaction (years after the marriages have already taken place) Laban is keen to remind Jacob that "the daughters are my daughters" (31.43). The statement affirms, on the surface, the father's primary relationship to his daughters. One thinks of the poor man in Nathan's parable to David who had nothing "except one little ewe-lamb which he had bought and nourished up. And it grew up together with him and his sons, and ate of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was like a *daughter* to him" (2 Sam 12.3). The emotional tone of this passage is largely absent in Laban's relationship with his daughters—it is hard to imagine the poor man using his daughterly sheep for the purposes of trickery—but the

description of the relationship as a primal one still holds. Certainly this is the case in comparison to the son-in-law who intrudes and interrupts this relationship (no matter how closely related he may be). With this intrusion, the daughter will now eat of another's meat, drink of another's cup, and lay in another's bosom.

What Nathan's parable also brings to the foreground is the (implicit) sensual and sexual features of the father/daughter/son-in-law relationship. The parable is meant to be a loose analogy to David's adultery with Bathsheba, and thus the poor father is somewhat equated with Uriah (Bathsheba's actual husband).[3] The husband and the father thus blur into each other, given their mutual desire for control over the sexuality of the daughter/wife. Accordingly, this attempt to control sexuality and fertility is central to Gen 29-31: the father looks to exploit his daughters' sexual availability, these same daughters barter over a (perceived) fertility drug and the "privilege" of sleeping with their husband, and the previously duped son-in-law plays a strange fertility game with the father-in-law's flock.

In what follows below I will explore Gen 29-31 somewhat linearly, devoting more attention to certain episodes (such as the wedding night and Rachel's theft of the teraphim) than

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[3] This is the case if one takes the traditional equation of David with the rich man, Uriah with the poor man, and Bathsheba with the ewe-lamb. The connection between Bathsheba's name (בת־שבע) and the lamb, who is called a daughter (בת), is often noted in this regard. There is another possible mention of a daughter in the rebuke of 12.8 in which Yahweh states that he gave to David "the daughter of your master (i.e. Saul)" (though the verse could also read "house" [בית] instead of "daughter" [בת])—this daughter could be equated with Michal. The point in mentioning these parallels is to show that Nathan's description of the ewe-lamb as a "daughter" is quite significant (and thus will be discussed further in chapter 5, as I mentioned in the previous note). For an excellent survey of interpretations of Nathan's parable, see Hugh Pyper, *David as Reader: 2 Samuel 12:1–15 and the Poetics of Fatherhood* (Biblical Interpretation Series 23; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 84–110. For further discussion, see also Jeremy Schipper, "Did David Overinterpret Nathan's Parable in 2 Samuel 12:1-6?" *JBL* 126.2 (2007): 383-407; Erik Eynikel, "The Parable of Nathan (II Sam. 12,1-4) and the Theory of Semiosis," in *Rethinking the Foundations: Historiography in the Ancient World and in the Bible. Essays in Honour of John Van Seters* (BZAW 294; New York: De Gruyter, 2000), 71-90.

others (such as the naming etymologies in the birth accounts). It is also necessary, however, to look at each passage in connection with certain key intertexts; the Jacob story, particularly Gen 29-31, is a tightly structured web in which each scene is full of allusions and associations to others. To read the chapters intertextually helps not only to fill out particularly laconic passages but also provides a deeper appreciation of the story as whole.

The Bed-trick

The arrival of a foreigner at a well, as is the case with Jacob in the beginning of Gen 29, is a biblical type-scene which foreshadows a future betrothal.[4] The wooing of Rebekah in Gen 24 contains the first example of this type scene and contains a few important elements that connect to this passage. In Gen 24, the most elaborate and extended version of the foreigner at the well type-scene, the betrothal is conceived ceremoniously.[5] Abraham's servant gives jewellery to the bride to be and the negotiations for Rebekah are carried out in diplomatic fashion. The bestowal of more gifts at the end of the negotiations signifies the formal treaty between the house of Nahor and the house of Abraham (an allegiance among the sons of Terah). Importantly, the bridegroom himself, Isaac, is missing from this scene, which is part of the characterization of

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[4] See Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 47-62. Alter points out the following features of this type-scene: "The betrothal type-scene, then, must take place with the future bridegroom, or his surrogate, having journeyed to a foreign land. There he encounters a girl…or girls at a well. Someone, either the man or the girl, then draws water from the well; afterward, the girl or girls rush to bring home the news of the stranger's arrival…finally, a betrothal is concluded between the stranger and the girl, in the majority of instances, only after he has been invited to a meal" (52). The most prominent examples include the arrangement of Isaac and Rebekah's marriage (Gen 24), this scene with Jacob and Rachel, and that of Moses and Zipporah (Exod 2.15-21).

[5] For a detailed analysis of the literary artistry of this chapter, see Meir Sternberg, "The Wooing of Rebekah," in *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1985), 131-52.

Isaac as the most passive of the patriarchs. Rebekah, in contrast, is continuously active in the

narrative and is even the one to draw water from the well (whereas this is otherwise always the

male's role in this type-scene), which similarly plays into her characterization as the most

dominant and shrewdest of the matriarchs.[6] There is also, in the words of Alter, "a concise,

devastating characterization of Laban."[7] The narrator makes no explicit mention of what type of

a person Laban is but carefully juxtaposes his seeing of Rebekah's new jewellery with his

gracious invitation to the servant: "And when he saw the nose ring, and the bracelet on his

sister's arms,…he said, "Come in, blessed of Yahweh." (Gen 24.30-31). This hint of Laban's

greed, however, is not played upon until decades (and chapters) later, as the marriage for Isaac is

easily arranged without difficulties.

All of this serves to contrast with Jacob's betrothal scene in Gen 29. Jacob arrives, not as

an official emissary, but as a refugee from his brother Esau's wrath. Accordingly, Jacob arrives

without camels, gifts, and jewellery—he has nothing to offer but himself. This status as a

penniless refugee will colour the entire interaction between Laban and Jacob that follows. This

time the betrothal does not operate smoothly but is full of contention and deceit. Symbolizing

these hardships is the large stone blocking the well in Gen 29.2. Stones accompany Jacob

throughout his story: there is the stone that he uses as a pillow at Bethel, and, after his epiphany,

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[6] For analysis of the characterization of Isaac and Rebekah in this chapter, see Lieve
Teugels, "'A Strong Woman, Who Can Find?' A Study of Characterization in Genesis 24, with
Some Perspectives on the General Presentation of Isaac and Rebekah in the Genesis Narratives,"
JSOT 63 (1994): 89-104; Susanne Gillmayr-Bucher, "The Woman of Their Dreams: The Image
of Rebekah in Genesis 24," in *The World of Genesis: Persons, Places, Perspectives* (eds. Phillip
Davies and David Clines; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 90-101. For analysis of
the characterization of Abraham's servant, see Lieve Teugels, "The Anonymous Matchmaker:
An Enquiry into the Characterization of the Servant of Abraham in Genesis 24," *JSOT* 65
(1995): 13-23.
[7] Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 63.

he sets up this this very stone as an altar (Gen 28.11, 18); there is this memorable removal of the stone from the mouth of the well; and finally, there is the pillar of stones that functions as a testimony and witness between himself and Laban (Gen 31.44-54).[8] These stones, representing the unyielding nature of things, are a symbol of Jacob himself (he is a character who sleeps on stones and speaks with stones) as well as symbols of what Jacob overcomes (he is a character who wrestles with stones).[9] The well, on the other hand, is a symbol of potential integration (see Gen 26.17-35). It is also a symbol of fertility, and conceivably, as Alter suggests, a female symbol—something which may be bolstered by the fact that the well-betrothal scene is set in a foreign land, perhaps a "geographical correlative for the sheer female otherness of the prospective wife."[10] Jacob's machismo-like act of rolling away the stone from the mouth of the well, therefore, is part of his characterization as a resourceful contender, a man who takes fate into his own hands. The act also epitomizes his relationship with Rachel, particularly when one takes into account the association of the well with women and fertility. Alter observes that "Jacob will obtain the woman he wants only through great labor, against resistance, and even then God will, in the relevant biblical idiom, 'shut up her womb' for years until she finally bears Joseph."[11]

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[8] See Jan Fokkelman, *Narrative Art in Genesis: Specimens of Stylistic and Structural Analysis* (2nd ed.; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 123-97 and Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 55.

[9] See Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 55. Alter also perceptively notes how Jacob's association with stones contrasts with the way that Joseph (his favoured son) will make his way in the world with his association with the filmy insubstantiality of dreams.

[10] Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 52. See also Peter Sabo, "Drawing out Moses: Water as a Personal Motif of the Biblical Character," in *Thinking of Water in the Early Second Temple Period* (eds. Ehud Ben Zvi and Christoph Levin; Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2014), 418-19.

[11] Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 55. The removal of the stone might even suggest the breaking of hymen. Jacob, for his part, is obviously in some sort of excited, effervescent state

If there are obstacles in Jacob's way, however, there is also (divine) providence, as he stumbles upon the very relatives whose shelter and women he has been sent to seek (see Gen 27.42-28.5). Indeed, 29.10 alone reminds us three times that Rachel is the daughter of Jacob's mother's brother. In other words, Rachel is Jacob's first cousin (through the mother's line), an endogamous relationship which, as we have seen in chapter 1, represents the ideal for the Terahite/Abrahamic line.[12] When Laban greets Jacob, he affirms this close relationship: "Surely you are my bone and my flesh" (29.14). And it is this kinship tie that is presumably behind Laban's assertion that it is better for Jacob to marry his daughter than any other man (29.19). The connection between the kinship tie and betrothal exactly parallels that of Gen 2.23-24 in which

given his subsequent kissing and weeping. And weeping in particular, given its bodily flow of liquid, parallels Jacob's drawing of water from the well.

[12] See Bruce Vawter, *On Genesis: A New Reading* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977), 167-8, for a chart and detailed analysis of the Terahite genealogy. See also, James Nohrnberg, "The Keeping of Nahor: The Etiology of Biblical Election," in *The Book and the Text: The Bible and Literary Theory* (ed. Regina Schwartz; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 161-88 (esp. 164). Jacob's description of Laban as the "son of Nahor" (29.5) emphasizes this relationship (as it glosses over Laban's actual father, Bethuel).

The preference for first cousin marriage is still found among many Middle Eastern families, see Marcia C. Inhorn, *The New Arab Man: Emergent Masculinities, Technologies, and Islam in the Middle East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 140, and Julian Pitt-Rivers, *The Fate of Shechem: Or, The Politics of Sex. Essays in the Anthropology of the Mediterranean* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 155.

Lynda Boose, working from the observations of Pitt-Rivers, presents the intriguing possibility that this preference for first-cousin marriages has important implications for the father-daughter relationship. Isaac marries Rebekah (the granddaughter of his father's brother Nahor) and Jacob marries Rachel and Leah (the daughters of his mother's brother, Laban, who is the grandson of Nahor). In both instances, therefore, the daughters are products of the husband's patriline. Thus, "[i]n leaving their father's house through marriage, in-marrying daughters only reenter it through the collateral door. By repeatedly providing a woman directly related to the father's brother as the answer to where wives should be found for the sons, the narrative is indirectly answering the question it has approached about what to do with one's daughters: it is to marry daughters to males related as closely as possible to the father's structural parallel, his brother, while avoiding marriage to any one of the father's three distinct competitors, his own father, his brother, or his son" ("The Father's House," 59).

the man's affirmation that he shares bone and flesh with the woman leads to the narrator's conclusion that this is why men and women cleave together.

Having confirmed this kinship tie and completed the terms for the betrothal which he made out with Laban (seven years of service), Jacob is ready to receive the daughter who is the object of his desire and love. Of course, the introduction of Leah in 29.16—another daughter of Laban's and, moreover, an elder to Rachel—alerts the reader to possible complications in this transaction.[13] The other parenthetical comment—that Leah had tender eyes but Rachel was exceedingly beautiful (29.17)—foreshadows how the complications will arise.[14] For it is Rachel whom Jacob loves, and Laban will play upon this desire of choosing of one daughter over the other.

> And Laban gathered together all the men of the place, and made a feast. And in the evening he took Leah, his daughter, and he brought her to him; and he went into her. And Laban gave Zilpah his handmaid to his daughter Leah for a handmaid. And in the morning, behold, it was Leah! And he said to Laban: "What is this that you have done to

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[13] For discussion of this trope of "fronting," in which material is mentioned as background information that foreshadows important events to follow, see C.H.J. Van der Merwe, "Explaining Fronting in Biblical Hebrew." *JNSL* 25 (1999): 173-86. For a more general discussion, see Tamar Zwei, *Parenthesis in Biblical Hebrew* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

[14] Translations have often rendered the adjective describing Leah's eyes (which comes from the root רכך) as "weak," which suggests some sort of impairment or even odd-looking eyes (see RSV, NJPS, NIV). However, the word may also mean "delicate" or "soft," suggesting that perhaps Leah's eyes were an asset to her appearance. In this case, the parallel between Leah and Rachel would point out that both Rachel and Leah were attractive, but only Rachel was absolutely stunning. See HALOT 3:1230; BDB 940; Tikva Frymer-Kensky, "Leah," in *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament* (eds. Carol Meyers, Toni Craven, and Ross S. Kraemer; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), 108-9.

Whatever the case, it is important to note that Leah is defined by her eyes, a fact that will become significant when she is used as an object to trick Jacob, which parallels Jacob's own trick of his dim-eyed father in Gen 27.

me? Did I not serve with you for Rachel? Why have you deceived me?" And Laban said:

"It is not so done in our place, to give the younger before the firstborn" (29.22-26).

The passage is one of the premium examples of the minimalist plots of the Hebrew Bible. It is

never explicitly spelled out how Laban tricks Jacob. And in the gap between the evening and the

morning, in which one might expect the details of the bed-trick to be elaborated upon, one finds

the narratorial aside that Leah received a handmaid, Zilpah, from her father.[15] It is part of the

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[15] The term "bed-trick," in its most basic sense, refers to having sex with a partner who pretends to be someone else (or whom you believe to be someone else). It is derived from Shakespearean scholars, and was first coined for *All's Well that Ends Well* (see William Witherle Lawrence, *Shakespeare's Problem Comedies* [New York: Frederick Ungar, 1931], 51).

In her extensive study of the bed-trick, Wendy Doniger ponders why it is such a cross-cultural (she refrains from using the adjective universal) phenomenon, ranging from stories in ancient Indian texts, to the Hebrew Bible, to Shakespeare, to 20th century and contemporary Hollywood films (*The Bed-trick: Tales of Sex and Masquerade* [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000]). Why do we find versions of the bed-trick told over and over again, especially when it is clear that consummated bed-tricks are exceedingly rare in "real" life? Doniger's answer is that "all sexual acts are bed-tricks," at least in the "weakest sense," for "you never really know everything about your partner, and afterward, if you become estranged, the sudden distance, the total loss of intimacy, sometimes seem almost unbelievable, mythical" (*The Bed-trick*, 4). In other words, mythical stories of bed-tricks are only a slight exaggeration of what happens to people all the time. Though night-lights and pillow talk may have made the bed-trick harder to take seriously on a literal level, there is a gap between physical closeness and mental distance that still persists in our modern understanding of sex (see Jagendorf, "In the Morning," 58). Sex is a transformative experience that changes our perspective of ourselves and our partner, Doniger thus comments: "Sometimes we go to bed with an animal and wake up with a god; that is, we go to bed relatively indifferent and wake up enchanted by sexual magic. On other occasions, we go to bed with a god and wake up with an animal; that is, we go to bed blinded by desire and wake up with our eyes relatively cleared by satiation" (*The Bed-trick*, 3).

The relationship between sex and knowledge, between carnal knowledge and carnal ignorance, is thus what Doniger argues is the central theme of bed-trick stories. The question is whether sex tells the truth or a lie, and the answer is yes to both. Of course, this is particularly apt in regard to the Hebrew Bible and its references to sex as an act of "knowing." And in this note it should be observed that bed-tricks in the Hebrew Bible are of a very particular type. They exploit the gap between physical closeness and mental distance in order to highlight gender relations and the potential for male ignorance (and female cunningness/usefulness). The biblical "knower" is always man, even though the text may play with the fact that this man might not know what he is doing (Lot) or who he is with (Jacob) in the act of knowing. Thus, a certain amount of gender bending may be taking place but not so far as to designate the woman as the "knower." In the case of Gen 29, moreover, the manipulator is not a woman (as is the case with

literary artifice of biblical narrative to leave these gaps open, prompting readers to fill them in. "What is unsaid," writes Westermann, "speaks with such force as to give these few sentences the weight and density proper to noble metal."[16] The setting of evening, for instance, indicates that darkness must have played a factor in Laban's trick. It is also often pointed out that Leah probably would have been veiled, thereby further concealing her identity.[17] Finally, Laban's deception would have been helped along by the "feasting" that took place at the wedding—that is, by drunkenness (the Hebrew word used for "feast" here, משתה, derives from a root meaning "to drink" and thus could be translated as "drinking feast"). The narratorial aside about Zilpah is also part of the text's narrative art. On one level, it is an obvious digression—placed in the middle of the proverbial and literal night—that delays insight into Jacob's reaction, and thus increases tension. On another level, the information is anticipatory, foreshadowing the role that Zilpah will later have as a surrogate for Leah.[18]

An additional layer to the fraught background of this bed-trick is the key intertext of Jacob's deception of his father in Gen 27. Jacob's accusation that Laban "deceived" (רמה) him reflects Isaac's statement to Esau in 27.35 that Jacob took his brother's blessing with "deceit" (מרמה). The linguistic parallel is thus meant to emphasize poetic justice; the trickster Jacob has been duped at his own game. Laban's response to Jacob further reinforces this dramatic irony, as

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Lot's daughters and later Tamar) but another man. So here the theme of deception is emphasized over gender difference, as the women are the means by which Laban tricks Laban (and not active agents themselves). The real twist, of course, is that Laban, unknowingly, is building up Israel through this bed-trick. Leah becomes the mother of the most important tribe (Judah) and her ensuing wrestlings with Rachel result in the great number of sons born to Jacob.

[16] Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 467.

[17] A key intertext in this regard is Rebekah's veiling in 24.65 before the consummation of her marriage with Isaac. See Arnold, *Genesis*, 267 (n. 378); Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 467; Vawter, *On Genesis*, 321; Von Rad, *Genesis*, 291.

[18] See Nahum Sarna, *Genesis: The JPS Torah Commentary* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 205.

his assertion that giving away the "younger" (צעירה) before the "first-born" (בכירה) is "not done in our place" is a pointed reference to Jacob's stealing of Esau's first-born status/birthright (בכרה) and blessing (ברכה) (Gen 25.29-34; 27.36).[19]

The significance of the parallels between these two episodes, for my purpose here, is how the detailed episode of the blessing is able to put into words the interplay of sensuality and (lack of) knowledge that the laconic episode of the wedding night does not. Indeed, in the blessing episode all five senses are covered in one way or another: sight with Isaac's dim eyes (27.1), touch with Isaac's feeling of Jacob's faux-hairy arm (27.12), hearing with the difference between Jacob and Esau's voice (27.22), taste with the meal of venison (27.25), and finally smell with the field-like fragrance of Jacob's clothes (27.27). The effect is that readers are drawn into the physicality of the episode, the flesh and bone of things, so to speak. When Isaac feels Jacob, one is drawn to the moment of touch, to the sensitivity of the skin, to the difference between feeling a hairy body or a smooth one; when Isaac eats the venison, to the salivation of the mouth, to the pleasures of the palate; when Jacob leans forward to kiss his father, to the sensitivity of the lips; when Isaac smells his son, to the earthy smell of the field, to the connection between scent and

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[19] As Fokkelman observes, the narrator has prepared this effect by avoiding the root בכר (first-born) in 29.16, which uses the more neutral adjectives "big" (גדלה) and "little" (קטנה) (*Narrative Art in Genesis*, 129). Laban's comment that "it is not so done in our place" further reinforces this, as it implicitly refers to Jacob acting in *his* place by previously reversing the custom of primogeniture (see Alter, *Genesis*, 155). Of course, the comment also affirms Jacob's status as a foreigner in Paddan-Aram and as an outsider in Laban's family. Jacob, as a foreigner and refugee, is supposed to follow the laws of the place that he is in. Laban thus pointedly refers to Paddan-Aram as "our place," a place that must have different laws and customs (or at least expectations) than the place from which Jacob comes.

It is also noteworthy that there are no biblical laws that require either elder sons or daughters to marry before their younger siblings. At most one could say that this is an (implicit) custom or expectation. See Daniel I. Block, "Marriage and Family in Ancient Israel," in *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World* (ed. Ken M. Campbell; Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2003), 33-102 (esp. 57).

identity. There is no such elaboration in the bed-trick scene in Genesis 29, but given the connection it has to the blessing episode one can transfer some of the imagery between the two scenes. Zvi Jagendorf offers a wonderful assessment of this analogy:

> There in the darkness is the blind, passionate male, Isaac, the father, the figure of authority whose gift of blessing via kissing, smelling and touch is so akin to the sexual gift. Moved by desire (hunger) and love of Esau, he presumes to know the object of his passion through all senses but sight. Opposite him is Jacob, like Leah in his own bed later, the unloved one playing the part of the loved one (Esau), imitating his brother's sensual presence, the smell, the hair, the clothes; even the taste of the desired food is an initiation. The blessing itself is like the sexual gift of the passion-blinded virgin groom to his open-eyed virgin bride. It changes the status of both the receiver and the giver. For once given it cannot be repeated in the same way…[T]he father, like the groom, gives this precious gift to an illusion communicated by his senses. Sensual knowledge has turned out to be the opposite of true knowledge.[20]

In the case of the bed-trick in Gen 29, what Laban exploits is not just sensual knowledge, but sexual knowledge. Thus, although the verb ידע "to know/have sex" is not mentioned or punned upon (as it is in the Lot and Eden narratives), the same basic irony is at play. Jacob does indeed "know" one of Laban's daughters in the physical sense, but he is deprived of part of the mental knowledge which is supposed to accompany sex—and in the case of men, according to the standard biblical idiom (although the idiom is constantly played upon), the superior status of subjective "knower."

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[20] Jagendorf, "In the Morning, Behold!" 54.

What Jagendorf's quote does not discuss is the role of the absent third party who actually orchestrates the deception in each scene, Rebekah and Laban respectively. It is this brother-sister pair, and not Jacob and Leah, who can be viewed as the true deceivers. Of course, in Gen 27 it is clear that Jacob is a willing participant in his mother's scheme, whereas in Gen 29 no insight is provided into the thoughts of either Rachel or Leah. The omission of their perspective on the matter underlines that Laban was the main perpetrator in the deception. Accordingly, it is Laban, not Leah or Rachel, who is the object of Jacob's anger.[21] This is a battle between son-in-law and father-in-law. At the same time, it is difficult to imagine how the daughters were not at least on some level in collusion with Laban (how else would only Leah have gone to bed with Jacob that night?).[22] Subtly, therefore, the text adheres to a bestowal design that, as Lynda Boose says,

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[21] In contrast, it is Jacob, not Rebekah, who is the object of Esau's anger in Gen 27. In both cases the assumption is that the man must have been manipulated by another man. In Jacob's case this is correct, while in Esau's case it is only half correct. To be the object of manipulation by a woman would feminize the man (as is the case with Lot). Jacob avoids this fate in Gen 29, even though he is tricked, while in Gen 27 he is completely under the influence of his mother, but is the trickster. The patriarch, it seems, is allowed to be influenced or tricked by a woman if the resulting situation is viewed positively, as is the case with Tamar's deception of Judah in Gen 38.

[22] Worth mentioning here are the famous midrashim in which the daughters conspire together against Jacob. *Megillah* 13b suggests that Rachel plays a central part of the bed-trick by playing a double-trick of her own. Knowing Laban's plans in advance, Rachel colludes first with Jacob as the two agree on certain signs to use so that they might recognize each other at all times. When she sees Leah being brought forth for the marriage ceremony, however, she sympathizes with her sister and feels for Leah's potential embarrassment and shame—thus she readily transmits the signs to her sister. In proem 24 of *Lamentations Rabbah*, Rachel's mindset and role is explored in even greater detail. Not only does she do the double-trick of agreeing to secret signs with Jacob and then revealing them to Leah, she also hides under the wedding bed when Jacob makes love to Leah. Thus, whenever Jacob speaks to Leah she is silent and Rachel answers in her place so that Jacob does not recognize Leah's voice.

That the daughters may have had a more active role in the deception than the biblical text ascribes to them would also mean that they are to share some of the blame as well. Another midrash has Jacob confronting Leah in the morning: "You are a deceiver and the daughter of a deceiver," to which Leah cleverly retorts: "Is there a teacher without pupils?...Did not your father call you Esau, and you answered him! So did you too call me and I answered you!" (*Genesis Rabbah* 70:19).

"places the daughter's departure from the father's house and her sexual union with another male into a text defined by obedience to her father—not preference for an outside male."[23] That is, the success of the bed-trick indicates (at least for the time being) the daughters' obedience to Laban, their loyalty to the father over the groom. It also has the added effect of undermining the outside male's preference. We know, for instance, of Jacob's love for Rachel, but not whether Rachel reciprocates this love.

Another important difference between the blessing and bed-trick scenes is the motivation for the deception. Rebekah is motivated by her love of/preference for Jacob (Gen. 25.28). Nothing, on the other hand, is said concerning Laban's love of Rachel and Leah, or even of his preference for one of the daughters over the other. He does, however, refer to the social custom of giving the firstborn before the younger, which perhaps does reflect a concern for maintaining familial convention (beyond the irony it casts on Jacob's earlier deceptive actions with Esau).[24] He may also be motivated by rapaciousness, as evidenced by his immediate suggestion to Jacob that he work another seven years for Rachel (29.27). Thus, while it may not have been done

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[23] Boose, "The Father's House and the Daughter in It," 32.

[24] The status of firstborn and younger is the only distinction Laban makes concerning his daughters. Jacob's distinction concerns preference in beauty and desire. Rachel and Leah are consistently characterized as both a pair and a set of opposites (firstborn/younger, fertile/unfertile, loved and unloved). The bed-trick both blurs their identity together and furthers this division between them.

Interchangeability is of course a major motif of bed-tricks (see Doniger, *The Bed-trick*, 5-8). The assumption is that bodies can be exchanged without the victim/dupe having knowledge of it (love truly is blind in bed-tricks). This relates to the theme of doubling and identity, as sometimes the bodies are exchanged to emphasize their similarity or sometimes to emphasize their difference (those times when sex, or even species, are altered in the bed-trick stand as premium examples of the latter emphasis, see Doniger, *The Bed-trick*, 376-82 and 105-7). Identity, therefore, is necessarily flexible in bed-tricks—in most cases, in fact, the bed-trick excludes from identity everything but sex. And particularly if darkness, alcohol, silence, etc. are involved, there is possibility that one cannot distinguish anyone (or anything) from anyone (or anything) else. Again, this is a reminder of the illusion associated with sex and love, of the susceptibility to be deceived, and of the frailty of trusting one's own senses.

under ideal circumstances, this is a prime biblical example of the "gift" of giving one's

daughter(s), for Laban is able to maximize his profit from his daughterly commodities.

Beyond social custom and financial gain, moreover, Laban accomplishes two other

important things with his bed-trick: control over his daughters' sexuality and affirmation of his

primacy over the son-in-law. The two are not mutually exclusive, for control over his daughters'

sexuality serves to reinforce his powerful position. There is a consonance found in the Hebrew

text that highlights this found in 29.23: "And in the evening he took Leah, his daughter, and he

brought (וַיָּבֵא) her to him; and he went (וַיָּבֹא) into her." The same verb (with different

vocalizations and thus stems) is used to refer to Laban's "bringing" his daughter to the bed

chamber as Jacob's "entering" into her. To use a pun in English which similarly conflates terms,

Laban lies to Jacob and Jacob lies with Leah. The father and son-in-law become conflated with

one another. The avoidance of proper names in the verse, with the exception of Leah,

underscores this, as only context reveals which "he" brings and which "he" enters. So even at the

moment that Laban gives away his daughter, he is able to somehow retain her—or at least not

fully give her over to Jacob. The situation of Jacob as a refugee is also worth recalling here.

Laban gives away his daughter but he does so to a man who is living within his own household

(a man who is indebted to the father for survival). It is no coincidence, therefore, that Laban is

indeed hauntingly present in the middle of the wedding night, at least in terms of the syuzhet of

the narrative. That is, the interruption of 29.24, in addition to functioning as a retarding device

and literary fronting, points to the close connection between the father's control over his

daughters' sexuality and the sexual act occurring during the wedding night. Laban's "giving"

(נתן) of Zilpah to Leah, moreover, echoes his "giving" (נתן) of his daughters to Jacob (see 29.19,

28, and the parallel of Laban giving Bilhah to Rachel in 29.29 just after his giving of Rachel to Jacob).

The bed-trick thus sets the tone and establishes the themes that continue throughout the rest of Jacob's time in Haran. It demonstrates, for instance, the pervasive theme of deception (as well as the retribution for such trickery). It also displays the link between deception and sexuality, which will define the relationship between Laban, Jacob, and Rachel and Leah.

The Stick-trick

Jacob's arrival in Paddan-Aram and the story of his betrothals leads us to the birth of his children and eventually his departure back home to the land of Canaan.[25] Throughout the birth accounts (29.31-30.24) the focus is on Rachel and Leah—Jacob is hardly present, appearing primarily to perform his procreative duty (30.4, 16), and there is no mention of Laban at all. The sisters thus emerge as dynamic characters, expressing desires and concerns of their own. The pairing of them together functions as a literary convention that provides contrast and connections not only between the two members (younger/older, loved/unloved, fertile/barren, and so on) but

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[25] The birth accounts are situated in the structural center of this story, as can be seen by the following chiastic framework taken from Arnold's commentary (*Genesis*, 264):
      A: Jacob arrives in Paddan-Aram (29.1-14)
          B: Laban gains advantage over Jacob (29.15-30)
             C: Birth of Jacob's children (29.31-30.24)
          B: Jacob gains advantage over Laban (30.25-43)
      A: Jacob departs from Paddan-Aram (31.1-55)
While it has often been suggested that these birth accounts are secondary additions to the Jacob story (see, for example, Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 471-72), the importance of the central component within chiastic structures suggests otherwise. There is, moreover, an obvious overall chiastic structure to the Jacob story which may be based on the primacy of the pattern displayed here in Genesis 29-31 (see Arnold, *Genesis*, 229-31). For a thorough analysis of these chiastic structures see Fokkelman, *Narrative Art in Genesis*, 86-237 (see also David W. Cotter, *Genesis* [Berit Olam; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2003], 217-18; Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50* [Word Biblical Commentary 2; Waco: Word, 1994], 169-70).

also between other pairs—in this case the sibling pair of Jacob-Esau.[26] Jacob and Rachel, in particular, reflect the link between these sibling pairs; Rachel is Jacob's "Jacoba" (as Fokkelman asserts) and Jacob is Rachel's "Rachel'el" (as Pardes asserts).[27] Like Jacob, Rachel wrestles with and seeks to prevail over her older sibling.[28] The mandrake scene (30.14-16) displays this parallel nicely as it alludes to Jacob's usurping of Esau's birthright in 25.27-34. In both scenes the younger sibling desires something that belongs to the first-born (בכר or בכרה) and thus proposes an exchange (Leah, however, notably proves to be a more formidable jousting partner than Esau).

This points to the fact that the women's rivalry is not just sororal but spousal as well. And in regard to this relation, it is clear that the seeds of this discord are sown by Jacob and Laban:

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[26] On one level, therefore, Rachel and Leah serve as stand-ins reflecting the primary battle between brothers. For the stories of brothers, as many have argued, are not just essential figures in Israel's story—they are Israel's story. Of particular importance is the story of younger sons, who, like Israel, do not have an inherent right to the privileged status that they acquire in their narratives, and who must suffer exile to eventually acquire this status (see, for instance, Frederick E. Greenspahn, *When Brothers Dwell Together: The Preeminence of Younger Siblings in the Hebrew Bible* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994]; Jon D. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: The Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993]). Without the right to inheritance, it is supposed that biblical sisters must simply be mirrors to their brotherly counterparts. And while this is certainly true to an extent, others have pointed out that sister pairs present a more complex picture than is often assumed. Amy Kalmanofsky, for instance, asserts that the relationships between paired sisters in the Bible "are depicted with a greater emotional range than those of brothers, who are invariably defined by rivalry" (*Dangerous Sisters of the Hebrew Bible* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014], 20). For further analysis on the sisters as a (sibling) pair, see Phyllis Silverman Kramer, "Biblical Women that Come in Pairs: The Use of Female Pairs as a Literary Device in the Hebrew Bible," in *Genesis: A Feminist Companion to the Bible* (ed. Athalya Brenner; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 217-32; and Norman J. Cohen, "Two That are One: Sibling Rivalry in Genesis." *Judaism* 32.3 (1983): 331-42.

[27] See Fokkelman, *Narrative Art in Genesis*, 131 and 135; Pardes, *Countertraditions in the Bible*, 61.

[28] It is no coincidence that Naphtali (נפתלי), "my struggle," is Rachel's son, whom she names as such because of her mighty struggles (נפתולי) with Leah in which she eventually "prevails" (יכל) (30.8). The mention of prevailing is then echoed in Jacob's wrestling with the mysterious man at the Jabbok River, in which Jacob, like Rachel, prevails (יכל) (32.28).

Laban for orchestrating the double marriage in the first place, and Jacob because of his preference for Rachel over Leah (29.30).[29] The conflict between father-in-law and son-in-law, moreover, also clearly has effects on the relationship of the sisters, as both Laban and Jacob compete for the loyalty of Rachel and Leah. So even though Laban and Jacob are either completely or moderately absent, respectively, in the birth accounts, their effects are clearly present.

Similarly, Rachel and Leah are narratively absent in the story of Jacob's stick-trick against Laban (30.25-43) but symbolically present in their association with the flock. This association is underlined by the meaning of Rachel's and Leah's names—"ewe-lamb" and "cow," respectively.[30] Thus, in the birth accounts the daughters are the medium through which Jacob builds up his house, while the flock is the medium through which Jacob tricks Laban in their bartering scheme. The poetic parallels extend back to the bed-trick in which Jacob served Laban by watching his flock in exchange for his daughters (and the daughters are the medium through which Laban tricks Jacob). Even in Jacob's very first meeting with Rachel this connection is emphasized, as the narrator notes that Rachel watches "the sheep of her father, for she was a shepherdess" (29.9). With Jacob's arrival, however, Laban's sheep (and his daughters) are incorporated into Jacob's fold.

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[29] There may be a level of intertextual commentary here as well, as Lev. 18.18 appears to explicitly condemn the marriage of a man to two sisters: "Do not marry a woman as a rival to her sister and uncover her nakedness during her lifetime."

[30] See Sarna, *Genesis*, 202-3; Tikva Frymer-Kensky, "Leah," in *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament*, 108-9; idem, "Rachel," in *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament*, 138-40; Scott Noegel, "Drinking Feasts and Deceptive Feasts," in *Puns and Pundits: Word Play in the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near Eastern Literature* (ed. Scott B. Noegel; Bethesda: CDL Press, 2000), 163-79 (164).

Again, however, there are important differences to take into account between the sisters. As a "sheep," Rachel is the more cherished and loved sister. For example, in Nathan's parable in 2 Sam 12 (which I referenced above), the daughterly ewe-lamb, truly a cosset, is nurtured and precious—it is perhaps the best example of a biblical pet.[31] As a "cow," Leah becomes the more fertile of the two sisters.[32] This, of course, is a valuable and prized feature, but does not highlight the emotional features that "sheep" does. And perhaps this helps explain the other possible etymology of Leah's name, "make weary," or "tired."[33] She is made weary not only because of her many births but also because these births do not bring her the closeness with her husband that she desires.

Birth Accounts

In addition to Laban and Jacob, one might add Yahweh to the list of characters who incite conflict between Rachel and Leah. As a type of opening statement for the entire birth accounts the narrator states: "And Yahweh saw that Leah was hated, and he opened her womb; but Rachel was barren" (29.31). The deity's motivations for opening only Leah's womb are not entirely clear. It could be that the Hebrew God supports the underdog, the unloved one over the loved one.[34] Indeed, Leah's fertility and the prominence of her sons (particularly Judah) act as a type of

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[31] See Jack Miles, *God: A Biography* (New York: Knopf, 1995), 176. The word for ewe-lamb in 2 Sam 12 is כבשה, for an example of the positive connotations on the rarer רחל, see Song 6.6.

[32] For the association of Leah's name and fertility, see "Leah," in *Women in Scripture*,108-9

[33] Thus, Leah's name may relate to the Hebrew verb, לאה (see BDB, 521), which is also a meaning of the root found in Ugaritic and Syriac.

[34] This, for instance, is the characterization of Yahweh in the song of Hannah (another story of a loved, infertile wife and an unloved, fertile wife, but with important differences as well) in which the poet remarks that "the barren has born seven, but she who has many sons is forlorn" (1 Sam 2.5).

compensation for Jacob's clear preference for her sister. Rachel is more important in the

narrative of Gen 29-31, and Leah does not have a narrative existence independent of her;

however, the unloved woman eventually takes the superior spot through her sons. Importantly,

moreover, Leah's fertility stirs Rachel's jealousy creating a war of desire between the pair. Leah

is unloved (or less preferred than Rachel), but fertile; Rachel is loved, but barren. Each sister

wants what the other one has, and the result is a "good-for-patriarchy" battle for babies.[35]

Yahweh's ability to open and close wombs also plays with a central theme in Gen 29-31:

the attempt to control sexuality and fertility. In the bed-trick scene, Laban controls who sleeps

with whom and creates a situation in which he not only dictates this for his daughters but also for

his son-in-law. In the birth accounts, particularly the mandrakes scene (30.14-16), it is now the

women who scheme to control sexuality and fertility. So while Rachel and Leah were bartered

over in the opening scenes of Gen 29 as passive objects they now become the active ones. After

Rachel and Leah have come to their agreement—that Leah's son, Reuben, will give Rachel the

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The pairing of a barren, favoured wife with a fertile, unfavoured wife is a familiar pattern in the Hebrew Bible. See Esther Fuchs, *Sexual Politics in the Biblical Narrative: Reading the Hebrew Bible as a Woman* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), 47-65; Mara E. Donaldson, "Kinship Theory in the Patriarchal Narratives: The Case of the Barren Wife," *JAAR* 49.1 (1981): 77-87.

[35] Kalmanofsky, *Dangerous Sisters of the Hebrew Bible*, 24. As Esther Fuchs has observed, the barren wife theme can convey an obvious patriarchal message: "By projecting onto woman what man desires most, the biblical narrative creates a powerful role model for women…It should be ascribed to the imaginative and artistic ingenuity of the biblical narrator that one of the most vital patriarchal concerns is repeatedly presented not as an imposition on woman but as something she herself desires more than anything else" ("The Literary Characterization of Mothers and Sexual Politics," in *Feminist Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship* [ed. Adela Yarbro Collins; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985], 117-36 [130]). Elsewhere Fuchs categorizes the Rachel and Leah story as a "contest type-scene" in which there is one husband and two co-wives, one of whom is barren: "The fertile co-wife humiliates the barren wife intentionally until the latter is redeemed through divine intervention, becoming fertile and giving birth to one or more sons" (*Sexual Politics in the Biblical Narrative: Reading the Hebrew Bible as a Woman* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003], 47-65).

(perceived) fertility-drug of the mandrakes[36] for the right for Leah to have a conjugal visit (of

sorts)—Jacob silently acquiesces: "And Jacob came from the field in the evening, and Leah went

out to meet him, and said: 'You must come into me, for I have surely hired you with my son's

mandrakes.' And he lay with her that night" (30.16). The verb for "hire" used here derives from

a root (שׂכר) which forms the base of the name of the child produced from the mandrake

agreement: "And God listened to Leah, and she conceived and gave birth to a fifth son for Jacob.

And Leah said, 'God has given me my wage (שׂכר) because I gave my handmaid to my husband.

And she called his name Issachar (יִשָּׂשכר)" (30.17-18).[37] The root is repeated four times in the

span of three verses (Leah uses it twice in the emphatic infinitive absolute form in v.16) and is

used throughout the Jacob story (29.15; 30.18, 28, 32, 33; 31, 7, 8, 41).[38] A key intertext to the

mandrake scene is the first use of the root in 29.15 in which Laban enquires what Jacob desires

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[36] "Mandrakes" (דודאים) were considered to have aphrodisiac powers because they exude a distinctive and heady fragrance and perhaps because their sturdy, intertwined root has torso-like features (see Sarna, *Genesis*, 209; Arnold, *Genesis*, 270). It is also often noted that in Hebrew mandrakes (דודאים) is close in sound to "love" (דוד), something that is punned upon in Song 7.13-14: "There I will give my love (דדי) to you. The mandrakes (דודאים) yield their fragrance…my beloved (דודי)." Presumably these aphrodisiac qualities were extended to notions of fertility. Otherwise, it is difficult to understand why Rachel—who was already her husband's preferred wife—would want them. The bartering between the two women suggests that Jacob is sleeping with Rachel exclusively, and thus Leah's need to offer her sister something in return for a conjugal visit from Jacob. Sarna (*Genesis*, 209) thinks that the text is subtly making a mockery of the superstitious beliefs in the sexual/fertile qualities of the mandrakes, since Leah, who gives up the mandrakes, bears three children, while Rachel, who possess the mandrakes, remains barren for three years. And when Rachel eventually does give birth, the opening of her womb (as was the case with Leah) is attributed to Yahweh (30.22).

[37] It is strange that Leah's naming speech refers to her giving of Zilpah (her handmaid) to Jacob, for in the previous narrative it is clear that Leah is the mother of Issachar. Beyond, or in addition to, the possibility that Issachar's name comes from two different sources spliced together, perhaps there is a certain play here with surrogate and substitutive imagery. That is, the mandrakes and handmaids are both used to combat barrenness or lack of fertility and so Leah connects the two in her naming speech.

[38] The root takes two nominal forms: most often it occurs as שׂכר, though it also appears as משׂכרת (29.15; 31.7, 41). It is only here in 30.16 that the root appears in a verbal form in Genesis 29-31.

his "wages" (שָׂכָר) should be for his service to Laban and Jacob replies that he will serve for seven years for his daughter (29.18). Thus, the daughters who were previously equated with the wages now become the wage-barterers themselves: Leah hires (שָׂכַר) her husband and receives her wage (שָׂכָר) with the birth of a son (יִשָּׂשכָר, Issachar).[39]

Jacob, Laban, and the Flock

In between the birth accounts and Jacob's flight from Paddan-Aram is the peculiar story of Jacob's breeding of Laban's flock (30.25-43). Immediately after the birth of Joseph, Rachel's first-born, Jacob (conveniently) senses the need to return to his homeland. He approaches Laban with his request to leave, quick to remind his uncle of all the service that he has done for him. Laban reluctantly complies and the two strike up a negotiation process over what Jacob's wages should be for his service.[40] The uncle and nephew are up to their old tricks, as the conversation is "a masterpiece of suspicious wriggle in negotiations, full of ambivalence and false bottoms."[41]

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[39] There is an obvious tension between this scheming (of both Laban and Jacob, and Rachel and Leah) and the acknowledgment that Yahweh, ultimately, is in control of things, particularly reproduction. The use of the handmaids, Bilhah (30.3-8) and Zilpah (30.9-13), best displays this. In reaction to divine will, which controls the opening and closing of wombs, the women use their handmaids to battle their own barren fate. In this sense, their struggle is not only against each other (and their husband and father) but also against God—as is the case with Jacob (32.28). Of course, it is curious that while God opens and closes wombs the deity remains largely absent in the rest of the narrative—neither forbidding nor encouraging the sisters' use of their handmaids.

[40] In addition to wages (שָׂכָר), service (עבד) functions as the other key-word (often paired with שָׂכָר) in the Haran-phase of the Jacob story. The two roots are found most densely in Jacob and Laban's dialogues with each other, thereby providing not only the base for the chiastic structure to these chapters (29-31) but also emphasizing the themes of Jacob's (excessive) service for Laban and Laban's (unfair) wages. See Fokkelman, *Narrative Art in Genesis*, 126ff.

[41] Fokkelman, *Narrative Art in Genesis*, 142. Westermann comments that the passage "has presented exegetes with great difficulties, above all because from Jacob's offer to Laban right up to the very last act it is not clear what is going on" (*Genesis 12-36*, 479). For an overview of these problems, see Scott Noegel, "Sex, Sticks, and the Trickster in Gen. 30:31-43: A New Look at an Old Crux," *JANES* 25 (1997): 7-17 (esp. 7-9). Noegel notes that the confusion

The impasse is over whether Jacob will continue to be part of Laban's house or start providing for his own: "And now when shall I provide for my own house?" (30.30). Laban, by stressing wages (שָׂכָר), clearly desires that Jacob continue to work as a hired-hand employee, but Jacob desires to build his own personal wealth. In other words, he no longer wants to be dependent on his father-in-law; he wants to create his own autonomous family, or "father's house" (בֵּית־אָב).

The two, however, are able to agree upon the following proposal made by Jacob: in return for shepherding Laban's flock, Jacob will receive all the spotted and speckled goats, and all the dark (and non-uniformly) coloured sheep. This amounts to a very small number of the flock, for most sheep are white (not dark-coloured) and most goats are black (not speckled or spotted).[42] After the agreement is made Laban removes all the animals with recessive traits from the flock and places them in care of his sons, leaving Jacob with only black goats and white sheep (thereby even further reducing Jacob's chances of acquiring a substantial number of livestock). Jacob, however, is now accustomed to Laban's trickery and has a plan of his own. He peels poplar sticks, exposing their whiteness, and places them in the watering troughs where the goats go into heat when they come to drink. The peeled rods, with their stripes of white against the dark bark, then impart the trait of spots or speckled markings to the offspring conceived. Similarly, the faces of the sheep are placed toward the dark and speckled goats during their own mating time, thereby ensuring that the sheep's offspring is dark or speckled.[43]

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and ambiguity could be intentional; it helps characterize Laban and Jacob as characters with confusing double-talk and may even serve the literary function of purposefully tricking the reader.

[42] See Arnold, *Genesis*, 272; Edwin Firmage, "Zoology, *ABD* 6:1109-1167 (esp. 1126-7).

[43] The idea behind Jacob's scheming is based, as Alter asserts, on a widespread ancient notion "that sensory impressions at the moment of conception can affect the embryo" (*Genesis*, 165). It is a specific form of what James Frazer has famously called "sympathetic magic," in which mental connections mirror physical ones (*The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and*

It is often noted how this scene parallels that of the mandrakes, as both contain some element of magic in connection to sexuality and fertility.[44] In each scene there is a bartering process that results in the manipulation of sexual intercourse and then eventually in blooming fertility. Of particular interest for my reading here is the parallel between the fecundity of Jacob's flock and that of his wives.[45] This is displayed by a series of wordplays connecting Rachel and Leah with the flock (highlighted by their animalistic names). This is particularly the case with Rachel who, as we have seen, is immediately introduced with the flock of Laban: "While he [Jacob] was still speaking to them [the shepherds by the well], Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she was a shepherdess" (29.9).[46] As the story progresses, however, Rachel

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Religion [New York: The Macmillan Company, 1924]). Joshua Trachtenberg summarizes this fertility-magic belief as follows:

> There existed a strong conviction that things seen before and during conception make so powerful an impression on the mind that their characteristics are stamped on the offspring…If, on the way home from a ritual bath to which she was prepared after her period (a procedure preliminary to intercourse) a woman encounters a dog, her child will have an ugly dog-face, if she meets an ass, it will be stupid, if an ignorant lout, it will be an ignoramus (*Jewish Magic and Superstition: A Study in Folk Religion* [New York: Atheneum, 1974], 187).

Jacob's technique will not hold up to modern genetics, but that might be precisely the point. What Jacob relies on is a magical element, while Laban relies on common sense. Reliance on the supernatural, however, turns out to be the better option, especially when you are the recipient of divine favour like Jacob is.

[44] See Fokkelman, *Narrative Art in Genesis*, 147; Michael Fishbane, *Text and Texture: Close Readings of Selected Biblical Texts* (New York: Schocken, 1979), 40-62; and Gary A. Rendsburg, *The Redaction of Genesis* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1986), 165-66.

[45] It should be noted though that there are different implications for both Jacob and Laban concerning the fecundity of Rachel and Leah versus the fecundity of the flock. More children for Jacob, for instance, does not entail less children for Laban, while more livestock for Jacob does entail less livestock for Laban.

[46] Noegel notes that the supplemental phrase, "for she was a shepherdess," not only tells us of her occupation but could also intriguingly be read as "she was grazing"—ewe-lamb that she is ("Drinking Feasts and Deceptive Feasts," 171. He also suggests that the first line could be read as an onomatopoetic pun in which "And Rachel came (באה, *bāʾāh*) with the sheep," could be read as "an ewe-lamb came baa-ing with the sheep" (165). That is, the verb "come" in this particular formation would convey the sound of a sheep's bleating.

seemingly transitions from the keeper of her father's flock to one of the flock itself. Perhaps the most obvious example of this is the pun found in Jacob's rebuke to Laban in 31.38: "These twenty years I have been with you, your ewe-lambs (רחליך, literally "your Rachels") and she-goats have not cast their young, and the rams of the flocks I have not eaten." Thus in a context in which Laban accuses Jacob of stealing his daughters, Jacob reminds him that he always cared for the Rachels/ewe-lambs of Laban.[47] Indeed, in the climax of his parting speech, Jacob reminds Laban that he "served" (עבד) for Rachel and Leah (see 29.20, 27) just as he "served" (עבד) for the flock: "These twenty years I have been in your house: I served (עבד) you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock" (31.41).

What significance does this identification of Rachel and Leah as animals of the flock play in the rod-fertility scene in 30.25-43? One answer is that it provides dramatic retribution for Laban's previous deception of Jacob (which itself was dramatic retribution for Jacob's deception of Isaac). In Gen 29 Laban deceives Jacob into believing that his "wage" (שׂכר) will be the loved, ewe-lamb Rachel, whom Laban replaces with the (weak-eyed) cow Leah. In Gen 30 Jacob tricks Laban into believing that his own "wage" (שׂכר) will be relatively small, but then yields stronger sheep and goats for himself while producing an abundance of "weaker" (30.42) sheep and goats for Laban. In both cases the trick plays upon the lamb(s) of the victim's desire.[48]

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[47] No similar pun exists for Leah in this passage. As we have seen, Rachel is given much more narrative weight in these chapters. So even while both daughters are linked to the flock (both through their names and the other linguistic associations we have discussed), Jacob consistently prioritizes Rachel.

[48] Noegel, "Sex, Sticks, and the Trickster," 15; idem, "Drinking Feasts and Deceptive Feasts," 173. The other animal used throughout the Jacob story which is persistently associated with deception is the goat. Jacob uses a slaughtered goat to deceive his father in Gen 27, here goats are used in his scheme against Laban, and Jacob's own sons deceive him with Joseph's coat dipped in goat's blood in Gen 37 (a goat will also play a part in Tamar's deception of Judah in Gen 38).

Additional puns and wordplays further enforce this. The opening scene in Genesis 29, for example, revolves around the "watering" (שקה) of the flocks, a verb which is mentioned no less than five times (29.2, 3, 7, 8, 10). Immediately after Jacob removes the stone from the well and "waters" (שקה) the flock he proceeds to "kiss" (נשק) Rachel. In both instances the verb is conjugated as וישק, which again associates Rachel with the flock. The sexually charged imagery of watering at the well—only intensified by the kissing—foreshadows Jacob's marriage with Rachel and his subsequent appropriation of Laban's flock.[49] Indeed, the aqueous imagery continues on the wedding night as Laban hosts a משתה "drinking feast" to which he "gathers" (אסף) all the men of the place (29.22), which parallels the "gathering" (אסף) of the flock in order to water the sheep in 29.3 and 29.8. The parallel is important to note as it continues into the rod-fertility scene as well. Here Jacob switches one animal for another in order to manipulate the sexual activity of Laban's flock when the animals come to "drink" (שתה) in the watering troughs (שקתות) (30.38), much as how Laban brought Jacob a cow on the night of the drinking feast (משתה) instead of an ewe-lamb.[50]

But the pun that perhaps best reveals the dramatic retribution is the oft-noted one on Laban's very name (לבן), which is identical to the Hebrew word for "white" (לבן). The manipulation of the word begins in 30.35 in which, after the agreement has been set, Laban proceeds to remove all the speckled and spotted goats, "every one that had white (לבן) in it." Initially, then Laban seems to take advantage of the pun, herding all the animals that "answer

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[49] Sarna notes that this is the only instance in biblical narrative of a man kissing a woman who is neither his mother nor his wife. He also observes the link between this scene and Isaac's kiss of blessing in 27.26-27. The connection thus implies that the next scene will offer retributive justice for his offence in the previous one—something even more clearly foreshadowed by Laban's kiss of greeting as well (29.13) (*Genesis*, 202-3).
[50] Noegel, "Drinking Feasts and Deceptive Feasts," 174.

best to his nature," as Fokkelman puts it.[51] Jacob's actions, however, quickly reverse Laban's advantage. He peels rods of poplar (לבנה), creating peeled streaks of white (לבנות), which "exposes the white (לבן) in them" (30.37). The repeated emphasis on whiteness makes it difficult to miss the point: Jacob is now using *lābān* (לבן) against Laban, beating his father-in-law at his own game. The exact method that Jacob uses further underlines this: by exposing the animals to the sight of the white-striped rods when they became heated, Jacob plays a type of bed-trick on the flock, for just as on the wedding night, there is a deception of sight that leads to a manipulation of the sexual act.

The rod is supposed to stimulate passion; it functions as a phallic symbol. John Skinner has identified the wood for the rods of poplar (מקל לבנה) as *styrax officinalis*, basing his reasoning on both a cognate relation (the rod is referred to as *lubnāy* in Arabic) as well on the fact the wood exudes a white, milk-like gum.[52] If he is correct, then the imagery is even more apparent: the phallus combined with the seed. But whose phallus and seed does the rod represent? The linguistic connection to Laban might present him as the more obvious choice, but if so then this is the phallic rod and seed of the father used against him. Laban is supposed to have the phallic authority here but it is usurped by Jacob. The offspring (the seed) produced from this stick-trick does not belong to the father—the rods are a symbol of Laban's diminishing power and increasing impotence.

The manipulator behind the trick is the son-in-law, the fugitive-foreigner in the father's house, who uses the daughters/flock of Laban to build up his own house. The puns that we have traced throughout this story can thus be interpreted as conveying the message that God repays

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[51] Fokkelman, *Narrative Art in Genesis*, 150.
[52] John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1910), 393 (n.37).

acts of deception in kind. This, however, masks the fact that Laban's deception of Jacob (which was supposedly in retribution to Jacob's deception of Isaac) actually works out in Jacob's favour. And the strengthening of Jacob's house corresponds to the weakening of Laban's house; it both foreshadows and ensures Jacob's prevailing over Laban. The use of the daughter-wives Rachel and Leah throughout the story plays on this theme. From passive objects of the father's deception, the daughters transition into active barterers for the husband's love and birth of sons. Thus, the marriage of two sisters to the same husband leads to a multitude of sons that builds up Jacob's house. The stick-trick that Jacob plays on Laban further enforces this, given the daughter-wives' symbolic association with the flock.

The Body-trick

The opening verses of Gen 31 prepare the way for Jacob and his household's departure back to the land of his birth as well as his eventual (complete) separation from Laban and his household. The reaction against Jacob's stick-trick is presented from the mouths of Laban's sons, not Laban himself: "And he [Jacob] heard the words of Laban's sons, saying: 'Jacob has taken all that was our father's. And from that which was our father's he has made all his wealth'" (31.1).[53] Laban's sons are only mentioned here and in 30.35 where they were given charge of the flock sent away from Jacob. Martha Morrison argues that the introduction of Laban's sons "emphasizes the difference between Jacob and the members of the family and underscores

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[53] The deflection of these jealous thoughts to Laban's sons and not Laban himself may function as a characterizing device; Laban is too wily and cunning of a character for his thoughts to be revealed aloud (at least to Jacob).

Jacob's hired status."[54] Indeed, before the mention of sons, there was no evidence to suggest that Laban's house was not going to be built through his daughters. The presence of sons thus complicates everything further, particularly the matter of inheritance, as their speech suggests. The sons calculatingly refer to Laban as "our father," thereby excluding Jacob as a son as they jealously reflect on this intruder's wealth.

The delay of mentioning the fact that Laban has sons also underscores that the primary familial relationship on which Laban focuses his attention is with his daughters. These daughters, likewise, are the focus of Jacob's attention, for after perceiving that Laban's countenance is no longer with him (31.2) and receiving the divine affirmation to return to his homeland (31.3), Jacob is left with one large task: arranging for the support of Rachel and Leah.

Jacob's speech to Rachel and Leah (31.5-13) begins by telling them of all that *their father* (the phrase "your father" is mentioned four times in the opening five verses) has done against his son-in-law. This contrasts with Jacob's desire to go back to the land of *his fathers* (31.3) and the favour he enjoys with the God of *his father* (31.5). So as Laban's sons observe, it is clear that Jacob is indeed distancing himself from Laban's fatherhood. But there is a rebellious aspect to this as well, for despite Laban's shrewd dealings, Jacob was adopted into his home as a refugee. Jacob's status is always in-between—not fully adopted, but still part of the household; hired wage, but also a son—and the text plays with this liminality. At this point in the story, however, Jacob himself has decided to separate, and what he requires from Rachel and Leah is loyalty to their husband over their father. The very fact that Jacob needs to do this displays the power that the daughters hold. "My daughter is my flesh and blood," says Shylock of Jessica, "you take my

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[54] Martha A. Morrison, "The Jacob and Laban Narrative in Light of near Eastern Sources," *Biblical Archaeologist* (1983): 155-64 (160).

house when you do take the prop / That doth sustain my house" (*The Merchant of Venice* 3.1.35; 4.1. 373-74). Jacob seeks to take Laban's props for once and for all.

In his appeal to his wives, Jacob makes three arguments: first, Laban no longer regards him with favour as before; second, Laban has been unfair in his dealings with him even though Jacob has served faithfully; third, God has protected Jacob and favoured him by increasing his livestock at the expense of Laban's livestock. The appeal, of course, is another example of clever and crafty speech. Jacob makes no mention of his own meddling with things, but instead attributes his good fortune to the workings of his god. The blame for the tense state, therefore, is to be placed upon the deceptive, wage-changing Laban and the mysterious, favourite-playing ways of Yahweh. Another notable feature of the speech is the attention to the flock and animals of Laban, which, as we have seen, are closely connected to the daughters themselves. Thus, Jacob's assertion that "God has taken away the cattle of your father and given them to me" (31.9), as well as his version of how he gained the streaked and speckled of the flock, take on another level of meaning given that the words are addressed to Rachel and Leah—the most precious ewe-lamb and cow of Laban's flock.

The sisters respond in solidarity and agree to leave the house of their father. We have seen hints of cooperation in the bed-trick and mandrakes scenes, but here the sisters speak in a unified voice with the same purpose in mind. Their response, interestingly, does not focus on their allegiance to Jacob but rather on their feelings of ill will toward their father.

And Rachel and Leah answered and said unto [Jacob]: "Is there any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house? Are we not regarded by him as foreigners? For he has sold us and he has wholly consumed our money. For all the wealth which God has taken away from our father, that is ours and our children's. And now, all that God has said unto you, do" (31.14-16).

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This is the first time the daughters' perspective on their father has been revealed, and it is a provocative one. Laban, they claim, is more than just a deceiver; he is a greedy and covetous father who has sold his daughters and devoured their money. Their reply, moreover, assumes that they expected a portion and inheritance in their father's house even though they also had brothers. This distinguishes their case from that of Zelophehad's daughters (Num. 26.33; 27.1-11; 36.1-12; Jos 17.3-6) in which the issue of inheritance concerns a father with no sons and only daughters.[55] Indeed, Rachel and Leah's complaint actually parallels the complaint of their brothers in 31.1 in which both parties express their concern about lost wealth and money.[56] Of course, there is an important difference: the sons blame Jacob for this; the daughters blame

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[55] Similar ancient Near Eastern texts have been discussed in connection with the passage for quite some time. Millar Burrows, for instance, notes the parallels between this passage and laws from the Nuzi tablets and ancient Babylonian marriages (see Millar Burrows, "The Complaint of Laban's Daughters," *JAOS* 57.3 (1937): 259-76). See also Jonathan Paradise, "A Daughter and her Father's Property at Nuzi," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 32.4 (1980): 189-207; N.H. Snaith, "The Daughters of Zelophehad," *VT* 16 (1966):124-7.

A closer parallel might be Job's daughters, who share their father's inheritance along with their brothers (Job 42.13-15). For discussion of this, see Zafrira Ben-Barak, "Inheritance of Daughters in the Ancient Near East," *JSS* 25 (1980): 22-33; idem, "The Daughters of Job," *Eretz Israel* 24 (1993): 41-8; idem, *Inheritance by Daughters in Israel and the Ancient Near East : A Social, Legal and Ideological Revolution* (Jaffa, Israel: Archaeological Center Publications, 2006); Rebecca Lesses, "The Daughters of Job," in *Searching the Scriptures* (ed. Elisabeth Schlüssler Fiorenza; New York: Crossroad, 1994), 139-49; William S. Morrow, "Toxic Religion and the Daughters of Job," *Studies in Religion/Sciences religieuses* 27 (1998): 263-276; Peter Machinist, "Job's Daughters and Their Inheritance in the Testament of Job and its Biblical Congeners," in *The Echoes of Many Texts: Reflections on Jewish and Christian Traditions. Essays in honor of Lou H. Silberman* (eds. William G. Dever and J. Edward Wright; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 67-80.

[56] Fuchs compares the sisters' response to Jacob's motives for leaving Paddan-Aram. Whereas Jacob points to God as the ultimate reason for his departure from Laban's house, "his wives stress the financial aspect as their primary concern" ("'For I have the Way of Women': Deception, Gender, and Ideology in Biblical Narrative," *Semeia* 42 [1988]: 68-83 [22]). Jacob's piety is therefore contrasted with the pragmatism, even selfishness, of Rachel and Leah. In response to Fuchs's argument, Pardes points out the gap between Jacob's words and deeds. In other words, Fuchs's comparison only works if one takes Jacob's words at face value and likewise ignores his own manipulation of Laban. Pardes thus notes that Fuchs too falls "under the spell of Jacob's rhetoric" (*Countertraditions*, 69).

Laban. According to Rachel and Leah, Laban did not simply "give" (נתן) his daughters away, as

he himself asserts (29.19, 26, and 27); rather he "sold" (מכר) them, exploiting their value for his

own benefit—highlighted by the consonance between "foreigners" (from נכר) and "sold" (מכר).[57]

For the daughters, the silver which Laban gained from selling them is actually theirs (and their

children's). From this perspective, the silver is a kind of metonym for the daughters' value—thus

the injustice of Laban both emphatically consuming (אכל) (the money of) his daughters and

rejecting them as foreigners.[58]

It is, however, ambiguous whether the daughters consider the silver/money to be Jacob's

as well. That is, when they say that Laban has taken away all that was "ours and our children's"

do they include Jacob in this? It is not entirely clear, and thus again raises the issue of Jacob's

ambiguous status as both a foreigner and a member of the family, a son/son-in-law (highlighted

by Laban's affirmation that he and Jacob are "brothers" of the same "bone and flesh" in 29.14-

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[57] See also the depiction of selling daughters as slaves in Exod 21.7-11. In the Exodus text, the emphasis is on the rights of a daughter who is sold into slavery—she is not to be sold to a foreign people and so on; Rachel and Leah use it disparagingly here to suggest that they have been treated more like slaves than prized daughters.

[58] The verb "to eat/consume" (אכל) can act as a euphemism for intercourse in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Gen. 31.38; Exod. 2.20, 32.6; Dan. 10.3; and Prov. 30.20), and thus points to the possible sexual imagery in the daughters' response (see Gary A. Rendsburg, "Word Play in Biblical Hebrew: An Eclectic Collection," in *Puns and Pundits: Word Play in the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near Eastern Literature* [ed. Scott Noegel; Bethesda: CDL Press, 2000], 137-62 [esp. 150-52]). The daughters' description of themselves as "foreigners" (נכריות), moreover, can also carry a sexual connotation. For instance, this same feminine adjective (with a substantival sense) is also what is used to refer to the "strange/loose woman" (נכריה) of Proverbs (e.g., Prov. 2.16; 5.20; 6.24; 7.5; 23.27). What makes the strange woman strange, as Claudia Camp observes, is her sexual behaviour; the imagery associated with her revolves around sexual indiscretion, "including a peculiar combination of accusations of adultery and prostitution" (*Wise, Strange and Holy: The Strange Woman and the Making of the Bible* [JSOTSup 320; Gender, Culture, Theory 9; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000], 41). This possible sexual imagery, I would assert, has the daughters present their father as a type of procurer. They are, therefore, subtly referring to Laban's manipulation of them in the bed-trick he plays upon Jacob. There he treated them like "strange women" (נכריות), in the Proverbs-ian sense, under the pretence of preserving the custom of primogeniture but in actuality because of his greediness.

15). The exact nature of Jacob's "wages" is never spelled out; Jacob's work, for example, is never explicitly designated as a bride-price (מהר). Perhaps more significantly, the daughters' complaint reveals that their father gave no bride wealth (though he did, of course, provide his daughters with handmaids)—but would such bride wealth be expected when the groom is a refugee? The answer to this question is left dramatically unclear.

The women speak with one voice in their complaint against their father but it is Rachel alone who takes things a step further with her theft of Laban's teraphim (תרפים). Both Jacob and Rachel steal (גנב) something in their departure from Laban: Rachel steals his teraphim (31.19), Jacob his heart (31.20). Jacob's stealing of Laban's heart, to be sure, has an idiomatic meaning, as in Jacob deceived or outwitted Laban.[59] On the other hand, the use of לב "heart," also tells us something about Laban's emotional life.[60] It could hint, for instance, at Laban's paternal regard for his daughters. It could also refer to Laban's possessiveness of his daughters and thus his rapaciousness; the daughters are part of his wealth and his money, and Jacob has run off with them like Lorenzo with Jessica about which Shylock revealingly laments "My daughter! *O my ducats! O my daughter!*" (*The Merchant of Venice* 2.8.15). The Hebrew underscores this, given the wordplay between "heart" (לב) and "Laban" (לבן); the implication is that by deceiving Laban Jacob stole a part of Laban's Laban-ness, and hence yet another reminder of the trickster getting tricked. Rachel's parallel thievery, therefore, further confirms her status as Jacob's Jacoba. At the same time, it also aligns her with Laban. Like "exceptional hand-eye coordination, a love of spinach, or good cheekbones," as Melissa Jackson puts it, the trait of trickery seems to be passed

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[59] See Vinzenz Hamp, גנב, *TDOT* 3:39-45 (esp. 41).
[60] See H.J. Fabry, לב, *TDOT* 7: 399-437. The לב can refer to a great many dimensions of human existence as it is used in the Hebrew Bible, containing vital, affective, noetic, and voluntative functions. It is scarcely ever used as a physical organ (though it can have this concrete meaning) and is typically used in a metaphorical sense.

across and down generations in the Hebrew Bible.[61] In other words, Rachel truly is the daughter of her father—like father, like daughter (to paraphrase Ezek 16.44).

The motivation behind Rachel's theft, however, is unclear. To be sure, it is hard not to suppose that on some level it is an act of retribution. The daughters have just elaborated on their negative viewpoint of their father, describing his own thievery of their wealth, and so Laban's offense is repaid in kind. Thematically, moreover, there are links between Rachel's trickery regarding the teraphim and Laban's bed-trick—thus adding to the significance that it was Rachel alone who stole the teraphim.

Part of the difficulty in coming to any firm conclusion regarding Rachel's motivation is that it is unknown exactly what the teraphim are. It is not in my interest to side with one of the many hypotheses regarding the actual function of the teraphim.[62] For my purpose, the many

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[61] Melissa Jackson, *Comedy and Feminist Interpretation of the Bible: A Subversive Collaboration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 41.

[62] The word teraphim is found fifteen times in the Hebrew Bible in eight different contexts (Gen. 31.19-35; Judges 17-18; 1 Sam. 15.23; 19.11-17; 2 Kgs. 23.24; Ezek. 21.26; Hos. 3.4; Zech. 10.2). They were obviously material objects, perhaps statuettes in human form, and must have varied in size from relatively small (as is the case with Rachel) to the size of a human form (as in 1 Samuel 19) (for analysis of the link between Rachel's use of the teraphim and Michal's in 1 Samuel 19, see Keith Bodner and Ellen White, "Some Advantages of Recycling: The Jacob Cycle in a Later Environment," *BibInt* 22 [2014]: 20-33; see also Peter Bauck, "1 Samuel 19—David and the 'Teraphim': יהוה עם דוד and the Emplotted Narrative," *SJOT* 22.2 [2008]: 212-36). The etymology of the term is uncertain and it is questionable to what degree the etymology may help one understand the nature and function of the teraphim in any case (see Harry A. Hoffner, "The Linguistic Origins of the Teraphim," *BSac* 124 [1967]: 230-38; and for a critique of the helpfulness of etymology, see Karel van der Toorn, "The Nature of the Biblical Teraphim in the Light of the Cuneiform Evidence," *CBQ* 52 [1990]: 203-22 [esp. 204]). Suggestions that have been offered include fertility idols, ancestor figurines, good luck charms, and household gods.
    The two most dominant theories are those of household gods and ancestor figurines. The theory of teraphim as household gods gained popularity with the discovery of the Nuzi texts. In particular, the Nuzi documents have been used to suggest that the teraphim are connected to inheritance and property rights/ownership (see Speiser, *Genesis*, 250). Moshe Greenberg uses the Nuzi documents and Josephus specifically in regard to Rachel's theft, arguing that typically copies of the household idols would have been made, but since Rachel fled in haste she took the

theories about the teraphim—that they are ancestor figurines, household gods, fertility idols, and so on—are useful not necessarily because they shed light on what the actual function of the teraphim might have been, but because they shed light on the function of the teraphim within the text itself. Indeed, that the teraphim are hardly present on the level of narrative stands as a nice analogy for their function. As Anne-Marie Korte notes, "they are stolen and hidden, missed, and searched for, but not found."[63] Like an antithetical purloined letter, the teraphim stand out because of their absence and hiddenness; similarly, they are powerful signifiers without having a specifically known function. The theory that the teraphim are household gods, for example, emphasizes the liminal position of the daughter's belonging to both the house of their father and their husband. Rachel desires to take her father's gods (אלהים) (31.30) with her to the land of the God (אלהים) of her husband's father(s) (31.3, 5). On a broader ancestral level, the teraphim reveal

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originals ("Another Look at Rachel's Theft of the Teraphim," *JBL* 81 [1962]: 239-48). Ktziah Spanier intriguingly argues that Rachel's theft of the teraphim was not made for Jacob's sake— that is, for Jacob to have claim over Laban's estate—but "was part of her continuing struggle for primacy within Jacob's household" ("Rachel's Theft of the Teraphim: Her Struggle for Family Primacy," *VT* 42.3 [1992]: 404-12 [404]). Thus, the theft of the teraphim reflects Rachel's battle with Leah, as Rachel believed that possession of the teraphim would establish Joseph, *her* son, as the eventual leader of the family.

The other dominant theory—that teraphim are figurines of dead ancestors—is argued most thoroughly by Karel van der Toorn (and Theodore .J. Lewis) (see Karel van der Toorn, "The Nature of the Biblical Teraphim in the Light of the Cuneiform Evidence," 203-22; Karel van der Toorn and Theodore J. Lewis, "*tĕrāpîm*," *TDOT* 15:777-789; Theodore J. Lewis, "Teraphim," *DDD* 844-50; see also Oswald Loretz, "Die Teraphim als 'Ahnen-Götten-Figur(in)en' im Lichte der Texte aus Nuzi, Emar und Ugarit" *UF* 24 [1992]: 133-78). From this perspective, the teraphim are idolatrous representations of deceased spirits, or more specifically, representations of a family's deceased ancestors (for a reading that uses this theory in regard to Micah's teraphim in Judges, though also contains a discussion about Rachel's theft of the teraphim, see Benjamin Cox, "Micah's Teraphim," *JHebS* 12 [2012]: 1-36); and for a summary of interpretations of the teraphim until relatively recently, see Shawn Flynn, "The Teraphim in Light of Mesopotamian and Egyptian Evidence," *CBQ* 74.4 [2012]: 694-711).

[63] Anne-Marie Korte, "Significance Obscured: Rachel's Theft of the Teraphim; Divinity and Corporeality in Gen. 31," in *Begin with the Body: Corporeality, Religion and Gender* (ed. Jonneke Bekkenkamp and Maaike de Haardt; Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 157-82 (175-76).

both the split in Terah's line between Nahor's descendants and Abraham's and their ongoing connection. The teraphim are also clearly linked to the themes of sexuality and (the lack of) fertility—whether or not they actually were fertility idols. They are stolen by the initially barren daughter, who was only able to give birth after bartering for the mandrakes, and then deceitfully hidden by this daughter's (purported) menstruation. Indeed, Elaine Scarry points out that in Rachel's hiding of the teraphim, the idols "are almost absorbed into her own flesh as though they were her children not yet born."[64] The sexual imagery is further highlighted by the symbolic space of the tent in which Rachel hides the teraphim, and Laban's "feeling" (מִשֵּׁשׁ) all about in his search.[65]

Before the scene of Rachel's concealment of the teraphim, however, are Jacob's flight and Laban's consequent chase. Immediately after Rachel and Leah provide their perspective on Laban, Jacob rises up and carries away his entire household with him toward Canaan. At the same time that Jacob flees, Laban had gone to shear his sheep (31.19). This recalls the distance

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[64] Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 223.

[65] Studies that focus on the imagery of fertility and sexuality in relation to Rachel's theft and concealment of the teraphim typically come from a feminist perspective. I list here in chronological order those sources from this perspective that have been most influential in my own reading: Mieke Bal, "Tricky Thematics," *Semeia* 42 (1988): 133-55; Esther Fuchs, "'For I have the Way of Women': Deception, Gender, and Ideology in Biblical Narrative," *Semeia* 42 (1988): 68-83; Nancy Jay, *Throughout Your Generations Forever: Sacrifice, Religion, and Paternity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 105-11; Anne-Marie Korte, "Significance Obscured: Rachel's Theft of the Teraphim; Divinity and Corporeality in Gen. 31," in *Begin with the Body: Corporeality, Religion and Gender* (ed. Jonneke Bekkenkamp and Maaike de Haardt; Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 157-82; J.E. Lapsley, "The Voice of Rachel: resistance and Polyphony in Genesis 31.14-35," in *Genesis: A Feminist Companion* (2nd edition) (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 233-48; Susan Niditch, "Genesis," in *The Women's Bible Commentary* (ed. Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 13-29; Tammi J. Schneider, *Mothers of Promise: Women in the Book of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic Press, 2008), 84-87.

between the two men in which Laban had set his flock a distance of three-day's journey apart from Jacob. Sheepshearing, moreover, can function as a motif in the Hebrew Bible in which somebody is about to be deceived or purposefully uninformed of something (e.g. Judah in Genesis 38, Nabal in 1 Samuel 25, and Absalom in 2 Samuel 13), or as Keith Bodner and Ellen White put it: "when there is a sheepshearing festival, somebody gets fleeced."[66] The irony, as is to be expected at this point, is particularly rich in that Laban is fleeced not only by Jacob but by his daughterly cosset Rachel—he is sheared by one of his own sheep. Laban remains unaware of this familial betrayal, for when he catches up to the fleeing party he places blame solely upon Jacob: "What have you done, that you have stolen my heart and driven away my daughters like captives of the sword?" (31.26). But the daughters, as we know from their previous thoughts in 31.14-16, were not driven away like captives of the sword, but were willing participants in departing from Paddan-Aram. In fact, their parting was a result of Laban's own careless treatment of them.[67]

Thus, Laban's signs of apparent paternal affection shown in these verses should be read in light of his ignorance regarding his daughters' perspective on him, as well as his ignorance, or purposeful glossing over, of the effects of his previous trickery. Laban's lament, for instance, that Jacob did not permit him to "kiss" (נשׁק) his sons and daughters (31.28) recalls Laban's initial greeting kiss to Jacob in 29.13. This kiss had the appearance of joyful hospitality but was

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[66] Bodner and White, "Some Advantages of Recycling: The Jacob Cycle in a Later Environment," 24. See also Jeffrey C. Geoghegan, "Israelite Sheepshearing and David's Rise to Power," *Bib* 87 (2006): 55-63.

[67] This is underlined by the repeated use of the verb נהג "to drive (away)." For Laban's accusation that Jacob "drove away" (נהג) his daughters echoes Jacob's just previously mentioned "herding" (נהג) of his cattle and livestock to begin his journey home (31.18). That the verb נהג, moreover, is used in reference to the herding of cattle and livestock, and then Rachel and Leah, again highlights the daughters' connection to the flock/animals.

also a foreshadowing of Laban's retributive trickery on Jacob (who had received the kiss of blessing from Isaac in his trickery of his father [27.26-27]). Would Laban's farewell kiss be any different than his greeting kiss? Jacob voices his concern over this very deceitfulness in his response to Laban's inquiry as to why he had gone away secretly: "Because I was afraid for I thought that you would take away your daughters by force" (31.31). Laban had already used his own daughters as objects to deceive Jacob, and Jacob reasons that Laban may use his daughters against him yet again.

What Jacob does not know is that one of Laban's daughters had already enacted her own retribution against her father (31.32). Thus, in response to Laban's accusation of the teraphim theft Jacob proposes a death sentence to the culprit: "Anyone with whom you find your gods shall not live. In the presence of our kinsmen discern what is yours with me, and take it for yourself" (31.32).[68] Laban's search is a grave endeavour and the tension is built up as he sifts through each character's personal tent; he begins, as one would expect, with Jacob's tent but then goes through the tent of every other suspect before reaching Rachel's.

> And Laban went into Jacob's tent, and into Leah's tent, and into the tent of the two maid-
> servants, but he found nothing. And he went out of Leah's tent and entered into Rachel's
> tent. But Rachel had taken the teraphim and put them in a camel saddle and sat upon
> them. And Laban felt about the tent, but he found nothing. And she said to her father:
> "Let there not be anger in the eyes of my lord for I am not able to rise up before you, for

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[68] Jacob's challenge for Laban to "discern" (נכר) what is his alludes to Jacob's earlier deception of Isaac (27.23) and anticipates Jacob's deception by his sons (37.32, 33). The root of the verb, moreover, is the same as the daughters' accusation in 31.15 that their father considers them to be "strangers" (נכריות). Thus, Laban is to "discern" (נכר) the deception of the very daughter whom he has treated as a "stranger" (נכריה).

the way of women is upon me." And he searched but he did not find the teraphim (31.33-35).

The method of Laban's searching, his "feeling about" (מִשֵּׁשׁ), connects the passage with the Jacob's deception of touch on Isaac (27.12, 22). It also displays the sensuality of the scene—the father groping about his daughter's tent—and thus recalls the bed-trick. The intimate setting of the tent accentuates this; it can often function as a feminine, maternal space and symbol in the Hebrew Bible—rather cave-like. One thinks, for instance, of Isaac's bringing of Rebekah into Sarah's tent in Gen 24.67 in order to consummate the marriage.[69] The tent of Jael in Judges 4 and 5 is another good example of this, as it is replete with maternal imagery: Jael covers Sisera like a mother tucking in her child, she "opens" (פתח) a skin of milk to nourish Sisera, and is then instructed to stand guard at the "opening" of the tent. David Gunn and Danna Fewell assert that the verbal play and visual display in this scene from Judges construct a symbolic picture in which "the tent and its opening become uterine and vaginal images respectively."[70] In a more general sense they note that "at least in biblical literature, a man seldom enters a woman's tent for purposes other than sexual intercourse. The woman's tent is symbolic of the woman's body."[71] The repetition of the verb "enter" (בוא) in Laban's tent-to-tent teraphim search underscores this given its sexual connotations, as in Jacob's entering (בוא) into Leah on his wedding night in 29.23 (see also 29.21, 30; 30.3, 4, 14). This also shows the irony of Laban's

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[69] Sarah's tent is where Isaac and Rebekah consummate their marriage, where Rebekah replaces Sarah as matriarch and becomes the wife of Isaac; Rachel's tent, in contrast, does not consummate a marriage with a husband but a (type of) separation from a father.

[70] David Gunn and Danna Fewell, "Controlling Perspectives: Women, Men, and the Authority of Violence in Judges 4 & 5," *JAAR* 58 (1990): 389-411 (393).

[71] Gunn and Fewell, "Controlling Perspectives," 392.

failure, for like Jacob's entering in the bed-trick, Laban's entering results in a deception from the failure of his senses.

The sexual imagery is heightened by Rachel's use of menstruation as a way to deceive Laban. One common line of interpretation seeks to understand this trick by linking the biblical motifs of (male) repugnance for menstruation and the patronizing of idols and idolatry. Fokkelman points out that there may be something humorous in the fact that the teraphim are "saved" by menstruation: "This means that [the teraphim] are as unclean as can be, in this new position they come near to functioning as…sanitary towels."[72] Susan Niditch likewise focuses on the male revulsion for menstruation but interprets the scene as a victory of covert female power over overt male power: "[Rachel] uses her physical source of femininity, the dangerous and sullying power of menstruation to prevent her father from discovering her theft. Laban's paternal, and therefore masculine authority—an authority linked to his ownership of the teraphim—is undermined by his feminine offspring who cleverly exploits her most typical female characteristic."[73] The comedy is based upon the fact that the taboo of menstrual blood is a

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[72] Fokkelman, *Narrative Art in Genesis*, 170.

[73] Susan Niditch, "Genesis," 24. Two interpretations of the teraphim worth mentioning in more detail here are Nancy Jay's (*Throughout Your Generations Forever*, 105-111) and Anne-Marie Korte's ("Significance Obscured: Rachel's Theft of the Teraphim," 157-82). Jay argues that Rachel's theft of the teraphim is an attempt to secure matrilineal descent. What she steals, in other words, is "matriliny," in which Joseph, her only son at this point in the narrative, will be traced through his mother and her line of the family. By laying claim to her line of descent as an equal, or perhaps greater, line of descent than the patrilineal one, she seeks to guarantee an inheritance for her and her sons. From this perspective, the theft parallels Jacob's theft of birthright and blessing. Also significant for Jay is Rachel's (supposed) menstruating, which is the only biblical instance of the deliberate "use" of menstrual blood, the polluting counterpart to purifying sacrificial blood. Thus, even the means of Rachel's trickery symbolize the connection between the teraphim and matrilineal descent.

Korte, on the other hand, views the teraphim in connection with issues of fertility. This does not mean, however, that the teraphim are fertility idols that multiply childbirth; instead, they are protective idols that ward off the life-threatening consequences of fertility. Rachel's menstruating is not so much a sign of potential fertility but a statement of her not being pregnant.

male problem. Mieke Bal thus fittingly comments: "A woman would have simply checked, a man would not dream of trying. Thus, the very sign of female inferiority becomes a sign of male inferiority, of male fright, a fright that blinds."[74] From this perspective, Laban's blindness represents a type of inversion of Jacob's, even as they resonate with each other. Jacob is blinded by the darkness, (presumed) veiling, and inebriation, but also his lustful passion; Laban is blinded by the abject feminine body in front of him.

While the preceding interpretations explore the general male repulsion for menstruation, they do not dwell upon the significance of the father-daughter relationship (Niditch is an exception, though even she only mentions this in passing). What, for example, might it mean for a daughter to employ her menstruating body as a trick against her father? Alter offers one possibility by looking within the narrative itself:

> The impotence of the irate father vis-à-vis his biologically mature daughter is comically caught in the device she hits upon, of pleading her period, in order to stay seated on the concealed figurines. Her invention involves an ironic double take because it involves all those years of uninterrupted menses before she was last able to conceive and bear her only son.[75]

This also explains, according to Korte, Rachel's death in childbirth (and the death of Deborah, Rebekah's wet-nurse) shortly after Jacob's decree to his household in Gen 35 to bury all the foreign gods in their midst (although the teraphim are not explicitly mentioned along with these foreign gods).

[74] Mieke Bal, "Tricky Thematics," 151. Fuchs focuses on the ambiguity of the phrase "the way of women," which could simultaneously refer to Rachel's deceptiveness as well as her menstruation. That is, "the way of women," may be interpreted as the way of mischievousness, as opposed to the "way of men" (achieving things through established process)—in other words, deceptiveness may be inherent in female nature and there may be "no more point in challenging it than there is in challenging the menstrual process" ("For I have the Way of Women," 80).

[75] Alter, *Genesis*, 172.

The very character who is initially defined by her barrenness, and accordingly shows a great amount of concern over her fertility, a character whose first words are the boisterous, "Give me children or I die!" (30.1), now uses her menses to her advantage (whether it is an invention or not is left ambiguous in the narrative itself). She uses these menses against her father, leaving the paternal authority powerless.[76] In the bed-trick scene Laban does not hesitate to exploit this sexuality, but here it is precisely what leaves him helpless. The lost teraphim—as representations of his lost daughters, flock, and gods—symbolize the loss of Laban's phallic power and authority. Or perhaps, given the plural form of the noun, we might say that Rachel steals Laban's go(na)ds. If only Laban had an Iago type of character to warn him as the villain warns Brabantio: "Look to your house, your daughter, and your bags" (*Othello* 1.1.80), in which there is an obvious pun on "bags". There is indeed a poetic irony in Rachel drawing attention to her genitals in a ruse that symbolizes the weakening of the father's own phallic authority. His own seed (offspring), the fruit of his seed (semen), has turned against him.

Thus, Rachel does not simply use her femininity to trick Laban, she also uses her daughterhood. For there is something particularly paralyzing to Laban in having to consider his daughter's menses. This added paralysis can perhaps be accounted for by looking to Freud as an intertext (especially given his privileging of the father's gaze). In Freudian psychoanalysis, the mother's genitals are a highly symbolic place, full of conflicting meanings; on the topic of the daughter's genitals, however, Freud had virtually nothing to say.[77] Thus, whenever Freud

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[76] There may be an interesting irony here in Rachel using "weakness" as an excuse for her inability to rise before her father. In a sense, she is pretending to be Leah, the "weak/feeble" one—and by doing so she actually gains the upper hand and takes control of the situation.

[77] See David Willbern, "*Filia Oedipi*: Father and Daughter in Freudian Theory," 75-96.

mentioned female genitals, they were immediately associated with the mother. An excerpt from "The Uncanny" serves as an excellent example of this:

> It often happens that male patients declare that they feel there is something uncanny about the female genital organs. This *unheimlich* place, however, is the entrance to the former *heim* [home] of all human beings, to the place where everyone dwelt once upon a time and in the beginning. There is a humorous saying: "Love is home-sickness"; and whenever a man dreams of a place or country and says to himself, still in the dream, "this place is familiar to me, I have been there before," we may interpret the place as being his mother's genitals or body.[78]

For men, according to Freud, there is an overall uncanny (*unheimlich*) nature to female genitals; the mother's genitals, however, offer a sense of comfort and nostalgic hominess (that which is *heimlich*). One cannot apparently say the same about the daughter's genitals; they are not the familiar place of one's first home and thus do not recall the fantasy of "intra-uterine existence" as Freud says elsewhere in the essay.[79] The mother's genitals, therefore, offer a mixture of the homely and unhomely to men, while the daughter's genitals are simply unhomely (*unheimlich*).[80]

Rachel does not just draw her father's attention to her genitals, but presents them as bleeding. Within the scene itself, Rachel's bleeding stands as a (symbolic) reminder of the lengths to which Laban has fallen—a suspicious father searching and feeling about in the tent of

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[78] Freud, "The Uncanny," *SE* 17: 245

[79] Freud, "The Uncanny," *SE* 17: 244.

[80] Worth recalling here is the resonance in Hebrew between "daughter" (בת) and "house" (בית). I noted in the last chapter how this linguistic parallel can be used to highlight architectural metaphors related to the daughter. The daughter is represented as an empty space, a place to be filled. On the other hand, the linguistic parallel may emphasize dissonance between the two terms as well. The daughter is valuable only as a commodity to be exchanged between houses— she is thus simply a space-filler (an opportunity for connection between two houses).

his (supposedly) menstruating daughter. In the larger context of the story, one is reminded of "all those years of uninterrupted menses," as Alter puts it, in which Rachel's barrenness is actually a means used to build up Jacob's house (as it results in the use of the handmaids to proliferate the number of Jacob's sons). And the strengthening of Jacob's house results in the weakening of Laban's house. Such dangerous daughters are a great cause of patriarchal anxiety, as they are a reminder of the disruptive role that biblical daughters can play in the house of their father. A daughter, as we have noted before, is the most expendable family member, but precisely because of this position she instills a sense of loss and fear (most expendable can also mean least retainable). Her representation of the fluid boundaries and margins of the father's house can be connected to her bodily margins. The menstruating daughter, therefore, perhaps best signifies this, as it represents her sexual availability and thus (future) membership in another house.

Laban emerges from Rachel's tent a rather different man; he has already been bested by Jacob's stick-trick and now Rachel's body-trick has made him out to be a false accuser. Jacob, firmly having the upper hand, accordingly launches into a tirade against his father-in-law (31.36-42). He recounts the injustices Laban has enacted against him, beginning most recently with Laban's "feeling about" (מִשֵּׁשׁ) all his stuff. His rebuke culminates in the central complaint of 31.41: "These twenty years I have been in your house. I served you fourteen years for your two daughters and six years for your flock, but you have changed my wage ten times." The complaint encompasses the primary issues between the two men: the wages, the daughters, and the flock (which are all symbolically linked with each other).

Laban's response contains an interesting mixture of first appearing not to acquiesce at all but then acknowledging his own powerless position.

The daughters are my daughters, and the children are my children, and the flock is my

flock. All that you see is mine. But for these my daughters what can I do today, or for

their sons whom they have born? Now come, let us make a covenant, I and you, and let it

be as a witness between me and between you. (31.43-44)

On the one hand, Laban's claim is infallible. Rachel and Leah, as daughters, are Laban's

daughters. The father is asserting his primary claim and thus presumably takes this to mean that

the daughters will *always* be his daughters. Here Laban puns on his own name as if to emphasize

the point. The phrase "to my daughters" (לבנתי) could read as "my (female) Labans," and

similarly, the phrase "to their sons," (לבניהן) could read as "their (male) Labans." The wordplay

underscores his assertion that all Jacob can see is/are Laban's/Labans.[81] At the same time, Laban

admits to the impotence of these claims, acknowledging there is nothing he can do for his

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[81] Laban may be trying to save face, as is sometimes asserted, by suddenly suggesting that Jacob had contracted a type of *beena* marriage all along; that is, a marriage in which the husband becomes incorporated into the wife's household. *Beena* marriages can be distinguished from *ṣadīqa* (or *motá*) marriages, as the latter is known for conjugal relations on a temporary basis (see Thalia Gur-Klein, *Sexual Hospitality in the Hebrew Bible: Patronymic, Metronymic, Legitimate and Illegitimate Relations* [Sheffield: Equinox, 2013], 171-73).

Mieke Bal refers to such marriages as *patrilocal* in order to stress that "it is the power of the father, over and against that of the husband, which characterizes this type of marriage" (*Death and Dissymmetry*, 85). Bal admits that the term may be confusing, since patrilocal marriage is traditionally associated with *virilocal* marriage (where the wife resides with the husband's clan and kin), though she does offer a nice discussion of the already confusing mixture of terms used to refer to marriages in which the husband resides with the wife's clan and kin (84-85).

In addition to the confusion over what term one might use, it is also unclear in the narrative itself what marriage agreement Jacob and Laban agree upon. Gur-Klein perceptively argues that this may be part of the literary artifice of the text, as Jacob and Laban appear to have different understandings of what marriage arrangement they agreed upon—or at least each presents his own understanding of the original agreement in the way the is most beneficial to him (176-78). She also notes though that biblical marriages that could be classified as *beena* or *ṣadīqa* often do not seem to fit perfectly into either category. (For Gur-Klein's extended analysis on the different types of metronymic marriages that might be present in the Hebrew Bible, see *Sexual Hospitality in the Hebrew Bible*, 159-204.)

daughters and their children. As a result, he suggests a covenant of peace. Jacob willingly erects a stone pillar as the symbolic witness. The stone pillar harkens back to Jacob's making of one in Gen 28 but also to the large stone at the mouth of the well in Gen 29.[82] There a stone brought the two men together; here it is a symbol of their separation.

Given this separation, Laban posits one final warning to Jacob: "If you afflict my daughters, and if you take wives beside my daughters though no man is with us, see, God is witness between you and between me" (31.50). Laban claims the moral high ground above Jacob by appealing to his affection for his daughters—this apparent affection, however, must again be taken with a grain of salt. His concern about Jacob marrying other wives, for instance, must be under the pretence of Jacob not favoring other wives above Rachel or Leah, or creating a situation in which the wives are at discord with each other. This, however, is precisely the situation that Laban created with his bed-trick, playing upon Jacob's preference for Rachel and thus maneuvering to have Jacob marry Leah. If Laban's concern is that Jacob not take other wives in order that Rachel and Leah (and their sons) have a larger portion or share in Jacob's household, then this too is mitigated by Rachel and Leah's earlier declaration that Laban himself is the one who has cheated them of their portion and inheritance. Indeed, Laban's injunction that Jacob not "afflict" (ענה) his daughters echoes Jacob's previous complaint in 31.42 of his "affliction" (עני, a nominal form of the root ענה) under Laban's hands. The irony then is that

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[82] The word for the "heap" of stones here is גל which is derived from the verb גלל "roll away" used repeatedly in the opening scenes of Gen 29. The name of the place where this covenant took place is accordingly called "Galeed" ("heap of witness"), a folk etymology for the region of "Gilead." Gilead, as we will see in the next chapter, is a liminal place that functions as both a border and a frontier for Israel. In Judges, this in-between geographical location is a place of anxiety for women/daughters given the threat of exogamous marriages. In this treaty, which sets the original border in place, it is only fitting then that two matriarchs of Israel cross this boundary from the *other* side.

Laban is telling Jacob not to treat his daughters like he treated Jacob; there is also the subtle implication, therefore, that Laban is telling that Jacob not to treat his daughters like *he* treated them.

With this final admonition, and the covenant having been sworn in place, Laban offers a final farewell: "And Laban rose early in the morning and he kissed his sons and his daughters and blessed them. And Laban went off and returned to his place" (32.1). The same wordplay on Laban's name can be found in this verse as that found in 31.43, as "he kissed his sons and his daughters" can be read as "he kissed his (male) Labans and (female) Labans." The one character, of course, who is absent from Laban's farewell is Jacob—the one who stole the heart (לֵב) of Laban (לָבָן), and who is now departing with Laban's male and female Labans as part of his own household. This avoidance of kissing Jacob is a pointed contrast to Laban's initial kiss of greeting in 29.13 in which he ran to Jacob and embraced him.[83] Perhaps more ironic, however, is that Laban appears to remain ignorant of his daughters' perspective about him and of Rachel's theft of his teraphim. Indeed, his blessing and kissing of Rachel recalls that of the deception of Isaac in Gen 27; in both cases, a father is duped by his offspring whom he blesses and kisses. And just as with Jacob, there is a noteworthy difference between Rachel's relationship with Laban in this scene in comparison to her introduction in Gen 29. There Rachel enters the scene as tender of her father's sheep (29.9)—and runs to tell her father of Jacob's arrival, after receiving her own kiss from Jacob (29.11-12). This former shepherdess who cared for her father's sheep, however, is now an active deceiver of him, playing a crucial part in the weakening of Laban's house.

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[83] Of course, even here, as we have previously noted, Laban's kiss foreshadows his eventual deception of Jacob as it harkens back to Isaac's kissing in Genesis 27.

Addendum: Dinah

While in Paddan-Aram, Jacob primarily plays the part of son-in-law; back in Canaan he plays the part of father and has to deal with his own daughter and her potential son-in-law. The two parts of the Jacob cycle can thus be compared to each other in terms of the problematic roles that daughters and sons-in-law pose for fathers, but there are also significant differences. There is, for instance, a similar theme of giving away daughters—but this time the focus is on an exchange of daughters for daughters rather than labour for daughters. In contrast to Jacob, Shechem offers a bride-price and wedding gift, an exorbitant one at that. Each story also displays a clash of cultures that comes with different peoples interacting with each other and the potential intermarriage between them. But the Dinah story will not include any (explicit) marriage and certainly not the birth of many sons. Dinah differs from Leah and Rachel in this way (particularly Leah), as she remains childless and permanently retains the status of daughter—the only daughter to do so in Genesis.[84] Perhaps the biggest difference is the prominent role that sons play in Gen 34, as it is ultimately Dinah's brothers who take action on their sister's behalf. Jacob is somewhat removed from the center of activity, lacking control over both his daughter and sons. The tension remains expressly unresolved at the end of the chapter, which functions as a turning point in Jacob's life. For while God's injunction to return to Bethel and reconfirmation of the covenant will follow, Jacob's paternal power will progressively be diminished. As Alter writes, from this point forward Jacob is "more the master of a self-dramatizing sorrow than of his own family."[85] The same pattern is found in the David story in which an initially heroic and

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[84] See Naomi Graetz, "Dinah the Daughter," in *A Feminist Companion to Genesis* (ed. Athalya Brenner; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 306-17 (306).

[85] Alter, *Genesis*, 194.

courageous young man is subject to family troubles—troubles that include the sexual humiliation of his daughter and the rebellious impulses of his sons.

Gen 34 begins with Dinah going out to see the daughters of the land. Shechem, a Hivite and prince of the land, sees her and has a sexual encounter with her.[86] He then offers to marry Dinah, which is part of a larger negotiation about peaceful coexistence between the Shechemites and Jacobites and the intermarriage between them. The offer is deceitfully accepted by Jacob's sons on the pretense that all the Shechemite men be circumcised. Two of Dinah's brothers, Simeon and Levi, then take a leading role in plundering and killing the men of Shechem in their weakened state. They take Dinah out of Shechem's house, while the rest of the brothers (though perhaps also including Simeon and Levi) proceed to plunder the city. The story ends with Jacob chastising Simeon and Levi for bringing danger against his house, to which the sons rhetorically respond: "Should he treat our sister like a harlot?" (Gen 34.31).

"Whatever else Genesis 34 is 'about,'" writes Claudia Camp, "it is about drawing lines, and the problems in discerning where and how the lines should be drawn."[87] Accordingly, this will be the focus of my discussion in this section, as I explore how the daughter centers around this troublesome issue—Should she be given over in marriage to a foreign people? If not, then what should be done with her? The question is one of exogamy, a recurring theme of biblical daughter stories. Camp shows, however, that the narrative is also about endogamy and incest. Jacob represents the willingness to accept exogamous marriage, while Simeon and Levi represent the adherence to endogamous marriage. Taken to their extreme, both exogamy and

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[86] See below for discussion of what is meant by the word ענה in this context.

[87] Claudia Camp, *Wise, Strange and Holy: The Strange Woman and the Making of the Bible* (JSOTSup 320; Gender, Culture, Theory 9; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 289.

endogamy present problems. Will the practice of exogamy lead to the loss of identity entirely? Will the reaction against foreign marriage lead to the taboo of incest? Shechem and Dinah's brothers stand at opposite poles of potential, but equally unacceptable, marriage partners for Dinah—and this is part of what the story attempts to work through.[88] In order to do so, the text must balance and maintain, as Fewell and Gunn observe, two paradoxical fictions: "that [Jacob's] family is comprised almost exclusively of men and that this male family, in its essence, is unaffected by foreign women."[89] Dinah's presence serves to maintain these fictions even as she problematizes them.

Dinah is introduced as the last child born to Leah (Gen 30.21).[90] Her entrance into the narrative world is anticlimactic, for unlike her brothers, who are each symbolically and joyously named by their mother, she is given no etymological pun explaining her name. The narrator simply provides us with the detail that after the birth of Zebulun, Leah gave birth to a daughter named Dinah.[91] That she is narratively present at all, however, reveals her importance—she is

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[88] See Camp, *Wise, Strange, and Holy*, 289-94. Camp uses insights from Seth Daniel Kunin's *The Logic of Incest: A Structuralist Analysis of Hebrew Mythology* (JSOTSup, 185; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995). For Kunin, the preference for endogamy in the biblical myth ends ultimately in a preference for incest, specifically brother-sister incest. This is related in the Dinah story, however, as an issue of exogamy—displaying how problematic it is to decipher where endogamy ends and exogamy begins.

[89] Fewell and Gunn, *Gender, Power, and Promise*, 86.

[90] She is not, however, the last of Jacob's children to be born, as her birth is immediately followed by Joseph's (Gen 30.22-24) and then later the birth of Benjamin (Gen 35.16-18). There are therefore twelves sons and one daughter born to Jacob; she is the symbolic outsider to the desired number of twelve.

[91] Fewell and Gunn reflect on Dinah being a daughter of Leah: "Does she represent a judgement for or against Leah's cause, that is, Leah's desire to be loved by her husband? Does she represent the end of Leah's bid for love? After all, her arrival heralds the fact that Leah cannot bear sons forever. As far as Leah is concerned, sons hold her only possible key to Jacob's heart. Dinah marks the end of Leah's sons" (*Gender, Power, and Promise*, 80). Dinah thus functions as a symbol of Leah's unrequited love, highlighted by Shechem's love and desire for Dinah (Gen 34.3-4). Unlike her mother, moreover, Dinah never has any children. She is loved but childless; her mother is unloved but fertile.

the means by which the text will work out its suppressed contradictions about daughters. That there is no elaboration on her name, moreover, invites the reader to ponder its significance. It means "judgment," but in what sense is her birth a judgment and to whom might this apply? This ambiguity is one of the central features of the Dinah story—by the end of Gen 34 one could argue that she represents a judgment on the Shechemites, Simeon and Levi, or Jacob.[92] Given that I interpret the text as an examination and voicing of cultural paradoxes that daughters represent, I will examine each of these possibilities without univocally thematizing the narrative. It should be noted though that the common denominator is the victimization of Dinah; her narrative presence brings about her own judgment, as she is used and abused by the men around her.

In contrast to her overall confinement to the world of men, Dinah's first act is to see the daughters of the land. The common translation of "visit" for ראה ("see") is misconceived, since "seeing" plays an important part in the chapter. The idea, moreover, is that Dinah's relationship with the daughters of the land is not established—it immediately presents Dinah as an outsider,

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[92] Sternberg argues that the literary artistry of the text takes the reader on many twists and turns but that this ambivalence ultimately coheres at judgment—and the judgment is that the Shechemites are presented in a negative light and Simeon and Levi are ultimately vindicated (see "Delicate Balance in the Rape of Dinah," in *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 445-74; and "Biblical Poetics and Sexual Politics: From Reading to Counter-Reading," *JBL* 111 [1992]: 463-88). Fewell and Gunn take exception with Sternberg's interpretation of the ambiguity of the text as a type of window dressing, as they display how the text may actually maintain the essential goodwill of Shechem and the integrity of Jacob (see "Tipping the Balance: Sternberg's Reader and the Rape of Dinah," *JBL* 110 [1991]: 193-211). For a reading of the analysis of both Sternberg and Fewell and Gunn, see Paul Noble, "A 'Balanced' Reading of the Rape of Dinah: Some Exegetical and Methodological Observations," *BibInt* 4 (1996): 173-204. Camp, like Fewell and Gunn, wishes to emphasize the open-endedness of the text but seeks to show how Simeon and Levi might be exonerated from their violent actions from a priestly perspective (*Wise, Strange and Holy*, 280). Stiebert focuses on the potentially negative depiction of Jacob (*Fathers and Daughters*, 50-59).

one who is not a daughter of the land.[93] The reasons for Dinah's investigation are not given, she may be seeking companionship or simply wants to establish a rapport. Leaving her father's house, however, is an entry into a forbidden zone, as she is unaccompanied by a male who would signify ownership and thus is dangerously presented as sexually available.[94] Her wanderings also suggest a crossing of identity boundaries, for not only might she be taken by another man (which is exactly what happens) but her potential mixing with the daughters of the land might lead to her becoming one of them. On the other hand, Camp notes how in the larger context of the narrative, Dinah's "going out" might be viewed as an appropriate act of reaching across boundaries rather than a transgression of them.[95] The Shechemites speak of the property and trade benefits (and implicitly of the peaceful coexistence) that would result from intermarriage, from the taking of each other's daughters (Gen 34.9-10), and Jacob's silent reaction at the very least implies his openness to this suggestion.[96]

Whatever the case, Dinah crosses a threshold by "going out," and is accordingly taken by one of the *sons* of the land. Shechem's "seeing" (ראה) of Dinah both links the prince with the daughter (did they "see" each other?) and develops a contrast between them, given the overtly sexual nature of his seeing. His act of seeing is followed in sequence with his taking of Dinah and his "raping" of her. The use of the quotation marks for "rape" is intended to acknowledge that the likely connotation of ענה (in the *piel*) is not meant to emphasize a sexual encounter in

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[93] See Alter, *Genesis*, 189.
[94] See Boose, "The Father's House," 62.
[95] Camp, *Wise, Strange and Holy*, 284.
[96] A significant text from this perspective is Jacob's purchasing of land "from the sons of Hamor, Shechem's father" in Gen 33.19-20. Before the potential intermarriage of daughters, therefore, Jacob already is integrating himself into the land. Of course, the purchase may be seen as a symbolic entry into the land of Canaan which sets the seeds for its eventual overtaking, for the small acquisitions of land by the patriarchs (the cave of Machpelah and this land, for instance) signify their presence and thus their ancestors' "right" to this land.

terms of consent while also attempting to recognize the modern importance given to consent in sexual interactions. That is, following the work of Lyn Bechtel and Ellen van Wolde, I am persuaded that the verb is used to refer to the sexual "humiliation" or "shaming" of Dinah, and thus (from the androcentric viewpoint of the text) the brothers' reaction is provoked not necessarily by the use of force against their sister but the imputation of (familial) dishonour that such an act entails.[97] On the other hand, the translation of "rape" highlights that nothing is said of Dinah's attitude toward Shechem or her thoughts regarding his taking of her (which is, admittedly, a point of concern for modern readers that may not be shared by the ancient readers of the text).[98]

Shechem's sexual humiliation of Dinah is referred to three times as a "defilement" (טמא). The term is often used to describe a woman who sleeps with anyone outside the proper boundaries of marriage (Num 5.13-31; Lev 21.7, 13-14). It is associated with priestly literature, not being used anywhere else in Genesis outside this chapter. Shechem's defiling of Dinah places her as a marginal figure, as she is no longer a virgin but is still within her father's house. This also sheds light on the brothers' final rhetorical question, which asserts that Dinah has been treated like a "harlot" (זונה). The term זונה carries more nuanced connotations than that of prostitute or harlot, in the sense that these terms refer to someone who engages in sexual activity

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[97] Lyn M. Bechtel, "What if Dinah is not Raped? (Genesis 34)," *JSOT* 62 (1994): 19-36; Ellen van Wolde, "Does 'innâ Denote Rape? A Semantic Analysis of a Controversial Word," *VT* 52.4 (2002): 528-44; idem, "The Dinah Story: Rape or Worse?" *OTE* 15.1 (2002): 225-39.

[98] The contrast is often made with the rape of Tamar in 2 Sam 13 in which Tamar expresses her resistance to Amnon's advances (for more on this comparison, see below). For a sampling of authors who assume or assert that Dinah was raped, see Rashkow, *Taboo or Not Taboo*, 144-66; Eryl W. Davies, *The Dissenting Reader: Feminist Approaches to the Hebrew Bible* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 56-7; Frances Klopper, "Rape and the Case of Dinah: Ethical Responsibilities for Reading Genesis 34," *OTE* 23.3 (2010): 652-55; Caroline Blyth, *The Narrative of Rape in Genesis 34: Interpreting Dinah's Silence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

for payment. The word can refer more generally to promiscuity or adultery[99] and Julia Assante

makes a persuasive case that it refers even more broadly to any woman living outside of male

control.[100] By defiling Dinah, Shechem has threatened the cohesion of the tribal structure, as

Bechtel explains: "The fact that the revenge is carried out against the entire Shechemite

community shows that from the sons' perspective the pollution has affected the entire Jacobite

group. As a community concern, it warrants revenge on the entire Shechemite group."[101] The

idea of community defilement through a daughter's harlotry echoes Lev 19.29: "Do not profane

your daughter to make her play the harlot (זונה) lest the land play the harlot and the land fall into

lewdness." It is interesting that this prohibition is directed toward fathers, which may also be the

case with Simeon and Levi's accusation in Gen 34.31. For the subject of their rhetorical question

is ambiguous, suggesting that by not taking action against the Shechemites for Dinah's

defilement, Jacob himself may be the one they are accusing of treating Dinah like a harlot.

There is, moreover, a certain strand of the text which sees Shechem's actions as

somewhat absolvable. Immediately after his taking of Dinah, for instance, the narrator states that

Shechem's "very self clung to Dinah, the daughter of Jacob; and he loved the young woman, and

he spoke to the heart of the young woman" (Gen 34.3). The verse carries a mitigating force to

Shechem's previous actions. Whereas Dinah had initially been merely an object of his lustful

gaze and sexual shaming, he now loves her and views her on more intimate terms. Fewell and

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[99] See, Phyllis Bird, "Prostitution in the Social World and the Religious Rhetoric of Ancient Israel," in *Prostitutes and Courtesans in the Ancient World* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 40-58.

[100] See Julia Assante, "What Makes a 'Prostitute' a Prostitute? Modern Definitions and Ancient Meaning," *Historiae* 4 (2007): 117-32). I translate the term as "harlot," as it carries a more archaic ring than "prostitute," and connotes more broadly a promiscuous woman (and thus not necessarily a woman who engages in sexual activity for payment).

[101] Bechtel, "What if Dinah is Not Raped?" 34.

Gunn view the verse as part of the narrator's creation of "a complicated ethical situation calling for a compromised, but realistic, resolution," with the balance of favour now being tipped toward Shechem.[102] Camp further notes that one need not interpret these emotions to have happened as part of a temporal sequence, and thus to have occurred after the sex act. Lying with Dinah and loving her may have happened conterminously—the withholding of the more positive information being part of the text's coyness and literary artistry.[103] The idea of "speaking to one's heart," may even carry with it connotations of reciprocal emotions, indicating both Shechem's perlocutionary action and Dinah's positive response.[104]

Because of these emotions, and perhaps also for restitution, Shechem determines to marry Dinah and has his father, Hamor, make the necessary arrangements. Hamor proceeds to speak to Jacob, but the patriarch keeps silent until his sons have returned from the field. To both father and sons, therefore, Hamor offers his proposition of intermarriage:

> Shechem, my son, his very self longs for your daughter. Please give her to him as a wife. Intermarry with us; give your daughters to us and take our daughters for yourselves. And with us you shall dwell; the land is before you, settle and go about it and take holdings in it (Gen 34.8-10).

The marriage of Dinah and Shechem is thus part of a larger package—the step is one from family narrative to political event.[105] Dinah is again linked to the daughters of the land, her marriage being emblematic of this proposed exchange between each people's daughters.

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[102] Fewell and Gunn, "Tipping the Balance," 197.
[103] Camp, *Wise, Strange and Holy*, 286-87.
[104] Fewell and Gunn, "Tipping the Balance," 196.
[105] See Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 539.

Intermarriage, moreover, entails incorporation into the land, for with the exchange of daughters the Jacobite clan will be able to go about the land freely and dwell in it.

Shechem then furthers his father's offer and gives a carte blanche to Jacob and his sons, telling them that whatever they ask for, he will give (Gen 34.11). He includes in this offer any bride-price (מהר) or gift (מתן).[106] The offer recalls other biblical texts pertaining to such a situation. Deut 22.28-29, for example, reads: "If a man meets a virgin who is not betrothed and seizes her and lies with her and they are found, then the man who lay with her will give to the father of the young woman fifty shekels of silver and she will be his wife. Because he has violated her, he will not be able to send her away all his day" (see also Exod 22.16-17). By this standard, Shechem's offer more than makes restitution for his defilement of Dinah.

What Deut 22.28-29 does not mention, however, is the potential foreign difference between the daughter and the man who lay with her. And this is precisely what Dinah's brothers focus upon in their response:

> We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to a man who is uncircumcised, for that would be a disgrace to us. Except for this [reason] will we consent to you: that you will become like us, to circumcise every male. Then we will give to you our daughters and we will take your daughters for ourselves, and we will dwell with you and become one people. But if you will not listen to us and be circumcised, then we will take our daughter and we will go (Gen 34.14-17).

There is an interesting connection to explore here in regard to the potential link between circumcision and marriage. For one, circumcision may recall Hamor's call for the two groups to

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[106] The מהר refers to the price paid to the family of the bride and the מתן may refer to a present given to the bride. See Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 540.

"intermarry" with each other. This verb comes from the root חתן, which has the base meaning of

son-in-law (see chapter 1 on the discussion of Lot's sons-in-law)—perhaps a more literal

translation would then be "to become sons-in-law." And this is not the only biblical text which

links sons-in-law with circumcision. Michal, for example, is offered to David so that he might be

a son-in-law on the condition that he provide a hundred Philistine foreskins for Saul (1 Sam

18.25) (see chapter 5). There is also the enigmatic text in Exod 4.24-26 when Zipporah

circumcises her son and declares "surely you are a bridegroom/son-in-law (חתן) of blood to me."

For William Propp, these stories are echoes of an earlier practice in which circumcision was

performed at the time of marriage (or at least as a rite of passage to marriageable age). He even

hypothesizes that the root חתן originally related to circumcision, as in the Arabic *khatana*

(circumcise) and its derivative *khatan* (son-in-law, male relation by marriage).[107]

Whether or not this is truly an echo of an earlier historical practice, or whether there is a

linguistic connection between circumcision and becoming a son-in-law, there is a clear symbolic

association between both circumcision and marriage as markers of identity—even as they both

muddle identity as well. Circumcision is a dividing cut that is, on the one hand, a marker of unity

within a group. That is, it should provide a demarcation of difference, that which distinguishes

Israelite from foreigner. Once the difference of identity is erased through circumcision,

intermarriage will take place and the Shechemites and Jacobites will become "one people." This

is based upon the mutual exchange of daughters—symbolized by Dinah potentially becoming

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[107] See William Propp, "The Origins of Infant Circumcision in Israel," *Hebrew Annual Review* 11 (1987): 355-70 (358, see especially n.9). See also Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, *The Savage in Judaism: An Anthropology of Israelite Religion and Ancient Judaism* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), 141-76

one of the daughters of the land—and thus the repetitive talk of such daughterly exchange throughout Gen 34 (vv. 9, 16, 21).

The potential common identity that circumcision and marriage represent, however, is symbolically reversed. The circumcision of the Shechemites was doomed for failure, given that the brothers' negotiations were done out of deceit, and intermarriage (and assimilation) was not their end goal. Taking advantage of the recuperating Shechemites, Simeon and Levi slaughter the men of Shechem and take Dinah out of the house of Shechem, which is then followed by more plundering and raiding.

> And it happened on the third day, when they were sore, that the two sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, the brothers of Dinah, took their swords and they entered the city unopposed, and they killed every male. And Hamor and Shechem, his son, they slaughtered with the mouth of the sword; and they took Dinah from the house of Shechem and they went out. And the sons of Jacob came upon the slain and looted the city, because they had defiled their sister. Their sheep and their cattle and their donkeys, whatever was in the city and whatever was in the field, they took. And all their wealth and all their little ones and all their wives, they captured, and they looted all that was in their houses (Gen 34.25-29).

The Shechemites circumcise themselves without becoming proper Israelites. Exogamy is avoided, and along with it the blurring of identities it represents. The initial sexual encounter between Shechem and Dinah is thus inverted in this "reverse rape" of the Shechemites.[108] First

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[108] See Alice Keefe, "Rapes of Women/Wars of Men," *Semeia* 61 (1993): 79-97. There is also a poetic irony in Shechem's death coming while he recuperates from circumcision. His "punishment" ends where his "crime" began. The entire imagery of the slaughtering scene is filled with sexual innuendo—from the phallic swords to the taking of the Shechemite women—paralleling Shechem's initial taking of Dinah.

comes the symbolic gender reversal, since circumcision is a form of invagination.[109] This is followed by the slaughtering of Simeon and Levi, with the pointed description that they killed "every male" (זכר). This specific word for male (זכר) is used throughout the chapter, and always in reference to circumcision (vv.15, 22, 24), as is also the case throughout God's initial commandment of circumcision to Abraham in Gen 17 (vv.10, 12, 14, 23). This connection may stem from the potential phallic connotations of the word. Etymologically, for instance, the word could come from a root meaning "sharp/pointed" or "penis" (as in the Arabic *ḏakar*, meaning both "male" and "penis").[110] Thus, the Shechemites are not only deprived of the marriage they sought through circumcision (recall the connection between son-in-law and circumcision) by their deaths, they are also (symbolically) castrated—feminized by the death of every זכר.[111]

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[109] See Landy, *Beauty and the Enigma*, 267.

[110] See R. Clements, זכר, *TDOT* 4: 82-87 (83). The other common etymological suggestion is from the homonymic root relating to memory. For discussion on this connection, see chapter 4 in relation to the daughters of Jabesh-Gilead who had not "known a man by lying with a male (זכר)."

There are occurrences of זכר in the Hebrew Bible that strongly suggest the translation of penis—as in Ezek 16.17 in which the "images of men" (צלמי זכר) indicates images with phallic symbols—but nowhere in which the translation of penis is demanded. On the other hand, there is no specific term for the male organ of regeneration in the Hebrew Bible, only euphemisms. This includes terms like "flesh" (בשׂר) (e.g. Gen 17.11), "thigh/loin" (ירך) (Gen 24.2), or "feet" (e.g. Judg 3.24). See Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament*, 8-10; Athalya Brenner, *The Intercourse of Knowledge: On Gendering Desire and "Sexuality" in the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Brill, 1997), 36-39.

[111] As Camp notes, there are two different concerns in the brothers' assertion that it would be a "disgrace" (חרפה) to give their sister to an uncircumcised man—and both these concerns centre around Shechem's penis (*Wise, Strange and Holy*, 298-302). For one, Shechem has put his penis where it does not belong and thus brought about shame on Dinah's male kin. The second concern is not where Shechem's penis has been, but rather the state it is in (uncircumcised). For Camp, this displays an underlying ideology that assumes fertility without circumcision is impossible. She cites, for instance, Joshua's circumcision of the new generation of Israelites, which takes away the "disgrace (חרפה) of Egypt" (again equating this term with fertility), and is immediately followed by the Passover meal (Josh 5.1-12). It is as if, therefore, "circumcision creates the conditions under which the Passover meal may be kept; the rite that marks Israelite identity also joins the Israelites to the fertility of the promised land" (298).

There are two other noteworthy things, for our purposes, found in Gen 34.25-29: the presence of Dinah in Shechem's house and her removal by Simeon and Levi, and the taking of the women of the city by the sons of Jacob. The presence of Dinah in Shechem's house is surprising, we do not know, for instance, how she got there or whether she came willingly or not. The important part is that it sets the stage for Simeon and Levi to take her out of that house. The three's "going out" (יצא) from the house (34.26) parallels Dinah's initial "going out" (יצא) to see the daughters of the land (34.1)—an act that can be interpreted as restoring the boundary line that Dinah initially crossed or as a transgression of different line.

Julian Pitt-Rivers sides with the former option. For him, Dinah's re-entry into the Jacobite household represents a new kinship code in which the patriarchs would retain their own daughters and not exchange them with other people of the land.[112] The sister-wife episodes of Gen 12, 20, and 26 (in which the patriarch presents his wife as a sister to a foreign ruler), provide steps along the way to this resolution, but the fact that the patriarchs were willing to give their women in return for personal security shows that this system had not yet been entrenched. The persistent and growing concern for endogamous relationships, however, culminates in Gen 34, as Jacob's family is now formidable enough that they no longer need to give their women to more powerful neighbours.[113]

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[112] See *The Fate of Shechem*, esp. 152-66.

[113] It is not pure happenstance that this coincides with Jacob's purchase of land in Gen 33.19-20. For Pitt-Rivers, this is indicative of other nomadic groups who, when nomadic, need to practice sexual hospitality with more powerful sedentary groups, but may eventually become powerful enough to no longer have to do so (*The Fate of Shechem*. 160).

Helena Zlotnick offers another interpretation based on the insights of Pitt-Rivers. For her, the text reflects an alternative form of arranging marriages than that of fathers exchanging daughters: abduction marriage (or bride theft). The story thus represents a clash between two marital strategies, which ultimately sides in favour of keeping daughters at home and avoiding exogamous marriages (see *Dinah's Daughters: Gender and Judaism from the Hebrew Bible to Late Antiquity* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002], 33-56.

Camp sides with the latter option—that the brothers' taking of Dinah from Shechem's house can be interpreted as the transgression of another line. For her, Dinah is pushed "outside the family identity circle to create a wife who can legitimately be married by her brothers."[114] The story begins with the threat (or potential) of a thoroughly exogamous marriage, but, through an impossible union of contradictory elements, it ends in a fully endogamous one (at least symbolically). The brothers' taking of Dinah, in other words, allows for the text to hold the mythic contradiction of exogamy and incest—the idea that Jacob's family could be unaffected by foreign women (and does not need the daughters of the land) even as it is almost exclusively male. From this perspective, the sister-wife episodes do not so much contrast with Gen 34 as they correspond to it, for both deal with similar fantasies, like having a foreign ruler desire your women while also retaining them (endogamy to the point of incest).[115] Like the matriarchs in these tales (or at least Sarah in Gen 12 and 20), Dinah is required to leave the house of her patriarch, become associated with the foreign ruler and live in his house, only to return after the foreign ruler has been afflicted in some way. Dinah's progression parallels that of Shechem's but from the opposite direction. Shechem is an outsider (to the Jacobites) who becomes an insider through circumcision but is slaughtered along with the rest of his father's house; Dinah is an outsider (to the Shechemites) who becomes an insider by being kept at Shechem's house but ultimately returns to the house of her father.[116]

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[114] Camp, *Wise, Strange and Holy*, 294.

[115] For further analysis of the repressed desires and fears of the sister-wife episodes, see Cheryl J. Exum, "Who's Afraid of the 'Endangered Ancestress'?" in *The New Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible* (eds. J. Cheryl Exum and David Clines; JSOTSup 143; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 91-113. See also my discussion of this in chapter 5.

[116] See Landy (*Beauty and the Enigma*, 267), who writes: "Through circumcision, the Shechemites become Israelites while remaining Canaanites. Dinah has a double allegiance—to the house that she enters and to the paternal *oikos*—and is symbolically associated with the land and its future colonizers."

This brings us to the additional plundering of the sons of Jacob in which the women of the city are taken (Gen 34.27-29). It is unclear whether Simeon and Levi are to be included among these plunderers. Their "going out" from Shechem's house suggest a departure from the city, perhaps excluding them from these verses.[117] Whatever the case though (and the text is ultimately ambiguous), the taking of the Shechemite women suggests that the foreign mixing which had been so forcefully fought against now occurs. On the one hand, this nullifies the attempt to prevent exogamous marriage and the exchange of daughters.[118] On the other hand, this is precisely what allows for that strand of the text to exist—Jacob's sons can have their cake (retaining Dinah, avoiding exogamous marriage, and symbolically possessing their sister as wife) and eat it too (taking the foreign women of the city and avoiding the incest taboo). Simeon and

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[117] Sternberg excludes Simeon and Levi from this later plundering, seeing this as a sign of these brothers' righteousness. That is, while the rest of the brothers plunder and loot for materialistic gain, Simeon and Levi murder out of selfless concern for the wrong done to their sister and for the prevention of exogamous marriage (*The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 472). Fewell and Gunn disagree with this overly positive representation of Simeon and Levi and assume that the brothers' grossly disproportionate response in killing all the males of the city certainly would allow the possibility of them being in this later group (though they ultimately see the matter as a moot point in regard to Simeon and Levi's righteousness) ("Tipping the Balance," 205-6). Camp (while also acknowledging the ambiguity of the text) reads Simeon and Levi's exclusion as part of the priestly ideology of the text. For these two brothers, this is a holy war and their slaughter may be deemed appropriate from this perspective. Jacob's reaction against these two sons then is wrong-headed, as it is actually the father himself who fails to appropriately respond to his daughter's violation and the threat of exogamous marriage (*Wise, Strange and Holy*, 306-7).

[118] From this perspective, one might note Judah's exogamous marriage in Gen 38. This chapter begins in much the same way as Gen 34, as Judah leaves his brothers to settle elsewhere. As he arrives there, he "sees" a daughter of the Canaanites, "takes" her, and enters into her (Gen 38.2). While Judah's actions are not as violent as Shechem's, the abrupt language perhaps suggests that when it comes to taking daughters, there may be little difference between Canaanite and Israelite men. Fewell and Gunn add that there may even be a message here about the difference between sons and daughters leaving their father's house. For sons, this separation is part the normal progression of becoming an independent adult. For daughters, this has grave consequences, as the transition from the father's house to another must be done to avoid any stage of independence or time not under the control of a patriarch (*Gender, Power, and Promise*, 86 and 191).

Levi kill every male (זכר) of the city and remove their sister from it as well, which then opens the way for intermarriage from the reverse direction (without explicitly representing it as such).

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The story of Dinah is about drawing lines—between peoples, between sexual boundaries, between sons and daughters, and between different types of daughters. Dinah is the central character through which the text works out the problems and issues in discerning where these lines should be drawn. She is symbolically aligned with her paternal house as well as the house of Shechem, but also an outsider to both. She is both Jacob's daughter and a daughter of the land, an object of desire for the Shechemites and Jacobites alike. She is the reason for the circumcision and the slaughter—the one who opens the way for exogamous marriage and prevents it. For these reasons, and especially because she remains childless and thus permanently retains her status as a daughter, she leads nicely into the daughters of Judges, the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter 4: "Go and Lie in Ambush in the Vineyards": Daughters in Judges

Stories of women, as is often noted, are conspicuous in the book of Judges.[1] There are nineteen female characters (or female collectives) in the book, covering as diverse roles as daughter, wife, secondary wife, mother, prophet/judge, warrior, rape victim, and seducer.[2] This chapter will focus on those female characters who are classified as daughters. In fact, daughter stories frame the book of Judges, beginning with the narrative of Achsah and Caleb (Judg 1.10-15) and ending with the stories of the daughters of Jabesh-Gilead and Shiloh (Judg 21.8-13, 19-23). In between are the episodes of Jephthah and his daughter (Judg 10.17-12.7), the daughter of Timnah (Judg 14.1-15.8), and the "concubine"[3] from Bethlehem (as well as the old Ephraimite's daughter) (Judg 19). My underlying thesis is to show how the daughter, whose role is so important for the patriarchal ideology of Judges, also poses a genuine problem for it. There is, for instance, the constant threat of exogamous marriages with Canaanite daughters (Judg 3.5-7). These daughters, like the cannibalistic mother, may swallow up their men and seduce them to worship other gods. Thus, in order to take over the land of Canaan, but remain unaffected by the

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[1] For general sources, see Athalya Brenner, ed. *A Feminist Companion to Judges* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993); Athalya Brenner, ed. *Judges: A Feminist Companion to the Bible* (Second Edition) (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999); Susan Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen: Women in Judges and Biblical Israel* (New York: Doubleday, 1998); Cheryl Exum, "Judges: Encoded Messages to Women," in *Feminist Biblical Interpretation: A Compendium of Critical Commentary on the Books of the Bible and Related Literature* (eds. Louise Schottroff and Marie-Theres Wacker; trans. Lisa E. Dahill et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 112-27.

[2] See Brenner, "Introduction," in *A Feminist Companion to Judges*, 9-10.

[3] For now, I will use the term "concubine," for the sake of simplicity; however, the Hebrew פילגש does not necessarily denote concubine in the sense that many modern readers may think (i.e. a mistress, a woman who cohabits with a man without being "married"). For this, and additional reasons I explain below, I will typically transliterate the title as *pilegesh*.

presence of this "other," the Israelites must prize and cherish their own daughters. Achsah, the first daughter in Judges, stands as an ideal symbol of this type of daughter (perhaps this is why she is one of the four female characters in the book of Judges endowed with a personal name—and the only named daughter).[4] Even her story, however, contains traces and hints of the mésalliance and crossing of ethnic boundaries that haunt the book. The very need to set up the marriage of Othniel and Achsah as an endogamous ideal, for instance, points to the potential exogamous threat of her marrying another.[5] That is, there is not only the danger of Canaanite daughters marrying Israelite men, but also of Israelite daughters marrying Canaanite men. The story of Jephthah's daughter, with its liminal setting in the Transjordan, stands as a pointed example of this internal anxiety.

The official story of conquest and disintegration in Judges, therefore, parallels and contrasts with the story of intermarriage and infidelity. Mieke Bal's work on Judges, particularly *Death and Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges*, has been extremely influential in this regard. She argues that the political struggles and extreme violence that characterize the book stem from "a social revolution that concerns the institution of marriage, hence, the relations between men and women, sexuality, procreation, and kinship," and thus, "the murders of the young women of the book are caused by uncertainty about fatherhood—indeed, by the transition between an ancient and not very stable structure of kinship in which the

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[4] The other three named women in Judges are Deborah, Jael, and Delilah. Each of these women likewise represent an archetypal feminine identity. Deborah is the nurturing, life-giving mother, rescuing her children from danger and making them secure. Jael represents the other side of motherhood, offering the façade of protection and security but ultimately bringing death. Delilah is the femme fatale, the nagging wife who lures her husband into danger and death.

[5] This danger of exogamy, as I will detail below, exists even in this first union, given the ethnic ambiguity of the lineages of Caleb and Othniel.

daughter remains in the father's house and…the virilocal, patrilineal one."[6] I do not agree with

Bal that Judges is evidence of an anthropological switch between these two types of marriages;

however, her insight that the problem of coherence in Judges relates to patriarchy, to the

conflicting power claims of men over females and female bodies, is invaluable.[7] This connects,

moreover, to the private, domestic scenes of Judges, which are so often glossed over in

generalizations and summaries of the book of Judges. For daughter stories, this involves the

space of the father's house (of particular importance in regard to Jephthah's daughter and the

Levite's *pilegesh*). Daughters are inexorably linked to houses in Judges, even as they display

their problematic position within them. Bal uses the term "house-daughter" to express this close

relation, punning off the term house-wife which links wifehood with the house.[8] The term is

especially pertinent to Hebrew given the linguistic play between "daughter" (בת) and "house"

(בית) which we have noted throughout this study. The paradoxical state of daughters being

confined to the house but also excluded from it, moreover, plays with the large-scale issue of

Israel's place within Canaan. For her part, Bal does not focus on this connection (at least not in

Death and Dissymmetry), though this is a major theme I will trace in this chapter. This involves

paying particular attention to the setting of stories, the tribal affiliations, and the related issues of

miscegenation. And often, one not only has to explore the intratextual links between stories in

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[6] Bal*, Death and Dissymmetry*, 5-6. The first, more ancient type of marriage is referred to by Bal as patrilocal. Patrilocal marriages emphasize the "power of the father, over and against that of the husband, which characterizes this type of marriage" (85). Technically speaking this type of marriage is matrilineal, but Bal refrains from any type of terminology which might deceptively give women any power. Similarly, virilocal is the preferred counter-term for Bal, as this type of marriage occurs when "a virilocal husband takes his wife into his own clan" (86).

[7] For a more detailed critique of Bal's reliance on these two types of marriages, see Marc Brettler, "Review of Bal *Death and Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges* and *Murder and Difference: Gender, Genre, and Scholarship on Sisera's Death*," *Hebrew Studies* 31 (1990): 96-101.

[8] See *Death and Dissymmetry*, 195 n.28.

Judges to better understand these matters, but also the intertextual links between stories in Judges and others found throughout the Hebrew Bible. A good example of the importance of this is the story of Achsah, to which we will now turn our attention.

Achsah

Judges 1, as Francis Landy observes, is "a structuralist swamp of cross-references, tangled genealogies, ethnic ambiguities, erased but current traces of the past, anecdotal figments and territorial fragments."[9] It is a liminal chapter that simultaneously introduces the main themes, motifs, and problems of Judges, while also functioning as a type of conclusion or appendix to the book of Joshua.[10] The doubling of the Achsah story (Josh 15.13-19; Judg 1.10-15), in particular, serves to enforce this connection between the two books.[11] This vignette, like

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[9] Francis Landy, "Judges 1: The City of Writing, the Sacred, and the Fragmentation of the Body," in *Voyages in Uncharted Waters: Essays on the Theory and Practice of Biblical Interpretation in Honor of David Jobling* (eds. Wesley J. Bergen and Armin Siedlecki; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2006), 37-50 (37).

[10] Marc Brettler, for instance, has proposed that Judges 1.1-2.10 was originally an appendix to Joshua (*The Book of Judges* [New York: Routledge, 2002], 94-96). David Jobling, similarly, asserts that the beginning of Judges "belongs more naturally to Joshua" (1 Samuel [Berit Olam; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998], 34). For Jobling, in fact, both ends of the book are unstable, and thus he suggests that Judges could incorporate 1 Samuel 1-7, or even 1-12. (For parallels and developments between 1 Samuel 1-12 and Judges, see Mark Leuchter, "'Now there was a [Certain] Man': Compositional Chronology in Judges—I Samuel" *CBQ* 69 [2007]: 429-39.) Canonical differences display even more variance in continuation, as Ruth picks up the Bethlehemite thread of the end of Judges (as opposed to Samuel picking up the Ephraimite thread) (see Jobling, *1 Samuel*, 33-35).

[11] I will focus here primarily on the Achsah story in Judges, and mention the Joshua version only when it is pertinent to do so. Perhaps the biggest difference between the two versions is context. In Joshua, the episode is in the midst of a long description of tribal allotment. The capture of Hebron/Qiryat Arba and Devir/Qiryat Sefer is thus an affirmation of the earlier promises of inheritance that Moses had made to Caleb (see Josh 14.9) and the vignette reads as a conclusion of sorts for the Caleb story. There are many linguistic differences between the two versions as well—something that is further highlighted in the variances in the manuscript traditions. For general discussions of these differences and variants, see Jack M. Sasson, *Judges 1-12* (AB 6D; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 138-50 (esp. 144-45); Susan Niditch,

the vignette of Adoni-Bezek before it, has parabolic implications, foreshadowing events to come in Judges.[12] Found within it, moreover, are three paradigmatic characters: Othniel, the primary and idealized judge;[13] Caleb, a remnant of the previous generation and Mosaic times;[14] and Achsah, the first female character in the book and a symbol of the ideal endogamous marriage partner.[15] The inner, familial drama played out between these characters reflects the outer, public

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Judges: A Commentary (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 33-34, 40-41; and William Hallo, "New Light on the Story of Achsah," in *Inspired Speech: Prophecy in the Ancient Near East: Essays in Honor of Herbert B. Huffmon* (eds. John Kalter and Louis Stulman; New York: T & T Clark, 2004), 330-35 (330).

[12] David Gunn and Danna Fewell suggest that Adoni-Bezek's story is a parabolic reflection of exiled Israel; likewise, they see the story of Achsah as a parable of the destiny of Judah (*Gender, Power, and Promise*, 161-62). In a separate work, Fewell points out that Achsah might represent the ideal, courageous Israel, the Israel undaunted by the obstacles to which the "real Israel" fell prey. Alternatively, Achsah could be a symbol of Israel's own self-perception:

> "Having been given over to a situation not of her making, does she now find herself having to make additional demands of a God [portrayed as Othniel] who has not carefully considered what all this story entails? Wasn't she promised milk and honey? And yet now she finds herself in a vastly overrated land having to insist on being blessed with the very basic necessity of life, water" ("Achsah and the (E)razed City of Writing," in *Judges and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies* [ed. Gale Yee; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995], 119-45 (140).

[13] For Othniel as the ideal judge, see Landy, "Judges 1," 38; Brettler, *The Book of Judges*, 4-5; and Cheryl Exum, "The Centre Cannot Hold: Thematic and Textual Instabilities in Judges," *CBQ* 52 (1990): 410-31 (411, 414). Othniel is paradigmatic not just because of his primary appearance, but also because he is associated with the tribe of Judah. This association, however, is never explicitly stated and is further obscured by Othniel's Qenizzite affiliation (which I will discuss in further detail below).

[14] Caleb carries heavy symbolic value in regard to the times of Moses and Joshua, and the role which he played in Israel's entry into Canaan. Barry Webb, for instance, writes, "In the light of 2:7 Caleb will serve as a notable example of the 'the elders who outlived Joshua," in whose days Israel still served Yahweh" (*The Book of Judges* [NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012], 104).

[15] Lillian Klein remarks that Achsah serves "as a role model of propriety for later portrayals of women" in the book of Judges ("A Spectrum of Female Characters in the Book of Judges," in *A Feminist Companion to Judges* [ed. Athalya Brenner; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993], 24-33 [25].) In another essay she again elaborates on Achsah's role as the first woman in Judges, noting her threefold role as prize, bride, and daughter ("Achsah: What Prize is This?" in *Judges: A Feminist Companion to the Bible (Second Series)* [ed. Athalya Brenner; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999], 18-26).

drama played out between the Israelites and their neighbours. Moreover, their ethnic, tribal, and kinship affiliations are murky and complicated, displaying the messiness of Israel coming back to its "homeland" and its interactions and battles with the people who live there.

At the centre of Judges 1 is a woman, specifically a daughter, who likewise represents the uncanniness of the land, both strange and desired. Achsah's story begins with Caleb's offer of her to whomever is able to capture Qiryat Sefer/Devir.

> And Caleb said: "Whoever smites Qiryat Sefer and captures it, I will give to him Achsah my daughter as wife" (1.12).

Against Adoni-Bezek, Jerusalem, and Hebron the men of Judah simply go out to battle—but not so with Qiryat Sefer/Devir. It is not clear, therefore, why this offer is necessary. Is the problem that of motivation among the men of Judah? Or is it that Caleb is somehow unable to storm or overtake the city? Whatever the case, the offer reveals that this is the stuff of fairy tale (even though, as Sasson points out, it was not unheard of for "real world" rulers in the ancient Near East to offer their daughters as a prize).[16] Bravery is called for and there is the prize of a woman, princess-like, who comes with the triumph of capturing a city.

On another level, the lack of reason given for Caleb's offer reveals the rashness of the vow. This is a theme played upon throughout Judges, as fathers consistently make vows concerning their daughters which will come back to haunt them.[17] Bal notes the connection these vows have to violence and murder, how they are never just simple *words* but also *swords*—that

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[16] Sasson, *Judges 1-12*, 137. Perhaps the most interesting example Sasson provides is the recovery of the actual voices of the daughters of King Zimri-Lim in the Mari letters. (For more on the offer as a sign of being in the realm of fairy tale, see Fewell, "Achsah and the (E)razed City of Writing," 133.)

[17] I will explore these other vows below. I might also mention here that the vow perhaps also plays on the theme in Judges of men needing women to accomplish things (which creates a blurring of gender boundaries between men and women).

is, speech-acts with destructive consequences.[18] Caleb's vow, for instance, exchanges marriage for the conquering of a city. Compared to the other vows in Judges, however, it serves as a model one, since it does not include the death of any of the primary characters involved or any Israelites.

Another stroke of good luck (conforming to structuralist patterns) is that Othniel, a close relative and thus apparently a fellow Judahite, happens to be the "whoever" (the hero) who smites Qiryat Sefer.

> And Othniel, son of Qenaz, the younger brother of Caleb, captured it; and he gave to him
> Achsah his daughter as wife (1.13).

On the surface, Othniel is the ideal endogamous match. His union to Achsah avoids the danger of exogamy (and thus apostasy) which Judg 3.5-7 describes.[19] It is no surprise, from this perspective, that Othniel's reappearance in Judges occurs immediately after this description of intermarriages (3.7-11). The implication, as Barry Webb writes, is that "[u]nlike the marriages of many of his fellow Israelites, Othniel's is not tainted by covenant unfaithfulness."[20]And not only is Achsah, his bride, not a Canaanite, Hittite, etc., she is not even an Ephraimite, Danite, etc.

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[18] Mieke Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry*, 129-35.

[19] A recurring biblical theme surrounding daughters is the danger they present of exogamous marriages and by extension assimilation and apostasy. In Exod 34.14-16, for example, this prohibition of worshipping other gods is directly related to marrying the inhabitants of the land: "For you shall not worship other gods…lest you make a covenant with the inhabitant of the land…and you take from his daughters for your sons and his daughters play the harlot after their gods and make your sons play the harlot after their gods." This is almost exactly what Judg 3.5-7 recounts: "And the sons of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, Hittites, and Amorites, and Perizzites, and Hivites, and Jebusites. And they took their daughters for wives, and their daughters they gave to their sons, and they served their gods. And the sons of Israel did evil in the eyes of Yahweh." In Lev 19.29, there is a similar equation of daughters with the land/people: "Do not profane your daughter to make her play the harlot lest the land play the harlot and the land fall into lewdness." All these texts, therefore, imply an intimate connection between daughters, the people/land, and proper or improper worship.

[20] Webb, *The Book of Judges*, 104.

She is, moreover, the daughter of Caleb, a figure whose role as one of the two fearless Israelite spies of the land of Canaan must certainly be taken into account. What the other spies fear is a "land that eats its inhabitants," and the great stature of its inhabitants (Num 13.32). Caleb, however, insists that the Israelites are stronger: "Let us go up at once and possess [the land]" (Num 13.30). Ilana Pardes, in *The Biography of Ancient Israel*, argues that the land represents contrasting maternal imagery. On the one hand, it is the maternal "home," a paradisiacal place that offers milk and honey; on the other hand, it is a place of horror, representing the cannibalistic mother who eats her children.[21] By not succumbing to the fear of the cannibalistic mother, Caleb represents the paternal legacy and is "the fathers' custodian and representative."[22]

This is further emphasized in Caleb's possession of Qiryat Arba/Hebron and conquering of the "three sons of Anak" (Judg 1.10 and 20). At Hebron one finds the Cave of Machpelah and thus the ancestral graves; its association with the "three sons of Anak," suggests a (distorted) correspondence to the three patriarchs. These sons of Anak are giants—the Israelite spies talk of looking like "grasshoppers" (Num 13.33) in their sight; moreover, they have antediluvian associations, given their identification with the Nephilim (the offspring of the sons of God and the daughters of humankind in Gen 6.6). Bringing these associations together, Pardes writes:

> The fathers and the others blend at points. The fact that the giants turn up, of all places, in
> the area of Hebron, the burial site of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (see Gen. 23), reinforces

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[21] Ilana Pardes, *The Biography of Ancient Israel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

[22] Landy, "Judges 1," 41.

this notion, as if they were tall ghosts of distant forefathers, who have risen from their grave in the Cave of Machpela to haunt their descendants.[23]

Using Bruno Bettelheim's work on fairy tales, Pardes goes on to show how giants usually represent adults, specifically fathers, who must be cut down to size.[24] The hero is required to overtake the giant (or giants) in order to mature and enter adulthood. From this perspective, the sons of Anak, as distorted ancestral figures, represent the father(s) who must be overcome in order to enter the land. Caleb and Joshua are the only spies who are not crippled by this fear of the paternal giants and entry into the motherland. They function, therefore, as Oedipal figures, defeating the father figure(s) and forcing "the cannibalistic mother back to her position as an object of desire, whose only role is to provide her hungry children with the milk and the honey they long for."[25]

It certainly would not make sense for such a figure to marry his daughter to the very inhabitants of the land which he is seeking to defeat. Instead, he defeats the cannibalistic mother by offering his daughter as a reward. Achsah represents the security of identity and kinship, a way to conquer the land without being integrated with (or swallowed up by) its inhabitants. And by marrying Achsah, Othniel becomes aligned with this Oedipal function, overtaking cities of the motherland and renaming them.[26]

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[23] Pardes, *Ancient Israel*, 114.

[24] See Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (New York: Vintage, 1989), 28.

[25] Pardes, *Ancient Israel*, 115.

[26] There is much to say about the double name of Qiryat Sefer/Devir. That the former name is mentioned at all reveals the uncanniness of the city—it is at once homeland and foreign territory. There is power to renaming but it is not absolute, and traces will always remain. As such, the city symbolizes the continuous haunting presence of the other. The giants may be cut down, the father(s) may be defeated, but the dead may be just as powerful as the living (or more so, according to Freud). Qiryat Sefer, moreover, is a "city of writing" or "book city," giving further pause to why it might be triumphant to destroy such a city (see Fewell, "Achsah and the

The first sign of a crack in this seemingly smooth transition, however, is found when one tries to pinpoint Othniel's exact relation to Achsah and Caleb (which reveals the deeper problem of the genealogies and kinship ties between the characters). Othniel is introduced as the "son of Qenaz, the younger brother of Caleb," but the phrase "the younger brother of Caleb" could refer to either Qenaz (making Othniel Caleb's nephew) or Othniel. The much more likely reading is the latter, making Othniel Caleb's younger brother (and thus Achsah's uncle), as he is the principal character on which the sentence is focused and is the logical antecedent to the phrase.[27] The problem though is that Caleb in Numbers and Joshua is not a "son of Qenaz" but rather a "son of Yefuneh" (e.g. Num 13.6; 14.6; 26.65; Josh 14.13; 15.13; 21.12). A possible solution is that Othniel and Caleb are half-brothers—except that in Num 32.12 and Josh 14.6 and 14 Caleb is referred to as "son of Yefuneh, the Qenizzite."[28] If one takes Chronicles into account, such

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(E)razed City of Writing," 131-33). To destroy a place of learning and documentation is to privilege the sword over the word and seems to deconstruct the ideology of the Canaanites as "backwards" people versus the "enlightened" Israelites. There is obviously another added to dimension to this, however, in that the story is preserved in a book. Landy thus writes: "The book, the writing, of the City of the Book is the mirror image of the book in which its destruction is written" ("Judges 1," 45).

Just as fraught with meaning is the name Devir. It translates as "inner sanctuary," a term used of the holy of holies. There is no evidence, however, to suggest that they city has any sacred connotation. Certainly, however, there seems to be some correlation here between Devir and the cities of Hebron (the place of the patriarchs) and Jerusalem (the future sacred city). The name of the city (דְּבִיר) also suggests a connection to the noun דָּבָר, "word," and words certainly must exude from a "book city." And so one "word" supplants another; Canaanite writing is erased, and its history along with it, by the "word" (and sword) of the Israelites (see Landy, "Judges 1," 47).

In order to transition from Qiryat Sefer to Devir a woman is needed. It is not the last time in the Hebrew Bible the taking of a city is associated with the taking of a woman (see 2 Sam 11 and 16). The implication is that woman and city are there to be conquered. Achsah represents both this conquering and the prize, and thus is linked to both Qiryat Sefer and Devir.

[27] See Landy, "Judges 1," 39 n.10. He notes that if Qenaz were the antecedent to the phrase, then one would expect a more pointed specification, such as "son of his brother, Qenaz."

[28] Jacob Wright points out that understanding "brother" (אח) loosely as "kin" does not make sense either, as Othniel is referred to as "the younger one" (*David, King of Israel, and Caleb in Biblical Memory* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014], 171). It should be

matters become even more entangled. In 1 Chr 4.15, for instance, Caleb is a "son of Yefuneh," but also a grandfather of Qenaz. Moreover, there is another Caleb listed as a "son of Hezron" (1 Chr 2.9, 19) and perhaps also (if the MT is not emended) a Caleb that is a "son of Hur" (1 Chr 2.50). If these Calebs are all the same, then this character has up to four fathers (though it may be the case that at least some of them are different persons).[29] Additionally, Hebron is listed as a descendant of Caleb (see 1 Chr 2.19; 2.42); it is as if, as Landy says in regard to the Judges text, "in conquering the city [Caleb] is reabsorbing or misrecognizing his own seed."[30]

So while Caleb and Othniel are presented as Judahites, they also bring a number of other tribal and ethnic affiliations with them. And this mixture of identity carries with it important thematic points. The Qenizzites, for example, are one of the peoples to be dispossessed by the descendants of Abraham in Gen 15.19. In Gen 36.11, 15, and 42, however, the Qenizzites are classified as descendants of Edom (and therefore not as an indigenous people).[31] One is left then with the possibility that Caleb, Achsah, and Othniel are Judahites, Edomites, or Qenizzites—or any combination thereof. Danna Fewell observes that this ethnic ambiguity "undermines the us-them ideology that drives the conquest."[32] The fear of exogamy (and thus apostasy), of the

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noted though that only texts in Judges add this additional qualifier of Othniel being the "younger one."

[29] See, for example, Gary Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 1-9* (AB 12; New York: Doubleday, 2004), 305.

[30] Landy, "Judges 1," 44.

[31] For discussion of the many important historical issues concerning this genealogical confusion surrounding Caleb, the Calebites, and the Qenizzites, see Wright, *David, King of Israel, and Caleb in Biblical Memory*, 167-220. Wright points out that the *literary* character of Caleb is no doubt presented as a full-fledged Israelite and an important Judahite (169), though from a historical perspective he argues that the Calebites were one of the groups which resisted full absorption into the Judean polity (even as they were a part of it).

[32] Fewell, "Achsah and the (E)razed City of Writing," 140.

giving of Israelite daughters to the Canaanites, is already subtly present in this "close-knit" union between Othniel and Achsah.

This blurring of lines between Israelite and Canaanite is itself reflected in the relationship between father, uncle, and daughter. Othniel functions as a type of displacement for the father, as the union between uncle-niece is but one remove from that of father-daughter. Thus, the marriage between Othniel and Achsah avoids the incest prohibition while still keeping the daughter under the control and "house" of the father.[33] Staying in the house of the father, however, does not provide exclusive possession of Achsah to Othniel. And exclusive possession of daughters/women is part of the fear of exogamy, of playing the "harlot" (זונה) after other gods (2.17). The exchange of a daughter is a precarious thing, posing uncertainty not only for fathers but also for husbands. The precariousness of this exchange is in fact developed in the latter half of the story, for no sooner is Achsah given away as a wife than she returns to her father— carrying a message of demand no less.

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[33] See Landy, "Judges 1," 45.

And it happened when she came to him that she urged him[34] to ask from her father for the field. And she descended[35] from upon the donkey. And he said to her: "What is with you?" And she said to him: "Hand me a blessing! For you have given me away as Negev-land;[36] give me basins of water." And Caleb gave to her the upper basins and the lower basins (1.14-15).

[34] In some texts of the LXX and Vulgate a tradition is preserved which has Othniel doing the inciting with a feminine object (obviously Achsah). Paul Mosca ("Who Seduced Whom? A Note on Joshua 15:18//Judges 1:14," *CBQ* 46 [1984]: 18-22) points out that what is at stake here is the reputation of Othniel—but there is a dilemma either way. If Achsah is the subject of the verb, then what is Othniel's actual response? The ensuing narrative is dialogue only between Achsah and Caleb, and if Othniel is incited by Achsah then he is oddly silent throughout the rest of the passage. If Othniel is the subject of the verb, then he is cast as a greedy character who is inexplicably afraid or unwilling to ask his own request from his father-in-law (moreover, one would have to persuasively argue that the versions preserve a better reading than the MT). Mosca's solution is to assert that Othniel is not present in these verses at all, and that one should understand לשאל as a "perfectly good gerund construction," thereby rendering the sentence, "When she arrived, she beguiled him, asking from her father arable land" (21). In my translation I largely follow Mosca's lead, though have left the infinitive form here, perhaps somewhat clumsily, in order to leave it somewhat ambiguous as to who "incited" whom.

[35] The verb צנח is the cause of much scholarly discussion (in part because of G.R. Driver's (in)famous translation that Achsah's action was flatulence, see "Problems of Interpretation in the Heptateuch," in *Mélanges bibliques, rédigés en l'honneur de André Robert* [Travaux de l'Institut Catholique de Paris, 4; Paris: Bloud et Gay, 1957], 66-76 [75-76]). It appears only here (and in its Joshua parallel) and Judg 4.21 in which Jael strikes the tent-peg into Sisera's head. Bal, along with others, translates the verb as "she clapped her hands," contending that Achsah's action was meant to garner her father's attention (*Death and Dissymmetry*, 151-55). This translation, however, is not as convincing as that from Fewell and Gunn (Controlling Perspectives: Women, Men, and the Authority of Violence in Judges 4 and 5," *JAAR* 56 [1990]: 389-411 [esp. 394]) who argue that the basic meaning of the root is "descend" (and offer their own translation of "dismount"). In the passage in Judg 4.21 they understand the feminine subject of the verb to be Jael (and not the tent peg), and so Jael "dismounts" Sisera after nailing his head to the floor. (For a more succinct summary of Fewell's argument and her objections to Bal's reading, see "Achsah and the (E)razed City of Writing," 137, n.44.) While I have translated accordingly, I would agree with Sasson's conclusion that "[w]hen all is said and done…we are left to our own devices to imagine what Achsah was doing on/from her donkey when she entered into discussion with her father" (*Judges 1-12*, 148).

[36] This clause is sometimes translated as, "for you have given Negev land to me" (KJV, NJB, and Robert Boling, *Judges* [AB 6A; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975]), though one would expect נתתה לי as in the clause immediately following. Moreover, one wonders why Caleb has given land completely unrelated to the capture of Qiryat Sefer. Others (NRSV, REB)

In 1.12-13, Achsah is offered as a prize in order to motivate the men of Judah. Caleb, in effect, uses her as bait. That Achsah's name means "bangle" or "anklet" seems to affirm this status for her—she is a nice trinket (one that can be dangled before the eyes) that comes along with the capture of the city.[37] That she needs to be offered in the first place, however, suggests that there may be more to this trinket than purely ornamental value. That is to say: what is the prize of triumph without the spoils of war? and what is land without descendants (that is, without a wife to produce descendants)? The entire ideology of taking over the land of Canaan, and of preventing intermarriages with the Canaanites, depends on daughters like Achsah.

The other sign that Achsah's name may be initially deceiving is that she transforms from bargaining chip to barterer herself.[38] The key-word of 1.15 is the verb נתן (to give), which is repeated three times. The one who was "given away" (נתן) now complains about being "given away" (נתן) as Negev-land (dry-land) and demands to be "given" (נתן) basins of water. In the parallel passage in Joshua, this verb is also found in Achsah's initial exclamation, "give (נתן) me a blessing" (15.19). In Judges this is replaced with the verb יהב, which perhaps provides a shade more of coarseness to the request. Because of the same use of the verb in connection to daughters, Hallo compares this verse to Prov 30.15, "The leech has two daughters, "Give, give!" (הב הב), thereby suggesting that the colloquial phrase "gimme" might portray an adequate idea of

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translate, "since you have set me in the land of the Negev," following the Septuagint's, ὅτι εἰς γῆν νότου ἐκδέδοσαι με ("because you have set/assigned me in the south land"). Here too, one would expect a different construction, perhaps a ב particle ("in") attached to ארץ ("land"); it is also not clear why Achsah would be assigned in the Negev-land. The best solution, therefore, is to understand the clause as a complaint of being "given away as Negev-land" in which Negev-land represents undesirable and infertile land. Sasson (*Judges*, 149) points out that the perfect of נתן with a personal suffix is nicely represented in the Hebrew Bible and almost uniformly gives the impression of someone doing something to someone else, as in Ps 118.18, "but you did not hand me over (נתנני) to death" (see also Ps 124.6; Lam 1.13-14).

[37] See Fewell, "Achsah and the (E)razed City of Writing," 133-34.

[38] Fewell, "Achsah and the (E)razed City of Writing," 134.

what is behind this verb in both cases.[39] This implies that Achsah reverts to the child's role; that is, she approaches Caleb as if she is still primarily a daughter.[40]

That she asks for a "blessing/present" (ברכה) further confirms this, as it evokes the "blessings" given to sons in Genesis (Gen 25.11; 27.15-40; 48-49). It also brings to mind the case of the daughters of Zelophehad (Numbers 27 and 36), and thus the recognition of daughters as inheritors of property.[41] The connotation of "present" for ברכה is well-attested in the Hebrew Bible, as in David's gift to the elders of Judah in 1 Sam 30.26 or Naaman's gift to Elisha in 2 Kgs 5.15. In Gen. 33.11, moreover, there is a similar play on both of these meanings, as Jacob, after having stolen the "blessing" (ברכה) of Esau (Gen 27.36), returns to his brother and offers him a "gift" (ברכה). There is also a third layer of meaning in that בְּרָכָה "blessing/present" plays on בְּרֵכָה "pond/pool," thereby contrasting the dry Negev-land with the request for basins of water.

This wordplay highlights the importance of water in these verses and draws attention to the symbolic associations of water with fertility. "In asking for water for the land Caleb has given her," writes Lillian Klein, "Achsah is likening herself to the land, a place for planting

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[39] Hallo, "New Light on the Story of Achsah," 333.

[40] Trent Butler comments that Achsah "did not turn on the feminine charm with her father. Rather, she returned to the child's role: 'Give me, daddy, give me. I've been cheated, daddy. It's not fair'" (*Joshua* [WBC 7; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983], 186).

[41] Of course, the comparison has many differences as well. In the case of Zelophehad's daughters, the point is that the father has no sons. In Caleb's case, at least in Joshua and Judges, this remains ambiguous (in Chronicles he has many sons). As we have seen with Rachel and Leah, however, daughters may have expected a share and portion of the father's house even if they had brothers. For more on this see my previous chapter on Rachel and Leah; for more discussion on what exactly Achsah might have been asking for, see below (and for an analysis of the historical and legal background to Achsah's request, see Joseph Fleishman, "A Daughter's Demand and a Father's Compliance: The Legal Background to Achsah's Claim and Caleb's Agreement (Joshua 15,16-19; Judges 1,12-15)," *ZAW* 118.3 (2006): 354-73.

seed."[42] It is odd, however, that this is an exchange between father and daughter. For what has Caleb offered up Achsah as a prize if not as a means for reproduction (or was the enticement purely sexual or essentially gratuitous)? Othniel, the uncle turned husband, should be the one to "water," to plant seed, in the woman. He is, however, noticeably absent, replaced by the father who seems to affirm his daughter's right to fertility by giving her over and above what she requests (both the upper and lower basins). But there the story stops. Achsah does not transition from daughter to mother; she remains, at least metaphorically, in the/as Negev-land.[43]

Thus, even as the Achsah story stands as an ideal to which other daughter stories in Judges will be compared, her persistent status as a daughter foreshadows the childless fate of women in the book of Judges. Her story hints at the prosperity and fertility that comes with basins of water but then abruptly ends. Without the daughter/wife transitioning into a mother, the oedipal fears of the motherland cannot be overcome.

Jephthah's Daughter

If Achsah's story presages the pattern of daughters not transitioning to mothers in the book of Judges, then the story of Jephthah's daughter is the most pointed realization of it. She is defined solely in relation to her father, and in the moment she comes out of her father's house she permanently confines herself to it. There is no husband in this story, no one to mediate between the woman's status as wife or daughter—and thus there is no possibility for Jephthah's daughter to become a mother either. The only party involved between Jephthah and his daughter is Yahweh, the deity to whom the daughter is sacrificed as a result of her father's rash vow.

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[42] Klein, "What Prize is This?" 26.

[43] Achsah thus functions as a symbol of liminal space as well, between the fertile land and the desert from which Israel came.

And Jephthah vowed a vow to Yahweh, and he said: "If you will indeed give the sons of

Ammon into my hand, then the emerging one that emerges from the doors of my house to

meet me when I return in peace from the sons of Ammon will be for Yahweh, and I shall

offer it up as a whole burnt offering" (11.31).

The vow of Jephthah, structurally speaking, is the opposite to that of Caleb's.[44] Jephthah's vow

calls for a deal with God in the hopes of ensuring military victory; Caleb's vow seeks to motivate

military victory with a prize. (In both cases, the father's vow reveals his feeling that he is unable

to accomplish victory on his own.) The ambiguous "whoever" (1.12) of Caleb's vow is the male

to whom he will give his daughter, whereas the ambiguous "emerging one that emerges" from

the doors of Jephthah's house turns out to be his daughter (whom he will sacrifice to Yahweh).

The former episode ends with the daughter receiving abundant water while this episode ends

with the daughter as a burnt offering and the ashes of its after-effects (she will not be the only

burnt daughter in the book of Judges). Webb calls the story of Jephthah's daughter a "grotesque

and tragic parallel" to the story of Achsah.[45]

The story of Jephthah's daughter is also a grotesque and tragic parallel to the story of

Jephthah. In order to understand the daughter's story, therefore, it is necessary to spend some

time on the father's. Jephthah is a marginal figure: the son of a "harlot" (זונה)[46] (11.1), an outcast

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[44] See, for instance, Tammi Schneider, *Judges* (Berit Olam; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 11; Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry*, 49-51.

[45] Barry Webb, *The Book of Judges: An Integrated Reading* (JSOTSup 46; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 87.

[46] For discussion on the meaning of זונה, see my remarks on the term in the previous chapter on Dinah. While I consistently translate "harlot" throughout this study, the word carries a variety of more nuanced connotations. From this perspective, it is important to note that when Jephthah's brothers cast him out, it is not because his mother is a זונה, but because he is the "son of another woman" (בן־אשה אחרת).

from his family (11.2), and the leader of a group of "rootless fellows"[47] (11.3). His brothers

dispossess him because his maternity poses a threat to their inheritance, and this mark of

maternal foreignness will have important implications for Jephthah's daughter as well. Perhaps

equally problematic, but for different reasons, is Jephthah's paternity. It is not entirely clear

whether "Gilead" is the name of Jephthah's father or a substitute for the father's actual name

(perhaps the land of Gilead is "personified as his nameless father"[48]). Either way, Jephthah's

paternity firmly identifies him with Gilead while his maternity does not, resulting in a strange

mixing of both model insider and outsider.

Like his own daughter, moreover, Jephthah is the victim of rash speech. His brothers'

force him into exile claiming that Jephthah will "not inherit in the house of our father" (11.2),

but later Gilead will need Jephthah in its fight against Ammon, and will even give him the titles

of being their "head" (ראש) and "general" (קצין) (11.11). Jephthah is keen to point out this

backtracking on the part of the Gileadites, mentioning that those who previously "hated" (שׂנא)

him and drove him out of his father's house come to him now that they are in a time of trouble

(11.7). The irony is that Jephthah will later be the victim of his own speech—and unlike the

Gileadites he is unable to retract the consequences of his words.[49] Another layer of meaning is

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[47] The phrase אנשים ריקים literally means "empty men," and thus by itself does not necessarily imply immorality (the comparison is often made to Judg 9.4 in which Abimelech hires "rootless and reckless men"). It refers, as Webb puts it, to "a lack of qualities which command success in the leading of a regular life, especially a lack of material goods such as property and social status" (*The Book of Judges* [2012], 310, n.28; see also, Sasson, *Judges 1-12*, 421).

The "rootless fellows" that surround Jephthah may also be a roundabout parallel to the "companions" of Jephthah's daughters that weep with her in the mountains.

[48] Lillian Klein, *The Triumph of Irony in the Book of Judges* (JSOTSup 68; Sheffield, Almond Press, 1988), 222, n.7.

[49] There are also a number of connections between the Gileadites' rejection of/plea to Jephthah and the Israelites' rejection of/plea to Yahweh in 10.6-16. The comparison suggests

found in the narratorial comment that "Jephthah spoke all his words before Yahweh in Mizpah" (11.11). Mizpah is where he will return after the battle and realize the fatal consequences of his own words. It is also the implied place where Jephthah carries out his extensive negotiations with the king of the Ammonites—negotiations which break down because "the king of the Ammonites did not listen to the words of Jephthah" (11.28). In regard to these connections, Exum writes: "All [Jephthah's] words are thus through extension associated with Mizpah, and they are useless and destructive words—useless in that they fail to achieve peace, destructive in that they cost him his only child."[50]

These repeated mentions of Mizpah (10.17; 11.11, 34) along with the overall setting of Gilead, further highlight Jephthah's status as a border figure and the theme of liminality in this story. The land of Gilead (meaning "rugged," or "hill country/mountain range" and, according to the folk etymology in Gen 31.47-48, deriving its name from the "mound of witness" called Galeed[51]) is located in the Transjordan somewhere between the rivers of Arnon and Yarmuk. It served as a border between Israel and Aram (and other Transjordan territory outside Israel), and thus represents, as Rachel Havrelock notes, an "ethnic limit."[52] It is the place of the covenant,

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that just like the Israelites' "repentance," the Gileadites' "repentance" is more a change of strategy than a change of heart (see Webb, *The Book of Judges* [2012], 314).

[50] J. Cheryl Exum, "On Judges 11," in *A Feminist Companion to Judges* (ed. Athalya Brenner; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 131-44 (133).

[51] See BDB 166; Niditch, *Judges*, 131.

[52] Rachel Havrelock, *River Jordan: The Mythology of a Dividing Line* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 120 (72-84). See also Francis Landy, "Gilead and the Fatal Word," in *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1986), 39-44; and David Jobling, *The Sense of Biblical Narrative: Structural Analyses in the Hebrew Bible, II* (JSOTSup 39; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986, 124-32.

Havrelock notes how Gilead is a continual site of contention in the Hebrew Bible, "as some accounts present Gilead as in inseparable region of Israel and others place it resolutely outside of Israel…Gilead is sometimes an auxiliary site of home, a proximate diaspora, or the place in between homeland and exile where the concepts lose their integrity exactly as they came into being" (72).

and last meeting, between Jacob and Laban (Gen 31.21, 44-49). The heap of stones and the pillar (which is called Mizpah) set up there are meant to ensure that members of Jacob's and Laban's houses will not pass over their respective boundary. Of course, the problem is that the border has already been passed over and ethnic blurring has already occurred. Jacob takes back with him Aramean daughters (and handmaids) who are the mothers of the tribes of Israel. He does so, however, to avoid marrying from among the Canaanites (Gen 27.46; 28.1)—exogamy blurs into endogamy. Gilead and Mizpah thus function as "frontiers," places of entrance, as much as they do borders.[53]

This brings us to the Ammonites, one of the peoples that also occupy this border/frontier land of the Transjordan. Ammon is more explicitly Other than Gilead—it is, for example, never a place of reconciliation. The Ammonites' military presence brings about the need for the Gileadites to appoint a "mighty warrior" (גבור חיל) (11.1) like Jephthah as their leader. The dialogue between Jephthah and the king of the Ammonites, accordingly, deals with territorial land claims and retellings of history. There are many interesting details that have been explored in this dialogue, particularly the variants between this text and what can be gathered from other biblical texts that relate a similar history (such as parts of Numbers 20–24, 32, and Deuteronomy 2–4).[54] Perhaps the most interesting feature of the negotiations, however, is the prominence given to Moab (mentioned in 11.15, 17, 18, and 25). In 11.25 Jephthah even refers to the god of

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[53] See Havrelock, *River Jordan*, 120. Part of the reason for this ambiguity, according to Havrelock, relates to how Gilead was domesticated into the twelve-tribe system. She writes: "The tribal system proves flexible enough to accommodate the entrance and exit of groups without structural compromise," and thus the overlap of groups like Machir and half Manasseh (and the Gileadites) "can serve as an example of 'the flexibility of myth,' the way in which myth reflects the changing social structure while professing to be immemorial" (120).

[54] See, for example, Sasson, *Judges 1-12*, 424-35; Webb, *The Book of Judges* [2012], 316-25; and Niditch, *Judges*, 131-33. By exploring the differences in each separate biblical text one can construct some of the motivations and goals of each source's ideological framework.

the Ammonites as Chemosh, who otherwise is cited as the god of the Moabites (Milkom would be the deity one would expect to be listed for the Ammonites). Historical critical studies have generally assumed, therefore, that an original version of the story, which involved Israel and Moab, has been adapted to a dialogue between Israel and Ammon.[55] Of course, if this were the intention, then one would expect the adaptation to be more thorough, for there is something peculiar, as David Jobling remarks, that in a speech to Ammon, Jephthah "cannot get Moab off his mind."[56] Part of the reason for this, according to Jobling, is that Jephthah (and thus the implied author) really did think that this land, the land that Israel had taken from Sihon (11.19-23), belonged to Moab (see Num 21.21-35, especially 21.26). That is, Israel took from Sihon land that Sihon had taken from Moab—but Moabite land was divinely forbidden for Israel to acquire (Deut 2.9).

This still does not explain why Moab is so intertwined with Ammon in Judg 11. The answer may relate to the fact that Ammonite land is also divinely forbidden for Israel to acquire (Deut 2.19) and for precisely the same reason: both peoples are descendants of Lot. Jobling thus traces this boundary mixing to Gen 13 in which Abram and Lot divide the Promised Land, and although the precise division is somewhat obscure it "would tend to coincide with the best-known west-east division, between Cis- and Transjordan."[57] Lot's inheritance of (some part of) the Transjordan then passes on to his descendants Moab and Ammon. Jobling thus concludes that Israel has "a sense, a mythic 'knowledge', that lower Transjordan properly belonged to its

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[55] See W. Richter, "Die Überlieferung um Jephtah, Ri 10,7-12,6" *Bib* 47 (1966): 522-47; M. Wüst, "Die Einschaltungen in die Jiftachgeschichten, Ri 11.13-26," *Bib* 56 (1975): 464-79; and J. Soggin, *Judges: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1981), 211-13.

[56] Jobling, *The Sense of Biblical Narrative, II*, 130.

[57] Jobling, *The Sense of Biblical Narrative, II*, 113-14.

kinfolk of Moab and Ammon."[58] In the case of Judg 11, Ammon's claim to the Amorite land is more easily refuted (again, see Num 21.21-35) but the comingling with Moab still highlights how Jephthah cannot but reveal the worry over the proper claim of Lot's descendants to the Transjordan region.[59]

Even more pertinent to our discussion here is how Jobling applies these observations to the biblical representation of Transjordanian women.[60] Such women represent a logical problem in relation to Israelite legitimacy and identity, since they are simultaneously self and other, insider and outsider. The best thing that can happen for them is "to move to the west as virgins."[61] That this is not their usual fate is evidence in itself of the problems they pose to Israelite identity. Indeed, there is a strong biblical pattern of transgressive Transjordanian women, exemplified by the depiction of Moabite women as hypersexual and forward. This begins with Lot's daughters, who not only commit incest but also feminize their father in the process. The issue of Israelite men playing the "harlot" (זונה) with Moabite and Midianite daughters (Numbers 25 and 31) serves as another illustrative example. So long as the Israelites are encamped on the east bank, they are liable to be seduced by these foreign women and led to worship their gods. Havrelock notes the importance of the fact that the encounter with Moab is again only with women, more specifically "the suspect category [of] 'single' women, usually figured in biblical terms as daughters."[62] Wives and mothers, on the other hand, are already

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[58] Jobling, *The Sense of Biblical Narrative, II*, 114.
[59] Jobling adds that a supplementary reason for Moab's presence here may be the primary role that Moab plays in the Moab/Ammon pair. Moab was the son from Lot's *elder* daughter and emerges as the more dominant player in the Pentateuch. Thus, even when Judges attempts to substitute Ammon in this role, "Moab continues to raise its ugly head even to the extent of a Freudian slip in the divine names!" (130).
[60] See Jobling, *The Sense of Biblical Narrative, II*, 103, 105-6, 113-14, 131ff.
[61] Jobling, *The Sense of Biblical Narrative, II*, 131.
[62] Havrelock, *River Jordan*, 49 (see also 52).

domesticated "in every sense of the word,"[63] whereas daughters' sexuality and reproductive

capacity pose a much more real threat.[64]

This anxiety is more subtly portrayed in the story of Zelophehad's daughters (Numbers

27 and 36), who are Transjordanian Israelite women seeking to secure the right to inherit land

(since their father had no sons). They are thus doubly rendered strange—as daughterly inheritors

and Transjordanian. Num 36 attempts to make the daughters more "legitimate" by requiring

them to marry their fellow tribesmen. Havrelock thus comments: "the fact that the marriage of

Zelophehad's daughters to their cousins is the last act of the book of Numbers (Num 36.10-22)

shows how female ownership of the land can be counteracted in order not to destabilize the male

nation. By marrying correctly, the daughters of Zelophehad lose their land and with it their

ambivalent status. As wives, the daughters become imperceptible in the national collective."[65]

The threat of exogamy is again turned into endogamy, and the doubly dangerous daughters are

turned into wives and dependents upon their husbands. Still, by having their fellow tribesmen

marry inside the tribe, the daughters reveal a reversal of gender norms that links them with other

Transjordanian women (like the daughters of Lot). And all of this is further complicated by the

genealogy in Josh 17.1-6, which has the daughters of Zelophehad become ancestresses of the

Cisjordanian moiety of Manasseh. On the one hand, this further integrates the daughters into the

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[63] Havrelock, *River Jordan*, 49.

[64] It is odd, however, that when the Israelites are later seeking vengeance upon the Midianites only the virgins are kept alive (see Num 31.15-18). The non-virgins pose the threat of seducing the Israelite men, since they carry knowledge with them already. The virgins have not yet taken on the contagion of the Transjordan, and thus could be "redeemed" by being paired with an Israelite man. Jobling thus suggestively wonders: "Is it the case that non-virgin Transjordanian women have, as it were, taken the contagion irredeemably, so that they are a source of danger, but so that conversely it is meritorious to bring a Transjordanian virgin into Yahweh's land?" (*The Sense of Biblical Narrative, II,* 114).

[65] Havrelock*, River Jordan*, 53-4.

status of proper Israelite women by settling west of the Jordan; on the other, it reveals a complicated genealogical picture in which the daughters are associated with both the Cisjordan and Transjordan and seem to belong properly in neither.

This portrayal of Transjordanian women, and the anxiety associated with it, applies to Jephthah's daughter as well. Using the insights of Jobling and Havrelock, I would like to show how Jephthah's daughter both conforms to and subverts these stereotypes. Like Zelophehad's daughters, she is without brothers, and could make a claim for inheritance and territory; and like the Moabite (and Midianite) daughters, her virginity (sexual availability and reproductive capacity) presents a potential problem for Israelite identity. Unlike Zelophehad's daughters, however, she is never given any land; and unlike the Moabite daughters, she remains a virgin. What both Jobling and Havrelock pass over in their analyses is how the incestuous story of Lot's daughters, the primal scene of transgressive Transjordanian women, might relate to Jephthah's daughter. For the union that results in Moab and Ammon reveals not just Israel's worry over its proper claim to (certain) Transjordanian land but more broadly Israel's conflicted stance toward its relation to close others. Moabites and Ammonites are peoples with whom Israel shares an ancestral past, and, as we discussed in chapter 1, are a reminder of Israel's own mixed origins. To avoid miscegenation, the Israelites are not to copulate with foreign daughters (thus the fear of exogamy), but if endogamy is taken to its extreme then it results in incest. And incest results in its own confusion of categories: Lot becomes both father and husband, his daughters both wife and child. Likewise, Moab and Ammon are Israel's (distorted) reflection of itself.[66] The dialogue

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[66] This applies not only to incest but also to taboo forms of murder. When King Mesha of Moab sacrifices his oldest son before the eyes of the conquering armies of Israel and Judah (and Edom), the Israelite soldiers withdraw, implying that they are horrified by such a deed. But child sacrifice, as the story of Jephthah's daughter shows, is not so foreign to Israel.

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between Jephthah and the king of the Ammonites is representative of an inner battle; Israel mythically (perhaps unconsciously) "knows" the land to be Moabite/Ammonite and is battling with itself over its "rightful" claims. The success of this battle is then paired with, even contingent upon, the sacrifice of Jephthah's virgin daughter, who represents the potential blurring of identity that would call into question the validity of the battle. So just as the conflicting land claims are "solved" by military defeat, the threat of miscegenation is "solved" by sacrifice. This sacrifice, however, was done at the hands of the father, which exposes an odd correspondence to the sexual anomie and incest that characterizes the Moabites and Ammonites. The desire for pure exogamy leads to (implied) incest—Jephthah's daughter stays within her father's house and within the Transjordan. Landy points out this sexual inversion and similarity between father-daughter sacrifice and father-daughter incest:

> The sacrifice of a virginal daughter to God in the paternal home corresponds to, and reverses, the possibility of incest. Sexual union between father and daughter is the antithesis of, and equivalent to, the consumptive union of the daughter with the patriarchal deity in the flame. Fire and sex are metaphors for each other throughout [Judges].[67]

Similar to the story of Caleb and Achsah, therefore, the outer, public drama between Israel and its other reflects the inner, familial drama between Jephthah and his daughter. But the differences between the two scenes stand out as well. Achsah goes out to meet her father in order to complain about the consequences of her father's vow and demands a gift (a gift she will eventually receive); Jephthah's daughter approaches her father with timbrels and whirling dances

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[67] Landy, "Judges 1," 45.

only to discover that she is the gift her father must sacrifice to Yahweh (a fate which she accepts, incredulously, without complaint).

> And Jephthah went to Mizpah, to his house—and behold, his daughter coming out to meet him with timbrels and whirling dances. It was only her, the only child; from him there was not any other son or daughter. When he saw her he tore his garments and said: "Alas, my daughter you have indeed laid me low and you are among my troubles. I have opened my mouth to Yahweh and I cannot turn back." And she said to him: "My father, you have opened your mouth to Yahweh. Do to me according to what came forth from your mouth, now that Yahweh has done vengeance for you against your enemies from the Ammonites (11.34-36).

As we have noted, Mizpah is the place where Jephthah spoke his words to the Gileadites and the implied location where he negotiated with the king of the Ammonites as well. He returns, therefore, to the place where he uttered his vow and now realizes its consequences. There is perhaps a subtle wordplay that highlights this connection between Mizpah (מצפה) and Jephthah's lamentation, "I have opened (פציתי) my mouth to Yahweh and I cannot turn back" (11.35).[68]

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[68] The vow is completely binding so it seems, unable to be reversed. Num 30 may be used as an intertext, as it states that any pledge made by a man in the name of God must be fulfilled:

> When a man vows a vow to Yahweh, or swears an oath to bind a binding upon himself, he shall not violate his word; according to all that has come out of his mouth, he must do (Num 30.3)

Thus, the passages are linked not only by their focus on vows but by the linguistic connection of vows being that which "comes out from the mouth." The passage from Numbers, moreover, also shows a concern for the vows of daughters and a father's power over them:

> When a woman vows a vow to Yahweh and she binds a binding in the house of her father, in her youth, and her father hears her vow and the binding which she bound upon herself, but he offers no objection, then all her vows shall stand and each of the bindings she bound shall stand (Num 30.4-5).

Interestingly, in the Judges passage it is the daughter who hears the vow of her father and then seemingly affirms his obligation: "And she said to him, 'My father, you have opened your mouth

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Jephthah's name (יפתח), perhaps not coincidentally, means "he opens," the implied subject

probably being a deity given credit for opening the womb of a woman (see Gen 29.31; 30.22).

Sasson, however, notes that God is also known to open the lips of poets (Ps 51.17) and the

mouths of prophets (Ezek 3.27).[69] So there may be another layer to this pun between the opening

of the mouth to express a rash vow and Jephthah's name.[70]

There is also the pointed reference that Mizpah is Jephthah's home. What should be a

joyous homecoming (for Jephthah has indeed returned home "in peace" as he asked for in his

vow) is nothing of the sort. This is the first time that the house motif appears in father-daughter

stories in Judges, being absent in the episode of Achsah; however, it will appear more forcefully

in the episodes to come. In previous chapters we have seen how fatherhood establishes itself in

the house—exemplified in the term "the father's house" (בית אב). The house becomes a

synecdoche for fatherhood. In the Lot story, for example, Lot's movements in and out of his

physical house parallel the problems he faces as a father (his responsibility to provide hospitality

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to Yahweh; do to me according to what has come out of your mouth" (Judg 11.36). Jione Havea
offers a wonderful comparison between the response of Jephthah's daughter and Num 30
(*Elusions of Control: Biblical Law on the Words of Women* [Atlanta: Society of Biblical
Literature, 2003], 118-27). He notes how the principles of Num 30.3 are split between the
masculine and feminine voice of Jephthah and his daughter—the father affirms the rigidity of the
vow and the daughter affirms that the father must complete his vow. More than simple
affirmation, therefore, the daughter's words may be a subtle retort, a turning of the father's
s/words against him (see also Danna Fewell, "Judges," in *The Women's Bible Commentary* [eds.
Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992], 67-77
[71]). This is supported by the daughter's request for the sacrifice to be delayed, for whereas the
daughter in Num 30 has no say in the fulfillment or annulment of her vows, Jephthah's daughter
expresses her own request and compromise. The delay, moreover, opens up a space for
questioning the vow, potentially even finding a way out of it (perhaps through a substitute as is
the case with Abraham's near sacrifice of Isaac). Thus, even as Jephthah's daughter seemingly
affirms the vow her agency undermines and qualifies it.

[69] Sasson, *Judges 1-12*, 419.

[70] The punning extends even further, for "Mizpah" means "watchtower," a look out point
where one (God, soldiers) watches for trouble. And indeed, this look out point will bring trouble
to Jephthah.

for his guests, to protect his daughters, and to keep the men of Sodom outside his house). When the narrative setting transitions to the cave, the last vestiges of Lot's fatherly power and authority are lost. Jephthah has similar problems with the father's house. At the beginning of his story he is driven out of his family by his own brothers with the accusation, "you will not have an inheritance in our father's house, for you are the son of another woman" (11.2). From this expulsion he is then offered the possibility of becoming the "head" (ראשׁ) of Gilead—and Gilead, let us recall, is his father's name, blurring the distinction between Jephthah's father and fatherland. Being the "head" of Gilead, however, is conditional on his ability to defeat the Ammonites—thus the apparent need for the vow (and given Jephthah's previous expulsion, there is certainly some ground for this insecurity).[71] The twist, of course, is that while the vow apparently helped Jephthah win the battle, he loses his "house" as a result of the vow's consequences. By vowing to sacrifice his only daughter (rather than giving her away, as Caleb does), Jephthah condemns "the one person who ensures his status as father."[72]

These conflicting forces regarding the fate of Jephthah reflect the problematic place of the daughter in the father's house. The house is the place to which daughters are confined, but is simultaneously the place where daughters in Judges "meet their undoing."[73] The reader should thus know that when Jephthah ambiguously vows to make a burnt offering out of the one that emerges from the "doors of his house" (11.31), the daughter is already the implied victim. The

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[71] The text reveals to the reader that "the spirit of Yahweh" had already come upon Jephthah in 11.29 (see also Judg 3.10 and 6.34), thus making the vow to Yahweh that much more questionable (that is, why would Jephthah need to make a vow to Yahweh in order to ensure victory if the spirit of Yahweh was already with him?). For further discussion, see Webb, *The Book of Judges* (2012), 328-29. It is also interesting that Jephthah's vow to Yahweh is immediately after Yahweh's spirit penetrating him, as if to suggest that Yahweh is in some way responsible for the vow (see Exum, "On Judges 11," 134-5).
[72] Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry*, 179.
[73] Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry*, 170.

mention of "doors" (דלת), in particular, highlights this concern with boundaries and the problems surrounding it.[74] Bal, for instance, observes: "The door of the house and [the daughter's] coming out of it—at once a spatial transgression and a temporal transition—is also the definition of Jephthah's fragile identity. The view of the daughter is the view of the open door, of the leak in the system, of the breach in the architecture of exclusive possession."[75] The house is not as stable or as safe as it seems, for there are always doors by which danger can enter or out of which peril might come. This vulnerability and potential for instability that the door represents is disclosed by Jephthah's very name: יפתח, "he opens." With his vow Jephthah opens the door for his daughter to come out of the house. His ensuing confrontation at his door recalls the scene in which the Levite opens the door (ויפתח, almost exactly Jephthah's name) in 19.27 to find the body of his raped pilegesh. There too, as we will see, the door signifies both safety and danger, the system and its undoing.

Jephthah's open door, moreover, corresponds to his open mouth. The mouth, like the door, is a threshold space, a border/frontier in which things may enter or exit. The emphasis in this case is on what comes out of the mouth. Jephthah's daughter underlines this by both affirming and repeating Jephthah's lament over opening his mouth: "My father, you have opened your mouth to Yahweh. Do to me according to what came forth from your mouth" (11.36). The connection between "words" and "swords," between speech and violence, is nowhere more apparent than here—Jephthah's daughter is a victim, first and foremost, of her father's words. The same link is found in the standard biblical expression for military conquest: to defeat "by the mouth of the sword" (לפי־חרב). When Judah smites Jerusalem at the beginning of Judges, for

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[74] It is worth recalling here the repeated mention of "doors" and "entrances" in the Lot story (see the discussion in ch. 1 and later in this chapter).

[75] Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry*, 180.

instance, the tribe defeats the city with "the mouth of the sword, setting it on fire" (1.8). The mouth of swords can thus "consume" in a similar way to fire and the inhabitants of the city are metaphorically devoured (see also 18.27).[76]

In three other scenes in Judges, this oral imagery of the sword is played upon in connection to the deceitful and destructive power of words. In 3.16, Ehud's "sword with two mouths" (חרב ולה שני פיות), often translated as "double-edged sword," reflects his duplicitous speech. His announcement that he has a "secret word" (דבר־סתר) for the Moabite king Eglon, for example, plays upon two meanings of דבר, which can mean either "word" or "thing." So while Eglon may be expecting a "secret message," the expression may just as well refer to the two-edged sword that Ehud has tucked beneath his cloak. Edward Greenstein perfectly formulates the dynamics of this pun: "the dagger's 'mouths' surely have a 'word' to say to the king."[77] In 4.15–16 it is twice mentioned that Sisera's army fell "by the mouth of the sword," and in the second mention the narrator adds that "not a man was left," even though Sisera himself is still alive. This is because the "not-a-man" Sisera (see Judg 4.20, which more explicitly plays upon Sisera being

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[76] This act of "consuming" is presumably what serves as the basis for the metaphor. Swords can "devour" (אכל) (e.g. Deut 32.42; 2 Sam 2.6; 11.25; Isa 31.8; Jer 12.12; Nah 3.15) because, like the mouth, they can tear flesh (or more generally that conquest is an act of devouring). See Joshua Berman, "The 'Sword of Mouths' (Jud. III 16; Ps CXLIX 6; Prov V 4); a Metaphor and its Ancient Near Eastern Context," *VT* 52.3 (2002): 291-303. This also appears to be the connection in those instances in the Hebrew Bible in which "sword" stands as a metaphor for the potency of speech. In Ps 57.4, the poet writes of being among sons of men whose "tongue is as sharp sword," and in Isa 49.2, the servant speaks of God making his mouth "like a sharp sword."

[77] Edward Greenstein, "Humor and Wit," *ABD* 3: 331. Eglon's fate is similar to that of patriarchal ancestor of the people over whom he rules: Lot. That is, like Lot, he is deceived, penetrated, and feminized. It is no coincidence, therefore, that this theme recurs with a Moabite. The feminized male body parallels the symbolic function of the Transjordan—the feminized other of the Cisjordan. (For further analysis on the sexual and scatological imagery of this story, see Marc Brettler, "Never the Twain Shall Meet? The Ehud Story in History and Literature," *HUCA* 61 [1991]: 285-304.)

a "no-man") will not be killed by the mouth of the sword (i.e. military defeat) but by the mouth

of a woman and her deceptive words to him.[78] Finally, in the aftermath of the death of the

Levite's concubine, the city of Gibeah (20.37), the Benjaminites (20.48), and the inhabitants of

Jabesh-Gilead (21.10), are all victims of both "the mouth of the sword" and the words of the

mouth. In the latter two cases in particular, this connection is directly linked to the rash vow of

the rest of the Israelites to not give away any of their daughters as wives to the Benjaminites

(21.1).

This last example especially relates to the Jephthah story in that words come back to

harm the collective body of Israelites—for immediately after learning how powerful words can

be on a personal level, Jephthah subjects an entire tribe to a violent test of speech (12.1-6). The

victim this time is the Ephraimites, who are angry with Jephthah for not including them in the

battle against the Ammonites (presumably denying them a share of the booty). A similar scene

occurs in Judg 8.1-3, in which Gideon has to contend with the Ephraimites. Both episodes

display the recurring pattern in Judges in which Ephraim is unable to assert its dominance over

the other tribes.[79] They both exhibit, moreover, the repeated motif of strife at the Jordan (and this

setting plays particular importance in this narrative). Unlike Gideon, however, Jephthah is unable

to avoid battle with his fellow Israelites.[80] The episode is "a *mise en scène* of Jephthah's

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[78] Bal thus writes: "Both Yael and Delilah destroy the men who choose to come too close to them by tricking them into uttering fatal words. They are generally considered seductresses, using, that is, the other 'mouth' at their disposal. The mouth of the sword and the mouth of the female body come to resemble each other, in strategy and effect" (*Death and Dissymmetry*, 65).

[79] See Francis Landy, "Between Centre and Periphery: Space and Gender in the Book of Judges in the Early Second Temple Period," in *Centres and Peripheries in the Early Second Temple Period* (eds. Ehud Ben Zvi and Christoph Levin; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 133-62. Landy observes that none of the major judges come from Ephraim either—though there is the possible exception of Deborah (her gentilic is not specified).

[80] There are also other important differences to consider. In the case of Jephthah, no information is provided as to whether Ephraim was previously part of the battle—it is only said

problematics,"[81] for verbal negotiations again lead to military combat (once again words lead to death), Jephthah's leadership is again insecure, and its setting in the liminal territory of the Jordan again reveals the anxiety over Israelite identity.[82]

The Ephraimites' first words to Jephthah are a threat to burn down him and his house with fire (12.1). Using fire as an instrument of vengeance can also be found in Jotham's prophecy in 9.15-20 (see also 9.49) as well as the burning of the Timnite daughter with her father in the Samson story (Judg 14.15; 15.6). The latter example (which I will explore in more detail below) displays the connection between daughters and houses. The Timnite daughter's death occurs not only within the house of her father but also with her father whose house she represents through synecdoche.[83] This comparison reveals both the irony and the emptiness of the Ephraimites' threat. It highlights, for instance, how Jephthah has already burned down his house through the burnt offering of his daughter (his "house," his continuing lineage, has already ceased to exist). And precisely because of this, the threat also rings hollow—how do you burn down a house that has already been burned down?

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that Ephraim is one of the many tribal areas in Israel invaded by Ammon (10.9). In the case of Gideon, the Ephraimites had already mobilized against the Midianites and had the heads of two Midianite princes to show for it (7.24-25). Their complaint, therefore, is that Gideon had not called them earlier (not that he had not called them at all). Gideon's situation is different than Jephthah's as well, as Gideon is still pursuing the Midianites (or at least certain Midianites, see 8.4-5).

[81] Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry*, 163.

[82] The setting also recalls Ehud's capture of the forks of the Jordan river in 3.28-30 in his battle against the Moabites. The victory (and in this case the piling up of ten thousand bodies) ensures that the Moabites stay in their Transjordan territory. Significantly, the Ephraimites are accomplices in the victorious battle (3.27), displaying how the collective body of Israel is less fragmentary at this point in time. Even here though Ephraim is not dominant among the tribes, and comes only at the beckoning of Ehud, a Benjaminite.

[83] See Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry*, 172.

Just like Jephthah's vow, moreover, the Ephraimites' words will have disastrous consequences for them. They will not be consumed by fire but by the mouth of the sword (and because their mouths are not able to pronounce the right words). It is a battle within the collective body; Israel's fragmentation is increasing. The taunt in 12.4, whether it is Ephraim or Gilead speaking (though probably Ephraim), highlights this division: "You are fugitives of Ephraim, Gilead, in the midst of Ephraim, in the midst of Manasseh."[84] There are echoes here of the accusation of the Ammonite king, who accused Gileadites of being in a place that is not theirs (11.13), which itself recalls the expulsion of Jephthah from his father's house (in which his brothers accused him of not belonging). The mention of Manasseh in the taunt is also significant. It is the tribe that straddles both sides of the Jordan and thus mediates, and recapitulates, the problem of Israel's division. Jobling summarizes: "Israel is divided in two by the Jordan. But one of the tribes ensures Israel's singleness by straddling the border. But that tribe is itself divided in two by the Jordan, and *its* singleness becomes an issue!"[85] The taunt thus refers to divisions within divisions: Joseph is divided into Ephraim and Manasseh, and Manasseh is divided into Cisjordan and Transjordan Manasseh.

With this in mind, it is no surprise that the famous Shibboleth scene plays out at the fords (the passing points) of the Jordan River (12.5-6). The river functions as a border, a place where identity can be revealed. Unlike the difference between the Ammonites/Moabites and the Gileadites, however, the difference in identity is not immediately distinguishable in this case— thus the need for the Shibboleth test. That the test is based upon the pronunciation of a single

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[84] The verse is notoriously complex. Sasson (*Judges*, 453) outlines three possibilities in order of likeliness: Ephraim is speaking, and thus this is a taunt against clans originally from Manasseh; Gilead is speaking, and thus this is a taunt against the lowly fugitive Ephraimites; there is an indefinite speaking subject, "for it was said…"

[85] Jobling, *The Sense of the Biblical Narrative, II*, 119.

phoneme displays both the enormity of minute differences and their ultimate insignificance. Words are powerful, they can save and extinguish life (as the Jephthah story displays many times over). But words are also empty, ultimately meaningless and arbitrary, exemplified by the word "shibboleth."[86] Havrelock relates the arbitrariness of "shibboleth" to the arbitrariness of the boundary of the Jordan:

> The Jordan brings into relief a minute but irreducible variant of pronunciation—a consonant that determines who can cross and live. The absurdity of difference hanging on a consonant reflects back the emptiness of territory as a signifier. The border has created the arbitrary differences that it claims to protect.[87]

The attempt to differentiate between Ephraim and Gilead thus seems rather precarious, even as the bodies pile up—forty-two thousand times in all (12.6). The pronunciation of "shibboleth" as Derrida observes, is a "mark of an alliance inverted and turned against oneself."[88] Civil war ensues on the basis of the pronunciation of a single letter.

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[86] The two options provided for the meaning of shibboleth/shibboleth are "ear of grain" or "water stream" (see Sasson, *Judges 1-12*, 453-54). The "ear of grain" option is well presented in the Versions, but "water stream" plays nicely with the river setting of the episode. Bal explores potential implications of both options (*Death and Dissymmetry*, 163-64). "Ear of grain/corn" may recall the crops of grain/corn destroyed by Samson's fire, and thus potentially the "consuming" power of words. "Water stream" may recall Achsah's request for pools of water, a place of life and fertility (which will be turned into a place of massacre). In the end, however, Bal concedes that the word is aptly untranslatable (164). In his rumination of Shibboleth, Derrida likewise focuses on the arbitrariness of "shibboleth." A "shibboleth," he writes, is "any insignificant, arbitrary mark…once it becomes discriminative and decisive, that is, divisive" ("Shibboleth" in *Midrash and Literature* [ed. Geoffrey H. Hartman and Sanford Budick; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986], 307-48 [322]). He thus extends comparison of Shibboleth to circumcision, a cut that divides and defines. The Ephraimites' problem was in their body; it was in "a certain impotence of their vocal organs, that the Ephraimites experienced their inability to pronounce what they nonetheless knew ought to be pronounced Shibboleth" (344).

[87] Havrelock, *River Jordan*, 127-28.

[88] Derrida, "Shibboleth," 346.

This is the final scene of the Jephthah story, followed by a short formulaic synopsis of the length of his rule, his death, and his burial: "And Jephthah judged Israel six years. Then Jephthah the Gileadite died, and he was buried in the cities of Gilead" (12.7). The repeated mention of Gilead in this verse affirms yet again Jephthah's connection to the Transjordan. He is buried, curiously, "in the cities of Gilead," as if his body is distributed over the entire territory.[89] The ambiguity in his death recalls that of his birth in which Gilead could be the (substitute?) name for his father or the personified "father"-land in place of the father.

Ibzan of Bethlehem is the minor judge that follows Jephthah (12.8-10).[90] Ibzan's importance is his extreme virility: "He had thirty sons, and thirty daughters he sent outside. And thirty daughters he brought in for his sons from outside" (12.9). Such potency and exchange of daughters certainly contrasts with Jephthah—the father of only one child, a daughter, who remains a virgin. The reference, moreover, that Ibzan sent his daughters "outside" and brought in daughters for his sons "from outside" implies the marriages were exogamous.[91] Thus, after a story of no-marriage/extreme endogamy there appears a story of mass exogamy. In previous stories of judges who had many sons—as is the case with Gideon (8.30) and Jair the Gileadite (10.4) (who similarly had thirty sons)—the problem of finding wives is not raised.[92] Now, after

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[89] There may be here a hint of the fragmented body motif (e.g. 1.4-7; 19.29). See below for more discussion of this.

[90] While Ibzan comes from Bethlehem, his tribal affiliation is ambiguous. While the assumption is Judah, some have attributed it to a northern tribe (e.g. Zebulun or Asher). See Sasson, *Judges 1-12*, 456.

[91] It is, of course, unclear exactly what "outside" means in this context. The tendency among translations to have "outside the clan" (e.g. JPS and NRSV), however, is only speculation; there is no noun for "clan" in the text but merely the mention of "outside" (חוץ).

[92] Schneider notes that both Abimelech's mother and Jephthah's mother potentially come from outside of Israel (*Judges*, 188).

Jephthah, the issue becomes more explicit and prominent.[93] It is a major theme of the Samson story and is the main plot obstacle in the final stories of Judges. So Ibzan paves the way for the continued concern in Judges over exogamy and the primary issue surrounding daughters in the house of their fathers. He does so by playing the foil to Jephthah.[94] His virility provides a contrast to Jephthah's impotency, thereby highlighting the consequences of Jephthah's vow.

This leads us back to the last few verses of Judges 11 in which Jephthah's daughter accepts her own sacrifice.

> And she said to her father: "Let this thing be done to me: leave me alone two months, and I will go, I will go down into the mountains and bewail over my בתולים, my companions and I." He said: "Go." And he sent her two months. And she went, she and her companions, and she wept over her בתולים in the mountains. And at the end of two months she returned to her father, and he did to her his vow that he had vowed—and she had not known a man. So it became a tradition in Israel. From year to year, daughters of Israel would go to commemorate the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite, four days each year (11.37-40).

The word בתולים is commonly translated as "virginity," though because this may not be entirely accurate I have left it untranslated for now.[95] The singular noun בתולה, for instance, does not

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[93] To be sure, one must temper this insight with the presence of Abdon in Judg 12.13-15, who has "forty sons and thirty grandsons" (12.14) but nothing is said of finding wives for these sons (though implicitly wives are mentioned by the presence of grandsons).

[94] See Webb, *The Book of Judges* (2012), 344-45.

[95] For literature that argues בתולה/בתולים does not mean "virginity" in its most basic sense, see Tikva Frymer-Kensky, "Virginity in the Bible," in *Gender and Law in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East* (eds. Victor H. Matthews, Bernard M. Levinson, and Tikva Frymer-Kensky; JSOTSup 262; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 79-96; J. Schmitt, "Virginity," *ABD* 6:853; and Peggy Day, "From the Child is Born the Woman: The Story of Jephthah's Daughter," in *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel* (ed. Peggy Day; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 58-74; M. Tsevat, בתולה, *TDOT* 2: 338-42; Gordon Wenham, "bĕtûlāh 'A

always seem to mean virgin, as in Joel 1.8: "like a בתולה wearing sackcloth for the husband (בעל)

of her youth."[96] בתולה, moreover, is often paired with בחור "young man" (e.g. Deut 32.25; Isa

23.4; 42.5; Jer 51.22; Ezek 9.6; Lam 1.19; 2.21), and the two terms together mean "young

people" with virginity playing, at most, a background role. The plural, as we have here, appears

less frequently, and surely means "virginity" in some cases (e.g. Lev 21.13 and Deut 22.14);

however, other plural nouns—such as "youth" (בחורים) and "old age" (זקנים)—seem to suggest

that the term more accurately reflects a certain stage in life.[97] Thus, the base meaning of

בתולה/בתולים is perhaps best understood as a nubile young woman, a marriageable object.

Sometimes, for emphasis, the Hebrew may add the phrase "no man has known her" (e.g. Gen

24.16 and Num 31.18). This is important to keep this in mind, for the focus of attention for

Jephthah's daughter when she and her companions go off to the hills is her status as a בתולה.[98]

We do not know that she is a virgin, that she has "not known a man," until 11.39—and this is

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Girl of Marriageable Age,'" *VT* 22 (1972): 326-48 (but see the response to Wenham in Tom
Wadsworth, "Is There a Hebrew Word for Virgin? Betulah in the Old Testament," *Restoration
Quarterly* 23.3 [1980]: 161-71).

    Bal (*Death and Dissymmetry*, 46-52) offers the suggestion that the term relates first and
foremost to marriageability—to the woman as a potential object of gift. She bases this on the
slight differences between בתולה, נערה (young girl), and עלמה (nubile woman, potentially married,
but not pregnant).

> The transition from *na'arah* [נערה] to *bethulah* [בתולה] and then to *'almah* [עלמה], this
> whole transition so subtly subdivided by the language between the young woman as
> property of the father and property of the husband, is a phase of insecurity and danger
> (48).

The problem with this categorization is that each of these words can be ambiguous, and
particularly with עלמה there may not be enough occurrences of the word to fit it into this model.

    [96] At certain times, particularly in legal material, בתולה (like בתולים) more certainly means
"virgin" (e.g. Lev 21.13ff; Deut 22.19).

    [97] See M. Tsevat, בתולה, *TDOT* 2: 338-42 (340-41); Sasson, *Judges 1-12*, 442

    [98] The point is not that virginity is not a central feature of this text (or even that it is not
implied by the use of בתולה/בתולים) but that it should not serve as the *basic* idea of what
Jephthah's daughter laments over in the mountains.

noted directly in relation to her sacrifice and the resulting yearly ritual (and not necessarily as the object of her time of mourning).

Even with this distinction in mind, however, the exact purpose of Jephthah's daughter's lament is still not entirely clear. Frymer-Kensky notes that the ambiguity and variability of בתולה/בתולים stems from the cultural assumption that young marriageable women are virgins—and the range of uses in the Hebrew Bible certainly reflects this. Thus, in some contexts the term may focus on the youthfulness of the woman, at others her marriageability, and at others her virginity. What then might the emphasis be in this context? Perhaps it is the impermanence and insecurity of being a nubile woman. That is, Jephthah's daughter remains permanently fixed in what is supposed to be a passing phase. In this sense, she bewails both that she is a בתולה and that she is not one (that she does not move beyond being a בתולה).[99]

I suggest, therefore, the translation of "daughterhood" for בתולים (in this context). Jephthah's daughter remains a daughter, exclusively the possession of her father (even though she has reached the stage where she could be possessed by another). Accordingly, she never takes on the responsibilities of wife or mother. Exum notes that this perhaps is why Jephthah's daughter remains unnamed: "because she is commemorated not for herself but *as a daughter*."[100]

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[99] Perhaps this explains the use of the semantically slippery preposition על in both occurrences of על־בתולי (11.37, 38). The implication could be that she is mourning *because* of her בתולים; that is, she will not ever be anything but a בתולה. Bal, on the other hand, argues that the preposition connotes confrontation, and thus that Jephthah's daughter bewails *against* her בתולים (*Death and Dissymmetry*, 47-48). If one takes into account the ambiguity and flexibility of בתולה/בתולים, however, then both options are possible. She bewails her current status as well as her future, unfulfilled life.

[100] Exum, "On Judges 11," 139. Here I might also mention the comparison that is often made between the story of Abraham's near sacrifice of Isaac and the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter. For feminist critics the question is to what degree the stories differ because of the gender and status of the intended sacrificial victim—a son versus a daughter. The consensus is that while Jephthah is certainly no Abraham and the situation of the sacrifices are clearly different, it is difficult to argue that sons are just as expendable as daughters in the biblical text

I would add to this, moreover, the fact that it is the "*daughters* of Israel" that commemorate

Jephthah's daughter each year (11.40). Presumably the text could have used בתולות, "the young

maidens" (or something of the like), in reference to the women who commemorate her, but that it

did not might further underline her defining status as daughter.[101] Daughterhood is the problem

for Jephthah's daughter, the reason she must accept the consequences of her father's vows (what

else could she do?).

Virginity, on the other hand, is the primary connection to her sacrifice and the ritual

associated with it.[102] As I mentioned above, the revelation that Jephthah's daughter had not

known a man does not appear until 11.39, directly after Jephthah accomplishes "his vow that he

had vowed."[103] This highlights the perceived value of her sacrifice, as the divine father with

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(see Fuchs, *Sexual Politics*, 177-99; Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry*, 109-13; Anne Michelle Tapp, "An Ideology of Expendability: The Virgin Daughter Sacrifice," in *Anti-Covenant: Counter-reading Women's Lives in the Hebrew Bible* [JSOTSup 81; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989], 157-74). Stiebert offers a counter argument to this consensus, arguing that the scene is noteworthy for its exceptionality and that the story is more about Jephthah's Oedipus-like fate in his being subject to things beyond his control (*Fathers and Daughters*, 90-101). My own interpretation aligns with those that view the daughterhood of Jephthah's daughter as a major reason for her sacrifice. Beyond, however, debating whether this presents daughterhood in a negative light (which it does), the question for me is what is it about daughterhood that plays into the themes and concerns of this passage. This includes the issue of virginity and the father's control over it, the implied fear and threat over (exogamous) marriage for Jephthah's daughter, and the masculine attachment to binding s/words.

[101] Day argues that the yearly commemoration was a ritual of women's life-cycle, of the transition to physical maturity (that is, a woman's first menstruation). If this were the case, however, then it would have been more natural to use בתולות instead of "daughters" (בנות). This is not to say that the passage here is not about life stages and the transition from one to another. However, Day's suggestion does take away from the more obvious reading of the text, which is a focus on daughterhood (evidenced by the repeated use of the term in 11.40).

[102] In biblical terms, as I mention above, daughters who are of marriageable age *are* virgins. So the gap between בתולה/בתולים and virginity is not that wide and the clearly become intertwined in this passage. The deferral of describing Jephthah's daughter as "not having known a man" builds tension and lets the reader focus on her nubility and its (im)permanence before drawing attention explicitly to her virginity.

[103] I should mention here the nonliteral, minority view that Jephthah did not actually sacrifice his daughter but dedicated her to Yahweh as a perpetual virgin. See, for example,

whom Jephthah exchanged his daughter receives a virgin. It also reinforces the problematics of Transjordanian women, especially virgins. She could have known a man; she could have seduced a Cisjordan man into the Transjordan. She could have been like Jephthah's mother, the "harlot" (זונה), who lives outside of the father's house and is the cause of Jephthah's initial disinheritance. Instead, she is the structural opposite, perpetually confined to her father's house even in the moment she is given away.

Havrelock notes the double meaning of this daughter's sacrifice. On the one hand, it "shows that when one cannot mark distance from a Transjordanian woman, that woman can be dispensed with."[104] And yet, Jephthah's daughter initiates subversion through her death, as it becomes ritualized. The very hills where she bewailed her fate become a site where other "daughters," Cisjordanian daughters among them, come to commemorate her. Again, the east bank "is established as a site of incorrect, even rebellious memory. Things that should be repressed, like incest and child sacrifice, are relegated there and cannot be expunged from memory because their residue lingers on the territory."[105]

If the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter is a "solution" to the fears of exogamy, harlotry, and miscegenation, however, then she also represents the problem of endogamy, virginity, and (implicit) incest. The most obvious evidence in support of this are the consequences her sacrifice has on Jephthah himself. She is kept within her father's house, but her father's house can only continue if she leaves it. She remains a faithful daughter, but her loyalty to her father leads to her

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Solomon Landers, "Did Jephthah Kill His Daughter?" *Bible Review* 7.4 (1991): 28-31, 42; David Marcus, *Jephthah and His Vow* (Lubock: Texas Tech Press, 1986), esp. 7-12.
[104] Havrelock, *River Jordan*, 57.
[105] Havrelock, *River Jordan*, 57-8.

death, and thus to the loss of Jephthah's status as father. This domestic tragedy then spills into tribal tragedy and civil war, a pattern which reaches its climax in the closing chapters of Judges.

The Daughter from Timnah

Jephthah's story is about a father who keeps his foolish vow; Samson's story is about a son who breaks a serious Nazirite vow. The two characters serve as counterparts to each other, as do Jephthah's daughter and the daughter from Timnah. The father Jephthah did not find a groom for his daughter; the Timnite father would not give his daughter to Samson (the groom). "Between father and husband," writes Bal, "both daughters have to die."[106] Both daughters, moreover, die by fire—Jephthah's daughter is sacrificed *by* her father as a burnt offering; the Timnite daughter is burned *with* her father.[107]

The Timnite daughter is first mentioned as an object of Samson's desire: "Samson went down to Timnah, and he saw a woman among the daughters of the Philistines. And he went up and he told his father and his mother, 'A woman (אשה) I have seen in Timnah among the daughters of the Philistines—now take her for me as a wife (אשה)" (Judg 14.1-2). The Timnite is

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[106] Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry*, 78.

[107] For analysis of the fire motif in the Samson story, see Robert Alter, "Samson without Folklore," in *Text and Tradition: The Hebrew Bible and Folklore* (ed. Susan Niditch; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 47–56. He writes:

> [T]he Samson story abounds in fire images—the flame in which the announcing angel ascends to heaven, the fire that consumes Samson's wife, the torches bound to the fox-tails that carry conflagration through the Philistine fields, the cords binding Samson that snap like flax in the flame—so that fire is at once associated with the powerful destructive energy he exerts and with the destruction he courts (50–51).

Even Samson's name, which means "sun," is associated with fire. Fire is used in the story as a symbol of love and hate, passion and anger, life and destruction. When Samson's birth is announced, it is accompanied by a burnt offering (Judg 13.16) in which flames the messenger of Yahweh ascends to heaven (Judg 13.20). In contrast, fire is only a symbol of destruction in the Jephthah story—the daughter is the burnt offering. Later, the Ephraimites' threat to burn down Jephthah's house ironically displays the destruction Jephthah has already committed.

immediately introduced as an אשה, first in the sense of "woman" then in the sense of "wife". The text will continue to refer to her as אשה too (14.3, 7, 10, 15, 16, 20; 15.1, 6) and the ambiguity between woman/wife reflects the indeterminacy of the Timnite's relation to Samson as "wife."[108] Samson, in a reversal of familial roles, commands his parents to take this woman as a wife for him. Understandably, the parents are confused. Is this not the son who was supposed to begin to deliver Israel from the hand of the Philistines (Judg 13.5)?[109] But they do not understand the ultimate reason for Samson's actions: "And his father and his mother did not know that this was from Yahweh, for he was seeking an occasion against the Philistines" (Judg 14.4). The disconnection between Samson and his mother is particularly noteworthy. She is the parent who better understands and interprets the events in Samson's birth story in Judg 13, and she shares with her son the Nazirite vow while he was in her womb. His dismissal of parental, particularly maternal, authority, therefore, foreshadows the beginning of his trusting women who will bring about his downfall. More generally, Samson's proposal to marry a Timnite woman presents the danger of exogamy (and apostasy) about which the book of Judges continually warns.

Samson's next actions with the lion in the vineyard further reveal his transgressive attitude. His very presence in the vineyard is questionable, as a place of grapes of the vine it again signals that he may be breaking the Nazirite vow (see Judg 13.14). The vineyard, moreover, is the site of other illicit activity in the book of Judges, as in the Baal harvest festival

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[108] Schneider (*Judges*, 203) notes the potential oddity of referring to the Timnite as an אשה, given that the description is not typically used for younger single women. Of course, she is described as being an אשה "among the daughters of the Philistines" thus implicitly identifying her as a nubile young woman.

[109] Webb sees some irony in the request for marriage (the union of becoming one flesh) juxtaposed with circumcision (the quintessential marker of Israel's separation to God as his elect people): "So how can Samson take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines without betraying his separation to God as an Israelite? And if his separateness as an Israelite is compromised, how can his deeper separation to God as a Nazarite be maintained?" (*Judges*, 365)

in 9.27 and the Benjaminites' taking of the daughters in Shiloh in 20.20-21. It also carries sexual

connotations, as is common in the Song of Songs (e.g. 1.6, 14; 2.15; 7.12; 8.11, 12) or Noah's

planting of his vineyard and the resulting implicitly sexual transgression of Ham (Gen 9.20-29).

Samson's taking of honey from the carcass of the dead lion might also violate the Nazirite

prohibition of eating unclean food.[110] It is perhaps for these reasons then that Samson does not

tell his parents from where the honey came when he shares it with them (Judg 14.9). The honey,

however, is also sexually symbolic (e.g. Prov 5.3; Song 4.11; 5.1). It comes from the belly of the

torn lion, conceivably a symbol of a torn hymen and defloration, an omen of the sexual pleasure

which Samson seeks. He shares the honey with his parents but does not tell them from where it

came (Judg 14.9). The secret parallels Judg 14.4 where Samson's parents are similarly kept in

the dark. The sharing of honey with his parents is rich with ambiguity. It may symbolize that his

sexuality is still too oriented toward his parents—and thus a foreshadowing that he will not have

the pleasure he seeks.[111] His parents eat the honey though, even as they worry about Samson's

desire for the Timnite woman. But they do not from where the honey came, just as they do not

know that Samson's desire for the Timnite woman is from Yahweh.[112]

The seven-day wedding feast that Samson organizes in Timnah again alludes to a

possible breaking of the Nazirite vow, given that the feast is a משתה "drinking feast," and implies

the presence of alcohol and drunkenness. Bal notes that this feast is the symmetrical counterpart

to the two-month rite of passage with Jephthah's daughter.[113] The "young men" (בחורים) of

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[110] See, for example, Joseph Blenkinsopp, "Structure and Style in Judges 13-16," *JBL* 82 (1963): 65-76 (66).

[111] See Bal, *Lethal Love*, 46.

[112] There is thus a link made between the parents with the Philistines through the honey trap—perhaps symbolizing Samson's liminal relation to both mother (Israel) and other (Philistines).

[113] Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry*, 78.

Timnah, for instance, parallel the companions Jephthah's daughter, but these companions will turn into enemies. The antagonism is initiated by Samson, who tries to best the young men with his famous riddle: "Out of the eater came something to eat. Out of the strong came something sweet" (Judg 14.14). A riddle with an enigmatic answer is a wide-spread motif of fairy tales, which often function as symbolic tales of sexual maturity.[114] It is significant that the young men turn to Samson's woman/wife in order to seek the answer: "Entice your man/husband to tell us what the riddle is, lest we burn you and your father's house with fire" (Judg 14.15), for just as Yahweh uses this woman to lure Samson into Timnah, the Philistines use her to discover Samson's secret. The Timnite woman becomes the centrepiece of both the larger story and the riddle. She plays to Samson's weakness—love—and accuses him of hating her because he keeps the secret even from her. Samson retorts that he has not shared the secret even with his father and mother, thereby again contrasting and comparing devotion to the wife versus devotion to the parents. And yet in line with the pattern of Samson surrendering information to women who do not have his best interest in mind, in the end he succumbs to the Timnite's request who then betrays him to the young men. Just before the sun goes down on the seventh day the men reveal the answer: "What is sweeter than honey? What is stronger than a lion?" (Judg 14.18). Samson's reply reveals the deeper symbolism of the riddle and its answer: "If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not have found out my riddle" (Judge 14.18). "Plowing" is a sexual metaphor; Samson's issue is penetration and the illicit use of his "property."[115] The strong one of the riddle, therefore, is the bride, "who, like the lion, needs to be broken open (deflowered, or killed) in

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[114] See Exum, *Fragmented Women*, 80; Bal, *Lethal Love*, 43; Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment*, 128

[115] See Webb, *Judges*, 374.

order for her belly to 'bring forth' sweetness."[116] The young men have bested Samson, the story

becomes a kind of sexual joke about Samson's inability to consummate the marriage. The

symbolic sexual maturity of the young men over Samson is then confirmed when Samson's

woman/wife is given to the "best man"[117] of Samson's companions (Judg 14.20).

The frustration of Samson's sexual desire leads to the beginning of the next chapter in

which Samson returns, after a period of time, with one thought on his mind: "I will go into my

woman/wife in the chamber" (Judg 15.1). Positive resonances are set up by this being the time of

wheat harvest (spring) and the presence of a goat (presumably a gift). Desire is met with

constraint though as the Timnite's father enters the scene and prevents Samson from "going in"

(punning on both entering the house and entering the Timnite woman). Attempting to explain his

actions, the Timnite father echoes his daughter's words during the wedding feast: "I thought you

hated her intensely, so I gave her to one of your companions. Is not her younger sister better than

she? Please take her instead" (Judg 15.2).[118] The juxtaposition of the Timnite being described as

Samson's woman/wife with the refusal to allow Samson to "go in" shows that Samson's battle is

no longer with young men but with the father—and paternal authority prevails for the time being.

Samson's reaction holds the Philistines in general responsible for this slight, setting on fire the

tails of three hundred foxes and letting them loose in their fields. But fire in the Samson story

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[116] Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry*, 78. While the bride becomes the symbol of the riddle, the answer is best thought of as "love," in both its emotional and sexual sense. Love is Samson's Achilles' heel, mentioned here and twice in relation to Delilah (16.4, 16). The story expresses the male's fear of surrendering to a woman and the fragility of man's attempts to avoid this attraction. See Exum, *Fragmented Women*, 82.

[117] The Hebrew literally reads "[one who] from his companion[s] who was his [chief] companion." The translation of "best man" also subtly displays the (sexual) superiority of this man over Samson.

[118] Here again is a father with two daughters defined by their status as older and younger. He offers the younger who is "better" than the older—but better in what way? Samson is not satisfied with this offer and seems to ignore it entirely.

only begets fire, and the Philistines react accordingly: "And the Philistines said, 'Who has done this?' And they said, 'Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he took his wife and gave her to his companion.' And the Philistines went up, and they burned her and her father with fire" (Judg 15.6).[119] The mention of the Samson as son-in-law, like the mention of the Timnite as woman/wife, plays not upon the closeness of the relationship but its distance. That is, Samson is not really a son-in-law and the Timnite woman was never really his wife, given that the father retained control over her. The connection between the two uses of fire reveals the inner destruction of the act for Samson. The Philistine fields are linked to the Timnite woman, the place for fertilization and "penetration," as Samson's retort to the young men in Judg 14.18 suggests. By setting these fields on fire, however, he leaves them barren and desolate, which is then mirrored by the eventual fate of his woman/wife. He is never able to consummate his relationship with her, and thus she is never able to be fertile, to bring forth sweetness from her womb.

The death of the Timnite woman is not an "official" burnt offering, as is the case with Jephthah's daughter, but it functions in a similar way. The Timnite woman and her father are the victims of a failed exogamous marriage, and their death is thus perhaps meant to display the danger of exogamy, the problems involved in unwanted crossings of boundaries. Again, however, the very measures taken to avoid exogamy end up in endogamy to its extreme. The daughter is immobilized forever in the father's house. This "communion or comingling of

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[119] It is interesting to note that there are four cases of burning a daughter with fire in the Hebrew Bible: the Timnite daughter, Jephthah's daughter, Judah's command that Tamar be burned (Gen 38.24), and the burning of a priest's daughter in Lev 21.9 ("And the daughter of any priest, if she profanes herself to play the harlot, then she profanes her father; with fire she will be burned"). Like Samson's association with fire, therefore, the association of biblical daughters with fire may symbolize danger, sexuality, and sacrificial deliverance.

ashes," Landy observes, "reverses the generative transmission between father and daughter through which the paternal house is perpetuated."[120] Samson's burning of the Philistine fields leads to the eventual removal of the father's resistance—but the daughter dies with the father, the flames of love and anger are not so easily extinguished.

The Levite's *Pilegesh* and The Daughters of Jabesh-Gilead and Shiloh

Jephthah is buried "in the cities of Gilead" (12.7), which alludes, as I noted above, to the connection he has with the land of Gilead. The odd phrase may also hint at the fragmented body motif, found in the framing stories of Adoni-Bezek (1.4-7) and the *pilegesh* in Gibeah (19.29). These dismembered bodies mirror the fragmentation of Israel, and the civil wars among the tribes. Because of this symbol of a dismembered body (see 1 Sam 11 and discussion below) and the repeated claims that there was no king in Israel at the time (see 17.6; 18.1; 19.1 and 21.25), the closing chapters of Judges are often understood as pro-monarchy but anti-Saul.[121] While my focus here is not on kingship in Judges, I do hope to show that such characterisations are not so

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[120] Landy, "Between Centre and Periphery," 148. The story thus reads as a strange variation of Gen 38, in which a place named Timnah (Gen 38.12) likewise provides the setting. In the Genesis text (which will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter), a daughter-in-law (Tamar) resorts to seducing her father-in-law (Judah) in order to perpetuate the family line. When Judah learns of Tamar's pregnancy, he demands that she be burned (Gen 38.24), though of course upon discovering that he is the father he comes to recognize Tamar's righteousness over his own. The story, therefore, does not end with fire and barrenness but with fertility and sons. At the same time, the incestuous implications of the union keep things within the father's house. That is, the paternal house is perpetuated but only by bringing in a daughter who was already there (relations between father-in-law and daughter-in-law being one step removed from father and daughter).

[121] See Yairah Amit, *Hidden Polemics in Biblical Narrative* (Biblical Interpretation Series 25; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 178-88; Richard Nelson, *Judges: A Critical and Rhetorical Commentary* (New York: Bloomsbury T& T Clark, 2017), 311; Brettler, *The Book of Judges*, 88-89; and Schneider, *Judges*, 258

clear-cut.[122] In chapter 19, for example, the chaotic state of Israel "doing what is right in its own eyes" is displayed in the Gibeahites' rape of the Levite's pilegesh, casting Gibeah as a type of Sodom. Allusion to Sodom, however, is also an allusion to Moab (and Ammon), thus making it odd that propaganda against Saul would also recall the "darker" past of David's ancestors. The closing chapters, moreover, cast the initial problems to be the product not of the tribal system, but of marital, familial, and domestic systems. Thus, whether the future king comes from the house of Saul or David, it is not clear how monarchy will solve such unless it can fix the problems with these domestic systems (and as we will see in the next chapter, this does not happen). This is where the work of Bal is so pertinent, for the political problems in Judges do not remain solely in the political realm—they spill into the familial and private realm (and vice versa). In Judg 19-21 the single corpse of a woman brings about civil war, and the violence of civil war leads to mass violence done to more women. The reader is consistently left wondering "what if"—What if the Bethlehemite woman's father had been able to persuade the Levite to stay the night? What if the old Ephraimite man had acted more courageously? What if the Levite had not acted so callously? These domestic "failures" display the inner contradictions and problems of patriarchy as much as they do the inner contradictions and problems of the tribal system (if not more so). And as is typical of deconstructive matters, it takes the (apparently) most insignificant members of the patriarchal family, secondary wives and daughters, to expose the leaks in the system.

> In those days when there was no king in Israel, a Levite man was sojourning in the
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> remote parts of the hill country of Ephraim. He took for himself a woman, a *pilegesh*,

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[122] I am deeply influenced here by the excellent work of Ian Wilson on kingship in the Hebrew Bible and his analysis of the polyvalence of kingship in Judges, *Kingship and Memory in Ancient Judah* (New York: Oxford, 2017), esp. 77-130.

from Bethlehem in Judah. And his *pilegesh* played the harlot against him, and she went away from him to the house of her father at Bethlehem in Judah. And she was there for some four months (19.1-2).

A Levite from the hill country of Ephraim takes a woman from Bethlehem in Judah. The connections and allusions to the rest of Judges (and beyond) are already dizzying. It is a union that hints at an alliance between north and south.[123] Of course, the ominous tone set by the reminder that there was no king in those days and the identification of the woman as a *pilegesh* certainly diminish those expectations. In addition to the failures of the Ephraimites that we discussed in regard to the Jephthah story, the previous chapters (17-18) on the hapless fate of Micah the Ephraimite likewise signal that a chaotic story will follow. Bethlehem and Judah, on the other hand, recall Judah's initial lead role in the battle against the Canaanites and the endogamous marriage of Achsah (also foreshadowing the rise of David). Even here, however, the kernels of strife and internal battle simmer. Judah is the tribe that initially hands Samson over to the Philistines (15.9-13), symbolizing tribal division rather than unity. A more significant parallel is that the young Levite in 17-18 is from Bethlehem in Judah. His "contract" with Micah (the Ephraimite) ended in dissolution, as will the union between this Levite (from Ephraim) and his Judahite *pilegesh*. The Levites, therefore, journey in reverse directions (the first from Bethlehem to Ephraim, the second from Ephraim to Bethlehem) even as their stories share a similar ending of conflict between north and south, and even as both are presented as sojourners

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[123] See Landy, "Centre and Periphery," 141-42. He writes: "The union of Ephraim and Judah is thus an ideal, a fleeting possibility, connecting past to future, the period of Judges to that of the monarchy. It may be an attempt by the past to claim the future, to appropriate a representative of Bethlehem's fertility, the nutritional potential suggested by its name, as well as its symbolic capital as the birthplace of David" (142).

(גר).[124] The description of these Levites as sojourners symbolizes both a pan-Israelite perspective (a tribe dedicated to Israel's deity with no territory of its own) and the marginalization of each tribe. In Judges 19, in particular, the Levite is described as sojourning in the "remote parts" (ירכתי)[125] of the hill country of Ephraim, a peripheral place away from symbolically loaded places like Bethlehem, Jebus/Jerusalem, or Ramah which become part of his story.

This backwoods Levite takes for himself a woman as a *pilegesh*. The conventional translation is "concubine" (see JPS, RSV, KJV), though because the term is notoriously difficult many prefer to leave it transliterated (as I also do).[126] Generally speaking, a *pilegesh* refers to a secondary/lesser wife, which would make this case interesting precisely because there is no

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[124] Gale Yee ("Ideological Criticism: Judges 17-21 and the Dismembered Body," in *Judges and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies* [ed. Gale Yee; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995], 138-60) argues that the last five chapters of Judges were written during the time of Josiah and that Josiah's reforms involved the loss of power by the rural Levites—thus explaining their overall negative portrayal. Mark Leuchter ("Now There was a [Certain] Man," 438) suggests that the anti-Levite polemic is only against the northern ones and not the Judean Levites. On the other hand, Yairah Amit (*The Book of Judges: The Art of Editing* [trans. Jonathan Chipman; Leiden: Brill, 1999], 157) argues that second Levite is provided only to connect Judges 19-21 to the preceding narrative. Brettler (*The Book of Judges*, 84) hypothesizes that the Levites are needed purely to provide landless characters, characters who can wander and have no close kin—and thus there is no condemnation of the (rural) Levites as a class.

[125] The literal meaning of the term is "flank, side, extreme part," though what it then means to speak of the "flank" of the hill country/mount of Ephraim is not clear. I follow here the translation suggestion of Robert G. Boling, *Judges*, 271. See also the discussion in Schneider, *Judges*, 247.

[126] See Schneider, *Judges*, 248; Landy, "Centre and Periphery," 142. Soggin (*Judges: A Commentary*, 159) argues against the translation of concubine and favors the idea of secondary wife. This also leads to divisions between the children from a primary versus the children from a *pilegesh*. Abraham, for instance, gives gifts to children from his *pilegesh* Keturah, but then sends them away (Gen 25.6). A similar theme is the issue of sons sleeping with their father's *pilegesh*, as with Reuben and Bilhah (Gen 35.22) and Absalom with David's *pilagshim* (2 Sam 16.21-22 and 2 Sam 20.3) (see also Abner sleeping with Saul's *pilegesh* in 2 Sam 3.7).

Bal (*Death and Dissymmetry*, 176-77) suggests the term refers to a wife from a patrilocal marriage (which is matrilineal descent for Bal) as opposed to the more traditional virilocal marriage (patrilineal descent). The evidence for this, however, is not very strong and requires a more strained reading than the broader idea of a *pilegesh* as a secondary wife (see Exum, "Raped by the Pen," 177, n.13).

mention here of a primary wife. The union is indeed a strange one, undermined from the start—and the woman's status as a not quite proper wife perhaps prefigures the sexual violation that will happen to her. Certainly her status as *pilegesh* brings up the common themes in Judges of fear of exogamy and household strife. The only other *pilegesh* in Judges, for example, is the mother of Abimelech, who divides the house of Gideon thereby instigating familial violence.

The problems hinted at by the tribal associations and peculiar relationship of the couple are then confirmed when the *pilegesh* "plays the harlot" and leaves to go to the house of her father. The verb here is זנה, which connects the *pilegesh* to Jephthah's mother (אשה זונה, Judg 11.1). She is, therefore, a doubly dangerous combination (according to the patriarchal, androcentric ideology of the text): a *pilegesh* who plays the harlot—the frightful combination of two trouble inducing women like Abimelech's and Jephthah's mothers. זנה is used in the initial description of Israel's infidelity with other gods (2.17) and implicitly tied to exogamous marriages with the Canaanites (3.6). Likewise, Israel "plays the harlot" after Gideon sets up his cult (8.27) and then after the judge dies as well (8.33). Samson's interaction with the זונה in Gaza (16.1-3), however, reveals the other side of this (perceived) danger: desire for integration. Landy points to symbolically ambiguous Rahab (a story which has many connections to this one) as an example of this—the זונה is representative of the land and the one who opens the way to it, "she embodies the *qedeshot* and *qodeshot*, the whore and the hierodule."[127] It is no coincidence that two verses after Samson visits the זונה he makes off with the city gates of Gaza on his shoulders to Hebron (16.3). After integrating himself with the זונה he symbolically links Philistine and

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[127] Landy, "Centre and Periphery," 145. See also Pardes, *The Biography of Ancient Israel*, 115-17. See also, Ruth Kara-Ivanov Kaniel, "The Myth of the Messianic Mother in Jewish and Christian Traditions: Psychoanalytic and Gender Perspectives," *JAAR* 83.1 (2015): 72-119 (89-91).

Israel together, taking the gates of the prostitute to the place where one finds the graves of the fathers.

There is a third defining feature of the Levite's woman combined with her status as *pilegesh* and playing the harlot: her daughterhood. She leaves her husband and retreats to the house of her father, as if to transition from wife/*pilegesh* back to daughter (Bal calls her a "wife who remains a daughter"[128]). At this point, she is properly neither; she is under the roof of her father but still the woman of another man. Perhaps this is why, curiously, she is never described as a "daughter" (בת). She is instead referred to as a נערה, "young girl," but always in reference to her father, "the young girl's father" (19.3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9). Her double identity is thus revealed between the alternating use of *pilegesh* and "young girl" (נערה). Similarly, the Levite is both the "man/husband" (איש) of the *pilegesh* (19.3) and the "son-in-law" (חתן) (19.5) of the young girl's father, and the father is both "the young girl's father" and the Levite's "father-in-law" (חתן) (19.4, 7, 9).[129] The number of terms display the complexity of these relationships, exemplified by the word חתן. As we discussed in relation to the sons-in-law of Lot, the difference between father-in-law and son-in-law is a matter of vowel pointing. It is perhaps a reminder of the fuzzy lines between the two kinship terms. Indeed, the term "father-in-law" (חֹתֵן) is used only two other times in Judges (1.16; 4.11), both in ambiguous references to Moses' father-in-law. Many scholars, in fact, assert that "father-in-law" (חֹתֵן) in 1.16 should really be "son-in-law" (חָתָן).[130] The only other use of "son-in-law" (חָתַן) in Judges is also problematic. It is used to refer to Samson in relation to the father of his Timnite woman/wife (15.6), and as is the case with the

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[128] Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry*, 89.

[129] Most often these identity terms are used right next each other, thus referring to the father in Bethlehem as "his [i.e. the Levite's] father-in-law, the young girl's father" (e.g. 19.4, 9).

[130] See Boling, *Judges*, 57; Soggin, *Judges*, 22-23. Sasson translates as "father-in-law" but notes the ambiguity of the root (*Judges* 155-56).

Levite and *pilegesh* here, the relationship status between Samson and the Timnite woman is uncertain. For the Timnite's daughter too returns to the house of her father after marriage, and is even given away by the father to another, even as Samson retains his title as "son-in-law."

The complexity of family relations is a theme that has been developing at least since the stories of Gideon, Abimelech, and Jephthah, in which wives, *pilagshim*, and "harlotry" lead to division and violence. Even in the Achsah story, in which all the characters are named and their status and relationship to each other appears to be clear, the daughter goes back to her father after marriage and Othniel's kinship is not straightforward. Of course, when Achsah returns to her father she plays an active character, demanding a gift and then receiving more than she asked. In Judges 19, on the other hand, no words are spoken between the father and the daughter. We only know that the father must have accepted his daughter back into his house, but not whether this was something he welcomed or found undesirable. Landy observes that "the silence between them, the absence of any communication or emotion, suggests a negation of the relations between father and daughter, an unspoken gap, which is not compensated for by a rapport with her husband. She dies in an interstitial space between them."[131]

Indeed, in the interaction between the father-in-law and son-in-law in 19.3-9, the young woman/*pilegesh* is never addressed or even spoken about. This is surprising given that the Levite journeys to Bethlehem explicitly to "speak to her heart"—moreover, it is "she" who brings him into her father's house (19.3). In the narrative that follows, however, it is the father-in-law who repeatedly appeals to the heart of the Levite (vv. 5, 6, 8, and 9). What, if anything, is done to

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[131] Landy, "Centre and Periphery," 148. In a way, this goes beyond even the stunted relationship between Jephthah and his daughter. When Jephthah returns home (so in this case it is the father who travels in and out of the house) and realizes the consequences of his vow, he expresses the distressed state he is in and the daughter proceeds to engage in dialogue with her father.

strengthen or make merry the heart of the *pilegesh* is not elaborated upon.[132] Webb wonders

whether the father's repeated mentions of the heart of the Levite are purposeful reminders of the

Levite's initial mission.[133] That is, perhaps they are hints (from either the father or narrator) that

reconciliation has not yet happened. Another odd feature is the Levite's delay of four months. It

may serve as a characterizing device to cast him in a negative light, a foreshadowing of his

crudeness that will be revealed later.[134] The Levite might also be waiting to determine whether

the woman was pregnant, which would then tie the waiting time to the woman's "harlotry."[135]

The delay also parallels the drawn out hospitality scene in which the father continually

presses the Levite to stay, enticing him with food and drink. Bal notes the uncanniness created by

prolonging the scene, as it becomes more and more obvious that the actions of the father-in-law

and son-in-law may not match what they are feeling and thinking.[136] The uneasiness only

increases with time, the setting of the father's house becomes more unhomely—and all the while

the young woman/*pilegesh* sits silently in the background. The father, for his part, wants the

couple to stay; it may be a sign of his possessiveness over his daughter or an effort to protect her

in his own house. His desire, alternatively, may be Laban-like, as he wishes to keep the daughter

and gain a son-in-law too (a Levite, as the previous chapters have shown, is a coveted asset). It is

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[132] Schneider (*Judges*, 253) links this mention of speaking to the heart to the first use of heart in Judges when Caleb gave the basins of water to Achsah "according to her heart" (1.15). The problem here, however, is that this phrase is not present in the MT and is based on the LXX's reading of κατὰ τὴν καρδίαν αὐτῆς—a reading which would then create a pun between Caleb's name (כלב) and the conjectured missing phrase "according to her heart" (כלבה). According to one's literary and textual stance the absence of this phrase may be due to haplography of the MT or the presence of the phrase may be due to dittography in the LXX.

[133] Webb, *The Book of Judges* (2012), 460.

[134] For a detailed analysis of the Levite's personality, see David Z. Moster, "The Levite of Judges 19-21," *JBL* 134.4 (2015): 721-30.

[135] See Schneider, *Judges*, 252-53.

[136] Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry*, 189.

more difficult to imagine the Levite's thoughts, particularly why he wanted to leave. If he is a sojourner then presumably he may live, or temporarily reside, wherever he pleases—why would he then not want to stay at the house of his father-in-law? He may simply want to claim his authority over his *pilegesh*, to drag her out of the domain of her father.[137] Whatever the case, it serves to show the divide between father-in-law and son-in-law, an ongoing game of pull and push between men while the *pilegesh* sits silently in the background.

The father's house again fails to protect a daughter—this too is part of what makes the scene uncanny (*unheimlich*).[138] Stuck between the Levite and her father, between being a *pilegesh* or daughter, there is no safe or proper place for her. In this sense, she actually parallels Jephthah's daughter, but arrives at this same paradoxical situation in an entirely different way. In her namelessness, the defining feature of Jephthah's daughter, of course, is her daughterhood. This is affirmed by her lamenting her בתולים and virginity. These features allow her to be a "proper" sacrifice, incinerated and immobilized within the father's house. Jephthah's daughter displays the absurd lengths that are required to avoid the dangers of exogamy and the problems of the (virgin) daughter within her father's house. The Levite's *pilegesh*, on the other hand, reveals these dangers more explicitly. Her "harlotry" is precisely what instigates the fear of exogamy, thus the reason for her separation from the Levite. Unlike Jephthah's virgin daughter, moreover, she has already been "taken" by another man and thus does not properly belong in her father's house either. This threat opens up the space for the *pilegesh* to also be "sacrificed," but

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[137] See Landy, "Centre and Periphery," 147.

[138] An additional reason for the uncanniness is the absence of the mother. Bal (*Death and Dissymmetry*, 186-96) and Landy ("Centre and Periphery," 148) both draw attention to this through Freud's well known passage that every home carries with it intimations of the first home, the mother's body (see Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny," in *The Penguin Freud Library. Vol. 14: Art and Literature* [trans. James Strachey; London: Penguin, 1990], 335-76). The mother haunts the father's house even when completely absent.

as Bal says, her sacrifice is "an anti-sacrifice in that it is anti-sacral and desacralizing…It is not a burnt offering but a 'raw' sacrifice. Instead of pure ashes, rotting flesh is scattered—not vertically, given to the deity, but horizontally, sent to the tribes."[139] A notable difference, however, is that the *pilegesh* dies outside her father's house. This may be symbolic of her "harlotry," as much as virginity is symbolic of Jephthah's daughter. Being out of her father's domain, *and* the *pilegesh* of a sojourner, makes her doubly susceptible to the danger of being outside a house. Webb notes that when the father is pressing the Levite to stay he refers to the Levite's destination as a "tent" (19.9).[140] By leaving, the Levite will deprive himself and his *pilegesh* of a house, a place of comfort, food, and drink symbolized by the nourishing name of the city itself: Bethlehem, "the house of bread."

After leaving the father's house, the narrative transitions to a second story of hospitality. The repetitive cycle of days of eating and drinking comes to an end as the Levite makes up his mind to leave at twilight on the fifth day. The three cities which they contemplate staying the night at are Jebus/Jerusalem, Gibeah, and Ramah. Each city has symbolic implications that go beyond the story itself: Jerusalem is linked with David, Gibeah with Saul, and Ramah with Samuel. The first option, Jebus/Jerusalem, is avoided by the Levite because it is not occupied by Israelites but strangers (19.12). This links the chapter with the battle against Adoni-Bezek at the beginning of the book (1.4-8) (and the motif of body fragmentation); it also recalls the previous failure of the Benjaminites to drive out the Jebusites from Jerusalem (1.21). The irony of fearing

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[139] Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry*, 127. Bal also has another essay which focuses more exclusively on the comparison between Jephthah's daughter and the Levite's pilegesh (as well as the Timnite woman), see "Dealing/With/Women: Daughters in the Book of Judges," in *Women in the Hebrew Bible* (ed. Alice Bach; New York: Routledge, 1999), 317-34.

[140] Webb, *The Book of Judges* (2012), 460-61.

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an unfriendly welcome at Jerusalem, of course, is about to be exposed with what happens at

Gibeah.[141] The Levite and his entourage initially settle in the open square, for "no man would

take them to his house to spend the night" (19.15). The sole exception is an old Ephraimite man

sojourning in Gibeah. That a sojourner in the city provides the only offer of hospitality

underlines the inhospitality of the Benjaminites. The old man is also clearly connected with the

Levite, not only as a fellow sojourner but also from the hill country of Ephraim. This affinity,

however, may not be a positive sign of things to come, as the previous story in Judges 17-18

clearly demonstrates that Ephraimites are not exactly good at keeping Levites.

The parallels with the Sodom story reach their climax in the next scene. The men of

Gibeah, described as "worthless fellows" (בני־בליעל) (Judg 19.22), surround the Ephraimite's

house, beat on the door, and demand "to know" the Levite man (see Gen 19.4-5).[142] Like Lot

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[141] Landy ("Centre and Periphery," 153-54) adds that there is further irony in that Levites will gravitate toward Jerusalem and its temple in the future. Thus, fearing the city because of its alien inhabitants makes the Levite "an exemplar of misplaced piety," highlighting not only his own displacement but the situation of the Levites in general.

[142] The connection between Gen19 and Judg 19 is well known, and I will not seek to analyze all the similarities and differences between them. My purpose here is to note the broad thematic connections (and a few of the linguistic ones) as well as some of the key differences. For a more exhaustive analysis of the parallels between the two chapters, see C.F. Burney's two-page chart in *The Book of Judges with Introduction and Notes* (New York: Ktav, 1970), 444-45. See also Susan Niditch, "The 'Sodomite' Theme in Judges 19-21: Family, Community, and Social Disintegration," *CBQ* 44 (1982): 365-378; Stuart Lasine, "Guest and Host in Judges 19: Lot's Hospitality in an Inverted World," *JSOT* 29 (1984): 37-59; Victor H. Matthews, "Hospitality and Hostility in Genesis 19 and Judges 19," *BTB* 22 (1992): 3-11; and Brettler, *The Book of Judges*, 85-88. Niditch argues that Judges 19 chronologically precedes Genesis 19, and so the Sodom story borrows from this one. This thesis, however, has not convinced the majority of scholars. Lasine, for example, argues quite persuasively for the "one-sided literary dependence" of Judges on Genesis ("Guest and Host," 38-39). An example he provides is the addition of the Ephraimite's virgin daughter in Judg 19.24. For him, the addition of this second woman is largely unnecessary for the narrative of Judges, and is thus done so that it might parallel the Genesis account. (While I agree with Lasine's overall argument, I would argue that the mention of the Ephraimite's daughter does in fact play an important role, if for nothing else than to highlight the absurdity of the offer. The Ephraimite's daughter also invites parallels and contrasts with the Levite's *pilegesh*.)

(who is also a sojourner), the old Ephraimite man comes out and pleads with the inhabitants of

the city not "to act so wickedly" (Judg 19.23; Gen 19.7). While Lot offers his own two daughters

"who have not known a man," the Ephraimite offers his virgin daughter[143] as well as the Levite's

pilegesh (19.24). The extension of the Ephraimite's authority over the Levite's *pilegesh* seems

perplexing, but the old man is repeatedly described as "master of the house" (בעל הבית) (19.22,

23) and perhaps this is meant to display his power over everyone in his house—including the

Levite and his *pilegesh*.[144] On a thematic level, the offer of two women (instead of one)

highlights the absurdity of the situation, as the host needlessly offers another man's woman (who

is not highly valued by her own man either, as the Levite's next action clearly reveals).

The virgin daughter functions as both a foil and parallel to the *pilegesh*. Her sole mention

is, in fact, the only occurrence of the word "daughter" (בת) in Judges 19. In regard to the

pilegesh, as we saw above, the text has assiduously avoided referring to her as a daughter. She

moves in and outside of multiple houses, a result of her "playing the harlot" (though one must

keep in mind the ambiguity of זנה), making her neither a proper daughter nor wife. The virgin

daughter stays within the father's house, and thus does not take on multiple identities or belong

to multiple men. In contrast, the *pilegesh* belongs not only to the Levite and her father but also

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[143] The Ephraimite refers to his daughter as "my virgin daughter" (בתי הבתולה), and in this case "virgin" is certainly the intended meaning of בתולה. The combination with daughter implies something beyond "young woman," and any emphasis on the girl being "marriageable" is also lacking. The parallel to Lot's daughters, who are specifically described as having "not known a man," likewise supports the translation of "virgin" in this context.

[144] BHS, along with many scholars, suggest that "and his *pilegesh*" should be omitted in 19.24, so as to have the old Ephraimite man offer only his daughter. This requires, however, further emendation, changing the object אותם "them" to אותה "her," along with all the other plural suffixes. Another problem with this reading is trying to imagine why the Levite would throw out his own *pilegesh* as a substitute for the virgin daughter who was offered. Certainly, as we have seen, the Levite is not the most caring and gracious of characters, but this situation still seems rather unlikely (in addition to the needless textual emendation).

apparently to the old Ephraimite man as well (for he is the one to initially offer her to the Gibeahite crowd). Still, the fact that the virgin daughter was also offered to the Gibeahites shows that her fate could have been the same. Jephthah's daughter, who also was offered up as a sacrifice because of her "father's perverted sense of moral obligation,"[145] serves as another example that virginity is no safety net for daughters in Judges.

The mention of the virgin daughter also casts the role of father onto the old Ephraimite man. He represents the incompetent father, unable to reason with the men of Gibeah and unable to protect those in his house. He and the Levite represent the split sides of Lot, who ends up playing both father and husband. The old Ephraimite, however, goes beyond Lot's persuasion to do to his daughters "whatever is right in your eyes" (Gen 19.8) and asserts that the men of Gibeah may "rape" (ענה) his daughter and the *pilegesh*.[146] The ethical confusion of the old man is similarly exposed in the contrast between this offer of rape with his repeated moral appeals to the Gibeahites not to act wickedly (v.23) and not to do such a vile thing (v.24). Thus, according to his logic, the acceptable alternative to wickedness and folly is rape and doing "whatever is good in one's own eyes," which implicitly aligns him with the way of thinking that 17.6 and 21.25 highlight as the reason for this social disharmony.[147]

The Levite goes a step beyond the ethical confusion of the old man, for he shows no moral struggle whatsoever. By thrusting his *pilegesh* out, he looks to avoid harm to himself. Issues of shame and honour are clearly at play in this story, but they are murky and complicated. In the Lot story, for instance, the rape of the daughters was avoided. Certainly Lot is cast as an

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[145] Webb, *The Book of Judges* (2012), 468.

[146] Efforts to soften the language of ענה here and render it as "humiliate" are largely unconvincing, as it is clear that the action proposed is sexual intercourse. See Schneider, *Judges*, 262.

[147] Webb, *The Book of Judges* (2012), 468.

incompetent figure, but his house is preserved and his visitors are protected (even as the visitors are the ones who protect him). Here the *pilegesh* actually is raped, and the Ephraimite is clearly not master of his house. More significant is the effect this has on the Levite. Michael Carden, for instance, supposes that "the Levite is made queer by the rape of his woman."[148] Looking to avoid, above all, his feminization/queering by the defeat of the enemies, he sends his *pilegesh* out to get raped, but because his honour is destroyed just the same he similarly ends up a "victim." He is obviously not a victim in the dreadful sense that the *pilegesh* is, but he is a victim of homosexual panic, and the homophobic violence of the Benjaminites is displaced onto him.[149]

The oddity of such logic, of course, is that by "attempting to inscribe the outsider as queer" there is the simultaneous attempt to inscribe "the queer as outsider."[150] In the case of Genesis 19, the text attributes this homophobic violence to the Sodomites who are already outsiders. In the case of Judges 19, however, this is attributed to fellow Israelites—the problem this time is within the collective body. The Gibeahites/Benjaminites demand to "know" the Levite in an attempt to make him into an outsider, but in doing this they estrange themselves from the rest of the Israelites. The Gibeahites are cast as Sodomites, and Sodom is the paradigmatic symbol of what Israel should not be.[151] Highlighting this is the fact that the Gibeahites were offered the virgin daughter of the Ephraimite, the representative of the

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[148] Carden, "Homophobia and Rape," 91-92.

[149] See Eve Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 88-89.

[150] Carden, "Homophobia and Rape," 91.

[151] Landy ("Centre and Periphery," 155) notes in this regard the stereotypical ethnic slur of associating such practices with Canaanites and Egyptians (Lev 18.3, 24-28). The story which began with such promise of endogamous alliance ends in sexual deviancy from this expectation:
> Same sex is illicit precisely because it does not traverse the difference of gender. In this it is homologous to the prohibition of incest. The Benjaminites are refusing the normative sex through which Israel is perpetuated, and whose ideal instantiation is the union of Ephraim and Judah the Levite's liaison promises but does not deliver (155-56).

endogamous ideal. Instead, they end up knowing the *pilegesh*, whose ways of harlotry (זנה) end up being displaced upon them in their very act of knowing her. They were offered Achsah; they end up with Jephthah's mother.

The blurring between self and other thus revolves around whom one "knows"—between the Levite, the virgin daughter, and the *pilegesh*. As in the Lot story, the repeated mention of doors and entrances of the house (the symbol of identity and kinship) highlights this blurriness. In v.22 the Gibeahites beat on the door (דלת) of the house, but like the Sodomites they do not enter the house, as the Ephraimite "goes out" (יצא) to speak to them. When the Gibeahites do not listen to the Ephraimite, the Levite "brings out" (יצא) the *pilegesh* to be raped. The scene contrasts with the peaceful house of the father at the beginning of the chapter, the place where the *pilegesh* went after initially leaving the Levite (19.2). The *pilegesh* never makes it back to the house proper. In the morning, she collapses at the "entrance" (פתח) of the "house of the man where her master was" (19.26). When the Levite wakes up he "opens" (פתח) the "doors" (דלת) of the house and sees there the *pilegesh* lying at the "entrance (פתח) of house, with her hands upon the threshold" (19.27). The threshold is the limit, the furthest point to which the *pilegesh* can go and still not be in the house. It is the marker between "security and danger, honor and shame, life and death."[152] In a climactic last act, the *pilegesh* puts her hands upon the threshold, as if to symbolize her liminal status as neither inside nor outside, neither fully dead or alive. The house is the place that promised her safety but continually denied it—placing her hands upon the threshold perhaps was a final meagre attempt to enter yet again into the father's house, or

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[152] Alice Bach, "Rereading the Body Politic: Women and Violence in Judges 21," in *Judges: A Feminist Companion* (Second Series) (ed. Athalya Brenner; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 143-59 (156).

perhaps it was an accusatory act, pointing to the place and institution which ultimately brought about her death.[153]

Unable to construct a "house" of his own, the Levite proceeds to share the destruction of his "house" with the tribes of Israel. Ironically, the location of her dismemberment is back at the Levite's house, placing her back where her story started only to again leave the house—but this time in pieces.

> And [the Levite] came to his house and he took the knife[154] and he seized his *pilegesh* and cut her, limb by limb, into twelve pieces, and he sent her throughout the territory of Israel (19.29).

Her body becomes a metaphor for the body of Israel, not only a sign of fragmentation but also something shared and mutually possessed by all the tribes. Bal refers to it as "an attempt toward communion that reveals a transgressive tendency."[155] For a time, it may seem as if the attempt succeeds, for because of the shocking nature of what has happened, "all of Israel" is gathered together "as one man" to determine what to do (20.1). None of the previous judges were able to muster such a (seemingly) unified assembly, but the dismembered corpse of a woman now brings them all together.

This unity, however, is not only fleeting but also deceiving. Benjamin is not part of the assembly, something already foreshadowed by the former events and then explicitly mentioned

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[153] See Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry*, 185 ff.

[154] The definite article for "the knife" perhaps indicates focused attention on the object. Webb (*The Book of Judges* [2012], 470) thinks it suggests the deliberation with which the Levite performed the deed. Jeremiah Unterman suggests that this use of the rare word for "knife" (מאכלת) is evidence (among other things) that points to a connection between this story and the Akedah (see Gen 22.6, 10) ("The Literary Influence of 'The Binding of Isaac' (Genesis 22) on 'The Outrage at Gibeah' (Judges 19)," *HAR* 4 [1980]: 161-65).

[155] Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry*, 192.

in 20.3. Another piece of foreshadowing is the location at which the assembly meets: Mizpah.

This Mizpah is not the same location as Jephthah's Mizpah (that was in Gilead in Transjordan; this one is in central Canaan), but there are symbolic connections nevertheless.[156] It is as if the two Mizpahs are counterparts of each other (one in Transjordan and one in Cisjordan). As we saw above, Mizpah is both Jephthah's home and the place where he faces the fatal consequences of his vow. This Mizpah will similarly be the place of a foolish vow with disastrous consequences for virgin daughters. And while this initial vow does not specifically mention daughters, the statement that "no man is to go to his tent or return to his house" (20.8) further alludes to Jephthah's vow which similarly focuses on the house.

The people of Israel gather in order to seek an answer to their question: "how did this evil thing happen?" (20.3). Initially, the question is posed to the Levite who proceeds to tell a shrewdly selective version of what happened in Gibeah (most notably eliminating any mention of his throwing the *pilegesh* outside the house and blaming her death solely on the Gibeahites).[157] The question is then repeated in 20.12 in the rest of the Israelites' attempt at verbal negotiations

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[156] For more on the differences between this Mizpah and Jephthah's, see Webb (*The Book of Judges* [2012], 473 n. 63). The apparent aside that the assembly of Israel "including the land of Gilead" (20.1) gathered together, also recalls the Jephthah story and the division between Transjordan and Cisjordan Israel.

In addition to the Jephthah story, one might note the connection between this Mizpah and the place associated with Israel's transition from judgeship to monarchy (see 1 Samuel 7). Mizpah is also the site of Gealiah's assassination in 2 Kgs 25.25 and thus is also the symbolic place of the transition from monarchy to exile. See Niditch, *Judges*, 202, for a standard evaluation of Mizpah as a locus for legal, ritual, and political activity.

[157] This is the second time that the Levite has relayed a story that is pointedly different than that of the narrator's. His speech to the old Ephraimite man in 19.18-19 does not have the same sinister tones as does this speech, but the repeated strategic omissions and crafting of material certainly displays the rhetorical and misleading abilities of the Levite. (For more detailed analysis of these strategic omissions and how they characterize the Levite, see Moster, "The Levite of Judges," 721-30.)

with the Benjaminites. The phrase "evil thing" is open-ended, as it does not elaborate on what

the specific evil is. Throughout the rest of the book of Judges, the "evil thing" of the Israelites

typically refers to exogamous marriages that lead to worship of other gods (e.g. 2.11; 3.7). While

that is obviously not what is being referred to here, the motif lies in the background. Because of

the Gibeahites' "evil thing" and the reaction to it, soon Israel will need to resort to extreme

measures to ensure endogamous marriages for the Benjaminites. Such extreme measures are

made in the name of unity, but then inflict harm on fellow Israelites. The Benjaminites, for

instance, are repeatedly called "brothers" in the closing two chapters (20.13, 23, 28; 21.6), but

what does that make the inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead or Shiloh?

But this is to skip ahead to the aftermath of the battle. That is, the vow of the Israelites

not to give their daughters away to Benjaminites is not revealed until the beginning of chapter

21. The repetitive, drawn out battle between Benjamin and the rest of Israel in Judges 20 says

nothing at all about daughters. Perhaps the repetition itself is meant to display the pointlessness

of civil war, in which brother fights against brother. Indeed, the complications of civil war are

underlined by the oracular appointment of Judah as the first tribe to go up against Benjamin

(20.18), which mirrors the beginning of the book in which Judah is the first tribe to go up against

the *Canaanites* (1.1-2). The repetition also builds tension, pointing to the important third and

final inquiry to Yahweh which mentions Phinehas, son of Eleazar, son of Aaron (20.28).

Phinehas is at Bethel ministering because that is where the ark of the covenant is currently

located (thereby explaining why the Israelites have gone to Bethel for all three of their inquiries).

His relation to Aaron justifies this role and perhaps is meant to contrast with the identification of

the Levite in 18.30 as a grandson of Moses.[158] For our purposes, however, Phinehas's most important role is his background, as he is known for his zealous slaying of an Israelite man and his Midianite woman (Num 25.6-8). This recalls then not only a battle of Israelite against Israelite but also the threat of exogamous marriages and the extremes measures that are taken to avoid it.

This leads us to the vow in 21.1: "And each man of Israel had sworn at Mizpah: 'Not a man among us will give to Benjamin his daughter for a wife.'" Traffic of daughters is supposed to unify Israel together, a way to keep men together.[159] But it can also lead to war (as the dismemberment of the *pilegesh* shows) and be a casualty of war (as the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter shows). In this case, the traffic of daughters is a way to find reconciliation, as its cessation is the root cause of the current crisis for the Benjaminites. Rivalry between brothers can only be tolerated for so long, whereas the manipulation of daughters remains constant. The solution for the Benjaminites' problem is not immediately clear; in fact, in the first seven verses of the chapter no less than three times do the Israelites repeat that they had vowed not to give their daughters to the Benjaminites and ponder what to do as a result.

The solution that the Israelites decide upon (for Yahweh never answers their inquiries) is to determine whether there was anyone from the tribes of Israel who did not come up to Mizpah.

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[158] The superscript nun (נ) in the MT means the name could be read as Manasseh as well. For an exploration of both possibilities and the meaning of the ambiguity, see Schneider, *Judges*, 242.

[159] The term "traffic" is purposefully chosen, despite its potentially excessive undertones. My intention here is primarily to refer to Gayle Rubin's influential essay, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy" of Sex," in *Toward an Anthropology of Women* (ed. Rayna R. Reiter; New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 157-210. Rubin's argument is similar to that of Lévi-Strauss's in that she shows how the exchange of females in a large variety of societies creates, maintains, and transforms the relationships among men. (Niditch [*Judges*, 208] also sees a parallel here between Rubin's work and the events of Judges 21.)

When the survey is done, there are no men from Jabesh-Gilead. This is where the connections to Saul become even more apparent, as Jabesh-Gilead will be delivered by Saul from the threat of the Ammonites (1 Sam 11), and, in turn, certain brave men from Jabesh-Gilead retrieve the corpses of Saul and his sons after they are killed in battle with the Philistines (1 Sam 31.11-13). Perhaps the most explicit link is that when Saul hears of the Ammonite threat against Jabesh-Gilead the spirit of the deity grips him with anger causing him to take the oxen he was driving, cut them into pieces, and send the pieces throughout Israel in order to rally the people to help the Jabesh-Gileadites (1 Sam 11.6-7). The dismembered corpse this time is not a human, but the general analogy is too close to miss. Gibeah, importantly, was the place at which Saul was residing when he first heard the news of the Ammonite threat. Thus, there is a reversal between the function of Gibeah and Jabesh-Gilead in Judges and Samuel. In Judges, Gibeah is the place in which conflict originates and Jabesh-Gilead suffers military defeat as a result. In Samuel, Jabesh-Gilead is delivered from military threat and help comes from Gibeah.

The place which Saul musters the troops, moreover, is Bezek. In Judges, Bezek is the city of Adoni-Bezek, the first named enemy of Israel, known for his amputation of the thumbs and big toes of seventy kings who scavenged for food scraps under his table (a very large table indeed) and who loses these extremities himself. Landy points out how Adoni-Bezek stands for both the official ideology of Judges and its subversion.[160] He regards his own mutilation as evidence of the wholeness (שלם) of divine judgement, echoing the name of the city in which he dies (ירושלם). Of course, that very wholeness contrasts with his own fragmented body, a troubling sign that conquest of Canaan will never be complete and wholeness will meet with

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[160] Landy, "Judges 1," 46-47.

fragmentation. Thus, by the end of the book the fragmented body of the Canaanite Adoni-Bezek

is displaced by the fragmented body of the Bethlehemite *pilegesh* and the ensuing fratricidal war.

In other words, by the time Judges ends, punishment is not sought out against Canaanites

like Adoni-Bezek but against brothers like Gibeahites and Jabesh-Gileadites. The inherent

contradictions of civil war problematize any notion of complete judgement. The absence of

Jabesh-Gilead in the initial battle against Benjamin, for instance, is why the town is subject to

military retribution. The curious thing about this, of course, is that the retribution is done in the

name of *survival* for the Benjaminites! It is an odd circularity, for, like an auto-immune disease,

the more successful the battle, the more harm there is to the body.

The twelve thousand men sent to battle Jabesh-Gilead are to smite the inhabitants of the

town, even "the women and the little ones" (21.10)—save the "young women" (נערה בתולה) who

have not known a man. So here there is an explicit reference to virginity ("not knowing a man")

in combination with נערה (young woman) and בתולה (nubile woman). The piling up of terms

leaves no room for doubt—these women are marriageable, young, and virgins. In addition to the

standard formula for virginity, the text adds the seemingly tautological requirement that these

women have "not known a man *by lying with a male*" (21.12). This is also represented in the

reverse formula of killing any woman who has "known lying with a male" (21.11). The word for

male here is זכר, which as we discussed in ch.3 an emphatic word for maleness, perhaps even a

reference to the male sexual organ. The word also carries a homonymic association with the verb

זכר "to remember," implying a relation between maleness and memory. The combination of

"knowing" (ידע) with lying with a "male" (זכר) thus serves to highlight the additional cognitive

element to sex, particularly the (male) desire that females do not acquire knowledge and memory

of more than one man. Bal notes how this desire for exclusive possession creates problems for

fathers, who by their incessant need to preserve this possessive exclusivity end up being conflated with husbands.[161] It also helps explain the extent of the violence against Jabesh-Gilead: the fathers (who have the authority to "give away" their daughters and thus authority over whom the daughters know) must be killed, the potential rival males (who pose the threat of knowing the daughters) must be killed, and finally the women who have already known a man (and thus are possessors of memory) must also be killed.

In this particular case, I think there is an additional reason for the highly emphasized value on the virginity of the daughters from Jabesh-Gilead: their location in the Transjordan. They are Israelites, but they are linked with territory on the fringes, both inside and outside Israel. As virgins, however, they had not yet taken on the contagion of the Transjordan, and hence were acceptable partners for Cisjordanian men (like the Midianite daughters in Num 31.18). Thus, they are one of the few examples of Transjordanian women who move west as virgins.[162] So whereas Jephthah's daughter is sacrificed as a virgin, the daughters of Jabesh-Gilead are saved because of their virginity. In both cases, the issue of exogamy lies in the background and is exploited for different reasons. That is, the choice of virgin daughters from Jabesh-Gilead may be *because* of their potential threat of otherness. They have enough "foreignness" to be outside of Israel, or at least the potential to be outside of Israel (and thus are perhaps only "partially" bound to the vow), while not being so foreign that marriage with them would be exogamous.

A different dynamic is at play with the daughters of Shiloh (21.15-23), for daughters of Shiloh obviously do not carry with them Transjordanian associations. This transition from

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[161] Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry*, 53 ff.
[162] See Jobling, *The Sense of Biblical Narrative, II*, 103, 113-14, 131ff.

Transjordan to Cisjordan is significant, for now the search for daughters is within the collective body proper. Shiloh, moreover, is the sacred centre, the site of the ark of the covenant prior to the establishment of the temple in Jerusalem (but then again, it is not in Shiloh in Judg 20.27 either). But here, the centre becomes peripheral (as in Benjamin's own near annihilation). Having two searches stresses the importance of the initial problem: the need for daughters to be exchanged among the tribes (and the foolishness of the vow to prevent this for Benjamin) (21.18). While the new solution does not require military involvement and annihilation of the majority of the people of a town, it is just as disturbing as the first:

> And they said, "Behold, there is a yearly festival of Yahweh in Shiloh"…And they commanded the Benjaminites saying, "Go and lie in ambush in the vineyards and watch. And behold, when the daughters of Shiloh come out to whirl in whirling dances, then you will go out and seize for yourselves, each man his woman, from the daughters of Shiloh, and then you will go to the land of Benjamin" (21.19-21).

The Benjaminites receive directions to "lie in ambush" (ארב), which is exactly the method that the Israelites had used against them in their previous defeat (20.29-38, ארב is mentioned throughout these verses). In contrast to the brute force inflicted against Jabesh-Gilead, this time there is a voyeuristic, perhaps even scopophilic, element. The dancing of the daughters serves as an enticement, Bal writes: "They dance, they are to be watched, and: behold. The memory of the military slogan *veni*, *vidi*, *vici* imposes itself nicely."[163] The sexual connotation of vineyards (as we noted above) is also worth recalling, as it might also be mixed with sexually suggestive actions of looking (e.g. Gen 9.20-29).

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[163] Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry*, 71.

The scene also clearly recalls that of Jephthah's daughter. In both stories, there is the mention of whirling dances, a yearly festival, and the location of daughters outside the house (of their father). The end result this time is not the death of one daughter, but the rape (and marriage?) of several daughters. While it may be implied, there is no mention here, interestingly, of the women at Shiloh as young (נערה), nubile (בתולה), or virgins ("not knowing a man"). They are defined solely as "daughters," women who belong to a father. Part of the reason for this, as I have outlined above, relates to the daughters of Shiloh being Cisjordanian women. It may also serve to highlight the status of the women in relation to their fathers (and brothers), as is suggested by the second part of the plan.

> And if their[164] fathers or their brothers come out to contend with us, then we will say to them, "Have compassion on them,[165] for we did not take a woman for each man in battle, neither did you yourselves give [your daughters] to them, lest you be guilty" (21.22).

As Alice Bach points out, the second part of the plan reveals that the concern is the offense that the *men* of Shiloh will take—the voice of the daughters of Shiloh is absent (as it was with the *pilegesh*).[166] Two dubious reasons are given as to why offense should not be taken: the daughters were not taken in battle (so there is no need for military retaliation) and because the daughters were not given away the men are not guilty of breaking the oath. In effect, the Israelites offer kidnap and rape as a viable way for the Benjaminites to obtain wives, as opposed to military violence or oath-breaking. The logic parallels that of the old Ephraimite man, who offered his virgin daughter as a substitute in order to prevent the gang rape of the Levite, and thus shows the

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[164] The pronouns here are masculine, but must certainly refer to the daughters. See Webb, *The Book of Judges* (2012), 504, n. 160.

[165] I follow here the suggestion of the BHS to read חָנּוּ. As it stands, the MT has חָנּוּנוּ, "have compassion on us," which then leaves the following object (אותם) stranded.

[166] Bach, "Rereading the Body Politic," 152-53.

connection between the eventual rape of the *pilegesh* and the rape of the daughters of Shiloh. Webb provides a helpful chiastic structure to this sequence of events:

The rape of the Levite's concubine

"Holy" war against Benjamin

Problem: The oath—Benjamin threatened with extinction

"Holy" war against Jabesh-Gilead

The rape of the daughters of Shiloh[167]

The tribe that previously refused a virgin daughter and initiated the whole cycle of violence attempts to end this violence with the kidnapping and raping of daughters. At the centre of this problem is the rash vow of the Israelites not to give away their daughters and the lengths to which they will go in order to avoid breaking this vow.

The rash vow reaches all the way back to Caleb, Othniel, and Achsah, which is similarly an endogamous marriage. The differences between the two sets of marriages, however, are noteworthy. With Achsah, the daughter was offered as a prize for the capture of a city; now, daughters are taken as wives because of military defeat and potential extinction. Achsah voices her dismay about being "given away," whereas the daughters of Shiloh are simply kidnapped. Their fathers, in fact, are not even given the option of giving their daughters away. Their (future) husbands, represented by the Benjaminites (and through extension the rest of the Israelites), usurp the fathers' role in the exchange, in contrast to Caleb's seeming authority over Achsah even after marriage.

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[167] Webb, *The Book of Judges* (2012), 507. There is some dissymmetry to note in this neat chiasm, for the fathers (and brothers) do not give away the daughters of Shiloh, as opposed Ephraimite's actions in Judg 19. The Benjaminites' actions are thus more like Danites' theft of the Levite and sacred objects in Judg 18.

What is the fear being exploited here? It cannot simply be the lack of stable, central authority, a monarchy. It goes deeper, to the fear of instability in the father's house, and of the problematic role that daughters play both inside and outside the father's house. It is no mistake that Judges ends with this scene of men spying out potential wives as they are hidden in vineyards. The reader is cast into the male gaze of the Benjaminites, seeing things through the eyes of those who are doing whatever is right in their own eyes. The scene is at once (male) fantasy and nightmare. Fantasy for those hidden in the vineyard; nightmare for the fathers (and brothers) of the daughter. It is a nightmare, of course, for the daughters too. But the narrative never once focalizes things through their eyes, nor the eyes of the daughters of Jabesh-Gilead or the *pilegesh*. Their viewpoint is lost among the wars and reunification of men, even as they are the bodies over which the wars are fought and brought to an end.

Chapter 5: Daughters, Kings, and Gods

This chapter covers three sets of daughters: the story of Ruth and Naomi—ancestresses of David; the stories of Merab, Michal, and Tamar—daughters associated with the David story; and the Daughter of Zion—the city of David. While the connecting thread is David, each section is somewhat intended to stand on its own. In the first, my concern relates to the intertextual links that the book of Ruth shares with the stories of Tamar (Gen 38) and Lot's daughters. The structure of a widowed daughter seducing a fatherly figure for survival and continuation of the family line is the common theme of this Ruth corpus. The reason for the thrice repeated structure, I argue, is that each story is working through repressed material which is most apparent in the primal scene of Lot and his daughters. By the final story in Ruth, the father-daughter incest and extreme measures to preserve the father's seed are more veiled, and the union of Ruth and Boaz is celebrated and confirmed by the community. From the stories of these ancestresses of David, I transition to the stories of daughters that play an important part in David's own story: Merab, Michal, and Tamar (and by extension Bathsheba). Merab and Michal, daughters of Saul, are both used as bait by their own father to trap and ensnare David; however, by the end of their stories, they come to symbolize the end of Saul's house at the expense of David's rise. But life does not fare better for Tamar, the only named daughter of David. Raped by her own brother, this incestuous story symbolizes the intra-familial problems of David's house and the king's own responsibility for them. Princesses do not fare well in the Hebrew Bible. This leads us to the final section on the Daughter of Zion (another princess turned desolate woman). In the prophetic material of the Hebrew Bible, Jerusalem is feminized and often given this daughterly title (or some variation of it). Taking the filial aspects of this title seriously, as well as the related

daughterly imagery, I try to account for what it means to personify the city as a daughter, and how this relates to the other metaphorical aspects of the city as a wife and mother. The focus of this section is the reading I offer of two texts, Ezek 16 and Lam 1-2, in which the city as a daughter plays an important part. In the Ezekiel text, the prophetic marriage metaphor dominates and the focus is on Jerusalem's recalcitrant and perverse ways. In Lamentations, the city is a devastated figure, calling out for sympathy, but she also carries a bold voice criticising the injustice of her punishment. Thus, I end the chapter with her voice, imagining how her words might apply to other predominantly silent daughters of the Hebrew Bible.

The Ruth Corpus: Ancestresses of David

There are two genealogical lists found in Ruth 4.11-22, which complement and contrast each other. The first (vv.11-17) celebrates a sequence of women who built the house of Israel and Judah through sexual subterfuge—the speakers alternate between the people at the gate and the elders, the narrator, and the women of the neighbourhood. The second (vv.18-22) is a more standard genealogy which mentions only the fathers and sons that lead to the birth of David and is spoken solely by the narrator.

> And all the people who were at the gate, and the elders, said: "(We are) witnesses. May Yahweh make the woman who is entering into your house like Rachel and Leah, who built, the two of them, the house of Israel, so that you prosper in Ephrathah and proclaim a name in Bethlehem. May your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, from the seed that Yahweh gives you from this young woman." So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. And he went into her and Yahweh gave her conception,

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and she bore a son. Then the women said to Naomi: "Blessed be Yahweh who has not removed a kindred redeemer today; and may his name be proclaimed in Israel. He will be for you a restorer of life and a sustainer of your old age because your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, bore him." Then Naomi took the child and placed him in her bosom, and became his caregiver. The neighbourhood women proclaimed a name, saying: "A son has been born to Naomi." They proclaimed his name [to be] Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David. And these are the generations of Perez: Perez begot Hezron, and Hezron begot Ram, and Ram begot Amminadab, and Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon,[1] and Salmon begot Boaz, and Boaz begot Obed, and Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David.

It is primarily the mention of the women in the context of giving a blessing that interests me here. Rachel and Leah built the house of Israel through their "wrestlings" (נפתולים) (Gen 30.8) with each other, their bartering over and use of the mandrakes (Gen 30.14-16), and their part in the "bed-trick" played upon Jacob (Gen 29.22-25). Tamar, likewise, used sexual deception in order to seduce her father-in-law, Judah. This union resulted in the birth of Perez and Zerah (Gen 38), and Perez is used as the starting point to trace to David in the second genealogical list. Finally, while there is no explicit mention of Lot's daughters, the recurring identification of Ruth as a Moabite (e.g. 4.3, 5, and 10—to list the occurrences in just chapter 4) alludes to this connection. Their story, moreover, is the origin of these tales of adultery, (implicit) incest, and seduction committed by female progenitors of the house of David.

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[1] In MT, this name is spelled שׂלמה (Salmah) here in v.20, but then שׂלמון (Salmon) in v.21. Some medieval Hebrew manuscripts have שׂלמה in v.21 to make the match, while most Old Greek witnesses have Σαλμαν (Salmon) in both verses. I have decided to follow Old Greek in this matter, given the pattern set out from every other begot series in the passage (A begot B, B begot C, and so on), though the name could just as likely be Salmah in both verses.

The allusion to Lot's daughters also draws attention to the reunification of Terah's line, that is, the union of sons from the line of Abraham with daughters from the lines of Abraham's brothers, Nahor and Haran. The marriages of Isaac with Rebekah and of Jacob with Rachel and Leah brought together the lines of Abraham and Nahor; now, through the marriage of Ruth and Boaz, Abraham's line is reunited with that of Haran's.[2] Genesis 13, as we saw in chapter 1, details how Lot "separates" (פרד) from Abraham (various forms of פרד are used throughout the passage: vv. 9, 11, 14). Unlike her patriarchal ancestor, however, Ruth refuses to be "separated" (פרד) from Naomi (Ruth 1.17). Similarly, the genealogy of Perez in Ruth 4.18-22 functions as a near seamless transition from the story of Tamar, connected by the use of the formulaic תלדות ("generations") structuring of Genesis.[3] This allows for the following genealogical ties: Haran is the father of Lot and Lot is the father of Moab, and thus the ancestor of Ruth, while Abraham is the great grandfather of Judah and Judah is the father of Perez, and thus the ancestor of Boaz. Although this genealogical reconstruction consists of the names of the men (with the exception of Ruth), the stories show that their existence depends heavily on the women as well. It is Lot's daughters, in fact, who preserve the line of Lot/Haran; it is Rachel and Leah's bartering that builds up the house of Israel; and it is Tamar's veiled deception that results in the birth of Perez.

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[2] For a summary of these genealogical connections, see Jeremy Schipper, *Ruth* (AB 7D; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 41-43.

In Deut 23.3-5, Moabites are excluded from the congregation of Yahweh for ten generations. The text recounts how the Moabites and Ammonites did not provide bread and water for the Israelites while they were traveling through the wilderness, something which contrasts with Elimelech's sojourning to Moab in search of food during a time of famine (Ruth 1.1). It is, therefore, no coincidence that Elimelech is from Bethlehem ("the house of bread"). See Danna Fewell and David Gunn, *Compromising Redemption: Relating Characters in the Book of Ruth* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1990), 69-70, 72, 79; Bal, *Lethal Love*, 80; André Lacocque, "Date et milieu de livre de Ruth," *RHPR* 59 (1979): 583-93 (587).

[3] See Gen 2.4; 5.1; 6.9; 10.1; 11.10; 11.27; 25.12; 25.19; 36.1 (and 36.9); 37.2.

Thus, in addition to the genealogical ties, the trickery—or better, the desperate actions—of these women intertextually link their stories together. Harold Fisch's seminal essay, "Ruth and the Structure of Covenant History,"[4] argues that both connections must be kept in mind. Fisch combines synchronic and diachronic structural analyses to the stories of Ruth, Tamar, and Lot's daughters, thereby arguing it is important not just to understand the significant themes and motifs (the deep structure) that these stories share but that these connections must also be framed within "the memory of past and promise" that is so central to the world of the Hebrew Bible.[5] In other words, establishing a schema of convention and shared structure is only the first step—this must be supplemented with an analysis of the divergences between the stories, and, in this case, the pattern of diachronic differences.[6]

What Fisch does not address at length, however, is the deeper unconscious concerns that these stories might involve. Following the work of Ruth Kara-Ivanov Kaniel, I read the connections between these stories as indicative of the "return of the repressed," as each deals with sexual deviance in order to produce a desired result.[7] Kara-Ivanov Kaniel focuses on how this culminates in the story of Mary, the mother of Jesus, for Mary embodies the sexual sins of her foremothers but attempts to "transform them back to a model of virginity."[8] This model of repression and transformation, however, is already present within the stories of Lot's daughters,

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[4] Harold Fisch, "Ruth and the Structure of Covenant History," *VT* 32.4 (1982): 425-37.

[5] Fisch, "Ruth," 425.

[6] As Alter notes in *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, this is the case with all art: "what is really interesting is not the schema of convention but what is done in each individual application of the schema to give it a sudden tilt of innovation or even to refashion it radically for the imaginative purposes at hand" (52).

[7] See Ruth Kara-Ivanov Kaniel, "The Myth of the Messianic Mother in Jewish and Christian Traditions: Psychoanalytic and Gender Perspectives," *JAAR* 83.1 (2015): 72-119. See also, *Holiness and Transgression: Mothers of the Messiah in the Jewish Myth* (trans. Eugene D. Matanky; New York: Academic Press, 2017).

[8] Kara-Ivanov Kaniel, "The Myth of the Messianic Mother," 75.

Tamar, and Ruth. Freud's concept of "repetition compulsion" (*Wiederholungszwang*), therefore, works in tandem with the concept of the "return of the repressed." That is, each story is a representation of similar desires and fears that it is attempting to work out. Repetition compulsion is thus a symptom (a constant repetition of repressed material) as well as a principal dynamic of the cure.

Cheryl Exum's "Who's Afraid of the Endangered Ancestress?" offers just such an analysis of the thrice repeated endangered ancestress type scene (Gen 12, 20, and 26) and thus is another helpful intertext.[9] In each of these episodes the patriarch travels to a foreign territory where he attempts to pass off his beautiful wife as his sister because of his fear that the locals will kill him in order to take her for themselves. The repeated themes and motifs of these stories point to a common intra-psychic conflict (at least for the male biblical authors) over women's sexuality: it is something both desired and feared. The patriarch, for instance, wants to affirm the value of his wife by having other men also desire her (as in archetypal Girardian mimetic-desire). And yet, he also fears competitors for his wife (if she is, in fact, such a desirable object). An even greater fear, moreover, relates to woman's sexual knowledge and the threat it poses to man's supposed mastery in this regard. Comparable fears and desires, as I outline below, are present in the shared themes and motifs of Lot's daughters, Tamar, and Ruth.

Exum's article also provides a nice counterpoint to the common supposition of both Kara-Ivanov Kaniel and Fisch that the book of Ruth "redeems" (Fisch) or "sublimates" (Kara-Ivanov Kaniel) the repressed material of this corpus of texts. There are certainly important diachronic differences that culminate in the story of Ruth, but one must question whose interests this redemption or sublimation serves. Exum concludes that the story of the endangered

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[9] See Exum, *Fragmented Women*, 148-69.

ancestress is retold in order to assure the patriarch that his fears are unwarranted. Thus, by the third repetition in Gen 26, it is the foreign ruler (Abimelech) who looks out his window and sees the patriarch (Isaac) fondling his wife (Rebekah). The fantasy of having another man desire his wife (having his wife be the object of male gaze) is maintained while the fear of the woman being sexually possessed and known by another (gaining sexual knowledge outside the patriarch's realm of control) is relieved. Likewise, the book of Ruth works through the repressed material of the Lot complex only to sublimate them in the interests of patriarchy.

Repetition and Repression

The sexual relationship in each of these stories revolves around incest, specifically between father (figures) and daughter (figures). With Lot and his daughters, of course, this is obvious. Tamar's seduction of Judah is between father-in-law and daughter-in-law—the sexual taboo is thus "softened" even as it is still quite apparent. With Ruth and Boaz, however, the incest theme is more subtly displayed. Boaz is associated with Elimelech, described as his מידע, a difficult term to translate, though it probably refers to some sort of kinship relation.[10] This is supported by Naomi's reference to Boaz as "close (kindred)" (2.20, see also 3.12) and the designation of Boaz as "kindred redeemer" (2:20; 3.9, 12, 12). And while Boaz is neither directly father or father-in-law, he repeatedly addresses Ruth as "my daughter" (2.8; 3.10, 11). To be sure, "daughter" in this context may simply refer to an unmarried female member of a

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[10] The MT *Kethiv* is מידע and thus may be the *pual* participle of ידע (to know), while the *Qere* is מודע (a construct form from the same ידע root). Edward Campbell (*Ruth* [AB 7; New York: Doubleday, 1975], 88-90) argues that the term should be translated as "covenant-brother" (an intriguing possibility, but not a convincing translation).

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household, but it also indicates the familial ties between Boaz and Ruth.[11] The possessive is

important to note as well—for Boaz, Ruth is *his* daughter.[12] There are hints, therefore, in the

union of Ruth and Boaz of familial closeness and incest.

In contrast to this incest theme, the beginning of each episode is characterized by

exogamy. Lot's family, for instance, breaks with the endogamous structure of Abraham's line.

While his wife is given no genealogical background, she is associated with Sodom, and his

daughters are initially married to Sodomites. Judah's wife, Shua, is a Canaanite, and, as is also

the case with Lot's wife, her death and removal from the story opens the way for the illicit sexual

relations that follow. Finally, Elimelech's sons, Mahlon and Chilion, marry Moabites.[13] Thus, the

initially exogamous pattern of marriages in each story always results in closely endogamous

relations. This again displays the blurring between exogamy and endogamy, particularly

incestuous endogamy, that has been highlighted throughout the preceding chapters.[14]

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[11] See Landy, "Ruth and the Romance of Realism, Or Deconstructing History" in *Beauty and the Enigma*, 218-51 (238).

[12] This also contrasts and corresponds with Naomi addressing Ruth as "my daughter" (1.11, 12, 13; 2.2, 22; 3.1, 16, 18).

[13] There is a biblical pattern of Judahite exogamy in which the book of Ruth only plays a part. We saw in the last chapter, for instance, that Ibzan from Bethlehem (though perhaps not the same Bethlehem) married sixty children to spouses outside (his clan) (Judg 12.8). In 1 Chr 4.22, descendants of Judah, Joash and Saraph, marry into Moab and return to Lehem (possibly intending Bethlehem). David, of course, will continue this pattern with his many exogamous marriages (2 Sam 3.3; 1 Chr 3.1-2). Based on this, and other examples, Schipper (*Ruth*, 39-40) points out that the designation of Elimelech's line as Ephrathites from Bethlehem is just as important as Ruth's designation as a Moabite. In other words, the book of Ruth relates not just to marriages between Moabites and Israelites but between Moabites and Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah.

[14] The repeated identification of Ruth as a Moabite both highlights her foreignness and serves as a reminder of her shared genealogy (from the line of Haran and thus a Terahite). Her link back to the incestuous origins of the cave scene, moreover, exemplifies this blurring of endogamy and exogamy.

Another shared pattern is the role of the woman (or women) as instigator of the sexual relationship. Lot's daughters resort to making their father drunk with wine and Tamar veils herself such that she is perceived as a "harlot" (זונה) (Gen 38.14-15). In the case of Ruth, this seduction is again less conspicuous, as sexual intercourse is not explicitly mentioned until 4.13. There is, however, a "bed-trick" of sorts in the threshing floor scene in Ruth 3, and indeed there are striking resemblances in it with the incestuous cave scene in Gen 19.30-38. In both, there is an intimate night-time encounter between a woman, or women, whose husband(s) had died and an old man (Gen 19.31; Ruth 3.10). Boaz refers to his old age indirectly, noting how Ruth did not go after "young men" (בחורים) (3.10), and the immediate contrast is with the "young men" (נערים) of chapter 2, who are associated with sexual interest (2.9, 15). Thus, by alluding to his old age, Boaz may be expressing his fear of old age and waning sexual potency.[15] As we have seen, the same fear is placed in the mouth of Lot's elder daughter in Gen 19.31. Intoxication also plays a role in both Genesis 19 and Ruth 3, given Boaz's hearty eating and drinking (Ruth 3.7).[16] Naomi even explicitly tells Ruth in 3.3 to wait to make herself "known" (ידע) until Boaz has finished his food and drink—implying that Ruth should wait until satiation and inebriation have taken effect in Boaz. Indeed, although it is never used in the overtly sexual way that is found in Genesis 19, ידע (to know) is repeated throughout the third chapter (3.3, 4, 11, 14, 18). The verb, moreover, is linked with the seductive, secretive actions of Ruth (and Naomi); Boaz, like Lot, remains unaware—he does not "know"—of Ruth's presence until she has also been lying at his feet well into the night. The sexual imagery of the scene perhaps reaches its climax in 3.7, when

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[15] Bal, *Lethal Love*, 71.

[16] Similarly, the sheep-shearing festivity in Gen 38.12-13 may be accompanied by drinking and thus intoxication for Judah. In Fisch's paradigm, each of these alcoholic associations reveals temporary loss of order and self-control on the part of the father figures ("Ruth," 431).

Ruth, following Naomi's advice, comes in secret (ותבא בלט), uncovers the feet of Boaz (ותגל מרגלתיו), and lies down next to him (ותשכב). As is often noted, "feet" here could refer to Boaz's genitals (e.g. 1 Sam 24.4), something which is bolstered by the sexually suggestive terms "lie down" (שׁכב, see Lev. 20.11, 18, 20; Deut 27.20) and "enter/come" (בוא, see Gen 30.16; 38.8-9).[17] This would further parallel with Gen 19.30-38, in which the verb שׁכב is repeatedly used and always in the sexual sense—especially noteworthy is the rare use of the feminine command שׁכבי (lie down) in both Gen 19.34 and Ruth 3.13. Finally, the setting of the threshing floor, like the setting of the cave, carries sexual connotations. Separating the chaff from the grain is a biblically loaded symbol, carrying connotations, among other things, of fertility and licentiousness (see Hos 9.1). Calum Carmichael asserts that the activity of treading grain (with the feet) corresponds to the metaphorical meaning of "treading" (with the "feet") between men and women (which also fits with the larger theme of the fertility/infertility of Elimelech's family line with the fertility/infertility of the land).[18]

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[17] See Fewell and Gunn, *Compromising Redemption*, 86-88; Campbell, *Ruth*, 131; Schipper, *Ruth*, 143-44. Each of these terms are potential double entendres. To argue firmly, however, that they are either overtly sexual or completely non-sexual is to miss the point, for it diminishes the ambiguity. For example, when Ruth asks Boaz to "spread your wing/skirt over your handmaid" (3.9) the phrase is open to several interpretive possibilities at once: a request of marriage (see Paul Kruger, "The Hem of the Garment in Marriage: The Meaning of the Symbolic Gesture in Ruth 3:9 and Ezek 16:8," *JNSL* 12 (1984): 79-86), a sexual proposition (Kirsten Nielsen, "Le choix contre le droit dans le livre de Ruth. De l'aire de battage au tribunal," *VT* 35 [1985]: 201-12 [206-7]), or perhaps just a desire for relief from the cold. Landy writes that the request "implies intimacy beneath the clothing that connotes partnership and warmth, as well as sexual possibilities" ("Ruth and the Romance of Realism," 232).

[18] See Calum Carmichael, "'Treading' in the Book of Ruth," *ZAW* 92.2 (1980): 248-66. In a separate article, Carmichael relates Ruth's request for Boaz to spread his skirt/wing over her to the sandal ceremony in Ruth 4.7-10 ("A Ceremonial Crux: Removing a Man's Sandal as a Female Gesture of Contempt," *JBL* 96 [1977]: 321-36). From this perspective, Ruth asks Boaz to put her on as his new footwear—she is to be a sandal for him. And the sandal is a symbol for the female genitals, as in the common psychoanalytic interpretation of slippers in fairy tales (like Cinderella's special slipper) (see Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment*, 264-77).

The seduction of Ruth, like the seduction of Lot's daughters and Tamar, is more than

mere trickery—it is a matter of life and death, and the survival of a future generation. In each

story, the woman (or women) is widowed and left without a husband to continue the family line.

For Lot's daughters this entails the loss of their husbands along with all the other men of Sodom

and Gomorrah, a destruction so great that they come to believe there are no other men alive

(19.31). Both of Tamar's husbands die (Er and Onan), leaving her childless as she returns to the

house of her father (38.11). In Ruth, all the male members of Elimelech's family die in Moab,

widowing Ruth and Orpah and leaving Naomi with no husband and sons.[19] Such dire situations

leave the women in these stories with no choice but to resort to extraordinary measures to ensure

the continuation of their line. Unlike the bed-tricks in Shakespeare, therefore, these bed-tricks are

not one of the games of love (however tragi-comic games of love may be) but are undertaken for

the purpose of survival, of both the woman and her line.

Left with no husband, the women in these stories look to a near kinsman, a father or

father figure, in order to produce offspring. Thus, the family structure must remain intact and all

the offspring, not just Moab and Ammon, are in some way "from the father" (though the fatherly

relation becomes more distant in each case). With Tamar and Ruth, the law of levirate

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Threshing floors, interestingly, are also places of hybridity, of the miscegenation between
Moabite and Israelite, or Canaanite and Israelite. A Canaanite threshing floor, for example,
becomes the site of the temple in 2 Sam 24.16-25. In this text as well, as Landy observes, the
spectre of death is evoked and averted. Thus, intertextually, "these correlations suggest a cultural
context that may be more or less activated in [Ruth]; here may be decided issues of life and
death, social regulation and human desire" ("Ruth and the Romance of Realism," 222). For an
extended analysis of the many symbols and motifs associated with threshing floors, see Landy,
"Threshing Floors and Cities," in *Memory and the City in Ancient Israel* (eds. Ehud Ben Zvi and
Diana Edelman; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2014), 79-97.

[19] Fisch notes how the disaster and loss of men is always preceded by an initial separation
or "descent": Lot separates from Abraham and descends to Sodom (Gen 13), Judah descends
from his brothers (Gen 38.1), and Elimelech leaves Bethlehem to sojourn in Moab (Ruth 1.1)
("Ruth and the Structure of Covenant History," 430).

duty/marriage is evoked.[20] Judah, for instance, tells Onan to "go in to your brother's wife and perform the duty of a brother-in-law (יבם) to her that you might raise up offspring/seed for your brother" (Gen 38.8). Thus, at least in this case, the levirate duty has the articulated purpose of raising up seed or offspring for the deceased brother (and is, interestingly, commanded by the father). In Ruth, there is no mention of a brother-in-law, as Boaz is a "kindred redeemer" (גאל); there are, however, a number of intertextual links with detailed levirate legislation in Deut 25.5-10. The basic tenets are outlined in vv.5-6:

> When brothers dwell together and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the dead one shall not marry outside (the family) to a stranger. Her brother-in-law shall go into her and take her as a wife and perform the duty of a brother-in-law to her. And it will be that the firstborn whom she bears will raise up to the name of the dead brother and his name will not be blotted out of Israel.

The next three verses (vv.7-10) then describe what is to happen if the brother-in-law fails to perform his duty: his wife is to make the matter public and go up to the gate of the city to the elders. The elders will then attempt to persuade the brother-in-law, but if he is not persuaded then the widowed woman is to pull his sandal off and spit in his face, making this man's name known as "the house of him whose sandal was pulled off." Parallels to Ruth include obligations to a widowed kinswoman (Deut 25.5; Ruth 4.5), raising up the name of a deceased kinsman (Deut 25.6; Ruth 4.5, 10), going up to the elders at the gate (Deut 25.7; Ruth 4.1-2), pulling a sandal off

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[20] My purpose here is not to provide a detailed analysis of the levirate duty/marriage but rather to consider the themes and symbols that the stories of Lot's daughters, Tamar, and Ruth might share in regard to it, and how each story utilizes the levirate duty. For general surveys, see Richard M. Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), 461-83; and Ernst Kutsch, "יבם" *TDOT* 5: 367-73. See also, Dvora E. Weisberg, "The Widow of Our Discontent: Levirate Marriage in the Bible and Ancient Israel," *JSOT* 28.4 (2004): 403-29.

a foot (Deut 25.9; Ruth 4.7), and building up a house (Deut 25.9; Ruth 4.11).[21] These links show that the law of levirate duty certainly plays a part in Ruth; however, the differences now become more significant. Often noted, for example, is the connection between levirate duty and land redemption/inheritance that is made in Ruth but is absent in Gen 38 and Deut 25.5-10. More significant for my purpose is how Ruth shares the concern over raising the name of the deceased (4.10) but does not specifically have the brother-in-law to do so. This is also the case in the story of Judah and Tamar, for the male seed is provided not from any of the brothers-in-law (Er, Onan, or Shelah) but from Judah, the father-in-law. In other words, the stories of Tamar and Ruth play with the levirate duty even as neither woman actually conceives with the help of a *levir* (a husband's brother).

The replacement of the brother-in-law with a father figure both masks and highlights the incestuous implications of the levirate duty. Intercourse with the wife of one's brother, for instance, is explicitly condemned in the sexual taboos listed in Leviticus:

> You shall not uncover the nakedness of your brother's wife; it is your brother's nakedness (Lev 18.16).

> If a man takes his brother's wife, it is impurity; he has uncovered his brother's nakedness; they shall be childless (Lev 20.21).[22]

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[21] See, e.g., Michael D. Goulder, "Ruth a Homily on Deuteronomy 22-25?" in *Of Prophets' Visions and the Wisdom of Sages: Essays in Honour of R. Norman Whybray on His Seventieth Birthday* (eds. Heather A. Mackay and David J. Clines; JSOTSup 162; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 307-19; and Donald A. Leggett, *The Levirate and Goel Institutions in the Old Testament, with Special Attention to the Book of Ruth* (Cherry Hill, N.J.: Mack, 1974).

[22] Some assert that these Levitical verses do not conflict with the levirate duty since they revolve around sexual relations with a brother's wife while the brother is still alive, while such a relationship after the brother dies is not prohibited. (so, for example, Eryl W. Davies, "Inheritance Rights and the Hebrew Levirate Marriage," *VT* 31 [1981]: 138-44, 257-68 [267]). Intercourse with a brother's wife while the brother is alive, however, would simply be adultery,

In contrast, as we have noted, father-daughter incest is never condemned in these chapters from Leviticus.[23] And yet, it is the father (figure) and daughter (figure) relationship, much more so than the levirate duty, that ties the stories of Tamar and Ruth together. Moreover, it is precisely this relationship that accounts for the connection of these stories to Lot and his daughters—and thus explicitly to incest.[24] Thus, the levirate duty may serve to emphasize the incestuous history in David's genealogy as much as it may be a way to justify it.

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and this seems to imply something different. There is no caveat that the prohibition ceased after death. There is more substance to the argument that intercourse with a brother's wife is less of a taboo than other sexually illicit relations. Intercourse with a brother's wife is described as "only" an "impurity" (נדה), while other transgressions are called "perversion" (v.12), "depravity" (v.14), "a disgrace" (v.17), or "a sin" (v.20) (see Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh*, 471-72). Still, the idea that these verses show no conflict with the legislation of levirate duty seems strained. The Hebrew Bible preserves many traditions and theologies that conflict and dialogue with each other, as evidenced by the play between the levirate duty in Deut 25.5-10 and the stories of Tamar and Ruth, and thus likely with the sexual taboos in Lev 18.16 and 20.21 as well.

[23] It is noteworthy though that sex with a daughter-in-law is explicitly forbidden (Lev 18.15; 20.12). For Jonathan Ziskind, the comparison is revealing (see "The Missing Daughter in Leviticus XVIII," *VT* 46.1 [1996]: 125-30). The prohibition against uncovering the nakedness of one's daughter-in-law is followed by the description that she is the "woman/wife of your son," thereby asserting that the proper sexual possessor of daughters-in-law is their husband. To uncover the nakedness of one's daughter, however, would result in the odd assertion of the father uncovering his own nakedness. Such a prohibition might imply, according to Ziskind, an undermining of the father's own authority, which perhaps explains the law's absence. For a more detailed discussion of this issue, see Stiebert, *Fathers and Daughters*, 104-30.

[24] Arthur Brenner thus writes: "May we not suspect that it was not the levirate marriage as such, but rather the mating of father and daughter, in the ancestry of both Boaz and Ruth, which brings together the Tamar-Judah story and the Ruth-Boaz story" ("Onan, the Levirate Marriage and the Genealogy of the Messiah," *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 10 [1962]: 701-21 [715]). Brenner's analysis is influential to this work, given the emphasis on finding the repressed material in the biblical stories surrounding the levirate duty. In a classic psychoanalytic interpretation, Brenner finds themes in the biblical levirate duty stories that relate to the patriarchal father of the primal horde and the band of brothers that revolted against him. The stories of Lot and Judah (and through extension, Boaz) are understood as remnants of the primal-horde father asserting his prerogative of mating with all the daughters of the horde (including his own daughters). This position, however, was not abdicated voluntarily but must have been forced upon the father by his sons. The logic of the levirate duty, therefore, might rest on the covenant the brothers made with themselves after their revolt—that is, a brother is obligated to marry his dead brother's widow if for no other reason than to prevent the father from doing so.

Working Through and Sublimation

      The story of Lot and his daughters is the primal scene in this series of stories, and as such

alerts us to the central point of repression in these stories: the sexual taboo of incest, specifically

between a father and daughter. Around this central feature one finds the other major components

of the Lot complex: the absence/death of sons (initial husbands), the absence/death (or infertility)

of the mother, the fear of old age—and by extension the fear of producing no offspring (i.e. not

preserving the seed of the father), the initiative taken by the daughter (figure), the deception of

the father (figure), and the eventual procreative result. Of course, what is important in this case is

the diachronic scale, the way that each of these stories interacts with these features and how this

reveals more clearly the fantasies and fears of this corpus of material. Thus, this requires analysis

of how the stories of Tamar and Ruth "work through" the primal repressions of the Lot story.

      If incest is the central taboo, then the most obvious difference relates to the differing

kinship relations between the sexual pair in each story: first daughter-father, then daughter-in-

law and father-in-law, and finally "daughter" and close kinsman. Even the women's seduction

progressively becomes more "civilized."[25] Rather than the setting of a cave, for instance,

Tamar's seduction is set "at the entrance of Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah" (Gen

38.14).[26] And instead of primarily relying on intoxication (though it may indeed play a part given

the celebration of sheep-shearing) she employs disguise—the figure of a prostitute being a

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[25] Fisch, "Ruth and the Structure of Covenant History," 434.

[26] The "entrance to Enaim," literally translated is "the opening of the eyes," an ironic name not only because Judah remains "blind" to Tamar's identity but also because of the association with the opening of eyes and sexual knowledge (Gen 3.7; 4.1). Like the pun on Lot "knowing" and "not knowing" his daughters, therefore, Judah will remain blind even as he opens his eyes with Tamar. (The mention of "entrance" or "opening" also carries sexual connotations, as it does in the Lot story.)

symbol of civilization. Ruth's seduction is perhaps the most elaborate, she enters the threshing floor after cleansing and anointing herself, dressed in her fine garments (3.3). Intercourse remains only a possibility. There is also a careful observance of proprieties, or at least the façade of it, in the request for redemption (3.9) and the concern for Ruth not to be seen at the threshing-floor (3.14). Additionally, the story is a public affair, taken before the assembly of elders at the gate which debates and then approves of the union (4.1-12).

Another related diachronic element is the increasing concern with moral justification. In the final verses of Genesis 19, the text provides no judgement on the actions of Lot's daughters. When the paternity of Tamar's child is revealed, in comparison, Judah acknowledges that Tamar is more righteous than he is (Gen 38.26). The public union of Ruth and Boaz is celebrated and accepted not just by the elders at the gate but also the neighbourhood women. In this last episode, therefore, the union is approved by law, custom, and even fellow neighbours.[27] Connected to the concern over morality is the growing self-awareness of the men in the story. Lot remains without knowledge, both in terms of action and moral evaluation; Judah, although initially unware, eventually realizes the unrighteousness of his actions and accepts his fatherhood; Boaz accepts his responsibility to Ruth (and Naomi), performs his duty, and consummates his union with Ruth in 4.13 without influence from alcohol or deception.

For Fisch, these diachronic progressions point to an important purpose: redemption. That is, the function of the story of Ruth is "to 'redeem' the previous episodes in the corpus,"

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[27] This relates to the book of Ruth's concern for the poor who glean after the reapers and courtesies between a land-owner and servants (chapter 2). All of this establishes law and custom, the adherence to social order—themes which are subverted in the Lot story (and to a certain extent in the Tamar story as well).

exemplified by the extraordinary frequency of the root גאל (redeem) in the book.[28] The union of Ruth and Boaz serves to redeem the land of Elimelech and his dead sons, perpetuating their name as well. Ruth *and* Naomi, likewise, are both redeemed from their widowed state (4.10, 14-16). And as much as these characters are redeemed within the book of Ruth, they also "redeem" characters from their own lineage. Fisch thus writes:

> Of whom, we may ask, is Ruth the redeemer? Might it be suggested that she is the redeemer of the unnamed ancestress who lay with her father in Gen xix? Just as Boaz is the "redeemer" of his ancestor, Judah who, in an only slightly more edifying fashion, "went in" to the supposed prostitute at the crossroads leaving her his seal, his cord and his staff as a pledge. Boaz redeems that pledge.[29]

Fisch thus finds the stories in the Ruth corpus to be a miniature *Heilsgeschichte*, redeeming not only ancestors but also the genealogy of the Davidic line. Kara-Ivanov Kaniel, likewise, situates these stories in regard to David, and draws more explicitly on the placement of Ruth in the Septuagint between the books of Judges and Samuel (as opposed to after the Song of Songs in the *Kethuvim* of the Hebrew Bible). Thus, "this placement fills a gap in the narrative of the birth of King David by telling the story of his grandmother, Ruth the Moabite. Moreover, via the interpretive mode of intertextuality, the genealogical list in the end of the Book of Ruth serves as a summary of the stories of the dynasty of David as well as an introduction to the birth of the redeemer."[30]

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[28] Fisch, "Ruth and the Structure of Covenant History," 435-36.

[29] Fisch, "Ruth and the Structure of Covenant History," 436.

[30] Kara-Ivanov Kaniel, "The Myth of the Messianic Mother," 76. Nielsen likewise concludes: "Just as the book begins with Elimelech, 'God is king,' so it ends with David, God's chosen king" (*Ruth* [OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997], 99). This follows the conjecture that Ruth must have been written during a time when David's origins might have been under discussion and there was a need to provide a defence for his family.

On the other hand, there may be more complexity and irony here to take into account. Tod Linafelt, for instance, thinks that the canonical position of Ruth between Judges and Samuel reveals a "less than ideal portrait of David and kingship" than is commonly supposed.[31] Judges presents an anarchic, decentralized society leading to the murder, rape, and kidnapping of the women in the book. The story of Ruth and Naomi emerges out of this chaos and violence against women that characterizes that period, displaying a relationship of commitment and solidarity that is independent of men—but only to slip back into the "dominant story of male power and prerogative" and then be absorbed into the story of the monarchy. Moreover, the daughters of the monarchic period associated with David often share as undesirable a fate as the daughters during the period of the judges. This applies whether Ruth is situated in between Judges and Samuel or in between Song of Songs and Lamentations. Thus, independent of canonical order *or* the overall fabula of the Hebrew Bible, the redemptive status of Ruth is called into question by the fate of characters like Merab and Michal, Bathsheba, and Tamar.

The stories of these women in the David story will be discussed further below. For now, we may note how this observation leads to a broader questioning, beyond that of canonical position, of the redemptive qualities of Ruth. For as I noted above, this redemption or sublimation is in the interest of patriarchal ideology; the stories in the Ruth corpus are part of what Exum would call "patriarchy's talking cure."[32] That is, Ruth may present a less dangerous and feared form of woman's (a daughter's) sexuality and man's "knowledge" of it, the incest taboo may be avoided even as it is officially sanctioned, and the fear of infertility may burst through in a long line of sons leading to a founding royal figure, but all of these "progressions"

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[31] Tod Linafelt, *Ruth* (Berit Olam; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999), 80-81.
[32] Exum, *Fragmented Women*, 159.

serve patriarchal interests. This is perhaps best displayed in the concluding statement that "a son has been born to Naomi" in 4.17. The fear of failing to preserve the father's seed is thus overcome—even though both the father and his sons have died. In her study, Kara-Ivanov Kaniel draws attention to the remedial function of myths, and quotes Robert Segal's assertion that "Myths *solve* problems rather than *perpetuate* them, are progressive rather than regressive, and abet adjustment to the world rather than flight from it. Myths serve not, or not just, to vent bottled-up drives but also to sublimate them."[33] This perspective, however, is altered when one acknowledges that solutions for some are not solutions for all. Even with Ruth, the larger problem of patriarchal ideology still remains.

This, however, may be giving patriarchy too much regard, and not enough regard to the ambiguity of the biblical text. For even as the Ruth corpus seems to work through, rectify, and soften taboo sexual desires and fears like incest, paternal old age, and infertility, it also points to their persistence. It seems dubious, for example, that the forbidden "sins" of incest and adultery in the Davidic line might be justified through the law of levirate duty.[34] For this is simply to replace one form of incestuous union with another form that is implicitly incestuous. Moreover, if the canny and daring women of the Ruth corpus inevitably perpetuate patriarchal ideals then they also clearly expose the fragility of them. If a system can so easily be manipulated by those it purports to subject, then there are more cracks in it than at first appears. The world is too multivalent, sexual relations too deceitful and full of illusions, familial and ethnic ties too

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[33] Robert Segal, "Introduction," in *Quest of the Hero: Otto Rank, Lord Raglan, and Alan Dundes* (ed. Robert Segal; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), vii-xli (ix). (See Kara-Ivanov-Kaniel, "The Myth of the Messianic Mother," 102.)

[34] See Brenner, "Onan, the Levirate Marriage and the Genealogy of the Messiah," 701-21; and Kara-Ivanov Kaniel, "The Myth of the Messianic Mother" 99-103 and 95 n.52.

muddled, for any so-called *Heilsgeschichte*—patriarchal or not—that could culminate in pristine redemption, devoid of complications and paradox.

Merab, Michal, and Tamar: Daughters and David

"And he will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers," warns Samuel in the midst of his message of what a king will require of his people (1 Sam 8.13). Sons (1 Sam 8.11) and maidservants and manservants (1 Sam 8.16) will also be taken by the king thus revealing how the concepts of family and monarchy are intertwined in the warning.[35] It appears that life under a king may still involve the social ills of the time of the judges, when "there was no king in Israel" and "every man did what was right in his own eyes" (Judg 17.6; 18.1; 19.1; 21.25).[36] The Israelites' repeated concern for a king who judges (שׁפט) for them (1 Sam 8.6, 20), which reads as a slight against the judges (שׁפטים), is turned by Samuel into a message of how the destructive power of the monarchy will similarly extend to entire households. As the books of Samuel and Kings unfold, this prediction begins to show its veracity, exemplified in the inner feuding of the monarchic households themselves. The focus of this section, accordingly, will be on daughters associated with David. This begins with Saul's offer of his daughters, Merab and Michal, to David. Only Michal eventually marries David, but this results in the tangled web of

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[35] See April D. Westbrook, *"And He Will Take Your Daughters…": Woman Story and the Ethical Evaluation of Monarchy in the David Narrative* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), 36-40 (38); Elna K.A. Solvang, *A Woman's Place is in the House: Royal Women of Judah and Their Involvement in the House of David* (JSOTSup 349; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), 108.

[36] This is perhaps nowhere more apparent than in regard to exogamous marriages. So while Judges repeatedly warns against the dangers of exogamous marriages, biblical kings have a great number of them (see, for example, 2 Sam 3.3; 1 Kgs 3.1; 11.1; 14.21; 16.31). The irony becomes all the sharper in that Judges presents the monarchy as a cure to this "social ill."

father, daughter, and son-in-law relations. The fortune of Saul's daughters, however, is not as tragic as that of David's only named daughter, Tamar. Like the Levite's *pilegesh* in Judg 19, her rape is the starting point for a civil war. The drama in her story, however, is not intra-tribal but intra-familial.

Merab and Michal

> The first mention of Merab and Michal is found in 1 Sam 14.49:
>
> Now the sons of Saul were Jonathan, Ishvi, and Malchishua and the names of his two daughters were these: the name of the firstborn was Merab, and the name of the younger was Michal.

The feminine form "firstborn" (בכירה) to describe Merab is found only here and in two other places in the Hebrew Bible. It is used four times in the episode of Lot and his daughters (Gen 19.31, 33, 34, 37) and in the Jacob story when Laban informs his nephew, "It is not so done in our place, to give the younger before the firstborn" (Gen 29.26). This linguistic tie points to a network of correspondences between these two Genesis episodes—particularly the triangular relationship between Laban, his daughters, and Jacob—and the story of Merab and Michal (see below). Moreover, as with the daughters in Genesis, the categorization of Merab and Michal into firstborn and younger is an important part of their characterization. Being the elder, Merab is the first to be offered to David in marriage:

> And Saul said to David: "Here is my elder daughter Merab; her I will give to you as a wife—only be a valiant man for me and battle the battles of Yahweh." For Saul thought, "let not my hand be upon him, but let the hand of the Philistines be upon him." And David said to Saul, "Who am I? And what is my life, my father's clan in Israel, that I

would be a son-in-law to the king?" But at the time when Merab, Saul's daughter, should have been given to David, she was given to Adriel the Meholathite as a wife (1 Sam 18.17-19).

The sequence of events is given the briefest of outlines: an offer, a response, and an ensuing marriage (but not to David). As Anthony Campbell writes, "Saul gets a verse; David gets a verse; the outcome gets a verse."[37] Beneath this structural simplicity, however, lies a dense set of multivalent actions. There is, to start with, the ulterior motive of Saul, linking his offer of marriage to David's death in battle. This offer is particularly ironic when compared to 1 Sam 17.25 in which marriage to the king's daughter is one of the rewards to be given to the man who defeats Goliath. That is, Merab is offered here not because David *has killed* a Philistine but in the hope that David *will be killed* by a Philistine.[38] The classic folkloric motif in which the hero must perform some difficult task in order to win the hand of his bride (as was the case with Caleb's offer of Achsah) is given a twist, for the bride is the bait and the difficult task is a trap.[39] David's response is not accompanied by an interior monologue, but this only serves to make it more

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[37] Anthony Campbell, *1 Samuel* (FOTL VII; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 197. There is a chiastic-like structure to the episode, beginning with a marriage proposal and concluding with a marriage, both linked by the "giving" (נתן) of Merab as a wife. Of course, this apparent symmetry contrasts woth the fact that the originally intended bridegroom, David, is replaced by another. For a more detailed analysis of the parallelism and structure of these verses, see Orly Keren and Hagit Taragan, "Merab, Saul's Mute and Muffled Daughter," *JBL* 134.1 (2015): 85-103 (86-91).

[38] See Peter Miscall, *The Workings of Old Testament Narrative* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 64. For an analysis of the potential links between 17.25 and 18.17-19, see Keren and Taragan, "Merab," 91-4.

[39] See Campbell, *1 Samuel*, 197. Campbell adds that there is a double twist, for the hero escapes the trap and Saul ends up trapped behind a superior rival.

obscure. It may be a gesture of genuine humility,[40] or false humility,[41] or perhaps simply

rhetorical (and thereby purposefully vague).[42] This ambiguity extends to the giving away of

Merab to another man. Was this the work of Saul? It is unclear, as the text uses the passive "she

was given" instead of attributing the action directly to Saul.[43] And even if it were Saul, the

reason for the withdrawal is entirely opaque. Was it because Saul was angered by something

about David's response? Because Saul never intended to marry Merab to David in the first

place? Because Saul wanted to anger David by offering the marriage only to call it off later?

Perhaps the only unambiguous feature of this episode is Merab's silence and passivity,

something that contrasts with her sister Michal and leads us to the second marriage proposal

from Saul to David:

> And Michal, daughter of Saul, loved David; and they told Saul, and the thing was
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> agreeable in his eyes. And Saul thought, "I will give her to him that she might be a snare
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> to him and the hand of the Philistines will be upon him." So Saul said to David a second
>
> time, "become a son-in-law to me today" (1 Sam 18.20-21).[44]

Saul uses his daughters as bait for a trap in both episodes, but now there is the important feature

of Michal's love. It is the only instance in the narratives of the Hebrew Bible in which a woman

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[40] See P. Kyle McCarter, *1 Samuel* (AB 8; New York: Doubleday, 1980), 307-8.

[41] See David J. Clines, "Michal Observed: An Introduction to Reading Her Story," in *Telling Queen Michal's Story: An Experiment in Comparative Interpretation* (eds. David J. Clines and Tamara C. Eskenazi; JSOTSup 119; Sheffield: JSOT press, 1991), 24-63 (28).

[42] See Keith Bodner, *1 Samuel: A Narrative Commentary* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2008), 198.

[43] For an exploration of viewing either David, Merab, or Michal as the reason for the marriage withdrawal, see Keren and Taragan, "Merab," 94-8.

[44] In Codex Vaticanus, the story of Saul's offer of Merab, along with other important passages, is absent. For an analysis of these text critical problems, see McCarter, *1 Samuel*, 306-9 (as well as 5-11). In the MT, however, Saul's offers of Merab and Michal occur in sequence and thus invite comparison.

is explicitly said to have loved a man.[45] Moreover, Michal's love for David echoes that of Jonathan's (1 Sam 18.1-4) and points to the familial divisions that result from Saul's fear and jealousy of David. According to Jobling, Michal's love displays the principal purpose of Merab's story as well: to offer a contrast between the sisters. That is, Merab's "problem" is that she does not spontaneously love David, as Jonathan and Michal do.[46] As a literary foil, therefore, Merab prepares the way for Michal, fulfilling the repeated biblical motif of two daughters.[47] Indeed, the importance of doubling is found in Saul's condition for this second marriage proposal and David's resulting actions. This time Saul requires the foreskins of a hundred Philistines (1 Sam 18.25) and David obliges by bringing back two hundred (1 Sam 18.27).[48] So twice Saul uses his daughters as a bait and twice his trap fails, the second time to an act of doubling itself.

The request of Philistine foreskins also points to an interesting connection between circumcision and marriage, specifically to becoming a son-in-law (חתן). This connection was discussed in chapter 3 in regard to the Shechemites' circumcision of themselves if they are to "intermarry/become sons-in-law" (התחתן) with Jacob's daughters (see also Exodus 4.24-26, in which Zipporah circumcises her son and declares "surely you are a bridegroom/son-in-law (חתן) of blood to me"). In the Dinah story, the symbolism of circumcision as an identity marker that signals unity among a group is reversed, as the Shechemites circumcision only leads to their

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[45] Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 148.

[46] David Jobling, *1 Samuel* (Berit Olam; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998), 183.

[47] Bodner (*1 Samuel*, 199) observes that the line translated, "So Saul said a second time, 'become a son-in-law to me today,'" may also be rendered, "By the second you will become a son-in-law to me today."

[48] Versions of the LXX have David bring back one hundred foreskins and this is also the number cited by both MT and LXX in 2 Sam 3.14. As Campbell (*1 Samuel*, 197) notes, one may assume the story was told many times and in many different versions; in 2 Sam 3.14 the tradition may be different or it may simply be in reference to what was asked for rather than what was provided.

deaths. In this case, I would call attention to circumcision as the quintessential ritual of (symbolic) castration. As such, circumcision relates to the father's control over sons and sons-in-law.[49] In both stories, however, the father is presented as less powerful than the sons/sons-in-law. It is thus David who is the master circumciser. By succeeding in his near impossible task, David turns the tables on Saul's trap, physically circumcising the Philistines and symbolically castrating Saul. One can imagine the scene in which the two hundred foreskins (given in full number) are counted out to Saul, each number a confirmation of the king's failure and David's success. The end result is that Saul has been bested and he has but no choice to give Michal to David as a wife (1 Sam 18.27). Saul's failure leads to Saul's fear, as the verses immediately following Michal's giving away make clear:

> And Saul saw, and he knew, that Yahweh was with David and Michal, daughter of
> Saul,[50] loved him; and he came to fear David even more (1 Sam 18.28-29).

This second mention of Michal's love for David provides a nice inclusio for this episode. Initially, this love was used by Saul as a snare against David, but now it is a source of fear to Saul.

The triangular relationship of father, daughter, and son-in-law is thus established and the loyalty of the wife/daughter to her husband over her father is displayed in the teraphim scene in 1 Sam 19.11-17. Having just escaped Saul's attempt at his life in the king's house, David flees to his own house—but even here he is not safe, as Saul sends guards to kill David in the morning.

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[49] See, for example, Sigmund Freud, "Totem and Taboo," *SE* 13: 1-162.

[50] LXX (Codex Vaticanus) has "all Israel" and not "Michal, daughter of Saul." The Hebrew makes more sense, or at least is more pointed, given that Saul already knows of David's national popularity. What he learns here, however, is the popularity of David within the king's own family (see Bodner, *1 Samuel*, 201).

And just as David was previously the beneficiary of Jonathan's help (1 Sam 19.1-7), he is now saved by Michal.

> And Michal, his wife, reported to him, saying, "If you don't escape with your life tonight, tomorrow you will be killed." And Michal lowered David down through the window, and he went out and fled and escaped. And Michal took the teraphim and she set it on the bed with a pillow of goat's hair at the head-place, and covered it with clothing. And Saul sent messengers to take David, and she said, "He is sick." Then Saul sent messengers to see David, saying, "Bring him up to me on the bed to kill him." But when the messengers went in, behold, the teraphim on the bed with a pillow of goat's hair at its head-place! And Saul said to Michal, "Why have you deceived me thusly, and sent away my enemy and he has escaped?" Michal said to Saul, "He said to me, 'Send me away! Why should I kill you?'" (1 Sam 19.11-17).

The description of Michal has changed from "Saul's daughter" to "David's wife," thereby revealing where her allegiance lies in this scene. The references to Michal as daughter or wife vary throughout her story and point to her conflicting status as part of both Saul's house and David's. Exum thus writes, "Michal is 'hemmed in' narratively—the scenes where she is a subject are surrounded by scenes in which she is 'acted upon,' first by her father, then by her husband—just as she is hemmed in by the men's political machinations."[51]

The allusions to the Jacob story in Gen 29-31 enforce this, as both episodes feature fathers-in-law (Laban and Saul), daughters (Rachel and Michal), and fugitive husbands (Jacob and David) that play a game of deception with each other that involves teraphim.[52] And like

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[51] Exum, *Fragmented Women*, 44-45.
[52] Additionally, one might note the connection between Michal's covering of the bed/teraphim with clothes and Rebekah's covering of Jacob with Esau's clothes in Gen 27—also

Rachel's theft and concealing of the teraphim, Michal's cunning use of the idols places her in

opposition to her father. Michal's ruse may even have particular resonance, as Samuel's second

denunciation of Saul in 1 Sam 15.23 references teraphim as well: "For rebellion is like the sin of

divination, and insubordination is like iniquity and teraphim." The recurrence of the teraphim,

courtesy of his own daughter, comes back to taunt Saul.[53]

As we saw in chapter 3, the teraphim are powerful signifiers. My approach takes the

many theories of what the teraphim might have been—household gods, ancestor figurines,

fertility idols, and so on—and explores how these theories might illuminate the literary artistry of

the text. Their potential function as household gods, for instance, highlights the liminal position

of the daughter's belonging to the houses of both father and husband. Rachel's theft of the

teraphim symbolizes her severance from Laban's house, just as Michal's teraphim bed-trick

indicates her loyalty to David over her father. The teraphim might also be symbols of sexuality

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an act used to deceive a father. Alter further observes that the use of "goat's hair" conjures up the image of Jacob's "stick trick": "Michal puts goat's hair at the head of the bed, because being black or dark brown, it would look like a man's hair, but goats (and the color of hair are also prominent in the Jacob story" (Robert Alter, *A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel* [New York: Norton, 1999], 120). For more on the connection between these two stories, see Bodner, *1 Samuel*, 206-8; Diana Edelman, *King Saul in the Historiography of Judah* (JSOTSup 121; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 149-52; Exum, *Fragmented Women*, 49, n.13.

The divergences between the two stories are also important to consider. For example, Rachel's use of menstruation to conceal the teraphim is echoed by Michal's invoking of "illness" to put off Saul's messengers; however, in the case of Rachel, the teraphim are the hidden objects, whereas with Michal the teraphim are the instruments of deception. Saul, moreover, eventually discovers Michal's ruse, whereas Laban remains entirely oblivious. Saul's realization, however, only leads to further manipulation, as Michal asserts that David threatened her life and thus left her with no choice but to help her husband. This final scene of heated dialogue between Saul and Michal carries ironic implications, as Michal's love for David will later turn into disdain—a change of emotions that parallels Saul's initial love for David (1 Sam 16.21) that turns into hatred and jealousy.

[53] See Robert Polzin, *Samuel and the Deuteronomist: A Literary Study of the Deuteronomic History: Part Two: 1 Samuel* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1993), 182.

and fertility. Thus, Rachel, the initially barren daughter, steals the teraphim and cunningly hides them with her excuse of menstruation. The image of menstrual blood on the teraphim is not just a mockery of foreign idols but a striking symbol of infertility over fertility, emphasized by a woman who, after years of lamenting her uninterrupted menses, uses her (supposed) period to gain advantage over her father. Barrenness, therefore, may be the ultimate connection between Rachel and Michal (even though Rachel has two children). For the principal theme of Rachel's life (the desire for children) is echoed by Michal's childless fate (2 Sam 6.23).[54]

The finer details of Michal's deception scene exhibit further evidence of this.[55] The maternal setting of the tent, as is the case with Rachel, is absent; however, the matrimonial image of the bed and the method of escape through the window carry their own symbolically weighted implications. The window, for instance, will reappear in 2 Sam 6.16 when Michal peers through the window and sees David leaping and dancing before the ark. The woman at the window is a popular ancient Near Eastern motif which also appears a number of times in the Bible, as in Jezebel's looking out the window for Jehu's arrival (2 Kgs 9.30) and Sisera's mother looking out

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[54] See Peter Miscall, *1 Samuel: A Literary Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 127. Both women, moreover, are subject to a curse, so to speak. Rachel's stealing of Laban's "gods" leads to Jacob's pronouncement to Laban that whoever has the "gods" shall not live (Gen 31.32). Michal has a more deliberate encounter with David in 2 Sam 6 where her rebuke of the king is linked to her childless fate.

[55] Lillian Klein asserts that Michal's use and possession of the teraphim may be a symbol of "her failure to worship the one God of the Israelites" ("Michal, The Barren Wife," in *Samuel and Kings: A Feminist Companion to the Bible* [Second Series] [ed. Athalya Brenner; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000], 37-46 [44]). The worship of foreign gods, of course, is one of the main snares in the Deuteronomistic History (see the worship of Gideon's ephod in Judg 8.27); however, if the use of the teraphim is an implicit criticism of Michal then what does it say about David that the idols are found in his house? Clines accordingly argues that any criticism that might be attached to Michal simply by the use of the teraphim would then also have to be attached to David ("Michal Observed," 43-44).

the window in vain for her returning son (Judg 5.28).[56] The woman watches from her house the

world of men—she is an "outsider" to this world even as she is confined to the inside of the

house. Michal, as David's wife, now belongs in his house and becomes metonymically

associated with it. So when the house is no longer safe for David, Michal, as Exum notes,

becomes the agent of his rescue: "By letting David out of the window…Michal figuratively

births David into freedom. David, in 1 Samuel 19, passes through the vagina/window into the

larger world, so to speak, to meet his destiny. Michal stays behind, inside the house, called

'David's house,' attending to domestic matters that appear natural and innocent—making the bed

and caring for the sick."[57] This maternal imagery contrasts with the vacant bed, occupied only by

the teraphim mannequin. In other words, the bed is not a place of David and Michal's love but

rather of deception, idols, sickness, and ultimately emptiness—for David's escape from the

window is also his departure from the conjugal bed. The entire scene plays out like a reversed

bed-trick. The trickery is done not for the purposes of sexual deception, even though the bed is

used; a substitute for the husband replaces him, but it is not another body. Saul's messengers,

symbolically representing the father and the father's gaze, look upon the pseudo-sexual scene

and discover that the son-in-law whom they wish to kill is not there. If the teraphim are figurines

of dead ancestors, or at least symbolically represent them, the irony would be even more pointed.

The groom has been replaced by dead ancestors, the bride is left bereft, and the father is left

ensnared by his own trap.[58]

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[56] See McCarter, *II Samuel* (AB 9; New York: Doubleday, 1984), 172; Exum, *Fragmented Women*, 47. McCarter asserts that there are two sides to the motif: the bride (or prostitute) watching for her lover's arrival and the mother (or sometimes also bride/lover) waiting for her beloved's return from battle.

[57] Exum, *Fragmented Women*, 47.

[58] It is worth recalling Saul's initial idea that Michal would be a "snare" (מוקֵשׁ) for David. In Judg 8.27, Gideon's ephod becomes a "snare" to him and his family, and Judg 2.3 speaks of

Initially, David's departure from the window seems permanent. Nothing is said of Michal again until 1 Sam 25.44: "And Saul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Palti the son of Laish who was from Gallim."[59] In this verse, Michal is described as both Saul's daughter and David's wife, again confirming her attachment to both houses. It appears though that Saul, the father, is now left with the upper hand. He still has control over Michal and even though she is David's wife he gives her away to another man—as if to one-up the previous withdrawal of Merab's marriage offer. This brief note of Michal's new marriage, moreover, comes directly after two new marriages of David (to Abigail and Ahinoam), giving an ironic connotation to Michal's description as David's wife. Their union has been split, resulting in new marriages for both even as the text still describes them as husband and wife.

Michal does, however, end up back in David's house. In the war and political sparring between the houses of Saul and David following Saul's death described in 2 Sam 3, David twice

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foreign gods being a "snare" before Israel. So Michal's use of the teraphim (the snare) may be a symbol of the dramatic retribution Saul suffers as a result of his intended snare.

[59] The location of Gallim is unknown, though its name "heaps" recalls the region of Gilead "heap of witness." Interestingly, Merab is given to Adriel the Meholathite (1 Sam 18.19), and Abel-meholah was located close to Jabesh-Gilead. Both husbands therefore are associated with Gilead, a place with strong connections to Saul.

The genealogy of both husbands is also noteworthy. Palti is a son of Laish, which perhaps connects to the Laish overtaken by the Danites in Judg 18. It is as if Palti is a textual embodiment of this place—innocent and subject to the whims of warriors and those more powerful. Adriel, for his part, is not given a familial designation in 1 Sam 18.19, when he first appears; however, 2 Sam 21.8 adds that he is the son of Barzillai. Is this the Barzillai who is one of the principal supporters of David (e.g. 2 Sam 19.31-39) and is often identified as Barzillai the Gileadite (e.g. 2 Sam 17.27; 19.31, see also Ezra 2.61; Neh 7.63)? If so, there is something interesting in the fact that Adriel is given a daughter of Saul's while Adriel's father is an ally of David. The potential mixture is indicative of the entire battle between Saulides/Benjaminites and Davidides/Judahites. And all of it is mixed up in the liminal region of Gilead, both part of and independent of Israel, an essential player in this battle over power/kingship and peripheral to the centre. It functions as a nice analogy to the role of Merab and Michal as well, for they too are symbolic of the failed alliance between Saul and David—presenting the potential for union but then given to men associated with Gilead.

demands to have Michal back—first from Abner (v. 13) and then from Ishbosheth (v.14). To Abner he refers to Michal as "Saul's daughter," whereas to Ishbosheth he refers to her as "my wife." The switch in designations is obvious political maneuvering. Abner has just offered to defect from Saul's house to David's, and thus David requires him, as a symbol of good faith, to hand over a member of Saul's family. Accordingly, David cannot refer to Michal as "Saul's daughter" to Ishbosheth, as Saul's son could not mistake the symbolic significance of a request for a daughter of his father. Instead, he reminds Ishbosheth that Michal is the wife he acquired with the price of Philistine foreskins.[60] As usual, Michal is caught up in the political (and personal) machinations between men. When Ishbosheth obliges and sends for Michal to return to David, nothing is recorded of her reaction. This contrasts with the vivid depiction of Palti's (this time the full name Paltiel is used) emotions: "And her husband walked with her, weeping after her all the way to Bahurim" (2 Sam 3.16).[61] The new husband's expressive outburst also contrasts with David's cold calculations and the continuing absence of any description of his feelings toward Michal.

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[60] For further analysis of this sequence of events, see David J. Clines, "Michal's Story in Its Sequential Unfolding," in *Telling Queen Michal's Story: An Experiment in Comparative Interpretation* (eds. David J. Clines and Tamara C. Eskenazi; JSOTSup 119; Sheffield: JSOT press, 1991), 129-40 (136-7).

[61] This theme of marriage offered and taken away is found throughout the daughter stories of the Hebrew Bible. First there were Lot's daughters, presumably betrothed but not married. Their grooms are annihilated along with the rest of the men of Sodom and then end up having intercourse with their father, the very man who had previously offered them to the Sodomite mob. Leah is a substitute Rachel—the elder being put in place of the younger, leading to Jacob's marriage to both daughters. Samson's first wife is given to another, and the younger is offered in her place (a kind of reversal of the story of Jacob but relying upon the same structure of marriage to two daughters). And now there is the story of Merab and Michal. The daughters are both offered in marriage to David only to eventually marry another man. The elder comes first but the younger represents the more important relationship.

This brings us to the final extended scene with Michal in 2 Samuel 6. Here Michal is repeatedly referred to solely as "Saul's daughter" (vv.16, 20, and 23), thereby signalling the contention between her and David in this passage (just as she was called "David's wife" when she contended with Saul). Indeed, the very first action of Michal in this story is to peer through her window (echoing 1 Sam 19.12), see David dancing before the ark, and then despise him in her heart (2 Sam 6.16). And thus when David returns to his house (בית) he is greeted by a strong message from this daughter (בת) of Saul: "How the king of Israel has honoured himself today, uncovering himself today before the eyes of the maids of his servants as a foolish one shamelessly uncovers himself" (2 Sam 6.20). David responds, firstly, by drawing attention to Yahweh's preference "above your father and all his house" (2 Sam 6.21), again drawing attention to Michal's conflicting household allegiances. There is, moreover, a potentially forceful pun in the "above all" (מכל), in the phrase "above all his house," with Michal's name (מיכל) thereby further highlighting Michal's connection to Saul's house. David then matches Michal's sarcastic tone by elaborating that he will behave even more shamelessly than he already is, humiliating/humbling himself in his own eyes while still maintaining honour among the maidservants (2 Sam 6.22). The accusation by Michal and the rebuttal by David are thus charged with sexual imagery, dancing and uncovering oneself in conjunction with gazing eyes. For one who formerly loved David, this display may be offensive not just because of its sexual vulgarity but also because of David's neglect of her.[62] This implicit neglect is found in the concluding verse of the chapter as well: "And for Michal, daughter of Saul, there was no child until the day

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[62] See Clines, "Michal's Story in Its Sequential Unfolding," 138. The singing and dancing of David before the ark being witnessed by the young women echoes the song of the women at the beginning of the David story (1 Sam 18.7). This parallelism further enforces Michal's relation to Saul, for just as the song in 1 Sam 18.7 was a source of jealousy for Saul so here David's celebration is a source of disdain to Saul's daughter.

of her death" (2 Sam 6.23). Exum points out that this mention of "death" (מות) hauntingly echoes the last words in 1 Samuel 19.17, David's (fictional?) threat, "should I kill (מות) you?" It is, therefore, as if "Michal's literary murder at the hands of the androcentric narrator—by means of David's words and the hints that David may be responsible for Michal's childlessness—would make it seem that David's threat to kill Michal has now been carried out."[63] The previous teraphim scene—with its connections to Rachel, infertility, and an empty conjugal bed—has prepared the way for this ending for Michal. The daughter who has been exchanged multiple times among multiple men ironically becomes a symbol of the barrenness of her father's house. Even more pointed is the fact that Michal was originally intended by Saul to be a snare that would lead to *David's* death, the very individual who is (directly or indirectly) responsible for Michal's infertile fate.

There is another potential mention of Michal that carries intriguing implications. In 2 Sam 21.8, David takes "the five sons of Merab the daughter of Saul whom she bore to Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite," and hands them over to the Gibeonites so that they can take vengeance on Saul's house. The problem, however, is that "the Masoretic Text actually reads "Michal" here. To be sure, there is textual support for "Merab," and Adri(el) is cited as Merab's

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[63] Exum, *Fragmented Women*, 50. The precise reason for Michal's childlessness is not explained. The text, for instance, does not say that she was barren, perhaps implying that the reason is that David never slept with her again. Or perhaps Michal refused to sleep with David. There may even be a hint that Yahweh, the one who opens and closes wombs, is to blame. Whatever the reason though, it is hard to argue that David is not ultimately responsible. Kalmanofsky (*Dangerous Sisters*, 50) thus writes: "At the beginning of her story, Saul hopes Michal will entrap David within his house in order to destroy him. In the end, Michal is trapped within David's house."

husband in 1 Sam 18.19.[64] Moreover, as we have just seen Michal is deemed to be childless until

the day of her death in 2 Sam 6.23. Still, there may be some significance in this blurring together

of the identities of Merab and Michal. Jobling, for instance, observes how the stories of Michal

and Merab repeatedly diverge only to always come back together.[65] Both are offered in marriage

to David, but only Michal, who loves David, ends up marrying him—but then Michal, like

Merab, is eventually given to another man anyway. In another divergence, however, David takes

Michal back and she remains childless, whereas Merab stays with Adri(el) and has children—but

then David ends up leading Merab's children to their deaths and the contrast between the sisters

again vanishes. The final irony, therefore, is that in 2 Sam 21.8, some ancient versions read

Michal (notably the MT) instead of Merab: "The Freudian nature of the slip is only too obvious.

After their separate stories have run their course, after all the contrasts have been made between

them, they become indistinguishable again. They are the undifferentiated fillers of the category

'daughter of Saul,' just as they were when an anonymous daughter of Saul was to be the prize for

Goliath's slayer (1 Sam 17:25)."[66] This text-critical uncertainty, therefore, functions as a sort of

summary statement on the stories of Merab and Michal. They are fillers to be exchanged among

men for the purposes that the men desire—and are destined to lead desolate fates simply because

they are daughters of Saul.

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[64] For an extended discussion of the text critical issues surrounding this verse, see McCarter, *II Samuel*, 439.

[65] Jobling, *1 Samuel*, 183-4. Kalmanofsky similarly argues for a reading that embraces the ambiguity and therefore intentionally blurs the identities of Michal and Merab (*Dangerous Sisters*, 49-50). And while Kalmanofsky's focus relates to how the two women relate to each other as sisters, she likewise concludes that "their characters and their fate are fused to reflect the fate of their father" (50).

[66] Jobling, *1 Samuel*, 184.

Being daughters of Saul was what involved these daughters with David in the first place. He was their original groom, the one who was supposed to be the husband to their sons—instead he brings about the death of these sons. The promised and failed unions between Merab/Michal and David symbolize the failure of an alliance not just between Saul's house and David's but between Benjamin and Judah. There is, for instance, the dual role of Mephibosheth, for David spares Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son (2 Sam 21.7), but then hands over the Mephibosheth that is Rizpah's son to his death (2 Sam 21.8). Further, Rizpah—Saul's *pilegesh*, the source of contention between Ishbosheth and Abner in 2 Sam 3.7—plays the role of grieving mother denied to Merab/Michal.

Tamar

If the lamentable fortune of Merab and Michal is due to their being Saul's daughters (who thus cannot reproduce or be integrated into David's line), then what does this say about the rape of Tamar, David's daughter, in 2 Samuel 13? In other words, it does not seem to matter who one's father is in the stories of kings—daughters seem to have it bad either way. This reveals, yet again, that kingship does not solve the problems for daughters and families that Judges implied it would (see Judg 17-21). The problem runs deeper; it is part of the overall patriarchal system of the Bible. If, moreover, Tamar's name is linked to that of her ancestress in Gen 38, then this further complicates the redemptive attributes of the Ruth corpus.[67] That is, the progressive

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[67] Beyond the name Tamar and the sexual (incestuous) dimensions, Genesis 38 links with 2 Samuel 13 (and the surrounding chapters of 2 Sam 11-12 and 2 Sam 14) in several ways. Both stories, for example, deal with the tribe of Judah, use a setting of sheep shearing, and several linguistic connections (as in the use of the root פרץ, Gen 39.29; 2 Sam 13.25, 27). There are also potential links between several names and proper nouns in the two stories, as in Onan (אונן) and Amnon (אמנון). For more comparison between the two stories, see Gary A. Rendsburg, "David and His Circle in Genesis xxxviii," *VT* 36 (1986): 438-46; Fokkelien van Dijk-Hemmes, "Tamar and the Limits of Patriarchy: Between Rape and Seduction," in *Anti-Covenant: Counter-Reading Women's Lives in the Hebrew Bible* (ed. Mieke Bal; Sheffield: Almond, 1989), 135-56; C.Y.S.

civility from the stories of Lot's daughters to Tamar to Ruth, must be viewed in light of the stories of Michal and Tamar. (Again, this would be the case either in canonical order or in terms of the overall fabula of the Hebrew Bible.) If Lot's daughters stand as archetypal, mythical figures, displaying the desires and repressions surrounding daughters, then it is as if the two Tamars stand as bookends for daughter stories, the latter perhaps even symbolizing the retrospective punishment of the former (though I would not go so far as to claim this to be direct literary allusion). In the case of Tamar in 2 Samuel, family seduction is not committed out of desperation to improve one's situation or to produce offspring but solely out of lust. This points to another key intertext to 2 Sam 13: the story of Dinah. Both Tamar and Dinah are daughters who are raped/humiliated (ענה) by a prince.[68] Furthermore, the father in each case, Jacob and David respectively, does not avenge the reproachful action, but rather a brother or brothers do so in the father's stead. Indeed, David's inaction is more pronounced than that of Jacob's, not only because he is king, and thus does not face many of the safety issues that Jacob fears in Gen 34,

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Ho, "The Stories of the Family Troubles of Judah and David: A Study of Their Literary Links," *VT* 49 (1999): 514–531; A.G. Auld, "Tamar Between David, Judah, and Joseph," *SEÅ* 65 (2002): 93–106; John E. Harvey, *Retelling the Torah: The Deuteronomistic Historian's Use of Tetrateuchal Narratives* (New York: T & T Clark, 2004), 56-7.

 Additionally, one might note the important link between Tamar's "long sleeved robe" (כתנת פסים) (2 Sam 13.18) which parallels that of Joseph's (Gen 37.3). See Adrien Janis Bledstein, "Tamar and the 'Coat of Many Colors,'" in *Samuel and Kings: A Feminist Companion to the Bible* (Second Series) (ed. Athalya Brenner; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 65-83. Thus, there is a link between Joseph—the beautiful (יפה) boy (Gen 39.6)—and Tamar, the beautiful (יפה) sister (2 Sam 13.1) (see below).

 [68] Beyond this linguistic connection between "rape/humiliation" (ענה) in both stories (which is also paired with "lie down" [שכב] in both texts), there is the repetition of the actions of the prince as a "reproach/disgrace" (חרפה) (Gen 34.14; 2 Sam 13.13), the prince's act described as "foolish" (נבלה) (Gen 34.7; 2 Sam 13.12), and a key character keeping "quiet" (חרש) (Gen 34.5; 2 Sam 13.20)—to list just a few of the important ties. For more on the comparison between these stories, see Esther Fuchs, *Sexual Politics*, 200-24; Rashkow, *Taboo or Not Taboo*, 142-6; Harvey, *Retelling the Torah*, 56; Naomi Graetz, *Unlocking the Garden: A Feminist Jewish Look at the Bible, Midrash and God* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgia Press, 2005), 30.

but also because his problem is solely intra-familial.[69] Because of the close similarities with the story of Bathsheba (2 Sam 11), David also plays a more culpable role than that of Jacob. The impact of David's earlier sexual deviance and murder is now displayed in the even darker sexual deviance and murder within his own family.[70]

Tamar is never referred to as David's daughter; in fact, there is no mention at all of direct contact between the two. She is introduced as Absalom's sister and Amnon's object of love (2 Sam 13.1). Thus, from the very start she is sandwiched between the two men who most control her fate in the ensuing narrative. David's presence, however, still lurks in the background, as both Absalom and Amnon are given their full names, "son of David." It is a fitting introduction for David's presence in the chapter—never a dominating role but always subtly involved. Despite being largely absent in the narrative, he is the one who sends Tamar to Amnon (2 Sam 13.7), and thus leads Tamar to be raped, just as he is the one who sends Amnon to Absalom (2 Sam 13.27), and thus leads Amnon to be murdered. Each time, to be sure, he is seemingly unaware of his sons' scheming, but the fact that he sends both children to their horrific fates is one of many signs that suggest a certain liability on his part. At the very least, it emphasizes David's inability to control his family and the devious plotting of his sons (devious plotting that very much parallels his own actions with Bathsheba and Uriah).

This familial fragmentation is highlighted by the chiastic structure of the narrative unit of Tamar's rape. It progresses through a series of emotions, beginning with Amnon's love for

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[69] See Stiebert, *Fathers and Daughters*, 58; and Helena Zlotnick, *Dinah's Daughters: Gender and Judaism from the Hebrew Bible to Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 41.

[70] See Mark Gray, "A Chip Off the Old Block? Rhetorical Strategy in 2 Sam 13.7-17: The Rape of Tamar and the Humiliation of the Poor," *JSOT* 77 (1998): 39-54. Gray argues that the crimes committed in 2 Sam 13 are more serious than those of David in 2 Sam 11 and thus the two stories are not simply parallel but degenerate from bad to worse.

Tamar (v.1) and ending with Absalom's hate for Amnon (v.22). At the centre of the story is

Amnon's rape of Tamar, which results in his love turning to hate (v.15).[71] Unlike Shechem,

therefore, who expresses his love for Dinah after he rapes/humiliates her (Gen 34.2-3), Amnon

comes to hate the initial object of his love. Tamar begins the narrative as a beautiful sister and

virgin but ends as a "desolate woman" in the house of Absalom.[72] Absalom's final words to her

are "do not take this matter to heart (לֵב)," which certainly must have a bitter ring given that

Amnon's seduction of Tamar entailed his request to have his sister bake (לבב) him some (heart

shaped?) cakes (לְבִיבוֹת) (2 Sam 13.6, 8, 10).[73] The phrase is repeated by Jonadab to David in 2

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[71] See George Ridout, "The Rape of Tamar: A Rhetorical Analysis of 2 Sam 13:1-22," in *Rhetorical Criticism: Essays in Honour of James Muilenburg* (eds. Jared J. Jackson and Martin Kessler; Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1974), 75-84; Frank M. Yamada, *Configurations of Rape in the Hebrew Bible: A Literary Analysis of Three Rape Narratives* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 105-6. Shimon Bar-Efrat (*Narrative Art in the Bible* [JSOTSup 70; Sheffield: Almond Press, 1989], 278) draws attention to how the story moves through different pairs of characters, with the second character in each pair becoming the first in the next sequence of characters: Jonadab and Amnon (vv.4-5), Amnon and David (v.6), David and Tamar (v.7), Tamar and Amnon (vv.8-16), Amnon and the servant (v.17), the servant and Tamar (v.18), Tamar and Absalom (vv.19-20). This too draws attention to the centrality of the scene between Tamar and Amnon.

[72] In 2 Sam 14.27, Absalom is recorded as having three sons, "and one daughter, whose name was Tamar, she was a woman of beautiful appearance." The name, and her description as "beautiful" (יפת), alludes to this Tamar of 2 Sam 13. It may symbolize the transfer of control from Absalom to David, appearing as it does within the larger context of Absalom's coup. It should be remembered that with Amnon's death, Absalom moves closer to the throne. Beyond political implications, however, it may symbolize the continued presence of Tamar as somebody dear to Absalom (he defended her honour and kept her under his protection in his house).

[73] McCarter (*II Samuel*, 322) argues that this was a dish of hearty dumplings and not "cakes." He notes that these dumplings may have been heart shaped but the verb לבב (translated as "bake" here) also has an erotic sense, as in Song 4.9: "You arouse (לבב) me, my sister, bride! You arouse (לבב) me with one of your eyes." Throughout this scene, in fact, there is an intermingling of erotic undertones in connection to food. In addition to the multivalence of לבב, there is the repeated mention of making the food before Amnon's eyes (2 Sam 13.5, 6, 8) so that he may see it, as if the kneading of the dough is a form of arousal. Moreover, Amnon requests to be fed from the hand of Tamar (2 Sam 13.5, 6, 10), emphasizing not only physical closeness but a maternal, nurturing nature to Tamar which he will exploit. Finally, we might note the most obvious point: this food is not what Amnon actually desires and hunger is not what he is seeking to alleviate.

Sam 13.33, as the shrewd nephew attempts to persuade the king that not all his sons are dead but just Amnon. This repetition suggests that father and daughter are linked through their mutual deception. Mutual deception, however, does not equate with shared victimhood. Tamar is depicted in thoroughly innocent and tragic terms—obeying her father, tending to her brother, and resisting his disgraceful advances. After being sent out of Amnon's chamber with the door locked behind her (again, there is the association with daughters and doors), she tears the long-sleeved coat (כתנת פסים) that she is wearing. The only other occurrence of long-sleeved coat in the Hebrew Bible is Joseph's famous garment, given to him by his father as a sign of his favoured status (Gen 37.3).[74] There is little to suggest that Tamar's robe is a similar symbol of special paternal favoritism, given that its sole description is that it is the type of robe that all the virgin daughters of the king wore (2 Sam 13.18); rather, the connection with the Joseph story, I would assert, is meant to highlight David's failure to protect Tamar as well as his nonexistent rebuke of Amnon. In both stories a father sends a child apparelled in a long-sleeved coat to perform a service for his or her brother(s) but the child is then abused and cast out. In each case the father is unwitting, but still carries a level of implicit guilt. In Gen 37, for instance, Joseph's brothers strip him of his long-sleeved robe and dip it in goat's blood to convince their father that Joseph has been devoured by a wild animal (Gen 37.31-33). This echoes Gen 27 in which Jacob deceives his own father with the use of a slaughtered goat (and perhaps also Gen 30 in which Jacob again uses goats as an instrument of deception). Jacob, in other words, reaps what he

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[74] Often כתנת פסים is translated as "coat of many colours," or something of the like. This difference can be traced to the LXX's translation of ποικίλος (many coloured) for the enigmatic Hebrew modifying noun פסים. However, most scholars take this modifying noun to mean "long-sleeved," based on the meaning of פס as "extremity" indicating the palm of the hand or the sole of the foot (so ankle-length garment or robe that reaches to the palms). See Bledstein, "Tamar's 'Coat of Many Colors,'" 66; Arnold, *Genesis*, 318; Speiser, *Genesis*, 289.

sows—and that he is an unwitting catalyst in Joseph's abuse from his brothers serves to make

this point more forcefully. That David is subject to a similar fate is made clear in the central unit

of the passage in which Amnon rapes Tamar. That the rape is incestuous, moreover, aptly reveals

the circularity of problems for David's family.[75] It will lead to Absalom's fratricide of Amnon

and is the result of David's adultery and murder in 2 Sam 11. So while David is peripheral to the

main sequence of actions in 2 Sam 13, he is still implicitly responsible for what happens—just

like Jacob in Gen 37.

It is noteworthy, therefore, that Tamar invokes David in the middle of her rejection of

Amnon's solicitation. She implores her brother to "speak to the king, for he will not withhold me

from you" (2 Sam 13.13). The suggestion is that David has control over things—and perhaps

could prevent this reproachful thing from happening if he were more present. But appealing to

David's regal authority passes over his paternal authority, as she mirrors the narrator's reticence

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[75] For some scholars, incest is not the issue here, for Tamar seems to believe that forming a union with Amnon is not out of the question (2 Sam 13.13). It may be, therefore, that no incest prohibition exists for royalty or that such brother and half-sister unions were (somewhat) acceptable (contra Lev 18.9, 11; 20.7; Deut 27.22). For discussion along these lines, see van Dijk-Hemmes, "Tamar and the Limits of Patriarchy," 139; Victor Matthews and Don Benjamin, "Amnon and Tamar: A Matter of Honor (2 Samuel 13:1-38)," in *Crossing Boundaries and Linking Horizons: Studies in Honor of Michael C. Astour on His 80th Birthday* (eds. Gordon D. Young, Mark W. Chavalas, and Richard E. Averbeck; Bethseda: CDL, 1997), 339-66 (351); William H. Propp, "Kinship in 2 Samuel 13," *CBQ* 55 [1999]: 39-53; Zlotnick, *Dinah's Daughters*, 41.

To completely ignore the incestuous implications of this chapter, however, would be misguided. For one, the preponderance of sibling terms employed here suggests that incest certainly plays a part. McCarter, moreover, points out that, given the patriarchal mindset of the biblical authors, it is difficult "to think of the 'sacrilege' Tamar speaks of so emphatically in vv.12-13 as simple rape…since a man who raped an unbetrothed woman was not punished but only required to marry her (Deut 22:28); the rape of Dinah in Genesis 34 was a sacrilege because Shechem was not an Israelite, and the Levite's concubine in Judges 19 was raped to death by a group of men. Surely, then, the sacrilege in the present passage is incest" (*II Samuel*, 323). See also Bledstein, "Tamar and the 'Coat of Many Colors,'" 82; and Rashkow, *Taboo or Not Taboo*, 142-9.

to identify her as David's daughter and simply calls David "the king" (instead of "father"). This contrasts with the immense frequency of sibling terms used for Tamar, Amnon, and Absalom, as "brother" and "sister" are mentioned six times each in vv.1-14. Such repetition not only underscores the incest theme (this is truly an "endogamous" affair, within the bounds of the family), it also displays David's detachment and the sons' usurping of the father's role in determining the fate of Tamar.

Playing on this dynamic, Ilona Rashkow interprets the entire scene as evidence of displaced Oedipal fears and desires that occur in sibling rivalries.[76] Part of Amnon's love for Tamar is love for David, and desire to be loved back by the father. This, however, is mixed with competition for the father's love with Tamar (and Absalom) thereby explaining the mixture of love and hate. Rashkow summarizes: "Amnon's love for David becomes Amnon's hatred of Tamar; incest with Tamar becomes rivalry with Absalom. And the object of desire, paternal love, is denied."[77] While I am unconvinced of Rashkow's overall analysis, the theme of displacement and the embracing of conflicting emotions that surround intra-familial conflict are helpful interpretive concepts. This is especially the case in regard to David, as he connects Tamar, Absalom, and Amnon together through his paternal role. But this paternal relationship is obscured, characterizing David as a distant father. In the numerous mentions of love and hate in 2 Sam 13, David is never once the subject or object. His only emotion is that of exceeding anger in v.21, though it is not clear if he is angry with Amnon, himself, or the entire situation.[78]

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[76] Rashkow, *Taboo or Not Taboo*, 142-9. She refers to Freud's comments on incestuous sibling relationships in "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality," *SE* 7: 135-243.

[77] Rashkow, *Taboo or Not Taboo*, 149.

[78] The LXX removes most this ambiguity by mentioning that David did not rebuke Amnon because "he loved him" and because Amnon was his firstborn (see McCarter, *II Samuel*, 319-20 for further discussion of this textual issue).

David's exceeding anger, and ineffectual reaction to it, echoes his response to Nathan's parable in 12 Sam 12.5—and this connection points to perhaps the strongest criticism of David's failure to protect Tamar. In the parable, Nathan describes a poor man who had nothing, "except one little ewe-lamb which he had raised and nourished. And it grew up together with him and his sons, and ate of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was like a *daughter* to him" (2 Sam 12.3). As Stiebert points out, this mention of the lamb as a daughter has potential implications for David's relationship with Tamar: "David's lack of proper paternal love and affection for Tamar…stands in stark contrast to this image of intimacy and loving care. The image in the parable…is an implicit but pointed proleptic criticism of David's inaction in response to his innocent daughter's violation. Whereas the word בת [daughter] is striking and noticeable in the parable, its absence is striking and noticeable in the story of Tamar."[79] The daughterly cosset is not the only mention of a daughter in 2 Sam 11-12. Bathsheba's name (בת־שבע) means "daughter of an oath" (or perhaps "daughter of seven") and thus likewise ties her to both Nathan's parable and Tamar, particularly as an object of unjust treatment by David. There is, moreover, another potential mention of "daughter" in Yahweh's rebuke of David in 2 Sam 12.8. The MT reads, "I gave you the house [בית] of your master," but some ancient Versions read "daughter" here—and if "master" refers to Saul, then this daughter would be Michal.[80] If this is the case, we can construct the following network of correspondences: David was given the

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[79] Stiebert, *Fathers and Daughters*, 63-4. For a survey of interpretations of Nathan's parable, see Hugh Pyper, *David as Reader: 2 Samuel 12:1–15 and the Poetics of Fatherhood*, 84–110. For further discussion, see also Jeremy Schipper, "Did David Overinterpret Nathan's Parable in 2 Samuel 12:1-6?", 383-407; Erik Eynikel, "The Parable of Nathan (II Sam. 12,1-4) and the Theory of Semiosis," 71-90.

[80] For more discussion on this text-critical issue, see McCarter, *II Samuel*, 295. The Peshitta (Syriac translation) simply reads "daughter." The Lucianic manuscripts of the LXX read παντα "all," which McCarter thinks could read as a vestige of the original מכל בת, "Michal, [your master's] daughter."

daughter of his master (Michal) and thus the keys to the kingdom, but then did evil in Yahweh's sight by committing adultery with a daughter of an oath (Bathsheba), which resulted in the rape of his own daughter (Tamar) and the civil war within his own family. In other words, daughters do not fare well in David's hands: not when they are given to him as a bride, not when they are the object of his love, and not when they are his own.

The Daughter of Zion: David's City

The comely and delicate woman, I will cut off/I have likened to the Daughter of Zion—Jer 6.2

From David's only named daughter, we now turn our attention to his city, Jerusalem, which is personified throughout the Prophets and Lamentations and often given the filial name "Daughter of Zion" (בת־ציון). Additional titles, such as "Virgin Daughter of Jerusalem" (בתולת בת־ציון), "Daughter of Jerusalem" (בת־ירושלים), and the related "Daughter of my people" (בת־עמי), are also used, typically in conjunction or parallelism with "Daughter of Zion."[81] This daughter is perhaps the most prominent in all of the Hebrew Bible; she is a dynamic character who weeps, mourns, loves, nurtures, and rebels—and at times she gives extended speeches. And yet, there is no single story for her, only sporadic images and vignettes. Perhaps the most extended episode is her "biography" in Ezek 16 as well as her prominence in Lam 1-2, which, accordingly, will be

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[81] I will use "Daughter of Zion" as the default title, as it is the most common of these expressions (see Lam 1.6; 2.1, 4, 8, 10, 18; 4.22; Isa 1.8; 4.4; 10.32; 16.1); 52.2; 62.11; Mic 1:13; 4.8, 10, 13; Jer 4.31; 6.2, 23; Zech 2.14; 9.9. Zeph 3.14; Ps 9.14). The next most common expression is "Daughter of My People" (Jer 4.11; 6.26; 8.11, 19, 21, 22, 23; 9.6; Lam 2.11; 3.48; 4.3, 6, 10; Isa 22.4) followed by the rarer "Daughter of Jerusalem" (Isa 37.22 and 2 Kgs 19.21; Lam 2.13, 15; Mic 4.8; Zeph 3.14; 9.9) and "Virgin Daughter of Zion" (Isa 37.22 and 2 Kgs 19.21; Lam 2.13). Also worth noting are the expressions, "Daughter of Judah" (Lam 1.15; 2.2, 5) and "Virgin of Israel" (Jer 18.12; 31.4, 21; Amos 5.2).

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texts of focus in this section.[82] Even in these passages, however, the imagery of the city as a daughter is not singular, but mixed with a number of other female roles and identities: mother, wife, adulteress, widow, virgin, and prostitute. Thus, many question how the term "daughter" should be taken in the expression "Daughter of Zion"—answers range from asserting that it is simply meant as a term of endearment and vulnerability (and thus empty of its filial connotations) to contending that it is a literal description (and Zion is a daughter of God, a goddess).[83] And these answers depend not just on the variety of imagery but also on grammar, for the Hebrew בת־ציון may be understood as a typical genitive of possession, "Daughter of Zion," or as an appositional genitive, "Daughter Zion." The former suggests that Zion *has* a daughter (and thus is probably a mother), whereas the latter suggests she *is* a daughter.[84]

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[82] As we will see below, the term "Daughter of Zion" is not used in Ezek 16 and 23; however, her "biography" in Ezek 16 begins with her birth and refers to her father and mother

[83] For the former option, see W. F. Stinespring, "No Daughter of Zion: A Study of the Appositional Genitive in Hebrew Grammar," *Encounter* 26 (1965): 133-41. Given the many meanings of בת, Stinespring suggests translating בת־ציון as "maiden Zion," or "dear Zion," so as to highlight the emotive connotations of the expression (and this is still followed by many translations and commentaries). For the latter option, see Elaine Follis, "The Holy City as Daughter," in *Directions in Biblical Hebrew Poetry* (ed. Elaine R. Follis; JSOTSup 40; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 173-84.

Both polarizations are problematic. The basic meaning of בת is "daughter" and while this term certainly carries other connotations, there is no reason to avoid the filial aspects of the word altogether. On the other hand, there is a clear metaphorical aspect to the expression and image. That the biblical authors borrowed from other ancient Near Eastern imagery of city goddesses, for example, does not refute the fact that the Daughter of Zion is largely metaphorical in the biblical text.

[84] For those on the side of the appositional genitive, see W. F. Stinespring, "No Daughter of Zion," 133-41; Adele Berlin, *Lamentations: A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville/London: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 10-12; and Magnar Kartveit, "Daughter of Zion," *Theology and Life* 27 (2004): 25-41. Waltke and O'Connor interpret the expression under the broad category of "genitive of association," which is basically tantamount to the appositional genitive position (Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990], 153). Aloysius Fitzgerald argues that the two nouns are in apposition (though he is not fully convinced of the "appositional genitive" terminology) and thus interprets "Daughter Zion" to be a title similar to the epithets for goddesses and cities like those found in West Semitic sources outside the Bible (see "The Mythological Background for the Presentation

Although I consider the appositional genitive to be the most convincing explanation, I still prefer the translation "Daughter of Zion," as it reflects the grammatical ambiguity of the word (just as the phrase "the city of New York" can refer to the appositional expression "the city, New York," which means "New York City"). And this grammatical ambiguity parallels the varied imagery used for the Daughter of Zion, who is both mother and daughter (as well as wife, widow, and so on).

Given, however, that Jerusalem can carry all these feminine identities, what does it specifically mean to personify the city as a daughter? Elaine Follis suggests that at least part of the reason is that cities and certain territories are commonly called "daughters" in the Hebrew Bible, for in addition to Daughter of Zion, one also finds Daughter of Tyre (Ps 45.13), Daughter of Babylon (Ps 137.8), Daughter of Tarshish (Isa 23.10), Daughter of Egypt (Jer 46.11) and Daughter of Edom (Lam 4.21) in the Hebrew Bible.[85] This may also relate to the plural use of בת to describe smaller (dependent) cities within a greater entity, as in "the daughters of Moab" (Isa

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of Jerusalem as Queen and False Worship as Adultery in the OT," *CBQ* 34 [1972]: 403-16; and "*Btwlt* and *Bt* as Titles for Capital Cities," *CBQ* 37 [1975]: 167-83; but see also Peggy Day's critique of this argument in "The Personification of Cities as Female in the Hebrew Bible: The Thesis of Aloysius Fitzgerald, F.S.C.," in *Reading from This Place*, vol. 2, *Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in Global Perspective* [eds. Fernando Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995], 283-302).

F.W. Dobbs-Allsopp goes against this stream and argues that phrase is a construct chain signifying a genitive relationship, specifically a genitive of location ("The Syntagma of *bat* Followed by a Geographical Name in the Hebrew Bible: A Reconsideration of Its Meaning and Grammar," *CBQ* 57 [1995]: 451-70). Thus, "Daughter of Zion" is a title—like those signifying a goddess of a particular city or country—but is understood metaphorically (since a real goddess would not be imagined by the biblical author). Michael Floyd takes this argument a step further and argues that "Daughter of Zion" is a genitive construction that personifies the city's female inhabitants characterized in terms of the conventional role played by ancient women in communal rejoicing and lamentation ("Welcome Back, Daughter of Zion!" *CBQ* 70 (2008): 484-504.

[85] Elaine R. Follis, "Zion, Daughter of," *ABD* 6: 1103; idem, "The Holy City as Daughter," 173-84.

16.2) to mean the "cities of Moab" (see, for example, Num 21.25, 32; 32.42; Josh 15.45, 47; 17.16; Judg 1.27; 11.26; Neh 11.25-31; and 1 Chr 2.23). The idea here is that these cities are the metaphorical subordinate offspring of a nation or greater territory, which is thus personified as a mother. Granted, this does not work with the singular use of בת, but it does reveal the frequent connection between daughters and space. We have seen, for instance, the close connection between daughters and houses—how daughters are at once a representation of the house and a foreigner within it.

Cities, however, are public spaces, centres of culture, and full of more diverse socio-economic structures than houses. Follis thus offers the further suggestion that referring to cities as daughters might be due to the stereotypical association of femininity and culture. That is, while "sons are thought to be representative of the adventuresome spirit of a society…female children are associated with stability, with nurturing the community at its very centre."[86] Christl Maier provides a similar perspective, but argues that the "daughter" imagery of city relates to the need for protection. Thus, she notes that "cities, like women, can be desired, conquered, protected, and governed by men."[87] Daughter imagery thus evokes a greater emotional value to the protection of the city, appealing to the power of paternal security and striking at the paternal fear of being unable to keep it safe.

With this in mind, I would assert that the personification of the city as a daughter also plays an important part in the prophetic marriage metaphor, which figures the people of

[86] Follis, "Zion, Daughter of," 1103. Follis's more specific argument, however, is that "Daughter of Zion" is a divine epithet, comparable to the "holy city" of the divine daughter Athena. In this way, the city is not just the quintessence of civilization and culture but also the recipient of divine favor (and by extension, divine wrath and punishment).

[87] Christl M. Maier, *Daughter Zion: Mother Zion: Gender, Space, and the Sacred in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 73.

Jerusalem/Israel as God's wife. The book of Hosea—with its analogical marriage between the prophet and a woman of harlotry paralleling the relationship between Yahweh and Israel—is generally assumed to have been the first to develop this imagery fully.[88] If the covenant between the people and Yahweh is likened to marital covenant, then idolatry is tantamount to adultery.[89] Unsurprisingly, the focus is on the woman's (in)fidelity, for the man is the dominant person in the union. And as we have seen throughout this dissertation, a husband's possession of his wife parallels a father's possession of his daughter. At times the prophetic marriage metaphor blurs these two relationships together; that is, Yahweh is both father and husband and Jerusalem/Israel is both daughter and wife (and mother of the children of this union as well). Jerusalem's unfaithfulness in Jer 2.27, for example, is naming another "father" in the stead of Yahweh.

What this means is that the image of the daughter-city strikes not just at the patriarchal desire for control in terms of protection, but also in terms of sexuality. And the sexualized daughter presents a different set of desires and problems for men than the sexualized wife. There is, for instance, the concern over the daughter's virginity. To be overly controlling, however, is symbolically, if not literally, incestuous. The mixing of metaphors surrounding the Daughter of Zion presents just such a problem. The paternal possession over the daughter extends into her adulthood—because Yahweh acted as a father for Jerusalem in her youth, she should stay loyal to him in her adulthood. Combined with this, therefore, is the fear of the daughter's possession

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[88] See, for example, Sharon Moughtin-Mumby, *Sexual and Marital Metaphors in Hosea, Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Ezekiel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 206-68; Carleen Mandolfo, *Daughter Zion Talks Back to the Prophets: A Dialogic Theology of the Prophets* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 31-7; Gerlinde Baumann, *Love and Violence: Marriage as a Metaphor for the Relationship between YHWH and Israel* (trans. Linda Maloney; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003).

[89] Accordingly, texts that employ this aspect of the metaphor highlight the waywardness of the wife, focusing on her misdeeds and necessary punishment. See Carleen Mandolfo, *Daughter Zion Talks Back to the Prophets*, 31-54 (e.g. Hosea 1-3; Jer 2-3; Ezek 16 and 23).

by others. This is particularly the case when the lover the father has chosen for his daughter is himself—he is not just a jilted husband but also an abandoned father.

The flip-side to this negative portrayal of the Daughter of Zion's waywardness is the potential for reunion with Yahweh, the father/husband. Zeph 3.14-15 is a model text in this regard:

> Shout joyfully, O Daughter of Zion, shout triumphantly, O Israel. Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O Daughter of Jerusalem. Yahweh has removed your judgments against you. He has removed your enemies. The King of Israel, Yahweh, is in your midst. Do not fear disaster again.[90]

The fantasy here is that the relationship will have gone through tumultuous times but will be renewed nonetheless. The desire for possession, as these passages have it, trumps the previous disobedience and recalcitrance.

Ezekiel 16

The intermingling of the prophetic marriage metaphor with (sexualized) daughter imagery is perhaps displayed nowhere better than Ezek 16. On the one hand, it is a strange text to use in order to examine the personification of Jerusalem as a daughter, for the city is never referred to as "Daughter of Zion" (or any of its variants) in the chapter. However, Ezek 16

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[90] See also Isa 16.1; 52.2; 62.11; Mic 4.13; Jer 6.2; Zech 2.14; 9.9-10; Ps 9.15. For a more detailed look at some of these "positive" texts, see Mark J. Boda, "The Daughter's Joy," *in Daughter Zion: Her Portrait, Her Respons*e (eds. Mark J. Boda; Carol J. Dempsey, and LeAnn Snow Flesher; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 321-42. Boda makes the interesting observation that while roughly half of the texts on the Daughter of Zion are "positive" there is never any record of her expressing joy in the first person. This may relate to the fact that while the Daughter of Zion is often invited to rejoice (as in the Zephaniah passage), she is never invited to lament (but does at time voice her pain uninvited).

provides a narrative (of sorts) that traces the city's life story from birth forward. The term

"daughter" (בת), moreover, is found throughout the chapter, always shifting in nuance and

meaning but tying sections and themes together.[91] This parallels the ambiguous parentage of

Jerusalem. Her parents are Canaanites, but she is raised and nurtured by Yahweh. The deity thus

originally plays the part of adoptive father but then transitions into the part of jilted lover,

focusing on the rebellious ways of the woman.

The chapter begins with the prophetic formula of receiving the word of Yahweh, and it

should thus be kept in mind that everything said here is from Yahweh's mouth (as mediated

through the prophet). Jerusalem, for her part, is never quoted (either directly or indirectly) and

the entire speech of the chapter is set in "I-you" language. This contrasts with the book of

Lamentations, for instance, in which the speaking voice is constantly changing and the Daughter

of Zion often speaks in the first person (at least in the first two chapters). Thus, Ezekiel provides

us solely with the male gaze, focusing on the female body that is both defiled and defiling.[92]

God's address commences with the city's origin, stating that her mother was an Amorite

and her father a Hittite (16.3). This Canaanite background presents a negative image of the city;

she is the product of foreigners. Her foreign mother, in particular, will be an important

determiner of her fate. At the time of her birth, she was uncared for by these Canaanite parents

and abandoned in an open field (16.4-5). Yahweh finds her abandoned and wills her to live:

"And I passed by and saw you weltering in your blood, and I said to you, 'In your blood, live!'

And I said to you, 'In your blood, live!" (16.6). Blenkinsopp asserts that this first "passing by"

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[91] See Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel* (AB 22; New York: Doubleday, 1964), 295.
[92] See Mandolfo, *Daughter Zion Talks Back to the Prophets*, 46. Julie Galambush
likewise notes how this is a defining mark of Ezekiel, asserting that "the insistent focus on the
bloody pollution of Jerusalem's body is distinctive to Ezekiel" (*Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel:
The City as Yahweh's Wife* [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992], 102).

may be a reference to the time of the ancestors, where God bestowed favour upon a particular people.[93] The imagery of being found by God in a field though also recalls that of Egypt and the exodus, and the time in the wilderness. The peculiarity of both these resonances, however, is that they precede Jerusalem's prominence (it is the city of David).[94] Thus, the ambiguity of the location and history of the woman—on the hand, she is Jerusalem; on the other hand, she stands for Israel. In any case, the foundling accordingly grows to maturity after Yahweh's rescue (16.7). Still naked and bare, however, she requires adorning by Yahweh. He sees that she is now at the age of "lovemaking" (דדים) and spreads his skirt over her, betrothing himself to her with a covenant (16.8). According to Eilberg-Schwartz, this is as close as one gets to a "graphic image of God having sexual intercourse" in the Hebrew Bible.[95] Sexually explicit or not, it is clear that at this point, the (adopted) daughter transitions to a wife.

The following verses detail Yahweh's extravagant ornamenting of Jerusalem, which results in the city becoming an abundant and beautiful woman (16.9-14). The story may thus be a version of the romantic folktale of the foundling who is rescued from death and eventually weds her rescuer—though if so, it is a dark version in which the problems between the rescuer and the foundling are the focus.[96] The turning point of the chapter is found in v.15: "But you trusted in your beauty, and you played the harlot (זנה) because of your renown, and lavished your harlotry (תזנות) on any passer-by." The large remainder of the chapter then documents Jerusalem's

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[93] Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1990), 77.
[94] This also relates to the woman's mother being a Hittite and her father an Amorite. It is a reference to Jerusalem's pre-Israelite origins. Amorite probably functions in this context as a generic term for the early inhabitants of the land, alluding to the Jebusites. Hittite may also carry this connotation, though it might also be a subtle reference to Uriah/Bathsheba, which would again mix pre-Davidic Jerusalem with post-Davidic Jerusalem.
[95] Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, *God's Phallus: And Other Problems for Men and Monotheism* (Boston: Beacon, 1994), 113.
[96] See Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel*, 77; Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel*, 300.

"harlotry" (the root זנה is frequently used) with her other lovers/gods. This catalogue of horrors includes her nymphomaniac adulteries with foreigners (Egyptians, Assyrians, and Chaldeans) and Yahweh's brutal reactions (vv.15-43), a comparison with Jerusalem's "sisters" Samaria and Sodom (vv.44-58), and a conclusion foretelling the mortification of Jerusalem before Yahweh and a return to the covenant (vv.59-63).[97]

Significantly, the earlier time of the woman's daughterhood is repeatedly mentioned. Yahweh twice mentions, for instance, his incredulity at Jerusalem not remembering the days of her youth (16.22, 43), given the dire straits into which she was born and the compassion he bestowed upon her. This forgetfulness on Jerusalem's part contrasts with Yahweh's remembrance of the days of Jerusalem's youth and a re-establishment of the covenant—which then results in Jerusalem's remembrance of her recalcitrant ways as well (16.60-61). Remembering or forgetting the time of infancy, therefore, determines fidelity and infidelity on Jerusalem's part, as in 16.22: "And with all your abominations and your harlotry you did not remember the time of your youth, when you were naked and bare, weltering in your blood." Here the daughter and wife imagery collide in a disturbing juxtaposition of a helpless naked and bloody infant with the willful abominations of the whoring city.[98]

To add to this, Jerusalem's infancy is also evoked to *explain* her deviant ways. The pointed recollection of Jerusalem's parentage in 16.44-45 is used to account for her rebellious nature: "Like mother, like daughter! You are the daughter of your mother who loathed her husband and her sons…Your mother was a Hittite and your father was an Amorite" (16.44-45). Even though both parents are mentioned, it is the mother who is responsible for the daughter's

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[97] The following large scale structure is based on Greenberg's analysis (*Ezekiel*, 292-3).
[98] See Cynthia R. Chapman, *The Gendered Language of Warfare in the Israelite-Assyrian Encounter* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 119-29.

waywardness. The sense here, as Stiebert observes, is heredity, "of a stain that has passed from mother to daughter."[99] This fits with overall focus on feminine rebellion in the chapter (whether by daughter, wife, or mother), but is somewhat ironic given that elsewhere the book of Ezekiel goes to great lengths to ensure that sons are not responsible for the sins of their fathers and fathers are not responsible for the sins of their fathers (e.g. Ezek 18.1-20).[100] In any case, one of the abhorrent traits that the mother passes on to her daughter is lack of compassion for her own children, whom she slaughters and sacrifices (16.20-21). The image plays to the fear of the cannibalistic mother, reversing her nurturing status. Galambush notes that it also usurps the authority of the father, as the woman is taking the fruits of her sexual obligation to her husband and transferring them to her other lovers/idols, which are her husband's competitors.[101] The act also contrasts with Yahweh's parental concern for Jerusalem in the opening verses of the chapter; there Yahweh willed her to live in her blood, but now she spills the blood of her children for idols (against Yahweh's will). She is not just a murderous mother; she is also a barbaric daughter. A similar connection is found in her initial nakedness, first covered by God (16.8) but then exposed by her harlotry (16.36); this leads to God handing her over to her lovers-turned-enemies who will strip her bare and expose her nakedness (16.37)—thereby returning her to her original state (16.7).

This continued theme of daughterhood is perhaps best displayed in the numerous and diverse uses of "daughter" (בת) from 16.20 onward. This first occurrence, as we have seen, mentions Jerusalem's daughters. The daughter who was shown compassion sacrifices her own daughters. Because of such actions, Jerusalem is handed over to "the daughters of the

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[99] Stiebert, *Fathers and Daughters*, 199.
[100] See Stiebert, *Fathers and Daughters*, 199, n.116.
[101] Galambush, *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel*, 84.

Philistines" (16.27). This then leads to a comparison of Jerusalem and her daughters to Samaria and Sodom (and their daughters) (16.44-58). Here the term "daughters" is used to refer to the smaller towns within the territory of a main city (or nation), but certainly carries an important familial sense too. Samaria and Sodom, for instance, are Jerusalem's "sisters," and thus are implicitly daughters as well. And these daughters, as the aphorism of 16.44 reminds us, are also like their mother, following in her ways (just as their own daughters do). Jerusalem's deeds, however, are worse than her sisters (and their daughters), and so her initial pride over them is turned into reproach from the daughters of Aram and the daughters of the Philistines, her surrounding neighbours (16.57). When Jerusalem is (partially) restored to Yahweh at the end of the chapter, however, she will be given her sisters, Sodom and Samaria, "as daughters" (16.61). Jerusalem will thus become a mother to her sisters, reaffirming her lost motherhood in the earlier sacrificing of her daughters.

A biological daughter of a Hittite and Amorite, a foundling child adopted by Yahweh, a mature maiden still naked and bare, an adored and spoiled bride, a promiscuous and indiscriminate lover, a murderous mother—these are some of the roles that the woman plays in Ezek 16. Her final scene may seem like a return to fortune, but the ending, as is commonly noted, is rather bleak. The memory of her former ways will be a source of shame to Jerusalem, and as a result she will never again open her mouth (16.63). It is a rather odd fate, since she never opens her mouth at *any* point in this biography.

Lamentations 1-2

Unlike the portrayal in Ezekiel, in Lamentations Jerusalem is given a voice of protest and resistance. The tone of Lamentations, moreover, is also quite different. While there is mention of

her sin (l.8-9) and admission of her rebelliousness (1.18, 20, 22), it is not a point of focus; rather, the book concentrates on the suffering and devastation of the city and its inhabitants. The recurring image of the city as a daughter, therefore, is a vivid and effective way to display the violent injustice and abuse that the inhabitants have suffered.[102] Accordingly, the title Daughter of Zion (1.6; 2.1, 4, 8, 10, 13, 18; 4.22) and its variants Daughter of Judah (1.15; 2.2, 5), Daughter of my people (2.11; 3.48; 4.3, 6, 10), and Daughter of Jerusalem (2.13, 15) are used more frequently here than anywhere else in the Hebrew Bible. But vulnerability is only part of the daughter-city's presentation in the book; she is also a vocal critic of her enemies, God, and the very metaphors used to describe her. These twin themes of sympathy and outrage will serve as the basis for my discussion here.

The somber tone of Lamentations is set from the very beginning with a series of metaphors that display the reversal of fortune of the once great city.

How?[103]

> She sits alone, the city once full of people.
>
> She has become like a widow, the mistress among the nations.
>
> Princess among the provinces, she has become a vassal.

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[102] With regard to Yahweh's implied fatherhood in the book, Stiebert thus writes: "The [daughter] metaphor is effective because the daughter is vulnerable, because her punishment is disproportionate, and because she is entitled to protection from her father—that is what best explains and legitimates the choice of the daughter-metaphor" (*Fathers and Daughters*, 192).

[103] I interpret this beginning word (איכה) as both pure glossolalia as well as a pointed question that interrogates the entire function of the book. Thus, it could simply be transliterated as "Eikhaaaah," a primordial scream responding to something beyond words (see F.W. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations* [Louisville, Ky.: John Knox, 2002], 33). Its semantic meaning, however, is "how," thus offering a startling beginning in which the poet already concedes the inability to explain or adequately illustrate the catastrophe. Either way, the word stands apart from the articulate speech that follows (see Berlin, *Lamentations*, 49).

Once a mistress, the city is now like a widow; once a princess, she is now a vassal. The next verse describes her weeping in the night, a single tear upon her cheek, as her former friends and lovers have become enemies. In contrast to Ezekiel, the prophetic marriage metaphor, and thus the depiction of the city as an adulteress and deviant wife, is basically absent. However, one still finds similarly horrific descriptions of punishment and abuse. In 1.8-10, for example, Jerusalem is likened to a sexually assaulted woman. As with Ezekiel, her former lovers look upon her nakedness (1.8) and impurity is in her skirts (1.9). 1.10 takes this a step further, as it evokes a scene of rape. The enemies stretch their hands over Zion's "precious things" (מחמד) and enter into her inner sanctuary. The metaphorical image of sexual violation, as Alan Mintz lays out, is "founded on the correspondence body//Temple and genitals//Inner Sanctuary."[104] It is worth mentioning, moreover, that in 5.11 the rape of women and girls in Zion and Judah is mentioned without metaphorical distancing.

The abuse done to Zion is described in intensely physical terms. There is mention of weeping (1.2, 16), groaning (1.8), and churning bowels (1.20). In 2.11 one finds a combination of physical ailments: "My eyes are worn out from tears, my bowels murmur. My liver-bile spills out over the destruction of the Daughter of my people." The external eyes are thus strangely combined with the internal organs of the bowels and liver. Their common feature, however, is that they all secrete bodily fluids: "tearing eyes, a churning stomach, and a bilious liver."[105] The

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[104] Alan Mintz, "The Rhetoric of Lamentations and the Representation of Catastrophe," *Prooftexts* 2 (1982): 1-17 (4). In 1.11b the people of the city trade their "precious things" (מחמד) for food, in order to sustain their life. In this context, the word might mean "offspring" as in Hos 9.16, "Even though they give birth, I will slay the precious offspring of their wombs (מחמדי בטנם)." Such parental desperation and sacrifice of their children is a common theme in Lamentations.

[105] Berlin, *Lamentations*, 72.

focus on Zion's bodily fluids presents her as an abject body.[106] The abject body is one that leaks

waste and fluids, not only a form of pollution but also a blurring of the boundaries between self

and other (the boundary upon which subjectivity depends). Blood, particularly menstrual blood,

is perhaps the quintessential (secreting) abject fluid. In Ezekiel, for example, the infant Jerusalem

squirms in her blood (Ezek 16.6) and needs a paternal Yahweh to wash off this blood (Ezek

16.9). The transition represents that from abject to subject, only for Yahweh to later bring upon

her the blood of wrath and jealousy (Ezek 16.38). In Lamentations, Jerusalem is described as a

menstruous woman (נדה) among her neighbouring adversaries (1.17). The idea is that she is

impure and thus rejected by the surrounding nations. This recalls the previous mention in 1.9 of

Jerusalem's impurity in her skirts, which may also be taken as a reference to menstruation.[107]

The figure of a menstruating woman rejected by those around her contrasts and

corresponds to the ambiguous maternal imagery of Lamentations. In the first chapter, for

instance, one finds several examples of the city mourning the loss or captivity of her children

(1.5, 16, 18). A similar intensely emotive scene occurs in 2.11-12 in which infants cry out for

food from their mothers, but because there is nothing to eat their life is poured out at their

mothers' bosoms. At other points, however, Lamentations records mothers who eat their

children. In 2.20, the Daughter of Zion exclaims:

> Look, O Yahweh, and consider: to whom have you done this?
>
> Shall women eat their offspring, the little children they care for?

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[106] See Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (trans. Leon S. Roudiez; New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

[107] See Iain Provan, *Lamentations* (NCBC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 45; Delbert R. Hillers, *Lamentations* (AB 7A; 2nd rev. ed.; New York: Doubleday, 1992), 86.

4.10 also relates how compassionate women, because of their own starvation, boil their children. Hugh Pyper points out that these cannibalistic mothers strike at the fundamental fears of paternity and patriarchy, for "if the woman to whom a man has entrusted his seed devours his children, what hope of survival has he?"[108] This might also be part of the reason why the city is so frequently referred to as a daughter in Lamentations. The daughter does not induce this type of anxiety. When she is in distress she has no children to eat—she is likely the one being eaten!

This brings us to one of the fundamental questions of Lamentations: what did Zion do to deserve all this suffering and anguish? Several suggestions are offered—she sinned and rebelled, her prophets offered false and deceptive visions, her priests shed the blood of the righteous, and so on—but they all fall short. The first chapter mentions five times that the city has no "comfort" (נחם) (vv.2, 9, 16, 17, 21). This culminates in the poet's rhetorical questions of 2.13:

How can I bare witness for you? To what can I liken you?

O Daughter of Jerusalem.

To what can I compare you, so that I might comfort you?

O Virgin Daughter of Zion.

For vast as the sea is your destruction.

Who can heal you?

If there is no comfort, either by way of analogy or symbol, then what is function of the book?[109] It may simply be to give voice to this pain and absence of comfort, and thus the need for the voice of the city herself.

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[108] Hugh Pyper, "Reading Lamentations," *JSOT* 95 (2001): 55-69.
[109] See Francis Landy, "Lamentations," in *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (eds. Frank Kermode and Robert Alter; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), 329-34; Peter Sabo, "Poetry Amid Ruins," in *Poets, Prophets, and Texts in Play: Studies in Biblical Poetry*

During certain parts of the first two chapters of Lamentations, Zion speaks in her own first person voice (e.g. 1.9, ll-22; 2.11-12, 20- 22).[110] Certainly one purpose of this is to heighten sympathy for Jerusalem. It is one thing to have a third person narrator describe destruction, it is another to have the city come to life and speak of her personal torture. On another level, it displays the dialogical structure of Lamentations as a whole—no one voice dominates, but the book offers a number of voices who respond and relate to the suffering differently. Thus, in addition to the third person narrator and the first-person voice of the Daughter of Zion, there is the first-person voice of the "man" (גבר) of ch. 3 and the communal first person plural voice of ch. 5. The voice of the Daughter of Zion, however, is especially significant because of its gender. Here, for once, is an extended speech from the daughter's perspective.

Where her voice is strongest, moreover, one finds the severest criticisms of Yahweh. She constantly beseeches Yahweh to look and gaze upon her pain, for the punishment exceeds that of the crime. Attention is drawn to the fact, moreover, that Yahweh is the ultimate cause for this infliction (e.g. 1.12 and 2.21). The enemies have been summoned by his own hand—and, paradoxically, this appears to have been his devised from long ago (2.17). The irony of this is

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and Prophecy in Honour of Francis Landy (eds. Ehud Ben Zvi, Claudia V. Camp, David M. Gunn, and Aaron W. Hughes; New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), 141-57.

[110] See William Lanahan, "The Speaking Voice in the Book of Lamentations," *JBL* 93 (1974): 41-9. Given that Lamentations often shifts voice, however, there is debate as to who exactly is speaking when. See also Knut M. Heim, "The Personification of Jerusalem and the Drama of Her Bereavement in Lamentations," in *Zion, City of Our God* (eds. Richard S. Hess and Gordon J. Wenham; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 129-69.

It should be noted, moreover, that this is not the only time that the feminized city breaks her silence. Two other prominent examples include the voice of Zion in Isa 49.14-21 and Jer 4.19-26 (and the end of 4.31). For analysis of the voice in Jer 4, see Barbara Bakke Kaiser, "Poet as 'Female Impersonator': The Image of Daughter Zion in Biblical Poems of Suffering," *The Journal of Religion* 67.2 (1987): 164-82. There are also times when the narrator/prophet, often speaking in the voice of the deity, quote Jerusalem's words, as in Jer 2.23, "How can you say, 'I am not defiled, I have not gone after the Baals?'" or Jer 3.4, "Have you not just called to me now, 'My father, you are the friend of my youth.'"

that Yahweh's mistreatment of the Daughter of Zion results in his own suffering. He violates and destroys his own holy place. The mothers of Jerusalem failing to give suck to their own children (and even eating them), for example, is a meta-commentary on Yahweh's failure to protect and care for his own daughter. She is his child, just as her children are his children.[111]

<div align="center">***</div>

This criticism of Yahweh and rejection of the idea that she is solely responsible for her subjugation is why the voice of the Daughter of Zion can be read as a response to her portrait and treatment within the Prophetic books in general.[112] Thus, her silence in (most of) the prophets can be filled in with her speech from Lamentations. While keeping in mind that the Daughter of Zion (like all biblical characters) is the construct of patriarchal ideology, I would like to extend the influence of her words to many of the other silenced and abused daughters of the Hebrew Bible. I cannot help, for example, but think of Jephthah's daughter, or the Timnite daughter, when I read the Daughter of Zion's protest against Yahweh that he sent fire from on high that went deep into her bones (1.13). Likewise, the sexual mistreatment of the Daughter of Zion recalls the horrific stories of Dinah, Tamar (2 Sam 13), and the Levite's *pilegesh*. Dinah suffered the fate of daughters who stray outside the house, but it was while she was in Shechem's house that her brothers slew the Shechemites with the sword—the Daughter of Zion has poignant words for her too: "From outside the sword bereaves, in the house it is (like) death" (1.20).[113]

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[111] This is highlighted in a disturbing pun of the aforementioned verse on cannibalistic mothers in 2.20. The first line rhetorically asks Yahweh to consider "to whom have you done (עוללת)," while the second line asks whether women should eat "the little children (עללי) they care for." The children of the women thus symbolize the relation of the Daughter of Zion to Yahweh.

[112] See Mandolfo, *Daughter Zion Talks Back to the Prophets*, 3.

[113] To be sure, the next clause of the verse has Jerusalem asserting that this distress is "because I have been very rebellious," and such guilt or blame is totally absent in the case of Tamar. I am, however, interpreting the Daughter of Zion's words not as literary allusions in the

The Levite's *pilegesh,* on the other hand, is deprived of the house, gang raped in the streets and left there to die; her last grasp on the threshold of the house after her long night of suffering is a potent image of the protection that she is continually denied. The Daughter of Zion offers her own lamentation for such senseless deaths, words which could apply both to the Levite's husband and to the men of Gibeah: "In the dust of the streets lie the young and old…in the day of your anger you have slaughtered without mercy" (Lam 2.21). Dinah and the Levite's *pilegesh* are entirely silent throughout their stories; Tamar (2 Sam 13), on the other hand, is given a voice to express her thoughts and disapproval of what happened to her. Her protests, however, lead nowhere and the princess ends up a desolate woman (שׁממה) in her brother's house. Coincidentally, this root (שׁמם) is a keyword in Lamentations (1.4, 13, 16; 3.11; 4.5; 5.18), and the blame for this desolation is bluntly directed at God (e.g. 1.13). When Absalom tells Tamar not to take the matter of Amnon to heart (לבב), I hear the voice of the Daughter of Zion retort: "I am distressed, for my bowels churn, and my heart (לבב) is turned over inside me" (1.20). Merab and Michal are given marriages only to have them revoked; at the end of their story their identities again blur together as their children are sent away to die. We noted, however, that they are deprived of textual space to express their grief. Thus, their voice too can be heard in the Daughter of Zion's repeated complaints about the misfortune of her children. Finally, the Daughter of Zion corresponds and contrasts with other daughter-mothers like Lot's daughters, Tamar (Gen 38), and Ruth. Her story reveals the twisted logic behind preserving the seed of the father above all. She may be cannibalistic, but she was driven to this by the father. So while there

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strict sense of the term but rather as an intertextual voice that has reverberations for the stories of other biblical daughters.

may be none to comfort the Daughter of Zion, her voice may offer comfort to other biblical

daughters.

Conclusion

When Ruth returns to Naomi after her night on the threshing floor with Boaz, her mother-in-law asks: "Who are you, my daughter?" (Ruth 3.16). The question echoes Boaz's startled reaction, "Who are you?" in 3.9, when he awakes at midnight and finds the woman lying at his feet. These are questions not only of identity but also of possession, as when Boaz first sees Ruth and asks, "To whom does this young woman belong?" (Ruth 2.5). Thus, the interrogative in Ruth 3.16 is often translated in a genitival sense, "*Whose* are you, my daughter?" thereby interpreting Naomi's question as an inquiry about Ruth's current household affiliation.[1] Should Ruth still be considered the widow of Mahlon or has she become the wife of Boaz (and what about her troubling status as a Moabite as well)? The question is perhaps also an inquiry into the relationship between Ruth and Naomi—Who is Ruth? And who is she in relationship to Naomi? As I discuss in ch. 5, these two women emerge out of the chaos of the days of the judges and lead into the stories of Merab, Michal, and Tamar. Placed in between these violent and brutal stories, the story of Ruth and Naomi is one of fantasy, perhaps even a moment of possibility. The two women forge a relationship of commitment and solidarity with each other—not quite that between mother and daughter, but between a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law—which, for a brief time, is independent of men. To be sure, by the end of the book, their relationship slips back into the dominant story of patrilineality and patriarchal hierarchy and order, but the women's commitment to each other allows for that transitory period in which Ruth is first and foremost the daughter (in-law) of Naomi.

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[1] See Schipper, *Ruth*, 158-59; Jack Sasson, *Ruth: A New Translation with Philological Commentary and a Formalist-Folklorist Interpretation* (2nd ed.; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 100.

The relationship is noteworthy because of its contrast with the rest of the daughter stories in the Hebrew Bible. For one, because of the absence of mother-daughter relationships in this corpus of texts, but also because of the persistent biblical assumption that a woman must always be defined in subordinate relation to a patriarch. For when it comes to biblical daughters, the question of identity is dependent upon the one to whom they belong (first their father and then, should they marry, their husband). As we have seen throughout this study though, dependence does not always equate with security. While biblical daughters serve the needs of their patriarchs, they can also function as potential destabilizing figures. Lot's daughters, for instance, fulfill the patriarchal desire to preserve the father's seed but do so by asserting their own authority and independence and feminizing their own father in the process. Rachel and Leah perform a good-for-patriarchy battle over their husband's love and the birth of sons, but this results in the weakening of their own father's house (exemplified in Rachel's theft of Laban's teraphim). The many daughters of the book of Judges represent the possibility of endogamous marriage, serving to deter intermarriage and maintain Israelite community and identity. At the same time, they represent the fear and danger of exogamous marriage and the resulting apostasy—the possibility of integration and assimilation with the Canaanites. Eve's positional coding as a daughter, even as she is presented as the mother of all the living, both covers over her maternal role and reveals a hidden pregnancy envy. The reproductive potential of daughters is also found in the stories of Tamar (Gen 38) and Ruth, who, like Lot's daughters, use deception to ensure the survival of the family—simultaneously building the father's house and revealing the system's fragility because of its dependence upon the family member whom it most subjugates.

It is clear, therefore, that stories of daughters both affirm the underlying gender ideology of the Hebrew Bible and open up the possibility of its deconstruction. This is the case with all

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stories of biblical women, which similarly reveal fears of female agency and desire for patriarchal control. These fears and desires, however, are manifest differently depending on the role which the woman plays in each narrative. Daughters, unlike wives and mothers, are not yet domesticated, at least not in the house of their husband. The father stands, therefore, as the sole (male) proprietor of her, even as it is his task to find another (male) possessor of his daughter.

This role of daughters as commodities of exchange, accordingly, is one of the most prominent patterns we have seen in this study. Sons represent the replacement of the father and in that sense they are structurally homologous. Daughters, on the other hand, allow for this transition to take place—and so they are just as essential as sons for the continuity of the father's house but in a different way. Daughters offered as prizes—like Achsah, Merab, and Michal—are perhaps the most obvious example of this. Achsah especially is equated with property, first as an object in exchange for the conquering of a city and then in her demand to be given (more?) property from her father. By the end of her short narrative, the father has benefitted from the destruction of the city and the son-in-law/husband has received not only the triumph of victory and the daughter but also (by extension) the land given to the daughter. Merab and Michal, on the other hand, present the problems that can occur in such an exchange, because of the manipulation by both the father and the groom. The exchange of Merab is offered and then revoked; the exchange of Michal is completed, but then dissolved—only to be renewed but without continuation of a family line. Saul's offer of his daughters is never intended to be successful in the first place, as the father views his daughters' as valuable insofar as their bride-price would result in the death of the groom. David, for his part, does not preserve his seed through Michal—and even sends Merab's sons (who are also textually and synecdochally Michal's as well) to their death.

The exchange of daughters, therefore, can result in tensions between father and son-in-law, which is another major theme of daughter stories in the Hebrew Bible. The father's possession of the daughter is primary, and his desire to maintain this control is revealed in his insistence that she belong to nobody but him until he marries her off. This bestowal design places the daughter's departure from her father's house as obedience to the father instead of preference for an outside male.[2] The bartering between Laban and Jacob over Rachel and Leah is a model of this complex triangular relationship. The persistent issues of daughters/wives and wages—from Laban's bed-trick to Jacob's stick-trick to Rachel's body-trick—permeate this story and thus display the link between the daughters' value as wife and property. Jacob proves to be superior to his father-in-law and ends up with both the daughters/wives and a large portion of Laban's property. This reveals the status of the son-in-law as both intruder and necessary figure—Jacob represents the possibility through which the father can build up his house through his daughters but is also a threat to the father's exclusive possession of his daughters.

Taken to its extreme, the fear of the son-in-law's intrusion leads to incestuous stories like Lot and his daughters, or stories like Jephthah's daughter in which the daughter is never given away. In Gen 19, this link between the father's possession of his daughters and his control over their sexuality is displayed in the connection between Lot's initial offer of his daughters and the ensuing incestuous relations in the cave. Granted, Lot's offer of his daughters to the Sodomite mob is not one of betrothal, as the women are substitutes offered as objects of sexual humiliation in the stead of the (divine) guests. Lot's presentation of them as virgins, however, reveals his control and knowledge over their sexuality. Lot knows that his daughters have not known a man—their virginity is a tangible sign of his knowledge and possession of them. In the cave, Lot

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[2] See Boose, "The Father's House and the Daughter in It," 32.

is deprived of this authority of knowledge even as he sexually knows his daughters. In between these two passages is the brief narrative about Lot's sons-in-laws, who represent the possibility of Lot displaying his control and authority over his daughters' sexuality in a socially authorized way. The story of Jephthah's daughter takes this a step further, as it has no mention of a son-in-law at all. Jephthah's daughter is defined solely in relation to her father and confined permanently to his house in the sacrificial act of her burning. No husband enters the story; there is no one to mediate between the woman's status as wife or daughter—and thus there is no possibility for the daughter to become a mother.

Jephthah's daughter is the prime example of daughters in Judges who do not become mothers.[3] Even Achsah, who represents on one level the ideal betrothal scenario, is never mentioned as bearing any children. As for the Timnite daughter, it remains uncertain whether she consummated her relationship with Samson before she was burned with her father. The Levite's *pilegesh* is raped many times over, but her story is one of (violent) sex without reproduction. The childless daughters of Judges lead to the stories of Merab, Michal, and Tamar. Michal is explicitly presented as childless, the result of being a daughter of Saul. But David's daughter, Tamar, likewise is left a desolate woman in the house of her brother. These stories of daughters who do not become mothers function thematically as potentiality thwarted. They are also a reminder of the liminality of daughters, confined between childhood and adulthood and never properly belonging in her father's house (as daughters should become wives and mothers).

Thus, daughters do not simply function as commodities of exchange who appear in the biblical text in response to a need by male characters for wives—they also represent the ability to

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[3] The other possibility would be Dinah. Both Jephthah's daughter and Dinah's daughter wander outside their father's house—and action which brings about their respective death and sexual humiliation.

preserve male seed. Lot's daughters, for instance, do not transition to wives before they become mothers and preserve the seed of their father. Tamar (Gen 38) likewise continues Judah's line without betrothal. Ruth plays the role of both wife of Boaz and mother of Obed, but the child will raise the name of Elimelech's seed and Naomi is the one who takes him and becomes his nurse (Ruth 4.16). These stories present dangerous daughters, who, even as they serve patriarchal needs, somewhat stay confined to their daughterhood even after reproduction.

Synopsis and Future Directions

This study has focused on the literary patterns and underlying gender ideologies found in biblical daughter stories. The patterns reveal common themes and concerns that shape each narrative but also the way that literary analysis reveals fissures and problems of the underlying ideology the text creates. In order to establish and analyze these patterns, I have prioritized a more detailed reading of certain texts over a survey-like approach. As a result, however, certain daughter stories have been mentioned only as intertexts and have not been the subject of extended analysis. The story of Zelophehad's daughters, for instance, could have had its own separate section (or chapter), given its concern over issues of inheritance and endogamy/exogamy (especially in relation to Transjordanian daughters). The case of Zelophehad's daughters, moreover, relates more broadly to the texts that pertain to daughters in biblical law. These include: Exod 21.7-11 (regulations concerning a man's selling of his daughter into slavery); Lev 19.29 (a daughter's harlotry leading to the harlotry of the land); Lev 21.9 (a daughter of a priest playing the harlot and profaning her father); and Deut 22.13-21 (a son-in-law's accusation against the non-virginity of his wife and the father's responsibility to prove otherwise). Also noteworthy is the absence of any prohibition against father-daughter

incest in the sexual taboos listed in Lev 18-20 (as well as Deut 27.20-23).[4] All of these passages

relate to central themes and concerns of this present study—tension between fathers, sons-in-law,

and daughters; the daughter's virginity and harlotry; the father's control over the daughter's

sexuality; and the association of the daughter with the father's house—and thus could have been

more extensively examined.[5]

Future studies might also look at biblical daughter stories from a variety of different, but

related, methods of interpretation than I have chosen here. Thus, in addition to the literary,

feminist, psychoanalytic, structuralist/deconstructionist readings I have offered here one might

also interact with the related fields of queer theory, post-colonialism, and masculinity studies

(among others). Masculinity studies especially may produce fruitful readings. As a complement

to, and result of, feminist criticism, masculinity studies focuses on the way men and masculinity

are social constructs. In the past two decades, though particularly the last decade, masculinity

studies has emerged in biblical studies as an important and influential method of interpretation.[6]

It has helped readers gain further insight into the motivations, relations, and power structures

embedded in biblical texts, revealing the way that masculinity is performed through military

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[4] I refer the reader to Stiebert's reading of Lev 18-20, which is certainly more thorough than my own sporadic references to these chapters (*Fathers and Daughters* 104-30)

[5] One could add to this list brief mentions of daughters that play minor but significant roles—like Job's daughters (Job 1; 42.13-15), Pharaoh's daughter (both the daughter who saves Moses in Exod 2 and the wife of Solomon mentioned throughout 1 Kgs 3-11), or even collective daughters like the daughters of Jerusalem in the Song of Songs.

[6] See Susan E. Haddox, "Masculinity Studies of the Hebrew Bible: The First Two Decades," *Currents in Biblical Research* 14.2 (2016): 176-206. For a sampling of masculinity studies of the Hebrew Bible, see Howard Eilberg-Schwarz, *God's Phallus: And Other Problems for Men and Monotheism*; O. Creangă (ed.), *Men and Masculinities in the Hebrew Bible and Beyond* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2010); Roland Boer, "The Patriarch's Nuts: Concerning the Testicular Logic of Biblical Hebrew," *Journal of Men, Masculinities and Spirituality* 5 (2011): 41-52; and Rhiannon Graybill, *Are We Not Men? Unstable Masculinity in the Hebrew Prophets* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

might, bodily integrity, honour, virility, and authority over one's house. Stories with biblical daughters, as we have seen, revolve around such features as well. On the one hand, the daughter is a placeholder who affirms her patriarch's masculinity: she is passive while he is active, she is the soil/receptacle while he provides the seed, she is the prize while he is the military victor, she is deprived of phallic authority while he is to embody it, and so on. On the other hand, precisely because the daughter is the least powerful and authoritative family member her presence often complicates and questions her patriarch's masculinity. In the most extreme case, as with Lot's daughters, the potential husbands are erased and the father is feminized, deprived of bodily integrity and honor (while still providing the seed).

Finally, there is a rich world of reception history to be explored. There is already one wonderful example of this in Robert Polhemus's, *Lot's Daughters: Sex, Redemption, and Woman's Quest for Authority*. Polhemus uses the Lot story as a starting point to explore the development of father-daughter (and older men-younger women) relations in "history, psychology, and art, and, specifically, in the creative experiences of figures important in the shaping of modern culture."[7] This includes texts like Nabokov's *Lolita*, the works of Shakespeare, Luther's and Calvin's reading of the Lot story, the relationship of Freud to Dora (Ida Bauer) and his resulting case history *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*, and even the relationships of Woody Allen and Bill Clinton with their daughters (if Polhemus were writing now he would undoubtedly have a chapter on Ivanka and Donald Trump). For Polhemus, it all begins with the Lot story of the Hebrew Bible, in which the same cross-cultural themes are found:

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[7] Polhemus, *Lot's Daughters*, ix.

I believe that the dark Lot family narrative, with its unavoidable, cosmic disaster, its irrepressible sexual sin, its pressure to sublimate erotic familial desires, and its potential for redemption, goes on living in us because it holds repressed secrets of the past and epic possibilities for the future. I mean to show how and why what happens in this scandalous myth comes down through the ages, roils people's imagination, get modified, and helps explain contemporary life…[8]

This present study focuses solely on where Polhemus begins. The Lot story serves as a paradigm for daughter stories in the Hebrew Bible and their relationship to their patriarch. Instead of reaching out to modern culture, I have concentrated on other stories in the Hebrew Bible where similar themes and motifs, desires and concerns, are found—stories that likewise roil the imagination and hold repressed secrets of the past and epic possibilities for the future.

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[8] Polhemus, *Lot's Daughters*, x.

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