

**Drunkenness, Prostitution and Immodest  
Appearances in Hebrew Biblical Narrative,  
Second Temple Writings and  
Early Rabbinic Literature:  
A Literary and Rhetorical Study**

Rabbi Eli Kohn: Student Number 2004 195323

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Philosophy  
in the

Department of Afroasiatic Studies, Sign Language and  
Language Practice

Faculty of the Humanities  
of the

University of the Free State

Supervisor: Professor Y. Gitai

Co-Supervisor: Professor P. J. Nel

Bloemfontein

Date of Submission: May 2006

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## **Acknowledgements**

I wish to express my heartfelt thanks to Professor Y. Gitai for his good counsel and steady encouragement which have seen this thesis to its completion. He first introduced me to academic thinking and working with him over the last few years as my supervisor has been a privilege.

I also wish to pay special recognition to my co-supervisor Professor P. Nel who has provided thoughtful comments and direction throughout the preparation of this thesis. I also thank the administration of the University of the Free State for allowing me the opportunity to study under its auspices. I am also grateful for the financial assistance which enabled me to focus my efforts on completing this thesis.

My deepest thanks also go to the administration of the Lookstein Center of Jewish Education at Bar Ilan University in Israel, where I have worked for the past ten years, for allowing me the time to spend researching and writing this thesis. I am particularly thankful to Rabbi Stuart Zweiter, Director of the Lookstein Center, for his support and advice.

On a more personal level, I wish to thank my wife, Leah, who has been a constant support in this intellectual endeavor. In addition, my mother has been an invaluable source of encouragement and support throughout this intensive period. As an expression of appreciation, I dedicate this thesis to them.

## Introduction

### The Main Problem Addressed by this Thesis

There are a number of narratives in the Hebrew Bible which deal with seemingly inappropriate behaviors such as drunkenness and prostitution. These stories include, among others, Noah's drunkenness after the flood in Genesis 9:18-29, Lot's drinking of wine with his two daughters in Genesis 19:31-38 and the narrative of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38. The unseemly aspects of these stories are puzzling because the major protagonists are often characters portrayed as models of otherwise righteous behavior. Noah, for example, is the only character in the Bible who is referred to as a righteous (צדיק) man (Genesis 6:9 and Genesis 7:1). Yet leaving the ark after the flood his first action is to plant a vineyard and get drunk. As he lies naked in his tent, his nakedness is observed by one of his sons, Ham, who acts in an inappropriate way (not specifically detailed in the biblical narrative). The biblical narrative does not dwell on Noah's inappropriate behavior. How then are the readers, not to mention the early rabbis, to understand Noah's act of drunkenness in light of what the Bible has already told us about his being a righteous man? Similarly, in Genesis 19:31-38, the Bible describes the actions of Lot and his two daughters after the destruction of Sodom. The two daughters make their father drunk and commit incest to conceive children. In this narrative, the act of drunkenness is compounded by the sin of incest. Yet this provocative biblical narrative is understated and elliptical in style giving no judgment of their behavior.<sup>1</sup> How is this story evaluated in second temple and early rabbinic literature? The story of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38 is another puzzling moral narrative. Tamar intentionally deceives her father-in law by impersonating a prostitute and Judah engages a woman who he considers a prostitute. Moreover, he and his daughter-in-law commit what appears to be incest. Even more disturbing is that as a result of their seemingly inappropriate union are

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<sup>1</sup> Discussions of biblical narrative's elliptical style include Auerbach E. 1953. *Odysseus' Scar*. In: Trask WR (ed). *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. pp. 3-23 and Sternberg M. 1985. Gaps, Ambiguity and the Reading Process. In: *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading*, Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature, Bloomington: Indiana University Press. pp.186-229.

born twin boys, one of whom is Perez, a direct ancestor of King David.<sup>2</sup> This seemingly inappropriate liaison on the part of royal ancestors creates an intolerable tension within the narrative that calls for meaningful resolution.

### **The Aims and Objectives of this Thesis**

The provocative and perplexing biblical narratives in Genesis 9:18-29, Genesis 19:31-38 and Genesis 38 invite and even demand interpretation. The purpose of this study is to explore how ancient interpreters provided new meanings to these ancient texts. As these stories are viewed in new historical and cultural settings, they acquired additional layers of significance. Early Jewish interpreters made hermeneutic decisions at critical junctures in the biblical narrative and sometimes reconfigured the story's plot and characters to correspond with their understanding of its central message. These three particular narratives indeed offer a rich vista into the thematic and literary formulation of ancient Jewish interpretation.

Another aim of the study is to explore how ancient interpreters and particularly the authors of early midrashic literature, established standards of rabbinic morality by reshaping and developing the early biblical narrative. Their interpretations of the biblical narrative may in fact offer an assessment of what the early Rabbis considered moral behavior.

### **Research Hypothesis**

The thesis examines the hypothesis that there maybe a change of attitude towards the practices of drunkenness and prostitution over the time in question. Drunkenness, for example, does not appear to be a practice that is explicitly condemned in these biblical narratives while it does seem to be an issue of great concern and perhaps considered even sinful in the second temple and early rabbinic period. The practice of prostitution does not appear to be a particularly sinful practice in the biblical narrative while it seems to receive ambivalent treatment in the second temple and early rabbinic period. This hypothesis will be examined more closely in this study. The focus of this research is on

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<sup>2</sup> Perez heads David's lineage in Ruth 4:18-22 and 1 Chr 2:3-15.

how the rabbinic approaches to these issues, which ultimately shaped Judaism, developed from the biblical narrative through the second temple literature. The topic of immodest appearances has been incorporated in terms of drunkenness and prostitution and therefore has not been dealt with separately.

### **Research Methodology**

The methodology used in this thesis is based largely on literary and rhetorical analysis. This includes textual analysis and literary hermeneutics. I compare texts in the second temple and early rabbinic periods to earlier biblical ones. My aim is to show how these stories, based on the biblical literature itself, were shaped literarily and rhetorically during the second temple and early rabbinic period. In particular, I examine the art of rhetoric, namely the presentation of the second temple and early rabbinic text as compared to the biblical one. Thus the rhetoric of transition is a particular concern of this study.

The rhetorical means through which these ancient interpreters argue for a particular understanding of the biblical narrative is also analyzed in this study. Sometimes interpreters argue for their understanding of the biblical text through narrative expansions artfully integrated into the story; sometimes through repetition of particular themes which take on distinctive associations and sometimes through verbal links and intertextual allusions to other scriptural passages. Indeed part of my purpose is to explore not just the content of these interpretations but also their poetics. The poetics of interpretation here refers to the way in which interpreters implicitly argue through literary and rhetorical means for their understanding of scripture. A good example of the variety of literary genres in ancient interpretation is the exegesis of the Testament of Judah, Targum Neofiti and Genesis Rabba on the Genesis 38 biblical text. These three interpretations embed versions of the biblical narrative within the genres of testament, paraphrastic translation and anthological commentary. These different genres allow a variety of literary methodologies for the exploration of the interrelationship between a biblical text and its new literary contexts. Also important are the various means through which interpreters incorporate exegetical material into the biblical narrative. These means of joining

interpretation and received text reveal a range of attitudes towards scripture in early Jewish communities.

A study exploring early Jewish exegesis requires some consideration of the methodology of textual interpretation. The variety of interpretive trajectories arising from each one of these biblical narratives becomes comprehensible only if one considers seriously the role of interpreters situated within particular historical and cultural contexts. Interpreters bring to these stories different expectations, associations and exegetical strategies and therefore discover different resonances within the same biblical narrative. They go even further, crossing the line between interpreter and author, when they reshape that narrative so that it better expresses a particular meaning and incorporate this revised narrative within a new literary composition. This genre of writing is known to modern scholars as the "The Rewritten Bible."<sup>3</sup> Sometimes, as in the case of Jubilees, the retelling is a calculated, highly self-conscious attempt to explain scripture (and, in this particular case, to explain it in keeping with a definite political and religious program). Other retellers of scripture seem less self-conscious: sometimes the reteller himself may not even be aware where the biblical text leaves off and the interpretation begins, since he is simply passing along what he has learned or has heard is the meaning of a biblical text. In either case, the Rewritten Bible is the most popular transmitter of biblical interpretation among ancient writers.

The emphasis on the interpreter's centrality, connects this study with recent movements in literary criticism that stress the contextual nature of interpretation. These movements include reader-response theory, represented by the writings of Stanley Fish, Wolfgang Iser, and others, as well as the dialogical hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer and philosophers of the same tradition.<sup>4</sup> Contemporary discussion about the texts, readers and

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<sup>3</sup> The term was apparently first used by Vermes G. 1975. *Post-Biblical Jewish Studies*. Leiden: Brill.

<sup>4</sup> See Eagleton T. 1983. Phenomenology, Hermeneutics, Reception Theory. In: *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. pp. 54-90 for an overview of reader-response theory and its relation to wider philosophical movements. See Warnke G. 1987. *Gadamer: Hermeneutics, Tradition and Reason*,. Stanford: Stanford University Press for an overview of the thought of Gadamer.

the interpretive process are multifaceted, but two tenets that reader-response theory and dialogical hermeneutics share are relevant for this study.

The first tenet is that the meaning of a text is not limited to the author's original intent nor to some "objective" meaning conveyed through its language, form and style. Rather, the meanings of a text arise through creative encounters between various readers and the written material. The historical-critical methods of the last two centuries, with their focus on the moment of composition or initial reception of biblical passages, have furthered understanding of biblical literature and its original contexts. At the same time, these approaches miss something essential about how scripture functions for successive generations of readers. For traditional religious literature to retain its central place within religious communities, interpretation that transcends any original meaning is both inevitable and necessary.

Different theorists focus on different aspects of the dialogical interaction between text and readers through which meaning emerges. Iser, for example, emphasizes the "polysemantic nature" of the text, including its "gaps" and multiple "impulses", as a major factor contributing to the diversity of "realizations" of any given work by different readers.<sup>5</sup> His attention to the "inexhaustibility" of the text suggests that the participatory role of readers consists primarily of selecting among interpretive options to "concretize" the text as a unified work. By contrast, other theorists point to the literary competencies, historical perspectives and psychological motivations that readers bring to the text in order to explain their various interpretations. Fish, for example, discusses the "framing process" that shapes readers' perceptions of a written work. Readers apprehend a text through prior mental grids consisting of literary expectations and verbal associations that shape their experience of it.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, Gadamer stresses the contextual nature of all

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<sup>5</sup> Wolfgang I. 1974. *The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach*. In: *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. pp. 274-94.

<sup>6</sup> Fish S. 1980. What is Stylistics? In: *Is There a Text in This Class? : The Authority of Interpretive Communities*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. p. 109.

interpretation when he argues that the historical situations of readers constitute the "horizons" or perspectives from which understanding of a text in specific contexts becomes possible. In Gadamer's view, "perception includes meaning" because perception involves projections of the concerns and prejudices of historically situated interpreters onto the foreign horizons of a literary work.<sup>7</sup>

This diversity of emphasis within the contemporary discussion of readers, texts and interpretation fosters a sensitivity to the complex dynamics operative in the early Jewish readings of the three narratives in this study. At times, interpreters filled gaps and resolved textual indeterminacies to create a coherent interpretation of the biblical narrative. At other times, particular historical and cultural contexts of interpretation and different expectations and strategies of reading motivated exegetical trajectories. There may even be instances when interpreters consciously asserted their theological will to supplant the content or implications of the biblical narrative. Discerning an interpreter's position on the continuum between conscious and unconscious manipulation of the narrative, though, is often difficult if not impossible.

The second tenet of reader-response theory and hermeneutic philosophy pertinent for this study concerns the traditional nature of all interpretation. The expectations, associations, and perspectives that readers bring to a text are never wholly subjective, but rather stem also from larger traditions of interpretation and modes of making sense of literature and the world in general. Fish addresses this traditional dimension when he notes that the members of every "community of interpretation" share "strategies of interpretation." These shared strategies explain the relative stability of interpretation among the "informed readers" of any given community.<sup>8</sup> In a similar vein, Jonathan Culler defines the idea of "literary competency" as the internalization by individuals of rules,

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<sup>7</sup> Gadamer argues that the hermeneutic process involves a "fusion of horizons" in which the gap between interpreter and text is mediated. See Gadamer HG. 1993. *Truth and Method*. 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed. New York: Continuum. pp. 302-7.

<sup>8</sup> Fish S. 1980. Interpreting the *Variorum*. In: Tompkins JP (ed). *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. pp. 164-84.

conventions and procedures of reading that render literature readable for a particular period.<sup>9</sup> Gadamer also emphasizes that the larger historical contexts of readers, or the "horizons" from which a text is viewed, include aesthetic standards and interpretive traditions.

This recognition of the traditional nature of interpretation supports my contention that the exegesis presented by the ancient interpreters to be examined in this study is neither subjective nor insignificant. These creative and often ingenious interpretations are nevertheless serious readings that incorporate traditional material and exemplify traditional hermeneutic maneuvers. These interpretations reveal much about the communities from which they stem, including some of the central concerns and modes of self-definition, the moral values and aesthetic standards, and the traditions of reading and interpreting scripture characteristic of those communities.

### **Ancient Jewish Exegesis Consulted in this Thesis**

The ancient interpreters used in this study lived in various historical eras. The earliest texts consulted, including Jubilees, Baruch and the Testaments of the Twelve Tribes, are dated at approximately the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE, while later texts cited, including Genesis Rabba and other early rabbinic literature, date to the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century CE. However, despite their varied cultural and historical backgrounds, these interpreters seem to share common perceptions regarding the underlying hermeneutic principles of biblical interpretation. All ancient Jewish interpretations, for example, regarded the biblical narrative as authoritative and revelatory written texts. These interpretations attest to "the most characteristic feature of the Jewish imagination, the interpretation and rewriting of sacred texts."<sup>10</sup> These ancient interpreters expect to discover in the Bible relevant and edifying scriptural truths, and trust that their discussion of the particular aspects of the biblical narrative will free the divine voice to speak for their generation. Through exegesis they recraft a morally ambiguous story in order to eliminate its problematic

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<sup>9</sup> Culler J. 1980. Literary Competence. In: Tompkins JP(ed). *Reader-Response Criticism*. pp. 101-17.

<sup>10</sup> Fishbane MA. 1989. Extra-Biblical Exegesis: The Sense of Not Reading in Rabbinic Midrash. In: *The Garments of Torah* Bloomington: Indiana University Press. p.18.

aspects or to exploit them ingeniously as object lessons for those who stand in the shadow of biblical tradition. In addition, they devise for this narrative positive and vital functions including the articulation of cultural identity and the expression of moral and religious ideals. As such, they provide valuable insights into early rabbinic thinking concerning the practices discussed in this study.

### **Research Contribution**

There has been much research investigating attitudes to the above practices in the Hebrew biblical narrative. However, less systematic research has been done examining these practices in later writings such as the second temple and early rabbinic periods. Furthermore, no systematic attempt been made to investigate how attitudes to these practices may have changed over time. More importantly, issues related to the literary and rhetoric interpretation of these three particular narratives have received little attention. Thus, this study aims to fill a particular hiatus in the existing literary and rhetorical thematic.

### **Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis is organized as follows. Chapter one focuses on the literary and rhetoric structure of the biblical narratives of Noah's drunkenness (Gen 9:18-29) and Lot's drinking of wine with his two daughters (Gen 19:31-38). Chapter two discusses the portrayal of these stories in ancient Jewish literature as well as exploring the methodology of ancient interpreters in general and the particular genre of midrashic literature. Chapter three focuses on the biblical narrative of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38, and chapter four presents three distinct interpretations of this narrative by ancient Jewish interpreters. In the last chapter, I offer conclusions based on the analysis presented in the first four chapters.

## Chapter 1

### **The Literary<sup>11</sup> and Rhetorical Portrayal of Drunkenness in Specific Biblical Stories**

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the literary and rhetorical portrayal of drunkenness in two specific biblical stories. The chapter will focus on the stories of Noah's drunkenness after the flood in Genesis 9:18-29 and Lot's drinking of wine in Genesis 19:31-38.

I will present my thesis using the following method. To better understand the literary setting of the particular biblical text, I will first consider some parallel texts from the Ancient Near East. I will then consider these stories within their context in Genesis and then, following the methodology of Cassuto, Avishur, Fokkelman, Alter, Sternberg and Gitai among others, I will analyze the literary structure of each particular text. Finally, I will present an exegesis, based on textual analysis and literary hermeneutics of the features of composition as they appear in the particular verses within each story. This will be done with the help of medieval and modern biblical commentaries.

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<sup>11</sup> By literary analysis, I follow the same general approach Robert Alter describes in his work on biblical narrative (Alter R. 1981. *The Art of Biblical Narrative*. New York: Basic Books. pp.11-12): "the manifold varieties of minutely discriminating attention to the artful use of language, to the shifting play of ideas, conventions, sound, imagery, syntax, narrative viewpoint, compositional units, and much else; the kind of disciplined attention, in other words which through a whole spectrum of critical approaches has illuminated, for example, the poetry of Dante, the plays of Shakespeare, the novels of Tolstoy".

## 1.1 The Story of Noah's Drunkenness -Genesis 9:18-29<sup>12</sup>

בראשית פרק ט

(יח) וַיְהִי בְנֵי נֹחַ הֵי צְאִים מִן הַתְּבָה שֵׁם נֹחַם וַיָּפֶת נֹחַם הוּא אָבִי כְנַעַן:

(יט) שָׁלַח אֱלֹהִים בְּנֵי נֹחַ וּמְאֵלָה נִפְצָה כָּל הָאָרֶץ:

(כ) וַיַּחַל נֹחַ אִישׁ הָאֲדָמָה וַיִּשְׁטַע כָּרָם:

(כא) וַיִּשְׁתֶּה מִן הַיַּיִן וַיִּשְׁכַּר וַיִּתְגַּל בְּתוֹךְ אֹהֶל הָ:

(כב) וַיֵּרָא חָם אָבִי כְנַעַן אֵת עֶרְוַת אָבִיו וַיִּגַּד לְשָׁנָי אֶחָיו בְּחוּץ:

(כג) וַיִּקַּח שָׁם וַיָּפֶת אֵת הַשְּׂמֵלָה וַיִּשְׂימוּ עַל שְׂכָמָם וַיִּשְׁנִיחֵם וַיִּלְכוּ אַחַר רְבִית וַיִּכְסּוּ אֵת עֶרְוַת

אָבִיהֶם וַיִּפְנִיחֵם אַחַר רְבִית וַעֲרֹנֹת אָבִיהֶם לֹא יָאוּ:

(כד) וַיִּיקַּץ נֹחַ מִיֵּיבוֹ וַיֵּדַע אֵת אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לוֹ בְּנוֹ הַקָּטָן:

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<sup>12</sup> Many commentators and articles have been referred to in this analysis of the text. Among the modern commentaries include: Cassuto U. 1965. *Book of Genesis*. Jerusalem: Magnus Press; Coats GW. 1983. *Genesis with an Introduction to Narrative Literature*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co; Gunkel H. 1997. *Genesis*. Mercer, Georgia: Mercer University Press; Hamilton V. 1990. *Genesis*. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co; Jacob B. 1974. *The First Book of the Bible: Genesis*. New York: Ktav Publishing House; Knight G. 1981. *Theology in Pictures: A Commentary on Genesis Chapters 1-11*. Edinburgh: The Handsel Press; Mathews KA. 1996. *The New American Commentary*. Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman; Speiser EA. 1964. *Genesis*. The Anchor Bible New York: Doubleday; Von Rad G. 1972. *Genesis*. Translated Marks JH. Old Testament Library Louisville: Westminster; Westermann C. 1984. *Genesis A Commentary*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House. Extensive use has also been made of classic rabbinical commentaries on the text which include: Bahya 123-124; Berlin; 66-70; Hirsch: 114-118; Nachmanides: 64-67; 114-118. Among the articles referred to include: Tomasino AJ. 1992. History Repeats Itself: The "Fall" and Noah's Drunkenness. *VT* 42:128-130; Avishur Y. 1999. The Story of Noah's Drunkenness and His Son's Behavior. In: *Studies in Biblical Narrative*. pp. 41-56; Basset FW. 1971. Noah's Nakedness and the Curse of Canaan a Case of Incest? *VT* 21: 232-237; Davies PR. 1986. Sons of Cain. In: Martin JD and Davies PR (eds). *A Word in Season: Essays in Honour of William McKane JSOT Sup 42*; Sheffield: JSOT Press. pp. 35-36; Dimant D. 1998. Noah in Early Jewish Literature. In: *Biblical Figures Outside the Bible*. pp. 123-150; Hofitzger J. 1958. Some Remarks on the Tale of Noah's Drunkenness. *OTS* 12:22-27; Steinmetz D. 1994. Vineyard, Farm and Garden: The Drunkenness of Noah in the context of the Primeval history. *JBL* 113:193-207; Vervenne M. 1995. What shall we do with the Drunken Sailor? A Critical Re-examination of Genesis 9:20-27. *JSOT* 68: 33-55; Wenham GJ. 1978. The Coherence of the Flood narrative. *VT* 28:336-48.

(כה) וַיֹּאמֶר אֲרוּר כְּנָעַן עֶבֶד עֲבָדִים יִהְיֶה לְאֶחָיו:  
 (כו) וַיֹּאמֶר בְּרוּךְ ה' אֱלֹהֵי שָׁם וַיְהִי כְנָעַן עֶבֶד לְמוֹ:  
 (כז) וַיִּפֹּת אֶל הַיָּם לְיִפֹּת וַיִּשְׁכַּן בְּאֶהֱלֵי שָׁם וַיְהִי כְנָעַן עֶבֶד לְמוֹ:  
 (כח) וַיַּחֲזִי בְּחַ אַחֵר הַמִּבּוּל שָׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה וַחֲמִשִּׁים שָׁנָה:  
 (כט) וַיְהִיו כָּל יְמֵי בְּחַ תְּשַׁע מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה וַחֲמִשִּׁים שָׁנָה וַיָּמָת: פ

18: And the sons of Noah who went forth from the ark were Shem, Ham and Japheth. And Ham was the father of Canaan.<sup>13</sup>

19: These are the three sons of Noah and from them the whole world was dispersed.

20: And Noah, a man of the soil, began to plant a vineyard.

21: And he drank of some of the wine and became drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent.

22: And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father's nakedness and told his two brother's outside.

23: And Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it across their shoulders; then they walked in backward and covered their father's nakedness. Their faces were turned the other way so that they could not see their father's nakedness.

24: And Noah awoke from his wine and found out what his youngest son had had done to him.

25: And he said, "Cursed be Canaan, the lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers."

26: And he said, "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem! May Canaan be the slave of Shem.

27: May God extend the territory of Japheth and may he live in the tents of Shem, and may Canaan be his slave."

28. And Noah lived after the flood three hundred and fifty years.

29: And all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years, then he died.

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<sup>13</sup>The translation of this story is taken largely from Avishur's article "The Story of Noah's Drunkenness and his son's Behavior," in *Studies in Biblical Narrative*, though I have made some of my own modifications where I felt that more precision of style and content was warranted.

### 1.1.1 The Ancient Near Eastern Literary Background

To provide historical context to my presentation of Noah's act as described in the biblical text, I present some background from the Ancient Near East to contextualize the attitude of these writers towards the excessive drinking of wine. It seems, from the following Ugaritic sources, that drunkenness in antiquity was not regarded as particularly reprehensible. In this culture, people pictured their supreme god, El, as one who was not only loving, all powerful and wise, but also one who was not infrequently drunk. For example, one text describes a divine banquet:

El sits in his *mzrh*-shrine  
El drinks wine to satiety  
Liquor to drunkenness.  
El goes to his house  
Proceeds to his court  
Tkmm and Snm carry him.<sup>14</sup>

The authors of this piece saw no inherent problems with the idea that their supreme god was, on occasion, so completely drunk that he needed the help of junior gods to escort him back to his throne room.<sup>15</sup>

The following is another account in Ugaritic literature of the drunkenness of gods:

The gods eat and drink  
They drink wine till satiety  
Must till intoxication

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<sup>14</sup> Translation of Gordon CH. 1976. El Father of Snm. *JNES* 35:261. Gordon also points out that according to the Aqhat legend a model son is expected, among others forms of service, to carry his father when the latter is too drunk to walk by himself. We will consider the biblical parallel to this in our text shortly.

<sup>15</sup> See also Hamilton 1990: 321-323 and Westermann 1984: 488, both of whom also follow this approach.

(KTU 601: 2-4)

Yet another Ugaritic text describes the son's duty towards his father which echoes the behavior of Noah's two sons, Shem and Japheth. Beyond the obvious desire of the biblical text to extol the virtues of these two sons, their example becomes even clearer when considered in the light of Canaanite morality. In the commandment of the ideal son in the Ugaritic tale of Aqhat, it is the son's duty towards his father to help him when he is drunk:

"He takes his hand in drunkenness  
lifts him onto his shoulder  
when he is full of wine."<sup>16</sup>

It is the son's obligation to his drunken father to support him and carry him home on his back.<sup>17</sup> Moreover a recently published Ugaritic text, noted previously, tells of a feast of gods in which El got drunk and his sons *tkmn* and *snm* carried him on their back and took him to his house, thereby fulfilling the duty of a son to his father.<sup>18</sup>

In summary, in Ugaritic texts drunkenness was not considered a particularly reprehensible act. The gods themselves were frequently inebriated. In addition, these texts present the filial duty of sons towards their father, when the latter is in a state of intoxication, an act which echoes the behavior of Noah's two sons.

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<sup>16</sup> See Herdner A. 1963. *Corpus des Tablets en Cuneiforms Alphabetiques*. Paris: 17 (2 Aqht): I 31-32 and three more times.

<sup>17</sup> See Boda MJ. 1993. Ideal Sonship in Ugarit. *UF* 25: 9-24 and Koch K. 1967. Die Sohnesverheissung und den ugaritischen Daniel. *ZA* 58: 211-221.

<sup>18</sup> See Avishur 1999: 45.

### 1.1.2 The Story of Noah's Drunkenness in the Context of Genesis 1-11

Before focusing on the literary structure of the text as a whole as well as its literary composition and linguistic style, I feel that no full treatment of this unit can be undertaken without considering how the language and literary style of the unit, parallels earlier sections of Genesis.<sup>19</sup> The narrative of Noah's drunkenness, which results in the patriarch's invocation for curse and blessing, recalls the language of the world before the flood, especially Adam's story but also Cain's rivalry with his brother Abel. Noah and Adam share in the same profession (2:15; 9:20); the language of "curse"-קללה (3:14,17; 4:11; 5:29; 9:25) and "blessing"-ברכה (1:28; 5:2; 9:26) are heard again and both experience the shame of "nakedness"-ערוה (3:7, 10-11; 9:22-23). There are many literary allusions to the garden sin: the tree of knowledge "in the middle of (בתוך) the garden" (2:9; 3:3, 8) and Noah "inside (בתוך) the tent" (9:21); the woman "saw"-ראה in 3:6 and Ham "saw" in 9:22 though the brothers did not "see" (9:23); Adam and Eve "knew"-ידע- they were naked" in 3,7 and Noah "knew" what his younger son had done to him" (9:24). In short, Noah appears to be the second Adam both as recipient of divine blessing and as father of corrupt seed. The parallels between these stories will be examined more deeply in the next chapter when studying the writings of the second temple literature on this story.

### 1.1.3 The Literary and Linguistic Structure of the Narrative as a Whole

In the Torah's division into paragraphs, the one relating the story of Noah's drunkenness and the behavior of his sons consists of twelve verses (Genesis 9:18-29). However, one third of these do not appear to directly relate to the narrative proper. The first two verses of the story (18-19) are in its introduction and the last two (28-29) are its conclusion.

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<sup>19</sup> See Tomasino AJ. 1992. History Repeats Itself: The "Fall" and Noah's Drunkenness. *VT* 42:128-30 and Steinmetz D. 1994. Vineyard, Farm and Garden: The Drunkenness of Noah in the Context of Primeval History. *JBL* 113:193-207.

Avishur (1999:41) has creatively shown us that the story as whole, with its introduction and conclusion, is cast in a single mold possessing external features marking it out as a literary unit with a structure organized in a set scheme. This is a **chiasmus**: the narrator has inserted into the story structural signs that divide it into two parts, where the features of the second repeat those of the first crosswise, that is, the last is repeated first and the first last<sup>20</sup>. The twelve-verse narrative falls into two almost equal parts and verse 23 is the crux, itself including the central and salient chiastic repetition. The division, highlighting the linguistic chiastic features, is as follows:

A And the sons of Noah :וַיֵּהְיוּ בְנֵי נֹחַ:

B who went forth from the ark were-הָיָא אֲנָשִׁים מִן הַתֵּבָה-

C Shem, Ham and Japheth-שֵׁם וְחָם וַיַּפֶּת-

D And Ham was the father of Canaan-וְחָם הוּא אָבִי כְנַעַן-

E And Noah began.... And he drank of the wine and became drunk

וַיִּתְחַל נֹחַ אִישׁ הָאֲדָמָה וַיִּטַּע כֶּרֶם וַיִּשְׁתֶּה מִן הַיַּיִן וַיִּשְׁכָּר

F And Ham saw - וַיֵּרָא חָם אֲבִי כְנַעַן -

G the nakedness of his father-אֶת עֶרְוַת אָבִיו-

H And they walked backwards-וַיֵּלְכוּ אָחֻר רַגְלֵיהֶם

I And covered the nakedness of their father-וַיִּכְסּוּ אֶת עֶרְוַת אָבִיהֶם-

H" Their faces were turned away - וּפְנֵיהֶם אָחֻר רַגְלֵיהֶם -

G" and their father's nakedness-וְעֶרְוַת אָבִיהֶם-

F" they did not see-לֹא רָאוּ-

E" And Noah awoke from his wine-וַיִּיקָץ נֹחַ מִיַּיְנוֹ-

D" Cursed be Canaan-אֲרוּר כְנַעַן-

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<sup>20</sup> On chiasmus in the Bible see primarily Brin G & Hofman Y. 1962. Towards the Use of Chiasmus in the Bible. In: Eliner A. *Seidel Volume*. Jerusalem. pp. 280-89; Di Marco A. 1975-77. Der Chiasmus in der Bibel. *Linguistica Biblica* 36: 21-92; Fokkelman J. 1991. *Narrative Art in Genesis*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press; Loewenstamm SE. 1992. *From Babylon to Canaan-Studies in the Bible Its Oriental Background*. Jerusalem: Magnus Press; Lund NM. 1933. The Presence of Chiasmus in the Old Testament. *AJSL* 46: 104-26; Raday YT. 1964. On Chiasmus in Biblical Narrative. *Beth Mikra* 20/21: 48-72; Seidel M. 1978. *Bible Studies*. Jerusalem: Magnus Press. pp. 1-108; Weiss M. 1984. *The Bible from Within*. Jerusalem: Magnus Press; Welch WW. 1981. *Chiasmus in Antiquity*. Hildesheim: Gerstenberg.

C" Shem (and) Japheth-שם ויפת-

B" After the flood Noah lived-ויחי נח אחר המבול-

A" All the days of Noah were-ויהיו כל ימי נח-

In seven of the eight parallels between the two parts of the story, the repetitions are in style and language; namely, the same word or the same combination, or even the same syntactical structure is repeated exactly. In one repetition, however, the parallel is only thematic: in the first part the ark (תיבה) is mentioned, in the second the flood (מבול). At the center of the story, the pivot of the chiasmic structure, stands the expression ערות אב which is repeated three times and serves as the *Leitwort*.<sup>21</sup> What is clear from this chiasmic structure is that the focus of the story seems to be not on the act of Noah's drunkenness, but rather on the consequences of his drinking and his sons' reaction.

A further consideration of the literary structure of the story offers a different perspective. Vervenne (1995:47-50), for example, posits that the literary composition of the text of Gen. 9.20-27 can be divided into two parts. The first part, comprising vv. 20-23, deals with a discordant event in Noah's family. The difficulty into which the ancestor ran after he had set up as a viculturist is first depicted. But like Avishur, Vervenne posits that the subsequent section does not raise the matter of Noah's drunkenness, but focuses on the issue of the son seeing his naked and sleeping father. The picture is one of a defenseless father, seen by the eyes of one of his sons, that contrasts with the description of the other two sons who scrupulously screen off their father. In the second main part vv. 24-27, the awakened Noah comes to the fore. He is no longer the passive sleeper whose bare body is the object of his sons' activity. The roles are now reversed. Noah actively addresses himself to his sons who have become passive.<sup>22</sup> This part of the composition opens with a narrative passage in verse 24, which is like a pivot around which the literary structures

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<sup>21</sup> See Buber 1964: 274 who sees the *Leitwort* of the story as ערות אב and כנען.

<sup>22</sup> Jacob 1974: 68 expresses this change of feature between the two sections of the pericope in a similar way. He writes on verse 24, "Noah revives; the story expresses this nicely by letting his name disappear after he had planted wine and drunk of it; it reappears now after he had slept off his drunkenness. This was not the Noah we had known so far."

turn. This verse, more particularly, explicitly marks the transition from passivity (vv. 20-23) to activity (vv. 25-26).

In summary, when examining the literary structure of the unit whether employing Avishur's chiasmic structure or Vervenne's passive and active model of Noah, the focus of the story appears to be placed on the sons' behavior towards their father rather than Noah's act of drunkenness.

I will now focus on the linguistic composition of the unit as a whole before considering the individual verses themselves.

Vervenne (1995:47) divides Gen. 9. 20-27 into two linguistic units<sup>23</sup>. The first unit which comprises vv. 20-24 is a *narrative text*. Niccacci (1990:29) defines narrative as text which, "concerns persons or events which are not present or current in the relationship involving writer-reader and so the third person is used." The first unit consists of a chain of thirteen finite verbal clauses as follows:

20a And **he began**.... ויחל

20b And **he planted**.... ויטע

21a And **he drank**... וישת

21b and **he became drunk**.... וישכר

21c and **he lay uncovered**.... ויתגל

22a and **Ham saw**.... וירא חם

22b and **he told** his 2 brothers.... ויגד לשני אחיו

23a And **Shem and Japheth took**... ויקח שם ויפת

23b And **they laid** it.... וישימו

23c And **they went** backwards.... וילכו אחורנית

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<sup>23</sup> For the text-linguistic terminology used in this section reference should be made to Weinrich H. 1977. *Tempus: Besprochene und erzählte Welt*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer; Schneider W. 1978. *Grammatik des biblischen Hebräisch*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Munich: Claudis Verlag; Talstra E. 1982. Text, Grammar and Hebrew Bible. *Bi Or* 39:26-38; Niccacci A. 1990. *The Syntax of the Verb in Classical Hebrew Prose*. JSOTSup, 86; Sheffield: JSOT Press.

23d And **they covered**...ויכסו

23e And their faces were turned the other way....ופניהם אהורנית

23f And their father's nakedness they did not see...וערות אביהם לא ראו

24a And **Noah awoke** ....וייקץ נח

24b And **he knew**...וידע

24ba What his youngest son had done to him...את אשר עשה לו בנו הקטן

All verbs of this sequence have the form *wäyyiqtol*. The sequence is briefly interrupted between the eleventh (ויכסו) and twelfth (וייקץ) *wäyyiqtol*. At that point, a sentence is inserted consisting of a verbless clause (23e) and a finite verb clause (23f: *w-x-qatal*). This syntactic shift not only recovers information (23c: background) but emphasizes the fact that Ham and Japheth did not watch their father at all.<sup>24</sup> The verbless clause also suggests simultaneity between the first action (23e) and the second (23f).

The second linguistic unit consists of vv. 25-27 and Vervenne (1995:48) characterizes it as a *discursive* text. Niccacci (1990:29) defines a discursive text as one in which "the speaker addresses the listener directly (dialogue, sermon, prayer)". This unit is comprised of two discourses v.25 and vv. 26-27 each beginning with a finite verb clause, a *wayyiktol* of אמר. This fits the discursive units into the foregrounding narrative sequence as described above. The discourses proper are introduced with non-finite verb clauses ארוך ברוך. The exact parallelism of the phrase ויהי כנען עבד למו in vv. 26 and 27 shows that these verses comprise a syntactic unit. The parallel key words ה' אלוקים in these verses emphasizes this structure.

After focusing on the literary structure and linguistic composition of the unit as a whole, I now examine more closely the literary and linguistic composition of the individual verses themselves. As has been previously mentioned, the tale in essence consists of eight verses only (vv.20-27) and in contrast to the introduction and conclusion, whose verses are in ordinary prose, the story itself is written in poetic prose reaching a climax in the blessings and curses, which are poetically written. The brief story is rich in literary detail and every

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<sup>24</sup> Niccacci 1990: 48.

word and phrase justifies meticulous study. In order to better understand their historical setting, reference will also be made, from time to time, to parallel texts in Ancient Near East Literature. In the following commentary this shall be considered in detail.

#### **1.1.4 Exegesis on verses 9:18-27**

##### **Verses 18-19**

18: And the sons of Noah who went forth from the ark were Shem, Ham and Japheth. And Ham was the father of Canaan.

19: These are the three sons of Noah and from them the whole world was dispersed.

Gunkel (1997: 80) followed by Westermann (1984: 482-484) view verses 18 and 19 as the close of the flood narrative and at the same time the introduction to the family tree of Shem, Ham and Japheth in Genesis 10. Hamilton (1990: 320-321)<sup>25</sup> develops this idea by describing Noah's three sons as representing the progenitors of the human race. The emphasis of common ancestry was first cited in Genesis 1 and 2. That theme is repeated here. Yet, he explains, the narration about the peopling of the earth is postponed until after the interlude about Noah, his drunkenness and his sons. Chapter 10 could just as easily have followed 9:19. Hamilton posits, that the diffusion and multiplication of the "Canaanites" (10:15-20) or of the larger "Hamites" (10:6-20) take place in spite of Ham's dubious behavior and the curse that is placed on Canaan.

Wenham (1978: 336-348), Coats (1983:87) and Hamilton (1990: 321) discuss a further piece of information that is added in the introductory verses 18-19. In this text there is a reference to a post-Flood third generation. "Ham was the father of Canaan". This reference anticipates 10:6 which tells that Canaan was the youngest and fourth son of Ham: Cush, Egypt, Put and Canaan. Although no specific references have been made to it, the notation here about Canaan is evidence that the divine imperative of 9:1 is already at work: "Be abundantly fruitful and fill the earth," as is the promise of the covenant with

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<sup>25</sup> See also Wenham GJ. 1978. The Coherence of the Flood Narrative. *VT* 28: 336-348, especially the palistophe that appears on page 338.

Noah, his sons and their descendants. The verse, according to Hamilton, points to one of those descendants.

While the two introductory verses may be deemed necessary for the continuity of the narrative following on from the story of the flood, this does not seem to hold true for the last two verses forming the conclusion. They appear to add nothing to the preceding story, and in fact belong rather to the description following them.<sup>26</sup> Coats (1983:87), notes that the conclusion does not relate in substance to the unit but only establishes the Noachian context for the unit.

**Verse 20-** And Noah, a man of the land, began to plant a vineyard.

The grammatical structure of the clause ויהל נח איש האדמה ויטע כרם has been variously interpreted as reflected by the different translations. The translation above is based on the New English Bible (NEB). Similarly, the New American Bible (NAB) translates the verse as, "Noah, a man of the soil, was the first to plant a vineyard."

The Revised Standard Version (RSV), in comparison, translates it as "Noah was the first tiller of the ground. He planted a vineyard." I do not accept the RSV translation for a number of reasons.<sup>27</sup> Firstly, the translation is misleading because Cain (4:2) was the first tiller of the soil.<sup>28</sup> Secondly, as Cassuto (1965:108) has pointed out, the verb והל cannot be grammatically followed by a noun especially one preceded by the definitive ה as in איש האדמה. Nachmanides, in his commentary on 9:20, also understands the verse as has been translated by the NEB. According to Nachmanides, Noah's initiative was to be the first man to plant a vineyard. Those who preceded him planted individual vines, but Noah was the first to plant vines in rows so as to be called a vineyard.

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<sup>26</sup> See Vervenne 1995:44 who sees 9:28-29 as a conclusion to the genealogical composition of chapters 5-9. Westermann 1984:486, however, claims that vv. 18-19 and 28 function as, respectively, title and conclusion of the pericope of Gen. 9. 20-27.

<sup>27</sup> Similarly Westermann, Gunkel, Dillman and Skinner all reject the notion that the text means that "Noah was the first farmer". Rather, as Westermann 1984: 487 explains, the cultivation of the soil has taken a further step from agriculture to viticulture.

<sup>28</sup> See Hamilton 1990: 320.

The word ויחל is worthy of attention. Avishur (1999:46) points out that this verb is not connected to the verb וייחל meaning "waiting" in the story of the flood in 8:12, but is a term indicating beginnings in human civilization and in this case the beginnings of planting vineyards and wine making on earth.<sup>29</sup> It compares with what is said of Nimrod, the first mighty hunter and founder of the kingdom of Babel and its cities in the land of Shinhar בארץ גבור בהיותו גבור – "he was the first on earth to be a mighty man" (Gen. 10:8). It can also be compared to what is said of the builders of the tower of Babel: וזה ההלם לעשות "and this is only the beginning of what they will do" (Gen. 11:6).<sup>30</sup>

The phrase איש האדמה also needs to be considered carefully. I have translated this as "a man of the land", following Cassuto (1965:108), Jacob (1974:68), Mathews (1996:414) and Avishur (1999:46). Cassuto discounts the translation of "the worker of the soil" for two reasons. Firstly, the word עובד would have been used if this were its meaning. Secondly, the word אדמה is not necessarily connected to the meaning of "soil". It often means "land". Genesis 12:3, ונברכו בכך כל משפחות האדמה, clearly indicates the use of אדמה as referring to land in general. Cassuto, and others, have posited that the

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<sup>29</sup> See also Gen. 6:1 where the root החל means "beginning." A similar syntactic structure also occurs in Ezra 3:8 ויעמידו-החלו i.e. "they started by appointing" (cf. Williamson GM. 1985. *Ezra, Nehemiah*. Waco, TX: World Books). According to Vervenne 1995:45, the characterization of Noah as "tiller of the soil" fits into the context of Gen. 1-11, since "tilling the soil" is a typical motif in this complex (see 2:15; 3:23;4:2). Interestingly enough, as we have seen, the commentators do not connect ויחל which appears twice in the immediately preceding chapter in 8:10 and 8:12. In these verses it clearly has the meaning of "waiting". If we were to connect these verses we would have an intriguing interpretation to the verse. Noah did not plant the vine immediately after his return to dry land. It was a premeditated, thoughtful act which the "man of the land" waited to perform until the right time would come.

<sup>30</sup> Other classical commentaries following this understanding of ויחל include Ibn Ezra and Seforno. Rashi and Kli Yakar however understand the word as being derived from חולין –profanation- and come to comment negatively on Noah's behavior as profaning himself by planting a vine which would lead to his intoxication. We will try to show how both Rashi and Kli Yakar consistently follow the Midrashic understanding of the story which paints Noah in a very negative light throughout this episode. This will be considered in the next chapter. This is also consistent with the "Drash" bent of the commentary of Rashi generally in his commentary on the Torah as opposed to the "Peshat" focus of a commentary like Ibn Ezra.

intention of the term *איש האדמה* is to connect this phrase to the term used by Lemech when his son Noah was born in Gen: 5:29; "and he called his name Noah, saying, "This one shall bring us relief from our work and the toil of our hands, out of the land (*אדמה*) which the Lord has cursed." Accordingly, the description *איש האדמה* presented here is meant to indicate that henceforth the curse on the soil is lifted and Noah is the first to be the master of the land which yields him its strength. Noah is indeed the "master of the land" being the head of the only family to have survived from all those families of the world-*משפחות האדמה*.<sup>31</sup> Thus the wish expressed at the time of Noah's birth has indeed been realized and Noah plants a vineyard and enjoys its fruits.

Jacob (1974:67) and Westerman (1984:487) follow this line of thought. Westerman, for example, writes,

Viticulture and its produce are regarded as an advance on agriculture. Over and above the toil and labor of the farmer to produce the necessities of life, it yields a product that brings joy and relaxation. The rhythm of work and celebration demands that the celebration be the high point; festivity supersedes daily drudgery. The production of wine opens the way to festal drinking. One can understand how in Israel the vine and its fruit became the sign of the blessed life in the messianic era.<sup>32</sup>

I will suggest one last comment on this verse. In the Bible the planting of the first vineyard, like the founding of other aspects of civilization is attributed to man, in contrast to their attribution to gods in the divine myths of the peoples of the Ancient Near East and Greece. The Greeks ascribed vineyard planting to Dionysos, the god of wine, and the Egyptians to Osiris. It is interesting that a number of scholars have pointed out that

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<sup>31</sup> See also Rashi among the classical Jewish commentators on 9:20 who clearly understands the phrase *איש האדמה* in term of "master of the land".

<sup>32</sup> See also Jacob 1974:67. Many instances in the Bible view the vine as a sign of peace and prosperity. See Zechariah 8:12 and Micha 4:4; "They shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and none shall make them afraid."

Deucalion, the hero of the flood in the Greek myth is linked to the myth of Dionysos and the invention of wine.<sup>33</sup>

21: And he drank of some of the wine and became drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent.

This verse is short and does not provide some important details of the narrative. For example, the time interval between the planting of the vineyard and Noah's inebriation is not written in the text. The account is given in short words and is divided into two; the cause-"and he drank of the wine and became drunk," and the effect-"and he lay uncovered in his tent."<sup>34</sup> The description of the inebriation is given here in standard form: in the Bible the two verbs שָׁתָה and שָׁכַר often appear in connection with each other as in Gen. 43:34 and Samuel 11:14.

How does the text of the Bible relate to Noah's inebriation? This is a very important question especially as this thesis compares the Bible text on drunkenness with that of the second temple texts and later midrashic and rabbinic texts. Cassuto (1965:110) points out that the brevity of the text in describing Noah's drunkenness suggests that this issue is not the focus of the story. It merely is a means to the real purpose of the story; the blessings and the curses of Noah. As has been discussed in the earlier treatment of the literary and linguistic structure of the unit, this approach seems to be most reasonable.

Yet, it seems difficult to understand how the obedient, righteous Noah of Gen. 6:5-9:17 becomes drunk and naked in 9:21. The text does not moralize on Noah's behavior which is neither condemned nor approved.

A modern commentator such as Knight<sup>35</sup> claims that:

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<sup>33</sup> See Cassuto 1964: 158-163 and Skinner 1910:181-183.

<sup>34</sup> See Avishur 1999: 48.

<sup>35</sup> Knight GF. 1981. *Theology in Pictures: A Commentary on Genesis, Chapters One to Eleven*. Edinburgh: The Handsel Press in his commentary on Gen. 9:20-27.

Under no circumstances are we to bring a moral judgment to bear upon Noah as he falls drunk in his tent. Man learns only from experience. In our day, every material discovery brings its compensatory disadvantages, road deaths from the development of the internal combustion engine, unspeakable devastation from the discovery of nuclear fission. Noah is the "guinea-pig" so to speak from whom all mankind has been able to learn that along with drunkenness goes moral laxity, and that the drugging of the higher powers of human consciousness leads to sexual license.

However, this approach is difficult to accept. The ancients seem to be well aware of the effects of intoxication. Yet, intoxication itself was not necessarily seen as reprehensible.

Mathews (1996:417) is another commentator who tries to justify Noah's actions. He finds an allusion to Noah drinking "some" of the wine as perhaps suggesting a mitigating factor and perhaps even an allusion to 3:12 where Adam feebly excuses himself ("some of the fruit").

Another approach considers the procreative qualities of wine. Cohen<sup>36</sup>, for example, suggests that Noah's intoxication resulted from his need to increase his procreative power and not from a weakness of alcohol or from any ignorance of the effects of alcohol. Noah is given a command to procreate to fill the world. His determination to maintain his procreative abilities at full strength resulted in drinking himself into a state of helpless intoxication. The story can be compared in some ways to Lot and his daughters. Lot too survived a disaster believed to be cataclysmic and subsequently believed that he and his daughters were the sole survivors on earth. Second, he too was considered to be an old man at the time of his escape from the fire. His age differed from Noah's in years, but not degree. Third, he too became intoxicated to the point of stupefaction. In both cases the drinking of wine, Cohen suggests, was meant to increase the father's procreative powers.

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<sup>36</sup> Cohen H. 1974: 6-10. *The Drunkenness of Noah*. Alabama: Alabama University Press.

Cohen finds a similar parallel in David trying to make Uriah drunk with wine in Samuel 2: 11:13.

Though Cohen's study makes some astute observations, he appears to me to rely too heavily on unproven statements rather than a systematic exegesis of the text.

The epiphany of the drunkenness episode is that Noah "lay uncovered in his tent." The verbal form ויתגל is, according to some commentators,<sup>37</sup> an elliptical form of ויתגלו מערומו, "his nakedness, private parts were exposed." We are not told why Noah was naked at this time. As Hamilton (1990:322) has pointed out, the root גלה used here is the *Hithpael* form of the verb which is found again only in Proverbs 18:2 (the fool "uncovers his heart," i.e. displays his folly). As such the intention here is that Noah uncovered himself. The Good News Bible (GNB) translates here more explicitly "took off his clothes". There is no indication here that Ham disrobed his father. Noah was probably so inebriated that that he stripped himself and probably passed out unclothed in the tent. Some commentators suggest that the additional comment that it happened in the tent, at least not in public, is meant to mitigate somewhat the offensiveness of the scene.<sup>38</sup>

22: And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father's nakedness and told his two brothers outside.

23: And Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it across their shoulders; then they walked in backward and covered their father's nakedness. Their faces were turned the other way so that they could not see their father's nakedness.

How is Ham's sin to be understood? His sin was apparently that he "saw his father's nakedness". The biblical text is again very brief and this phrase is open for interpretation. There are several suggestions to explain this expression and the nature of the sin. F.W.

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<sup>37</sup> See Avishur 1999: 48.

<sup>38</sup>See Gunkel 1997:80. Similarly, Jacob 1974:67 sees this as a mitigating circumstance. He writes: "The inner warmth of the wine had caused him to throw off his garment. He celebrates the first vintage a little too freely."

Basset, for example, suggests that the sin is incest.<sup>39</sup> He, like Gunkel, begins with the argument that v.24 says explicitly that the son had done something to his father.<sup>40</sup> In addition, in Lev. 18: 6-19; 20:11, 17-21; Ezek. 16:36-37, to uncover גלה (in the *Piel* form) the nakedness of a person is to commit fornication, to engage in heterosexual intercourse with a relative. Thus, Lev. 18:7 "you shall not uncover the nakedness of your father," prohibits cohabitation with one's mother. In Lev. 20:17 "uncover is replaced by "see": if a man takes his sister... and sees her nakedness and she sees his nakedness....," suggesting the interchangeability of "uncovering" and "seeing". To do the first is to do the second. This suggestion, applied to Gen. 9:21, would mean that while Noah was inebriated and unawares, his son Ham slept with his mother, and Canaan was the offspring of this incestuous relationship. This explanation would explain why Noah curses Canaan after he sleeps off his hangover. A parallel could be found in Reuben's affair with his father's concubine, Bilhah, which results in his loss of privilege as firstborn (35:22; 44:3-4).<sup>41</sup>

One of the major difficulties with this interpretation is how it fits the biblical story.<sup>42</sup> For example, when Shem and Japheth "covered their father's nakedness"(verse 23) does this mean simply that they abstained from sexual relationship with their mother? Basset himself is forced to admit that v.23 is awkward, and that it comes from the hand of a later redactor who failed to understand the subtleties of the event.

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<sup>39</sup> See Basset FW. 1971. Noah's Nakedness and the Curse of Canaan. A Case of Incest? *VT* 21:232-37.

<sup>40</sup> See Gunkel 1997:80. Similarly, Philips suggests that 9:24 "Noah knew what his younger son had done to him" implies more than an immodest look at his drunken father but rather his actual seduction while unconscious-an act so abhorrent that the author is unwilling to spell it out. (Philips A.1980: Uncovering the Father's skirt. *VT* 30:38-43). See also von Rad G. 1958:113 *Das Erste Buch Mose, Genesis 5*. Göttingen and Warter B. 1977. *On Genesis*. London.

<sup>41</sup> See Mathews 1996:419.

<sup>42</sup> See Rice G. 1972. The Curse That Never Was. *JRT* 29:5-27. Davies (1986: 35-36), on the other hand, referring to Basset, states carefully that "it may well be that some sexual connotation is involved in the case of Noah." See Davies PR. 1986. Sons of Cain. In: Martin JD and Davies PR (eds). *A Word in Season: Essays in Honour of William McKane JSOT Sup 42*. Sheffield: JSOT Press. pp. 35-36.

However, a comparison of the biblical text with parallels in the Ancient Near East suggests grounds for substantiating an act of sexual misconduct. This may more adequately explain Noah's wrath and the curse he invoked on Canaan the son of Ham. For example, according to Philo of Byblos, who cites a Phoenician tradition preserved in Greek, it is told that El (=Kronos) lay in ambush for Uranus (that is, heaven) his father in a place inside the earth and overpowered him and severed his organs close by springs and rivers, and so prevented him from begetting more sons. A similar narrative is found in Huro-Hittite mythology, which tells of the god Kumarbi who pulled his father Anu (that is, heaven) off the throne, bit him and swallowed his private parts. Another parallel is found in Greek mythology, where Zeus is related to have deposed his father Chronos and castrated him.<sup>43</sup>

Other commentators, however, limit Ham's transgression to his simply observing the exposure of Noah's genitalia and failing to cover his naked father. In addition, he compounded his sin by going and telling his brothers outside of what he had witnessed.<sup>44</sup> Although not stated explicitly, this act is not trivial: Ham wished to draw his brothers into a jest, but they not only did not agree, they fulfilled their moral duty to their father. Their behavior is contrasted to their brother's. Ham saw his father's nakedness, but they walk backwards "and they did not see their father's nakedness."

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<sup>43</sup> See Cassuto 1965:148-172 and Westermann 1984:644-661. We will see in the next chapter how the linkage of fables of this kind with the story of Noah's drunkenness and Ham's deed is found in early rabbinic literature.

<sup>44</sup> See Avishur 1999:48. Cassuto 1965: 153 also posits that Ham's sin was limited to "seeing" the nakedness of his father. The fact that in verse 23 we read that Shem and Japheth, "did not see their father's nakedness" shows that Ham's sin was in the domain of seeing alone. As we shall see, the fact that a son sees his father's nakedness is reprehensible enough. Similarly Mathews 1996:419 comments on the description in the verse of "their faces were turned," that if in fact some lecherous deed occurred inside the tent, it is inexplicable why the covering of their father is in juxtaposition to Ham's act. On other occasions Genesis is straightforward in its description of sexual misconduct (e.g. 19:30-35; 34:2). There is no reason to assume, according to Mathews, that sexual misconduct would be described euphemistically by the author.

In summary, it is **Noah's nakedness** rather than his drunkenness that lies at the heart of this biblical text. It is Noah's nakedness which lies at the centre of the unit's chiasmic structure and it is the phrase ערות אביהם which is repeated three times in its various forms within both these verses in the unit's composition.<sup>45</sup> Noah's drunkenness is only circumstantial to his nakedness. It is Noah's nudity, not his inebriated state, which Ham saw and passed on to his brothers. His sin would have been equally reprehensible had his father been sober.<sup>46</sup>

A parallel of Ham's act towards his father can be found in Habakkuk 2:15:

הוי משקה רעהו –  
מספח המתך ואף שכר-  
למען הביט על מעוריהם-

In both passages the sin is seeing nakedness. In Genesis, the word is ראה (saw) and in Habakkuk the term found is הביט (gaze).<sup>47</sup> In many ways the text in Habakkuk matches the story in Genesis. Yet there are also great differences. While the Habakkuk passage speaks of one causing his friend to become drunk in order to gaze on his nakedness, in Genesis the account is of a father who becomes drunk and his son's behavior towards him.

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<sup>45</sup> See Vervenne 1995:49 who also does not view the text as focused on the issue of drunkenness. The motif of the story is ערוה which he translates as genitals. The text focuses on the issue of the son seeing the genitals of his sleeping father and does have sexual connotations. Vervenne sees in the repeated use of ערוה an association to a Priestly origin. ערוה appears about 50 times in the Hebrew Bible predominantly in the book of Leviticus (chapters 18 and 20). He suggests that the text is subtly criticizing the aberrant ideas that took root in Israel's *Umwelt*. It attacks Canaan who stands for all those who associate sexuality with erotic pleasure and whose sexual behavior contravenes the divine laws of Israel. It is these practices that are being condemned in the text.

<sup>46</sup> See Hamilton 1990:323.

<sup>47</sup> See Avishur 1984: 269-95 where he points out that ראה and הביט are two synonymous verbs forming a set word-pair in the Bible.

In this regard it is important to comment that nakedness appears to be shameful in Hebrew culture.<sup>48</sup> Specific prohibitions are stated against the public exposure of the genitals and buttocks (e.g. Exodus 20:26: 28:42) and nakedness was commonly associated with public misconduct (e.g. Exodus 32:25). In the biblical world insulting one's parents was considered a serious matter that warranted the extreme penalty of death. Mosaic legislation reflected this sentiment.<sup>49</sup>

Shem and Japheth, unlike Ham, treated Noah with respect. Unlike Ham they do not talk; they only act. It is telling that verse 24 is the most expansive verse of the whole unit with 21 words of which three are repeated in the same verse. The intention is to draw attention to their pious content<sup>50</sup> which, significantly, is unfolded in a series of concrete verbs:

1. They took (the cloak)... ויקח שם ויפת.
2. They put it.... וישמו
3. They walked backwards וילכו אחורנית
4. They covered ... ערות אביהם.
5. Their faces were turned away ופניהם אחורנית
6. They did not see.... ערות אביהם.

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<sup>48</sup> We suggest for example, the public mistreatment of David's envoy in 2 Samuel 10:4 and the public ridicule of the nations (Isaiah 20:4; 47:3; Micah 1:11).

<sup>49</sup> E.g. Exodus 20:12; 21:15, 17; Deut 21:18-21; 27:16. We emphasize here that the seeing of nakedness together with Ham's "telling" his brothers and his lack of respect for his father appears to be the sin as seen by most modern commentators. Westermann 1984:489, for example, writes: "The continuity of the life of a group of people depends on the stream of tradition being passed on undisturbed from one generation to another. This was only possible when the elders were respected by the younger, those going by those coming. Respect for the elders was a command necessary for the maintenance of the group. That is the reason why Noah cursed the son who mocked him." See also Fleishman J. 1999. *Parent and Child in Ancient Near East and the Bible*. Jerusalem: Magnus Press, where he describes the severe penalties of a child who fails to honor his parents.

<sup>50</sup> Westermann 1984: 488.

It has been noted by scholars that the style is almost poetic in form and shows signs of parallelism as in lines 3 and 5 and lines 4 and 6.<sup>51</sup> Cassuto understands the details of the story as follows. When they approached and entered the tent, "*they walked backward*", that means, not in the direction of their faces but of their backs. When they drew near to their father, they cast the garment that was on their shoulders over him and in this way *they covered his nakedness*. In addition, at the moment they covered him they turned their *faces backwards*, that is to say they turned their heads away and looked behind them so as not to gaze on their father until they had finished covering him.<sup>52</sup>

An echo of the requirements of Canaanite and Israelite morality regarding duties of a son towards his drunken father can be found in the following passage in Isa. 51: 17-18:

"You who have drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of his wrath  
Who have drunk to the dregs of the bowl of staggering  
There is none to guide her among all the sons she has borne  
There is none to take her by the hand among all the sons she has brought up."

The prophet describes Zion as one who has drunk to inebriation and her sons, whom she has brought up, do not hold her hand and support her.<sup>53</sup>

24: And Noah awoke from his wine and found out what his youngest son had had done to him.

This verse ends the "narrative"<sup>54</sup> part of the text. The story that begins "and he drank of the wine", ends with "when Noah awoke from his wine." The text does not elucidate how

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<sup>51</sup> See Cassuto 1965:153. Delitzsch comments, "The spirit of their action is reverent chaste simplicity and adroitness combined with love." See also Gervitz, S. 1964. *Patterns in the Early Poetry of Israel*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

<sup>52</sup> Cassuto 1965:154.

<sup>53</sup> See Avishur 1999: 45 and Rainey 1975:79-80.

<sup>54</sup> See Vervenne above who divides the text into two sections: narrative and discursive.

Noah learned of the affair and the assumption that his brothers told him is not certain. Again, one can point out the noticeable tendency of the story towards brevity.

The phrase "youngest son" has been discussed by various commentators. It is difficult because in general it would seem that the usual order in which the sons were listed in the Bible-Shem, Ham and Japheth-represented the order of seniority of the three brothers. As such, Ham was the middle son and if the Bible had wished to indicate another chronological order this does not seem the proper place to do so incidentally.

Some have interpreted the term in a comparative sense; Ham was younger than Shem.<sup>55</sup> This is difficult as it does not conform to Hebrew usage. Others have interpreted it to refer to the youngest son of Ham, that is to Canaan.<sup>56</sup> Some have understood it in the connotation of "unworthy" which does not accord with the simple meaning of the text.<sup>57</sup> Cassuto gives a different explanation. He sees it as a Hebrew preference for preferring the short word before the longer, while accepting the actual chronological order based on Gen. 10:21 as Japheth, Shem and Ham.<sup>58</sup> The various commentaries all point again to the cryptic nature of many aspects in this biblical text.

25: And he said, "Cursed be Canaan, the lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers."

26: And he said, "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem! May Canaan be the slave of Shem.

27: May God extend the territory of Japheth and may he live in the tents of Shem, and may Canaan be his slave."

This "discursive" part of the text will now be examined in more detail. Commentators have experienced great difficulty in explaining the curse pronounced on Canaan. They

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<sup>55</sup> See Saadya Gaon on 9:24.

<sup>56</sup> See Ibn Ezra on 9:24.

<sup>57</sup> See Rashi on 9:24.

<sup>58</sup> Cassuto gives various other examples where the Bible gives preference for the shorter word before the longer e.g. חן והסד , חק ומשפט , חסד ורחמים , יום וליילה.

find it hard to comprehend why Canaan should be cursed for a sin that not he, but his father committed. Numerous solutions have been proposed including the following:

(1) Did the text originally read "Ham" and only later "Canaan" was read in the light of what happened to the Canaanites in Palestine under Joshua and David?<sup>59</sup>

(2) Was Canaan perhaps the perpetrator of the crime?<sup>60</sup>

(3) Perhaps the phrase "Cursed be Canaan" should be understood as "Cursed be Canaan's father."<sup>61</sup>

Cassuto, Avishur and others<sup>62</sup> have rejected all these possibilities. They understand simply that Noah's utterance is not directed against the person of Canaan but against the *people* of Canaan. As Cassuto points out, "Ham represents here the Canaanites who were known to the Israelites and his actions merely symbolize the practices of the children of Canaan. The Canaanites were to suffer the curse and the bondage not because of the sins of Ham but because they themselves acted like Ham, because of their own transgressions, which resembled those attributed to Ham in this allegory"<sup>63</sup>

Avishur (1999:50) points out that the curse of enslavement of a brother to his brother or brothers is a frequent motif in the Genesis narratives. It appears a number of times in Isaac's blessing upon Jacob and Esau (Gen. 27:29, 27:37, 27:40) and in Jacob's blessing upon Judah (Gen. 49:8). The curse against Canaan, like the other blessings and curses

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<sup>59</sup> See Hamilton 1990:234.

<sup>60</sup> We will see in the next chapter how various traditions in second temple literature follow this line of thought.

<sup>61</sup> See Saadya Gaon on 9:25.

<sup>62</sup> See for example Westermann 1984: 489.

<sup>63</sup> See Cassuto 1965:152. See also Vervenne who follows a similar view. Hamilton 1990:321, however, considers whether we have here an example of God visiting the iniquities of the fathers to the third and fourth (and second!) generation. Canaan's father has eaten sour grapes and therefore Canaan's teeth are set on edge. However he brings verses like Jer. 31:29 and Ezek. 18:2 to rebut the idea of vicarious or deferred punishment.

mentioned, is written in meter and lofty language. The verse of the curse of Canaan may be divided into three stichoi, each with two beats.

Cursed be Canaan-ארור כנען

A slave of Slaves-עבד עבדים

Shall he be to his brothers-יהיה לאחיו

Like many of the curses and blessings in the Pentateuch, the curse against Canaan opens with ארור ("cursed"), just as the blessing upon Shem opens with ברוך ("blessed").<sup>64</sup>

The curse against Canaan and the blessings upon Shem and Japheth each conclude with a wish that Ham will be enslaved to his brothers. This wish, expressed twice in the same words and once slightly modified, appears as a refrain in this part of the text. The modification is in the curse against Canaan, where the word עבד (slave) which appears in the two blessings upon Shem and Japheth, is replaced by the phrase עבד עבדים (slave of slaves).<sup>65</sup> In this sense Canaan is being described as a slave of the lowest degree, base and despicable. Many scholars<sup>66</sup> have noted that the curse against Canaan is the second curse against a human, following the curse upon Cain (4:11-12), yet this is the first uttered by a human.

Noah's blessings upon Shem and Japheth are also constructed as a poem in lyrical language. For example, the use of the word למו is confined to poetry. Verse 26, for example, may be divided into two stichoi, each with four beats:

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<sup>64</sup> See the twelve curses on Mount Ebal (Deut. 27:15-26) and the six curses against the violators of God's commandments and laws (Deut. 28:16-19), which open with ארור and the six blessings upon the upholder's of God's commandments and laws (28:3-6), which open with ברוך.

<sup>65</sup> See similar phrases in the Bible such as מלך מלכים (Ezek. 26:7), קדש קדשים (Exod. 30:29-occurring 27 times in the Bible). Constructs of this kind serve as hyperbole. See Avishur p.50 and p.83.

<sup>66</sup> See, for example, Cassuto 1965:153, Mathews 1996:423, Hamilton 1990:325.

Blessed be the God of Shem  
And let Canaan be their slave

"Blessed" is spoken by Noah to the Lord and only indirectly to Shem. It is Noah's recognition that whatever blessing comes to Shem is the Lord's doing. Most scholars accept this interpretation of the verse. However, Avishur (1999:53) rejects this interpretation by posing that so far nothing has been said of Shem in connection with his God. Furthermore, nowhere in the Bible is the name "God" associated with a son during the lifetime of his father. Avishur, therefore, suggests that there seems to have been a corruption in the formulation of the blessing which should read, "Bless O Lord, the tents of Shem."

Noah's blessing for Japheth in verse 27 is also written in poetical language involving a play on the sound of his name: *yapt* ("extend") is similar in sound to *yepet* or *yapet*. According to Noah's blessing, Japheth will be welcomed in the camp of Israel, but the Canaanites will be driven from the land (e.g. Exodus 3:8,17; Deut 7:1;20:17) and accepted only as servants (cf. Gibeonites, Josh. 9:27). Another literary element of this verse is the Hebrew "tents of Shem" forming a wordplay with the parallel "God of Shem" in v.26, where a transposition of letters alone distinguishes "tents of" (*hly*) and God of"(*lhy*).<sup>67</sup> Its meaning perhaps is that to reside in the "tents" of Shem is tantamount to declaring that his "God" is Japheth's as well.

### **1.1.5 Summary of the Biblical Text of Noah's Drunkenness**

In summary, in this chapter I have considered the literary structure and linguistic composition of the biblical text of Noah's drunkenness. I have showed that the literary structure is most interesting, displaying signs of chiasmus. This suggests that the biblical text displays unity of structure and purposeful literary design. In addition, the biblical text can be divided into narrative and discursive units. When considering the linguistic

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<sup>67</sup> Mathews 1996:424.

composition and style of the verses, the first narrative unit appears relatively brief and cryptic, while the discursive unit of the blessings and curse is quite expansive displaying richness of poetry and literary style. The focus of the narrative unit, according to most commentators, seems to be on Noah's nakedness and his sons' response rather than Noah's drunkenness. The chiasmus structure also identifies the nakedness theme as the central motif of the unit.

However, I suggest that the literary structure of the verses that describe Noah's drunkenness 9:20-21, though indeed brief and cryptic, could be conveying important messages about Noah's drunkenness, which seem to portray him in a negative light. I propose several reasons:

- (a) The verb ויחל needs to be examined more closely. The understanding of most commentators that it means "he began," is difficult. What does this verb add to the meaning of the story? The text could easily have been understood by using the phrase ויטע כרם. Are there any other instances that the verb ויחל presents itself in biblical literature that can perhaps shed light to its meaning here?
- (b) Where did Noah get a vine to plant from and why did he choose to plant a vineyard, rather than any other plant as his first act after the flood?
- (c) The staccato use of the verbs in these verses is somewhat unusual. The placement of five active verbs in such close connection and proximity in two short verses ויחל, ויטע, וישת, וישכר ויתגל creates an effect of rapid action. There certainly must have been a time lapse between the time he planted the vine and when he drank it, yet the text chooses not to discuss this. What is the text alluding to by this literary style?
- (d) Why is Noah now referred to in the text as איש האדמה? Is this phrase to be identified with the עבד אדמה we found by Cain? Or does this phrase perhaps suggest a new title for Noah, teaching us something more about Noah and his personality?
- (e) In addition to all these questions, the text leaves us with three other major questions unanswered. 1. How did the righteous Noah of the flood story turn into

the inebriated Noah of chapter 9? 2. What was Ham's sin that deserved Noah's incensed reaction of the curses? 3. Why did Noah curse Canaan, Ham's son, rather than Canaan the seeming perpetrator of the sin?

This chapter has examined the various approaches of medieval and modern commentators to these particular questions.

The biblical text leaves gaps for interpretation. The next chapter examines how writers of the second temple period understood this story and in particular how they dealt with all these questions and interpreted the gaps left in the biblical text. Particular attention will be given to the literary construction of their text as it compares with the biblical one studied in this chapter. In addition, I will demonstrate how rabbinic literature, as expressed in the Midrash, was particularly sensitive to literary nuance and exegesis and how the Rabbis of this period provided their own solutions to answer these textual difficulties.

## 1.2 The Story of Sodom, Lot and his Two Daughters - Genesis 19:1-38

The study of this text will focus on the story of Lot and his daughters but I will also consider this pericope within the context of the narrative of the destruction of Sodom as a whole. I, therefore, present the Hebrew text of the whole of chapter 19. In addition, I will consider the literary parallels between this story and that of the Noah drunkenness episode previously studied.<sup>68</sup> I show that there are indeed many interesting parallels between the two stories, but also quite a number of differences as well. I will then provide a commentary to the text focusing on understanding some of the major issues arising from the narrative. The literary portrayal of the Lot's daughters in the biblical text will then be compared, in the following chapter, to later second temple literature and early rabbinic texts expounding the same story. I will show how different traditions developed in later literature about the characters in the story and their motives. Some of these traditions, I will posit, seem to move away from what is written in the biblical text presented here and provide new insights and even surprising twists to this story.

וַיְבֹאוּ שְׁנֵי הַמַּלְאָכִים סָדֹמָה בְּעֶרְבַּי וְלוֹט יִישָׁב בְּשַׁעַר סָדֹם וַיִּרְא לׁוֹט וַיָּקָם לְקַרְאֲתָם  
וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּ אַפַּיִם אֲרָצָה:  
(ב) וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה נָא אֲדֹנָי סוּרוּ נָא אֶל בַּיִת עֲבָדְכֶם וְלִינוּ וְרַחֲצוּ רַגְלֵיכֶם וְהִשְׁכַּמְתֶּם וְהִלַּכְתֶּם  
לְדַרְכְּכֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֵאמֹר כִּי בְּרַחוּב נָלִין:  
(ג) וַיִּפְצַר בָּם מֵאֲדָו וַיִּסְרוּ אֵלָיו וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל בַּיִתוֹ וַיַּעַשׂ לָהֶם מִשְׁתָּה וּמִצּוֹת אָפֶה וַיֹּאכְלוּ:  
(ד) טָרֵם יִשְׁכְּבוּ וְאֲנָשֵׁי הָעִיר הָעִיר אֲנָשֵׁי סָדֹם נִסְבּוּ עַל הַבַּיִת מִנֶּעַר וְעַד זָקֵן כָּל הָעָם מִקְצָה:  
(ה) וַיִּקְרְאוּ אֶל לׁוֹט וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ אַיֵּה הָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר בָּאוּ אֵלֶיךָ הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה הֲוֹצִיאֵם אֵלֵינוּ וְנִדְעָה  
אֵתָם:

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<sup>68</sup> Many scholars have discussed the thematic links between Gen 9:20-27 and Gen. 19:30-38, the story of Noah's drunkenness and the story of Lot's daughters and procreation of Moab and Amnon. I will examine their theses later in this chapter. These include: Niditch S. 1985. *Chaos to Cosmos: Studies in Biblical Patterns of Creation*. Atlanta: Scholars Press; Carmichael C. 1997. *Law, Legend, and Incest in the Bible: Leviticus 18-20*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press; Steinmetz D. 1994. Vineyard, Farm and Garden: The Drunkenness of Noah in the Context of Primeval History. *JBL* 113:198; Kunin D. 1995. *The Logic of Incest: A Structuralist Analysis of Hebrew Mythology*. JSOT Sup 185 Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.

- (ו) וַיֵּצֵא אֱלֹהִים לֹוט הַפְּתִיחָה וְהַדָּלֶת סָגַר אַחֲרָיו:
- (ז) וַיֹּאמֶר אֵל נָא אֲחֵי תִרְעוּ:
- (ח) הִנֵּה נָא לִי שְׁתֵי בָנוֹת אֲשֶׁר לֹא יָדָעוּ אִישׁ אוֹצִיאָהּ נָא אֶתְהֶן אֵלֵיכֶם וַעֲשׂוּ לָהֶן כְּטוֹב בְּעֵינֵיכֶם רַק לְאֲנָשִׁים הָאֵל אֶל תַּעֲשׂוּ דְבַר כִּי עַל כֵּן כָּאוּ בְּצַל קִרְתִּי:
- (ט) וַיֹּאמְרוּ גַשׁ הַלָּאָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ הָאֶחָד בָּא לָגוֹר וַיִּשְׁפֹּט שְׁפוֹט עִתָּה נִרְעָה לָךְ מִמֶּה וַיִּפְצְרוּ בְּאִישׁ בְּלוֹט מֵאִד וַיִּגְשׂוּ לְשִׁבְרֵי הַדָּלֶת:
- (י) וַיִּשְׁלַחוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים אֶת יָדָם וַיָּבִיאוּ אֶת לֹוט אֲלֵיהֶם הַבְּיָתָה וְאֶת הַדָּלֶת סָגְרוּ:
- (יא) וְאֶת הָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר פָּתַח הַבַּיִת הֵכּוּ בַסְּנוּרִים מִקֵּטָן וְעַד גָּדוֹל וַיִּלְאוּ לְמִצָּא הַפְּתָח:
- (יב) וַיֹּאמְרוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים אֵל לֹוט עֲדֵ מִי לָךְ פֹּה חֵתָן וּבְנֵיךָ וּבְנֵי בְנֵיךָ וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר לָךְ בְּעִיר הוֹצֵא מִן הַמָּקוֹם:
- (יג) כִּי מִשְׁחָתִים אֲנַחְנוּ אֶת הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה כִּי גְדֹלָה צַעֲקַתְכֶם אֶת פְּנֵי יְקֹנֵךְ וַיִּשְׁלַחְנוּ יְקֹנֵךְ לִשְׁחָתָה:
- (יד) וַיֵּצֵא לֹוט וַיְדַבֵּר אֶל חֲתָנָיו לֵקְחֵי בְנֹתֵי וַיֹּאמְרוּ קוֹמוּ צֵאוּ מִן הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה כִּי מִשְׁחָתִים יְקֹנֵךְ אֶת הָעִיר וַיְהִי כַמְצַחֵק בְּעֵינֵי חֲתָנָיו:
- (טו) וַיִּכְמוּ הַשַּׁחַר עָלָה וַיֵּאֲצִוּ הַמַּלְאָכִים בְּלוֹט לֵאמֹר קוּם אֶת אִשְׁתְּךָ וְאֶת שְׁתֵי בְנֵיךָ וְהִנְמַצְאֵת פֶּן תִּסָּפֵה בְּעוֹן הָעִיר:
- (טז) וַיִּתְמַהֲמַה וַיִּחַזְקוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים בְּיָדוֹ וַיִּבְדּוּ אִשְׁתּוֹ וַיִּבְדּוּ שְׁתֵי בְנֵי וַיִּתְּנוּ בְּחֶמְלַת יְקֹנֵךְ עָלָיו וַיִּצְאָהוּ וַיִּנְחָהוּ מִחוּץ לָעִיר:
- (יז) וַיְהִי כִהוֹצִיאָם אֹתָם הַחֹצֵה וַיֹּאמֶר הַמַּלְטָה עַל נַפְשְׁךָ אֵל אַחֲרֶיךָ וְאֵל תַּעֲמִיד בְּכָל הַכְּפָר הַהִרָה הַמַּלְטָה פֶּן תִּסָּפֵה:
- (יח) וַיֹּאמֶר לֹוט אֱלֹהִים אֵל נָא אֲדֹנָי:
- (יט) הִנֵּה נָא מִצָּא עַבְדְּךָ חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ וַתַּגְדֵּל חַסְדְּךָ אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ עִמָּדִי לְהַחְיֹת אֶת נַפְשִׁי וְאֲנִי כִי לֹא אוֹכַל לְהַמְלִיט הַהִרָה פֶּן תִּדְבַקְנִי הַרְעָה וַמְתִי:
- (כ) הִנֵּה נָא הָעִיר הַזֹּאת קָרָה לְנוֹס שְׁמָה וְהוּא מְצַעֵר אֶמְלִטָהּ נָא שְׁמָה הַלֹּא מְצַעֵר הוּא וַתְּחִי נַפְשִׁי:
- (כא) וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו הִנֵּה נִשְׂאֵתִי פָּנֶיךָ גַם לְדַבֵּר הַזֶּה לְבַלְתִּי הִפְכִי אֶת הָעִיר אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ:
- (כב) מִהֵרָה הַמַּלְטָה שְׁמָה כִּי לֹא אוֹכַל לַעֲשׂוֹת דְּבַר עַד בֹּאֲךָ שְׁמָה עַל כֵּן קָרָא שֵׁם הָעִיר צוֹעֵר:
- (כג) הַשְּׁמֵשׁ יֵצֵא עַל הָאֶרֶץ וְלוֹט בָּא צֹעֵרָה:
- (כד) וַיִּקְנֶה יְקֹנֵךְ הַמַּטִּיר עַל סְדֹם וְעַל עֲמֹרָה גְּפָרִית וְאִשׁ מֵאֵת יְקֹנֵךְ מִן הַשְּׁמַיִם:
- (כה) וַיִּהְיֶה אֶת הָעָרִים הָאֵל וְאֶת כָּל הַכְּפָר וְאֶת כָּל יְשֵׁבֵי הָעָרִים וְצִמְחַת הָאֲדָמָה:
- (כו) וַתִּבְטַשׂ אִשְׁתּוֹ מֵאַחֲרָיו וַתְּהִי נְצִיב מְלַח:

(כז) וַיִּשְׁכַּם אַבְרָהָם בְּבִקְרָא אֶל הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר עָמַד שָׁם אֶת פְּנֵי יְקֹנָן:  
(כח) וַיִּשְׁקֹף עַל פְּנֵי סְדֹם וְעַל כָּל פְּנֵי אֶרֶץ הַכְּפָר וַיִּרְא וַהֲנִה עָלֶיהָ קִיטָר הָאָרֶץ  
בְּקִיטָר הַכְּבָשׂוֹן:  
(כט) וַיְהִי בְּשַׁחַת אֶל הַיָּם אֶת עַרְי הַכְּפָר וַיִּזְכָּר אֶל הַיָּם אֶת אַבְרָהָם וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶת לוֹט מֵתוֹךְ  
הַהַפְּקָה בְּהַפְּךָ אֶת הָעָרִים אֲשֶׁר יָשַׁב בָּהֶן לוֹט:  
(ל) וַיַּעַל לוֹט מִצּוּעַר וַיִּשָּׁב בְּהָר וַיִּשְׁתִּי בְּנֵי תֵיּוֹ עִמּוֹ כִּי יָרָא לְשֹׁכֵת בְּצוּעַר וַיִּשָּׁב בַּמְּעָרָה הוּא  
וַיִּשְׁתִּי בְּנֵי תֵיּוֹ:  
(לא) וַתֹּאמֶר הַבְּכִירָה אֶל הַצְּעִירָה אָבִינוּ זָמַן נָאִישׁ אֵין בְּאָרֶץ לְבֹא עֲלֵינוּ כְּדָרְךָ כָּל הָאָרֶץ:  
(לב) לָכֵן נִשְׁקָה אֶת אָבִינוּ יִין וְנִשְׁכְּבָה עִמּוֹ וְנַחֲתֶיהָ מֵאָבִינוּ זָרַע:  
(לג) וַתִּשְׁקֶינן אֶת אָבִיהֶן יִין בַּלֵּילָה הוּא וַתִּבְּא הַבְּכִירָה וַתִּשְׁכַּב אֶת אָבִיהָ וְלֹא יָדַע בְּשִׁכְבָּהּ  
וּבְקוּמָה:  
(לד) וַיְהִי מִמָּחָרֵת וַתֹּאמֶר הַבְּכִירָה אֶל הַצְּעִירָה הֵן שְׁכַבְתִּי אִמָּשׁ אֶת אָבִי נִשְׁקַנּוּ יִין גַּם  
הַלַּיְלָה וּבֹאִי שְׁכַבִּי עִמּוֹ וְנַחֲתֶיהָ מֵאָבִינוּ זָרַע:  
(לה) וַתִּשְׁקֶינן גַּם בַּלֵּילָה הַהוּא אֶת אָבִיהֶן יִין וַתִּקַּם הַצְּעִירָה וַתִּשְׁכַּב עִמּוֹ וְלֹא יָדַע בְּשִׁכְבָּהּ  
וּבְקוּמָה:  
(לו) וַתִּהְרָיֵן שְׁתֵּי בָנוֹת לוֹט מֵאָבִיהֶן:  
(לז) וַתֵּלֶד הַבְּכִירָה בֶן וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ מוֹאָב הוּא אָבִי מוֹאָב עַד הַיּוֹם:  
(לח) וַהַצְּעִירָה גַּם הוּא יָלְדָה בֶן וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ בֶן עַמִּי הוּא אָבִי בְנֵי עַמּוֹן עַד הַיּוֹם: ס

30: Lot went up from Zohar with his two daughters and settled in the hill country; he was afraid to stay in Zohar. And he lived with his two daughters in a cave.<sup>69</sup>

31: The older one said to the younger: "Our father in advancing in age, and there is not a man on earth to come into us, as is done everywhere.

32: Come let us get our father drunk and then lie with him that we may preserve offspring through our father."

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<sup>69</sup> The translation here is influenced by both Mathews and Wenham's commentaries, but is essentially mine.

33: So they made their father drunk that night, and the older one went in and lay with her father. He was unaware of her lying down or getting up.

34: Next day the older one said to the younger: "Last night I lay with father. Let's get him drunk tonight also, and you go in and lie with him, that we may preserve offspring through our father."

35: That night they got their father drunk and the younger one went in and lay with him. He was unaware of her lying down or her getting up.

36: Thus both daughters of Lot became pregnant by their father.

37: The older one bore a son whom she named Moab. He is the father of the Moabites of today.

38: The younger one, she also bore a son whom she named Ben-Ammi. He is the father of the Ammonites today.

### **1.2.1 Literary Setting of the Lot's Daughters' Text - 19:31-38**

Scholars are in disagreement about the place and purpose of the text within the Sodom destruction setting. Some argue, as Skinner (1917:313) and Davidson (1979:79)<sup>70</sup> that the main purpose of the text is to provide a background to the origin of the Moabites and the Ammonites, Israel's unfriendly neighbors. As such, this account is really an independent story and a type of appendix to the Sodom narrative. Skinner, for example, writes:

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<sup>70</sup> Davidson writes: "Behind the present form of the story, there may lay an earlier Moabite-Ammonite tradition which proudly remembered that they were descended from the sole survivors of a catastrophe. The Hebrews may have reshaped the tradition to stress the somewhat dubious origins of the Moabites and the Ammonites." Von Rad 1972: 219 also posits such a theory but gives no real evidence that such a Moabite tradition existed.

It is very natural to regard this account of the origin of Moab and Ammon as an expression of intense national hatred and contempt towards these two peoples.

Similarly, Gunkel writes:

The legend is ethnological in nature. It deals with the origins of the peoples of Moab and Ammon, Lot's sons...In later times, especially since it became customary to see Moab and Ammon as traditional enemies (Deuteronomy 23:4ff.), this parentage was assuredly seen as a particular disgrace.

However, other scholars such as Westermann and Sarna reject this view and place the story within the Sodom setting. Sarna (1989:139), for example, states that:

It is difficult to understand the point of this episode since neither people plays any role in the patriarchal narrative. A theory that it expresses Israel's contempt for its traditional enemies is hardly likely to be correct. If this were the motivation, then surely a scandalous origin for Esau-Edom, the inveterate and implacable national enemy, would also have been invented, rather than have him be the son of Isaac and Rebekah. Nothing in our story suggests hostility. The daughters do not act out of lust. Lot, who is entirely unaware of what is happening, receives no blame. The later hostility to Moab and Ammon finds expression in the law prohibiting Israelite intermarriage with them, but the proscription in Deuteronomy 23:4f is conditioned on Israel's wilderness experience and is not based on the incestuous origin of these peoples.

Thus, according to these scholars, this narrative is to be viewed as part of the motif of the (partially) new creation of the human race after a disaster. Following this line of argument, the narrative needs to be considered within the wider context of the Sodom destruction story. Considering this literary perspective, chapter 19 forms one thematic theme; namely destruction followed by renewal. As such, the Lot's daughters' narrative

parallels the flood story and in particular Noah's attempt to re-create the world after its destruction.

As Westermann (1984:312) posits, this episode "is a matter of preserving the human family after the disaster." He continues:

The primeval motif has been transferred to a situation in which the disaster is partial and limited; it is no longer a question of the preservation or of the new creation of mankind but of the preservation of a family line.

This study accepts the approach of this school of thought and attempts now to deepen the parallels and differences between the Noah flood story, with particular reference to his drunkenness, and the Lot's daughters' narrative.

### **1.2.2 Parallels and Differences between the Noah Drunkenness Story and the Lot's Daughters' Narrative**

As previously mentioned, many scholars have seen thematic links between Gen: 9:20-27 and Gen 19:30-38. Bergsma and Hahn<sup>71</sup>, for example, have cited the following similarities between the two pericopes: They both happen in the aftermath of a calamitous divine judgment, both are instigated by the wickedness of men - particularly sexual wickedness (cf. Genesis 6:4; 19:5), which destroys the earth or a large part of it – and in each an aged patriarch gets drunk, facilitating intercourse between parent and child, giving rise to one or more of the traditional enemies of Israel (Canaan, Moab and Ammon). Steinmetz points out that "the parallel between the Lot story and the vineyard story supports the implication of a sexual violation of Noah by his son."<sup>72</sup> However, the parallel suggested sexual intercourse between Noah and his son is, as we have seen in

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<sup>71</sup> See Bergsma JS & Hahn SW. 2005. Noah's Nakedness and the Curse on Canaan. *JBL* 124/1:25-40.

<sup>72</sup> See Steinmetz 1994: 199.

detail in the previous section of our study, not explicitly mentioned in the text and there are other equally plausible possibilities.<sup>73</sup>

However, leaving the sexual issues aside, it is clear that there are still many points of similarity between the two stories. As Wenham<sup>74</sup> puts it:

In both, the heroes drink too much. In both, when their father is drunk, the children sin against him, and this has consequences for future generations.

Niditch<sup>75</sup> gives a more thorough examination of the similarities between the passages and summarises them as follows:<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> As we saw previously, many scholars interpret Ham's sin as merely "seeing" their father's nakedness and that there was no actual sexual offence. In the above recently published article, Bergsma and Hahn make quite a convincing case for Ham's sin being maternal incest. The statement, "saw his father's nakedness" implies, in their view, relations with Noah's wife. The imagery of wine and the vineyard is associated only with heterosexual intercourse in the Bible whether in the story of Lot and his daughters, the David-Uriah-Bathsheba affair (2 Sam. 11) or the Song of Songs (Songs 1:2, 4: 2-4; 4:10; 5:1) For example, the Song writer sings of male-female relations when he (or she) exclaims, "your kisses are like the best wine" (7:9).

<sup>74</sup> See Wenham G. 1994. *World Bible Commentary*. Texas: World Books. p. 60.

<sup>75</sup> See Niditch S. 1985. *Chaos to Cosmos, Studies in Biblical Patterns of Creation*. California: Scholars Press. pp. 53-55.

<sup>76</sup> See also Carmichael C. 1997. in *Law, Legend and Incest in the Bible: Leviticus 18-20*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press. He notes that the two earliest incidents of incestuous conduct in the book of Genesis involve drunkenness; first Noah's and then Lot's. The two incidents have much in common: the role of wine, the initiative toward the parent from the son or daughter... the concern for future generations.

<b>Lot and Daughters</b>	<b>Noah and Sons</b>
"World" has been destroyed by fire	World has been destroyed by flood
A few have been spared by God who have the responsibility of repopling the earth	Same
Drunkenness of patriarch of spared family unit	Same
Incestuous intercourse	Incestuous action of some sort
Significance of future ordering of the families of men: Moabites and Ammonites engendered and distinguished from Israelites	Significance for future ordering of the families of men: Canaanites distinguished from other descendants of Noah.

However, according to Niditch, there is one important difference between the stories. The incestuous act in the story of Noah and his sons is homosexual, while the Lot's daughters' narrative presents a heterosexual relationship. Wenham (1994:60), who does not accept that there was actual sexual misconduct in the narrative of Noah's drunkenness, discusses other differences in the story which he describes as "striking." He writes:

Lot clearly is much more drunk than Noah, for he never realized what his daughters did, whereas Noah seems to have been aware immediately. Further, Lot's daughters appear much more culpable than Ham. His offence appears to have been accidental; theirs was clearly deliberate. And seeing one's father uncovered is much less grave than incest. Furthermore, here it is daughters, not sons, that are responsible and the leading spirit is the older daughter, as opposed to the younger son. In every respect, then, the sin of Lot's daughters is much graver than Ham's and obviously Lot was more heavily under the influence than was Noah.

Wenham's exegesis here is telling especially when considering, in the next chapter, the exegesis of second temple authors and particularly those of the early rabbinical school. Despite the seemingly grave misconduct of the characters in the Lot episode, some

second temple authors and later Rabbis provide a very different perspective to the story. I will examine more closely, later in the chapter, the conduct of the participants in this narrative and attempt to glean some moral judgment about their actions from the text. No moral judgments are explicitly in the text.

Hamilton 1990:50, in his commentary on Genesis, also points out another difference between the two narratives. In the Lot story the initiative for the action is taken by a childless woman who plans to rectify these circumstances. In the discussion of the biblical narrative of Judah and Tamar, it will be shown that these details do find a parallel in that story.

In summary, the parallels between the Noah and Lot narratives are most interesting and provide insights in helping our understanding of their themes and connecting concepts. These will be especially important when we consider the exegesis of the narrative in second temple and early rabbinic literature.

I will conclude this section, with Wenham's (1994:64) observations of the similarities between the Lot episode here and the total context of the Noah flood story. He writes:

"When God ruined the cities... God remembered Abraham" (19: 29) and he sent Lot out of danger. This is more than a reference to Abraham's intercession on behalf of the righteous of Sodom. It is a clear echo of and presumably a deliberate comparison with Noah and the flood. When "God remembered Noah" (8:1) the flood started to abate; when he remembered Abraham, he rescued Lot. Two events in Genesis are clearly parallel: two cataclysmic acts of divine judgment on outrageously sinful communities, with the only righteous man and his family spared. Noah is seen as a second Adam from all humanity descended; the destruction of Sodom, speaks once again of the depravity to which human society can descend. So if Noah is seen as a second Adam, Abraham is probably viewed as a third Adam, the new hope of mankind. It is Abraham's prayer that saved Lot and it is in Abraham that all nations of the world may hope to find blessing.

### **1.2.3 Literary Structure and Style of the Lot's Daughters' Text**

Westermann (1984:312) points out the following symmetrical structure of the text. Verse 30 is the exposition; vv. 31-32, the decision; vv. 33-36, the execution of the decision (v.33, the elder, vv. 34-35, the younger; v.36, the result); vv. 37-38, the birth and the naming of the sons. In this pericope, verse 30 and verses 36-38 are the report which form the framework for the story.

Westermann and Gunkel (1997:217) have both commented on the unusual style of the account. The two consummations are recounted in almost the same words (vv. 33, 35) as are the two summons (vv.32, 34b). As such, the text portrays a symmetry by which the summons and the consummations correspond to one another. The two births described in vv.37-38 also correspond to each other in a similar way. It seems that these parallels are no accident, but an intentional literary device. The second summons (v.34) would not have been necessary for the continuation of the action and is only present because of its counterpart. Thus the narrative has been quite artfully crafted.

### **1.2.4 Commentary on the Lot's Daughters' Text**

30: Lot went up from Zohar with his two daughters and settled in the hill country; he was afraid to stay in Zohar. And he lived with his two daughters in a cave.

What can be learned from the verse about Lot's motives and actions in this narrative? It seems that having been reluctant to obey the command in the first place, Lot now shows that he does not trust the implied divine guarantee that he would be safe in Zoar (v.21). Wenham (1994:60) interprets the text as portraying a faint-hearted and vacillating Lot who is reduced to living in a cave. Caves are often used as an example of graves (Genesis 25:9) or mentioned because they are habited by refugees (Josh. 10:16; 1 Sam 13:6). The description here of Lot is a far cry from Lot, the rich rancher who had so many flocks and sheep that he had to separate from Abraham (13:8-11). He chose to live in the fertile

Dead Sea valley, which now has been destroyed with all his other relations and property. He and all he has can now be accommodated in a cave. The change in Lot's circumstances from when he is first introduced in Genesis until this point is most stark. The literary contrast is skillfully presented in the narrative; from the imagery of the abundant flock in Genesis 13 to the solitude of the empty cave in the end of Genesis 19. Von Rad (1972:61) describes Lot's fall in a most graphic way:

If one surveys the stages of Lot's career, his succumbing to the attraction of the luxuriant Jordan valley, his inability to assert himself with his offer to the Sodomites and his inability to make up his mind even before divine judgment or to entrust himself to the leadership of the messengers and God's protection, and finally to his succumbing in drunkenness to vital forces, it will become clear that the narrator has drawn a very compact picture in spite of being bound to ancient traditions. Having been set on the way to a promise by God, just as Abraham was (12:4), he turned aside from this way (ch.13), still supported by God's grace, and then finally slipped completely from God's hand, which directs history.

31: The older one said to the younger: "Our father is advancing in age, and there is not a man on earth to come into us, as is done everywhere.

32: Come let us get our father drunk and then lie with him that we may preserve offspring through our father."

If scholars have, by and large, interpreted Lot's behavior in this narrative in a negative light how are the motives and actions of his two daughters, especially the older one who initiates the plan of incest, to be understood? Certainly in other places in the Bible incest is punishable by death (Lev 20:12). The narrative here does not openly condemn their actions but a close reading of the text and its literary subtleties may give a hint about scripture's opinion of their motives and actions.

Firstly, what did the older daughter mean by saying that her "father is old"? Is she concerned that his age precludes him from having sexual intercourse (18:12), or does she think that because he is too old he ought to be looking for a husband for her (cf.24:1)? It seems from the text, in particular the phrase, "there is not a man to come to us", that she is more concerned about the lack of potential husbands for her father to seek out rather than his possible lack of virility.

Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, how is the phrase "there is not a man on earth to come to us", to be understood? Did Lot's daughters think that the whole of humanity had been destroyed and their father was the only man left or that now no one would want to marry them after what they had been through and their connection to Sodom? Classical Jewish biblical exegesis presents different view points on this question.

According to Rashi, Ibn Ezra<sup>77</sup> and Rashbam<sup>78</sup>, the narrative suggests that the daughters understood that the whole world had been destroyed and that their father was the only man left in the world with whom they could beget children. However the Radak<sup>79</sup>, a twelfth century biblical exegete, rejects this view. In his view, the daughters knew that the whole world had not been destroyed because they had run to Zoar which had been spared God's wrath. In addition, the Radak posits, Lot had told his daughters that Sodom had been destroyed because it was evil. They had no reason to think that the rest of the world had suffered the same fate.

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<sup>77</sup> Commentary 18:31. Abraham Ibn Ezra, born in Toledo, Spain 1092 was a renowned Bible commentator, astronomer, poet and grammarian. His chief fame rests on his Bible commentary in which his independent ideas aroused much controversy which has still not died down. His strict upholding of traditional rabbinic exegesis did not preclude him from offering original interpretations of caustic comment on those that failed his exacting standards of grammatical analysis.

<sup>78</sup> Commentary 18:31. Initials of Rabbi Shmuel ben Meir (1080-1158). He was a member of the Tosaphist school and grandson of Rashi. In his commentary to the Torah, Rashbam insists on not deviating from the plain sense –the peshat, in the interests of which he often took issue with his illustrious grandfather.

<sup>79</sup> Commentary 18:31. Initials of Rabbi David Kimche (1160-1236). Well known biblical commentator who flourished in Provence.

Radak, therefore, claims that the daughters wished to "lie with their father" because they believed that no other man would wish to marry them. Potential suitors would say that these ladies came from the destroyed cities and therefore it would not be appropriate to marry them. Interestingly enough, Radak suggests that the daughters' act of not telling their father about their desire to have offspring from him is proof that the act of incest was a repugnant one among the people of the time. They felt compelled to follow this path but they were sure that their father would never have condoned such an action despite their good motives.

Sforno<sup>80</sup> follows the general approach of the Radak, but posits a different reason for the eldest daughter's suggestion. He writes:

There is no man left in this area who is suitable to marry us. It is the custom ("the way of the land") that a woman should only marry someone who is suitable for her.

According to Sforno's interpretation, it is the daughters who would reject other suitors, rather than being rejected. It is for this reason that they publicize the names of their children, Moab (*me...ab* from the father) etc. to show the world that they conceived from a suitable man - their own father!

More recent scholars have also argued both these points of view. Wenham (1994:61) for example, following Radak, suggests that:

Presumably there were at least eligible husbands no farther away than Zohar. But this comment does give an insight into the girl's state of mind: she is desperate to marry, so she exaggerates the effects of the recent catastrophe.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Commentary 18:31. Ovadiah ben Judah Sforno (1475-1550) was an Italian Jewish Bible commentator, Talmudist and physician whose commentary to the Pentateuch is included in the standard editions of *Mikraot Gedolot*.

However, Speiser and Von Rad follow Rashi's view that the daughters thought they were the only survivors of a world catastrophe. Speiser,<sup>82</sup> for example, writes:

As they are here portrayed, Lot and his two daughters had every reason to believe that that they were the last people on earth. From the recesses of their cave somewhere up the side of a canyon formed by the earth's deepest rift, they could see no proof to the contrary. The young women were concerned with the future of the race, and they were resolute enough to adopt the only desperate measure that appeared to be available. The father moreover, was not a conscious party to the scheme. All of this adds up to praise rather than blame.

It is interesting to note that those commentators who interpret the daughter's words as expressing the thought that the whole world was destroyed, tend to find some justification and even praise for her behavior. While Lot is generally portrayed by them in a negative way, the daughters act in an even heroic manner to ensure the continuation of the human species. This line of thought is explicitly developed among classical Jewish exegetes, and as we shall see in the next chapter, this is also the general direction of the early Rabbis in the Midrash as well. Rabbenu Bahya<sup>83</sup>, for example, writes:

For the daughters saw the great destruction in that generation and they were frightened that the species of man would be destroyed. They saw that their mother had turned into a pillar of salt and their father was the only person left in the world and he had no partner. Therefore they had to do this action in order to

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<sup>81</sup> Hamilton 1990: 51 follows Wenham's line of thought here. He writes: "The daughter's lament is probably more hyperbolic than reflective of a response to a worldwide catastrophe as in Noah's day. After all Zohar is spared. "He understands the Hebrew term ארץ as a local reference to land rather than a reference to the world.

<sup>82</sup> Speiser EA. 1964. *Genesis*. The Anchor Bible. New York: Doubleday. p.145.

<sup>83</sup> Bahya ben Asher lived in Saragossa in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and is mainly known for his commentary on the Pentateuch.

preserve mankind. It is for this reason that we do not have mention in the narrative of the derogatory term *zenut* (forbidden sexual intercourse).

In summary, according to many exegetes the narrative, especially when considered in the framework of the larger Sodom pericope and the Abraham episodes from chapter 13, while seemingly painting Lot in a derogatory light, does appear to be somewhat more accepting of the daughters' actions. This is especially so in the light of what has been elucidated so far in classical Jewish medieval exegesis. This is, I think, very surprising especially when considering the Pentateuch's clear prohibition of incest. As will be now examined, these exegetes were still somewhat ambivalent about the daughters' actions and they shared their obvious concerns through their interpretations of the subtle textual difficulties and nuances in the text.

33: So they made their father drunk that night, and the older one went in and lay with her father. He was unaware of her lying down or getting up.

34: Next day the older one said to the younger: "Last night I lay with father. Let's get him drunk tonight also, and you go in and lie with him, that we may preserve offspring through our father."

35: That night they got their father drunk and the younger one went in and lay with him. He was unaware of her lying down or her getting up.

As has been discussed earlier, scholars have noted the parallelism between the descriptions of the two actions of the daughters. They are almost identical. Yet classical medieval exegetes, based largely on early midrashic literature, have spotted important nuances between the description of the text of the elder daughter's actions and that of the younger one's. These textual differences and their possible interpretations will now be considered.

In verse 33 the elder daughter comes and ותשכב את אביה –she lies with her father, while in verse 35 the younger daughter gets up and ותשכב עמו - she lies with **him**. **The word אביה is not mentioned.** Rashi in his commentary on verse 33 points out this difference and suggests that it represents two different attitudes towards the act of incest. The elder daughter who made the suggestion in the first place is more sexually provocative than her younger sister. This is represented by the term-she lies with her father. The younger daughter who accepts her sister's suggestion is more modest in her actions. This is reflected by the impersonal term "עמו".

The text clearly is also using literary irony, an important rhetorical feature, in expressing its message. Earlier in 19:8 Lot was willing to exploit his daughters for sexual purposes without their consent. Now they will use their father for sexual purposes, without his consent. The difference between the two, however, is that in the first instance sex was offered for titillation and gratification of the lust of the townsmen, the second does not emphasize the orgiastic. The daughters simply want to reproduce. In some ways, both Lot and his daughters act out of noble motivation: He to save his guests and they to secure progeny. Both situations require drastic actions.<sup>84</sup>

Hamilton (1990:52) points to another interesting literary parallel between these verses and the ones earlier in the chapter. In particular, he focuses on the word ידע meaning "knowing". Twice these verses (vv. 33, 35) relate that Lot *was unaware* what his daughters were doing with him. This attention to his ignorance and in particular the use of ידע allows the reader to trace the theme of knowledge throughout this chapter. The Sodomites wanted "to know" Lot's visitors. Lot, so deep is his drunken stupor, does not "know" what his daughters are doing to him. Noah at least after he had slept off his hangover, "knew what his youngest son had done to him" (9:24). The narrative does not mention any response of Lot after his drunkenness ended. The text only focuses on his ignorance at the time of coitus. In the earlier verse of the chapter it was clear that Lot did not know the real identity of the two men who stayed at his house. In these verses in the chapter he is literally in the dark, for he is in a cave and it is night. Lot, in summary, is in

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<sup>84</sup> See Hamilton 1990:51 who develops the comparison between these two episodes.

the dark about his guests and about his daughter's intentions. The narrative therefore is cleverly using the word "ידע" as a literary ploy, both linking various parts of the Sodom narrative and creating a further connection between this story and the Noah drunkenness narrative.

36: Thus both daughters of Lot became pregnant by their father.

37: The older one bore a son whom she named Moab. He is the father of the Moabites of today.

38: The younger one, she also bore a son whom she named Ben-Ammi. He is the father of the Ammonites today.

When considering again the link between these verses and the literary contrast with the earlier sections of the chapter, there is another interesting point. In vv. 1-29, the emphasis was on the loss of life. Here the events describe the beginning of life.

Classical medieval biblical exegesis sees in the names of the two sons born from the incestuous relationship differences in the actions of the two daughters. The elder one calls her son מואב, according to Rashi this means he is openly "from the father" (אב). Her action, both as initiator of the idea for incest and as first name giver is more brazen and sexually open. The younger daughter however, calls her son עמון a much more modest term meaning "son of my people" – (בן עמי).

However modern biblical scholars have suggested other meanings for the names of Moab and Ammon. Hamilton, for example, suggests that Moab may mean "water (i.e. seed, progeny) of the father, not necessarily "from father".<sup>85</sup> Ammon, Hamilton (1990:53)

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<sup>85</sup> See Dahood MJ. 1982. Eblaite and Biblical Hebrew. *CBQ* 44 13 n 39, who observes that in a bilingual text from Ebla the Eblaite equivalent of Sum. A, water is *mawu*. If one removes the case ending *mawu* becomes *maw*, and by diphthong contraction *maw* becomes *mo*. Dahood then suggests that *mo* is a byform of *me* and he presents the Ketib of Job 9:20 as evidence that *mo* means "water" in biblical Hebrew. He

suggests, should not be translated as "people", but rather as a male relative or kinsman. Davidson (1979:79) similarly comments here that the Hebrew word "*am*" which normally means "people" in the Old Testament is used here in the sense which it still has in the Arabic, to mean an uncle but here a father.

### **1.2.5 Summary of the Lot's Daughters' Narrative**

In my study of this text, I have tried to emphasize the following points. Firstly, I have aimed to show that there are many clear parallels between this narrative and the Noah drunkenness story previously studied. The parallels are not only thematic, but linguistic as well. Among the many parallels I have shown, the central one is that in both narratives a drunken father is taken advantage of by a child or children. When considering the culpability of the actions of the characters in the two stories, it would seem, on a superficial level, that the actions of Lot's daughters are more severe than Ham's. They commit incest upon an unknowing father, while Ham's offence is not clearly expressed in the text. Both Lot and Noah have clearly seen better times, but Lot ends his biblical appearances with this story, while Noah recovers from his drunkenness to play an important role in giving blessings and curses to the future races of the world.

While the daughters' actions appear reprehensible especially in the light of the Pentateuch's law against incest, both medieval and modern scholars have found textual nuances in the text to suggest that the daughters' motives may have justified their unsavory act. These scholars have seen in their desire to continue the seeds of mankind, the actions of heroic women who had to use desperate unholy means for the future of peoplehood.

In the next chapter, I examine how second temple and early rabbinic exegetes understood this story. Did they see Lot's daughters as initiators of a heinous crime of incest or did they attempt to justify their actions? How does this story compare with their generally

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gives other instances of *mo* meaning water in his work, "A Sea of Troubles: Notes on Psalms 55:3-4 and 140:10-11," *CBQ* 41: 605-6.

very negative view of Noah's drunkenness? And how did God Himself view the actions of the two daughters? I will show that, in their literary reading of the text, these interpreters found answers to all these questions.

## Chapter 2

# The Literary and Rhetoric Portrayal of Drunkenness in the Genesis 9:18-29 and Genesis 19:31-38 Biblical Stories in the Second Temple Jewish Literature and Early Rabbinic Periods

### 2.1 Introduction to the Methodology of Ancient Biblical Interpretation

In order to fully understand the exegesis of ancient interpreters on these stories, it is important to give some background as to how these interpreters approached their business of interpreting. Kugel<sup>86</sup> suggests that despite the great variety of styles and genres in ancient biblical interpretation they share a common set of assumptions regarding the biblical text. He identifies four fundamental assumptions about scripture that characterize all ancient biblical interpretation.

His first assumption is that all ancient interpreters share the belief that the Bible is a fundamentally cryptic document. That is, all interpreters maintain that although scripture may appear to be saying X, what it really means is Y, or that while Y is not openly said by scripture it is somehow implied or hinted at in X. One example I will discuss in the Noah drunkenness story, is the ancient interpretation that אהלִי (Genesis 9:27) meaning literally tents, is referring to "a place of learning." When ancient interpreters read a piece of biblical text, they see that beyond the apparent meaning of the text is some hidden or esoteric message.

The second assumption is that scripture constitutes one great Book of Instruction, and as such is a fundamentally relevant text. Biblical figures such as Abraham, Jacob and Moses

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<sup>86</sup> See Kugel JL. 1997. *The Bible As It Was*. Cambridge, USA: Harvard University Press. In his introduction to the book, Kugel devotes his opening chapter to an exposition of the history and methodology of the Ancient Biblical Interpreters. See also Kugel JL. & Greer R. 1986. *Early Biblical Interpretation*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press; Kugel JL. 1990. *In Potiphar's House: The Interpretive Life of Biblical Texts*, San Francisco: HarperCollins and Fishbane MA. 1985. *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*. Oxford: Clarendon.

are held up as models of conduct, their stories regarded as a guide given to later human beings for the leading of their own lives. Some interpreters saw the figures themselves as moral exemplars, others as allegorical representations of virtues to be emulated. What though is common between them is that these historical figures are not merely historical, but more importantly instructional. As regards our biblical text, one of the major issues concerning many interpreters is the question of Noah's righteousness after the flood. Does Noah's drinking episode in fact change the reader's view of how he should be considered? Is Noah still a role model for the reader to emulate?

The third basic assumption is that scripture is harmonious. There are no incoherencies in the Bible nor apparent inconsistencies. Biblical interpreters sought to discover the basic harmony underlying apparently discordant words since, in their view, all of scripture must speak with one voice. Thus, we will find ancient interpreters comparing the acts of Noah, Adam and Uzziah even though the latter is cited in the book of Kings. This also means that different parts of scripture needed to be consistent with each other. This view developed into the notion that every detail is important and everything in the biblical text is intended to impart some teaching. We will see that this assumption is particularly relevant when discussing rabbinic writings of the Midrash.

Finally, all these interpreters assume that all of scripture is divinely sanctioned, of divine provenance or divinely inspired. God, according to them, is the omniscient narrator of the scriptures. For example, the author of Jubilees believed that all of the Genesis narratives are of divine provenance-as much so as the laws of Exodus through Deuteronomy that are specifically attributed to God.<sup>87</sup>

In summary, bearing these four assumptions in mind will help in understanding why interpreters say what they do about the biblical text. However, the main focus in studying

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<sup>87</sup> Similarly Jubilees maintains that later scriptural works such Isaiah and Psalms were inscribed in the "heavenly tablets" long before the human transmitters of these texts had been born. See Dead Sea Scrolls 11QPs where the text asserts that David's songs were "given to him for the Most High". This is also reflected in Philo of Alexandria and Acts 2:30-31.

these texts is to consider **how** they interpreted or retold the biblical text. In my exposition I will focus on the following four questions, in particular.

(i) What additional words or phrases did the particular ancient interpreter add to the biblical text or what changes to the text did he make?

(ii) How do these interpreters differ in their exegesis of the biblical text and what do they have in common?

(iii) How does the tradition of exegesis on the Noah's drunkenness text develop over time from second temple to later rabbinic writings? I will begin by analyzing the late second temple texts of Jubilees, Baruch 3, Philo and Josephus; I will continue with the Palestinian Targumim of Pseudo-Jonathan and Neofiti and then consider the various Midrashic traditions in Midrash Rabba, Tanchuma and Midrash Rabati. Finally I will consider how these traditions crystallized the thinking of the Rabbis of the Talmud.

(iv) Perhaps, most importantly, I will try to discover the **exegetical motif**<sup>88</sup> that lies behind the particular interpretation of the author. By this I mean the underlying idea about how to explain the biblical verse that becomes the basis for the ancient writer's interpretation or alteration of what the biblical text actually says. This is not an easy task as the ancient interpreters do not usually clarify explicitly what their exegetical motifs are on a particular text. However, by careful textual analysis of the ancient writer's text and comparison with the biblical text, I hope to reveal the exegetical motif or motives in the story. In the Noah drunkenness text, I suggest that the central exegetical motif revolves around the judgments that the ancient writers made regarding Noah's behavior in this narrative.

As regards methodology, I will be placing considerable focus on a close reading of the literary form and structure of their exegesis. In doing so, I will frequently be aided by the literary term "**narrative expansion**".<sup>89</sup> This is one of the most characteristic features of ancient biblical scholarship, whereby all manner of "extra's" not found in the biblical text itself such as additional actions performed by someone in the biblical narrative or words

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<sup>88</sup> A term coined by Kugel in his book *The Bible As It Was*. 1997:28.

<sup>89</sup> A well-known term in literary analysis. See Peters S. 2004:17. *Learning to Read Midrash*. Jerusalem: Urim Publications, who develops this term within the framework of midrashic exegesis.

spoken by him-are inserted in a retelling of the text by some later author or in a commentary upon it. Such narrative expansions are by definition "exegetical" because they are ultimately based on something in the text. This may be an unusual word or turn of phrase that sets off the imagination of the exegete or simply some problem in the plot that requires resolution. Narrative expansions may be said to be based, as we have seen, upon one or more exegetical motif. As such, I will focus on discovering the narrative expansions of various ancient interpreters.

## 2.2 Jubilees<sup>90</sup>

This book purports to contain a revelation given to Moses by the "angel of the Presence," one of the angels closest to God, at the time of the Sinai revelation. Jubilees takes the form of a retelling of the book of Genesis and the first part of Exodus: the angel goes over the same material but fills in many details, sometimes shifting slightly the order of things, and occasionally skipping over elements in the narrative. The book was originally written in Hebrew, and fragments have been found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. The text was translated from Hebrew into Greek and from Greek into Latin and Ge'ez. The almost complete text exists only in Ge'ez, though a substantial section is extant in Latin as well.

Before discussing the relevant text from Jubilees, it is important to first give some background as to the particular agenda of its author. In seeking to retell the book of Genesis and the beginning of Exodus, this author had a definite program. He wished to claim that this particular part of the Pentateuch, although it consists mostly of stories and does not contain any law code as such, had nonetheless been designed to impart legal instruction no less binding than the overt law codes found in the rest of the Pentateuch. In other words, by reading the stories of Genesis carefully, one could work out all sorts of binding commandments that God had, as it were, hidden in the narrative. Reading in this fashion, the author of Jubilees was able to find a set of rules strictly defining what is

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<sup>90</sup> Many scholars date the book to the middle of the second century B.C.E. See Kugel in his *Traditions of the Bible* 1998: 922 who favors an earlier date, perhaps at the beginning of the second century B.C.E.

permitted and forbidden on the Sabbath, regulations forbidding marriages between Jews and non-Jews, strictures against various forms of fornication and other issues of interest.

One particularly interesting feature of Jubilees is that it maintains that the true calendar ordained by God consisted of exactly 52 Sabbaths (364 days) per year and that the moon, whose waxing and waning determined the months of the year for other Jews, ought rightly to have no such role in the true calendar. The author sought to show that this calendar, too, was implied by the stories of Genesis. The Dead Seas Scrolls sect adopted the same calendar as that prescribed by Jubilees and it is clear that the members of this group held this book in high esteem.<sup>91</sup>

The author divides the history of the world and of mankind into units of 50 years. Hence the name Jubilees. Each unit of 50 years is subsequently divided into seven times seven periods of years (49) plus one year. All the historical events that are described in the book are placed in this structure of Jubilees, 7 "weeks" of years and regular years. In this way, the time structure of Jubilees is far more detailed in comparison with the biblical text. This particular characteristic of the book helps us understand how the author interpreted the various events in Genesis and the connection between them. Are the events connected to each other? Are they close or far apart? These types of questions can be more easily answered through the detailed dates provided in the book.<sup>92</sup>

The specific genre of the Jubilees text has been called by scholars as "The Rewritten Bible."<sup>93</sup> Instead of the author commenting on the verse in the Bible by citing the verse and adding his glosses, the author of Jubilees has taken another approach to his methodology of interpretation. He has rewritten the biblical story to include his additions

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<sup>91</sup> See Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible* 1998:922. The translations cited are principally those of Charles Charles RH. 1903 *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*. Oxford: Clarendon and .Charlesworth J. 1985. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. New York: Doubleday and Company.

<sup>92</sup> See H. Mack in *הפרשנות הקדומה למקרא* p.54-57.

<sup>93</sup> The term seems to have first been coined by Vermes G. 1975: *Post-Biblical Jewish Studies*. Leiden: Brill. See Kugel 1997:28.

and interpretations as if they are already part of the text. The following is the text of Noah's drunkenness, as presented in Jubilees.

### **2.2.1 Chapter 7-Jubilees**

7:1 During the seventh week, in its first year, in the Jubilee Noah planted a vine on the mountain, whose name was Lubar, one of the mountains of Ararat on which the ark had come to rest. It produced fruit in the fourth year. He guarded its fruit and picked it that year during the seventh month.

7:2 He made wine from it, put it in a container and kept it until the fifth year-until the first day of the beginning of the first month.

7:3 He joyfully celebrated the day of this festival. He made a burnt offering for the Lord—one young bull, one ram, seven sheep each a year old, and one kid—to make atonement through it for himself and for his sons.

7:4 First he prepared the kid. He put some of its blood on the meat that was on the altar which he had made. He offered all the fat on the altar where he made the burnt offering along with the bull, the ram, and the sheep. He offered all their meat on the altar.

7:5 On it he placed their entire sacrifice mixed with oil. Afterwards, he sprinkled wine in the fire that had been on the altar beforehand. He put frankincense on the altar and offered a pleasant fragrance that was pleasing before the Lord His God.

7:6 He was very happy, and he and his sons happily drank some of this wine.

7:7 When evening came, he went into his tent. He lay down drunk and fell asleep.

The rest of the story essentially follows the biblical text.

What are the additions and changes in this "rewritten text" as compared to the biblical text examined in chapter 1?

1. Where did Noah plant the vine? The biblical text does not elaborate. Jubilees is very specific, on a mountain called Lubar.
2. When did Noah plant the vine? Again, we find a narrative expansion, as compared to the biblical text. He planted it in the seventh week in its first year.
3. When did he make the wine? According to the Jubilees version, he waited for four years and only drank wine in the fifth year.
4. Noah waited for the festival on the first day of the first month to drink the wine.
5. Noah offers sacrifices on this day which is a holiday enjoyed by his sons who also drink happily
6. Noah waits till evening before going to his tent, lying down drunk and falling asleep.

When examining these details of the story I discover quite a different one as compared to the biblical text. Firstly Noah is diligently fulfilling the precepts of the Bible by waiting for four years before deriving benefit from the tree.<sup>94</sup> He waits until the fifth year, again following the biblical precept before drinking the wine.<sup>95</sup> This is in contrast to the biblical story which, as we have shown previously, seems to suggest that all of these events; planting, drinking, etc. all happened in close time proximity. In addition, Jubilees adds an important element to the story. This drinking of wine is part of a celebration of a festival. This is not an "unholy act". On the contrary, Noah is in the midst of celebrating a religious festival to God! The sacrifices he brings mirrors those sacrifices brought in Numbers 29:2-also on a festival. Jubilees adds a further element not mentioned in the biblical text. This drinking is not done alone but together with his sons. They are part of this religious celebration. Finally, Noah does not become drunk immediately, as it appears from the biblical text. He remains sober until the evening and only then, when he goes to his tent, does he fall asleep.

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<sup>94</sup> See Leviticus 19:23-24.

<sup>95</sup> Leviticus 19:25.

What is the author of Jubilees, as reflected in his exegesis of the text, trying to say about Noah? It seems that he is trying to portray Noah as the "righteous character" of Gen. 6:1. He waits, showing self restraint, before he prepares and drinks the wine. He and his sons take part in a religious festival and only in the evening does Noah become drunk. The Jubilee exegesis, rather than being a "pure" exegesis of the text, seems driven by his making a positive point about Noah's behavior.<sup>96</sup>

### **2.3 Genesis Apocryphon<sup>97</sup>**

This Aramaic text found in Qumran is, as it stands, incomplete. In its original form, this composition apparently presented a series of first person narratives spoken by different figures from the book of Genesis. These narratives frequently contain interpretive motifs, some of which are paralleled in other Jewish writings of the period (Jubilees, for example). It is likely that the Genesis Apocryphon was composed sometime in the first century B.C.E.

#### **1QapGen; Col: XII**

13: I, and all my sons began to till the earth and I planted a huge vineyard on Mount Lubar and four years later it produced wine for me.

14: {...} *Blank* And when the first feast occurred, on the first day of the first feast of the month,

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<sup>96</sup> See VanderKam JC. 1989:43. *The Book of Jubilees*. Leuven-Paris: Peeters.

<sup>97</sup> See Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible* 1998:917. See also Fitzmyer and Harrington, *A Manual of Palestinian Aramaic Texts*, 102-127; Greenfield and Qimron, *The Genesis Apocryphon Col.XII*; Morgenstern, "Hitherto Unpublished columns." The translation is based on Martinez FG. *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*. p. 231.

15: {...} My vineyard: I opened the pitcher and began to drink it on the first day of the fifth year.

16: {...} On that day I called my sons, and my sons' sons and all our wives and their daughters and we got together and we went.

17: {...} And I blessed the Lord of the Heavens, the God Most High, the Great Holy One, who saved us from destruction.

When examining this text, there are clear comparisons with the Jubilees text. Although the Apocryphon text is somewhat incomplete, we can glean the following information:

1. Both identify Mount Lubar as the place of planting of the vineyard.
2. Both point out that Noah, in accordance with Torah law, waited four years before wine production and a fifth year before drinking the wine.
3. The day of the wine drinking was a religious festival.
4. All his family participated in the drinking. (Jubilees in fact only mentioned his sons drinking).

In summary, it seems that the Jubilees and Genesis Apocryphon texts, both written, according to most scholars, between the 1-2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.E. are following an earlier tradition that portrayed Noah as being a righteous individual until the end of his life. Furthermore, they view his drunkenness as the consequences of a religious feast. These narrative expansions do not seem to be based on any particular exegetical difficulty in the biblical text, but are part of a general polemic or message which these authors wish to share with their readers about the character of Noah in the story.

## 2.4 Josephus - Antiquities Book 1:140-142

Josephus Flavius (ca 37 C.E. –c. 100C.E.) was born of a priestly family in Jerusalem and was, by his own account, a gifted student who acquired a broad exposure to the different Jewish schools of thought existent in his own time. He served as a general in the great Jewish revolt against the Romans, but was defeated and taken prisoner. After the war Josephus moved to Rome and composed his multivolume Jewish Antiquities. The first four books of this massive work retell the events of the Pentateuch with frequent additions and modifications that reflect the biblical interpretations he learned in his youth. This book is indeed a rich source of information about ancient exegesis.

Josephus, in his multivolume work, Jewish Antiquities also retells the events of the Noah drunkenness story and seems to follow the tradition of Jubilees and Genesis Apocryphon in viewing Noah in a more positive light. Yet the first century C.E. writings of Josephus, do not include all the detail that has been seen in Jubilees and Genesis Apocryphon as I shall demonstrate below<sup>98</sup>:

140: After the Flood, when the earth had been re-established in its former nature, Nochos applied himself to labor and planted vines upon it. When, the fruit having become ripe in due season, he harvested it and the wine was ready for use, he offered a sacrifice and feasted.

141: Having gotten drunk he fell asleep and being naked he lay indecently. The youngest of his sons, having observed him, showed him mockingly to his brothers, but they covered their father.

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<sup>98</sup> The translation of this text is taken from Feldman LH. 2000. *Flavius Josephus Translation and Commentary*. Boston: Brill.

142: And Nochos, realizing this, invoked a blessing for his other sons, but he did not curse Chamas because of his kingship to him, but rather his descendants.<sup>99</sup>

Josephus, in the first century C.E., agrees with the tradition that may have been widely held in his day that Noah's getting drunk was as a result of a "sacrifice and feast." According to Josephus, following Jubilees and Genesis Apocryphon, Noah's behavior should be considered within the framework of a religious feast. The inference is that Noah's behavior is not to be condemned. Yet, Josephus does not mention the idea of Noah waiting for four years before making the wine nor the fact that he involved others in this act of religious feasting. Is perhaps Josephus, tempering the more righteous picture of Jubilees and Genesis Apocryphon, which portrays Noah as following all the Torah commandments in his preparation of wine and in his desire to include other family members in this religious festivity? In any event, it seems that Josephus is generally continuing the more positive tradition concerning Noah's behavior as we have seen in Jubilees and Genesis Apocryphon.

## **2.5 Philo Questions and Answers on Genesis and Exodus Book II, 68<sup>100</sup>**

Philo was a Greek-speaking Egyptian Jew and the author of a multivolume series of commentaries on the Pentateuch. Philo was heir to the already existing tradition of interpreting the Bible allegorically, a tradition that appears to have flourished in Alexandria, Egypt. Philo championed this approach: For him, although biblical stories recounted historical events, they likewise had an "under-meaning" (*huponoia*) by which Abraham, Jacob and other biblical figures were understood to represent abstractions or spiritual realities whose truth applied to all times and places. Philo explained many biblical texts in keeping with the then - current Greek philosophical ideas.

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<sup>99</sup> It is interesting how Josephus interprets the difficulty of Noah's cursing of Canaan rather than Ham the culprit. Josephus, abides by the literal meaning of the text and explains very simply that Noah did not curse Ham himself because of his nearness of kin. To justify the severity of the punishment, Josephus adds that Ham showed the sight of his naked father to his brothers "with mockery".

<sup>100</sup> Philo of Alexandria c. 20 B.C.E. – c.40 or 50 C.E.

This early first century C.E. commentary takes the form of questions and answers on the first two books of the Pentateuch and in form resembles Hellenistic (pagan) commentaries to the Homeric poems. To each question concerning the meaning of a biblical expression or verse, Philo generally gives a two fold answer; one refers to the literal meaning and the other to the allegorical meaning. The allegorical interpretation may be divided into three categories: The physical (i.e. cosmological or theological), the ethical or psychological and the mystical.<sup>101</sup>

On the verse Genesis 9:21 –Philo asks:

What is the meaning of the words, "he drank of wine and became drunken?"

He answers:

In the first place, the righteous man did not drink the wine but a portion of wine and not all of it. For the incontinent and self-indulgent man does not give up going to drinking-bouts before he has put away inside himself all the unmixed wine. But the continent and abstemious man measures the things necessary for use. And "becoming drunken" is use in the sense of "making use of wine." For there is a two fold and double way of becoming drunken: one is to drink wine to excess which is a sin peculiar to the vicious and evil man; the other is to partake

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<sup>101</sup> It is interesting to note that sometimes Philo's comment contains only one kind of allegorical interpretation, sometimes two and occasionally all three. Some scholars have suggested that Philo's two fold method of interpretation is a forerunner of the fourfold method of interpretation used by Rabbinic and Patristic commentators. His "literal" interpretation corresponds to the "literal" or "historic" interpretation of the Church fathers and to the *Peshat* of the Rabbis. His "physical" interpretation corresponds to the allegorical interpretation of the Church fathers and to the *Remez* of the Rabbis. His "ethical" interpretation corresponds to the "moral" interpretation of the Church fathers and to the *Drash* of the Rabbis. His mystical interpretation corresponds to the "analogical" interpretation of the Church fathers and to the *Sod* of the Rabbis. In this work, the "Questions and Answers on Genesis and Exodus" Philo follows the text more closely and stays within a more limited area of ideas. See Marcus in his introduction to the commentary of the "Questions and Answers."

of wine, which always happens to the wise man. Accordingly it is the second signification that the virtuous and wise man is said to be drunken, not by drinking wine to excess but merely by partaking of wine.

Philo's exegesis of the verse is intriguing. From the phrase וישת מן היין, he derives the fact that Noah drank some of the wine, not all of it. Noah, in fact did not get drunk at all in the way that the term is generally used. A person who over indulges in wine is a sinful person which is not the profile of Noah. By getting drunk, according to Philo's exegesis, the text means that Noah took part in wine drinking; although he did not actually get drunk.

Philo, in fact, continues this line of thought that Noah is still the righteous one by suggesting that he only was naked "in his home". He writes: "This is praise for the wise man that his nakedness does not take place somewhere outside but that he was in his house concealed by the screen of his house."

In summary, Philo in his exegesis of the Noah drunkenness story follows the tradition and exegetical motif that Noah was indeed righteous even after he drank of the wine. Yet Philo goes one step further than Jubilees, Genesis Apocryphon and Josephus. According to Philo, Noah did not get drunk at all. The term used by the Bible, "to get drunk" in connection to a wise man merely means drinking or partaking of wine. Only wicked and sinful people drink to a state of inebriation and since, according to Philo, Noah was a righteous man it is simply incomprehensible to understand the biblical text in its literal sense.

So far, this thesis has examined several ancient exegetes who have interpreted the Noah drunkenness story in a way that portrays Noah in a positive light. The exegetical motif which is common to their interpretations is that Noah was basically a righteous man and either became drunk as a result of a religious festivity celebrated with his family or did not get drunk at all. Basing themselves on this exegetical motif they have added to the text using narrative expansions to elaborate the story. For example, Noah waited four

years before drinking the wine based on his observance of the *mitzvot* of the Torah. He sacrifices animals as stated in the requirements of the book of Numbers.

However, I now wish to show that there were other ancient traditions about Noah's behavior which view Noah in a very different light.

## 2.6 III Baruch IV. 9-13<sup>102</sup>

9: Then I Baruch said: Show me, I beg, which tree it is that led Adam astray. The angel said: It is the vine which Samaael the angel planted: The Lord God was angry at this and he cursed both him and his tree and he did not allow Adam to touch it; therefore the devil in envy deceived him through the vine.

And I Baruch said: If the vine has caused such evil ....

10: And the Angel said: When God brought the flood upon the earth... the water entered paradise and destroyed every plant but it swept the shoot of the vine right outside and carried it away.

11: Then when land appeared again out of the water Noah .. began to plant whatever plants he found.

12: But when he found the shoot of the vine, he took it and asked himself what it was...

13: And he said shall I plant it or not? Since Adam was destroyed through it, let me not suffer the wrath of God because of it..." And Sarasael the angel said to him, "Come Noah, plant the shoot of the vine."

In order to understand this first century C.E. text, it needs to be appreciated that it is based on an earlier tradition about the tree that caused the fall of Adam and Eve. Already

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<sup>102</sup> *III Baruch*, also known as the *Greek Apocalypse of Baruch* survives in two forms, Slavonic and Greek. According to scholars these may, but not necessarily, stem from a text originally composed in a Semitic language. Scholars date this text to the late first century C. E., see Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible* 1998:573.

in 1 Enoch<sup>103</sup> 32, 4 is found the identification of the Tree of Knowledge as the vine. The above Baruch text links the fall of Noah to the fall of Adam and Eve. Both were caused by the vine. But the text has another important message. Noah knew the cause of Adam's sin, but he still decided to partake of the same vine from the Garden of Eden. Thus, Noah's sin is magnified and his culpability compounded.

Furthermore, another text in Baruch 2<sup>104</sup>: 4-5 directly links Adam's sin to the evils of intoxication. Here too, the Tree of Knowledge is identified as the vine. But the author adds a direct message about the evils of intoxication:

Know Baruch, that just like Adam bears his punishment because of the vine, so too today, **mankind will bear a sin greater than Adam if they drink wine to intoxication. They will distance themselves from the honor of God and they will hand themselves over to eternal fire.** For no good will come from wine and those who drink from it to indulgence. Brother will not pity brother nor will father pity son. Through over indulgence in wine man will kill, commit adultery and prostitution, steal and commit perjury and no good will come from it.

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<sup>103</sup> This text is particularly important for our discussion because, according to most scholars, it constitutes one of the most ancient Jewish writings to have survived outside the Bible itself. The most ancient manuscripts found have been dated well back into the third century B.C.E. See Vanderkam JC. 1984. *Enoch and the Growth of an Apocalyptic Tradition CBQ Monograph Series 16*. Washington, D.C; Stone ME. 1988. Enoch, Aramaic Levy and Sectarian origins. *JSJ* 19:159-170. See also *Apocalypse of Abraham* 23, whose first century C.E. author also identifies the fruits of the tree of knowledge with the "grapes of the vine." See Charlesworth's translation of the text in his book, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 1985:700. A later rabbinic text, *Pirke De Rabbi Eliezer* 23, also supports this tradition.

<sup>104</sup> Baruch 2 describes the visions seen by Baruch Ben Neriyah when he visits one evening the higher celestial spheres together with an accompanying angel. Scholars find it difficult to pinpoint an exact date for the writing of this book but most cite an early date of about 200 B.C.E. As such this text gives us an interesting insight to an early interpretation of the biblical text. See Kahana A. 2004:516. *Hasefarim Hahizoniyim*. Tel Aviv: Hillel Press.

In summary, in this early second century B.C.E. text there is perhaps the first direct condemnation of intoxication in the Apocrypha. The author links his message directly to the sin of Adam as taking from the vine, the Tree of Knowledge. The author of Baruch III appears to develop this early tradition and links it to sin of Noah. Noah planted the same vine from the Garden of Eden and knowingly followed Adam's footsteps and sinned.

In fact, there is here evidence of the formation of two different traditions about the behavior of Noah after the flood as seen by the early ancient interpreters. One tradition, followed by the authors of Jubilees, Genesis Apocryphon, Josephus and Philo portrays Noah as still being a basically righteous man even after his drinking episode. Another tradition, supported by the author of Baruch III and with its roots in Enoch 1 Baruch II, portrays not only a negative picture of Noah's sinful actions, but sees in the drinking of wine to excess, the roots of many evils of mankind as a whole.

I will now consider how some of the various Targumim of the Bible interpreted the Noah drunkenness story and whether they develop these exegetical motifs and narrative expansions which have been noted.

## **2.7 Targum<sup>105</sup> Pseudo- Jonathan:<sup>106</sup> Genesis 9:18-27<sup>107</sup>**

The Targum (in general) is the name for a translation of the Hebrew Bible or parts thereof into Aramaic, a Semitic language related to Hebrew and spoken widely throughout the ancient Near East from the eighth century B.C.E. onward. Targums are not only interpretations in the sense that all translations involve interpretive decisions; some

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<sup>105</sup> See Geiger A. 1875. *Urschrift und Übersetzungen der Bibel in ihrer Abhängigkeit von den inneren Entwicklug des Judentums*. Breslau: Verlag Julius Hainauer and more recent studies including the essays collected in Beattie and McNamara, *The Aramaic Bible: Targums in Their Historical Context*. See Kugel, *Traditions in the Bible*, 1998:943.

<sup>106</sup> See Hayward CTR. 1989. The Date of Targum Pseudo –Jonathan. *JSJ* 20:280-281; Shinan A. 1990. Dating Targum Pseudo –Jonathan. *JJS* 41:57:61 and Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible*.

<sup>107</sup> The translation is based on Maher M. 1992. trans. *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis*. Vol. 1B of *The Aramaic Bible*, Collegeville: Liturgical Press.

Targums, notably Targum Neofiti, the Fragment Targum and Targum Pseudo Jonathan (all Targums of the Pentateuch) contain frequent exegetical expansions of the biblical text, from a few words to entire paragraphs, not found in the original. Despite the extensive research conducted over the last half-century in particular, scholars have still not reached a consensus as to either the dating or the interrelationship of the Targums. Virtually all scholars agree, however, that the process of translating biblical texts into Aramaic must have begun long before any of our extant Targums was composed; such translations began perhaps as early as the time of the return from Babylonian exile. If so the various individual Targum texts – Onqelos, Neofiti et al. most likely do not represent the work of isolated translators beginning afresh; their translations probably include many translation traditions inherited from ages long past. In that sense any dating of a Targum is likely to be misleading from the standpoint of ancient biblical interpretation, since at least some of the interpretations contained within that Targum may go back to a period far earlier than the Targum's own composition. Nevertheless, most scholars suggest that the various Targums basically took shape in the first or second century C.E. The four main Jewish Targums to the Pentateuch are Targum Onkelos, Targum Neofiti, Targum Pseudo-Jonathan and Fragment Targums.

Because of a relatively late misunderstanding, this Targum was for a while erroneously attributed to Jonathan b. Uzziel (first centuries B.C.E.-C.E): Its present scholarly name reflects the consensus that it is not Jonathan's Targum, but an anonymous compilation (sometimes also called Targum Yerushalmi 1). This Targum apparently took shape over a long period of time. While this Targum is clearly related to the other "Palestinian" Targums it likewise has obvious affinities to Targum Onkelos, so that it might best be described as a hybrid of these two traditions to which a great deal of further material from rabbinic midrash has been added.

The following is the translation of Targum Pseudo- Jonathan of the story of Noah's drunkenness. In order to highlight the narrative expansions of the author, I have italicized the additions or changes to the biblical text.

v.20 Noah began *to be a man tilling the earth. And he found a vine which the river had brought from the garden of Eden, and he planted it in order to have a vineyard. That same day it sprouted and ripened grapes and he pressed them.*

v.21 He drank of the wine and became drunk, and he uncovered himself within his tent.

v.22 Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father's nakedness and told his two brothers *in the street.*

v. 23 But Shem and Japheth took a mantle, placed it on both their shoulders and, going backwards covered their father's nakedness; their faces were turned away so that they did not see their father's nakedness.

v.24 When Noah awoke from his wine, he knew *by being told in a dream* what had been done to him by *Ham* his son, *who was slight in merit because he was the cause of his not begetting a fourth son.*

v.25 And he said, "Cursed be Canaan" *who is his fourth son.* A slave reduced to slavery shall he be to his brothers.

v.26 He said, Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem, *whose conduct was righteous; therefore* Canaan shall be *his* servant.

v.27 May God *adorn the borders* of Japheth. *May his sons become proselytes* and dwell in the *schoolhouse* of Shem and let Canaan be a slave to them.

A detailed study of the exegetical expansions and hermeneutical comments in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan's work will, I suggest, yield important reflections about how the author considered Noah's behavior in this episode.

v.20 In an earlier discussion of this verse in chapter one, the literary difficulties arising from this phrase *איש האדמה* were considered. Does it mean "master of the land" or "worker of the soil"? The Targum here has opted for the second explanation and compares it to the parallel term of *עבד אדמה*, used in the description of Cain in Genesis 4:2. Grammatically, (the use of the *ה הידיעה* by Noah) and syntactically, (the use of the noun *איש* rather than the verb *עבד*) there are clear differences between the meaning of the two phrases. Yet, it seems that the author of Pseudo-Jonathan is possibly intentionally comparing the two episodes or asking us to consider the comparisons between them.

*"And he found a vine which the river had brought from the garden of Eden, and he planted it."*

Noah's finding a vine that the river has carried down from the garden of Eden is a clear narrative expansion. This is the author's solution to the question raised previously in our first chapter. From where did Noah get this vine to plant?

What is the source of the author's seemingly fanciful explanation? There does not seem to be any literary clues from the text that would support such an exegesis. I contend that Pseudo-Jonathan's explanation is based on the much earlier tradition in the Apocrypha and which is developed later in midrashic literature. According to this tradition, it was the vine whose fruit caused the fall of Adam and Eve. In the case of Noah, there was already a recognized tradition that wine caused his downfall as well. The attempt to link Noah's action with the sin of the garden of Eden is rooted in earlier tradition and, I suggest, is used deliberately by the author to paint a negative picture of Noah's actions in this story. Both the sins of Cain and then Adam are used as oblique references and associations to help frame the mind set of the reader that Noah too is following in their sinful footsteps.

In addition, as has been noted in the first chapter, a close textual reading of these three stories (Adam, Cain and Noah) within the context of Genesis 1-11 as a whole, shows the many literary parallels between them and the Targum here is taking advantage of these associations in his exegesis. As such, the Targum's interpretation here, I suggest, is not based on pure homiletics but on firm exegetical motifs and hermeneutic principles. I will attempt to show that this is indeed the case regarding much of the exegesis of this Noah text, as it is expressed in later midrashic and rabbinic literature as well.

*"That same day it sprouted and ripened grapes and he pressed them."*

Again, the Targum, is presenting a solution to a simple literary problem within the biblical text. The Bible does not describe the time that elapsed between planting the vine and Noah's drinking of the wine. The Targum's solution is that it all miraculously

happened on one day.<sup>108</sup> What is the Targum's message here? Perhaps the Targum is suggesting that this miracle is symbolic of Noah's state of mind. He wishes to taste of the wine as quickly as possible. He knows of its effects as it led Adam to sin. His lack of self control and immediate desire for self-gratification is symbolized by the rapidly growing wine. If you want it so badly, says God, you will get it fast!

v.22 By translating Hebrew "outside" as "in the street", the Targum is perhaps trying to emphasize the shameful nature of Ham's deed. In other words, Ham was not ashamed to go to a public place to talk to his brothers about their father's actions.

v.24 *"by being told in a dream"*

The Targum again is coming to answer an obvious question arising from the biblical text. How did Noah know what had happened to him when he was drunk? Scholars have not found the source for Pseudo-Jonathan's comment here.<sup>109</sup>

*"Ham... who was slight in merit"*

The reference to Ham as the perpetrator of the deed is another narrative expansion to the text. The difficulty, as discussed in the first chapter, is that Ham does not appear from the text to be Noah's youngest son. In both 9:18 and 10:1 the text lists the same sons of Noah: Shem, Ham and Japhet. Presumably, the biblical text is writing them in their chronological order of birth. The Targum solves this textual difficulty by explaining that Ham was indeed not Noah's youngest son chronologically, but "slight (or little) in merit."

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<sup>108</sup> Maher 1992:10, in his introduction to his translation of Pseudo-Jonathan, contends that although all the Targums tell of miracles and wonders, Pseudo Jonathan distinguishes itself from the other Targums in that it shows a far greater interest in the miraculous and the wonderful. In addition to this example of Noah, Pseudo-Jonathan tells of miracles that happened to Rachel (Gen. 30:21) and Pinchas (Num. 25:28).

<sup>109</sup> See Maher 1992:46. See also Brayer. *Studies in the Pseudo-Jonathan of the Bible. Book of Genesis*. He contends that sometimes Pseudo-Jonathan in his other commentaries on the Pentateuch tells how hidden things were revealed to different people (cf. Exodus 1:15; 32:20, 28; Num 31:18; Deut 21:8).

The Targum's exegesis is based on a play on the biblical words "his youngest (lit. little) son."

*"Because he was the cause of his not begetting a fourth son."*

The Targum's interpretation here comes to provide a solution to two textual difficulties discussed in the previous chapter:

(1) What did Ham do to Noah that led Noah to pronounce his curse?

(2) Why did Noah curse Canaan and not the seeming perpetrator his father Ham?

The Targum's solution is that Ham castrated Noah. Canaan, Ham's fourth son, is cursed because Ham prevented Noah from having a fourth son.

The sexual connotation proposed by the Targum is quite compatible with those interpreters noted in the previous chapter who focus on the sexual reference to "their father's nakedness" ערות אביהם as the focus or central pivot of the story.

v.26 *"whose conduct was righteous"*

Who does Noah bless? Shem the righteous one. I suggest, the Targum, with subtle literary irony, has switched the roles of the righteous and the sinful. Shem is now taking over the righteous role of Noah. The Targum has achieved this literary effect by the addition of one word to the text-*righteous*. This literary contrast provided by the Targum is his exegetical tour de force.

In summary, according to the exegesis of Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, Noah, who was the righteous individual "righteous in his generation" (6:9), seems to have become the sinful Noah. The Targum does not state this explicitly but alludes to it in his exegesis. Noah plants a vine from the tree of the garden of Eden that led to Adam's sin and follows Cain's example of becoming the "tiller of the soil". His lack of self control and immediate desire for self-gratification are symbolized by the miraculously growing vine that provides its

produce in one day. His drunkenness not only leads to his own embarrassment but to his castration by his middle son, Ham. Canaan, Ham's son, is cursed because Shem is now blessed "as the righteous son" who will be the source of God's instruction (אֱהֲלֵי שֵׁם) in the future. Shem has in fact inherited, whether Noah intends to do so consciously or not, Noah's role before the flood. Shem will now be regarded as one of the fathers of the Hebrew race. It will be his duty to bring the world closer to God's will and bring proselytes to attach themselves to God's word. Shem is indeed the link between Noah and Abraham.<sup>110</sup>

What I have tried to show in this section is not only the Targum's exegesis of the Noah drunkenness story, but perhaps more importantly for our purposes, the sophisticated literary tools the author uses in his interpretation of the text. I identify the central exegetical motif as Pseudo-Jonathan's reflections over Noah's behavior in the story. Although he does not pass judgment explicitly on Noah's behavior, I contend that his narrative expansion and literary associations reveal his implicit thoughts on the matter.

The Pseudo-Jonathan Targum builds his portrait of Noah using subtle textual associations to Adam and Cain. He develops a step by step description of Noah's fall with his drunkenness leading to his castration and finally uses literary irony by switching the "righteous" figure from Noah to Shem.

## **2.8 Targum Neofiti 1 Genesis 9:18-27<sup>111</sup>**

Having discussed the Targum Pseudo-Jonathan in some detail it will be interesting to compare the exegesis of the Noah story to another Palestinian Targum, Targum Neofiti.

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<sup>110</sup> The idea that Shem is in fact the link between Noah and Abraham and a forerunner of the Hebrew race is developed quite extensive in later rabbinic literature. According to this tradition Shem opened an academy of Torah learning referred to as "*Ohalei Shem*". See Genesis Rabba 63:7 where Rebecca is described as feeling the kicking of the twins when passing the academy of Shem. See also Genesis Rabba 68:11 where Jacob is described as spending 14 years in this academy.

<sup>111</sup> The translation used here McNamara's 1992 translation in, *The Aramaic Bible, The Targums*.

Kugel (1998:944),<sup>112</sup> has dated its authorship to roughly at the end of the first century C.E., about the same time, he contends, that the major part of Pseudo -Jonathan was formed.

Unlike the Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, in this Targum, there is very little narrative expansion of the biblical text. However, one important addition is made in verse 20 of the Neofiti text:

v.20 And Noah, *a just man*, began to till the earth and he planted a vineyard

It is difficult to make too many radical assumptions from the addition of these words "*a just man*", but it seems possible that the author is referring back to the biblical text of 6:8 where Noah is described as a righteous man. It seems reasonable to assume that the author is suggesting that despite the story we are going to read now about Noah... remember that he is still a righteous man.<sup>113</sup>

If correct, this suggested interpretation of the Neofiti exegesis would mean that in the early second century C.E. in ancient Palestine there were already a number of conflicting traditions about the figure of Noah as a righteous individual after his drinking episode towards the end of his life. Was, as the Targum Pseudo-Jonathan seems to suggest, the episode of Noah's drunkenness considered in a negative light reflecting unfavorably on Noah's character and even perhaps Noah losing his title of צדיק to his son Shem? Or perhaps, as the Targum Neofiti seems to suggest, this episode was a mere aberration or slip in Noah's long life of impressive service to God and he drinks and dies basically the same just man we first met in Genesis 6:8?

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<sup>112</sup> See also Flesher P. 1992. Exploring the Sources of the Synoptic Targums to the Pentateuch. In: Flesher P (ed). *Targum Studies: Textual and Contextual Studies in the Pentateuchal Targums*. Atlanta: Scholars Press. pp. 101-134 and Kasher R. 1986. Targumic Conflations in Ms. Neofiti 1. *HUCA* 57: 1-20.

<sup>113</sup> McNamara 1992:41 in his notes on the translation of this Neofiti text makes this observation.

When considering the chain of exegetical tradition over this period can one perhaps align the Targum Pseudo-Jonathan tradition with the earlier Baruch III text which connects the Noah story with the Garden of Eden and Adam's sin? The Targum Neofiti text could align itself with the Book of Jubilees and Josephus tradition that considered a much more favorable picture of Noah's actions.

In the next section, I will examine how rabbinic attitudes to drunkenness, as expressed in the various Midrashim and later talmudic sections, developed based on their exegesis of the Noah drunkenness story. Their exegesis, while built on elements found in these earlier ancient writings, developed new and more detailed narrative expansions, expressing a more radical exegetical motif about the portrait of the biblical Noah after the flood. I will suggest that between these two developing traditions about Noah's behavior in the story, the Baruch III and Pseudo-Jonathan tradition gained prominence and not only fashioned future rabbinic thought about the personality of Noah but shaped rabbinic attitudes about the undesirable consequences of drinking wine to excess.

## **2.9 Understanding the Literary Approach of the Midrash**

Before examining the literary structure and narrative expansions in the following midrashic texts, I will provide a short introduction to the methodology of the Midrash. This will help in the analyses and exegesis of the midrashic texts. Although this literature contains general features mentioned in the previous discussion of the methodology of ancient interpreters, nonetheless it contains particular elements that mark it as a particular genre of ancient writing. The basic question to be considered is what type of discourse is encountered in the genre of midrashic literature? Is Midrash hermeneutic, homiletic or perhaps fiction? I will first present a short summary of some of the major scholarly approaches to this question.

Isaak Heinemann's *Darkhe Haagada*<sup>114</sup> has been considered by scholars as being the first to make a serious full-scale attempt to describe the approach of Midrash systematically.<sup>115</sup> Heinemann begins his work with a discussion of Maimonides theory of aggadic Midrash. He cites a passage in which Maimonides, in his Guide of the Perplexed, attempts to establish the particular genre of Midrash. Maimonides identifies:

the manner of Midrashim whose method is well known by all those who understand their discourses. For these (namely the midrashim) have in their opinion the status of poetical conceits; they are not meant to bring out the meaning of the text in question. Accordingly, with regard to Midrashim, people are divided into two classes: A class that imagines that the Sages have said these things in order to explain the meaning of the text in question, and a class that holds the Midrashim in slight esteem and holds them up to ridicule, since it is clear and manifest that this is not the meaning of the biblical text in question. The first class strives and fights with a view to proving, as they deem, the correctness of the Midrashim and to defending them, and think this is the true meaning of the biblical text and that the Midrashim have the same status as the traditional legal decisions. But neither of the groups understands that the Midrashim have the character of poetical conceits whose meaning is not obscure for someone

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<sup>114</sup> Heinemann Y. 1953. *Darkhe Ha'agada*, Jerusalem: Magnes Press.

<sup>115</sup> See Boyarin D. 1990. in *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* who analyses Heinemann's approach in some detail. Other scholars have rejected Heinemann's thesis. Susan Handelman (1982:234), for example in her book, *The Slayers of Moses: The Emergence of Rabbinic Interpretation in Modern Literary Theory*, suggests that Heinemann, "does not deal with the philosophical issues of meaning." David Stern (1986), in his work, *Moses-side: Midrash and Contemporary Literary Criticism*, rejects Handelman's criticism and explains that Heinemann's work is precisely about understanding aggada in terms of an articulated theory of literary meaning. Stern provides another perspective on Heinemann in "Midrash and Indeterminacy," in *Critical Inquiry*, when he writes, "Another model for midrashic discourse, framed in Romanticist language and virtually Viconian mythopeiac terminology was proposed by Isaac Heinemann in his *Darhke Ha'aggada*."

endowed with understanding. At that time this method was generally known and used by everybody, just as the poets use poetical expressions.<sup>116</sup>

Maimonides, in this text, after rejecting views that propose that Aggada is commentary- either bad or good- Maimonides argues that it is poetry- i.e. didactic fiction. This view of the Aggada is also the one presupposed in many studies of rabbinic thought which treat the statements of the Midrash as a kind of praiseworthy sophistry or homiletic fiction which may have theological or ideological ramifications, but tacitly deny their hermeneutical function.<sup>117</sup>

Heinemann, however, dismisses Maimonides opinion and this view of Midrash. He argues that Maimonides does not take sufficiently into consideration the difference between the Midrash and stories which are purely fictions. He writes (1974:3):

It is certainly true that the *Drash* gives greater freedom of movement to the personal character of the interpreter than does the plain sense... but not infrequently the *Darshanim* cited logical proofs for their Midrash and also rejected the interpretations of their colleagues; also the most serious controversies between the sages of Israel and the sectarians and Christians were carried on with the methods of Midrash .

Heinemann argues that in fact Midrash is encoded as biblical interpretation and not mainly as poetry and homiletic. To take it as something else is analogous to the error of taking ancient historiography as fiction, merely because the "facts" do not comply with our reading of the documents.

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<sup>116</sup> *Guide of the Perplexed*, III, 43. The translated text is that of Shlomo Pines (Chicago nd), pp. 572-573.

<sup>117</sup> See Heinemann J. in *The Nature of Aggada*, who also follows this view. Perhaps the classic of this genre of Midrash studies is E.E. Urbach's, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs* trans. Israel Abrahams. See also Elbaum J. "R. Eleazar Hamodai and R. Joshua on the Amalek Pericope," in *Studies in Aggadah and Jewish Folklore*.

Heinemann offers therefore an alternate option. This can be defined as a combination of the first and third of Maimonides' classes. Midrash is in fact a form of poetry which does intend to be an interpretation of the text. As he writes (1974:41):

We must see it as a serious and successful effort to discover the depths of Scripture and to clearly determine the truth which is hidden from the eyes of the rationalists.

It is my contention in this study, based on Heinemann's classic work, that both exegetical and homiletical texts are found side by side within midrashic literature. The exegetical Midrash usually focuses on a difficulty in the biblical text for the purpose of resolving it. This may mean the explaining of a word, phrase, verse or story and/or its connection to other elements in the biblical text. In contrast, the focus of the homiletic Midrash is to teach, preach, discuss concepts or moral discourses. Yet even when the Rabbis use this homiletic method, **"we will not read Midrash well and richly unless we understand it first and foremost as reading, as hermeneutic, as generated by the interaction of rabbinic leaders with a difficult text, which was for them both normative and divine in origin."**<sup>118</sup> According to this view, even homiletic rabbinic discourses will generally be grounded in some literary problem or nuance in the biblical text. Similarly Stern <sup>119</sup> writes, "Midrashic interpretations typically originate out of problems in Scripture. Lexical oddities, implicit or outright contradictions, unknown place names or unidentified personages, cases of awkward syntax –any of these irritants in the scriptural text can furnish the rabbis with an occasion for interpretation."

In his book *Potiphar's House*, Kugel concurs with the above remarks but offers an important proviso which will be utilized in our midrashic analysis. He writes,<sup>120</sup> "Most of the narrative expansions found in rabbinic Midrash have as their point of departure some

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<sup>118</sup> The words of Boyarin in *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* 1990:5. See also Peters in *Learning to Read Midrash*. 2004:57.

<sup>119</sup> See Stern in "Midrash," in *Contemporary Religious Jewish Thought*. 1986:613-620.

<sup>120</sup> See Kugel in *In Potiphar's House* 1994:247.

peculiarity in the biblical text itself. That is to say, these expansions, whatever other motives and concerns may be evidenced in them, are formally a kind of biblical exegesis." However, he continues, "are we therefore to conclude that such narrative expansions constitute **"pure"** exegesis, that they derive solely from the efforts of early exegetes to explain the meaning of biblical passages?" Kugel claims that this is hardly true. The early exegete is an expositor with an "axe to grind." Quite often this "axe" is polemic indeed. Following Kugel's important comment here, although the early exegete was initially concerned by a textual problem within the text, he may often embellish the original exposition to make a point on some moral or other issue. This is what I contend is happening with many of the midrashic comments regarding the Noah drunkenness story.

My discussion on the literary approach of the Midrashim in the Noah drunkenness story, will also utilize another important idea in midrashic exegesis. Scholars of Midrash have, especially in recent years, focused on the concept of **intertextuality** in the interpretation of Midrash.<sup>121</sup> By this they mean that the ancient Rabbis viewed the Bible as a self-interpreting text. In order to understand a biblical verse in one text in the Bible, one can find exegetical clues from another verse in the Bible to interpret it. As such the texts maybe dialogical in nature, with each text seemingly aware of the existence of the other and in fact in dialogue with it, even though historically they maybe thousands of years apart. In addition, the concept of intertextuality has been extended to mean, in the words

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<sup>121</sup> See Boyarin who develops this concept. See the interesting argument between Kugel and Neusner on the understanding of intertextuality. Kugel in his essay "Two Introductions to Midrash" writes, "Midrash is exegesis of biblical verses, not of books. The basic unit of the Bible for the midrashist is the verse; this is what he seeks to expound, and it might be said that there simply is no boundary encountered beyond that of the verse until one comes to the borders of the canon itself." Neusner in his article, "The case of James Kugel's joking Rabbis and other Serious Issues," in his book *Wrong Ways and Right Ways in the Study of Formative Judaism*, strongly attacks Kugel for this statement. In his view, Kugel has understood the term intertextuality to mean that all rabbinic literature is a seamless whole without history or contestation. Boyarin attacks Neusner's understanding of Kugel and suggests that Kugel was obviously referring to the biblical canon. In addition, he explains the concept of intertextuality in the way we have described above namely that every text is ultimately dialogical in that it records the discourse of earlier texts.

of Boyarin, that the text is often made up of, "a mosaic of conscious and unconscious citation of earlier discourse." As such, many comments of the Midrash maybe built on previous layers of exegesis and interpretation.

In using the concept of intertextuality in understanding the Midrashim connected to Noah's drunkenness, I will utilize both of these interpretations of what intertextuality may mean. I will therefore focus on how the Rabbis of the Midrash use biblical verses in dialogue although they maybe separated in their original biblical context by thousands of years. In addition, I will try and identify layers of previous exegesis upon which the present midrashic comment is based. I will also try to show, how these previous layers in exegesis may themselves have originated from very early traditions that did not necessarily have their source in some difficulty in the text but in very ancient oral traditions about the story. This latter possibility will be considered in the analysis of these texts.

## 2.10 Genesis Rabba on 9:18-27<sup>122</sup>

בראשית רבה (וילנא) פרשה לו

ג ויחל נח איש האדמה, נתחלל ונעשה חולין למה ויטע כרם לא היה לו ליטע דבר אחר של תקנה לא יחור אחד ולא גרופית אחת, אלא ויטע כרם, ומהיכן היה לו, א"ר אבא בר כהנא הכניס עמו זמורות ונטיעות, ויחורים של תאנה, וגרופיות לזיתים, הה"ד (בראשית ו) ואספת אליך, אין אדם כונס דבר אא"כ היה צריך לו, איש האדמה, ג' הם שהיו להוטים אחר האדמה ולא נמצא בהם תועלת, ואלו הן, קין, נח, ועזיהו, קין היה עובד אדמה, נח איש האדמה, עוזיהו (ד"ה = דברי הימים = ב כו) ואכרים וכורמים בהרים ובכרמל כי אוהב אדמה היה, איש אדמה שעשה פנים לאדמה, ושבשבילו נתלחחה האדמה, ושמיאל כל פני האדמה, איש האדמה, בורגר לשם בורגרות, אמר רבי ברכיה חביב משה מנח, נח משנקרא איש צדיק נקרא איש אדמה, אבל משה משנקרא איש מצרי נקרא איש האלהים, ויטע כרם

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<sup>122</sup> Genesis Rabba is a rabbinic anthology of comments on verses from the book of Genesis. It was probably compiled at the end of the fourth or in the early fifth century C.E. although much of its exegesis certainly goes back to an earlier period. See Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible* 1998:17.

בשעה שהיה הולך ליטע כרם, אפגע בו שיזא שמדון, א"ל שותפי עמך, אלא איזדהר בך דלא תיעול לחלקי, ואם עלת בחלקי אנא חביל בך.

ד וישת מן היין, וישת, שתה שלא כמדה ונתבזה, א"ר חייא בר אבא בו ביום נטע, בו ביום שתה, בו ביום נתבזה, ויתגל בתוך אהלו, ר"י אמר רבי חנין בשם רבי שמואל בר יצחק ויגל אין כתיב כאן, אלא ויתגל גרם גלות לו ולדורות, עשרת השבטים לא גלו אלא בשביל יין הה"ד (עמוס ו) השותים במזרקי יין, וכתוב (ישעיה ה) הוי משכימי בבקר שכר ירדופו וגו', שבט יהודה ובנימין לא גלו אלא בשביל היין שנאמר (שם /ישעיהו/ כח) גם אלה ביין שגו ובשכר תעו, בתוך אהלו, אהלה כתיב בתוך אהלה של אשתו א"ר הונא בשם ר"א בנו של ר' יוסי הגלילי נח כשיצא מן התיבה הכישו ארי ושברו, ובא לשמש מטתו ונתפזר זרעו ונתבזה, אר"י לעולם לא תהי להוט אחר היין שכל פרשת היין כתיב בה ווי"ן י"ד פעמים הה"ד ויחל נח ויטע כרם וישת מן היין ויתגל וירא חם ויגד לשני אחיו ויקח שם ויפת, וישימו על שכמם שניהם וילכו אחורנית ויכסו את ערות אביהם ופניהם אחורנית וערות אביהם וגו' ויקץ נח וידע את אשר עשה לו, ויאמר ארור כנען עבד עבדים וגו'.

ה וירא חם אבי כנען, אמר להון ואגיד להון, אמר להון אדם הראשון ב' בנים היו לו, ועמד א' מהן והרג את חברו, וזה יש לו ג', והוא מבקש לעשותן ד', אמר להון ואגיד להון, א"ר יעקב בר זבדי מה טעם עבד יוצא בשן ועין, מהכא וירא ויגד.

ו ויקח שם ויפת את השמלה, א"ר יוחנן שם התחיל במצוה תחלה ובא יפת ונשמע לו, לפיכך זכה שם לטלית, ויפת לפיוולא, וישימו על שכמם שניהם וילכו אחורנית ויכסו את ערות אביהם, ממשמע שנאמר וילכו אחורנית איני יודע שערות אביהם לא ראו, אלא מלמד שנתנו ידיהם על פניהם והיו מהלכין לאחוריהם, ונהגו בו כבוד כמורא האב על הבן, אמר הקב"ה לשם אתה כסית ערותא דאבוך, חייך שאני פורע לך (דניאל ג) באדין גבריא אלך כפיתו בסרבליהון, רבי יודן ורבי הונא רבי יודן אמר בגוליהון, ר' הונא אמר במוקסיהון, אמר הקב"ה ליפת, אתה כסית ערות אביך, חייך שאני פורע לך (יחזקאל לט) ביום ההוא אתן לגוג מקום שם קבר בישראל גיא העוברים קדמת הים וחוסמת היא את העוברים וקברו שם את גוג ואת כל המונו וקראו גיא המון גוג, אמר הקב"ה להם אתה בזית ערות אביך, חייך שאני פורע לך (ישעיה כ) כן ינהג מלך אשור את שבי מצרים ואת גלות כוש נערים וזקנים ערום ויחף וחשופי שת ערות מצרים.

ז ויקץ נח מיינו, נתפרק יינו מעליו, וידע את אשר עשה לו בנו הקטן, בנו הפסול הה"ד (מלכים א ח) כי מזבח הנחושת קטן מהכיל וגו', ויאמר ארור כנען עבד עבדים יהיה לאחיו, חם חטא וכנען נתקלל, אתמהא, רבי יהודה ורבי נחמיה, רי"א לפי שכתוב ויברך אלהים את נח ואת בניו, ואין קללה הוה במקום ברכה לפיכך, ויאמר ארור כנען, רבי נחמיה אמר כנען ראה והגיד להם, לפיכך תולין את הקללה במקולל, א"ר ברכיה הרבה צער נצטער נח בתיבה שלא היה לו בן קטן שישמשנו, אמר לכשאצא אני מעמיד לי בן קטן שישמשני כיון שעשה לו חם אותו מעשה, אמר אתה מנעת אותי מלהעמיד לי בן קטן שישמשני, לפיכך יהיה אותו האיש עבד לאחיו שהן עבדים לי, ר' הונא בשם ר' יוסף אמר אתה מנעת אותי מלעשות דבר שהוא באפילה לפיכך יהיה אותו האיש כעור ומפוחם, רבי הונא בשם רבי יוסף א"ל אתה מנעת אותי מלהעמיד בן רביעי, לפיכך אני מארר בן רביעי שלך.

ח ויאמר ברוך ה' אלהי שם אמר ריש לקיש אף מיפת עמדו באהלי שם ויאמר ברוך ה' אלהי שם, ויהי כנען, יפת אלהים ליפת זה כורש שהוא גוזר שיכנה בית המקדש אעפ"כ וישכן באהלי שם אין שכינה שורה אלא באהלי שם, בר קפרא אמר יהיו דברי תורה נאמרים בלשונו של יפת בתוך אהלי שם, רבי יודן אמר מכאן לתרגום מן התורה, הה"ד (נחמיה ט) ויקראו בספר תורת האלהים זה המקרא, מפורש, זה תרגום, ושום שכל אלו הטעמים, ויבינו במקרא, אלו ראשי הפסוקים, רבי הונא בן לוליאני אומר אלו ההכרעות והראיות, רבנן דקסרין אמרי מיכן למסורת, רבי זעירא ורבי חננאל בשם רבי אפי' אדם רגיל בתורה כעזרא, לא יהא קורא מפיו וכותב, והא תני מעשה שהיה ר"מ באסייא ולא היה שם מגילת אסתר וקרא לו מפיו וכתבה, תמן אמרין שתי מגילות כתב, גנו את הראשונה וקיים את השנייה.

### **2.10.1 Some Comments on the Literary Structure of Midrash Rabba 9:18-27 and its Exegesis.**

When I first examine the overall literary structure of the midrashic exegesis of the Noah drunkenness story in Midrash Rabba, I note the somewhat exaggerated emphasis that the Midrash gives to Noah's behavior in the story and in particular the effects of his intoxication. Whereas only two short and cryptic biblical verses focus on Noah's act of drinking out of the nine verses that describe the events of the story, in this Midrash two large and expansive paragraphs (ג וד) out of six elaborate on this part of the biblical text.

Moreover, when I consider the overall structure of this Midrashic exegesis nearly half of the total Midrashic text focuses on Noah's behavior and its consequences. Whereas many commentaries have focused on the motif of ערות אביהם as being the chiasmic center and *Leitwort* of the biblical text, with the text focal point being on the sons behavior towards their father, the Midrash Rabba seems to have shifted the focus of its exegesis of the text to Noah's behavior. The Midrash does deal with the sons' behavior too, but certainly in a less expansive way.

A cursory glance through the first two paragraphs (ג וד) of the Midrashic exegesis of the drunkenness story is enough to show its clear negative judgment of Noah's behavior in the story. This is done by a series of exegetical comments based on grammatical and syntax issues within the text. However, a closer look at the connection between these comments seems to express, I suggest, a message beyond pure exegesis. Drunkenness is seen not only as a problem for Noah, but for the whole of the Jewish nation as well. I shall now demonstrate how the Midrash presents this idea through these verses.

### 2.10.2 Paragraph ג of the Midrash

The exegesis of the word ויחל , meaning becoming "profane" according to the Midrash, is surprising. Most commentaries of the biblical text understand the word החל as "he began." This is the meaning of the word in earlier places in Sefer Bereishit as I have shown in chapter 1. The Targumim, both Neofiti and Pseudo –Jonathan, as discussed earlier, also explained this in this way. The Midrash, however, does not accept this as the meaning of the word. Why? It seems that the Midrash is indeed concerned here with the פשוט or plain explanation of the verse. There is a syntactical problem in the verse. The text could have just as easily have written ויטע כרם without the verb ויחל at all.<sup>123</sup> Once he planted a vineyard, it is clear that he "began" his work. This verb, if it means "to begin"

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<sup>123</sup> See מתנות כהונה who an alternative suggestion that if ויחל means "he began" the verse could have more simply written ויחל איש האדמה לטעת כרם. As it is written now in the biblical text, there is no connection between the verb ויחל meaning beginning and the action of planting a vineyard.

therefore, does not add to the fundamental meaning of the verse. The Midrash connects the word ויחל therefore to חולין .

But even here the Midrash is not satisfied with bringing this option alone-it doubles the alliterative affect-נתחלל ונעשה חולין. Some exegetes have interpreted this to mean that, "he not only became profane (חולין) as a one-off act of indiscretion but נתחלל –his whole being changed as it were to become a person who was no longer holy."<sup>124</sup> This understanding of ויחל also has biblical support. The phrase ויחל העם לזנות in Numbers 25:1 seemingly connects the word ויחל to an action which is not holy; the lust of Israel for the daughters of Moab.<sup>125</sup>

The Midrash continues that Noah should have planted something else of value, such as a young fig shoot or olive shoot. Instead he planted a vineyard. In other words, according to the Midrash, Noah made a poor choice in his choosing a vine to plant. The Midrash takes for granted that Noah knew or should have known that wine causes degradation. It is not clear from the Midrashic reading of the biblical text where Noah would have this

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<sup>124</sup> See Neusner 1986:28 in his commentary, *Genesis Rabba the Judaic Commentary to the book of Genesis*, A New American Translation Volume II. I have followed mainly his translation though occasionally I have used my own where I felt that it was more accurate of the Hebrew text. See also Theodor J. and Albeck H. *Midrash Bereishit Rabba, critical Edition with Notes and Commentary*. See also Freedman H. *Genesis in Midrash Rabba*. Neusner's work is based largely on Freedman's earlier study so in fact my translation reflects them both. In my commentary I have also considered various other Hebrew commentaries on the Midrash including *Midrash Rabba Hamevoar*, 1986 and the classical super commentaries of the Midrash Rabba which include, מתנות כהונה and עץ יוסף .

<sup>125</sup> See also other classical Jewish commentators who follow the Midrash in its understanding of ויחל here. Seforno, for example, writes on 9:20, "Noah began with an unworthy action, and therefore unbecoming actions followed. For we find that a little perversion in the beginning can often lead to much greater ones in the end. As such we find in 25:1 ויחל העם לזנות." He explicitly makes the connection to Numbers which I have referred to here. Kli Yakar (commentary to the Torah of Ephraim Solomon ben Haim of Lunshitz 1550-1619) also makes this connection in his commentary on the verse in 9:20. However he expands his exegesis to a polemic of the dangers of wine drinking. He writes, "*hulin* is the opposite of holiness, for wine makes someone used to immorality.. it is for this reason that the word ויחל is used in this context. We shall see that the Kli Yakar follows the Midrash consistently throughout his exegesis of these verses.

knowledge from. This is perhaps the source for some of the narrative expansions to be encountered in the Midrash.

It is interesting to compare this midrashic assumption of Noah's prior knowledge of the negative consequences of wine with the commentaries of early Christian exegesis. Some of these early commentators, such as John Chrysostom,<sup>126</sup> suggest that the ancestor's behavior is to be exonerated, since he was the first human being who tasted wine. It is self-evident to the Church Father that Noah, "through ignorance and inexperience of the proper amount to drink, fell into a drunken stupor." Origen and Jerome, following similar lines, contend that Noah lived in a rude age of the world and perhaps did not know the power of the wine.<sup>127</sup>

The Midrash continues with an obvious question on the biblical text. Where did Noah get the vine shoots from in the first place? Rav Kahana, answers that Noah brought them with him into the ark together with other shoots like fig and olive shoots. This was for the purpose of planting when Noah would eventually leave the ark and to begin the process of cultivating the world from afresh.

It is important to point out here the methodology of the Midrash. Its literary method is one which first and foremost begins with a close scrutiny of the language of the text and, particularly in this case when asking where Noah got the roots from, attempts to identify the "gaps" in the biblical text itself. Then, through narrative expansions, based on a particular exegetical motif, it tries to fill them.

However, the Midrashic solution here is, I suggest, trying to drive home a particular point about Noah's character. The Midrash could have offered the Targum Pseudo-Jonathan's answer to the same question- Noah found it having been washed down from the garden of Eden. Yet, the Midrash prefers the option that Noah had lots of shoots to choose from-

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<sup>126</sup> Saint Chrysostom J. 1990: *Homilies on Genesis, 18-45, The Fathers of the Church*, 82. Washington, D.C: The Catholic University of American Press. pp. 202-203.

<sup>127</sup> Origen, *Selecta* in Gen.62-63 (PG. 12. 109); Jerome, Ep. 22.8 (CSEL. 54. 155).

they were all in his ark- but he made a conscious decision to plant a vineyard. This is part of the systematic exegetical motif that, I contend, lies behind many of the narrative expansions of this text. Noah, the no longer righteous, knowingly and by choice planted a vineyard and by so doing he not only made himself unholy ויהל but brought tragedy to his future people.<sup>128</sup>

However, the Midrash does not construct this new view of Noah all at once. It painstakingly builds a negative portrait of Noah, verse after verse gradually expanding its exegesis reaching a literary climax in its commentary of ויתגל in paragraph 7. This has an important literary effect which aims to leave the reader convinced of the harsh message about the evils of drinking wine which is the tour de force of the Midrashic rhetoric in its text.

The Midrash then compares three men who "lusted"<sup>129</sup> after soil and no good comes of them Cain, Noah and Uzziah. What is the comparison between them? All three suffer negative consequences as result of their desire for soil. The Midrash does not explicitly state these consequences but, as it often does methodologically, relies on the reader's knowledge of the Bible to make the connection himself. Cain becomes a murderer, Noah a drunkard and Uzziah a leper. The comparison of Noah with these individuals, especially Cain, strengthens the literary effect that the Midrash is trying to develop. Noah is certainly in bad company as far as his actions are concerned.

The term איש האדמה seems to have puzzled the Midrash, as it did the commentators we discussed in chapter 1. If it means tiller of the soil, then עובד אדמה, the term used in describing Cain in Genesis 4:2, would have been more appropriate. The Midrash solves this textual difficulty by saying that Noah was given a title, "man of the earth." Two possibilities are offered. One is positive and one seemingly more negative. The positive

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<sup>128</sup> Interestingly enough, the Midrash Rabba, despite following the negative view of Noah's actions as in Baruch III and Pseudo Jonathan, does not mention as they do that this vine had its origins in the Garden of Eden. This certainly could have strengthened the case he is making of wine as a source of sin.

<sup>129</sup> This is Neusner's translation in his commentary 1986:29.

one is that he was called by that title because, on his account the earth was saved, and also because his descendants covered the face of the earth. The other explanation offered is that the title reflects Noah becoming the "Lord of the land", because of him acting as a בורגר or master of the prairie. The implication here seems to be quite negative- Noah is acting in a somewhat high handed fashion in his planting a vineyard and in so doing becomes a "master of the earth."<sup>130</sup>

It is interesting that the Midrash gives two explanations here for the term איש האדמה including one that reflects Noah in a more positive light. Perhaps the Midrash does not want to paint a too negative a picture of Noah too quickly. The reader has to be convinced of the Midrash's argument and a more positive exegesis at this stage may not alienate the pious reader of the text, who still associates himself with the earlier textual portrayal of Noah "the righteous."

The Midrash Rabba's comparison between Moses and Noah is an important piece of specific exegesis to make a general point.<sup>131</sup> "Moses was more beloved than Noah. Noah once was called "a righteous man" (Gen. 6:9), but the end was called "a man of the earth." But Moses at first was called, "An Egyptian man" (Exodus 2:19), but in the end was called, A man of God" (Deut. 33:1). Each of these men is described as איש. But each one progressed in completely different paths. Again, the Midrash uses literary comparison between texts describing biblical figures to strengthen its exegetical motif underlying the Noah drunkenness story. Only here it deepens the literary effect by using textual contrast rather than comparison. The contrast between Noah and Moses is particularly telling and stark. Moses moves from an early low point as an Egyptian man to a high point as a man of God. Noah takes the opposite path, he moves from "a righteous man to "a man of the earth." The Midrash here is referring back to its original exegesis of Noah "lusting" after the soil. These literary effects serve to strengthen the

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<sup>130</sup> The interpretation of the word בורגר here follows the understanding of the המבואר p.122.

Neusner understand the term differently. He translates it as "master of the fortress." See his commentary 1986:29.

<sup>131</sup> Neusner 1986:29.

negative portrayal of Noah which is being deliberately and dramatically designed by the Midrash to reach its climax in paragraph 7.

The next piece presented by the Midrash is quite a difficult piece of artistic imagery and few scholars have made an attempt to interpret its meaning.

"He planted a vineyard" (Gen.9-20)

"When he was going out to plant the vineyard, the demon, Asmodeus, met him saying to him, "You can join me in this partnership, but be very careful, not to come into my share of the deal, and if you do come into my share of the deal, I am going to hit you."

What is the message of the Midrash here? Who is Asmodeus? What partnership is being referred to? What deal is implied?

On a more superficial level, the Midrash may be providing an answer to one of our previous questions. Why was Noah guilty for getting drunk, he surely did not know the effects of over indulgence in wine? The purpose of this Midrashic comment is a narrative expansion to teach that in fact Noah was informed of the dangers of drinking by this demon before the act of intoxication.

The message of the Midrash is cryptic, but I suggest on a more subtle level, may also be offering a literary bridge between what has been said up until now about Noah the individual and the ultimate message about the evils of drinking wine which the Midrash wishes to convey. The demon, Asmodeus, is according to Midrashic tradition, the "demon of demons" who is responsible for all manners of destruction and terror in the world.<sup>132</sup> He warns Noah that he has the power to become partners with him in destroying the world. In order to avoid this happening, Noah has to keep to his share; namely to drink a little wine. If however he oversteps the bounds and approaches the demons share, i.e. drinks to inebriation, then he will be hit and suffer the consequences.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> See מדרש רבה המבואר p. 123.

<sup>133</sup> See the commentary of מתנות כהונה on Midrash Rabba comment... בשותפי עמך.

The implication of this Midrash is that the dangerous effects of intoxication go beyond that of Noah the individual. Noah is warned that his actions will have dire consequences to the rest of mankind as well. This narrative exchange between Asmodeus and Noah, sets the literary stage for the following Midrashic comments and help us understand the gravity with which the rabbis of the Midrash viewed the evils of intoxication.

However, this Midrash also seems to lay the foundations for the later rabbinic position that drinking wine to moderation is permissible. In this narrative expansion of the Midrash we may have the basis for the later Talmudic comment in Talmud Gittin 70a

"יין מהדברים שרובן קשה ומיעוטן יפה"

This Talmudic comment emphasizes the point that the drinking of wine is indeed positive when only a little is drunk. However, when drunk to excess, its consequences are indeed very difficult.

### 2.10.3 Paragraph 7 of the Midrash.

"He drank of the wine and became drunk". (Gen. 9:20)

The Midrash comments, on this part of the verse, that he drank without restraint and so became drunk and was shamed. Again, a closer look at the biblical text may help in understanding the source for this midrashic exegesis. Mirsky,<sup>134</sup> comments that the verse could have been written in the more usual form וישת יין וישכר . Rarely does one find the literary form .. לשות מ.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> See also מתנות כהונה on the words שתה in this section.

<sup>135</sup> An interesting exception is ז ירמיהו נא: ז "מיינו שתה".

Drinking "from the wine" may imply, he suggests, that Noah did not stop drinking until he got drunk. Alternatively the term מן היין may reflect, according to the Midrash, that he drank from "all the wine" and was not concerned about only drinking a small amount.<sup>136</sup>

The Midrash continues, "Said R' Hiyya, on the same day he planted the vineyard, drank the wine and suffered shame."

We found a similar comment on this verse in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan. The sticatto-type juxtaposition of the verbs וישת, וישכר ויתגל all prefixed by the וי grammatical form, seems to suggest to the Midrash that these actions occurred in close succession. The only addition to the Pseudo-Jonathan formulation however is the phrase "בו ביום נתבזה" which does not occur in this earlier Targum version. The Midrash Rabba, in including this term, is perhaps continuing to build its consistent negative portrayal of Noah by including this derogatory comment about Noah. It does so though, by using a clever literary ploy. The term נתבזה is juxtaposed to the biblical terms ונטע and ושתה. The effect is that the reader may think subconsciously that this term is also part of the biblical text!

"And he lay uncovered in his tent" (Gen. 9:21)

The Hebrew phrase ויתגל בתוך אהלה raises many grammatical difficulties in the biblical text. The ויתגל form התפעל is unusual, for the text should have used the ויגל form נפעל. What is written is not "lay uncovered" but "uncovered himself". The Midrash is sensitive to these textual difficulties and suggests that the word ויתגל here is used because it has a double meaning. Since the consonants of the word for "uncover" can yield the meaning "exile"-גלות, we made read the passage, says the Midrash, to indicate that Noah's act of drunkenness brought about both for himself and generations to come the penalty of exile.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> See מתנות כהונה above.

<sup>137</sup> See Neusner's translation and commentary 1986: 30.

The בעל הטורים<sup>138</sup>, a classic Jewish medieval biblical commentator, sees deeper connections between the form גלות and ויתגל. As the Midrash is apt to play word games and change the order of letters in its exegesis, he sees the letters of ויתגל forming in a different order the word גליות –meaning exiles.<sup>139</sup> This commentator claims that this insight also lies behind the rationale of the Midrash in its exegesis here.

The Midrash at this point in paragraph 7 reaches the climax of its exegesis of these verses. Noah's actions brought about on himself and generations to come, the penalty of exile. He continues,

**"The ten tribes were exiled only on account of wine, in line with this verse: 'Woe to those who get up early in the morning to follow strong drink', (Is. 5:11)**

**The tribes of Judea and Benjamin went into exile only on account of wine, in line with this verse, 'But these also erred through wine.' (Is. 28:7)."**

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<sup>138</sup> See *Baal Haturim*, the medieval commentary of Yaakov ben Asher, on Genesis 9:21.

<sup>139</sup> See Heinemaan in his work *Darkei Haagada* 1976:103. Heinemann devotes a whole chapter in his book to discuss how the Midrash interprets each letter within the biblical text. This type of exegesis views each letter as having an independent life of its own without specific connection to the current word to which it belongs. For example, in the David -Avigayil story in Samuel 1:24, the *Midrash Yalkut Shimoni* (Volume 2:134) connects the character of Naval with Lavan. Both tricksters have the same letters in different orders. The Midrash goes as far as interpreting the forms of letters as well. For example the Midrash on Genesis 1:1 asks, "Why was the world created with the letter ך? It has two pointed curves one above and one below to show man from where he comes and where he will go." The Midrash also interprets the numerical value of words such as the word ךך –referring to the 210 years of exile in Egypt. Heinemann points out that these types of exegesis are particular to the Midrash. We do not find them in the Apocrypha which does not utilize this type of exegesis. Peters, p.19, expounds on Heinemann's idea that while Greek hermeneutics focuses on the word as the smallest possible meaningful unit, among the Rabbis of the Midrash even the letter is not the smallest meaningful unit. The Talmud in Menahot 29b, discusses the story of Moses in the Beit Midrash of Rabbi Akiva which begins with the question of Moses about the purpose of the crowns he is affixing to the letters of the Torah.

With this statement about wine, the Midrash has reached its climax. The exegesis has been carefully developed by the Midrash. Beginning from the individual Noah, who "made himself profane", through the story of the demon who warns Noah of the evils of wine, the Midrash has now described how Noah's actions not only affected the Israelite people in the future but were responsible for two exiles.

The midrashic exegetical method here is again worthy of note. The verses brought by the Midrash need to be read within their own literary context. For the reader who is familiar with the biblical context this is obvious and the Midrash often takes this for granted. The first quotation of the verse in Isaiah 5:11 is in fact the literal פשט interpretation of the verse. The condemnation of those who get up to drink wine is followed in verse 13 of the same chapter by, "therefore my people are gone into captivity, (גלה) because they have no knowledge: and their honorable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst."<sup>140</sup>

Although the Midrash does not quote this verse it is clear that it is referring to it. Isaiah states explicitly that drunkenness has led to exile.

The form גלה in Isaiah 5:13, written in the past tense, has occupied the minds of biblical commentators. The Midrash has clearly understood it here as a pure past tense. "See what drunkenness has caused", says the prophet, "exile of our people". The only past exile it could refer to, in Isaiah's time, is that of the ten tribes which had already occurred. However, there are those commentators who read גלה more as a future threat. The prophet sees in his vision the punishment that is to come in the future and does so by expressing it in a literal form as if it has already happened.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> The translation here is based on the Koren edition of the Bible edited by Harold Fisch. This translation is based on the Friedlander edition of the Bible published in 1881.

<sup>141</sup> See commentary of *Daat Mikra* on Isaiah 5:13. He brings various examples when prophecy uses a similar literal form. The prophecies of Bilam in Numbers 24:7 are a good example of this phenomenon. Some have given this the term "Past prophetic."

The verse from Isaiah 28:7 has a less obvious connection in the text to exile as compared to the first verse quoted in 5:11. The context of the verse is referring to the sins of Ephraim from the northern kingdom. They are referred to in 28:1 as the שכורי אפרים. The prophet, talking to the people of Judah, warns them not to gloat about the sins of their brother Ephraim. Also they, the people of Judah, have sinned with the evils of drink. The Midrash's reference to Judah and Benjamin is clearly the literal meaning of the verse. However in the immediate context of this verse, the punishment of exile is not explicitly mentioned in the text. There is perhaps an allusion to this verse at the end of the chapter 28:22, "Now therefore be not mockers, for I have heard from the Lord of hosts that destruction is decreed upon the whole land", but there is no explicit reference to exile.

In summary, the Midrash has connected three separate instances in the Bible which are connected to the evil consequences of wine. One explicitly connects this to exile, one could be interpreted to refer to exile, but one has no connection at all to exile! Noah's actions do not lead him to exile, yet the Midrash sees in his actions the cause of all future exiles. This does not seem to have any basis in any of the biblical texts we have seen.

It is difficult to pin-point the source for this Midrashic exegesis here. The idea of intertextuality, already mentioned, is important in this regard. In the interpretive methodology of the Midrash, verses are seen in continuous dialogue with one another. Noah's drunkenness and the intoxication of the sons of Judah and Israel many generations later are all internally connected in the view of the Midrash.

Yet, it is difficult, not to get the impression that the Rabbis of the Midrash, in addition to their clear exegesis based on the biblical text, have as Kugel puts it, "an axe to grind". Their repeated message of the evils of excessive drinking seems to go beyond the level of straightforward or "pure" exegesis and into the area of polemics. To see in Noah's wine drinking the source of all exiles seems to exaggerate the issue and has no basis in the biblical text. Perhaps the Rabbis of the Midrash were concerned about particular social problems connected to drinking in their time, but this is only conjecture and goes beyond the scope of this thesis.

The Midrash could easily have stopped here regarding its message about wine, but makes one further statement.

" Said Rav Yohanan, You should never lust for wine, for through the passage that deals with wine the word 'woe'-וי is written no fewer than fourteen times;

ויחל, ויטע, וישת, וישכר, ויתגל, וירא, ויגד, ויקח, וישמו, וילכו, ויכסו, ויקץ, וידע, ויאמר

The Midrash is again reinforcing the message of the evils of wine. The repetition of the consonants וי form in such close proximity creates, according to the Midrash, a very interesting literary affect. The reader, as he reads the text, hears the sigh of וי or woe in the background. This literary effect, perhaps unconsciously, drives home to the reader the evil or "woe" consequences of drinking wine.

However, the Midrash is again basing itself, though not said explicitly, on other biblical verses that support his point. In Proverbs 23:29-30 we read:

"Who cries, Woe? Who cries Alas? Who has Quarrels? Who has complaints? Who has causeless injuries? Who has redness of eyes? They who tarry long at the wine; they who go to seek mixed wine."

The author of Proverbs explicitly connects the cry of "Woe-וי " to the drinking of wine and the Midrash is using this imagery to strengthen his exegesis.

#### **2.10.4 Paragraphs ה,ו,ז,ח of the Midrash**

In these paragraphs, the Midrash is focusing on the part played by Noah's sons in the story. The Midrash, following Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, understands that Ham castrated his father and therefore kindles the wrath of the ensuing curses. Why does Noah curse

Canaan rather than Ham the perpetrator of the evil deed? The Midrash offers two explanations:<sup>142</sup>

R. Judah said, "It is because it is said, ' And God blessed Noah and his sons' (Gen. 9:1). Now there cannot be a cursing where there has been a blessing. Accordingly, he said, 'Cursed be Canaan'."

R. Nehemiah said, "It was Canaan who saw and informed the others. Therefore the curse is assigned to the one who is ruined."

The first possibility suggests that Noah could not curse Ham and so he cursed his descendants. According to the second possibility it was Canaan who was the instigator of the behavior towards the father.

### **2.10.5 The Connection between Rashi's Commentary and that of the Midrash Rabba**

It is interesting to note that Rashi<sup>143</sup>, the 10<sup>th</sup> century biblical commentator, follows the Midrash Rabba's exegesis almost completely in his commentary of Gen.9:18-27. He also connects the word ויהל to the word הולין: Rashi also suggests that Noah brought the vine shoots with him into the ark and he also sees in the Noah story the seeds of the future exile of the ten tribes.

This is important because Rashi, unlike the Midrash Rabba, does give some methodological explanation in his commentary of his exegesis. Rashi quite often does quote Midrashim in his commentary, but he does so selectively. Sometimes he quotes them verbatim, while other times he will change their style and language to suit his own purposes. In fact, most of the midrashic comments he does not quote at all in his

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<sup>142</sup> See Neusner in his translation and commentary 1986: 33.

<sup>143</sup> An acronym for the well known Talmud scholar and biblical commentator, Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, who lived in France in the 10<sup>th</sup> century.

commentary. Rashi himself on the commentary of the verse in Gen. 3:8 makes the following critical comment about his choice of Midrashim:

There are many Midrashei Aggada, and the Rabbis have already organized them in Bereishit Rabba and other Midrashim. But I have only come to explain the literal meaning of the text ( פשוטו של מקרא ) **and to bring Aggada that comes to answer an exegetical problem on the text**, each verse in its place.<sup>144</sup>

A number of important principles can be derived from Rashi's comment here about his exegetical method. Firstly, he will only bring a Midrash which he considers the פשוט or literal sense of the verse or close to the literal sense of the verse. He will therefore not quote numerical word plays or *Gematriyot* that the Midrash uses quite regularly. More important for our purposes, Rashi will only quote a Midrash which answers in his view a particular exegetical problem in the text. He does not bring a Midrash which focuses on a moral idea or polemic which has no anchor in the text.<sup>145</sup>

As Rashi does bring this Midrash Aggada, it may be safe to assume that Rashi was also sensitive to the exegetical issues in the text which we have mentioned earlier in our discussion of the Midrash Rabba. This Midrash Rabba is indeed close to the פשוט or literal understanding of the text.

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<sup>144</sup> The translation is mine.

<sup>145</sup> This assertion is a point of contention between the various super-commentaries of Rashi. Several of them, like Eliyahu Mizrahi and Yitzchak Horowitz, the author of the 19<sup>th</sup> century work *Be'er Yitzchak*, are of the opinion that Rashi does bring a Midrash even when there is not necessarily a pressing exegetical issue in the text. He does so when he wishes to stress an important ethical or moral principle in his commentary. Others, including Abraham Bakrat in his super commentary of Rashi, *Sefer Zikaron*, David Perdu, the author of the 18<sup>th</sup> century commentary, *Maskil Ledavid*, and Wolf Heidenheim in *Understanding the Bible*, are of the view that Rashi only quotes a Midrash when there is a particular exegetical problem in the text which forces him to do so. Nehama Leibovitz, the 20<sup>th</sup> century bible scholar in her writings, *דרכו של עיונים חדשים בספר שמות*, עמ' 495-524, follows this second school of thought. I too have understood Rashi's commentary here as following this second school of thought.

A closer look at Rashi's commentary, however, shows that he does leave out a number of midrashic comments. For example, when discussing the connection between the word *גלות* and *ויחגלו*, (exile), Rashi only brings the example the Midrash brings of the exile of the 10 tribes, not of Judah and Benjamin. As we have seen, the exile of the 10 tribes being connected to the drinking of wine is clearly stated in the Isaiah text of 5:11. However the second example of the exile of Judah and Benjamin being connected to wine is far less explicit in the Isaiah text. Therefore, Rashi does not bring this example. In fact, to strengthen the connection between the Noah text and Isaiah 5:11, Rashi brings another bridging text not brought by the Midrash at all. The ten tribes are connected to the city Shomron and that city is mentioned in Ezekiel 23:4 in the following context:

ותלדנה בנים ובנות ושמותן שמרון אהלה וירושלים אהליבה

And they bore sons and daughters. Thus were their names; Shomeron is Ahola and Jerusalem is Aholiva.

In this example we see a direct juxtaposition between Shomeron, referring to the ten tribes and *אהלה*. Rashi clearly connects the unusual word *אהלה* spelt with a *ה* rather than the expected *ו* (the normal form for his tent would be *אהלו*) in the Noah text with the personal noun *אהלה* in Ezekiel. This is an exegesis which is based on a clear difficulty within the text and, in this case, Rashi will bring such a commentary.

In summary, Rashi's quotation of this Midrash enforces our approach that this Midrash is indeed, in its underlying formation and structure, rooted in the literary ambiguities and difficulties of the biblical text. However, Rashi is selective in his commentary in that he only brings those parts of the Midrash which directly solve an exegetical problem in the text or are supported by a biblical text. Neither does Rashi bring the extensive polemic against the abuses of wine, brought by the Midrash. Rashi's principle purpose is to clarify the biblical text, not to discuss issues of moral behavior and ethics.

### **2.10.6 Summary of the Exegesis of the Midrash Rabba on the Noah Drunkenness Story**

In summary, I have examined in quite some detail how the Midrash Rabba has interpreted the Noah drunkenness story. It has clearly a very critical attitude towards Noah's behavior. It has developed the line of thought that was first examined in Baruch III and Targum Pseudo -Jonathan.

However, the Midrash Rabba is innovative in two specific points of his exegesis. Firstly, the level of open criticism of Noah's behavior is far greater than has been seen up till now. The emphasis on Noah's profaning and disgracing himself through his drinking is a new motif which was not seen in previous exegesis of the story. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, the Midrash Rabba has linked Noah's behavior to a much wider message the early Rabbis wish to share about the evils of drinking. The idea that Noah's behavior is in fact the cause for not one but two future exiles is one that has much more than pure exegetical ramifications. The Rabbis of the Midrash had a very clear and harsh message about the abuses of wine which they wished to share with their readers.<sup>146</sup>

I will now examine what a number of other Midrashim had to say on the story and whether they in fact continue the line of the Midrash Rabba.

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<sup>146</sup> A number of medieval Biblical commentators follow the line of the Midrash in using the Noah story as a general polemic against the evils of drunkenness. They include the *Kli Yakar* (16<sup>th</sup> century commentary of Ephraim Solomon be Haim of Luntshitz, Rabbi of Lemberg) and the commentary of the *Radak* (12<sup>th</sup> century Bible commentary).

## 2.11 Midrash Tanhuma<sup>147</sup> 9:18-27

The Midrash Tanhuma is an early medieval compilation of rabbinic Midrash on the Torah extant in various forms. Because of a standard formula of opening, the Midrashim in this collection are said to be of the *Tanhuma Yelammedenu* type, one found in other midrashic compilations and manuscripts including Deuteronomy Rabba and parts of Exodus Rabba, Numbers Rabba, Pesiqta Rabati and others. In addition to the standard Tanhuma quoted here, a significantly different text of this collection was published in last century by Solomon Buber who, it seems, mistakenly believed his to be the ancient Tanhuma.

The Midrash Tanhuma is divided according to the Palestinian practice of reading the Torah in a triennial cycle. This fact, together with the preponderance of sayings quoted in the names of Palestinian sages, has led some midrashic authorities to maintain that it was compiled in Palestine. Other scholars insist that the references to the Babylonian academies, the inclusion of passages from the *Sheiltot* of Rav Hai Gaon, who lived in Babylon when he wrote the *Sheiltot* and the quotation of a considerable number of earlier Babylonian teachers, indicate that the text was produced in Babylon perhaps as late as the end of the ninth century. In any event, the name Tanhuma, according to most scholars, was adopted from the name of Tanhuma Bar Abba, a prolific aggadist who lived in the fourth century C.E.

מדרש תנחומא (ורשא) פרשת נח סימן יג

(יג) ויחל נח איש האדמה כיון שנזקק לאדמה נעשה חולין, א"ר יהודה ב"ר שלום בתחלה איש צדיק תמים, ועכשיו איש האדמה, ויטע כרם משנטע כרם נקרא איש האדמה, שלשה

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<sup>147</sup> See Zunz L. *Vortrage der Juden*; Waxman M. *Jewish Literature* vol. 1 p. 139; Strack H. *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*. p. 218.

See Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible* 1998:927; Berman S. in his introduction to his translation of *Midrash Tanhuma-Yelammedenu*; Townsend J. introduction to his translation of Midrash Tanhuma. I have followed, in most places, the translation of Berman which I have found to be clear and precise.

נזקקו לאדמה ונעשו חולין, אלו הן קין נח ועוֹזִיָּה, קין דכתיב וקין היה עובד אדמה  
 (בראשית ד) מה כתיב נע ונד תהיה בארץ, נח דכתיב ויחל נח איש האדמה ויטע כרם  
 ונתבזה, וישת מן היין אמרו חכמים בו ביום נטע בו ביום עשה פירות בו ביום בצר בו ביום  
 דרך בו ביום שתה בו ביום נשתכר בו ביום נתגלה קלונו, ארז"ל כשבא נח ליטע כרם בא  
 שטן ועמד לפניו, א"ל מה אתה נוטע, א"ל כרם, א"ל מה טיבו, פירותיו מתוקים בין  
 לחים בין יבשים ועושיין מהן יין המשמח לבבות דכתיב ויין ישמח לבב אנוש (תהלים  
 קד) א"ל שטן בא ונשתתף שנינו בכרם זה, א"ל לחיי, מה עשה שטן הביא כבש  
 והרגו תחת הגפן, אח"כ הביא ארי והרגו, ואח"כ הביא חזיר והרגו, ואח"כ הביא קוף  
 והרגו תחת הכרם והטיפו דמן באותו הכרם והשקוהו מדמיהו, רמז לו שקודם שישתה  
 אדם מן היין הרי הוא תם ככבש זו שאינה יודעת כלום וכחל לפני גוֹזִיָּה נאלמה,  
 שתה כהוגן הרי הוא גבור כארי ואומר אין כמותו בעולם, כיון ששתה יותר מדאי  
 נעשה כחזיר מתלכלך במי רגלים ובדבר אחר נשתכר נעשה כקוף עומד ומרקד ומשחק  
 ומוציא לפני הכל נבלות הפה ואינו יודע מה יעשה, וכל זה אירע לנח הצדיק מה נח  
 הצדיק שהקב"ה פירש שבחו כך, שאר בני אדם על אחת כמה וכמה, ועוד שקילל זרעו  
 ואמר ארור כנען וגו', וחם על שראה בעיניו ערות אביו נעשו עיניו אדומות, ועל שהגיד  
 בפיו נעשו שפתותיו עקומות, ועל שחזר פניו נתחרך שער ראשו וזקנו, ועל שלא כסה  
 הערוה הלך ערום ונמשכה לו ערלתו, לפי שכל מדותיו של הקב"ה מדה כנגד מדה, ואעפ"כ  
 חזר הקב"ה וריחם עליו שרחמיו על כל מעשיו, אמר הקב"ה הואיל ונמכר עצמו לעבדות  
 יצא בעין שראה ובפה שהגיד בדין הוא שיצא לחרות בשן ובעין דכתיב (שמות כא) כי יכה  
 איש את עין עבדו לחפשי ישלחנו תחת עינו וכתוב ואם שן עבדו או שן אמתו יפיל לחפשי  
 ישלחנו, והלא דברים ק"ו ומה אם עבדו קנין כספו על שסימא עינו והפיל שינו יצא מעבדות  
 לחרות, זרע ברוכי ה' שהן מטע ה' להתפאר כשהן מתין אינו דין שיצאו לחרות מן העונות  
 במתים חפשי (תהלים פח) לחרות ברמ"ח אברים, אמר הקב"ה בעוה"ז ע"י יצה"ר רבו  
 עונות אבל לע"ל =לעתיד לבוא= והסירותי את לב האבן מבשרכם (יחזקאל לו), דכתיב  
 ולא יהיה עוד לבית ישראל למבטח מזכיר עון בפנותם אחריהם (שם /יחזקאל/ כט) וכתוב  
 בימים ההם ובעת ההוא נאם ה' יבקש את עון ישראל ואיננו (ירמיה נ) בעוֹזִיָּה כתיב כי  
 אוהב אדמה היה (ד"ה =דברי הימים= ב כו) שהיה מלך והפקיר עצמו לאדמה ולא נזקק  
 לתורה, יום אחד נזקק לבית הועד, אמר להם במה אתם עוסקין אמרו לו בהזר הקרב יומת  
 (במדבר א) אמר להם עוֹזִיָּה הקב"ה מלך ואני מלך נאה למלך לשמש פני מלך ולהקטיר  
 לפניו, מיד ויבא אל היכל ה' להקטיר על מזבח הקטרת, ויבא אחריו עזריה הכהן ועמו  
 כהנים לה' שמונים בני חיל (ד"ה =דברי הימים= ב כו) וכלם מפרחי כהונה, ויאמרו לו לא

לך עוזיהו להקטיר לה' כי לכהנים בני אהרן המוקדשים להקטיר צא מן המקדש כי מעלת  
 (שם/דברי הימים ב' כ"ו/) ולזה יצא עליו קצף מלפני ה', מיד ויזעף עוזיהו ובידו מקטרת  
 להקטיר ובזעפו עם הכהנים והצרעת זרחה במצחו (שם/דברי הימים ב' כ"ו/) באותה שעה  
 נבקע ההיכל הילך והילך י"ב על י"ב מיל ויבהילוהו משם וגם הוא נדחף לצאת כי נגעו ה'  
 (שם/דברי הימים ב' כ"ו/) מי גרם לו זו שבטל מן התורה והפקיר עצמו לאדמה.

The first part of the Tanhuma, follows closely what has been seen already in the Genesis Rabba. I will confine my study of the Midrash Tanhuma to the section of the discussion between Satan and Noah at the beginning of the Midrash for it, I contend, adds new elements to the drunkenness story, which have not yet been seen in the Genesis Rabba version.

"While Noah was planting the vineyard Satan appeared before him and asked: "what are you planting?" He answered: "A vineyard." "What is it?" inquired Satan. "Its fruits are sweet, whether moist or dry," he answered, and from them one produces a wine that causes the heart of man to rejoice, as it is written: "And wine doth make glad the heart of man (Psalms 104:15)." Satan suggested: "Come let us be partners in this vineyard." And Noah replied: "Certainly."

What did Satan do? First, he obtained a lamb and slaughtered it beneath the vineyard. Then he took a lion and slaughtered it there, and after that he obtained a pig and an ape and slaughtered them in the same place. Their blood seeped into the earth, watering the vineyard. He did this to demonstrate to Noah that before drinking wine man is as innocent as a sheep. Yet after he drinks a moderate amount of wine he believes himself to be as strong as a lion, boasting that no one in all the world is his equal. When he drinks more than he should, he behaves like a pig, wallowing about in urine and performing other base acts. After he becomes completely intoxicated, he behaves like an ape, dancing about laughing hysterically, prattling foolishly, and is completely unaware of what he is doing. All this happened to the righteous Noah. If the righteous Noah, whom the Holy

One blessed be He praised, could behave in such a fashion, how much more so could any other man!"<sup>148</sup>

At first glance this Midrash appears like a mere narrative expansion of the meeting between Asmodaeus, the king of the demons, and Noah which we discussed in Genesis Rabba. There, too, the demon asked to go in partnership with Noah and seems to warn him, quite cryptically, about the dangers of over drinking. However, I suggest, there are a number of additional elements in the Tanhuma that are worth noting:

1. The rich dialogue between Satan and Noah at the beginning of the story. Noah explains to Satan about the positive properties of wine. Is Satan really so ignorant about the qualities of a vineyard, when he asks Noah, "What is it?" One gets the impression that the Midrash is using a rhetorical device similar to the one used by God to Adam and Cain after their sin. "Where are you," cries God in both occasions. Here too, Noah is asked to contemplate the evils of drinking wine to intoxication, but this time before he over indulges himself.

It is important to note that the Satan, in midrashic literature, is often used as a symbol for man's inner struggles and battles. Similarly, Abraham, as he goes to sacrifice his son Isaac meets, according to the Midrash, Satan on his journey.<sup>149</sup> Noah knows of the qualities of wine before he drinks of the vineyard. Despite the warnings of Satan, personifying perhaps his own inner conscience, he goes ahead and drinks "like a monkey." The Midrash is

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<sup>148</sup> See Ginsberg L. 1909-38; reprint 1967-69. *Legends of the Jews*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society. p.168 and his notes p.58. See *Yalkut* 1, 61 that speaks of the sheep, the lion and the pig only. The commentary "*Har Zekeinim*" on the Pentateuch quotes a somewhat different version of the legend, according to which the animals are: the pig, he-goat, sheep and ape. In the commentary שלשלת הקבלה לחכם, a sixteenth century work by Gedalya Yichye, p.92, it is the he-goat which became drunk on wild grapes. Whereupon Noah tried to plant grapes and he washed the roots with the blood of a lion, pig, sheep and ape.

<sup>149</sup> See *Tanhuma* Genesis 22:1.

emphasizing Noah's culpability in the story; he ignores the warnings and therefore deserves to suffer the repercussions.

2. The dialogue in the Midrash emphasizes Noah's agreement to the partnership. He is not a silent partner as could be implied from the Genesis Rabba exegesis of the story where Noah says nothing in response to the demon. He again is portrayed as an active partner in what happens.
3. The imagery of the lamb, lion, pig, and ape, in this Midrash creates a vivid picture of the story. Why does Satan have to slaughter them so that their "blood seeps in the earth?" This is a very violent form of literary imagery that is being portrayed by the Midrash. Certainly far more explicit and vivid than the Genesis Rabba portrayal. What is its purpose? On what level, perhaps, it can be understood as a very stark message being shown to Noah in the clearest of visual forms. He is not just told of the evils of drinking, he is shown them very graphically as well.
4. Yet, the imagery of these four animals may have deeper literary messages and allusions as well. The commentary of the *Kli Yakar* on Genesis 9:20 suggests that these animals represent, in midrashic terms, the three exiles that have occurred to the Jewish people. In his words, "the lamb corresponds to the exile of Egypt, which served the lamb. The lion refers to the exile of Nebuchadnetzar who is referred to as a lion, and the pig is parallel to the Roman exile which is often referred to as a pig. Following this line of thought, the Midrash Tanhuma, then, is in fact strengthening the idea of wine leading to exile, as mentioned in Genesis Rabba. Satan is alluding to the fact, by slaughtering these particular animals, that the drinking of wine to excess will lead the people to, not just one, but various exiles.
5. However, it is also important to note the message that wine be drunk to moderation which is also being proposed by the Midrash. If Genesis Rabba

suggested this implicitly in the words of the demon, "not to come into my portion," here the Midrash elaborates on this message most explicitly. It does so in a number of ways. Firstly, Noah himself says how wine is sweet and causes man to rejoice and secondly the imagery of the lamb and the lions conveys to the reader the positive and even strengthening aspects of wine drunken to moderation.

In summary, a close reading of this part of Midrash Tanhuma, suggests that the previous messages explored in Genesis Rabba are not only being repeated but are strengthened as well. This is done through more explicit and richer rhetorical and literary devices whose purpose is to leave the reader with a more graphic visual message about the evils of over indulgence in wine.

## 2.12 Midrash Rabati<sup>150</sup> 9:18-27

The redactor of the Midrash is considered by scholars to be Rabbi Moshe Hadarshan who lived in Nirvina in the first part of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Rashi quotes this Midrash in his commentary on the Pentateuch.

בראשית רבתי פרשת נח [עמוד 59]

[ט, כא] ויתגל בתוך אהלה. בא וראה מה גרם יין בעולם, הרג בכורו של עולם, בזה את הצנוע בתוך אהלו והרג ב' אחים גדולים, החריב מוסיון של מלך, הרג מלכים ביום ומלך בלילה וערבב סעודת אחשוורוש המלך. הרג בכורו של עולם זה אדה"ר שהיה בכור לעולם, דא"ר אבון יין מסכה חוה לאדם ושתה, ותרא האשה וגו' (ג' ו'), וכתוב אל תרא יין וגו' (משלי כ"ג ל"א) כיון שחטא גרם לו ולתולדותיו מיתה. הרג שני אחים אלו שני בני אהרן ששתו יין ונכנסו שכורים בבית קדשי הקדשים וגרמו מיתה לעצמן, שכן נאמר לאהרן יין ושכר אל תשת (ויקרא י' ט'), החריב מוסיון של מלך דכתיב הוי עטרת גאות שכורי אפרים (ישעיה כ"ח א') ומה היה עונשן, ברגלים תרמסנה עטרת וגו' (שם ג') נעשו מרמס רגלו מתוכה. הרג מלכים ביום דכתיב ובן הדד שותה שכור וגו' (מלכים א' כ' ט"ז). הרג

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<sup>150</sup> The text presented here is the one edited by Albeck, 1940.

מלך בלילה זה בלשאצר דכתיב ביה בליליא קטיל וגו' (דניאל ה' ל'), מי גרם לו יין ששתה דכתיב ביה בלשאצר מלכא וגו' לקבל אלפא חמרא שתה (שם א') ערבב סעודתו של מלך שנאמר ביום השביעי כטוב לב המלך ביין (אסתר א' י'). א"ר חמא אפי' בצלצלי של זונות לא תכנס [אלא] ערומה, כיון שלא קבלה על עצמה מיד הרגה ונתערבבה סעודתו, בזה את הצנוע זה נח שנאמר וישת מן היין וגו' ויתגל.

The Midrash on the verse in 9:21 אהלה בתוך אהלה focuses on six different stories in the Bible each of which has negative consequences. The Midrash connects these stories and points to wine as being the common factor which led to what happened in each case. The six stories connected by the Midrash are:

1. Wine killed the first-born of the world, Adam. He sinned through wine-Eve gave him wine and he drank. The Tree of Knowledge being the grape-vine. Once he sinned that caused death to him and future generations.
2. Wine embarrassed Noah-he drank wine and he became drunk.
3. Wine killed the two sons of Aaron - Nadav and Avihu.
4. The Temple was destroyed through wine.
5. Wine killed kings by day (Ben Haddad-Kings 1 20:16) and a king by night (Belshazar in Daniel 5:30).
6. Aheusarus killed his wife Vashti because she refused to appear naked before all his guests at his wine party (Esther 1:10).

It is interesting to consider the structure of the Midrash as it presents itself here. The Midrash presents 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 in chronological order but leaves Noah (2) to the end. Perhaps it wishes to leave Noah to the climax as he is the subject of the text here.

For each of the stories, the Midrash brings proof texts to show their connection to wine. For example, by Adam the Midrash links the verse in Gen. 3: 6 ותרא האשה to the verse in Proverbs 23:31. אל תרא יין. The use of the word ראייה, seeing, connected to wine in Proverbs and "seeing" by Eve's sin conjures up a word association for the Midrash.

When considering the development of the themes in all the Midrashim already discussed, I suggest that this Midrash goes one step further in denouncing the evils of drunkenness. Genesis Rabba and Tanhuma, both trace the origin of the wine sin thematic to Noah. It was he who drank and by so doing embarrassed himself (Genesis Rabba and Tanhuma) and ultimately brought exile to the Jewish people (Genesis Rabba explicitly, Tanhuma perhaps implicitly).

Midrash Rabati however, following Baruch III, Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, Pirquei de R'Eliezer, traces the sin back to Adam himself.<sup>151</sup> This is the primeval sin. As such, this sin keeps returning to plague future generations. Noah, takes the same vine shoot that caused Adam to sin and that leads to his downfall.<sup>152</sup> Other individuals, not just the Jewish people as a whole, fall through the abuse of wine. They include Aaron's sons, and non-Jewish kings such as Belshazar and Aheuserus. The Midrash is perhaps alluding to the universalistic dangers of wine drinking. It does not just affect the Jewish people. It has ramifications to the whole world and across the whole of history. It is not by chance that the Midrash connects stories both from the beginning (Adam) and end (Belshazar and Aheuserus) of the biblical period. By doing so the author has not only focused on issues of intertextuality i.e. seeing the whole of the Bible as one canon in continual dialogue, but shown how the evils of wine drinking are universal going beyond a particular people and a particular time.

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<sup>151</sup> See Ginsberg *Legends* 1909-38:168, who adds the following paragraph to the story brought by the Tanchuma. "This deterred Noah no more than did the example of Adam, whose fall had also been due to wine, for the forbidden fruit had been the grape, with which he had made himself get drunk." See also my discussion above on Greek Baruch 4:8; Apocalypse of Abraham 23 and Enoch 32:4 who all follow this tradition. As already discussed, Genesis Rabba and Tanhuma followed the tradition that Noah brought the vine with him into the ark along with other plants for the future cultivation of the land.

<sup>152</sup> Although this is not said explicitly in the Midrash Rabati it is indeed in the other sources mentioned. Rabati does make the connection that Adam sinned with the vine though it is not clear whether he thinks that Noah's sin was drinking from the same vine or not.

## 2.13 Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 70a-b<sup>153</sup>

The Babylonian Talmud is a massive compendium of Jewish learning and biblical exegesis redacted in Babylon in the fifth and early sixth centuries C.E., but containing a great deal of earlier material. Organized in the form of a digressive commentary on the Mishnah, it ends up citing and explaining much of the Hebrew Bible and as such it is a valuable collection of rabbinic biblical interpretation.

To conclude my discussion on how rabbinic literature understood the story of Noah's drunkenness, the following Talmudic text is an interesting one in that it also links both the Adam and Noah texts:

R. Hisda said in the name of R. Uqba: The Holy One blessed be he, said to Noah: "Noah why did you fail to take a warning from Adam whose offence was caused by wine?"<sup>154</sup> This follows the opinion that the tree from which Adam ate was the vine, as it has been taught: R. Meir said: "That tree from which Adam ate was the vine, because only wine brings grief to a man."

Rashi, in his commentary on this section emphasizes the negative effects of wine:

"Wine brings grief to man": For through it, death came to the world and grief to mankind.

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<sup>153</sup> The translation provided here is mine.

<sup>154</sup> It is interesting that Jewish mystical writings like the Zohar (1:73a), first published in the 13<sup>th</sup> century in Spain and attributed to the Mishnah teacher and recluse Rabbi Shimon b. Yohai, claim that Noah's actions derive from idealism. According to this interpretation, he wished to taste of the vine of the Garden of Eden to better understand the sin of Adam so that he could forewarn the world of its effects. Some later biblical commentaries also attempt to exonerate Noah's actions. See, for example, the commentaries of Genesis 9:18-27 of Rabbeinu Bahya, Ramban and Chatam Sofer. According to them, Noah thought that the problem of nakedness had been removed and the world had returned to its state before the sin and so revealed himself in the tent.

The Talmud continues with a detailed description of how the mother of Lemuel in Proverbs 30 rebukes her son for drinking wine to excess:

Rabbi Yitzchak says, "how do we know that Solomon her son repented? For it says, 'I am more brutish than a man (שׂאִי) and have not the understanding of a man (אָדָם).'

I am more brutish than a man: this is Noah who is called שׂאִי as in וַיַּחַל נֹחַ אִישׁ וַיִּחַל נֹחַ אִישׁ וַיִּחַל נֹחַ אִישׁ and have not the understanding of a man: this is Adam."

The Talmud is again strengthening the connection between the stories of Adam and Noah. King Solomon repents by learning from the sins of Noah and Adam. They sinned through wine, as did King Solomon himself and he learns that he must act with more restraint in the future.

## **2.14 Summary of the Ancient Exegesis of the Noah Drunkenness Story**

The following table summarizes the major points discussed so far in this chapter. It highlights the two schools of early ancient interpretation which differ as to the character of Noah after the flood and his drunkenness episode. This, I claim, is the central exegetical motif that lies at the root of the narrative expansions we have discussed. As these interpretations develop over time in the midrashic and later talmudic sources, the negative interpretation of Noah's behavior becomes more dominant and in fact becomes the central motif of these later interpretations. These interpretations go beyond the figure of Noah himself, but consider the effects of drunkenness on other biblical characters as well. These events are not considered as isolated incidents but are connected, through the idea of intertextuality, across time and biblical books spanning many centuries. The particular connection between the Noah and Adam stories, deepens the sinful act of Noah's drunkenness. This connection, first discussed in the Baruch III text, is deepened in later Midrashic and Talmudic texts. As such, drunkenness is not simply a sin. It is the source of all sins leading to Israel's exile and, as we have seen in Midrash Rabati, this

line of thought reaches its climax with a description of the evils of excessive wine drinking as universal, going beyond a particular people and a particular time.

It is interesting to note that the earlier tradition of Jubilees, and Genesis Apocryphon followed by Philo and Josephus, which paints Noah's drunkenness in a positive light, is not continued by the midrashic and talmudic traditions. These later traditions are clearly based on the earlier Baruch III, and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan traditions. This study does not speculate why the rabbinic tradition developed in this way. Rather, I have focused on how this tradition developed over this period and the type of expansive exegesis that was developed by the Rabbis.

In the next part of this chapter I will examine how the same ancient interpreters considered the Lot drunkenness story. Do they continue their positions about drunkenness as developed in the Noah story, or do we see new traditions being developed and expounded by them? This will be the focus of the next part of my thesis.

**Table Summary of the Ancient Biblical Interpreters, Midrash, Talmud  
on the Noah Drunkenness Story**

	<b>Jubilees, Genesis Apocryphon 2 century B.C.E.</b>	<b>Enoch I 2 Century B.C.E</b>	<b>Philo, Josephus 1 Century C.E.</b>	<b>Baruch 3 1 Century C.E.</b>	<b>Targum Pseudo Jonathan 1 Century C.E.  (Majority of Targum According to Most Scholars</b>	<b>Targum Neofiti 1 Century C.E.</b>	<b>Midrash Rabba, Tanhuma Rabati</b>	<b>Talmud Sanhedrin</b>
<b>Attitude to Noah' actions</b>	Generally positive	Not mentioned	Generally Positive	Clearly Negative	Negative but nuanced	Positive But nuanced	Clearly negative	Clearly Negative
<b>Source of vine</b>	Not mentioned	Adam sinned with vine	Not mentioned	Garden of Eden	River brought from Garden of Eden	Not mentioned	Brought vine roots into the ark	Not mentioned
<b>When Did he make the wine?</b>	After 4 years	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	As soon as it grew	Grew miraculously on the day planted	As soon as it grew	As soon as it grew	As soon as it grew
<b>Why did He drink the wine?</b>	Religious festival	Not mentioned	Philo did not get drunk-just drank a little. Religious	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Enticed by a demon	Fell into the same sin and temptation as Adam
<b>Consequences of Drink</b>	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Wine is source of sin	Noah loses "righteous" title	Not mentioned	Not only Noah sins but all mankind	Source of suffering for mankind

## 2.15 Lot's Daughters in Jubilees

The previous chapter examined how various scholars both in the Jewish classical medieval tradition and more modern interpreters have attempted to understand the Lot's daughters' story. In particular, the thesis explored how these exegetes interpret the text with particular reference to the actions of the daughters who initiate sexual intercourse with their father.

In this chapter, the views of second temple and early rabbinic exegetes towards this narrative will be examined. In Jubilees 16: 8-9 is the following comment about this story:

And Lot and his daughters committed sin upon the earth, such has not been on the earth since the days of Adam till this time; for the man lay with his daughters. And behold it was commanded and engraved concerning all his seed, on the heavenly tablets, to remove them and root them out, and to execute judgment upon them like the judgment of Sodom, and to leave no seed of the man on earth on the day of condemnation.

According to Jubilees, Lot's incestuous union provided obvious grounds for not only condemning him but his daughters as well. The fact that Lot was unaware of his daughters' actions does not lessen his culpability. Nor does the possibility that his daughters may have done this for some higher motive-perhaps to keep mankind alive. The author of Jubilees not only sees their deed as sinful, but as the greatest sin since Adam.

The punishment mentioned by Jubilees, that they are to be "rooted out" and destroyed like Sodom, is difficult to understand. No mention of this is made in the biblical text. The prohibition to marry an Ammonite or Moabite is cited in Deuteronomy 23:4, but there is no command to uproot or destroy them, as is found by the Amalekites.

It is interesting to compare the comment here of Jubilees to the one mentioned regarding Noah's drunkenness. There it was shown that Jubilees did not censure Noah for his actions. On the contrary, Noah is praised for his dutiful performance of the commandments. He waits four years to plant a vineyard then offers a sacrifice together with his family at a religious feast. His drunkenness is as a result of religious ecstasy rather than moral debauchery. Regarding Lot, however, Jubilees find no grounds for exonerating his actions, even though he is passive in the act and unaware of what his daughters are doing to him. This is contrary to Noah who is well aware of his drinking state.

The act of incest is so despicable in eyes of the author of Jubilees that he can find no grounds for exoneration. In addition, it seems that Jubilees has two very different views of the characters of Noah and Lot. Noah, despite his drunkenness, is still righteous in stature. Lot, on the other hand, is not worthy of such an epitaph.

## **2.16 Philo's Commentary on 19:30-38**

Philo<sup>155</sup> takes a somewhat different approach to the exegesis of Genesis 19:30-38 as compared to Jubilees. He tries to provide some sort of an excuse or justification for the daughters' actions. He writes:

This undertaking against the present custom of marriage is somewhat unlawful and an innovation but it has an excuse. For these virgins, because of their ignorance of external matters and because they saw those cities burned up together with all their inhabitants, supposed that the whole human race had been

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<sup>155</sup> In his *Questions and Answers on Genesis*, Genesis Book IV, 336.

destroyed at the same time and that no one remained anywhere except the three of them. Wherefore, in the belief that they were showing foresight and that the earth might not be devastated and remain desolate and that the human race might not be destroyed, they rushed into an audacious act to overcome their helplessness in this matter and their difficulties.

Unlike Jubilees, Philo provides some justification for the actions of the daughters. Clearly he understands the Hebrew term בארץ as referring to the whole world rather than their immediate locality. We have already seen that some medieval commentators like Rashi, Rashbam and Ibn Ezra, follow this approach as do a good number of modern scholars.

It is interesting to note that Lot's role in the events is not discussed by Philo. He seems to be a passive partner in the "audacious act" of his two daughters to keep mankind alive.

Not only does Philo defend the daughters' incestuous act, but also the provocative and public naming of the eldest daughters son Moab, meaning, according to Philo that he is "from my father." He writes:

For she did not cease talking and remain quiet but prided herself in thought as a great achievement and with delight said, "I have a deserved honor, which the father, who is mind in me, sowed." And what should be the irreprehensible and irreproachable progeny of the mind and counsel if not good and excellent counsel.

The son is conceived from superior "seed"—that of her father. The daughter is proud of such an act and Philo seems to suggest that there is some justification for such a claim.

## 2.17 Josephus's Commentary on 19:30-38

Josephus, in his commentary, seems to take a similar approach to Philo in his defense of the daughters' actions but he also, I claim in a subtle way, has what to comment about Lot's actions as well.

The following is his re-telling of the events of Genesis 19:30-38 in his work *Judean Antiquities*<sup>156</sup>:

204. And he himself escaped with his daughters,<sup>157</sup> occupying some small space, encircled by the fire. Even now it is called Zoar, for thus the Hebrews called "little."<sup>158</sup> There, consequently, in isolation from people and with lack of nourishment he led a wretched life.

205. And the virgins, having supposed that all mankind had been obliterated, had sexual relations with their father, having taken care beforehand to escape notice. And they did this in order that the race not vanish. And children were born, from the elder daughter Moab (someone would say "from the father") and from the younger daughter Amman: the name signifies "son of the race."

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<sup>156</sup> Feldman L. 2000. *Flavius Josephus, Translation and Commentary, Judean Antiquities*, 1-4. Brill: Leiden. pp. 77-78.

<sup>157</sup> It is interesting to note that Josephus omits important information in his retelling of the biblical text. In Gen. 19:15-22 there is a long conversation in that Lot and his family linger and Lot himself expresses fear that he will die, thus showing lack of faith. Josephus omits this dialogue with the angels completely and states merely that Lot himself escaped with his daughters. It seems that Josephus is trying to protect Lot and his actions in the story, something which I believe is developed further later in the story. This is also stressed in Lot's leading a "wretched life" in the cave. He is a miserable character towards the end of his life to be pitied rather than denounced.

<sup>158</sup> Josephus apparently sees a connection here between צוער and צער meaning "small." See also Targum Onkelos and Targum Pseudo- Jonathan on Gen. 19-20.

Like Philo, Josephus understands that the text comes to find some justification for the daughters' actions in that they thought that mankind had been destroyed.<sup>159</sup> However, unlike Philo, a comparison between the retelling of the story by Josephus and the biblical text reveals some significant differences; ones which reflect not only on the daughters' behavior, but on Lot's as well. Josephus completely omits the unsavory details of the biblical narrative whereby the daughters get their father drunk on successive nights, as well as the conversation between them. In fact, according to Josephus's retelling of the story, we would not know that Lot got drunk at all! All that is recorded is the oblique reference that the daughters had, "taken care beforehand to escape notice." It seems that Josephus is trying again to protect Lot from what Josephus obviously regarded as unseemly actions and ones which would reflect poorly on his adoptive father Abraham. It is for this reason perhaps that no mention of Abraham's role in this story is recorded by Josephus. For example, the biblical statement that "God remembered Abraham," and therefore rescued Lot is not mentioned at all by Josephus.

In summary Josephus, like Philo, tries to find some justification for the daughters' actions. In doing so he also tries to somewhat obscure and even omit Lot's act of drunkenness thereby, exonerating him from wrongdoing. Lot is to be seen as a "wretched figure" sitting alone in the cave perhaps to be pitied, but not to be denounced.

I will now consider how Targum Pseudo-Jonathan interpreted the Lot's daughters' story and see how it developed the exegetical motifs concerning the daughters' and Lot's behavior and the way that it includes these interpretations in its narrative expansions and commentary.

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<sup>159</sup> Early Christian tradition also seemed to accept this interpretation. Origen, born in Alexandria around 185 C.E., for example in his "Homilies on Genesis 5:4" writes that: "They imagined that there was taking place something similar to what had happened in the time of Noah, and that they had been left with their father alone to insure the continuity of the human race." Similarly Jerome (Eusebius Sophronius Hieronymus, c. 345-420) writes in his "*Questions in Genesis 19:30*", that: "The justification that is offered for the daughters, namely, that they thought that the entire human race had been killed and for that reason lay with their father."

## 2.18 Targum Pseudo-Jonathan's Commentary on 19:30-38<sup>160</sup>

29. When the Lord destroyed the cities of the plain, *the Lord* remembered *the merit* of Abraham, and he sent Lot away from the midst of the upheaval when he overthrew the cities in which Lot dwelt.

30. Lot went up from Zoar and dwelt in the mountain with his two daughters, for he was afraid to dwell in Zoar; and he dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters.

31. The older said to the younger, "Our father is old, and there is not a man on earth to come into us after the manner of all the earth.

32. Come let us make our father drink wine and *when he is drunk* we will have intercourse with him, that we may raise up children from our father.

33. That night they made their father drink wine *and he got drunk*. And the elder *arose* and had intercourse with her father; and he did not know when she lay down, *but he knew* when she rose.

34. The next day the elder said to the younger, "Behold I have already had intercourse with my father last evening. Let us make him drink wine tonight also *that he may get drunk* and let you go in and have intercourse with him, that we may raise up children from our father.

35. So that night also they made their father drink wine *and he got drunk*. And the younger *arose* and had intercourse with him; and he did not know when she lay down or when she rose.

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<sup>160</sup> See *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis*, translated with Introduction and Notes by Michael Maher, 71-72. I have emphasized in italics the differences and additions in the commentary of Targum Pseudo-Jonathan as compared to the biblical text.

36. Thus the two daughters of Lot became pregnant by their father.

37. The elder bore a son and called his name Moab *because she had become pregnant by her father*. He is the father of the Moabites till this day.

38. The younger also bore a son and called his name *His-son for he was the son of her father*; he is the father of the people of the Ammonites to this *very* day.

A close literary study of the above Pseudo-Jonathan text shows, I claim, that the author develops his narrative exegesis on the exegetical motif that Lot is not a passive participant in the incestuous act, but a willing and active one. Lot's daughters do not avoid criticism either. There is no justification for their act as stated in Philo or Josephus. Neither is their overt condemnation as written in Jubilees. However it is Lot who is more actively portrayed in the narrative and it is he who is subtly condemned for his place in the events of that fateful night in the cave. Pseudo -Jonathan accomplishes this by a number of subtle narrative expansions.

1. The introduction of the phrase "he is drunk", "got drunk" etc. four times in his exegesis of the text. In the biblical text it does not describe Lot as actually getting drunk at all. Unlike the Noah narrative where the verb שכר is used, in the Lot story this verb is not included at all! Pseudo- Jonathan, I suggest, wishes to link the two stories and claims that Lot, too, indeed became drunk. While Josephus wishes to avoid all insinuations of Lot's misbehavior, the Targum makes every effort to strengthen Lot's culpability.
2. The addition of the phrase, "but *he knew* when she rose." Pseudo-Jonathan seems to follow the tradition which took the dot over the second *waw* in the word וקומה, or "when she rose", rendering it as an Infinite Construct, in the Hebrew text to mean that Lot noticed his daughter when she arose.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Compare the use of dots to *Sifre Num. 9:10* (edition Horowitz, 64-65); Gen. R. 51: 8; *Talmud Bavli Nazir 23a*.

By accepting these narrative expansions of Pseudo-Jonathan one may derive an important insight into Lot's behavior in the whole story. If Lot knew when he woke up what his elder daughter did to him on the first night then when the daughters get him drunk on the second night it seems clear that Lot knew what they were planning to do. Despite this Lot allows himself "to get drunk" and is an active participant in the incestuous act, at least during the second night. Pseudo-Jonathan is, I suggest, portraying Lot in a very negative light in the narrative. It is for this reason, perhaps, that he adds the word in verse 29 that the Lord remembered the *merit* of Abraham. God's remembering Abraham was not an act of nostalgia alone. God remembered Abraham's good deeds and only because of this merit did Lot deserve to survive. His actions in the story and his active participation in the incest on night two would not have warranted his survival if it would not have been for Abraham's merit.

I will now consider some of the various Midrashim that deal with the Lot's daughters' story. I will examine how they interpreted the biblical text and if they continue or change the exegesis from earlier second temple and first century times.

## 2.19 Genesis Rabba's Commentary on 19:30-38

### בראשית רבה (וילנא) פרשה נא

ח ותאמר הבכירה אל הצעירה אבינו זקן וגו', שהיו סבורות שנתכלה העולם כדור המבול, לכה נשקה את אבינו יין וגו', ר' תנחומא משום רבי שמואל ונחיה מאבינו זרע, ונחיה מאבינו בן אין כתיב כאן אלא ונחיה מאבינו זרע אותו זרע שהוא בא ממקום אחר ואי זה זה מלך המשיח, ותשקן את אביהן יין וגו', נקוד על וי"ו של ובקומה, שבשכבה לא ידע בקומה ידע, ויהי ממחרת ותאמר הבכירה אל הצעירה וגו' מנין היה להם יין במערה, אלא ממה שהיין מרובה להן היו מביאין אותו במערות, א"ר יהודה בר סימון נעשה להם מעין דוגמא של עולם הבא, היך מה דאת אמר (יואל ד) והיה ביום ההוא יטפו ההרים עסיס.

ט ותהרין שתי בנות לוט מאביהן, אמר ר"א לעולם אין האשה מתעברת מביאה ראשונה, אתיבין והא כתיב ותהרין שתי בנות לוט מאביהן, אמר ר' תנחומא שלטו בעצמן והוציאו ערותן ונתעברו כמביאה שניה, א"ר נחמן בר חנין כל מי שהוא להוט אחר בולמוס של עריות סוף שמאכילין אותו מבשרו, רבי יודן דמן גלוי ורבי

שמואל בר נחמן תרויהון אמרי משום רבי אליהו עיני, אין אנו יודעים אם לוט נתאוה לבנותיו אם בנותיו נתאוו לו מן מה דכתיב (משלי יח) לתאוה יבקש נפרד הוי לוט נתאוה לבנותיו ובנותיו לא נתאוו לו, ר' תנחומא בר רבי חייא משם ר' הושעיא תורגמנא אין כל שבת ושבת שאין קורין בה פרשתו של לוט מאי טעמיה (שם /משלי י"ח/) בכל תושיה יתגלע, א"ר אחא יתגלעו אין כתיב כאן אלא יתגלע האנשים נתרחקו, והנשים נתקרבו.

י הה"ד (ירמיה מח) אני ידעתי נאום ה' עברתו ולא כן בדיו, ר' הונא בר פפא ורבי סימון, רבי הונא אמר מתחלת עיבורו של מואב לא היה לשם זנות אלא לש"ש =לשם שמים= שנא' לא כן בדיו עשו לש"ש אלא לשם זנות, שנאמר (במדבר כה) וישב ישראל בשטים ויחל העם לזנות וגו', ר' סימון אמר מתחלת עיבורו של מואב לא היה לש"ש אלא לשם זנות שנאמר ועברתו לא כן בדיו לא עשה כן בדיו לשם זנות אלא לש"ש שנאמר (רות ג) ותרד הגורן ותעש ככל אשר צותה חמותה, א"ר לוי אם תחלתו של מואב לשם זנות גם סופו היה לשם זנות, בדיו לא כן עשו וישב ישראל בשטים וגו', ואם מתחלת עיבורו לשם שמים אף סופו לש"ש, בדיו לא כן עשו, ותרד הגורן.

יא ותלד הבכירה בן וגו', רבי יודן משם ר' אייבו הבכירה ע"י שביזת כבוד אביה ואמרה שמו מואב מאב אמר הכתוב (דברים ב) אל תצר את מואב ואל תתגר בם מלחמה, מלחמה אי אתה עושה עמהן, אבל אתה מפתק הנהרות שלהן, שורף גדישים שלהן באש, אבל הצעירה ע"י שחסתה על כבוד אביה ואמרה ותקרא שמו בן עמי בן מי שהיה עמי, אמר הכתוב (שם /דברים ב') אל תצורם ואל תתגר בהם כל עיקר. אמר ר"י ב"ר סימון ורבי חנין בשם ר' יוחנן בנותיו של לוט הולכות לעבור עבירה ונתפקדו, באיזה זכות בזכות מואב מי אב שנאמר באברהם (בראשית יז) כי אב המון גוים נתתיך.

In paragraph 8, on verse 31, the Midrash comments:

"And the older one said to the younger one, 'our father is old'. They thought that the whole world had been destroyed like the generation of the flood.

In this midrashic statement is found the comment, examined earlier in Philo and Josephus, that the daughters thought that the world had been destroyed. In fact the Midrash goes to great lengths to defend the daughters' actions. Lot is the focus of their disdain in the narrative-not the daughters. This is despite the fact that they are clearly the initiators of the act of incest with their father. Why did rabbinic thought defend such an

abhorrent action? When this midrashic comment is compared with similar statements found in the story of Noah one discovers a stark comparison in rabbinic attitudes to seemingly inappropriate conduct. Noah's drunkenness is starkly condemned by the authors of the Midrash but the daughters' active role in getting their father drunk and the subsequent abhorrent act of sexual intercourse with him is not only not condemned, but defended. Why should this be so?

In order to better grasp rabbinic thinking concerning this narrative, consider the following comment of the Midrash which sheds light about the early Rabbis conception of the whole of the Lot's daughters' story.

Verse 22:

Let us make our father drunk with wine: Rabbi Tanhuma in the name of Rabbi Samuel said on the phrase, וְנָחִיזָה מֵאַבְיֵנוּ זֶרַע. The word בֵּן is not used here but the word זֶרַע-seed. The seed that will come from another place. From where? The King Messiah.

This fascinating comment of the Midrash sheds light, I contend, on their whole understanding of this narrative. The daughters did not know that by their action here they were precipitating the eventual birth of the Jewish Messiah. David the king's great grandmother was Ruth who came from Moab. We will see how this Messianic theme lies at the heart of the rabbinic understanding of the Lot's daughters' story and also the Judah and Tamar narrative which we will study after this story.

According to the Midrash then, the significance of this episode can be understood not within the context of the etymology of the Moab and Ammon births nor as part of the greater Sodom narrative, but within a larger framework of **intertextuality** as part of the origins of the Biblical Messiah. As such this story, in rabbinic thinking, is connected to the Ruth narrative which happened thousands of years later. As discussed earlier in this thesis, intertextuality plays a central role in rabbinic thinking. In such a system, chapters

and verses in the Bible are in constant dialogue with each other, even though they may have thousands of years of history between them.

The following midrashic comment, in paragraph 8, gives an even greater insight into rabbinic conceptions of the story.

Verse 34:

"And on the morning after the elder said to the younger," Where did they have wine in the cave? The Sodomites hid their excess wine in the caves. Rabbi Judah Bar Simon said, (God provided it) it was an example of something from the world to come as the verse in Joel (4:18) writes: "On that day wine will flow freely in the mountains."

This comment of the Midrash needs further elucidation. The Midrash is concerned about the source of wine in the cave. On the first night, one could explain that they had enough wine from their own provisions. However, what about the second night? The Midrash suggests two possibilities. One possibility is that the wine had been hidden there in storage by the Sodomites and as they had all died the daughters felt no reason why they should not use it.<sup>162</sup> Another possibility, suggested by Rabbi Bar Simon, is more intriguing. God himself provided the wine for the act.<sup>163</sup> If his opinion in the Midrash is accepted here lies quite a remarkable rabbinic opinion and consideration about the narrative and its significance. Not only did the daughters act to save mankind from distinction but God himself provided the means by which they could do it! God himself is therefore sanctioning this act of incest between the daughters and their father. This, I

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<sup>162</sup> See the commentary of *Etz Yosef* who suggests that the wine was taken from public property as the Sodomites had been all killed. As such this was not considered theft on their part.

<sup>163</sup> See also Rashi on 19:37 who writes that "wine appeared to them in the cave in order that two nations come from them." The super-commentaries on Rashi comment that there is a textual incongruity that leads Rashi to make this comment. The verse writes בלילה הוא rather than the direct adjective ההוא. The text thus reads "the night of He" rather than "that night" which would be expected. This leads Rashi to commenting that it is a night that He-God-involved himself directly in the planning of the future Messiah.

suggest, can only be understood when this comment is considered in the context of the previous comments of the Midrash. As the seeds of the Messiah are being sewn in this narrative, it is only then appropriate that God himself be part of its beginning.

Comparing this narrative again to the Noah drunkenness story, yields another interesting literary parallel in the words of the Midrash. In both stories, the rabbinic author is concerned about the source of the wine. In both narratives, he asks where the main character had access to a vine or wine. However, the answers in each narrative are quite different. In the Noah story, the Garden of Eden was used as a source for the wine. The same tree which caused Adam to sin was the source for Noah's sin. However in the Lot story it is God himself, according to Rabbi Simon, who is providing the wine for the daughters. In Noah's case the wine is a source of sin; in Lot's case the wine is a source of redemption. Not immediate salvation, but one which God sows the seeds for the coming of the Messiah in many generations to come.

However, although the Midrash seems to exonerate the daughters from blame and even suggests God's divine assistance in furthering the act, it is not so easy on Lot himself. This is clearly seen in the following comment from the Midrash in paragraph 9.

Verse 36:

"And the two daughters became pregnant from their father," How are we to understand the term "from their father"? Rabbi Nachman bar Hanin says "Anyone who is passionate about living a life of immorality in the end will commit an incestuous act with his daughters."

Lot moved to Sodom, according to the Midrash, because he was seeking a hedonistic life style. This act of incest is a natural consequence of the type of life he chose to lead.

Lot's culpability in the incestuous act is also hinted to in verse 33. "And they made their father drunk with wine and he did not know what had happened when he lay down and when he got up." The Midrash comments:

It is pointed on the *waw* of the word *וּבְקוֹמָה* to teach that he did not know when he lay down but did know when he got up.

The Midrash, like Targum Pseudo -Jonathan, learns that Lot knew of the act after the first night. Yet, this did not prevent him from getting drunk again on the second night. According to the Midrash, Lot was not a passive partner to the act but a willing participant, certainly for the second night.

In summary, in this thesis I have examined how the Midrash Rabba portrays the narrative of Lot's daughters. The exegesis of the early Rabbis is surprising, especially in light of what was learned from their interpretation of the Noah drunkenness story. The daughters, unlike Noah, are not to be condemned for their actions. God himself supplies the wine for the fateful act. The daughters think that they are saving mankind in a physical sense. In fact, says the Midrash, they were partly right even though they did not know it. They were planting the seeds for saving mankind in a spiritual sense, by giving birth to an antecedent of the Messiah.

However, a closer examination of paragraphs 10 and 11 of this Midrash show, I suggest, that the moral implications of the narrative did trouble the Rabbis. Even though we saw in paragraphs 9 and 10 a seemingly total exoneration of the daughters with the onus of sin being placed squarely on Lot, paragraphs 10 and 11 represent rabbinic opinion which also condemns the daughters, especially the older one. At least some of the Rabbis of the Midrash were troubled by the incestuous act initiated by the daughters and they could not condone such an action, despite its worthy motivation. An example of such a rabbinic opinion is that of Rabbi Simon in paragraph 10 of this Midrash. He plays a clever literary pun on the verse in Jeremiah 48:30 *אני ידעתי נאום ה' עברתו ולא כן בדיו*. The word *עברתו* is used in the verse in connection with Moab and in its literal sense refers to Moab's anger. And the word *בדיו*, literally meaning branches, to his future generations. However, Rabbi Simon, using midrashic literary license, explains the word *עברה* from the Hebrew word *עבור* meaning pregnancy and childbirth.

Says Rabbi Simon; Moab's conception (עברתו) was not done "for the sake of heaven" but for the sake of immorality. However his descendants (בדיו) conceived for the sake of heaven as in Ruth (3:6) who did as her mother in law requested for the sake of heaven.

Moab's pregnancy was not a "kosher" one according to Rabbi Simon. Rabbi Judan in paragraph 11 of the Midrash continues Rabbi Simon's line of thought of condemnation, but directs the blame to the elder daughter. He writes:

Says Rabbi Judan, the elder daughter, despised her father's honor and said his name was Moab-from the father. It is for this reason the verse in Deuteronomy 2:9 writes אל תצר את מואב ואל תתגר בם מלחמה –do not provoke Moab to war. War should not be provoked but you can provoke them in other means such as diverting their water source or burning their stacks of corn. However, the younger daughter, who protected her father's honor and called her son בן עמי or the son of my people, the verse in Deuteronomy writes 2:19 אל תצרם ואל תתגר בם. One cannot provoke Ammon in any way at all.

From this paragraph of the Midrash it can be perceived that the Rabbis sensitivity to textual nuance led some of them to differentiate between the actions of the two daughters in the narrative. The elder one is certainly more culpable. Not only does she initiate the act, but she is more brazen in publicizing her father's role in the conception of "little" Moab. "Big" Moab in future generations will suffer the consequences.

However, the last comment of the Midrash on this story, in paragraph 11 is, I suggest, especially significant. Rabbi Judah Bar Simon, returns to Rabbi Simon's comment in the previous paragraph 10, and condemns both daughters for their actions. A close reading of this text is especially warranted here.

Rabbi Judah Bar Simon and Rabbi Hanin in the name of Rabbi Yochanan said; the daughters of Lot went to do a forbidden act and God helped them! For what merit did they deserve this? In the merit of the person who is called "Av" (Moab). Who is this? This is Abraham, as it is written in Genesis 17:5 *כי אב המון גויים נתתיך* –for a father (*Av*) of nations I have made you.

Rabbi Judah Bar Simon, in his exegesis of the text, understands that the daughters were committing a grave crime of incest by their actions. They may have thought that the world had been destroyed but this did not justify them committing incest with their father. However God saw to it that two great nations would emerge from this union and one of them, Moab, would be an antecedent of the Messiah. How is this possible? Rabbi Judah's answer is that God did this in Abraham's merit. He is the father of all nations including Moab and Ammon.

What is especially interesting here is that the same Rabbi Judah Bar Simon made the earlier Midrashic comment that it had been God Himself who had provided the wine in the cave which led to the drunkenness episode of Lot and his daughters. It seems that even when man's actions are dubious, or non holy, God can utilize those actions to bring good and salvation to mankind. According to the Midrash, God may have a long term plan which, though hidden from the present characters, can lay the seeds for events that will happen in many generations in the future. As such, the context of the Lot's daughters' story cannot only be considered within its present confines of Genesis 19:30-38 or within the larger narrative of the destruction of Sodom but as part of the genesis of the Messiah concept. This may begin in Genesis 19:30-38 but only ends many centuries later in the fields of Boaz in the book of Ruth leading to the birth of King David.

This idea is reflected in the following earlier comment of the Midrash on 19:23:

## בראשית רבה (וילנא) פרשה נ

ואת שתי בנותיך הנמצאות וגו', א"ר טוביה בר רבי יצחק שתי מציאות, רות המואביה, ונעמה העמונית, אמר רבי יצחק (תהלים פט) מצאתי דוד עבדי, היכן מצאתי אותו בסדום.

Lot is told by the angels to take his two daughters "who are found" lest they be destroyed together with the city. The Midrash is troubled by the obviously redundant words "who are found." They are the only daughters in the vicinity. But, the Midrash links "the finds" to two "finds" who are not yet born, but who are to result from the future union of Lot and his two daughters. These are Ruth the Moabite woman and Naama the Ammonite woman. Naama marries King Solomon and gives birth to Rehavam the King of Judah (Kings 1:14). Again the Midrash is linking episodes that occur many centuries apart, but are all part, in its perception, of God's master plan for mankind.

In summary, the Midrash Rabba has portrayed quite a nuanced and complex exegesis of the Lot's daughters' text. While it is clear that Lot is condemned for his part in the story, it is less clear to judge the culpability of his daughters. On the one hand, some Rabbis of the Midrash praise their initiative in saving the world, but on the other hand there are those, like Rabbi Judah Bar Simon, who condemn their actions in making their father drunk and having incest with him as forbidden behavior. There is also a clear difference in their evaluation of the moral culpability of the elder daughter as compared to the younger. There exegesis is in contrast to the previous Noah drunkenness story where the Midrash unanimously condemns the actions of Noah and discusses the fateful consequences of overdrinking for the future.

How are these differences in opinion in the Midrash to be understood? Some scholars<sup>164</sup> present the conjecture that the debate among the Rabbis on the guilt of Lot's daughters reflects a controversy between the anti-Hasmoneans, who were partisans of David, descended from Lot's son Moab through Ruth and their Hasmonian counterparts.

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<sup>164</sup> See Feldman 2000: 635 n. 78.

However, according to this view it would be difficult to explain why Josephus, who himself was descended from the Hasmoneans, should have sought to diminish the guilt of Lot's daughters.<sup>165</sup>

However, I suggest, that these differences in opinion concerning the culpability of the daughters may reflect a different perspective. The Rabbis are clearly troubled by the moral implications of incest even though performed with the best of motives. Do the ends justify the means according to midrashic exegesis? The Rabbis, I propose, are struggling with this moral dilemma and their views are by no way unanimous.

What I believe is even more fascinating though in this midrashic exegesis of the narrative is its perspective of the role of God in the story. One can condemn or praise the characters of Lot and his daughters and their roles in the events. But that is not, I suggest, the major point of the story according to the Midrash. It is God who is actively crafting the events in such a way as to sow the seeds for future salvation through the coming of the Messiah. Why God does so in such strange and dubious circumstances is not explained by the Midrash. But this, I contend, is the thrust of its exegesis. It is this fundamental point which, I will try to show, is shared between this story and the Judah and Tamar narrative which I shall examine in chapter 4 of my thesis.

## **2.20 Pesiqta Rabati's Commentary on 19:30-38**

This is a rabbinic collection of midrashic sermons designed for various Jewish festivals and other special occasions. Its composition is dated in the sixth century CE and therefore gives us an insight into how rabbinic thought concerning the Lot's daughters text developed during the centuries after the Midrash Rabba was edited.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> See Feldman 2000: 635.

<sup>166</sup> It is difficult to establish a textual basis for Pesiqta Rabati. Ish Shalom's text has been used but M. Friedmann's edition has also been considered. As yet a critical edition of this text has not yet been written.

## פסיקתא רבתי (איש שלום) פרשה מב

דבר אחר וה' פקד מה כתב למעלה מן הענין, וה' המטיר על סדום ועמורה גפרית ואש מאת ה' מן השמים (בראשית י"ט כ"ד) חורבנה של סדום, כיון שבאו המלאכים הוציאו לוט ואת שתי בנותיו, היו בנות לוט סבורות שמא שחרב את העולם כדור המבול, והן עומדות ומשקות אביהן (וישכבו) [ושוכבות] עמו ומתעברות הימנו כמה שכתב ותשקין את אביהן (שם שם / בראשית י"ט / ל"ג), א"ר אלעזר אע"פ שאין דרך האשה לעבר מן בעילה ראשונה אלא אלו שלטו בעצמן ועיברו מן בעילה ראשונה, ולא מתבקשות לזנות את אביהן אלא אמרו לא ברא הקדוש ברוך הוא את האדם אלא על פריה ורביה, והרי הוא חרב כדור המבול, מהיכן יש לו להתקיים, הוי לא מילט אותנו הקדוש ברוך הוא אלא לקיימו ממנו, ולא היו יודעים שסדום בלבד חרבה, אבל היו יודעים שאמרו המלאכים כי משחיתים אנחנו את המקום הזה (שם שם / בראשית י"ט / ג), אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא איני מקפח שכר כל ברייה אע"פ שלא חשבו בנות לוט מחשבה יפה אלא אני יודע את הלבבות אני ה' חוקר לב ובוחן כליות (ירמיה י"ז י'), לפיכך כשהוא בא לרחוקם ריחק את עמוני ולא עמונית מואבי ולא מואביות, אמרו המלאכים רבונו של עולם אילו הולכות ישינות עם אביהן בעילה אחת ומעמידות ממזרים בעולם, והצדיק הזה מצטער כל השנים הללו, בדין הוא שיפקד וה' פקד.

This rabbinic collection appears to continue the school of thought in the Midrash Rabba which defended the daughters' actions. The daughters thought that the world had been destroyed and did not have improper motives. This Midrash though adds another point not mentioned earlier in the Midrash Rabba exegesis. Because the daughters had honorable motives, women were not included in the biblical prohibition of marrying a Moabite and an Ammonite. They interpreted the biblical verse that מואבי ולא מואבית א. A Moabite man may not join the Jewish people, but a Moabite woman may. This was the source for permitting Ruth the convert to marry Boaz which will be discussed later in this thesis.

## 2.21 Babylonian Talmud, Baba Kamma 38b

How did the Rabbis of the Talmud interpret the Lot's daughters' narrative?

### תלמוד בבלי מסכת בבא קמא דף לח עמוד ב

ואמר ר' חייא בר אבא אמר ר' יהושע בן קרחה: לעולם יקדים אדם לדבר מצוה, שבשביל לילה אחת שקדמתה בכירה לצעירה, קדמתה ארבע דורות לישראל: עובד, ישי, ודוד, ושלמה, ואילו צעירה עד רחבעם, דכתיב: +מלכים א' י"ד+ ושם אמו נעמה העמונית

The Rabbis of the Talmud here add quite an astonishing comment to what was previously learned in Midrash Rabba and Pesiqta Rabati. Not only are the daughters to be condoned for their actions, the elder daughter is to be particularly praised for she went first! Not only is she lauded, but Rabbi Joshua ben Korcha suggests that she is a role model for future generations about how precepts should be performed with alacrity. Her eagerness to ensure the future of mankind led to the addition of four generations to the Jewish people, Obed, Yishai, David and Solomon.

## 2.22 Conclusion of the Second Temple and Early Rabbinic Exegesis of the Lot's Daughters' Story

The following table attempts to summarize the main points of interpretation of the Lot's daughters' story. What is particularly interesting is that there seems to be quite a different attitude in the exegesis of these interpreters towards the morality of the characters as compared to the Noah drunkenness story. While Noah is still considered righteous by early exegetes such as Jubilees and Philo and condemned by the Rabbis in almost unanimous terms, in the Lot's daughters story we seem to find almost opposite positions posed. Jubilees condemns Lot and his daughters quite bitterly, while the Rabbis seem to become more understanding of Lot's daughters as generations proceed, even suggesting, in talmudic times, that the elder daughter be a role model for alacrity in the performance of good deeds.

The key for an understanding of rabbinic thinking in this and other stories is their unique method of exegesis. As such, a narrative needs to be understood, not only within the context of a particular chapter or book of the Bible, but within a much wider framework which connects events across many generations. Within this mindset, the Rabbis perceive the repercussions Noah's act of drunkenness not only in this story's context but within the holistic framework of Jewish and even general history. Noah's drunkenness can lead to the exile of the Jewish people thousands of years later and to the fall of Persian kings. Lot's daughters' actions can lead to the birth of a saintly woman Ruth and Naama, both being connected to the ancestry of the Messiah. As has been mentioned, the daughters did not know that by their actions here they were precipitating the eventual birth of the Jewish Messiah. David the king's great grandmother was Ruth who came from Moab. The daughters thought they were enabling the continued physical existence of mankind but they were mistaken. But by subtle midrashic irony they were indeed right, even though they did not know it. They were to conceive the antecedents of the Messiah who is to bring spiritual salvation to mankind. They may have not saved mankind physically but, in the eyes of the authors of the Midrash, they did sow the seeds for saving the world spiritually. It is this messianic theme which, I contend, lies at the heart of the rabbinic understanding of the Lot's daughters' story and also the Judah and Tamar narrative. The key to understanding this theme is the rabbinic literary methodology of interpreting biblical texts within their widest contexts and once this is understood one can fully appreciate their unique perspective and exegesis in these narratives. It is this rabbinic methodology which will also help in understanding their comments on the next narrative to be examined, the Judah and Tamar story.

In addition to my attempt to present a greater understanding of early rabbinic textual **methodology** I also suggest that the Midrash raises many questions about early rabbinic **morality**. The Midrash clearly ignores the clear denouncement of Lot and the daughters' incestuous act as stated so unambiguously by the author of Jubilees. Early midrashic comments in Midrash Rabba do suggest a tension between the Rabbis about the moral culpability of the incestuous act, but it is not unequivocally denounced. On the contrary,

in the later midrashic comments of Pesiqta Rabati and Talmud Babli Baba Kama, the opinion of the Rabbis has tended to even consider the daughters actions as a *mitzva* or praiseworthy deed. But the midrashic authors go one step further. God can interfere in the affairs of men by providing the means, in the Lot's daughters' case, for enabling the act of procreation to take place. God himself, in the perception of some of the Rabbis of the Midrash, actually encourages the act of incest in order to precipitate the birth of the antecedent of the Messiah.

What is the rabbinic message being shared here through the words of the Midrash? Do the Rabbis teach that the ends justify the means and that the daughters' immoral incestuous act can be justified because it serves a greater end-the saving of mankind? If so, God's active involvement in precipitating the act, can perhaps be better understood. If this view in the Midrash is indeed accepted, as later Midrashim seem to suggest, then what are the limits of such actions and where are its boundaries? Does then rabbinic morality make the claim that the ends may justify the means? This will have great ramifications about the understanding of how rabbinic views about what they considered moral behavior were formed in the early 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> centuries C.E. Questions concerning the rabbinic perception of the morality of such actions, both in their own eyes and that of God Himself, remain for further investigation. These questions will be explored in the next chapters.

**Table Summary of the Ancient Biblical Interpreters, Midrash, Talmud  
on the Lot's Daughters' Story**

	<b>Jubilees 2 Century B.C.E.</b>	<b>Philo 1Century C.E</b>	<b>Josephus 1 Century C.E.</b>	<b>Targum Pseudo Jonathan 1 Century C.E.</b>	<b>Midrash Rabba, 2-3 Century C.E</b>	<b>Pesiqta Rabati 5<sup>th</sup> century C.E.</b>	<b>Talmud Baba Kamma 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century</b>
<b>Attitude to Lot's actions</b>	Very negative	Not mentioned	Lot's role deliberately deleted	Negative- he knew the second time	Clearly negative	Not mentioned	Not mentioned
<b>Attitude to Lot's daughters</b>	Very negative	Positive-Motive was to save the world	Positive-Motive was to save the world	Seemingly negative	Different views both positive and negative	Clearly Positive	Clearly Positive
<b>Specific Attitude to the elder Daughter</b>	Not mentioned	Positive-wished good seed	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Generally negative	Not mentioned	Very positive-did a Mitzva
<b>Source of wine</b>	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Either left from Sodom or brought by God	Not mentioned	Not mentioned
<b>God's direct role in the Narrative</b>	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Directs the events	Not mentioned	Not mentioned
<b>Implications of the text for the future</b>	Lot's seed to be rooted out in the future	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Ruth and Naama, antecedents of the Messiah	Law allows Jews to marry Moabite women	Be quick to do precepts like Lot's elder daughter!

## Chapter 3

### The Literary and Rhetorical Portrayal of Prostitution in Genesis 38:1-30 -The Story of Judah and Tamar

#### בראשית פרק לח

- (א) ויהי בעת ההוא ויבד יהודה מאת אחיו ויט עד איש עֲדָלְמִי וישמו חִירָה:
- (ב) ויבא שם יהודה בת איש כְּנַעֲנִי וישמו שׁוֹעַ ויקחה ויבא אליה:
- (ג) ותהר ותלד בן ויקרא את שמו ער:
- (ד) ותהר עוד ותלד בן ויקרא את שמו אונן:
- (ה) ות' סוף עוד ותלד בן ויקרא את שמו שלה וקנה בקזיב בלדמה א' תו:
- (ו) ויקח יהודה אשה לער בכורו וישמה תמר:
- (ז) ויהי ער בכור יהודה רע בעיני יק' נק וימתהו יק' נק:
- (ח) וי' אמר יהודה לאונן ב' א' אל אשת אחיך ויבם א' תה וקם זרע לאחייך:
- (ט) וידע אונן כי ל' א' לו יהנה הזרע וקנה אם בא אל אשת אחיו ושחת ארצה לבלתי נתן זרע לאחיו:
- (י) וירע בעיני יק' נק אשר עשה וימת גם א' תו:
- (יא) וי' אמר יהודה לתמר פלתו שבי אלמנה בית אביך עד יגדל שלה בני כי אמר פן ימות גם הוא כאחיו ותלך תמר ותשוב בית אביה:
- (יב) וירבו הנמים ותמת בת שׁוֹעַ אשת יהודה וינקם יהודה ויעל על ג' צ' אנו הוא וחיכה רעהו העדלמי תמנתה:
- (יג) ויגד לתמר לאמר הנה חמיך ע' לה תמנתה לג' צ' אנו:
- (יד) ותסר בגדי אלמנותה מעליה ותכס בצעיף ותתעלף ותשב בפתח עינים אשר על דרך תמנתה כי ראתה כי גדל שלה והוא ל' א' נתנה לו לאשה:
- (טו) ויראה יהודה ויחשבה לזונה כי כסתה פניה:
- (טז) ויט אליה אל הדרך וי' אמר הבה נא אבוא אליך כי ל' א' ידע כי כלתו הוא ות' אמר מה תתן לי כי תבוא אלי:
- (יז) וי' אמר אני כי אשלח גדי עזים מן הצ' און ות' אמר אם תתן ערבון עד שלחך:
- (יח) וי' אמר מה הערבון אשר אטון לך ות' אמר ח' תמך ופתילך ומטבך אשר בנדך ויטן לה ויב' א' אליה ותהר לו:
- (יט) ותקם ותלך ותסר צעיפה מעליה ותלבש בגדי אלמנותה:

- (כ) וַיִּשְׁלַח יְהוּדָה אֶת גְּדֵי הָעֵזִים בְּיַד רַעְיָהוּ הַעֲדָלְמִי לְקַחֵת הָעֵרְבוֹן מִיַּד הָאִשָּׁה וְלֹא מִצָּאָהּ:
- (כא) וַיִּשְׁאַל אֶת אֲנָשֵׁי מְקוֹמָהּ לֵאמֹר אֵיזָה הַקְּדוּשָׁה הוּא כְּעֵינַיִם עַל הַדֶּרֶךְ וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֹא הִיְתָה כְּזֹה קְדוּשָׁה:
- (כב) וַיָּשָׁב אֶל יְהוּדָה וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא מִצָּאָתִיָּהּ וְגַם אֲנָשֵׁי הַמְּקוֹם אָמְרוּ לֹא הִיְתָה כְּזֹה קְדוּשָׁה:
- (כג) וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוּדָה תִּשָּׁח לָהּ פֶּן נִהְיֶה לְבוֹז הַגֵּזַה שְׁלַחְתִּי הַגְּדִי הַזֶּה וְאַתָּה לֹא מִצָּאָתָהּ:
- (כד) וַיְהִי כַּמִּשְׁלֹשׁ חֳדָשִׁים וַיֵּגֵד לִיהוּדָה לֵאמֹר וַנִּתֶּה תַּמָּר פְּלִתָךְ וְגַם הַגֵּזַה הָרָה לְזַנוּנִים וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוּדָה הוֹצִיאֹהָ וּתְשׁוּרָהּ:
- (כה) הוּא מוֹצֵאת וְהִיא שְׁלַחָה אֵל חַמִּיָּה לֵאמֹר לְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר אָלֶּה לּוֹ אֲנִי כִי הָרָה וְתֹאמַר הֲפָר נָא לְמִי הַחֲתָמָת וְהַפְתִּילִים וְהַמְטָה הָאֵלֶּה:
- (כו) וַיִּפֹּר יְהוּדָה וַיֹּאמֶר צְדָקָה מִמֶּנִּי כִּי עַל כֵּן לֹא נִתְתִּיָּה לְשִׁלָּה בְּנִי וְלֹא יָסַף עוֹד לְדַעְתָּהּ:
- (כז) וַיְהִי בַעֲת לְדַתָּהּ וְהָיָה תְּאוּמִים בְּבֶטְנָהּ:
- (כח) וַיְהִי בְּלִדְתָּהּ נִישָׁן יָד וְתִשָּׁח הַמִּיֻלְדָּת וְתִקְשׁוֹר עַל יָדוֹ שְׁנֵי לֵאמֹר זֶה יֵצֵא רֵאשׁוֹנָה:
- (כט) וַיְהִי כַּמִּשְׁיָב יָדוֹ וְהָיָה יֵצֵא אַחִיו וְתֹאמַר מֶה פִּרְצָתָ עֲלֶיךָ פֶּרֶץ וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ פֶּרֶץ:
- (ל) וְאַחַר יֵצֵא אַחִיו אֲשֶׁר עַל יָדוֹ הַשְּׁנִי וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ זָרַח: ◻

### 3.1 The Context of the Judah and Tamar Narrative

Much of modern scholarship has viewed Genesis 38 as an independent narrative with little or no relationship to its immediate context. One of the reasons for this verdict is that Joseph, the main character of in chapters 37 and 39 is not even mentioned in chapter 38. According to these scholars<sup>167</sup>, the story of Judah and Tamar contributes nothing to the progress of the story of Joseph and, it seems, interrupts the flow of what is otherwise a very smooth and cohesive narrative. Brueggemann,<sup>168</sup> for example, declares that:

This peculiar chapter stands alone, without connection to its content...even close study does not make clear its intent.

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<sup>167</sup> See, among others, Brueggemann W. 1982. *Genesis*. Atlanta: John Nox Press. pp. 307-308; Coats GW. 1983. *Genesis with an Introduction to Narrative Literature*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co.; Von Rad G. 1972. *Genesis*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press; Skinner J. 1917. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*. New York: Scribner's Sons.

<sup>168</sup> Brueggemann 1982: 307-308.

Von Rad concludes in his commentary in an even more decisive way that:

Every attentive reader can see that the story of Judah and Tamar has no connection at all with the strictly organized Joseph story at whose beginning it is now inserted. This compact narrative (Genesis 38) requires for its interpretation none of the other Patriarchal narratives, and therefore the Yahwist, who found the story in tradition, faced the question where to insert this piece into the succession of traditions.<sup>169</sup>

However, I suggest, as do other scholars,<sup>170</sup> that there are many verbal and thematic links between Genesis 38 and the larger Joseph story in which it is embedded. In addition, there are many literary and rhetorical links between this narrative and other narratives in the book of Genesis, especially the Lot's daughters' story which we have previously studied. Furthermore, these links go beyond the book of Genesis alone, with clear thematic and verbal connections between Genesis 38 and the Book of Ruth. These literary links and parallels will now be examined.

### **3.2 Verbal and Thematic Links between Genesis 38 and its Immediate Narrative Context**

It is my contention that there are numerous links which integrate Genesis 38 into its current context and emphasize certain motifs through repetition. They also stimulate intertextual comparisons and contrasts that can serve as the starting points for creative

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<sup>169</sup> Von Rad 1972: 357.

<sup>170</sup> Recent commentators such as Alter (*Art of Biblical Narrative*, 3-22) have criticized historical-critical scholarship for ignoring these links in their concern with the prehistory of Genesis 38, its original source, and the discontinuities with the rest of the Joseph story. The examples of verbal and thematic links below are also noted by Alter and other contemporary commentators, such as Redford DB. 1970. *A Study of the Biblical Story of Joseph Genesis 37-50*. VT Sup 20 Leiden: E,J.Brill. I shall show that classical medieval Jewish commentators like Rashi and Ramban were very much aware of these links and refer to them frequently in their commentaries.

biblical exegesis. One example of a verbal and thematic connection between the story of Judah and Tamar and the larger Joseph story is the repetition of the verbal root "to go down" (יָרַד) in Genesis 37, 38 and 39. The first sentence in Genesis 38, "At that time Judah went down (וַיֵּרַד) from his brothers", may indicate a geographical direction of travel but these words mentioned after Judah's role in the sale of Joseph take on an additional connotation. This sale distanced Joseph from the murderous intents of his brothers, but it had less positive effects as well. Together with the brothers' subsequent deception of their father, it brought about Jacob's forlorn claim that he would "go down" (אָרַד) mourning to his son in *Sheol* (שְׁאוֹל) (Gen. 37:35). Also as a result of this sale, Joseph was "brought down" (הוֹרֵד) to Egypt, where Potiphar purchased him from the Ishmaelites who "had brought him down" (הוֹרִידוּהוּ, Genesis 39:1). Embedded between his father's pathetic imagined descent and his brother's forced, actual descent, Judah's descent signifies more than an incidental direction of travel. Within the extended play on the verb "to go down" (יָרַד) that provides linguistic and thematic cohesion between Genesis 37, 38, and 39, the description of Judah's journey as a descent implies moral judgment on this character and hints at a loss of status due to his flawed leadership of his brothers. Classical Jewish commentaries like Rashi, for example, emphasize that verb יָרַד is referring to Judah's moral failure in not saving Joseph completely but proposing he be sold. His brothers then ostracized him when they realized that Judah had had the power to convince them to save Joseph and bring him home to their father, thus avoiding the terrible ensuing family tragedy.<sup>171</sup> Two other examples, involving the themes of deception and seduction, help to illustrate further the craft of the biblical narrative and to point out the hermeneutic potential inherent in these intertextual points of contact.

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<sup>171</sup> See Rashi 38:1. Emerton JA. 1975. in "Some Problems in Genesis 38", *VT* 25: 338-61 discusses further possible interpretations of the notice that Judah "went down". Although the specific root "to go down" (יָרַד) is not employed in the earlier report concerning Joseph's whereabouts in Gen. 37:36, it seems clear that the Midianites have successfully managed to bring Joseph down to Egypt, just as they have managed to "bring down" (לְהוֹרִיד) their cargo of spices, balm and ladanum (Gen 37:25).

Genesis 37 introduces the theme of deception into the Joseph story when it depicts the brothers misleading Jacob concerning his favorite son's fate (Gen. 37:31-33).<sup>172</sup> After they sold Joseph, they "sent" (וישלחו Gen.37:32) his distinctive garment, dipped into the blood of a he-goat (שעיר עזים Gen.37:31), to their father. Their command that Jacob "Recognize!" (הכר נא, Gen.37:32) the garment's owner, evoked an immediate response. Jacob rightly "recognized it" (ויכירה, Gen. 37:33) as belonging to Joseph but erroneously concluded that a wild animal had killed him. The brothers misled their father through an article of clothing and thus concealed their responsibility for Joseph's disappearance. In Genesis 38, a second article of clothing-this time a veil-plays an important part in Tamar's deception of Judah (Gen.38:12-19). Because she covered herself with a veil, he failed to perceive that she was his daughter-in-law (Gen.38:16) and mistook her for a prostitute (Gen.38:15). Once again in Genesis 38 the motif of the goat-here specifically a kid (גדי עזים, Gen.38:17)-marks the theme of deception. This time, however, it stresses Judah's obliviousness to Tamar's ruse, since he sincerely offered it as a prostitute's fee.<sup>173</sup>

Other words connect the brother's deception of Jacob in Genesis 37 with Tamar's disclosure of her deception of Judah in Genesis 38. After being sentenced to death, Tamar "sent" (שלחה, Gen. 38:25) Judah's distinctive personal belongings (seal, cord and staff) to him for identification, just as the brother's "sent" (וישלחו) Joseph's coat to Jacob in Genesis 37. She commanded Judah to "Recognize!" (הכר נא, Gen.38:25), just as they asked Jacob to "Recognize!" (הכר נא Gen.37:32).<sup>174</sup> Judah recognized (ויכר, Gen.38:26) the pledge immediately, just as his father "recognized" (ויכירה, Gen. 37:33) Joseph's coat earlier. In Genesis 38, however, Judah's recognition of his personal belongings brings

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<sup>172</sup> Deception is a general, recurrent theme in biblical literature, often leading to the success of the less powerful over the more powerful. For a discussion of the theme see Niditch S. 1987. *Underdogs and Tricksters: A Prelude to Biblical Folklore*. San Francisco: Harper and Row.

<sup>173</sup> "Goats and Coats" is a further biblical theme in Genesis 27 when Jacob deceives his father and thereby gains the blessing by using two kids (גדי עזים Gen.27:9) and wearing Esau's coat.

<sup>174</sup> It is interesting to note that these are the only two places in the whole bible where the term הכר נא is used. As we shall see, the underlying theme of poetic justice (מדה כנגד מדה) is being subtly and ironically portrayed by the narrator. Judah deceived his father with the term הכר נא and he in turn is deceived by the same term.

about his acceptance of responsibility for a bad situation, whereas Jacob's recognition of his son's clothing in Genesis 37 facilitates the brothers' evasion of their responsibility. The verbal and thematic parallels between these episodes are nevertheless unmistakable, and they unify the two chapters. In addition, these parallels may suggest a certain moral appropriateness to the progression of events described in the two chapters. One might conclude, for example, that Tamar's deception of her father-in law in Genesis 38 deals Judah his just deserts for deceiving his own father in the preceding chapter.<sup>175</sup>

The theme of deception also reappears following the story of Judah and Tamar, in the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife in Genesis 39. When Potiphar's wife falsely accuses Joseph of rape, she produces his clothing as incriminating evidence (Gen 39:12-18). For the third time in three chapters a garment is used to lead others to draw false conclusions, and the repetition of this motif helps cement Genesis 38 into its present position.<sup>176</sup> The general theme of deception reappears later in the narrative when Joseph withholds his true identity from his brothers until they prove themselves trustworthy.

The deceptions in both Genesis 38 and 39 are practiced by sexually forward women, and the theme of seduction therefore unifies these two chapters as well. The juxtaposition of Tamar's successful seduction of Judah and Potiphar's wife's unsuccessful seduction of Joseph opens a wide range of interpretive possibilities. For example, if one understands Tamar as a parallel figure to Potiphar's wife, her character might be developed as a lascivious temptress. Alternately, these two women might be contrasted, since Tamar's motive was apparently to conceive children, whereas Potiphar's wife was attracted by

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<sup>175</sup> This theme of *מדה כנגד מדה* is developed, as will be explored in the next chapter, by later midrashic sources.

<sup>176</sup> For a discussion of the significance of various garments in Genesis 37-50, see Furman N. 1989. His Story Versus Her Story: Male Genealogy and Female Strategy in the Jacob Cycle. In: Amihai M, Coats GW & Solomon AM (eds). *Narrative Research on the Hebrew Bible Semeia* 46, Atlanta: Scholars Press. pp. 141-149.

Joseph's beauty. A contrast may be drawn between Judah and Joseph as well, since the first succumbed to a woman's charms, while the second resisted.<sup>177</sup>

### **3.3 Thematic Links between Genesis 38 and the Lot's Daughters' Narrative (Gen 19:30-38)**

A close literary reading of the Tamar narrative and the Lot's daughters' story, studied in detail in the previous chapter, shows the strong thematic links between them. Both narratives end with the birth of two boys after a search for an appropriate male partner. In the case of Lot's daughters the lack of an appropriate male partner is caused by the divine destruction of Sodom and its inhabitants. In the case of Tamar, two previous sexual partners, Er and Onan have died, while the third potential partner, Shela, is not yet available for sexual union. The theme of divine, punitive elimination of potential sexual partners thus also unites Genesis 38 and Gen 19:30-38.

In both of these stories, the women protagonists take direct action to overcome reproductive impasses caused by the absence of appropriate male partners. The female initiatives of Lot's daughters are similar in nature to Tamar's, in that they both involve secrecy and deception. In addition, both narratives describe how an older relative from the previous generation is targeted by women protagonists, thus invoking the common theme of incest. While Lot's daughters exploit their drunken father, Tamar deceives her unsuspecting father-in-law.

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<sup>177</sup> See James Kugel's discussion of interpretations of Joseph's relations with Potiphar's wife as less than innocent in his work 1990: 94-124 "Joseph's Change of Heart," in *In Potiphar's House: The Interpretive Life of Biblical Texts*. San Francisco: Harper. For an alternative interpretation of the juxtaposition of these two tales of seduction in Genesis 38 and 39, see Bal M. 1987. One Woman, Many Men, and the Dialectic of Chronology. In: *Lethal Love: Feminist Literary Readings of Biblical Love Stories*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. pp. 89-103. She argues that since the proleptic depiction of Judah's seduction by a woman in Genesis 38 ultimately turns out for the best, the reader may be assured that the results of Joseph's encounter with another woman in Genesis 39 will similarly prove beneficial in the long run.

Perhaps, more importantly, both the narratives of Lot's daughters and Genesis 38 end with the birth of sons.<sup>178</sup> What is even more significant is that the offspring delivered by Lot's daughters, like the offspring delivered by Tamar are related in some way to the Davidic lineage. In the case of Lot's daughters, the eldest daughter gives birth to Moab, the ancestor of David's maternal grandmother, Ruth. In the case of Tamar, her eldest son is Perez, a direct antecedent of Obed and the Davidic line (Ruth 4:18-22).<sup>179</sup> I shall now consider the literary connections between Genesis 38 and the Book of Ruth, which in fact contains many elements common to the Lot's daughters and Tamar narratives.

### **3.4 Thematic Links between Genesis 38 and the Book of Ruth**

The significance of Genesis 38 as a story of royal origins is never made explicit within the biblical narrative itself but is clarified more directly in the Book of Ruth. Although the narrative moves towards the climactic birth of twins in Gen 38:27-30, the historical significance of Perez as an ancestor of later kings must be deduced from genealogies located elsewhere in the Bible, especially in the Book of Ruth.

The genealogy concluding the Book of Ruth (Ruth 4:18-22) most directly traces David's ancestry back to Perez and thereby defines Genesis 38 as a story of royal origins:

These are the generations of Perez: Perez begat Hezron, and Hezron begat Ram, and Ram begat Amminadab, and Amminadab begat Nahshon, and Nachshon begat Salmah and Salmon begat Boaz, and Boaz begat Obed, and Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David.

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<sup>178</sup> It is interesting to note that all these mothers disappear from narrative view after the birth of their sons. The abrupt endings of these stories perhaps focuses attention further in time to David himself. As such these narratives form a set which connects the birth stories to the Davidic lineage. As such, each of the mothers-Lot's daughters, Tamar and Ruth-may be designated as a "royal ancestress."

<sup>179</sup> There is also a second connection between Gen 19:30-38 and the Davidic dynasty. Lot's younger daughter gives birth to Ben-ammi, the ancestor of the Ammonites. Naamah, Solomon's wife, and the mother of Rehoboam, was an Ammonite woman (1 Kings 14:31; 2 Chr 12:13).

In addition, the allusion to Genesis 38 found in the final chapter of Ruth is significant. When the elders at the gate address Boaz before he marries Ruth, they include the following blessing, "May your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah." The narrative thus presents Tamar, the mother of the man who heads the Davidic genealogy concluding the book, as a model for Ruth. Shortly thereafter, Ruth also emerges as a royal ancestress when she gives birth to Obed (Ruth 4:13-17). By sanctioning Boaz and Ruth's union with a reference to Genesis 38, the elders attest to a positive interpretation of the Judah-Tamar narrative as a story concerning royal origins.<sup>180</sup>

In addition to the allusions of royal origins that link Genesis 38 to the Book of Ruth, one can find other parallel thematic themes between Genesis 38 and Ruth.<sup>181</sup> These connections are remarkably similar to the ones we discussed earlier when comparing Genesis 38 with the narrative of Lot's daughters. In the case of Ruth, the deaths of both her husband and her husband's brother in the land of Moab leave her widowed and without a potential levir (Ruth 1:5). Death of suitable sexual partners thus unifies Genesis 38, Gen 19:30-38 and Ruth. Ruth's choice to return to Bethlehem with Naomi rather than to remain in Moab and remarry in her native land further limits her opportunities for finding a suitable mate, as her mother-in-law herself cautions (Ruth 1:11-18).

In both these stories, as in the narrative of Lot's daughters, female initiatives involve secrecy and deception. Lot's daughters' exploitation of their unconscious father and Tamar's deception of her father-in-law find a modified parallel in Ruth's surprise of her

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<sup>180</sup> It is interesting to note that the blessing in Ruth 4:12 immediately follows another significant blessing in Ruth 4:11: "May the Lord make this woman come into your house like Rachel and Leah, who together built the house of Israel. Prosper in Ephrath, and become Renowned in Bethlehem!" The juxtaposition of Rachel and Leah with Tamar in the blessing stresses that she, like them, is an ancestress of an important "house" of family, specifically in her case the "house of David."

<sup>181</sup> For discussions of the similarities between these narratives, see Brenner A. 1983. Naomi and Ruth. *VT* 33:393-94; Feeley-Harnik G. 1990. Naomi and Ruth: Building Up the House of David. In: Niditch S (ed). *Text and Tradition: The Hebrew Bible and Folklore SBL Semeia Studies*. Atlanta: Scholars Press. pp. 163-84.

elder kinsman at night, when he awakens to discover her lying near him.<sup>182</sup> The language describing the encounter that Ruth orchestrates is sexually suggestive (Ruth 3:6-15),<sup>183</sup> although the union appears to be delayed until its legal aspects are resolved (Ruth 3:12-13). Similarly, the theme of incest<sup>184</sup> is suggested by references to Boaz as an elder kinsman,<sup>185</sup> and by allusions to levirate practice, though its appearance in the Ruth story is decidedly mooted as compared to the Lot's daughters and Judah –Tamar narrative.

In summary, the thematic parallels between Genesis 38 and the book of Ruth, both in the origins of the Davidic dynasty and in the common themes of deception and seduction seem to suggest a rich basis for interpretation. It will be shown, in the next chapter, how some ancient interpreters have developed their exegesis based on these common themes and parallel concepts. In addition, the study has shown how Genesis 38 can be understood within the context of Genesis 37 and 39 and that the verbal and thematic themes in these chapters seem to support the thesis that these chapters should be considered as an organic whole. Furthermore, the thematic parallels between the three

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<sup>182</sup> Boaz reveals his lack of awareness concerning Ruth's identity and motives when he startles from sleep and asks, "Who are you?" (Ruth 3:9). The theme of secrecy is also expressed in Naomi's instructions that Ruth not let her presence in the threshing floor be known (Ruth 3:3-4), in Ruth's stealth as she approaches Boaz (Ruth 3:7) and in Boaz's precaution that she return home in the dark to prevent recognition (Ruth 3:14).

<sup>183</sup> Ruth accepts Naomi's instructions to beautify herself, to wait secretly at the threshing floor until Boaz has finished eating and drinking and has gone to bed, to uncover his feet and to lie down, and to do whatever he tells her (Ruth 3:1-5), apparently indicating that she is sexually offering herself. The references to uncovering and lying at Boaz's feet, or more literally, "the place of his feet" ( מרגלותיו Ruth 3:4; 7, 8, 14), are particularly suggestive because the word "feet" רגלים is used euphemistically for the genitals (Ezek 16:25; Deut 28:57). Also suggestive is the fact that Ruth spends the whole night with Boaz (Ruth 3:13-14).

<sup>184</sup> For a discussion of the different articulations of the theme of incest in the stories of Lot and his daughters, Judah and Tamar, and Boaz and Ruth, see Fisch H. 1982. Ruth and the Structure of Covenant History. *VT* 32:425-37.

<sup>185</sup> See Ruth 2:1; 3:2, 9, 12-13; 4:3-6 for indications of Boaz's relationship to Elimelech's widow. His seniority is indicated by the gratitude he expresses to Ruth for choosing him instead of one of the "young men" (Ruth 3:10).

stories of Lot's daughters, Tamar and Ruth, seem to support the contention that they form a common bond with the Davidic lineage and that each of these mothers may be designated as a "royal ancestress."

### 3.5 Commentary on Genesis 38

Chapter 38 is a clear unit within Genesis and its narrative structure can be divided into the following six scenes<sup>186</sup>:

vv. 1-5 Judah marries a Canaanite

vv. 6-11 Tamar marries Judah's sons

vv. 12-19 Tamar traps Judah

vv. 20-23 Judah looks for Tamar

vv. 24-26 Tamar vindicated

vv. 27-30 Birth of twins to Tamar and Judah

I shall examine the literary and rhetorical structure of each of the above scenes, explore the narrative development of the story and study the particular role and function of the two major characters in its exposition as portrayed in the text.

1. At that time, Judah went down from his brothers and turned aside to an Adullamite man, whose name was Hirah.<sup>187</sup>
2. Judah saw there the daughter of a Canaanite man, whose name was Shua, and he took her and went into her.
3. She conceived and gave birth to a son and his name was called Er.
4. She conceived again, gave birth to a son, and called his name Onan.

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<sup>186</sup> I follow here the division of Wenham in his commentary on Genesis 1994: 363.

<sup>187</sup> The translation I have used for this chapter is based on a number of different sources. I have frequently adopted translations of Wenham and Mathews in their respective commentaries as well as that of Menn E. 1997 in her work *Judah and Tamar in Ancient Jewish Exegesis*. Leiden: Brill.

5. She once again gave birth to a son and called his name Shelah. He was in Kezib when she gave birth to him.

Some modern commentators dismiss these first five verses as merely setting the scene for the more interesting action of the rest of the narrative. Von Rad (1972:357), for example, maintains that the real action of the story begins only with Gen.38:12. The simplicity and brevity of the initial account of reproduction indicates that it indeed it does play an ancillary role to the more complicated procreative drama that follows. However, it provides much more than the minimal background information required for the ensuing story. A spare genealogical note that Judah fathered three sons would suffice to set the scene for the events beginning in Gen.38:6.<sup>188</sup> The generosity of Gen 38:1-5 suggests that it contains clues for the interpretation of the chapter as a whole.

I suggest that these introductory verses establish a basic sequence of male and female actions leading swiftly to the emergence of the next generation.<sup>189</sup> The sequence begins in the second verse with the report that Judah "saw" (וירא) a certain woman and it continues with the notice that he "took her" (ויקחה) and "went into her."<sup>190</sup> The three verses that follow (Gen 38:3-5) depict the female procreative response to Judah's initiative of seeing, taking and entering. The first two of these verses explicitly record that Shua's

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<sup>188</sup> For purposes of comparison see the brief genealogical note that "Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth" (Gen. 6:10), which sets the scene for the story of the flood.

<sup>189</sup> Johanna Bos also notes the repetition of procreative verbs in Genesis 38, although she does so in a larger discussion of verbal patterns, with the narrative. See Bos J. 1988. *Out of the Shadows: Genesis 38; Judg 4:17-22; Ruth 3*. In: Cheryl J (ed). *Reasoning with the Foxes: Female Wit in a World of Male Power Semeia* 42, Atlanta: Scholars Press. pp. 40-49.

<sup>190</sup> "Taking" (לקח) is a term denoting marriage in the Hebrew Bible as in Gen 24:3 and 25:1. "Entering" (בוא) is also used in connection with marriage as in Deut 22:13, although it is used more generally to denote sexual intercourse with a woman, inside or outside of marriage. In the Mishna, however, the verbal root "entering" (בוא) is used specifically in connection with marriage, as in *m. Kiddushin*. 1.1.

daughter "conceived" (ותהר) and the final verse implies conception as well.<sup>191</sup> Each of these three verses also notes that she "gave birth" (ותלד) to a son and ends with the naming of the new born, and at least in the last two cases the feminine form of the verb clearly specifies that it was the mother who "named" (ותקרא) the child.<sup>192</sup> In summary, the list of procreative verbs in Gen 38:1-5, specifying the male initiatives of seeing, taking and going into and the female responses of conceiving, giving birth and naming, constitutes a schematic plot pattern, from which the longer second part of Genesis 38 deviates and to which it finally returns. The contrast between the two tales of reproduction accentuates the distinctive features of the more extended and interesting second tale and highlights the identity of the heroic character responsible for restoring its broken chain of events.

It is also interesting to note how the threefold recital of the Canaanite wife's actions in Gen 38:3-5 functions in the context of the larger narrative. The triple account of conception, birth and naming acts to unite the first and last part of Genesis 38. It also introduces a thematic number of great significance for the structure of the next part of the narrative. Three times Tamar is paired with a sexual partner (Er, Onan and Judah), the third of whom, unwittingly succeeds in impregnating her. There are three items in the

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<sup>191</sup> The Hebrew verb "she conceived" (ותהר) is omitted in the final verse of this section (Gen 38:5) although it is clearly implied by the verb "she continued" (ותסר) which replaces it.

<sup>192</sup> The majority of Hebrew manuscripts indicate a masculine subject for the first verb of naming in Gen: 38:3. Some Hebrew manuscripts however attest to a feminine subject of the verb, thereby consistently representing the mother as the one who names all three sons. Medieval Jewish commentators relate to this textual problem. The Maharam in his commentary on 38:5 suggests that it is ancient custom for the husband to name the first child and the wife the second child. According to custom Judah should have named the third son after his wife had named the second. However since Judah was away at the time in Keziv, his wife named the third son. It is for this reason that this extraneous piece of information is included in the narrative. Nachmanides in his commentary on Genesis 38:4, suggests that Judah's wife called the second son Onan because she had difficulties giving birth to him and his name is connected to the word מתאווננים (Numbers 11:1) meaning complaints. Rashi in his commentary on 38:5 connects the name Shelah to "stopping". It was at this point that she realized that she would have no more children. The name Keziv, according to this explanation, is also related to the fact that she stopped giving birth. as in הו כי כמו אכזב in Jer 15:18.

pledge that identify Judah's responsibility for her condition and spare her life. Judah's culpability in withholding Shelah is emphasized by three different references to this behavior (Gen 38:11, 14, 26). Perhaps most importantly for the overall structure of the entire chapter, the emphasis on the birth of the three sons made through the triple connection of their conception, birth and naming in the opening section facilitates a sense of closure when the birth of the twins in the final verses restores the number of Judah's living sons to three. Finally, the dominant presence of the mother in the last three verses of the opening procreative story, asserted through recurrent feminine verbs, foreshadows the dominance of another mother in the plot of the second procreative tale. The emphasis on the mediating role of a woman in the generational transition between father and sons in Gen 38:1-5 prepares the reader for the important mediating role of a different woman in Gen 38:6-30, although clearly Tamar's facilitation of the emergence of sons is not limited to her biological capacity for reproduction.

In the opening scene of the second procreative story (Gen 38:6-11), the maturation of a male from the younger generation motivates an attempt to replicate the procreative pattern established earlier:

6. Judah took a wife for Er his first-born whose name was Tamar.
7. But Er, Judah's first-born, was evil in the eyes of the Lord, so the Lord killed him.
8. Judah said to Onan, "Go into your brother's wife, act as a levir for her, and raise up seed for your brother."
9. But Onan knew that the seed would not be his, and whenever he went into his brother's wife he would spill on the ground so as not to give seed to his brother.
10. What he did was evil in the eyes of the Lord, and he killed him also.
11. Judah said to Tamar, his daughter-in-law, "Remain a widow at your father's house until Shelah, my son, grows up." For he said, "Lest he die also like his brothers." Tamar went and remained at her father's house.

In this passage, for the first time in Genesis 38, third person narrative and direct speech alternate. This alternation has rhetoric value in that it slows the pace of the narrative and

emphasizes important details. Most strikingly, the quotations of Judah's instructions to his son and daughter-in-law stress his responsibility for his family's welfare and continuity.

The opening three words of this subsection "Judah took a wife" וַיִּקַּח יְהוּדָה אִשָּׁה suggests that the narrative continues with the procreative pattern in Gen 38:1-5. This second notice of Judah's "taking" a woman is a rhetorical device which triggers the expectation that he is beginning the process leading to the birth and naming of sons with another partner. This is indeed what actually happens, but the immediate clarification that he took the woman "for Er his firstborn" alters the reader's initial expectation and leads to an ultimately erroneous conclusion that the task of procreation has been transferred to the next generation.<sup>193</sup>

But whereas the biblical narrative portrays Judah as an active agent by describing his initial journey and his sexual engagement with a woman who bears him sons, it never portrays his son Er<sup>194</sup> as an active agent. The text does not describe Er departing from his family, seeing the woman who becomes his wife, nor taking her. Moreover, it remains mute as to on the question of whether Er had sexual relations with Tamar. Instead of emerging as an active agent of procreation like Judah, Er becomes the passive object of divine evaluation in Gen 38:7. He is eliminated by God<sup>195</sup> from the narrative's cast of characters because of some unspecified evil.<sup>196</sup> It is interesting to note that not since the days of Noah and Sodom has God taken the life of one who displeased him and there it

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<sup>193</sup> For a father's role in choosing a wife for his son see Gen 24:3; 28:1-2; 34:4; Judg 14:1-7.

<sup>194</sup> The commentaries and dictionaries give Er (עֵר) the meaning of "watchful" by relating it to *Ur* "to be awake. Sarna in his work *Genesis* notes that a Midrash and Targum Jonathan link the name with *ariri* or childless. This meaning would reflect the context of chapter 38 quite well—a firstborn who dies without progeny.

<sup>195</sup> The nature of Er's sin is not divulged in the text. Jacob, 1974:712, suggests that "the completely similar sentence and fate suggests a very similar sin to Onan's." Rashi in his commentary on 38:7 also suggests that Er's sin was that he wasted his seed at the time of intercourse just as Onan did. The phrase וַיִּמַת גַּם אוֹתוֹ in 38:10 seems to also connect the deaths of the two brothers. See also Radak on 38:10-מתו אחד

<sup>196</sup> Note the reversal of consonants in the name Er (עֵר) and the word used to describe his character/activities, *Ra* (רַע) or evil.

was groups who were annihilated. Er is the first individual in the Bible whom God kills.<sup>197</sup>

Following Er's death, male reproductive responsibility returns briefly to the older generation, as Judah arranges a levirate marriage between Onan and Tamar, and then it shifts once again to another ineffectual young male. Onan seems to take on the masculine role established in the first narrative but "whenever he went into his brother's wife" he intentionally fails to execute his father's design, and therefore fails to initiate the female verbs of procreation in the first part of Genesis 38. Mathews (1996:436) points out that the syntax of verse 9 does not refer to one time "when" Onan had sex with Tamar, but whenever he had sex with her. Wenham (1994:367) also suggests that this expression emphasizes that Onan did this on every occasion of intercourse, not just once or twice. As a result Onan, like his brother, is divinely eliminated from the plot in Gen 38:10.

After two frustrated beginnings, there is a further retreat from the point of generational transition in Gen 38:11. In this verse, Judah sends Tamar back to her father's house, her former residence as an unmarried daughter, and postpones the giving of Shelah to Tamar out of concern for his life. However, the reason for Judah's actions here is known only to the reader, not to Tamar. The reader is given, for the first time, a fleeting entry into Judah's secret thoughts. This rhetorical device by which there is a discrepancy of knowledge between characters and between some characters and the reader adds to the irony and suspense of the narrative.<sup>198</sup> Although intended to prevent the death of his last remaining son, Judah's solution prevents the birth of all further sons as long as it remains in effect. This sub-section closes then with a delicate suspension of all procreative action. The two remaining couples in the narrative, an older couple whose reproductive life together is accomplished and past, and a younger couple whose reproductive life is potential and future, express this suspension.

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<sup>197</sup> Within vv. 1-11, vv. 1-6 highlight the beginning of life with verbs like "conceived," "bore," and "named" while vv. 7-11 highlight the termination of life with verbs like "killed" and "wasted".

<sup>198</sup> See Ska JL. 1988. L'Ironie de Tamar Gen 38. ZAW 100:261-63.

Another important feature of this sub-section is Tamar's passive role in the narrative. Alter<sup>199</sup> suggests that Tamar could have told her father-in-law of Onan's sexual aberrations and that she was in fact blameless for the lack of procreational advance, but it is clear that she does not do so. She chooses to sit (והשב) at her father's house waiting passively, at Judah's command, for Shelah to mature.

In Genesis 38:12-19, the text intimates how the passage of time opens the way for reproductive progress through an unexpected alternative route.

12. Much time passed, and the daughter of Shua, Judah's wife, died. When Judah was comforted, he went up to Timnah to his sheep shearers, he and Hirah his Adullamite friend.

13. It was reported to Tamar, "See, your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his flock."

14. She removed her widow's garments from upon her, covered herself with a veil, wrapped herself, and sat at the entrance of Enaim, which is on the way to Timnah, for she saw that Shelah had grown up, but she had not been given to him as a wife.

15. Judah saw her and thought she was a prostitute because she covered her face.

16. He turned aside to her on the road and said, "Come let me go into you," for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. She said, "What will you give me that you may go into me?"

17. He said, "I will send a kid from the flock." She said, "If you give a pledge until you send it."

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<sup>199</sup> See Alter R. 1996. *Genesis, Translation and Commentary*. New York: Norton and Company.

18. He said, "What is the pledge that I should give you?" She said, "Your seal, your cord, and your staff that is in your hand." He gave them to her and went into her, and she conceived by him.

19. She arose, went, removed the veil from upon her, and dressed in her widow's garments.

The reappearance in this section of two of the three introductory motives from Gen 38:1 signals a resumption of movement towards the narrative's goal. In Gen 38:12, Judah once again takes a journey, "he went up to his sheep shearers," in the company of a familiar friend, "he and Hirah, his Adullamite friend." In addition, the notice given that Judah's period of mourning has passed and the allusion to the season of sheep shearing with its component of revelry<sup>200</sup> all hint to the fact that the reproductive impasse of the previous sub-section maybe broken. The text uses an interesting rhetorical device to subtly describe this change of mood. Twice the text utilizes the verb עלה or "going up". ויעל על גוזי צאנו is in 38:12 and הנה המיך עלה is in 38:13. In contrast to the opening words of the chapter where Judah is going down-וירד, the double use of עלה in close proximity subtly changes the mood of suspension from the previous section.<sup>201</sup>

The list of actions in quick succession and close proximity at the beginning of Gen 38:14 (" she removed her widow's garments from upon her, covered herself with a veil, wrapped herself, and sat at the entrance of Enaim") is a rhetorical device used by the narrator to present Tamar as an active agent for the first time in the story. Tamar's change of location in Gen 38:14 implies a solitary journey by this character to meet her targeted sexual partner. The motif of a journey by a female character preceding marriage or sexual

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<sup>200</sup> The connection between sheep shearing and festivities, including wine drinking, is noted elsewhere in the Bible including 1 Sam 25:2-37 and 2 Sam 13:23-29. If Judah was already under the influence of wine, it might help to explain why he did not penetrate Tamar's disguise. In the next chapter we will examine how Ancient interpreters, especially in the Testaments of Judah, develop their exegesis and narrative expansions of the text based on this wine drinking theme.

<sup>201</sup> See also Alter, *Genesis*. 1996:221.

union is relatively rare in biblical literature, in common to the more common portrayal of such journeys by male characters.<sup>202</sup> The text thus identifies Tamar as the driving force behind the events on the road to Timnah.

It is interesting to compare the use of the verb ותשב –and she sat- in verses 38:12 and 38:14. The text uses another subtle rhetorical device of using the same word but suggesting two different contexts and meanings. In 38:12, as we have seen, Tamar passively waits for Shelah to mature. However in 38:14, Tamar actively waits for her father-in-law at the entrance of Enaim, until he directly, although unknowingly, performs the masculine procreative behavior lacking to this point in this chapter. Tamar's strategic waiting in 38:14 as compared to her passive waiting in 38:12 emphasizes the active role which Tamar has now undertaken.

Robinson<sup>203</sup> has made the interesting observation that the phrase בפתח עיניים –at the entrance of Enaim-, ought to be compared with the phrase כסות עיניים in 20:16 literally "covering of the eyes". When the truth of Sarah's identity is revealed to Abimelech after he had almost committed adultery with her, Abimelech gives to Abraham a thousand shekels of silver, which is to serve as a "covering of the eyes" to Sarah. That is, the money will vindicate Sarah publicly from any suspicion of irregular sexual behavior, and be a compensation for any embarrassment she has to live with. If כסות עיניים signifies vindication from suspicion of harlotry, פתח עיניים may signify the opposite-to pose in such a way as to cause one to stop, look and open his eyes.<sup>204</sup> Thus, בפתח עיניים may be a double entendre: Enaim is not only the place where Tamar met Judah, but also her sexual invitation to Judah. Again, we have evidence of Tamar's new active role in the narrative. In addition, in this setting the name בפתח עיניים (lit., "opening of the eyes") is particularly

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<sup>202</sup> Other examples consist of Rebekah's journey to meet Isaac (Genesis 24) and Ruth's venture to the threshing floor to meet Boaz (Ruth 3).

<sup>203</sup> See Robinson I. 1977. *Bepetah Enayim* in Genesis 38:14. *JBL* 96:569.

<sup>204</sup> Classical medieval Jewish commentators also connected the place name עינים to the meaning of "eyes". The Rashbam, in his commentary on 38:14 for example, understands this term to mean a "crossroads", where people are seen and visible to others. Radak follows a similar interpretation.

appropriate and ironic. At "Opening of the Eyes," even though he has sexual congress with her, Judah's eyes are closed as to the identity of his daughter-in-law, and thus he fails to recognize his partner.<sup>205</sup>

Judah's discussion with the woman he assumes to be a prostitute is the lengthiest dialogue in Genesis 38, indicating its rhetorical importance. This dialogue dramatizes Tamar's successful concealment of her identity, by portraying Judah's treatment of the exchange as a discussion about a prostitute's fee. It also connects this encounter with earlier events of the narrative through the wording of Tamar's first question to her father-in-law. The woman who was not "given" seed by Onan (לבלתי נתן) and who was not given to Shelah (לא נתנה) now asks Judah what he himself will "give her" (מה תתן לי). Her control over both the context of their discussion and its course indicates that, unlike earlier in the story, it is she who determines precisely what this male character will give her. Through his double donation of pledge and semen following Tamar's prompting, Judah unwittingly contributes both to the development of the movement towards reproduction and to the resolution of the secondary plot development, when Tamar risks her own life by manipulating the sexual double standards of Judah.

Alter<sup>206</sup> observes that the use of the three quick verbs at the end of 38:18—he gave, he lay, she conceived, is a rhetorical device to emphasize Tamar's single-minded purpose in the act. Both she and Judah see the act as purely pragmatic, with no illusions to emotions or feelings. According to Menn (1997:25), the rapid progress from male to female procreative actions signifies that Tamar has successfully facilitated progress towards generational transition.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> See Mathews 1996:440 and Bos1988:42. See also Good EM. 1988. Deception and Women: A Response. *Semeia* 42:116-117.

<sup>206</sup> Alter R. 1981:8-9. *The Art of Biblical Narrative*.

<sup>207</sup> The use of verb lists to collapse narrative time is common in biblical narrative. See, for example, Gen 25:34, when Jacob gives Esau bread and lentil stew, and Esau "ate and drank and rose and went away and spurned" his birthright.

In summary, at the end of this episode, although there has been substantial progress towards procreation, there is a concealment of this progress with Tamar's return to her father's house and her resumption of widow's dress.<sup>208</sup> The next episode describes the complication of the reproduction narrative.

20. Judah sent the kid to his Adullamite friend to take the pledge from the woman's hand, but he didn't find her.

21. He asked the men of the place where she had been, "Where is the consecrated woman who was at Enaim beside the road?" They said, "There has been no consecrated woman here."

22. He returned to Judah and said, "I didn't find her, and also the men of the place said, "There has been no consecrated woman here."

23. Judah said, "Let her take them, lest we be ridiculed. See I sent this kid, and you didn't find her."

This humorous depiction of Judah's attempt to settle accounts with the woman he mistook as a prostitute appears to be a digression, since it does not forward the plot; nevertheless, it serves a number of important purposes. Judah's lack of awareness comments on the success of Tamar's deception and partially excuses his participation in incestuous sexual relations. The men's denial of the existence of a prostitute (זונה) or "consecrated woman" (קדשה) -we shall deal with these terms more fully later in this chapter-, suggests that Tamar's disguised presence at Enaim was a singular occurrence and thereby substantiates her claims concerning Judah's paternity in the next episode. More importantly, by maintaining the slower pace introduced in the previous section through the inclusion of dialogue, this episode prolongs the suspense concerning the outcome of Tamar's ruse and maintains the focus on the pledge that will eventually resolve the crisis to her life. It also

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<sup>208</sup> It is interesting to compare Tamar's secret measures to bring about conception with Onan's secret measures to prevent conception in the previous section.

introduces the motif of sending an object through an intermediary, repeated in the next section. Whereas Judah's transmission of a kid through Hirah remains unsuccessful, Tamar's transmission of the pledge through an unspecified agent in the next episode proves successful.

24. About three months later, it was reported to Judah, "Tamar, your daughter-in-law, has had illicit intercourse; moreover, she has also conceived through illicit sexual relations." Judah said, "Take her out and let her be burned!"

25. As she was being brought out, she sent to her father-in-law, "By the man to whom these belong I have conceived." She said, "Recognize! To whom does this seal, cord and staff belong?"

26. Judah recognized and said, "She is more righteous than I, because I did not give her to Shelah my son." He never knew her again.

This episode is the dramatic climax of the narrative. It presents the crisis and resolution of the embedded plot tension, involving the jeopardy to Tamar's life. Judah's reaction to a promiscuous woman in his own family is radically different from his reaction to the sexually available woman he meets in a public place. The irony underlying the text is that they are one and the same woman. Tamar overcomes the crisis by sending the pledge and implicating Judah as the male participant for which he condemns her and as the father of the unborn child. The pledge's importance for resolving the crisis to Tamar's life is emphasized by the fact that she breaks her characteristic silence in the narrative only twice, once when she bargains for the pledge (Gen 38:16-18) and again when she produces it to identify Judah in this subsection (Gen 38: 25). The pledge forces Judah to reassess the situation and to acknowledge the comparative worthiness of Tamar's actions in light of his own failure to provide her with a suitable sexual partner in the person of his son Shelah.

This sub-section, ending as it does with Judah's recognition of the relative righteousness of Tamar's actions, his admission of guilt in withholding Shelah and the notice that he refrained from further sexual relations with her, presents the appearance of a conclusion. However, the narrative still needs to provide a resolution to the overarching issue which lies at the root of Genesis 38- the biological emergence of the next generation.

27. At the time of her delivery, there were twins inside her.

28. As she gave birth, one put out his hand, and the midwife took it and tied a red thread on his hand, saying "This one came out first."

29. When he drew back his hand, his brother came out! She said, "What a breach you have made for yourself!" And his name was called Perez

30. Afterwards, his brother, upon whose hand was the red thread, came out. His name was called Zerah.

In this final episode, twin sons are born and named, thereby completing the broken pattern of procreation established in the initial five verses of the narrative. The text has come full circle; Judah now has three sons, just as he had in the beginning of the chapter. The expansive description of this double event of birth and naming in comparison with the formulaic description of the three single births in the first narrative attests to the relative significance of the twins<sup>209</sup>, as does the tortuous route through which they were engendered and brought to life.

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<sup>209</sup> There is however the additional information about the location of Shelah's place of birth included in Gen 38:5, which singles him out as the significant brother of the initial sibling group. Shelah's survival after the deaths of his two elder brothers constitutes a variation on the common biblical theme of the ascendancy of the younger brother, also evident in the birth stories of Esau and Jacob and Perez and Zerach at the end of Genesis 38.

After this study of the narrative structure and rhetorical devices of the Genesis 38 narrative, I now wish to examine in more depth three specific themes which appear to be central to the underlying ideas of the chapter. They include the narrative presentation of prostitution, and the specific character roles of Tamar and Judah as depicted in the story.

### **3.6 Prostitutes and Consecrated Women in Genesis 38 and other Biblical Passages**

Genesis 38 depicts an interaction between a man and a woman he considers a "prostitute." (זונה, Gen 38:15).<sup>210</sup> The narrator himself provides no explicit moral evaluation, either of Judah's eagerness to consort with a prostitute or of the supposed profession of the woman who made herself available by sitting "at the entrance of Enaim which is on the road to Timnah."<sup>211</sup> This apparently nonjudgmental depiction of a casual sexual transaction, challenges the reader to search for other scriptural texts that might interpret this passage.

When examining some other biblical passages it seems that prostitution was part of the social reality in the land inhabited by Israel. For example, the text describes the matter of fact description of Rahab as the "prostitute" (זונה) who befriends the spies during their reconnaissance of Jericho in Josh 2:1 and 6:25. Samson's less than auspicious association with a "prostitute" (אשה זונה) from Gaza in Judg 16:1 is also depicted in a nonjudgmental way. In addition, some Israelite women also practiced prostitution. For example, Jephthah's mother was a harlot (זונה, Judg 11:1). Solomon's judgment of the two

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<sup>210</sup> As I will discuss below, the verbal root זנה includes not only professional prostitution, but also adultery and other forms of illicit sexual activity. In Gen 38:15-18, however, Judah considers Tamar sexually available for a price, so the narrow English translation "prostitution" is appropriate for the word זונה in this context.

<sup>211</sup> Other depictions of women making themselves sexually available by venturing into public places may be found in Prov 7:10-20; 9:13-18; Isa 23:16-17; Jer 3:2-3; Ezek 16:24-25. Significantly, other incidents of illicit sexual activity are also set outside, for example, at the "entrance" (פתח) of the tent of meeting (1 Sam 2:22; cf., Exod 38:8) which recalls the "entrance" (פתח) of Enaim where Judah meets Tamar.

prostitutes in 1 Kings 3:16-28 also points to the fact that this profession was practiced in Israel. Indeed, this story suggests that, far from being outlaws and criminals, prostitutes had recourse to legal arbitration in disputes.

Interestingly enough, biblical law does not prohibit a man from associating with a female prostitute. Even the didactic advice for young men in Proverbs stresses not the immorality of consorting with prostitutes, but the dangers of adultery.<sup>212</sup> Nor are there any explicit strictures against a woman engaging in sexual activity for economic gain, as long as she is not under some form of male familial authority—such as a daughter.

Prostitutes nevertheless occupied marginal positions in society, and their profession was not a respectable one. Especially telling is the outrage Jacob's sons feel because Shechem treated their sister Dinah as a harlot (Gen 34:31). The depiction of King Ahab's disgrace after his death in 1 Kings 22:38, when prostitutes washed in his blood at the pool of Samaria, also illustrates the dishonor of their profession. The law in Deut 23:19 rejecting "the prostitute's fee" (אתנן זונה) for payment of a religious vow simultaneously acknowledges the existence of prostitution in Israel and labels its profits as "an abomination to the Lord your God." Along the same lines, the law in Lev 21:7 prohibiting priests to from marrying prostitutes suggests that other Israelites could marry them, but that these women were unworthy partners for those set apart for the priestly service. Even Genesis 38 hints that Judah considers his own involvement with a prostitute unseemly, when he drops his search for the woman with the pledge rather than risk public ridicule (Gen 38:23).<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> According to Proverbs, consorting with prostitutes waste's one resources (Prov 29:3), but adultery is a far more serious matter. For example, Prov 6:26 states, "For the sake of a harlot, one may forfeit a loaf of bread, but another man's wife stalks one's very life." By contrast, the prophet Hosea unequivocally condemns men who keep company with prostitutes (Hos: 4:14).

<sup>213</sup> It is also possible, that the ridicule Judah imagines might stem not from exposure of his consorting with a prostitute, but from his insistence, counter to local opinion that there had been a prostitute in the area and the scandalous implication that perhaps this woman was actually some other man's wife or daughter. For further discussion of prostitutes in Israelite society and biblical literature see Bird P. 1989. *The Harlot as*

By contrast, biblical law prohibits prostitution by Israelite girls and women under the authority of their fathers in no uncertain terms. The law in Lev 19:29 addresses males with daughters under their protection:

Do not profane your daughter by making her a prostitute (להזנותה), so that the land does not whore (תזונה) and the land is not filled with depravity.

This law apparently prevents fathers from making a living off their daughters' sexuality and from thereby encouraging licentiousness among their family members and neighbors. When read in juxtaposition with Genesis 38, however, this passage may emphasize Judah's mistreatment of Tamar. While Judah is Tamar's father –in-law and not her father, and while he does not deliberately lead her into prostitution for economic gain, he nevertheless forces her to take drastic measures at Enaim. In effect, Judah makes Tamar a prostitute, albeit a temporary one with an unusual purpose, both by failing to provide her with a legitimate sexual partner and by treating her as a harlot during their encounter.

Two other biblical laws deal with wayward daughters under parental control (Lev 21:9 and Deut 22:20-21). In these laws the daughter, not the father, appears as the responsible party, and the prohibited sexual behavior is not necessarily limited to prostitution. The law found in Lev 21:9 addresses the specific case of a priest's promiscuous daughter:

The daughter of a priest who defiles herself by having illicit intercourse (לזנות) defiles her father. She shall be burned (תשרף) with fire.

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Heroine: Narrative Art and Social Presupposition in Three Old Testament Texts. In: Amihai M, Coats GW & Solomon AM (eds). *Narrative Research on the Hebrew Bible Semeia* 46. Atlanta: Scholars Press. pp. 119-39.

The law found in Deut 22:20-21, on the other hand, deals more generally with the case of a bride discovered by her groom to be a non-virgin:

But if this charge is true, the tokens of virginity for the girl not being found, then they shall bring out the girl to the entrance of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her to death with stones. For she has committed folly in Israel, by having illicit intercourse (לזנות) in her father's house, and you shall destroy the evil from your midst.

Both of the laws cited above employ the same verbal root (זנה) found in Gen 38:15 (לזונה) and Lev 19:29 (להזנותה), but in Lev 21:9 and Deut 22:20-21 the broad semantic scope of this root becomes evident. In biblical Hebrew, the verbal root זנה encompasses much more than the exchange of sexual services for compensation indicated by the English phrase "to prostitute oneself." The root זנה includes the concepts of promiscuity and adultery, in addition to prostitution.<sup>214</sup> Lev 21:9 and Deut 22:20-21 prescribe the death penalty for daughters guilty of sexual misconduct and specify a means of execution. In the law concerning the priest's daughter (Lev 21:9) an unspecified type of illicit sexual behavior is punishable by burning. In the law concerning the new bride (Deut 22:20-21), premarital loss of virginity is punishable by stoning.

There are some general correspondences between these two laws and the events in Genesis 38. In the biblical narrative, an anonymous report (Gen 38:24) alerts Judah to his daughter-in-law's sexual activity, apparent from her pregnant condition: "About three months later it was reported to Judah, 'Tamar, your daughter-in-law, has had illicit intercourse (זנתה); moreover, she has also conceived through illicit sexual relations (לזנויים).'" The double use of the root זנה in this report does not necessarily indicate a general knowledge of Tamar's impersonation of a prostitute in Gen 38:12-19, although it does draw the reader's attention back to that earlier section. Rather, in this report the term

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<sup>214</sup> This wide range of negative meanings, perhaps captured best by the somewhat dated English term "fornication," made the verb זנה especially useful as a metaphor for Israel's apostasy. Some examples of this metaphorical usage include Num 25:1-2; Judg 2:17; 8:27,33; Jer 2:20; 3:6; Ezek 6:9; Hos 4:12.

זנה apparently denotes any sexual activity inappropriate for a widow awaiting an arranged levirate marriage. Judah immediately responds by calling for her death as mandated in Lev 21:9 and Deut 22:20-21. The correspondence with the biblical laws superficially suggests that his harsh sentence is appropriate; however, this conclusion does not take into consideration the extenuating circumstances motivating Tamar's behavior, which Judah himself finally acknowledges. Curiously, the specific order that Tamar be burned most vividly recalls the law for the priest's daughter (Lev 21:9), although Genesis 38 nowhere indicates that she is a priest's daughter.

Another issue emerges from the curious wording of Hirah's question to the local men when he attempts to retrieve the pledge (Gen 38:21). He asks, "Where is the consecrated woman (קדשה) who was at Enaim beside the road?" The men use the same expression to describe the woman in their reply, "There has been no consecrated woman (קדשה) here," and Hirah employs this word again when he quotes them in his report to Judah (Gen 38:22). Perhaps the expression "consecrated woman" (קדשה) functions as a loosely synonymous term for female "prostitute" in Genesis 38. There must be at least some semantic overlap between the two words, or Hirah's question would make no sense in his search for the woman Judah employed as a prostitute.<sup>215</sup>

In Deut 23:18 is stated a clear prohibition against the "consecrated woman":

There shall not be a consecrated woman (קדשה) among the daughters of Israel.  
Nor shall there be a consecrated man (קדש) among the sons of Israel.

The prohibition against the "consecrated woman" (קדשה) and her masculine counterpart is unequivocal, but the exact significance of the term remains unclear in the context. Is it

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<sup>215</sup> The view that the two terms are synonymous in Genesis 38 was common in much earlier times, as the translations of the LXX and the Palestinian Targums indicate. In both Gen 38:15 and 38:22, the LXX uses the term "prostitute" as does the Targum Neofiti. For a discussion of the translation of the term קדשה and its equivalent in the LXX, see Dion PE. 1981. Did Cultic Prostitution Fall into Oblivion during the Post-Exilic Era? Some Evidence from Chronicles and the Septuagint. *CBQ* 43:41-48.

synonymous with the term זונה? A closer examination of the issue seems to suggest that the term "consecrated woman" implies some sort of connection with religious aspects of life. The root of the word itself, "to be set apart, consecrated, holy (שקד), seems to indicate a difference between this term and זונה. References to groups of consecrated men (קדשים) in passages from 1 and 2 Kings indicate that at least the prohibited "consecrated man" (שקד) of Deut 23:18 performed in a religious context. 1 and 2 Kings associate these male cult functionaries with the worship of other gods especially Asherah.<sup>216</sup> Ugaritic texts, which repeatedly list a group of male professionals known as *qdsim* or "consecrated men," directly after another group of professionals known as *khnim*, or "priests," reinforce the idea that the "consecrated men" in 1 and 2 Kings and Deut 23:18 are temple personnel.<sup>217</sup> In addition, the appearance of a type of "consecrated woman" (*qadistu*) with ritual duties in Akkadian texts lends credence to this view.<sup>218</sup>

Following this discussion of the "consecrated woman," (שקדשה) in some biblical sources, I wish to examine why Hirah uses this term in his search for the woman Judah considers a prostitute. Modern answers to this question frequently assume that a distinctive conceptual connection between sexuality and religion characterized Canaanite and Mesopotamian cultures. Until recently, biblical scholarship presupposed the existence of a widespread fertility cult involving ritualized prostitution and other forms of sacred sexual activity in various parts of the Ancient Near East.<sup>219</sup> Within this theoretical

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<sup>216</sup> For example, 1 Kings 15:11-12 connects Asa's dismissal of the male cult functionaries (קדשים) with his destruction of idols and his mother's Asherah, and 2 Kings 23:7 mentions that the male cult functionaries (קדשים) had houses within the temple near to the site where women wove tapestries for Asherah.

<sup>217</sup> See the discussion of the Ugaritic *qdsim* in Yamauchi EM. 1973. *Cultic Prostitution: A Case Study in Cultural Diffusion*. In Hoffner HA (ed). *Orient and Occident: Essays Presented to Cyrus H. Gordon on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*. *Alter Orient and Altes Testament* 22, Kevalaer: Verlag. p.219.

<sup>218</sup> For a discussion of the Akkadian *qadistu*, see Westenholz J. 1989. Tamar, *Qedesa*, *Qadistu*, and Sacred Prostitution in Mesopotamia. *HTR* 82:245-265.

<sup>219</sup> For discussions of the fertility cults of the ancient Near East and the role of sacred prostitution in them, see Books BA. 1940. Fertility Cult Functionaries in the Old Testament. *JBL* 60: 227-53.

context, Tamar, possibly a Canaanite herself, may have actually served as a "sacred prostitute" in the fertility religion typical of Canaan and the greater Ancient Near East.<sup>220</sup> Mathews (1996: 447), however, challenges this assertion. In his view, it is unlikely that Hirah would suppose that the woman who made herself available nowhere near any temple was a cult prostitute. Thus it is dubious that Tamar ever intended to pass herself off as anything more than a prostitute. It seems, therefore, that in order to be as polite as possible to the townspeople, Hirah used a euphemism. In private or plain speech, Tamar is a prostitute. In public or polite speech, Tamar is a "cult prostitute."<sup>221</sup>

Some scholars, however, have recently challenged the prevailing assumption that sacred prostitution and other sexual rites were commonplace among Israel's neighbors, pointing to the paucity of documentary evidence outside of the Bible itself for this type of religious expression.<sup>222</sup> According to this approach, a more cautious survey of Babylonian and Assyrian sources reveals merely that the *qadistu* filled important religious functions involving childbirth and that she herself could not marry, bear or

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Patai R. 1959. *Sex and Family in the Bible and the Middle East*. New York. pp.148-52; and Van der Toorn K. 1992. Prostitution. In: Freedman DN (ed). *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* vol.5. New York: Doubleday. pp. 510-513.

<sup>220</sup> The most extensive elaboration of this view may be found in Astour MC. 1966. Tamar the Hierodule: An Essay in the Method of Vestigial Motifs. *JBL* 85:185-96. See also Wright GRH. 1982. The Positioning of Genesis 38. *ZAW* 94:523-529. According to this view only in the final Hebraic version of the story did Tamar's status sink to that of a common prostitute, in keeping with the biblical polemic against the worship of foreign gods.

<sup>221</sup> See also Bird 1989:126 who notes that the Bible often uses euphemisms for both sexual acts and sex organs. Thus words for foot or hand may be used for the phallus. Bird's non-biblical use of this is the use of "courtesan" for the cruder expression "whore." See also Hamill T. 1986. The Bible and the Imagination: A Modest Sounding of Its Harlot's Evaluation. *ITQ* 52:107, who speaks of Hirah's replacing "an ugly word with a holy word."

<sup>222</sup> For examples of this critique see Arnand D. 1976. La Prostitution sacree en Mesopotamie, un mythe historique? *Revue l'histoire des religions* 183:111-15; Oden RA. 1987. Religious Identity and the Sacred Prostitution Accusation. In: *The Bible without Theology: The Theological Tradition and Alternatives to it*, San Francisco: Harper and Row. pp. 131-53. The vast majority of sources referring to ritual prostitution associated with a religious cult in Mesopotamia are in fact dependent on a single report in Herodotus *Histories* 1.199.

adopt children. There is no evidence that this cult functionary participated in any form of ritual sexual activity such as sacred prostitution. This approach therefore reopens the question of the Hebrew term's meaning of קדשה.

To conclude this section, whatever the nature of the "consecrated woman" (קדשה) mentioned in Genesis 38 and in other places in biblical literature, it is interesting to note how the biblical narrator is extremely circumspect in his portrayal of Tamar as a prostitute. He never directly states that Tamar was a prostitute or a consecrated woman. Moreover, he never even asserts that she pretended to be either of these. In fact, Tamar's covering herself with a veil, although necessary for the plot, seems incongruous for someone impersonating a prostitute.<sup>223</sup> Rather than charging that Tamar "played the harlot,"<sup>224</sup> the narrator merely reveals Judah and Hirah's perception of her as prostitute and consecrated woman. Later in Genesis 38, the narrator does not directly express the opinion that Tamar engaged in illicit sexual activity; rather, he presents this as the perception of those who report anonymously to Judah. Even Judah's positive evaluation of Tamar when he compares her behavior to his own entirely sidesteps the issue of whether she acted as a prostitute or a cult functionary. Ultimately, the narrator leaves the reader to judge Tamar's actions at Enaim. This leaves plenty of room for ancient

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<sup>223</sup> There is no other biblical evidence that prostitutes wore veils. Elsewhere in the Bible, Rebecca covers herself with a veil before meeting her future husband (Gen 24:65) Laban's deception of Jacob suggests that Leah was similarly veiled at their wedding (Gen 29:21-25). These instances suggest that the veil was a component of bridal attire. It seems likely therefore, that Tamar's wearing of the veil was not to make Judah think that she was a prostitute. Rather it was intended to prevent him from recognizing her. It is not the veil but Tamar's positioning herself at Enaim (v.14) that made her appear to be a prostitute. See the medieval Jewish commentaries of Rashi 38:15 and Radak 38:15 who take this approach.

On the subject of veiling, it is interesting to note that Middle Assyrian law no. 40, ANET,183, prohibits prostitutes from wearing veils, and the violation of this rule was a capital offence. This same law also forbids the unmarried *qadistu* to wear a veil whereas it requires the married *qadistu* to wear one. For a discussion of veiling in Middle Assyrian Law 40, see Lerner G. 1986. The Origin of Prostitution in Ancient Mesopotamia. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 11:248-54.

<sup>224</sup> This is the interpretive translation of the Hebrew verb (הַתְּהַלֵּךְ) in Gen 38:24 in the King James Version.

interpreters to provide their own exegesis of the text and to attempt to interpret the puzzling behaviors of the protagonists of this narrative.

In the next two sections I shall discuss, in more depth, the narrative perspective of the two major characters in Genesis 38, Judah and Tamar. I will outline their character roles as portrayed in the story and focus on how the text not only describes their individual actions, but how they think and relate to one another.

### **3.7 Tamar's Role in the Narrative-The Marginal Protagonist**

When considering the narrative of Genesis 38 as a whole, Tamar stands out in the text for her heroic ventures to overcome the childless state of the narrative including choosing for herself a sexual partner different from the one designated to her, disguising herself and traveling on her own initiative to meet him, and deceiving him in order to elicit the services of a male earlier denied her. Her achievement of conception signals a resumption of the basic pattern of procreation established in the first five verses, but it simultaneously places her life and the life of her unborn child in grave danger. She overcomes this self-inflicted jeopardy by producing the pledge shrewdly obtained from her unsuspecting father-in-law, thus forcing him to reverse his earlier judgment. Following her resolution of the threat to her life, she successfully brings the narrative to closure by delivering two sons, who receive names and therefore join the genealogical list of male generations. Twice, then, Tamar actively manipulates the plot; once on a biological level to facilitate conception and again on a social and legal level to save her own life and that of her unborn sons and to establish their paternity.

In light of Tamar's centrality with respect to basic plot structure, the general opacity of the biblical text concerning her character becomes all the more striking. The text offers little information about this protagonist, few insights into her reactions to events and motives for action, and no mention of her fate after the birth of the twins. In addition, the events of the narrative are rarely viewed from her perspective, even when she herself is forcing its direction. This discrepancy between Tamar's important function in moving the

plot forward and her marginal position within the narrative focus creates a dynamic tension, which each of the ancient interpreters cited in the next chapter attempts to resolve in one way or another.

A prime example of the narrator's reticence regarding Tamar is his introduction of this character in Gen 38:6. He provides neither ethnic nor genealogical background for her as he did earlier for Judah's wife, the Canaanite daughter of Shua, who plays a much lesser role. Only Tamar's name is disclosed. Significantly, in the course of the narrative only the narrator (Gen 38:11,13) and the anonymous voice of the report to Judah (Gen 38:24) continue to refer to Tamar by name after her introduction. The other characters refer to her in their speech and their thoughts with a variety of relational and occupational terms.<sup>225</sup> She is referred to by Judah as "a wife for Er" (Gen 38:6); "the wife of your brother" (Gen 38:8); and the "wife of his brother" in Gen 38:9. After the death of his sons in Gen 38:11, Judah orders her to remain a "widow" at her father's house, emphasizing her relationship to her dead husband. In Gen 38:14, in the only interior glimpse of the protagonist granted by the narrator, even Tamar defines herself in terms of another character, as the "wife" that should have been given to Shelah: "For she saw that Shelah had grown up, but she had not been given to him as a wife" (לאשה). On the road to Timnah in Gen 38:15 Judah considers her a זונה, an assessment echoed later in the public charge against her in Gen 38:24. When Judah and Hirah attempt to retrieve the pledge in Gen 38:20, she is simply "the woman" (האשה). The narrator's depiction of Tamar through the changing perceptions of the male characters is a rhetorical device which creates a sense of distance from this protagonist and prevents the establishment of a stable identity for her, despite her central role in the plot.

Interestingly enough, the narrator himself also refers to Tamar as Judah's daughter-in-law (כלתו) in Gen 38:11 and 16. By employing this term, which denotes a widely perceived

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<sup>225</sup> See Berlin A. 1983: 60-61. *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*. Sheffield: Almond Press, for a discussion of the various relational terms applied to Tamar. Berlin concludes from the employment of these different relational terms that Tamar is a subordinate character in the narrative. However, she fails to take account Tamar's central role in the narrative plot.

relationship judging from its appearance in the report to Judah in Gen 38:24, the narrator joins the other characters in viewing Tamar in relational terms. In depicting Tamar in this way, the text not only exercises an artistic option but also implicitly judges the male characters' treatment of this woman. The terms that Judah, Onan and Hirah employ in their references to Tamar reveal that they always think of her as someone else's wife and therefore someone else's responsibility. The male characters' attitude towards Tamar suggests that she has no advocate and must act on her own initiative.

The shifting perspectives in Genesis 38 also keep Tamar in the background for most of the narrative. Immediately after the narrator's cursory introduction of Tamar in 38:6, he deflects the focus to Er's and Onan's wickedness and God's punitive intervention. In Gen 38:11 Judah speaks to her for the first time, but the intention of his imperative-"Remain a widow at your father's house"-removes her physically to the periphery of the narrative.

Tamar's lack of presence to this point in the narrative functions artistically to enhance the reader's surprise when she acts on her own initiative after being informed of Judah's journey. It was noted in the previous commentary of the text how the narrator uses a series of verbs describing her decisive actions in Gen 38:14-ותחַסַּר, וְתָכַס, וְתָשַׁב. Tamar is presented at last as an independent agent who alters her appearance and moves herself to the geographical center of the narrative from its periphery.

Although the direct revelation of Tamar's independent actions and private thoughts momentarily strips away the layers of others' perceptions, she is immediately covered again in the opacity of the biblical text's depiction of her. It is Judah's perception of the woman he thinks is a prostitute to which the reader is privy in Gen 38:15, not Tamar's perception of her duped father-in-law. Even the dialogue in Gen 38:16-18, during which Tamar's voice is heard for the first time in the narrative, is initiated by her father-in-law and attests to his lack of perception of the real nature of their encounter. Tamar is again moved from narrative view through the depiction of Judah's unsuccessful attempts to find and pay the mysterious woman at Enaim in Gen 38:20-23.

In Genesis 38:25, Tamar resurfaces from the background of the narrative and seizes control of the plot for the second and final time. But even here, she does so indirectly by sending the pledge and a message from behind the scenes rather than confronting her father-in-law directly.

Curiously and significantly, Tamar is not a central character in the final birth scene. Her presence in the scene is apparent only through the use of possessive pronouns. The scene takes place at the time of "her delivery" and the twins are found in "her womb". She neither "gives birth" nor "names" her sons as did the Canaanite wife in the opening verses of the chapter. Instead, other characters replace her as the active subjects in this final scene in Gen 38:27-30. Her two sons dominate the delivery through various actions: putting forth a hand, withdrawing it and breaking forth out of order. It is the midwife rather than Tamar who plays an active role in the scene. It is she who takes the first infant's hand, ties on the distinguishing thread and comments on the reversal of the birth order.

The shifting perspectives, described above, are not unique to Genesis 38, but rather exemplify a characteristic feature of the poetics of biblical narrative.<sup>226</sup> In this narrative, however, the biblical poetics and rhetoric create a remarkable tension between Tamar's central role in the narrative plot and her marginal presence in much of the narrative surface. It is difficult to think of a comparable example of a biblical hero so lightly celebrated, emerging from nowhere and retreating to nowhere after shaping an important event in the history of Israel –in this case because of the narrative's genealogical connection with the Davidic kings.

In the next chapter this study will examine how ancient interpreters found it difficult to leave such a strong character untouched and take advantage of the sparse portrayal of Tamar's character to recreate her according to their own frames of reading. At times, they

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<sup>226</sup> See Berlin 1983:83. See also Sternberg M. 1985 in "Viewpoints and Interpretations" and "The Play of Perspectives." In: *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading*, Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature Bloomington: Indiana University Press. pp. 129-85.

positively enhance her character, and at times they trim her role in keeping with her marginal status in the narrative focus of the story. These widely divergent strategies are possible because of the gap, between plot and perspective that characterizes Genesis 38.

### 3.8 Judah's Role in the Narrative Though Ironic Eyes

Judah's actions and perspectives receive prominent coverage in Genesis 38. This expansive treatment contrasts with the narrator's sparse treatment of Tamar. The attention to Judah appears quite appropriate in light of the importance of this character within both the larger Joseph story and the even larger history of Israel. Given the status of Judah and the tribe associated with his name, the generally negative evaluation he receives in Genesis 38 is discordant. In this section the depiction of Judah in the text will be examined in more detail.

As a rule, the negative evaluation of Judah in Genesis 38 is expressed rhetorically in the subtle form of ironic understatement and implication.<sup>227</sup> For example, interpreting Genesis 38 within its larger context, the reader can detect ironic judgments in the dispassionate accounts of Judah's behavior in violation of the law and spirit of other biblical passages. His marriage with a Canaanite (Gen 38:2), his sexual engagement with a woman whom Hirah at least identifies as a type of priestess (Gen 38:15-23), and his incestuous relations with his daughter-in-law (Gen 38:15-18), all reflect poorly on Judah in light of biblical prohibitions against precisely such behavior which we have discussed above. In addition, the narrator's choice of the verbal root "to turn aside" (נטה) to describe Judah's association with foreigners and his engagement of a prostitute is suggestive. This root in the causative stem can express the idea of leading someone astray.<sup>228</sup> As such, it

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<sup>227</sup> See Sternberg 1985:186-22 for a discussion of biblical irony and an analysis of a sustained instance of it in the portrayal of Judah's distant descendant David. See Ska JL. 1988. L'Ironie de Tamar Gen 38. ZAW 100: 261-63 for a more specific study of irony in Genesis 38. See also Mann T. 1948. *Joseph and his Brothers*, trans. H.T. Lowe-Porter New York: Knopf.

<sup>228</sup> This meaning appears in Isa 44:20 and Job 36:18.

may imply that Judah erred in his alliance with the foreign population and with a prostitute.

Judah also exhibits a certain hastiness and insensitivity in his perfunctory marriage with the daughter of Shua and his unceremonious solicitation of the woman he takes for a prostitute. In both these instances, the absence of courtship behavior contrasts markedly with other, more extended, biblical encounters with future wives, typically at a well.<sup>229</sup> Judah's lack of deep feeling is also implied through the omission of any mention of mourning after the deaths of his two sons and through the placement of a brief notice that he was comforted, immediately following the report of his wife's death (Gen 38:12). The absence of portrayals of Judah's grief in Genesis 38 is especially striking in contrast to the extended depiction of Jacob's continuous mourning for his son Joseph in the preceding chapter (Gen 37:33-35).<sup>230</sup>

Earlier in this chapter, I examined the use of the word *וירד* in the sentence, "At that time Judah went down (*וירד*) to his brothers." While this verb may indicate a geographical direction of travel, the report of Judah's descent signifies more than an incidental journey detail. As Rashi (Gen 38:1) and other medieval commentaries have noted, the descent implies a moral judgment on this character and hints at a loss of status due to his flawed leadership of his brothers.

The fact that two of Judah's sons are summarily killed by God because of their wickedness raises further questions about their father's character. It is especially appropriate that Judah's son Onan should refuse to act charitably towards his dead brother by providing him with descendants, since Judah himself fails to act charitably towards his

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<sup>229</sup> Compare, for example, Gen 24:10-61; 29: 1-30; and Exod 2:15-22. Robert Alter 1981:47-62 discusses variations on the convention of the betrothal scene at the well and comments on the significance of its absence in certain biblical narratives, although not specifically in Genesis 38. There is actually a brief allusion to a source of water in Genesis 38, in the name of the location where Judah meets Tamar, "the entrance of Enaim" which may also be translated "opening of twin springs." This allusion points to Tamar's importance as a sexual partner and the mother of Judah's twin sons.

<sup>230</sup> Alter 1981: 4-7.

own live brother when he advocates selling him into slavery (Gen 42:21). Also like Judah before him, who participated in the deception of Jacob (Gen 37:31-33), Onan deceives his own father when he only partially complies with the levirate arrangement by taking precautions to prevent conception (Gen 38:9). Judah's evil sons, and especially Onan about whom the text goes into detail, therefore cast a negative light on their father by mirroring his image.

Judah is also portrayed as an unreliable character in Genesis 38, in that he twice fails to follow through with his stated intentions. In the first instance he fails to give Shelah to Tamar even after he has matured and in the second, he fails to deliver his promise of a kid to the same woman he mistakes for a prostitute (Gen. 38:20-23).

Judah's failure to follow through with his intentions in these two instances contributes to the more general portrayal of this character in Genesis 38 as ineffectual. Although Judah acts throughout the narrative in a commanding manner his arrangements and imperatives never have the intended results. Judah's plan for marriage between Er and Tamar is thwarted by divine intervention (Gen 38:6-7); his arrangements for a levirate marriage between Onan and Tamar are subverted by Onan (Gen 38:8-10) and his promise of a levirate marriage between Shelah and Tamar remains unfulfilled. Judah's order that Tamar burn is never carried out because of the implicating evidence of the pledge (Gen 38:24-26). Through these repeated illustrations of Judah's unsuccessful efforts to control his family and to determine the course of events, the narrator uses this rhetorical device to ridicule Judah who would be leader, but cannot rule.

Instead, Judah is ruled by Tamar. Twice she effectively directs his actions. One of the strongest expressions of irony in Genesis 38 therefore consists of the depiction of Judah as the ineffective leader, effectively led by the woman he has misled. The repeated dramatization of Judah's ignorance of his daughter-in-law's identity and plan throughout the latter part of Genesis 38 further emphasizes his lack of effective control over the narrative events. In addition, it imparts an ironic undertone to the narrator's final note

concerning Judah that "he never knew her again" (Gen 38:26), since even as he "knew" her at Enaim, he knew neither her identity nor her intention.<sup>231</sup>

Implicit in the depiction of Judah in the narrative is an element of shame. The humiliation of the family head is also made explicit by the by the public revelation in his involvement of the very act for which he condemns Tamar. Significantly, it is Judah himself who introduces the theme of shame into the narrative, when he instructs Hirah to drop the search for the woman with the pledge to avoid being ridiculed (פן נהיה לבוץ Gen 38:23). We see the further use of the rhetoric device of irony as Judah's attempt to conceal his involvement with this woman to avoid embarrassment ultimately facilitates the public disclosure of his involvement with her, since she consequently retains the pledge. (Gen 38:25).

To conclude this section, the presentation of Judah as a fallible human being in this narrative corresponds to the general tendency of the Bible against idealizing ancestral figures in the Hebrew Bible. This negative portrayal of an important Israelite ancestor, however, proved problematic to early Jewish interpreters of this narrative. At least two of the interpretations, examined in the next chapter, employ creative tactics to reform Judah's character into a more or less ideal ancestral hero, whose particular strengths correspond to the over-arching orientation of each respective interpretation.

### **3.9 Conclusions of the Genesis 38 Narrative**

The issues discussed in this chapter resurface repeatedly in the works of the ancient interpreters to be examined in the next chapter. Ancient interpreters often select one possible direction indicated by the text itself and develop it to the exclusion of other possible directions.

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<sup>231</sup> See Menn 1997: 40-41.

Although the preceding discussion of Genesis 38 provides a foundation for these ancient interpreters, these readers seem to approach the text from their own historical perspectives, with distinctive strategies and hermeneutic agendas. Precisely what these interpreters considered worthy of emphasis or needful of clarification will be examined in the next chapter. These ancient interpreters sometimes read against what appears to be the plain sense of the story of Judah and Tamar in order to realign the narrative with their understanding of the text. They interject material, alter details and even change major aspects of the narrative. This study focuses on the details of emphasis and alteration as well as the search for the inner logic that influences choices made by interpreters. What is common to all these interpretations is that each argues that its distinctive representation of Genesis 38 expresses the narrative's authentic meaning.

## Chapter 4

# The Literary and Rhetorical Portrayal of Prostitution as Portrayed in Genesis 38 in Second Temple and Early Rabbinic Literature

### 4.1 The Judah and Tamar story in the Testament of Judah

The Testament of Judah is part of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs,<sup>232</sup> which deals extensively with the ethical messages left by the sons of Jacob to be handed down to future generations. In the Testaments, each of Jacob's twelve sons addresses his descendants for a final time, imparting them wisdom gained from personal experience. The work's presentation of the ancestors' Testaments parallels biblical instances of the same phenomenon, including most strikingly Jacob's Testament to his twelve sons in Genesis 49. The exact definition and structure of the testament genre remains open to debate<sup>233</sup> but there is general agreement about the literary structure of a particular

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<sup>232</sup> The critical edition used in this study is De Jonge M. 1978. *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Critical Edition of the Greek Text*. Leiden: Brill. This is based on fifteen Greek manuscripts of which de Jonge considers MS b the best. English translations of this work consulted include, Hollander HW. and De Jonge M. 1985. *The Testaments of Twelve Patriarchs: A Commentary, Studia in Veteris Testamenti, Pseudepigrapha, vol.8*, Leiden; Kee HC. 1983. Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. In: Charlesworth JH. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. Garden City New York: Doubleday. pp. 775-828. Introductions to scholarship on the *Testaments* include De Jong M. 1980. The Main Issues in the Study of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. *NTS* 26:508-24 De Jonge M. 1978. *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Critical Edition of the Greek Text*. Leiden: Brill.

<sup>233</sup> For an overview of the testament genre and representatives of it, see Collins JH. 1984. Testaments. In: Stone ME (ed). *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus*. Assen: Fortress. pp. 325-55.

testament. Each testament begins with a biography of the individual patriarch, continues with exhortations about how to live an ethical life and concludes with predictions for the future.<sup>234</sup> In general, the narrative incidents presented in the autobiographical section of the Testaments dramatize particular virtues or vices of the patriarch.<sup>235</sup> These virtues or vices often reappear in the exhortations as behavior to be emulated or avoided, and they are sometimes associated with a particular tribe's future in the prophetic passages as well. The Testaments are therefore fundamentally an ethical treatise, presented as the final words of Jacob's sons to their descendants.

Scholars are not in agreement as to the work's origins and history of redaction. They continue to debate, for example, whether this work was originally composed by a Jewish writer from the Hasmonean period and repeatedly revised by a Christian,<sup>236</sup> or whether

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Testaments bear some affinities to Egyptian instruction literature and apocalyptic literature, although there are differences as well, including the testament's temporal context immediately before the speaker's death.

<sup>234</sup> These three parts are framed by reports of the circumstances of the Testament's delivery and of the patriarch's death. In the Testament of Judah the autobiographical account appears for the most part in T. Jud. 1:3-12:12, the moral exhortations in T. Jud. 13-20 and the predictions in T. Jud. 21-25; these main sections are framed by a note concerning the circumstances of delivery in 1:1-2 and account of the patriarch's death in 26. The most concentrated allusions to Genesis 38 appear within the autobiographical account in T. Jud., 8 and 10-12, although additional narrative material also appears among the moral exhortations and predictions. It should also be noted that the three divisions are not entirely distinct, and not all of the twelve Testaments contain each of these divisions.

<sup>235</sup> Similar employment of biblical figures as exemplars of vices and virtues appears in the Hellenistic work of Philo, who, for example, describes Tamar as "Virtue" in *On Flight and Finding* 27. This practice is related to a larger trend in Greek and Hellenistic literature to personify vices and virtues.

<sup>236</sup> As, for example, Charles argues in his introduction to *Greek Versions of the Testaments*, ix.

this work was originally composed by a Christian from the second century CE who incorporated early Jewish material.<sup>237</sup>

When focusing the study to the Testament of Judah it is important to consider how the specific testament genre influences the retelling of the Genesis 38 narrative. The biblical narrative is recontextualized within Judah's autobiography which he recounts to his sons on his deathbed. This recontextualization is an important rhetorical and exegetical technique which reframes the narrative to present it completely from Judah's perspective alone. This reframing of the story by the narrator of the Testament enables the reader to reconsider some of the moral and ethical issues arising from the text, discussed in the last chapter, in a different light.

It is also important to note that Judah's case is unusual in the Testaments, for unlike his brothers he exemplifies both virtues (obedience and manly courage) and vices (fornication, drunkenness and greed).<sup>238</sup> As I will describe in more detail below, the first part of Judah's autobiography in the Testament of Judah, based on a combination of biblical and post-biblical traditions, illustrates his virtues as a royal leader of his brothers.

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<sup>237</sup> As, for example, De Jonge argues in *The Testaments*: 1978: 116-28.

For surveys of the history of scholarship and date of the *Testaments*, see Bickerman E. 1950. The Date of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. *JBL* 69:245-60; Slingerland HD. 1977. *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Critical History of Research*, SBL Monograph Series 21, Missoula: Scholars Press; and De Jonge M. 1985. The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. *Christian and Jewish: A Hundred Years after Fredrich Schnapp*. *NeTTs* 39:265-75.

<sup>238</sup> In general, the other brothers, exemplify either vices or virtues, not a combination of the two. An exception to the rule is Gad, who exemplifies both strength and anger, although his moral vice is developed more extensively than his physical virtue. A similar imbalance occurs in Judah's case, in that his vices receive extended attention in the exhortation and prophetic sections unlike his virtues.

The second part, based primarily on Genesis 38 and elaborations on that biblical narrative, illustrates his weaknesses, especially those involving women. This Testament reacts strongly and negatively to Judah's relations with women, specifically with his marriage to a Canaanite woman and his incestuous intercourse with his daughter-in-law. Interestingly enough, it makes no attempt to minimize the sexual aspects of the narrative, nor does it attempt to justify his behavior. The emphasis on the sexual irregularities of Genesis 38 contributes to this development of Judah as an exemplar of immoral behavior. This only strengthens the literary effect of the third part of the Testament-Judah's repentance and restoration. Even from this brief summary, it is clear that the Testament of Judah, recontextualizes Genesis 38 within the larger story of Judah's life. Instead of a perplexing digression in the Joseph story as in the biblical text, Genesis 38 becomes the account of a great warrior king's downfall. In order to fully appreciate the particular exegesis of this Testament on Genesis 38, I will first consider how the Testament of Judah depicts Judah as an exemplar of masculine courage destined to be king. This will serve as important background to the later portrayal of Judah in its exegesis of Genesis 38.

The very first section of the Testament of Judah portrays Jacob's appointment of Judah as king over his brothers. Judah writes:

1:4 I was sharp and zealous in my youth, and I obeyed my father's every word.

1:5 and I blessed my mother and my mother's sister.

1:6 And it came to pass when I became a man, that my father Jacob promised me, saying: "You will be king, succeeding in all things."

The theme of Judah's leadership, implicit in the biblical narrative through the naming of David's ancestor Perez at the conclusion of Genesis 38, and through Jacob's blessing of his fourth son with its reference to a scepter and ruler's staff (Gen 49:8-12) becomes explicit from the outset of the Testament.

Judah next recounts his success in various exploits, achieved with divine assistance. For example, in the second section of the Testament of Judah, the patriarch recalls his encounters with a number of animals:

2:1 And the Lord showed me favor in all my works, both in the field and in the home .....

2:4 And I slew a lion and removed a kid out of its mouth. Taking a bear by its paw, I rolled it over a cliff, and every beast, when it turned upon me, I tore it apart like a dog.

After proving himself against beasts, Judah demonstrates his competence in battle; first against a coalition of Canaanites and later against Esau and his sons.<sup>239</sup> Judah's courage and physical dominance over animals and human enemies, his military leadership of his brothers described in the following sections of the testament all mark him as a successful king and a model of masculine virtue, encapsulated by a phrase in the subtitle of this

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<sup>239</sup> T. Jud. 3-7 describes the war against the Canaanites and T. Jud. 9 describes the war against Esau and his sons.

Testament in many manuscripts, "Concerning Manliness."<sup>240</sup> The author's reference to Judah's slaying a lion and killing a bear are clear allusions to the biblical account of David's actions with the same animals in Samuel 1 17: 36. The author of the Testament clearly wishes to build Judah's kingly model on the solid ground of King David.

But interwoven into the account of his early life is foreshadowing of a precipitous change. The next sections of the Testament critique what initially appears to be a positive portrayal of Judah's masculinity and kingship. The following distinctive version of Genesis 38 in this Testament serves as the vehicle through it makes its critique on Judah.

8:1 And I also possessed many flocks and I had as chief herdsman Hirah the Adullamite.

8:2 When I went to him I saw Barsan, the king of Adullam. And he made a drinking party for us, and after persuading me, he gave me his daughter Bathshua as a wife.

8:3 She bore me Er and Onan and Shelah; two of these the Lord killed childless, but Shelah remained alive, and you are his children. (T. Jud 8:1-3)

As I noted in the previous chapter, the first five verses of the biblical narrative focus on Judah's marriage with a Canaanite woman and the birth of their sons, thereby establishing

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<sup>240</sup> These words appear in the subtitle of a majority of manuscripts (MSS b, d, m, k, g, f). The emphasis on manhood begins even in the opening section of the Testament, when his father promises the kingship once "he becomes a man". The virtue of "manliness" is also very important in Greco-Roman philosophy. For example, Aristotle Rhetoric 136a states that prudence and manliness are appropriate virtues for a man.

the expectation that the remainder of Genesis 38 will also deal with procreation. In the version in this Testament however, there are clear alterations of the biblical account concerning what happened after "Judah went down from his brothers" (Gen 38:1), including both contractions and additions that drastically change its meaning and message.

The most significant contraction of the biblical narrative is that this passage pays little attention to the Canaanite woman's conception, delivery and naming of Judah's three sons. Their births are summarized in a single line. The patriarch then proceeds from his sons' birth to his two eldest sons' deaths recounted in greater detail in a later section of the Testament (T. Jud. 10:2-5). Then he connects the story with the present by identifying his deathbed audience as Shelah's offspring, not Perez's offspring one might expect in light of the biblical genealogies.

The cursory treatment of Er, Onan and Shelah's births deflects the reader's attention from the theme of procreation. In fact, the theme of procreation is hardly raised at all in the version of Gen 38:6-30 presented later in the Testament. Although Judah notes that Tamar became pregnant after intercourse with him (T. Jud. 12:4), he fails to mention the anonymous report of her pregnancy (Gen 38:24) or Tamar's charge that he was with child by the man who owned the pledge (Gen 38:25).<sup>241</sup> Most significantly of all, the births of Perez and Zerah are deleted entirely from the narrative in the Testament of

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<sup>241</sup> Rather, she merely sends the pledges to him privately, apparently at a time of her own choosing, and thus humiliates him (T. Jud. 12:5).

Judah. The Genesis 38 narrative has clearly been reworked by this Testament for purposes to be analyzed later in this chapter.

Judah appears in this passage as owner of many flocks and this extra-biblical reference to his wealth seems to emphasize the theme of Judah's success which have previously been discussed. The development of Judah's father-in-law, Barsan, as the king of the Adullamites similarly stresses Judah's elevated status through his association with royalty.<sup>242</sup> This initial meeting between two kings perhaps serves as a transitional motif from Judah's violent encounters with other kings during war to his domestic life during peace.

In addition, the Testament of Judah gives Judah's Canaanite wife a name. In calling her Bathshua and designating her a name, this Testament seems to reflect her important, although negative, role in the Testament's revised version of Genesis 38.

An additional motif in the passage consists of the enemy's king granting of his daughter to the hero at a drinking party. Although Judah has succeeded in defeating his enemies at war, in peace he is ultimately defeated through the wiles of a Canaanite woman. Similarly, the theme of drunkenness, another of Judah's vices, is suggested in this version of the first verses of Genesis 38 through the introduction of the detail of the drinking party. The deceptive wiles of the Adullamite king to destroy Judah through the snare of

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<sup>242</sup> The name Barsan is unique to the Testament of Judah, although the Septuagint calls the king of Gemorra in Gen 14:2, Barsa. Some suggest that his name derives from an Aramaic version of the expression "Shua's daughter" in Gen 38:12 and 1 Chr 2:3 (בת שוּעַ). See Menn 1997:137.

his daughter are most fully elaborated in a narrative passage embedded within the opening exhortations to his sons:

13:4 And I said to my father-in-law, "I will consult with my father and then I will take your daughter." But he showed me a measureless amount of gold in his daughter's name for he was a king.

13:5 And having adorned her with gold and pearls, he made her pour wine for us at the meal, with the beauty of women.

13:6 And the wine distorted my eyesight and pleasure blinded my heart.

13:7 And desiring her, I met her, and transgressed the Lord's commandment and my father's commandment, and I took her as a wife.

13:8 And the Lord repaid me according to the disposition of my heart, because as I took no delight in her children (T. Jud. 13:4-8)

Barsan plots to destroy the very basis of Judah's kingship in this passage, which is his obedience to his father. Like a good son, Judah initially desires to consult with his father, but the Adullamite king distracts him. Appealing to Judah's greed<sup>243</sup>, Barsan shows him his daughter's dowry; relying on the power of wine to pervert judgment, he has his daughter pour at the banquet;<sup>244</sup> and trusting in the seductive charms of feminine beauty,

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<sup>243</sup> Judah's attraction to wealth, which contributed to his sinful marriage with Bathshua, is reiterated in T. Jud. 17:1. According to T. Jud. 19:2 Judah almost lost his sons because of money.

<sup>244</sup> Judah's drunkenness as a factor contributing to his sinful relationship with Bathshua is developed in T. Jud. 11:2; 14:6; and 16:4. The image of the princess pouring wine at the banquet transforms a gesture of hospitality into a stratagem of the enemy. Other literary works from the Greco-Roman period, including the New Testament book of Revelation and the Tabula of Cebes of Thebes, similarly employ the image of a

he presents his daughter in an expensive costume of wealth and pearls.<sup>245</sup> Just as the king planned, Judah's three vices of greed, drunkenness and lust conspire against him, and he violates the commandments of the Lord and his father by taking a Canaanite woman as his wife. The undefeated warrior king thus suffers moral defeat at the hand of the enemy's daughter, who ensnares him with three vices associated with royalty.<sup>246</sup>

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woman offering wine as a negative symbol. Rev 17:1-6 depicts Babylon as a harlot dressed in rich jeweled clothes with a golden cup in her hands full of abominations and the impurities of her fornication. An angel explains that "for all nations have drunk the wine of her impure passion, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her."

<sup>245</sup> The patriarch's vulnerability to the beauty of women, which led to his association with Bathshua is repeated in T. Jud. 17:1.

The Canaanite king's dressing of his daughter in alluring clothing aligns her more closely with Tamar, who dresses deceptively in Genesis 38. Later, we shall see how Tamar is portrayed as a parallel to the seductively and expensively dressed Canaanite woman. Feminine dress and adornment seem particularly sensitive issues for the author of the Testaments.

<sup>246</sup> Judah confirms that kings are particularly prone to greed, drunkenness and lust when he warns his royal descendants against these vices. Drunkenness is particularly mentioned in sections 14 and 18. The Testament of Judah in 14:1, for example, moves to a direct exhortation against the drinking of wine: "**And now, my children, be not drunk with wine**; for wine turns the mind away from the truth, and throws in it the passion of lust." The evils of alcohol are clearly described. What then is the author's conclusion? Should total abstinence be practiced? Here, the Testament is less dogmatic than we may have expected. He writes in 14:7: "**Therefore he who drinks wine needs discretion, my children**, and this is discretion in drinking wine that a man should drink so long as he preserves modesty." It seems that the author here is offering two options as to the drinking of alcohol. One can drink wine in moderation and in fear of God which is acceptable. The other option is to drink wine "immodestly" without restraint which will lead to drunkenness and sin.

However, the Testament also provides a third option -total abstinence. This is the preferred option for the one who knows that his lack of self control will lead him to go beyond the boundaries of "modest" behavior when drinking. He continues in 16: 3-5: "**Otherwise do not drink at all**, in order that you do not sin in words of outrage and strife".

It appears that the Testament of Judah has a very negative attitude towards the drinking of alcohol and its detrimental effects in leading man to sin. It is arguably the first time in Hebrew Literature that a suggestion for total abstinence of wine is proposed for the masses. The particular connection between drunkenness and

Before Judah's encounter with Tamar, the Testament of Judah 10-11 illustrates Judah's loss of masculine authority within his own family to his domineering Canaanite wife and disobedient sons:

10:1 After these things my son Er took as a wife Tamar from Mesopotamia, a daughter of Aram.

10:2 But Er was wicked, and he had a difficulty concerning Tamar because she was not from Canaan. And an angel of the Lord killed him on the third day, at night.

10:3 And he had not known her on the account of the villainy of his mother, for he did not want to have children by her.

10:4 In the days designated for the bridal chamber, I gave Onan to her in levirate marriage; and he also in wickedness, did not know her, though he was with her a year.

10:5 And when I threatened him, he came together with her, but spilled the seed on the ground, according to his mother's command; and he also died in wickedness.

10:6 And I wanted to give her Shelah also but my wife did not permit it, for she maltreated Tamar because she was not of the daughters of Canaan as she was.

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sexual sin will be examined a little later in this chapter as will the possible biblical source for Judah's drunkenness.

11:1 And I knew that the race of Canaan is wicked, but the disposition of youth blinded my heart.

11:2 And when I saw her pouring out wine, I was deceived through the intoxication of wine, and I met her.

11:3 In my absence, she went and took for Shelah a wife from the land of Canaan.

11:4 Realizing what she had done, I cursed her in the anguish of my soul.

11:5 And she also died because of the wickedness of her sons. (T. Jud. 10:1-11:5)

This passage from the Testament of Judah consistently alters the biblical story, presented mainly in Genesis 38:6-11, to depict the patriarch as a passive and anguished observer of his family's behavior. First of all, Er takes his own wife instead of waiting for his father to act as in the biblical story. Then Judah helplessly notes Er's difficulty with Tamar because she is not a Canaanite like his mother,<sup>247</sup> and he explains that his eldest son's wickedness consists of abstention from intercourse with her to avoid having children. This explanation of Er's wickedness, deserving of divine punishment, involves a transfer of Onan's desire to prevent conception onto his elder brother.<sup>248</sup> The unique detail that an

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<sup>247</sup> Er's disdain for Tamar because she is not a Canaanite in this Testament is difficult to understand given the fact that he himself chooses her. The version in Jubilees is much more consistent, in that it depicts Er rebelling against his father's selection of a wife for him because he wants to marry a Canaanite like his mother (Jub 41:1-2). The author of this Testament may want to emphasize Judah's passivity, as well as to stress the patriarch's lack of responsibility for Tamar's actions.

<sup>248</sup> The idea that Er and Onan share the same aversion to having children with Tamar is a common Jewish exegetical tradition. We have already mentioned it in the medieval commentaries of Rashi and Radak in the previous chapter. Ancient interpreters like Jubilees (41:2) also depict Er as refusing to have intercourse with Tamar because she is not a Canaanite. The gap in the biblical narrative concerning the nature of Er's sin is thus filled by repeating a motif already present in Genesis 38.

angel kills Er in the night several days after the wedding corresponds with the Testament's view that Er dies because he abstains from sexual relations.<sup>249</sup>

It is important to note that throughout this expanded form of the biblical narrative it is Judah's Canaanite wife, not the patriarch himself, who is controlling the behavior of their sons. Er refrains from intercourse with Tamar on account of the craftiness of his mother.<sup>250</sup> Onan spills his seed on the ground in accordance with her command and in disregard of his father's threats. Shelah marries the woman of his mother's choice, rather than that of his father. This blame of the woman character corresponds with a general tendency in the Testaments to vilify women as the embodiment of sexuality and its moral ambiguities.

A final important aspect of the version of Gen 38:12 in the Testament of Judah is its creation of a disjunction between the events in the first half of Genesis 38 involving the Canaanite wife and her sons (Gen 38:1-12) and the events in the second half involving Tamar (Gen 38: 13-26). Unlike the biblical narrative which suggests a certain duplicity in Judah's dismissal of Tamar to her father's house, the Testament stresses his sincere intentions towards her. Judah claims that he would have given his third son to Tamar, but that his Canaanite wife prevented him from doing so. Thus, the Testament resolves the ambiguity of the biblical narrative in Judah's favor. However, the overall literary

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<sup>249</sup> The addition of an angel may also soften God's punitive character in the biblical narrative by attributing Er's death to an intermediary.

<sup>250</sup> T. Jud. 10:3. This same motif may be found in Jub 41:2.

structure of the Testament's narrative aims to divide the biblical story into two separate illustrations of Judah's basic character flaws and their consequences.

In summary, whereas the Bible presents Genesis 38 as a double tale of procreation (Gen 38:1-5 and Gen 38:6-30), the Testament of Judah transforms it into a double tale of Judah's fall into temptation, each revolving around his sinful relations with one of the women from Genesis 38. This leads to the concluding section of Judah's autobiography—the episode with Tamar.

12:1 And after these things, while Tamar was a widow, having heard after two years that I was going up to shear the sheep and having adorned herself in bridal array, she sat in the city of Enaim by the gate.

12:2 For it was a law of the Amorites that she who was about to marry should sit publicly by the gate for seven days for fornication.

12:3 Now, having become drunk at the waters of Chozeba, I did not recognize her because of the wine, and her beauty deceived me through the fashion of adornment.

12:4 And turning aside to her I said, "Let me go into you!" And she said to me, "What will you give me?" And I gave her my staff and my armor and the diadem of kingship, and after I went with her she conceived.

12:5 And not knowing what she had done I wanted to kill her; but secretly sending the pledges, she humiliated me.

12:6 And when I called her I heard also the words of mystery that I spoke while lying with her in my drunkenness. And I could not kill her because it was from the Lord.

12:7 But I said. "Perhaps she acted deceitfully, having received the pledge from another woman."

12:8 But I did not again approach her until my death, because I had done this abomination in all Israel.

12:9 And those who were in the city said that there was no prostitute in the gate, for having come from another region she sat for a short while in the gate.

12:10 And I supposed that nobody knew that I had gone into her.

12:11 And after this we came into Egypt, towards Joseph, because of the famine.

It is interesting how the Testament of Judah uses particular literary and rhetoric techniques to build the reader's sympathy for the character of Judah, while at the same time denigrating the personality of Tamar as portrayed in this narrative. After a respectable period of two years, during which Judah presumably mourned his Canaanite wife,<sup>251</sup> Tamar learns about her father-in-law's travels from an anonymous source as in Gen 38:13. However, this narrative presents quite a different reason for Tamar's public solicitation of sexual services. As we have seen in the Testament of Judah, this patriarch does not promise Shelah to her as in the biblical narrative. He planned to give him to Tamar but it is his wife who prevents him doing so and she makes other arrangements in his absence. Instead, Tamar's behavior merely follows an Amorite law specifying that all women who were soon to marry should prostitute themselves at the city gate for seven days. As such, Tamar becomes a קדשה –consecrated woman as in the Mesopotamian

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<sup>251</sup> This unique detail in the Testament of Judah amends the patriarch's unfeeling character in the biblical narrative by suggesting a period of mourning and abstinence between Judah's involvement with the two women of Genesis 38.

custom described by Herodotus Histories 1.119.<sup>252</sup> She thus blatantly violates a Pentateuchal law (Deut 23:18), and obeys instead the perverse law of the Amorites.<sup>253</sup>

The depiction of Tamar as a bride, perhaps in keeping with the double meaning of כלתו (daughter-in-law and bride) suggests that perhaps Tamar intended to marry Judah. The motif eliminates the idea that she intentionally dressed as a prostitute, and it also removes the charge that Judah responded to a prostitute. However, this change of the biblical narrative does more to strengthen our sympathy for Judah than it does to bolster the moral actions of Tamar. Judah is again tempted by an immoral temptress who causes him to succumb to vice yet a second time.

It is interesting to note that both the incidents of Bathshua and Tamar, connect the drinking of wine to sexual sin. This links the Testament of Judah narrative to two of the other stories I have focused on in my study; Noah's drunkenness (Gen 9:20-27) and Lot and his two daughters (Gen 19:30-38). The portrait of Judah as a drunkard is clearly stated in Testament of Judah 12:3: “**Now having become drunk at the waters of Chozeba**, I did not recognize her because of the wine, and her beauty deceived me through the fashion of the adorning.” It is interesting that the biblical story itself in Genesis 38:15 ascribes the fact that Judah did not recognize Tamar to her disguise, rather than to Judah’s drunkenness. Later in 12:6, Judah describes his drunken state as he is

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<sup>252</sup> The Testament of Judah, therefore, presents the widespread view in biblical scholarship, which we have described earlier, that ritual prostitution was common in the Ancient Near East.

<sup>253</sup> Tamar is thus also guilty of the sin described in Testament of Abraham 7:5 of "not giving heed to the law of God, but to commandments of humans."

with her: “And when I called her I heard also the secret words that I spoke in my drunkenness while sleeping with her.” Clearly the author of the Testament has a strong message to make about the evils of the drinking of alcohol as a cause for sin, with or without direct proof from the biblical text itself.<sup>254</sup> Likewise, the abstinence from wine is seen as the repentance for sexual sin, as noted in the confession of Reuben and as enabling man to refrain from sexual sin, as seen in Joseph’s battle against the advances of Potiphar’s wife.<sup>255</sup>

Are there any biblical allusions to Judah's drunkenness? The portrait of Judah as a drunkard may also have been motivated by some puzzling phrases in Jacob's blessing of his son. In Gen 49:11-12a, Jacob states concerning Judah, "Tying his foal to the vine, and to the choice vine his donkey's colt, he washed his clothing in the wine and in the blood of grapes his vesture; his eyes are red with wine." The many references to vine and wines

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<sup>254</sup> This theme is reiterated in the Testament of Judah 31:1. See also the Testament of Reuben 1:7-10, for example, where Reuben describes how he sins by defiling his father’s bed, Jacob, by lying with his concubine Bilhah. Reuben details the punishment he receives and his steps in repentance which include abstaining from wine. See also the Testament of Joseph 3:1-6 where Joseph resists the advances of the wife of Potiphar and uses the abstinence from alcohol as a tool in his battle against her. See also Philo, Abraham 134-135 where the author attributes to “strong drink” the sins of Sodom. In his treatise here “On Drunkenness”, Philo develops the theme of the evils of strong drink.

<sup>255</sup> Other authors of Second Literature texts also connect the drinking of wine with sexual sin. Ben Sira, for example, makes the connection in 9:9, “Never dine with another man’s wife nor revel with her at wine;” See Wieder pp.156-165 who compares Proverbs 23:29 which describes the effects of wine in terms of woe, wounds and illness, and Ben Sira 23:29 who in his view extols temperate drinking in terms of health and joy. See also Ben Sira 31:25-26 and 29-30. Midrashic literature particularly develops the connection between the excesses of drinking wine and sexual sin. See Midrash Tanhuma Noah 13, Tanhuma Noah 21, Genesis Rabba 36:5, Leviticus Rabba Shemini 7, Leviticus Rabba 12, Tractate Kala Rabbtai 2:8. This theme develops in Talmudic Literature see Talmud Babli Ketubot 65b, Babylonian Talmud Berachot 63a.

in these verses, especially to his bloodshot eyes, suggest that Judah consumed alcohol liberally.

In addition to drink, Tamar seduces Judah with her feminine beauty-"and beauty deceived me through the fashion of adornment" (T. Jud 12:3). This again has no basis in the biblical text which simply indicates that she concealed her identity when "she wrapped herself"(וּתְתַעֲלֶף) in a veil. However, the Septuagint translates this word as "she beautified her face" as to other ancient interpreters.<sup>256</sup> Clearly the Testament wishes to emphasize how Tamar manipulated her looks in order to heighten Judah's desire and to seduce him.

The rhetorical presentation of the dialogue between Tamar and Judah, a rare instance of reported dialogue in the Testament, aims to further the particular depiction of the characters as previously presented in this retold narrative. After Tamar asks what he intends to give her, Judah answers non-verbally by immediately surrendering to her significant possessions related to his status as king. There is no indication here that Judah intends these items as a surety for later payment, nor is there any mention of Hirah's search for the mysterious woman to attempt to retrieve them through the payment of a kid. Rather than the portrayal of Tamar asking for the pledge items as in the biblical narrative, in the Testament it is Judah who voluntarily surrenders the symbols of his royal authority to a woman engaged in impure behavior.<sup>257</sup> This rhetorical presentation

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<sup>256</sup> Similarly, T. Onq. Gen 38:14 translates the Hebrew verb וּתְתַעֲלֶף into Aramaic as וַאִיתְקַנְנָה ("she adorned herself"). These translations of the verb are supported by the usage of the root עֲלַף in Cant 5:14, which reads, "his loins are ivory work, adorned (מֵעֲלֵפָת) with sapphires."

<sup>257</sup> In Jub 41:11 as well, Judah, rather than Tamar, suggests the three items.

heightens sympathies for Judah who, having being seduced by an immoral woman, strips himself of his royal status. The significance of this transfer is explicitly confirmed later in his exhortations, when he identifies his staff as the support of his tribe, his armor as his power, and his diadem as the glory of his kingship (T. Jud 15:1-3).

When focusing attention to last section of the Testament (T. Jud 8-12) one detects drastic alterations compared to the biblical narrative. Judah's positive comparison of Tamar's behavior with his own in Gen 38:26 is eliminated. The concept of "righteousness" is never associated with this temptress.<sup>258</sup> An even more fundamental change is the deletion of any reference to the births of twins in Gen 38:27-30. Just as the author greatly expands the first part of Genesis 38 to portray Judah's defeat at the hands of a woman, so he abbreviates the second part to accomplish the same end. Rather than portraying the end of Genesis 38 as the means through which royalty emerges, in the Testament Judah's sexual union with Tamar precipitates this warrior king's fall from the throne and nearly terminates his dynastic lineage.<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> Immediately after Judah recounts his recognition that he had sexual relations with his daughter-in-law, he exhorts his sons to perform the "righteous decrees" of the Lord (T. Jud 13:1). It may be that the root meaning of the verb "she was righteous" (צדקה) that Judah uses to describe Tamar in the biblical narrative is displaced in the Testament of Judah to Judah's exhortation of his sons to righteous behavior.

<sup>259</sup> In both Genesis 38 and in the Testament of Judah, there is a threat to Judah's lineage, but whereas in the biblical the threat is biological, due to the failure of Judah's sons to procreate with Tamar, in the Testament the threat is moral, since the king has disobeyed his fathers' and God's commandments and therefore has lost his claim to royalty. In the biblical narrative Tamar rights the problem of childlessness through her ruse, whereas in the testament her ruse is one of two sexual ordeals that Judah fails. In the Testament, the crisis of childlessness is resolved through Judah's repentance and acts of penance.

In the final portions of the Testament, Judah's expresses his recognition of his error and his repentance for his sins. He abstains from meat and wine until his old age and experiences no merriment (T. Jud 15:4; 19:2). In addition, his father Jacob intercedes on his behalf through prayer (T. Jud 19:2). Eventually, through these means Judah receives divine pardon for the sins he committed (T. Jud 19:3-4).

In conclusion, in the literary context of the Testament of Judah, the story told in Genesis 38 is divided and reshaped into two parallel narratives illustrating the seduction and defeat of a successful warrior king. The two women of Genesis 38, one a Canaanite and the other a relative, accomplish this defeat, succeeding where their male counterparts failed. Judah's temporary loss of royal status through his association with the women of Genesis 38 teaches him to reassess his strengths and weaknesses and become a more wise and humble human being. Through Judah's exhortations to his descendants, this narrative becomes a cautionary tale for the common man regarding the wiles of women and their power to accomplish the destruction of even a mighty king.

It is worthwhile considering the motivation of the author of this Testament in interpreting the Genesis 38 narrative in the way he does. The combination of the motifs of drunkenness and the seduction of women in the Judah and Tamar narrative seem to point to parallel themes found in ancient Hellenistic novels. In particular, a close comparison exists between Judah's exploits and character as depicted in the Testament of Judah and Heracles, one of the most popular and enduring characters from Greek legend and

literature.<sup>260</sup> Indeed, the general typological correspondence between the Greek hero and the Jewish hero is strengthened by the fact that their legendary biographies hold a number of specific narrative motifs in common and raise several identical themes. The comparison between these two heroes may further intimate why the Testament interprets Genesis 38 as it does and may reveal nuances of the revised story of Judah and Tamar that would otherwise be lost on modern readers.

One prominent theme associated both with Judah and Heracles is the theme of kingship. In Greek literature from the Hellenistic and early Roman periods, Heracles is cast as king over all Greece-or even over the entire world.<sup>261</sup> Similarly in the Testament, Judah is king over his brothers and his descendants are destined to rule Israel in future generations. Interestingly enough, the theme of lost kingship is also present in both narratives. Heracles lost the kingship intended for him, while Judah in the Testament narrative fall's from royal status. Another common motif between these two heroes is their copious alcohol consumption and ardent sexual passion. The Testament of Judah, as has been

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<sup>260</sup> The popularity and endurance of Heracles in literature from the time of Homer through the Hellenistic period implies that his life and character were in some way paradigmatic for the Greeks and those who followed in their cultural and literary wake. Because of this paradigmatic quality, Heracles may be employed as a representative of some of the literary patterns and cultural values typical of the Hellenistic world within which the Testament of Judah emerged. For a discussion of the multifaceted depictions of character of Heracles in Greek and Roman literature, as well as in literature from later periods of western civilization, see Galinsky GK. 1972. *The Heracles Theme: The Adaptations of the Hero in Literature from Homer to the Twentieth Century*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

<sup>261</sup> See for example, Dio Chrysostom *Discourses* 1.59-61, where Heracles is the king not only of Argos, but of all Greece and even the entire world, since his shrines may be found from the farthest point east to farthest point west. See also Pseudo-Lucian *The Cynic* 13, where Heracles is the master of both land and sea.

shown, depicts the patriarch drunk from too much wine more than once and develops the dangers of wine as one of its central moral themes. Similarly the description of Heracles' consumption of wine provides the occasion for reflection on the effects of wine in general, in much the same way that Judah's intoxication does in the Testament of Judah. Finally, both heroes have a propensity towards promiscuous sexual behavior. The explicit development of Judah's relations with the Canaanite woman and Tamar as a sequential repetition of his fundamental weakness to feminine beauty is unique among the sons of Jacob as portrayed in the Testaments. Similarly in Greek thought, Heracles is the great lover, who experienced more of desire and its fulfillment than any other man.<sup>262</sup>

These similarities suggest that Judah's character in the Testament of Judah may have been developed as a rough parallel to the Greek hero. The fact that the figures of Judah and Heracles appear in larger cultural discussion about the same issues further collaborates this hypotheses.

It is appropriate to conclude this section with a discussion about **how** the Genesis narrative is presented in the testament. The particular genre of "testament" exerts a particular rhetorical and literary impact on the interpretation of the Genesis 38 text. Firstly, it introduces a consistent narrative point of view. As noted in the previous chapter, the perspective in the biblical text switches between the narrator and various

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<sup>262</sup> Heracles' own wife Deianeira offers this assessment of the hero in Sophocles *Women of Trachis* 459-60. Elsewhere in the same work, she describes Heracles' passionate nature as a disease (445). Interestingly enough, in the comic portrayals of Heracles, the hero's amorous affairs are associated with his consumption of wine, as is the case with Judah in the Testament of Judah.

characters and this technique sets up a complicated dynamic. It aligns the reader's sympathy with Tamar even though she remains marginal to the narrative focus, and it implies an ironic attitude towards Judah even though he is more prominently featured. The Testament resolves this tension between sympathy and perspective. The single voice of Judah, sincerely recounting his flawed life to his offspring, eliminates both the biblical author's implied support for Tamar and his ironic attitude towards Judah. Instead, in this Testament Judah himself bids for his descendants' sympathy and respect-and by extension for the general reader's sympathy and respect-by fully disclosing his sincere motives, his honest failings and his deep remorse, and by portraying the actions and motivations of the women in Genesis 38 in unflattering detail.

It is interesting to note that this genre of writing may borrow elements from the narrative technique of the Greek epic. In Achilles, Tatiush's novel, the hero himself is responsible for narrating the whole story as does Judah in the Testament. The literary prototype of the first person narrative is Odysseus' account to the Phaeacians of his fantastic adventures among the lotus-eaters and Cyclopes.<sup>263</sup> Thus, we can note the parallels in the ancient Greek novel of both motifs and the particular literary genre of the testament literature.

The context of Judah's testament to his sons also provides a moral justification for the retelling of a scandalous biblical story. The didactic purpose of its retelling insures that Genesis 38 will not be taken as a titillating tale but a pedagogic tool for instruction of the next generation. The testament genre, therefore, helps transform what appears to be a

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<sup>263</sup> See Haag T. 1983:10 in *The Novel in Antiquity*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

morally ambiguous biblical narrative into a bearer of moral truth. This transformation occurs even though Genesis 38 is used in a discussion of negative behavior to be avoided rather than positive behavior to be emulated.

However, besides retelling the story from Judah's perspective the author of the Testament uses other narrative techniques and additions to further the reader's sympathy for Judah's actions. Judah is portrayed as being drunk, having twice been deceived by the wiles of women. He is not depicted as having drunk any wine in the biblical narrative. By this narrative expansion, the author of the Testament is perhaps suggesting that Judah is really not responsible for his actions in the story. He was not fully in control of himself at decisive points in the narrative. In addition, the switching of blame for not giving Shelah to Tamar from Judah to his Canaanite wife is a further attempt by the author to soften the criticism of Judah's behavior in the story. Furthermore, the author of the Testament depicts Tamar as a קדשה-a consecrated harlot following Amorite law- rather than a common זונה. This presentation of Tamar seems to be an attempt by the author to portray both Tamar and Judah in a more positive light. Tamar does not intend to be a common prostitute nor does Judah approach her as such. It seems clear that the author of the Testament, though not denying Judah's failings in the story, makes every effort to improve his character portrayal as is befitting of an antecedent of King David.

#### **4.2 Jubilees 41-Presentation of the Narrative of Judah and Tamar**

There are many extra-biblical motifs in Jubilees that are shared with the ones already discussed in the Testament of Judah. As such, the discussion of Jubilees will be brief. These similarities include:

- a) the identification of Hirah as Judah's shepherd (T. Jud. 8:1; Jub. 41:14)
- b) the naming of Judah's Canaanite wife, even though the name is different in each source (Bathshua in T. Jud. 8:2, Bedsuel in Jub. 41:7 )
- c) the specification of Tamar as the daughter of Aram (T. Jud. 10:1; Jub. 41:1)

- d) the portrayal of Judah's sincere desire to give Tamar to Shelah in marriage (T. Jud. 10:6; Jub. 41:7)
- e) the Canaanite woman's role in preventing Shelah from marrying Tamar (T. Jud. 10:9 Jub. 41:7)
- f) Tamar's beautification of herself before meeting Judah (T. Jud. 12:1; Jub. 41:9)
- g) the transfer of the choice of pledge items from Tamar to Judah (T. Jud. 12:4; Jub. 41:11)
- h) the clear identification of Judah's sin with Tamar as incest (T. Jud. 13:1; Jub. 41:23)
- i) the depiction of Judah's penitence and the motif of supplication for forgiveness (T. Jud 15:4; Jub.41:23)
- j) the notice that Judah received divine forgiveness (T. Jud 19:3; Jub. 41:25)

These similarities have led some scholars to consider whether Jubilees may have been a source for the author of the Testament of Judah.<sup>264</sup> In any event, although the narrative additions are similar, Jubilees lacks the particular literary and rhetoric effects, noted in the previous section, that the particular genre of "testament" provides.

### **4.3 Targum Neofiti-Interpretation of the Narrative of Judah and Tamar**

Targum Neofiti, as has been discussed in more detail earlier in this thesis, is an expansive Aramaic translation of the Pentateuch. It contains additions of plot and dialogue at the climax of the story of Judah and Tamar (Gen 38:25-26) that completely recast the narrative as an illustration of the concept of "sanctification of the divine name." Genesis 38 becomes a story of divine providence, and its characters are reformed into exemplars of ethical behavior under duress. The goal of this section is to detail the literary and rhetorical interpretation of Genesis 38 that is accomplished in this work through its non-biblical narrative expansion at the pivotal point of the story.

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<sup>264</sup> See Menn 1997:164. Similarly there are elements in both Jubilees and the testament that correspond to features of the Septuagint's translation of Genesis 38 into Greek, possibly indicating a common dependence on this translation.

I first consider the biblical text on which the narrative expansion is based. Judah's command in Gen 38:24 that his daughter-in-law be executed by burning immediately follows the report that she is pregnant due to illegitimate sexual activity and leads up to the swift reversal in Gen 38:25-26:

As she was being brought out, she sent her to her father-in-law, "By the man to whom these belong I have conceived." She said, "Recognize! To whom do this seal, cord and staff belong?" Judah recognized and said, "She is more righteous than I, because I did not give her to Shelah my son." He never knew her again.

By contrast, the presentation of the events of Gen 38:25-26 in Targum Neofiti is dramatically augmented with additional elements of plot and dialogue lacking in the Hebrew text:<sup>265</sup>

Tamar went out to be burned in the fire, and she sought the three witnesses but did not find them. She raised her eyes to the heights and said, "I beseech mercy from before you, Lord. You are he who answers the oppressed in the hour of their oppression. Answer me in this hour which is the hour of my distress, O God who answers the distressed. Illumine my eyes and give me the three witnesses. And I will raise up for you three righteous ones in the valley of Dura: Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. When they go down into the burning fire, they will sanctify your holy Name."

Immediately the Lord heard the voice of her prayer and said to Michael, "Go down and give them, his three witnesses, to her." Her eyes were illumined and she saw them.

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<sup>265</sup> The translation used here that of McNamara M. 1992. *Targum Neofiti I: Genesis*. Vol. 1A of *The Aramaic Bible*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press.

She gave them to the judge<sup>266</sup> and said to him, "The man to whom these belong-by him I am pregnant. As for me, even if I am burned I will not identify him. But my Witness<sup>267</sup>, who is between him and me, he will place in his heart the willingness to see them in this hour, and he will redeem me from this great judgment."

Immediately Judah rose to his feet and said, "I beseech you, brothers and men of my father's house, listen to me. It is better for me to burn in this world with extinguishable fire, so that I do not burn in the world to come which is the fire that consumes fire. It is better for me to be ashamed in this world which is a passing world, so that I am not ashamed before my righteous fathers in the world to come. Listen to me my brothers and my father's house, with the measure that a man measures it will be measured to him, whether a good measure or a bad measure. And happy is every man whose deeds are revealed. Because I took the garment of Joseph, my brother, and dyed it with the blood of a goat and said to Jacob, 'Recognize! Recognize! Is this your son's garment or not?' now it is said to me, 'The man to whom these, the signet ring, the cord, and the staff, belong-by him I am pregnant.' Tamar, my daughter, is innocent. By me she is pregnant. Far be it from Tamar, my daughter-in-law-she is not pregnant with sons' through illicit intercourse."

A voice<sup>268</sup> went out from heaven and said, "Both of you are innocent. From before the Lord is the decree."

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<sup>266</sup> The text has a single "judge" (דיינא) which a later scribe changed to the plural "judges" (דייניא) by adding the letter ך above the line. See Diez M. (ed). 1968. *Neophyti I Targum Palestinense MS de la Biblioteca Vaticana*. Madrid: Consejo.

<sup>267</sup> The word "witness" could also be read "the witnesses" or even "his witnesses," but God is clearly the subject of the verbs in this sentence.

<sup>268</sup> Targum Neofiti has the spelling of ברם קלא which literally means "a daughter of a voice," as it appears in all the other Palestinian Targums.

And Judah recognized and said, "Tamar my daughter-in-law is innocent because I did not marry her to Shelah, my son." And he did not know her again.

This passage could not be mistaken for a literal translation of the Hebrew text of Gen 38:25-26. There are clearly many additional movements in the Neofiti text. The loss of the three items, for example, elicits an extended prayer from Tamar. Divine response through an angelic intermediary is immediate. Tamar once more places her life in danger with her refusal to shame her father-in-law. Judah responds immediately with a public address which he employs the rhetorical device of aphorisms to reveal his willingness to accept punishment for his misdeeds. He confesses to not one but two sins, and clears Tamar of the charges against her. Both apparently would have been burned for sexual relations, but a voice from heaven intervenes.<sup>269</sup>

In the following section, I intend to discuss the component parts of the narrative expansion in Targum Neofiti and focus particularly on the rhetorical devices use in formulating this new interpretation of the climax of Genesis 38. In addition, I show how many details of the narrative expansion work together to provide a thematic interpretation of the characters and events in Genesis 38 in terms of the phrase "sanctification of the divine Name."

### **4.3.1 Witnesses: Lost and Found**

The first addition to the plot is Tamar's inability to find the three items which she had cleverly procured from her father-in-law. The new direction of the story is highlighted by the use of a different legal term to designate the personal items that Judah gives to Tamar. The biblical text uses the term "pledge" (ערבון), designating a legal security for a

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<sup>269</sup> This basic structure is found in all the Palestinian Targums although Tg.Onq. lacks Tamar's statement of willingness to burn rather than identify Judah, and the order of the elements in Judah's speech varies from Targum to Targum. This situation suggests stages in the development of the narrative expansion, although many of the differences may be due simply to idiosyncratic oral presentations of the same material.

debt. In Genesis 38, Judah thinks that he surrenders the item only until he pays for the prostitute's services. The Targum introduces the term "witnesses" (שהדי , סהדי), a subtle rhetorical device, which guides readers from the business of prostitution to the semantic world of legal courts and justice which permeates the drama of the narrative expansion.<sup>270</sup> The introduction of witnesses also points forward to the unexpected appearance in Tamar's vow of the three saints at Dura who, by their willingness to die rather than worship an idol, attest to the importance of their God and become witnesses to his power to save. Finally, the term anticipates the intervention of the divine Witnesses of all things, in whom Tamar places her trust in her statement before the court.

Despite the clear deviation from the biblical text initiated by the introduction of the lost items, a number of midrashic sources besides the Palestinian Targums specifically connect this motif to a feature of the Hebrew consonantal text. These sources articulate a secondary interpretation of the letters of the first verb of Gen 38:25 (מוצאת). In addition to reading the verb as derived from the Hebrew root "to go out" (יצא), which is the root indicated in the masoretic pointing,<sup>271</sup> each of these sources also contains a secondary reading of the same verb from the Hebrew root "to find" (מצא).<sup>272</sup>

The exegetical conclusion that Tamar loses the items and then finds them is incorporated into the Targum Neofiti as well as into all the Palestinian Targums. However, rabbinic exegetes had to exercise considerable creativity in resolving the problem they introduced in interpreting the Hebrew verb (מוצאת) as "she found" and understanding that verb as "she did not find." They interpret this by God intervening to replace the original items. For example, the following quote in Midrash Tanhuma:

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<sup>270</sup> This shift relieves Judah of the appearance of an arbitrar and hasty family member who sentences Tamar to death without questioning her. It is interesting to note that the term "three witnesses" is one more than the two generally required to establish a point of fact in court, although here the witnesses are inanimate objects. Targum Pseudo-Jonathan employs the Aramaic word משכוניא or pledges.

<sup>271</sup> The MT pointing מוצאת defines this verb as a passive participle from the root "to go out."

<sup>272</sup> See Midrash Tanhuma Vayeshev 9:17; Midrash Rabba 85:11 and later sources including Midrash Hagadol Gen 38:25.

As she was going out, she sought the pledge and did not find them (the three items). In that hour, she raised her eyes to the heavens. Immediately, the Holy One, Blessed Be He, sent (שלה) her others.<sup>273</sup>

This version of the tradition maintains a tenuous link with the biblical text by employing the verbal root "to send" שלה from Gen 38:25 in its description of God's delivery of mysterious "others" in response to Tamar's appeal for divine assistance.

Having discussed some of the exegetical traditions that lie behind the motif of the lost and found in pledge in Targum Neofiti, it is necessary to ask how this motif functions in the narrative expansion itself. This rhetorical device aims to heighten the dramatic tension of the narrative by placing Tamar's life in even greater danger than in the biblical story. This heightening of the climax of a story is a common rhetorical technique within Aggadah, pointing to its creative, folkloric nature and its delight in the dynamics of narrative. A similar attenuation of the climax appears when Tamar places herself in danger a second time by refusing to identify her father-in-law.<sup>274</sup>

But even more significantly, this motif accomplishes a basic transfer of power over the plot's forward movement from its human protagonist in the biblical version to its divine overseer in the Neofiti version. The same transfer of narrative control manifests itself once again when the voice from heaven intervenes and asserts that the matter was "from before the Lord." Through the introduction of the lost and found pledge, Genesis 38 becomes a story of divine guidance in history. The divine presence, which is strangely absent after the initial swift executions of Judah's two wicked sons, reasserts itself, this time ultimately to save two righteous people from execution.

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<sup>273</sup> Tanhuma Vayeshev 9:17.

<sup>274</sup> Another example of this technique may be observed in the midrashic traditions concerning the delay of the exodus while Moses searched for Joseph's bones.

The loss of the three items in Targum Neofiti also initiates a pious transformation of the character of Tamar, whose cunning and strength in the biblical narrative are replaced by gentler, more comfortable characteristics. In the Targum, Tamar's careful procurement of Judah's personal items proves insufficient, and she loses control over the narrative. The plot development provides the opportunity to portray her under duress. In this revision of the biblical narrative, Tamar responds to crisis with prayer. It is to this prayer that I now turn, to explore more fully who she has become in this targumic version of the story.

### 4.3.2 Tamar's Prayer

Under threat of death in Targum Neofiti, Tamar assumes a common prayerful posture when she raises her eyes to the heights.<sup>275</sup> Perhaps the motif of lifting the eyes to heaven, which introduces Tamar's prayer in Targum Neofiti, derives from a particular understanding of the place where Tamar sat- פתח ענייִם (Gen 38:14). Following Genesis Rabba this place, which is not otherwise mentioned in biblical literature, may be taken as a phrase which indicates that she lifted her "eyes" (עֵינַיִם) to the "gate" (פֶּתַח) to which all eyes appeal for help.<sup>276</sup>

Tamar's prayer consists of three parts: an address, which includes a description of the nature of God to whom she prays; a petition for help in her present crisis; and a vow,

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<sup>275</sup> All the Palestinian Targums assert that Tamar raised her eyes to heaven in prayer and present a version of her petition. For another example of the prayerful gesture of raising the eyes, see the explanation in Targum Neofiti Gen 29:17 that Leah's eyes were "weak" (רַכּוֹת) because she constantly raised them in prayer to request that she be married to Jacob. Similarly, Targum Neofiti Gen 24: 63 maintains that that Isaac's purpose was to pray when he went out to the field and lifted his eyes before meeting Rebekah. Tamar's raising her eyes, we shall also examine, highlights the importance of sight and eyes in Genesis 38.

<sup>276</sup> See Tanhuma Vayeshev 9.17 where a similar explanation of the phrase "the gate of Enaim" is found. The association between an upward gaze toward the gate of heaven and prayer appears also in Jacob's description of Bethel as "the gate of prayer set aside unto the heights of the heavens" in Targum Neofiti Gen 28:17.

which she will fulfill if her prayer is answered. The address and petition in Targum Neofiti serve to identify God as merciful, especially to those who are oppressed.<sup>277</sup>

Through the wording of this prayer, Targum Neofiti argues that Tamar is not guilty of the sexual impropriety for which she is being unjustly executed. She is one of the many innocent sufferers in the world for whom God shows special concern.

Another important motif in Tamar's prayer is her pointing to the future through her vow to raise up three righteous men who will sanctify God's name in return for her life.<sup>278</sup> The introduction of these three saints into Tamar's prayer does not merely project the drama of the story into the future. It also forces us to read Tamar's willingness to be burnt in Targum Neofiti in light of the three men's willingness to be burnt at Dura. If Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah's willingness to enter the furnace rather than worship the idol is meritorious, then Tamar's willingness to be burnt rather than embarrass her father-in-law is similarly commendable.<sup>279</sup> The comparison of Tamar with the three men of Dura, triggered by their introduction in her vow, also subtly transforms the relationship of her story to the events in Genesis 22. Drawn into the rhetoric of self-sacrifice through her similarity to Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, she becomes not only a petitioning member of a later generation, but also a parallel figure to Isaac, who in Jewish tradition distinguished himself with his willingness to die for God's glory.<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>277</sup> God's mercy is also invoked in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan. The phrase "from before you, Lord" is a typical expression of respect in Targum Neofiti, as well as in other Targums. See McNamara *Targum Neofiti* 1, 33-34. Palestinian Targums also use other titles including "the living God", the "God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, my fathers."

<sup>278</sup> All of the Palestinian Targums depict Tamar as vowing the three men at Dura, although only Targums Neofiti and Pseudo-Jonathan specify that they will sanctify the divine Name.

<sup>279</sup> Rashi, in his commentary on 38:25, also develops the theme that Tamar was righteous in that she refused to embarrass Judah and by so doing was willing to endanger her life.

<sup>280</sup> In some rabbinic sources Isaac and the three men at Dura are explicitly brought together as exemplars of laudable surrender to death. See for example Genesis Rabba, 56:11, where all four devote their lives to study after divine deliverance from death.

Two other enhancements of Tamar's character are accomplished through her vow of the three righteous men at Dura. One is that with this vow Tamar is depicted as possessing a prophetic grasp of biblical history and of the interrelationship of events from patriarchal to exilic times. In connecting the events in Genesis 38 and Daniel 3, she acts as a precursor to the rabbinic exegetes who endeavor through their inter-textual readings of scripture to create of it a seamless whole.

The other is that Tamar is shown in a positive light through an allusion to the language of the levirate law in her vow. Tamar's promise that she will "raise up" (מקיימה)<sup>281</sup> three righteous ones and her specification that they will sanctify God's "Name" (שמך) echo the terminology of the levirate law in Deut 25:5-10, which concerns "raising up" (יקום, Deut 25:6) a "name" (שם) for the dead. This rhetorical device of allusion shows Tamar as willing to fulfill the responsibility of a levir, which Onan has failed to do for his brother.

In summary, Tamar's prayer depicts her as a model of piety and trust in time of danger, as well as a prophetess and true spiritual levir in contrast to Onan. It also introduces through her vow of the three men the central theme of "sanctification of God's name," and suggests that she, like Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, is an innocent and principled sufferer, who willingly faces death. Tamar's prayer and her subsequent statement to the court fill in the spare lines of her biblical character and resolve the tension between her important role in the story line and her marginal position in the narrative surface.

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<sup>281</sup> This verb is from the root "to rise" (קום), which is the same root used in the levirate law in Deut 25:5-10. This root can also mean "to vow" something, as it does in this context. The verb root קום also appears twice in Genesis 38 itself. The report that Tamar "rose up" (ותקם, Gen 38: 19) to return to her father's house after conceiving, especially after Onan's failure to "raise up" (והקם, Gen 38:8) seed for Er according to his father's instructions, marks her as the party who accomplishes the central purpose of the levirate custom in Genesis 38.

### 4.3.3 Tamar's Statement before the Court

Tamar's statement before the court follows her transfer of the three items, not to her father-in-law as in the biblical text, but to a judge. This change in the person who receives the pledge from Judah to a judge provides an appropriate context for the discussion of her new evidence by setting it in a legal court.<sup>282</sup>

In the biblical text, Tamar's reliance on the pledge's visual impact implies that its owner's identity is obvious. Since its mere presence implicates Judah, she has no need to identify him by name. In particular, Tamar's second statement in the biblical text, which contains a direct imperative to her father-in-law to recognize his personal effects, is not meant to be vague or non-incriminating. It is intended to force Judah to admit to himself and to others present his responsibility for the situation and his public admission is far stronger than any accusation Tamar herself could have made.<sup>283</sup>

Targum Neofiti modifies the calculating and assertive character implied by the biblical narrative, however, when it presents Tamar's statement that she will, under no circumstances, publicly reveal the identity of the man who made her pregnant. Tamar's statement portrays her as an advocate of an ethos in which publicly shaming another is one of the worst crimes possible. The famous rabbinic observation that: " It is better that

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<sup>282</sup> Targum Neofiti alone among the Targum manuscripts has a single judge. The other Palestinian Targums all contain the plural "judges," which more closely corresponds with a midrashic tradition identifying Isaac, Jacob and Judah as the three judges who hear this case. See for example Tanhuma Vayeshev 9.17 and Yalkut Shimoni Gen 38:25. In any event, since the Mishna in Sanhedrin 1.4 indicates that 23 judges are required for a capital case, neither the tradition included in Targum Neofiti nor the tradition in other Targums accords with the ruling of the Mishna.

<sup>283</sup> Self-incrimination is seen in other parts of the Bible as well, for example, in the stories involving Judah's descendant David in 2 Samuel 12 and 14. As we shall see in the discussion of Judah's confession, this theme of self-condemnation is picked up and celebrated in the Targum as a laudatory, voluntary disclosure.

a person throw himself into the midst of the furnace of fire than embarrass his neighbor in public," is attributed to the example of Tamar.<sup>284</sup>

Because Targum Neofiti desires to paint a portrait of thoughtful, self-sacrificing reserve, Tamar's second statement with its confrontational imperative ( "Recognize"-הכר נא, Gen 38:25) is taken away from her and reassigned to Judah. It is Judah who makes the confession and the draws the connection between his deceiving his father with the bloody coat and his being deceived now.

To summarize, Tamar's address to the court in this narrative expansion remakes her into an exemplar of considerate discretion and strong faith even in the face of death. Her statement of confidence in God as the Witness of the events at the entrance of Enaim and as the prompter of Judah's confession emphasizes the divine role in shaping the course of events in the Targum Neofiti version of the story.

#### **4.3.4 Judah's Confession**

Judah's public statement before the court is the longest section in the narrative expansion in Targum Neofiti. Rather than an unseemly story about a patriarch's association with a woman he considers a prostitute and his unwitting incestuous relations the story becomes a record of Judah's commendable behavior when confronted with his guilt. How did the motif of Judah's confession arise and feature so prominently in this and other versions of the story?<sup>285</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> This is a well attested rabbinic tradition. See Talmud Babli Ketubot 67b. Midrash Hagadol Gen 38:25 has similar statements attributed to various second and third century authorities. See also Urbach E. 1975:253. *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

<sup>285</sup> Targum Onqelos, and Targum Pseudo Jonathan both contain similar confessions. For an overview of the origins and development of this motif in rabbinic literature, see Hayes CE. 1995. The Midrashic Career of the Confession of Judah (Genesis 38:26) Parts 1 and 2. *VT* 45: 62-81, 174-87.

The basic generating force behind the ascendancy of the motif of Judah's confession is the desire to view Israel's ancestors in a positive light, as models of behavior and piety. Since the events in the early part of the biblical narrative make such a reading of this patriarch extremely difficult, the focus shifts to Judah's behavior after Tamar presents the pledge items in the new setting of a legal court. In this version of the story, Judah is faced the difficult choice of either confessing or denying his responsibility for Tamar's pregnancy.

The body of Judah's confessional statement in Targum Neofiti consists of two parallel aphorisms which apply especially well to Judah's particular case. These aphorisms are important rhetorical devices which heighten the dramatic impact of the narrative. They stress that acceptance of punishment and public humiliation in this world are preferable to the consequences which denial would bring in the world to come. The assumption is that since Judah condemned Tamar to death by burning, he himself expects to burn. Interestingly enough, this assumption is entirely absent in the biblical narrative, in which Judah's life is never endangered and in which he is apparently free to reverse his earlier decree concerning Tamar's fate. In any event, the idea that repentance and acceptance of a deserved death earns one a place in the world to come is expressed in a number of places in rabbinic literature.<sup>286</sup>

Judah's second aphorism compares the embarrassment that confession brings here in this world and in the next, and picks up on the biblical theme of embarrassment raised in Gen 38:23 by Judah's unwillingness to be a laughingstock. The willingness to be embarrassed before those assembled, indicated by this aphorism, remakes the character of Judah. Through this rhetorical device, Judah is no longer primarily concerned with his worldly reputation, but instead considers the long-term gain to be had by humiliating himself through confession before the court.

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<sup>286</sup> Judah's confession earns him eternal life in Genesis Rabba 97 and Num Rabba 7.17. For a discussion of repentance in rabbinic literature, see Urbach, *Sages*, 1975:462-71. See also the examples of repentant acceptance of death in Droge AJ. 1992. *A Noble Death: Suicide and Martyrdom among Christians and Jews in Antiquity*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.

In Targum Neofiti, these two aphorisms have been transformed from Judah's private assessment of his situation into part of his public confession. This reassignment from thought to word recreates Judah as a moral exemplar and as a teacher of ethical wisdom.

The second section of Judah's public confession contains an element of surprise. This is another effective rhetorical device which adds interest for the reader. Judah confesses to two misdemeanors not one. This double confession is unexpected as we would have imagined that the one sin which Judah is about to confess involves Tamar. Instead, Judah preempts his Tamar confession with a description of his deception of his father with a bloodied coat. Because he deceived his father with the command of **נֹא הִכָּר** he was destined to hear this command again after his daughter-in-law deceived him.

The confession of this additional crime by Judah has a number of other results. Paradoxically, his confession of multiple sins reflects positively on his character; it makes him more sympathetic by portraying him as a reflective and sincere person with a sensitive conscience. Having much to confess, Judah becomes an even better exemplar of public repentance. This treatment softens the ironic stance of the biblical narrator which we noted in the previous chapter.

His double confession also presents him as a biblical scholar, able to draw verbal and causal links between the events in Genesis 37 and 38 even as they occur. Not only is the story about him, but he joins the interpretive endeavor of rabbinic Judaism, drawing the moral lessons which come to dominate the aggadic traditions about him and introducing a whole set of dimensions absent from the biblical story including the two worlds, punishments and rewards after death and the value of confession.

Judah's confession concludes with his declaration of Tamar's innocence, his admission of paternity, and his explicit refutation of the charge that Tamar is pregnant through illicit sexual relations. The voice from heaven confirms Judah's human assertion of Tamar's innocence.

In summary, Judah's lengthy confession functions in a number of literary and rhetorical ways in Targum Neofiti. It prolongs and even amplifies the crisis of the biblical narrative, since Judah joins Tamar on the verge of execution. The character of Judah becomes a model for public confession and repentance, as well as a teacher and biblical exegete. Judah's confession of two sins adds an element of surprise to the narrative and he paradoxically becomes an even better example of repentance. Finally, the material in Judah's confession also argues that the Torah is an interconnected, seamless whole with moral and causal relations between its parts.

#### **4.3.5 Conclusions on Targum Neofiti Commentary's on Genesis 38**

The narrative expansion incorporated into the interpretation of Genesis 38, forms various functions. By concentrating its wealth of material at the climax of the story and having very little expansive material elsewhere in the chapter, Targum Neofiti deflects the focus of attention from other potentially problematic issues in the biblical story, such as Judah's marriage to a Canaanite, his evil sons, his incestuous sexual encounter with Tamar, as well as Tamar's deception of her father-in-law in order to engage him sexually.

The real tasks assumed by this narrative expansion are to transform the characters of this story into exemplars of fine character under threat of death and to interject a decisive divine presence into what appears on the surface to be a story of human initiative. In this transformation, Tamar becomes a pious and prayerful woman, an exemplar of modest consideration for another's reputation, and an illustration of the concept of "sanctification of the divine Name." Judah becomes a teacher of ethics and a biblical exegete, as well as an exemplar of willing confession of sin. With the introduction of divine activity bringing the plot to its conclusion, the story becomes religious history, appropriate to its status as scripture.

But whether transmitting traditional lore or presenting its own interpretation of the biblical narrative, Targum Neofiti argues for a particular understanding of the biblical

story through the means of narrative. With the reassertion of the narrative genre, the gap between the written biblical text and traditional, originally oral, exegesis on aspects of that text is closed. Biblical narrative and biblical commentary appear translated into Aramaic as one continuous whole. Characters both inhabit the story and assign moral meaning to it through additional words and actions. At the end a divine voice ratifies as revelation what has already been determined by the reformed narrative: both Tamar and Judah are innocent and the events are divinely ordained.

#### 4.4 The Commentary of Genesis Rabba 85 on Genesis 38

To conclude my discussion of the ancient interpreters of Genesis 38, I focus on the particular exegetical comments of the authors of Genesis Rabba on this narrative. I show that Genesis Rabba has its own distinctive statement about the general significance of Genesis 38.<sup>287</sup> This statement is very much connected to approaches in Genesis Rabba which have been examined in the story of Lot and his daughters. I contend that Genesis Rabba had a particular message to share about messianic origins and the birth of Davidic royalty which lies at the heart of both narratives. It is this message which drives its exegesis and directs its particular innovative hermeneutical interpretations. I shall examine a number of these interpretations as they appear in the eighty-fifth chapter of Genesis Rabba, which is devoted entirely to the explication of Genesis 38. The preface to this biblical narrative consists of the following four paragraphs:

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<sup>287</sup> In this approach I follow Jacob Neusner (1986) who argues that Genesis Rabba is a unified work on the basis of formal and rhetorical analysis, as well as on the basis of the overall thematic statement that this work makes about "Israel's salvific history" through the vehicle of commentary on Genesis. See his work *Comparative Midrash: The Plan and Program of "Genesis Rabba" and "Leviticus Rabba,"* Brown Judaic Studies 111. Atlanta: Scholars Press. However this approach is not universally accepted in academic circles. Some like Theodor (1901-6: 62-65) in his description of the compilation of Genesis Rabba in Bereshit Rabba vol.3 of *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, New York: Funk and Wagnalls, presupposes an unmotivated accumulation of exegetical traditions. He writes: "with the notoriously loose construction of the haggadic exegesis, it became easy to string together on every verse, or part of a verse, a number of rambling comments, or to add longer or shorter haggadic passages, stories etc. connected in some way with the exposition of the text. The process of accretion took place quite spontaneously in Bereshit Rabba." See also Hartman GH. 1986. (ed). *Midrash and Literature*. New Haven: Yale University Press and Eilberg-Schwartz H. 1987. Who's Kidding Whom?: A Serious Reading of Rabbinic Word Plays. *JAAR* 55:765-88.

## בראשית רבה (תיאודור-אלבק) פרשה פה

לח (1) ויהי בעת ההיא וגו' בגדה יהודה וגו' (מלאכי ב יא) אמר ליה כפרת יהודה שקרת יהודה ותועבה נעשתה בישראל וגו' (שם שם /מלאכי ב'/), כי חלל יהודה (שם שם /מלאכי ב'/) נעשתה חולין יהודה, קדש י"י אשר אהב ובעל בת אל נכר (שם שם /מלאכי ב'/) ויהי בעת ההיא וירד וגו'.

(2) עוד היורש אביא לך יושבת מרשה עד עדולם יבא כבוד ישראל (מיכה א טו) קדושו שלישראל, עד עדולם יבוא מלכן שלישראל, עד עדולם יבא, ויהי בעת ההיא וגו'.

(3) ר' שמואל בר נחמן פתח כי אנכי ידעתי את המחשבות וגו' (ירמיה כט יא) שבטים היו עוסקים במכירתו שליוסף ויעקב היה עוסק בשקו ובתעניתו ויהודה עוסק לקחת אשה והקב"ה בורא אורו של מלך המשיח ויהי בעת ההיא וגו'.

(4) בטרם תחיל ילדה (ישעיה סו ז) קודם עד שנוולד משעבד האחרון נולד גואל ראשון ויהי בעת ההיא וגו'.

### 4.4.1 Paragraph 1

"At that time," etc. (Gen 38:1). "Judah has been false," etc. (Mal. 2:11) He (God) said to him (Judah), "You have denied, Judah. You have lied, Judah." An abomination has been committed in Israel," etc. (Mal.2:11). "For Judah has profaned (נעשתה חולין) (כי חלל יהודה) (Mal 2:11). You have become profane, Judah (יהודה), "the holiness of Israel whom he loves, and have married the daughter of a foreign God"( Mal 2:11). "At that time, Judah went down (וירד) etc. (Gen 38:1).

In this first paragraph phrases from Malachi 2:11, occasionally interspersed with explanations, serve as an introduction to Genesis 38:1. In its biblical context, Mal 2:11 is part of a general prophetic indictment of the males of the early second temple period community-designated collectively as Judah-for desecrating the sanctuary through intermarriage with foreign women. This verse charges:

Judah has been false and an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem, for Judah has profaned the Lord's sanctuary, which he loves, and has married the daughter of a foreign god.

In its application to the opening events in Genesis 38, however, this verse is interpreted as a direct divine rebuke of one particular man, namely Joseph's son Judah, for his marriage with a Canaanite woman. This reinterpretation is made explicit in the paraphrase of the third person charge in the Bible, "Judah has been false," as God's rebuke of a single individual, "He said to him, 'You have denied, Judah. You have lied, Judah.'"

The most obvious connection between this verse from Malachi and the narrative contents of Genesis 38 consists of the former's concluding phrase, "he has married the daughter of a foreign God," which thematically and verbally recalls Judah's marriage with "the daughter of a Canaanite man" in Gen 38:2.<sup>288</sup> This point of contact between the biblical passages, as well as the general emphasis on intermarriage in the larger prophetic context of Mal 2:10-16, seems to point to the understanding of this paragraph in terms of Judah's deviant foreign marriage.

Further attention to Judah's decline in status begins with the gloss of the third phrase from Mal 2:11: "For Judah has profaned" and "You have become profane, Judah." It is not by chance, I contend, that the Midrash uses the same expression that someone "has become profane" (נעשה חולין) both here and in our first narrative discussion of Noah in Genesis Rabba 36,3. Both Noah and Judah are characters who the Midrash portrays in a negative light. They were both once models of good character who have "gone down" in spiritual level. But, as we shall see in a further midrashic comment, there is a fundamental

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<sup>288</sup> The fact that this paragraph forms an important connection with the second verse of the biblical chapter is not unusual in Genesis Rabba, in which paragraphs conclude with either the first or the second verse of the biblical passage under discussion. See the discussion in Albeck H. 1965. Introduction to Genesis Rabba. In: Theodor J. & Albeck H. (eds). vol. 3 of *Midrash Bereshit Rabba*,. Berlin: Wahrmann Books. pp. 1-138.

difference in the portrayal of these two characters. Noah after his drinking episode is consistently portrayed in a negative light while Judah's character is depicted in ambivalent terms. He, unlike Noah, will be the father of Israel's kingship and Davidic dynasty. Treatment of him is therefore quite different to that of the presentation of Noah.

In summary, through the literary techniques of glossing and the careful placement of words, this paragraph depicts Judah's decline in status from holy to profane, especially through his aberrant marriage to a Canaanite in Gen 38:2. Within this paragraph, it is not the people who collectively desecrate a holy place, but rather a single individual, Judah, who himself becomes profane.<sup>289</sup> The words, in Genesis 38:1 "At that time, Judah went down", are then much more than a simple description of a geographical journey. According to Genesis Rabba, these words foreshadow Judah's moral and social debasement through intermarriage.

#### 4.4.2 Paragraph 2

"I will yet bring the dispossessor to you, inhabitant of Moreshah. As far as Adullam will come the glory of Israel (כבוד ישראל)" (Mic 1:15): the Holy One of Israel. As far as Adullam will come the king of Israel (מלכן של ישראל). As far as Adullam he will come: "At that time" (Gen 38:1).

The common denominator between Mic 1:15 and Gen 38:1 that motivates their juxtaposition in this paragraph consists of the portrayal of a journey to Adullam in each. In Gen 38:1, the journey to the environs of the city is implied by Judah's descent to a place where he encounters an Adullamite. In Mic 1:15 the journey to Adullam is

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<sup>289</sup> Although the Targum on Mal 2:11 retains the biblical understanding that the term "Judah" refers to a community and not to an individual, it also assumes that the change in status from holy to profane is a reflexive one within the people themselves, not a debasement of the temple. In the Targum, the verse reads. "The people of the house of Judah have been false, and an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for the people of the house of Judah have profaned their soul which was holy before the Lord and which he loved, and they have chosen to marry wives from the daughters of the nations."

explicitly described, although the identity of the subject of this movement, "the glory of Israel" (כבוד ישראל), is elusive.<sup>290</sup>

It is exactly this ambiguity of subject in the second half of Mic 1:15 that this paragraph addresses in the glosses following this quotation. But rather than providing a single answer to this problem, the author emphasizes the potential for multiple interpretations of the phrase "the glory of Israel" in its presentation of two explanations one after another. In the first explanation, the author identifies "the glory of Israel" with the "Holy One of Israel". The choice of this title is significant in that interjects into this paragraph the concept of "holiness" already introduced in the first paragraph describing Judah before his debasement. This repetition is a literary tool which provides cohesion between the two paragraphs on a thematic and verbal level.

However, it is the second explanation of the Midrash which, I contend, is particularly telling for the direction which Genesis Rabba is taking in its particular thesis of Genesis 38. Instead of the sentence, "As far as Adullam will come the glory of Israel," the interpretive quotation reads, "As far as Adullam will come the king of Israel" ( מלכן שלישראל ).<sup>291</sup> To whom does the term "king of Israel" refer to in this passage? Since the opening verse in Genesis 38 describes Judah's journey to Adullam, it is very possible to

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<sup>290</sup> See Hillers DR. 1984:28. *Micah*, Hermeneia. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, who expresses frustration at the elusive interpretation of the second half of the verse. "Again we miss the point, even in a general way. What is the 'glory of Israel?' Why will it come down to Adullam?" An earlier witness to the difficulty of understanding the expression "the glory of Israel" in this context is Targum Jonathan, which simply eliminates all reference to this phrase in its translation of Micah 1:15 as a description of foreign invasion: "Again I will bring dispossessors upon you, inhabitants of Moreshah. They will go up to Adullam and arrive at the border of Israel."

<sup>291</sup> The reference to "the king of Israel" in this gloss may have been facilitated by the discussion of Israel's kings in the second half of Micah 1:14, immediately preceding the verse quoted in this paragraph: "The houses of Achziv ( אכזיב ) have become a stream which fails ( לאזוב ) for the kings of Israel ( למלכי ישראל )." The pun on the place name Achziv in this line recalls the note in Gen 38:5 that Judah was "at Kezib" ( בכזיב ) when Shelah was born, forging another link between the prophetic passage in Micah and Genesis 38.

conclude that "the king of Israel" refers to him. The identification of Judah as "king of Israel" is made more plausible by the inclusion, at an earlier point in Genesis Rabba, of a tradition describing how the sons of Jacob appointed Judah as their king.<sup>292</sup>

If the expression "the king of Israel" does refer to Judah, then this paragraph describes a journey to Adullam by two distinct parties, each exalted as "the glory of Israel." Implicit in the second paragraph is the view that Judah, "the holiness of Israel" as he is described in the first paragraph, is accompanied by the "Holy One of Israel" in his descent to Adullam in Genesis 38:1. The coordination of movement between holy divine and holy human travelers in the second paragraph serves as a marked literary contrast to the oppositional relationship indicated by God's castigations of Judah in the first paragraph. The second paragraph, therefore, functions to shift focus from Judah's guilt in marrying a Canaanite in the beginning of Genesis 38:1 to the larger implications of the biblical narrative for the origins of the royal genealogy.

As part of a discussion of the actions of "the king of Israel" in this second paragraph, the first verb of Gen 38:1, "he went down" (וירד) can be viewed differently as a derivative from the root to "rule" (רדה).<sup>293</sup> If read as "As that time Judah ruled," the opening line of Genesis 38 becomes a hint to the dominion of the patriarch's line through Perez, whose birth is recorded at the end of the narrative.

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<sup>292</sup> See Genesis Rabba 84.17 which states "On three occasions Judah spoke before his brethren, and they made him king over them." A more simple version of this paragraph is found in Yalkut Makiri, Micah 1:15, which also supports the reading of "the king of Israel" as Judah. It does this by presenting a version of the second paragraph with no reference to "the Holy One of Israel." Judah's royal status is also indicated in Genesis Rabba 70.15; 71.5; 72.5; 85.2; 92.5; 93.2; 96.5; 98.4; 100.8.

<sup>293</sup> Genesis Rabba 86.2 interprets a verb from the same root, "to go down" (ירד) in the phrase from Gen 39:1, "Joseph was brought down (הורד) to Egypt," as stemming from the root "to rule" (רדה). According to this phrase, Joseph ruled over the Egyptians. One of the biblical verses quoted in support of this interpretation, Psalms 72:8, contains a verb from the root "to rule" (רדה) which has the same consonantal spelling (וירד) as the verb found in Genesis 38:1. For another pun on the verbal roots "to go down" (ירד) and "to rule" see Genesis Rabba 8.12.

In summary, the theme of royal leadership introduced through the title "the king of Israel" (מלכן של ישראל) in this second paragraph dominates the next two paragraphs of Genesis Rabba, which concentrate on God's provisions for the emergence of Israel's messiah and redeemer through the events of Genesis 38.

### 4.4.3 Paragraph 3

R. Samuel b. Nahman began his discourse with the verse: "For I know the thoughts (המחשבות)" (Jer. 29:11) The tribes were busy with the sale of Joseph, Jacob was busy with his sackcloth and fasting, Judah was busy taking a wife, while the Holy One Blessed be He was creating the light of the king messiah (מלך המשיח).

In this third paragraph there is an intensification of the emphasis on the purposefulness of divine intervention in human history already implied in the second paragraph with the depiction of God's accompaniment of Judah to Adullam. The theme of royalty introduced in the second paragraph through the title "the king of Israel" is further developed in this paragraph as well, with the assertion that the overriding significance of Genesis 38 lies in the providential preparation for the emergence of the "light of the king messiah." An additional link between these two paragraphs may be seen in the employment of the title "the Holy One Blessed Be He," which corresponds to the divine title, "the Holy One of Israel", in the previous paragraph. These links establish a continuity between the paragraphs with this third paragraph concentrating more specifically on God's plans for Israel's final redemption implemented through his creation of the light of the royal messiah.<sup>294</sup>

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<sup>294</sup> In Genesis Rabba, the light that God creates on the first day is hidden following Adam's sin (Gen Rabba 11.2; 12.6) and stored up for the righteous in the messianic future. Alternatively, this primal light dwells with the messiah (Gen Rabba 1.6) In Midrash Hagadol by contrast, God busies himself not with the light of the messiah as in Genesis Rabba but with "the blood relative of the king messiah," apparently Perez.

It is also important to compare this midrashic comment with a similar one discussed in the study of Genesis Rabba in the Lot's daughters narrative. The Midrash there suggested that the source of the wine in the cave was in fact divine. God supplied the wine which led to the incestuous act and birth of Moab, the ancestor of Ruth. In both narratives, God is actively intervening in the course of history to ensure the birth of the ancestor of the Messiah. In both cases this divine intervention is done, even at the expense of allowing or even facilitating dubious moral behavior on behalf of the narrative's protagonists. This aspect of the midrashic exegesis will be further examined in the conclusions in the final chapter of my thesis.

The fourth paragraph in Genesis Rabba 85.1 begins with a quotation of the first half of Isaiah 66:7 and continues with an interpretation of this prophetic verse in terms of redemptive history:

"Before she labored, she gave birth" (Isa 66:7). Before the first oppressor (משעבד) was born, the final redeemer (גואל האחרון) was born.

Genesis Rabba interprets Isa 66:7 in a distinctive fashion befitting its application to Gen 38:1. The author literalizes the marvelous birth which the biblical author employs as a metaphor for Jerusalem's restoration, and which later writers employ for the final days. Moreover, the author in this paragraph understands the double description of this birth in Isaiah 66:7 as referring to not one, but two births. According to this interpretation, the prophetic verse describes two human mothers giving birth to two real babies. The paragraph presents a providential chronology of salvation. Even before Israel's first oppressor, Pharaoh, was born the ancestor of Israel's final redeemer, Perez, was born.

Besides emphasizing that the most important event in Genesis 38 is the birth of Perez, the author is also providing here a literary theory about the placement of Genesis 38 within the Joseph story. He suggests that the position of Genesis 38 before Genesis 39 is not intrusive, but attests to the providential ordering of Israelite history. According to this view, the birth of the final redeemer's ancestor precedes Joseph's enslavement in Egypt,

which prefigures Israel's first period of oppression under Pharaoh. Thus the final paragraph of the opening section of Genesis Rabba 85:1 reiterates the important theme of future redemption which has already been introduced in this section.

In summary, the recurring theme of kingship and future redemption which dominates the opening section of Genesis Rabba predisposes the reader to view the events of Genesis 38 in a particular way. While the first paragraph focuses on Judah's guilt in marrying a Canaanite woman, the following three paragraphs shift the focus to God's providence in history and His plan for Israel's future redemption. Even before the verse by verse commentary on Genesis 38 begins, this opening articulates a distinctive direction of interpretation of the biblical chapter and the use of prophetic verse to argue for the understanding of Genesis 38 as the story of royal and messianic origins.

I shall now consider a number of other passages in Genesis Rabba which emphasize the themes developed in the opening section of this work. I will first examine the concluding narrative of Genesis 38, the birth of Perez, which, as might be expected from the opening section's emphasis of the royal and messianic lineage, has special significance in the thematic and literary focus of Genesis Rabba.

### **בראשית רבה (תיאודור-אלבק) פרשה פה**

(כט) ויהי כמשיב ידו וגו' [ותאמר מה פרצת עליך פריץ] זה רבה על כל הפרצים ממך יעמוד עלה הפוריץ לפניהם (מיכה ב יג).

"When he drew back his hand,"(Gen 38:29) "This one is greater than all those who have made breaches (הפרצים), for from you will be established the one about whom it is written, 'The breaker (הפוריץ) will go up before them' (Mic 2:13)."

In keeping with Perez' importance for Israel's future redemption in Genesis Rabba, the midwife presents a prophetic comparison between this newborn and others who "make

breaches" (הפרצים), apparently intending by this expression other conquerors and royal leaders.

An important verbal and literary link facilitates the application of the phrase "The breaker will go up from before them," from Mic 2:13 to the figure of Perez in Gen 38:29 about whom the midwife exclaims "What breach you have made for yourself!" Words from the root "to break forward" (פרץ) appear in both the midwife's exclamation (פרץ, פרצת) and the prophetic phrase (הפרץ).<sup>295</sup> It may be that the author of Mica 2:13 himself is alluding to Perez as the royal ancestor through using the pun on his name.

Genesis Rabba's prophetic allusion to Mic 2:13 in its final section of commentary on Genesis 38 explicitly relates the birth of Peretz to the introductory opening paragraphs with their themes of king, messiah and redemption. This closure is not typical for Genesis Rabba, which characteristically ends its chapters not with a thematic conclusion but with discussions of the features of the biblical text.<sup>296</sup> The citation of Mic 2:13 at the beginning of this final section, ensures that the opening paragraphs we have discussed earlier are recalled precisely at the moment of the birth of David's ancestor.

#### 4.4.4 Kings and Redeemers Elsewhere in Genesis Rabba 85

The opening and concluding sections of Genesis Rabba are not the only places where kings, redeemers and messiahs are interjected through commentary into Genesis 38. I now examine a number of other instances in this midrashic text where these themes are

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<sup>295</sup> פרצו "they broke through" See also the verb immediately following the phrase quoted from Micah 2:13. Other less forceful similarities also facilitate the juxtaposition of these verses. For example, the preposition "upon yourself" (עליך) in Gen 38:29 contains the same two initial consonants as those found in the first verb in Micah 2:13, "goes up" (עלה). Also, the concept of precedence implied in the unexpected emergence first from the womb in Gen 38:29 is echoed in the preposition "before them" (מפניהם) in Micah 2:13.

<sup>296</sup> Unlike the beginnings of divisions in Genesis Rabba, which are marked by paragraphs, the endings are not marked by any formal characteristics. See Neusner and his conclusions in *Comparative Midrash* 1986:68-69.

emphasized. The following text show how the themes of kingship, political leadership and messianic redemption are also interjected into the glosses of the significance of the three pledge items that Tamar requests in Gen 38:18:

### **בראשית רבה (תיאודור-אלבק) פרשה פה**

(יח) ויאמר מה הערבון וגו' ותאמר חותמך ופתילך ומטך וגו' אמר ר' חוניה נצנצה בה רוח הקודש חותמך זו המלכות היך דאת אמר כי אם יהיה כוניה בן יהויקים מלך יהודה חותם וגו' (ירמיה כב כד), ופתילך זה סנהדרין היך דאת אמר ונתנו על ציצית הכנף פתיל תכלת וגו' (במדבר טו לה), ומטך זה מלך המשיח היך דאת אמר מטה עזך ישלח י"י מציון (תהלים קי ב).

"He said, 'What is the pledge,'"... "She said, 'Your seal, your cord and your staff,'" (Gen 38:18). R. Huna said, "The holy spirit was kindled within her: ' Your seal (חותמך) ' refers to kingship, as scripture says, ' Though Conia, the son of Jehoiakim the king of Judah were a seal (חותם),' (Jer 22:24). ' Your cord (ופתילך) refers to the Sanhedrin, as scripture says, "That they put upon the fringe of each corner a cord (פתיל) of blue (Num 15:38). 'And your staff (ומטך) ' refers to the king messiah, as scripture says, "The staff (מטה) of your strength the Lord will send from Zion' (Ps 110:2).

Whereas in the biblical story Tamar specifies the three items of the pledge because they unmistakably identify their owner, Genesis Rabba 85.9 presents a tradition in the name of R. Hunia which associates them prophetically with powerful institutions of national leadership: the kingship of the biblical past, the Sanhedrin of the recent present,<sup>297</sup> and the royal messiah of future restoration.

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<sup>297</sup> Genesis Rabba 98.10 claims that a majority of the members of Sanhedrin were descended from Judah. The interpretation of Judah's personnel effects as symbols of political leadership in Genesis Rabba recalls the interpretation of them as symbols of royalty in the Testaments of Judah 12:4 and 15:3, although in the latter work the focus is on kingship lost rather than kingship gained through the events in Genesis 38.

In another instance in Genesis Rabba 85, a comment on the anonymous report concerning Tamar's behavior in Gen 38:24 reiterates the theme of royalty by depicting her cognizance that she bears "kings and redeemers."

### **בראשית רבה (תיאודור-אלבק) פרשה פה**

וגם הנה הרה לזנונים אלא מלמד שהיתה מטפחת על כריסה ואומרת מלכים וגואלים אני מעוברת.

"Moreover she has conceived through illicit sexual relations (לזנונים)" (Gen 38:24). This merely teaches that she would beat on her seat and exclaim, "I am big with kings and redeemers."<sup>298</sup>

It is difficult to explain how the anonymous report to Judah in the biblical text teaches that Tamar bragged about the important status of her unborn children. Menn (1999:333) suggests that the object of the preposition in this phrase is suggested a word for armor (זוני), used in rabbinical literature as a symbol for magisterial office.<sup>299</sup> With this replacement, the sense of the second part of the report to Judah becomes, "moreover she has also conceived offspring who will bear armor" (i.e. kings and redeemers).

In summary, the theme of kings and messiahs lies as the central motif in the beginning, end and other parts of the exegesis of Midrash Rabba. Another important theme is the active divine providence that guides the story through its various stages. I conclude the study of the exegesis of Genesis Rabba on the Genesis 38 text by focusing on the two main protagonists of the narrative, Judah and Tamar and how this midrashic text portrays them in its exegesis.

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<sup>298</sup> Genesis Rabba 85.10.

<sup>299</sup> For examples of the usage of this object as a symbol of office, see Jastrow M. 1971:388. *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature*. New York: Judaica Press.

#### 4.4.5 Judah's Role as Worthy Royal Ancestor

The portrayal of Judah in the exegesis of Genesis Rabba is one fraught with ambivalence. On the one hand, it has been shown how the opening section of Genesis Rabba 85 stresses his guilt in marrying a Canaanite woman. In addition, other sections of Genesis Rabba emphasize Judah's sin in advocating the sale of Joseph<sup>300</sup>, and of deceiving Jacob<sup>301</sup>. On the other hand, Genesis Rabba 85 does take measures to improve Judah's reputation, in particular as far as his relations with Tamar are concerned. In this section, I shall try to discover in more depth how Genesis Rabba portrays Judah's character in the Genesis 38 narrative.

Many traditions in Genesis Rabba stress Judah's moral behavior towards Tamar. For example, in Genesis Rabba's commentary on Gen 38:11, Judah is depicted as correctly withholding his son Shelah from Tamar:

"Judah said to Tamar" (Gen 38:10). R. Eleazar said, "Though divination is futile, yet a portent may be true. For he said, 'Lest he die also like his brothers.' (Gen 38:11)." <sup>302</sup>

In this comment, Genesis Rabba justifies Judah's withholding of Shelah in Genesis 38 as a responsible decision, given the deaths of his two elder sons. Corresponding to its sympathetic understanding of Judah's actions here, Genesis Rabba omits development of his later failure to fulfill his promise. For example, it does not comment on Tamar's recognition that Shelah had not been given to her although he had matured in Gen 38:14. In the biblical narrative her recognition of the situation implies a negative evaluation of Judah's behavior, but in the midrashic exposition of this story this detail is not mentioned.

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<sup>300</sup> Although Judah's idea to sell Joseph is depicted as an attempt to save his brother's life in Genesis Rabba 84.17 and 93.9, his sin in this matter is emphasized in Genesis Rabba 99.1 as well as in 85.2.

<sup>301</sup> See Genesis Rabba 84.19 and 85.11. In Genesis Rabba 84.8 and 95.2, Judah is singled out as the brother who deceives Jacob.

<sup>302</sup> Genesis Rabba 85.5.

The silence in Genesis Rabba concerning Judah's failure to pair Tamar is a good example of how the verse by verse commentary of Genesis Rabba selectively treats the biblical text to further its own point of view.

However, the following two comments of Genesis Rabba on the meeting between Judah and the woman he takes for a prostitute, shows, I contend, how ambivalent this text is towards Judah's character, especially when the story focuses on the unflattering meeting at Enaim.

### **בראשית רבה (תיאודור-אלבק) פרשה פה**

(טו טז) ויראה יהודה וגו' אמר ר' אחא צריך אדם לרגל עצמו באחות אשתו ובקרובתו למה שלא יכשל באחת מהן וממי את למד מיהודה ויראה יהודה ויחשבה לזונה למה כי כסתה פניה עד שהיא בבית חמיה, ד"א ויראה יהודה לא השגיח כיון שכסתה פניה אמר אילו היתה זונה היתה מכסה פניה אתמהא, אמר ר' יוחנן ביקש לעבור וזימן לו הקב"ה מלאך שהוא ממונה על התאוה אמר לו לאיכן אתה הולך יהודה, ומאיכן מלכים עומדים ומאיכן גואלים עומדים ויט אליה על כורחו שלא בטובתו.

"Judah saw," etc. (Gen 38:15). R. Aha said, "A man should familiarize himself with his wife's sister and his female relatives. Why is this? So that he doesn't stumble concerning one of them. And from whom do you learn this? From Judah: 'He thought she was a prostitute' (Gen 38:15). Why is this? ' Because she covered her face' (Gen 38:16) when she was in her father-in-law's house."

Another interpretation of "Judah saw" (Gen 38:15): He did not look at her. Because she covered her face he said, "If she were a prostitute, would she cover her face?" R. Johanan said, "He wanted to pass by, but the Holy One Blessed be He assigned the angel in charge of desire to him. He said to him, 'Where are you going, Judah? From whence are kings and redeemers to arise?' ' And he turned aside to her' (Gen 38:16) under compulsion and not of his own free will.

The first of these very different understandings of the biblical encounter at Enaim focuses on Judah's failure to recognize his daughter-in-law. In the biblical narrative, this failure functions as an important condition for the success of Tamar's strategy and offers an ameliorating circumstance for the act of incest which follows. The midrashic interpretation, however, alters the reason that Judah does not recognize Tamar. Whereas in the biblical narrative, he does not recognize her because her face is covered, in this tradition he does not recognize her because her face is exposed for the first time in his presence, since she constantly veiled herself when she lived with him as a daughter-in-law.<sup>303</sup>

This shift in location of Tamar's veiling in accordance with contemporary conventions of dress positively attributes to her character a habit of modest decorum. However, with regards to Judah's behavior this tradition makes the explicit charge of unwitting incest implicit in the biblical explanation in Gen 38:16 that "he did not know she was his daughter-in-law." The lesson of how to avoid stumbling through inadvertent sexual relations with female relatives derived from this episode, unmistakably marks Judah guilty of this very deed. In addition, it also imputes a further fault in his character, consisting of his earlier failure to acquaint himself with his daughter-in-law.<sup>304</sup>

By contrast, the second reformulation of the encounter labors to acquit Judah from all charges of inappropriate intention and conduct. In this second midrashic version of the events, Judah does see a veiled woman on the way to Timnah as in the biblical narrative,

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<sup>303</sup> The tradition that Tamar covered her face in her father-in-law's house may also be found in *b. Megilla*. 10b, although this source focuses on Tamar's meritorious modesty rather than Judah's negligence. Criticism of Judah's failure to acquaint himself with his daughter-in-law is also found in *Yalkut Shimoni* 38:15.

<sup>304</sup> Interestingly, in this tradition there is no censure on the activity which Judah himself intends in the biblical narrative, namely, consorting with a prostitute. Similarly in the tradition which directly follows, Judah does not attempt to avoid contact with a prostitute, but with a respectable, modestly veiled woman.

but he declines the opportunity to go to her since it is obvious from her conservative dress that she is not a prostitute.<sup>305</sup>

This account further emphasizes Judah's lack of immoral intentions towards Tamar by portraying his attempt to pass by this respectably covered woman. In addition, it illustrates his willingness to comply with divine directives-even those contrary to his own desires-when it depicts his return to fulfill the heavenly purpose of bringing Israel's kings and redeemers into the world articulated by the angel.<sup>306</sup>

Besides improving Judah's reputation, the second midrashic interpretation of the biblical narrative interjects a controlling divine presence into verses of scripture which remain consistently on a mundane level. It is possible that the literary introduction of the verb "to turn aside" ( נטה ) at the beginning of Gen 38:16 (ויט), which is also used to describe the action of Balaam's she-ass after seeing the angel of the Lord in Num 22:23 (והט), also triggers word associations in the mind of this author. Since an angel sent by God is responsible for the donkey's swerving from the road in Numbers, an angel sent by God is introduced into the drama of Judah's swerving from the road in this midrashic reading of the Genesis narrative. Through this inclusion of this midrashic tradition, Genesis Rabba argues that the sexual encounter at Enaim, with its historically important outcome, is not the result of human intrigue and lust; instead it is an expression of divine providence.

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<sup>305</sup> Clearly both interpretations of the narrative are concerned with the fact, mentioned earlier in this chapter, that prostitutes do not usually cover their faces. The first commentary solves this difficult by writing that she in fact had her face exposed while the second one, denies the fact she was a prostitute. Both commentaries have to make major changes in the biblical narrative to express their positions. Possibly underlying the change of the events in the second commentary is an inelegant but more flattering reading of the biblical phrase "he thought she was a prostitute" (ויחשבה לזונה) as "he thought she was not a prostitute" (ויחשבה לא זונה), by separating the preposition ל from the noun "prostitute" and revocalizing this preposition as the negative article (לא).

<sup>306</sup> This tradition is also recorded in Yalkut Shimoni Gen 38:15-16. In another similar tradition in Tanhuma Vayeshev 9.17, Judah scorns the woman he considers a prostitute until God sends the angel Michael, the guardian angel of Israel to summon him to do his procreative duties.

Particularly interesting is the consistent exegetical methodology of Genesis Rabba across various narratives in the book of Genesis. In both the Lot's daughters and the Judah and Tamar stories we encounter divine intervention in the narrative in the exposition of Genesis Rabba. In the narrative of Lot's daughters, God himself provides the wine for the daughters to get their father drunk. In this narrative, God sends his angel to ensure the union between Judah and Tamar. In both cases the offspring of the act of procreation are the direct ancestors of the messiah. However in both cases, the means by which this is done, through incest and prostitution, is morally repugnant. What lesson is Genesis Rabba teaching the reader about the justification of immoral activity in order in order to achieve noble goals? We shall return to this important point in our conclusions in the next chapter.

In summary, as regards the portrayal of the character of Judah on the encounter in Enaim, two different traditions in Genesis Rabba have been examined. The first emphasizes Judah's guilt in not taking precautionary measures in advance to get to know her daughter-in law, while the second emphasizes Judah's innocent intentions and his compliance with divine designs. These two traditions correspond to the other traditions discussed earlier which portray Judah in contrasting ways.

What is the significance of this intentional juxtaposition of disparate portraits of Judah in Genesis Rabba? I suggest that these two interpretive directions actually articulate a tension inherent in the biblical narrative itself. On the one hand, reading the biblical story of Judah and Tamar's encounter in light of biblical laws against incest suggest that both characters are guilty of a capital offence. In addition, Judah's lustful behavior on the road to Enaim is not a model for righteous conduct. On the other hand, their illicit union leads not to punishment by death, but to the origins of the royal and messianic lineage.<sup>307</sup>

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<sup>307</sup> In Genesis Rabba Israel's kingship is generally viewed as a positive institution and the messianic age is viewed as the longed –for end of hostile Roman occupation or more generally as a period of justice and peace. By contrast, the biblical evaluation of kingship is not as uniformly positive.

Genesis Rabba does not resolve this tension by forwarding one potential interpretation of the biblical narrative and its characters and suppressing the other. Instead, both interpretations are presented side by side, with no attempt at harmonization. Through this literary and rhetorical technique, the contradictory voices within scripture itself are amplified, so that they can easily be heard by the reader of Genesis Rabba.<sup>308</sup>

However, on closer examination, it does seem that Genesis Rabba gives greater weight to the material which depicts Judah's innocence than that which portrays his guilt. In addition, in Genesis Rabba 85.11-12, the portrait of Judah as an innocent pawn follows the portrait of Judah as a sexual miscreant. This posterior placement may indicate an unwillingness to let traditions emphasizing Judah's culpability stand unchallenged.<sup>309</sup>

In summary, two differing traditions regarding Judah's portrayal in Genesis Rabba have been explored, with the more favorable depiction seeming to have greater prominence. According to both traditions, it is clear that in Genesis Rabba the biblical narrative as a whole, is fundamentally the story of God's intervention at the very beginning of Israel's history to prepare for the institution of kingship. I now consider how Tamar is portrayed within Genesis Rabba's divine framework of the narrative.

#### **4.4.6 Tamar, the Worthy Ancestress**

If there is some ambivalence as to the portrayal of Judah in the previous section, no such hesitation is found as regards Tamar. This may be due in part to the relative opacity of the biblical text concerning her character and the corresponding opportunity to shape it in any direction. But it may also be due to Tamar's extraordinary efforts in the biblical text to ensure the continuation of Judah's seed, actions which mark her as a person worthy to

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<sup>308</sup> For a discussion of the midrashic representation of contradictory potentialities within scripture see Boyarin D. 1986. *Voices in the Text: Midrash and the Inner Tension of Biblical Narrative* (Ex.16). *RB* 93: 581-97.

<sup>309</sup> See Neusner, *Comparative Midrash* 1986: 27, who similarly argues that the final position in the presentation of two different interpretations enjoys prominence.

establish the Davidic genealogy. A number of examples from Genesis Rabba suffice to show this basic direction.

Genesis Rabba develops Tamar's status as an ancestress of kings and redeemers by comparing her with the biblical matriarchs. For example in Genesis Rabba 85.7 we find:

"She removed her widow's garments from upon her," etc. (Gen 38:14). Two covered themselves with a veil and gave birth to twins: Rebecca and Tamar. Rebecca: "She took her veil and covered herself" (Gen 24:65); Tamar: "She covered herself with a veil and wrapped herself" (Gen 38:14).

The correspondence between Tamar and Rebecca on the basis of their veiling and their delivery of twins positively reflects on Tamar. In addition, Rebecca is described as "righteous" in other places in Genesis Rabba (63:5) and the juxtaposition of Tamar to one of Israel's matriarchs ensures a positive reading of her character.

Genesis Rabba also elevates Tamar's status by providing her with a suitable father. In Genesis Rabba 85.10 we read:

"Tamar was the daughter of Shem, for it is written, 'The daughter of a priest who defiles herself by having illicit intercourse,' (Lev 21:9). Consequently, 'Judah said 'Take her out and let her be burned'" (Gen 38:25).

The midrashic identification of Tamar's father as Shem makes an especially appropriate father for the woman destined to bring forth the royal and messianic lineage. In addition to his status in Genesis Rabba as priest<sup>310</sup>, teacher<sup>311</sup>, legal expert and judge<sup>312</sup>, he is also

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<sup>310</sup> Genesis Rabba 30.6 and 36.4 recount how Shem offered the first sacrifices after the flood because Noah was disqualified when a lion castrated him.

<sup>311</sup> Shem is depicted as a teacher in Genesis Rabba 43.6 and 63.10.

<sup>312</sup> For example he is depicted as a judge in Genesis Rabba 67.8.

identified as Melchizedek, king of Salem.<sup>313</sup> Genesis Rabba, therefore, replaces the biblical taciturnity concerning Tamar's background with its specification of Shem as her priestly and royal father.<sup>314</sup>

Genesis Rabba also highlights Tamar's status as a worthy ancestress through its depiction of her prayerful piety. The content of her prayer mentioned in Genesis Rabba 85.7 is particularly significant:

"She lifted her eyes to the gate (פתח) to which all eyes (עינים) are lifted and said: 'May it be your will that I do not leave this house empty.'"

The Targum Neofiti, as pointed out earlier, understood the geographical place-פתח עינים as a figurative expression for prayer. However, here Genesis Rabba gives an entirely imaginative content to her prayer, which has no explicit verbal links to the biblical text. Her supplication, "May it be your will that I do not leave this house empty," hints at the theme of dynastic lineage with its reference to a "house" (בית)<sup>315</sup> and calls for divine ratification of her efforts to conceive. In Genesis Rabba therefore, Tamar is not merely a pious figure who petitions heaven in time of personal need. She is also an intercessor for Israel's future generations, who will rely on the leadership of Davidic kings and experience ultimate redemption in the messianic age.<sup>316</sup>

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<sup>313</sup> In Genesis Rabba 44.7.

<sup>314</sup> A miraculous detail concerning Shem's birth decisively links him to his distant royal descendant David. In Gen Rabba 26.3, Shem is born circumcised as are Jacob and Joseph. Significantly in b. Sota 10b David is born circumcised as well.

<sup>315</sup> "This house" apparently refers to Judah's lineage. The dynastic sense of the word "house" is evident in its biblical usage in phrases like "the house of David" 2 Sam 3:1 and other places.

<sup>316</sup> Judith R. Baskin (1989: 112:14) examines the development of other important Israelite mothers especially Hannah, as intercessors in her "Rabbinic Reflections on the Barren Wife," *HTR* 82. In Genesis Rabba itself, God causes Israel's matriarchs to be barren because he yearns to hear their prayers and supplications (Gen Rabba 45.4). Another matriarch in Genesis Rabba with a special intercessory role not related to child bearing is Rachel, who prays for mercy for the Babylonian exiles who pass her grave (Gen Rabba 72.10).

Through a variety of means, then, Genesis Rabba argues that Tamar is an appropriate ancestress of the royal and messianic lineage. The portrayal of Tamar's similarities with biblical matriarchs, her delivery of righteous children, her modesty and pure motives, her distinguished genealogical background and her prayerful intercession for Israel's future all work together to insure a positive perception of this biblical character.

#### **4.4.7 Conclusion of Genesis Rabba's Exegesis on Genesis 38**

Two significant transformations of Genesis 38 occur in Genesis Rabba. First this commentary interjects a pervasive divine presence into a biblical narrative in which God makes only two brief punitive appearances. Rather than a tale of human intrigue, Genesis Rabba portrays the events of Genesis 38 as the means through which God brings to fulfillment his intentions to provide Israel with political leaders and redeemers. Non-biblical additions to the narrative include God's dispatch of an angel to guide Judah and Tamar, and a variety of prophetic scriptural passages emphasize the theme of divine involvement to establish Israel's historical kings.

The second significant transformation of Genesis 38 affected by Genesis Rabba consists of the recreation of Genesis Rabba as distinguished and moral forebears of an important royal and messianic lineage. Since Israel's kingship and other forms of political leadership are idealized in Genesis Rabba, their origins in the relations between one man and one woman are correspondingly represented in positive terms.

When focusing on the literary and rhetorical presentation of Genesis Rabba's exegesis I note that these two basic transformations are accomplished often at the expense of the internal dynamics of the biblical narrative. The constant intervention of God and the positive behavior of Judah and Tamar in Genesis Rabba flatten Genesis 38 into a story of divine intention and human compliance for the emergence of future kings and redeemers. The introduction of an angel to inform Judah to do his duty to produce kings and redeemers wreaks havoc on the original biblical narrative. Judah's subsequent search for

the prostitute and his sentencing of Tamar for sexual immorality become incongruous. Also if Tamar's pregnancy "through illicit sexual relations" merely means that she publicly announced her conception of future kings and redeemers as Genesis Rabba 85.10 maintains, then Judah's order that she be burned becomes incomprehensible. It seems therefore that Genesis Rabba sacrifices the art of biblical narrative for some higher goal such as the articulation of the divine plan for ultimate redemption.

In the following table, I summarize the major points of exegesis of the three main interpreters studied in this chapter; Testament of Judah, Targum Neofiti and Genesis Rabba. As a point of contrast, I also mention the fact that Josephus, whose interpretations have been examined quite often in this thesis, does not mention the story at all in his work. I will return to the significance of this point in my conclusions in the next chapter.

**Table Summary of the Ancient Biblical Interpreters, including Jubilees,  
Testament of Judah, Josephus, Targum Neofiti and Genesis Rabba  
on the Judah and Tamar Narrative**

	<b>Jubilees 2 Century B.C.E.</b>	<b>Testaments of Judah 2 Century B.C.E.</b>	<b>Josephus 1 Century C.E.</b>	<b>Targum Neofiti 1 Century C.E.</b>	<b>Genesis Rabba, 2-3 Century C.E.</b>
<b>Attitude to Judah's actions</b>	Sins though relations with two foreign women though ultimately repents	Sins though relations with two foreign women though ultimately repents	Whole story deliberately Deleted	Pious character who shows his willingness to die "for the sake of Heaven."	Ambivalent presentation, though major stress on his pious characteristics
<b>Attitude to Tamar's actions</b>	Very negative, causes Judah to sin	Very negative causes Judah to sin		Pious character who shows her willingness to die "for the sake of Heaven."	Pious character who prays and acts to bring kings and redeemers to Israel
<b>God's direct role in the Narrative</b>	Little role-focus on human actions	Little direct role-focus on human actions, though Judah realizes the events are a punishment for his sins		Major role in directing the events	Major role in directing the events
<b>Theme of Kingship</b>	Judah retains his kingship through repentance	Developed extensively. Genesis 38 describes the sins through which Judah nearly loses his royal status		Not developed extensively-though aware of the narrative's royal implications	Developed extensively. Genesis 38 is the story of the origins of Israel's kings and redeemers

## Chapter 5

### Conclusions

In this study, I have focused on three puzzling narratives in the biblical text that deal with drunkenness and prostitution. These stories include, Noah's drunkenness after the flood in Genesis 9:18-29, Lot's drinking of wine with his two daughters in Genesis 19:31-38 and the narrative of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38. My primary aim has been to discover how ancient interpreters understood these texts and how they expressed their views in both literary and rhetorical terms. This chapter summarizes my major conclusions in this thesis.

My starting point in this thesis has been, that despite the great variety of styles and genres and even interpretive methods employed by the ancient interpreters there exists an underlying common approach or common set of assumptions concerning the biblical text. I can point to four fundamental assumptions about scripture that characterize all ancient biblical interpretation.

The first assumption shared by ancient interpreters is that the Bible is a fundamentally cryptic document. As such, although scripture may appear to be saying X, it really means Y. Interpreters see beyond the apparent meaning of the text into the hidden or esoteric. For example, in the narrative of Noah's drunkenness, the word אהלי, meaning tents, refers to the study halls of Torah. In the story of Judah and Tamar, the place name פתח עינים meaning the entrance of Enaim is interpreted by Genesis Rabba as not really a geographical location but rather an indication that Tamar lifted her "eyes" (עינים) to the "gate" (פתח) to which all eyes appeal for help. By so interpreting these texts, the ancients demonstrated time and again that the Bible contained some meaning other than the apparent one. They also, through this methodology, vouchsafed the necessity of specially trained interpreters who could reveal the Bible's secrets. Not anyone could interpret the Bible. As such, these interpretations came to acquire an authority of their own.

The second assumption shared by ancient interpreters is that the scripture is fundamentally a relevant text. Biblical figures were held up as models of conduct and their stories regarded as a guide given to later human beings for the leading of their own lives. As such, these figures are not merely historical but instructional. Noah's state of drunkenness is, therefore, problematic in the eyes of these ancient interpreters. This is especially so as the Bible itself gives him the epitaph of a righteous man (צדיק) not once but twice (6:9 and 7:1). In their eyes, there is a moral difficulty for a righteous man such as Noah to become drunk especially as he is to be an instructional role model for future generations. The ancient interpreters, as we have seen, offer varied and sometimes opposing interpretations to explain his behavior, but this second assumption means that they are bothered about it. Similarly, the behavior of Lot and his daughters in the cave begs interpretation in the light of this assumption. Beyond the issue of Lot's drunkenness is the act of incest initiated by his daughters. Lot may not have the biblical status of Noah as a righteous man, but he is the nephew of Abraham, "our father". Furthermore, in the eyes of the ancient interpreters, sexual intercourse between father and daughter is a repugnant act irrespective of the moral standing of its perpetrators. The Bible's purpose in writing the story is not ethnological, dealing with the historical origins of the peoples of Moab and Ammon; it is instructional. It has a relevant message to teach its readers about how to live their lives. Again, the ancient interpreters offer varied interpretations and sometimes add or delete important details of the biblical narrative but, because they see the major purpose of the biblical text as relevant and instructional, they are united in their concern about the moral issues that are raised by the story. Therefore, according to Philo and Josephus' interpretation, for example, the daughters were forced to perform their actions in order to save the world from extinction as they thought the whole world had been destroyed. The author of Jubilees, on the other hand, decries in the strongest terms the immoral behavior of both Lot and his daughters in this episode. The interpretations are different, even opposite in intent, but all ancient interpreters are bothered about the messages that the narrative presents to the reader. Judah and Tamar's actions at "the gates of Enaim" offer a further example of the validity of this second assumption. Tamar's behavior, as described in the biblical text, in disguising herself as a prostitute to

entice her father-in-law is morally problematic in the eyes of the ancients. So too is Judah's immediate reaction to "come to her" on the side of the way. Not only is Judah a patriarch but both these two figures are the antecedents of King David. The interpreters again offer varied interpretations, but this assumption means that they have to be bothered by the instructional issues raised by the text.

The third basic assumption is that scripture is harmonious. In an anthology of texts in English or Latin, for example, written by many authors over a period of more than a thousand years in diverse locales and under different political regimes and cultural norms, the reader would hardly expect to find an absolute uniformity of views. One text would disagree with another not only in fundamental matters of belief, but even in its presentation of past events, since people's view of history tends to be colored by their own ideologies and change radically over time. Yet with regard to scripture – precisely because it was scripture, a body of sacred writings-ancient interpreters adopted a different approach. They sought to discover the basic harmony underlying apparently discordant words and concepts, since all scripture must speak with one voice. By the same logic any biblical text might illuminate any other. For example, in the Noah's drunkenness story the Midrash Rabati links six different stories in the Bible to the negative consequences of drinking wine. Genesis Rabba, an earlier Midrash, sees in the words *ויתגל* and *אזהלה* in Genesis 9:21 an allusion to the exile (*גלות*) of the ten tribes who were punished because of their over indulgence in wine as stated in Amos 6:6, "Those who over-indulge in wine." Similarly, ancient interpreters linked the episodes of Lot's drunkenness and the episode of Judah and Tamar with the story of Ruth. Moab was the offspring of the incestuous relationship with Lot and Peretz was born out of the union of Judah and Tamar. Ruth the Moabite, thousands of years later, meets Boaz a descendant of Peretz and out of their union is born an antecedent of King David. The harmonious nature of scripture in the eyes of the ancient interpreters led them to develop these intertextual links which often guides their exegesis. However, as compared to other earlier exegetical sources, rabbinic texts have a striking interest in connecting one biblical text with another. In particular is the characteristic of rabbinic exegesis to establish connections between Pentateuchal verses and other quite "distant" biblical texts. The rabbinic institution of opening a

sermon, seen particularly in Genesis Rabba, with some out – of - the - way verse and only later connecting this to the particular verse in the week's portion is a very interesting characteristic of this type of rabbinic exegesis. Beyond its rhetorical role in heightening tension in the audience and arousing their curiosity, its primary function may be to demonstrate the unity and interrelatedness of the canon in which verses that at first seem quite unrelated to one another are shown to have a profound hidden connection.

The fourth assumption is that all of scripture is divinely sanctioned or inspired. This does not only mean that much of the words from scripture come from God as in the oft quoted phrase "thus says the Lord". It also means that as scripture is divinely inspired, every word, letter and even dot in the Bible has importance and significance for the reader. For example, Targum Pseudo-Jonathan will infer from the dot over the second ך in the word ובקומה in the narrative of Lot's daughters (Gen 19:33) that Lot did know after he woke up what his eldest daughter had done and despite this he did not refrain from drinking the second night. Similarly, the unusual form ויחל in Genesis 9:20 leads Genesis Rabba and later medieval interpreters such as Rashi to make the connection between this word and the term חולין meaning profanity. Such detailed exegesis and the hunt for meaning in every single word and letter for textual incongruity and nuance presupposes their assumption of a divinely inspired text.

Bearing in mind these four assumptions will help in the understanding of what the ancient interpreters wrote about the texts in this study. Despite these shared approaches, I have tried to show how they vary greatly in the messages they are transmitting. I now wish to delve further into these messages with particular reference to the topics in our thesis; **drunkenness and prostitution**. I will then discuss in more detail the **common exegetical motifs** shared by many of these interpreters in the narratives under discussion. Following this I will focus on the **method, including literary and rhetorical devices**, by which the ancient exegetes shared these messages and motifs with their readers and finally I will discuss what can be learned about **rabbinic morality** from their interpretations of these texts.

## **Drunkenness in the Biblical Narrative and Second Temple and Early Rabbinic Literature**

In chapter one, I discussed the literary structure and linguistic composition of the biblical text of Noah's drunkenness. I pointed out that while the narrative unit describing Noah's act of drunkenness appears relatively brief and cryptic, the discursive unit of the blessings and the curse is quite expansive displaying richness of poetry and style. The focus of the unit as portrayed in the biblical text seems to be on Noah's nakedness and his sons' response to it rather than Noah's drunkenness. However, when turning to the exegesis of some of the ancient interpreters on this narrative one can discern a shift of emphasis onto Noah's act of intoxication. Whereas in the biblical text Noah's drunkenness is but an instigating factor in the plot, in ancient interpretation it becomes its driving force. Two schools of thought seem to develop in this later ancient literature, which differ as to their appraisal of Noah after the flood and his drunkenness episode. Noah's intoxication indeed appears to be the central exegetical motif that lies at the root of the narrative expansions discussed in chapter two. The tradition of Jubilees, Genesis Apocryphon followed by Philo and Josephus, paints Noah in a positive light. His drunkenness is a result of his festive sacrifice to God and is part of a religious ritual rather than debauchery. However a parallel tradition was developing, based on an early ancient text in Baruch III which highlights the negative consequences of Noah's intoxication and traces its roots back to the sin of Adam and his taking of the tree of knowledge-the vine. Targum Pseudo-Jonathan expands on this tradition by subtly removing Noah's epitaph of a "righteous" man to his son, Shem. By the 4<sup>th</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> century C.E. it is this tradition which has gained dominance with the Midrash Rabba adding emphasis to the negative narrative expansions of previous interpreters. Noah profanes (לרע) and disgraces himself through his wine drinking. In addition, his actions are the cause of not one, but two future exiles. The Talmud, followed in more expansive terms by Midrash Rabati, goes one step further by citing intoxication as the primeval sin, the source of all evil and mankind's destruction throughout its history. At this point in the history of interpretation there is no longer any reference to the ancient interpretation of the Jubilees school – it has been completely superseded by the negative narrative expansions of the Midrash and Talmud.

Elements of the tradition that views drunkenness as sinful, figure prominently in the writings of the Testament of Judah in its interpretation of the Judah and Tamar narrative. Judah is enticed to marry Batshua and have intercourse with Tamar. In both cases, it is Judah's drunkenness, according to the Testament, which leads him to sexual sin. This addition of the drunkenness motif to this story, which is completely absent in the biblical text, further suggests that already in the Hellenistic period negative attitudes towards drunkenness were coming to the fore in ancient Palestine.

How is the development of the tradition that paints such a negative picture of the act of drunkenness to be understood? Is the point of departure in the negative narrative expansions, found especially in rabbinic Midrash, rooted in some peculiarity in the biblical text or are they expressions of some social or cultural message about the evils of intoxication that became fused with the biblical character of Noah or Judah? I have briefly discussed this question in chapter two of the thesis but I wish to consider this again in my concluding chapter as it is a fundamental issue. I suggest, as do other scholars such as Kugel, that these narrative expansions do not constitute "pure" exegesis in that they derive solely from the efforts of early exegetes to explain the meaning of biblical passages. The starting point of Genesis Rabba is not the textual difficulty posed by the unusual words ויחל (9:20) and ויתגל (9:21) in the Noah drunkenness story. Rather the early exegete is an expositor with "an axe to grind." This "axe" is polemic indeed: he is out to prove to his audience that excessive wine drinking is sinful. His method, though, is to show this through the biblical text itself. In this way the narrative means much more than it seems to be mean and that there are hidden implications which, without him, we would likely pass over. In this case it seems that the exegete has started with an idea about the dangers of drinking and then examined an appropriate biblical verse to hang it on, rather than starting with the verse and finding its "solution" amid the cultural and historical baggage of his age. The growing intensity of the negative narrative expansions concerning the evils of drunkenness, especially in the testaments and early rabbinic Midrash, seem to point to this conclusion.

One can only speculate why this happened especially during the late second and post-second temple period in Palestine. It would be relevant to mention something of the Greco-Roman social and cultural background of the times. Firstly, it is important to point out that the Greeks had a god of wine called Bacchus/Dionysus. In the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E. this god was elevated to the position of one of the twelve Olympian deities.<sup>317</sup> The culture of drinking wine in the Greek world of the second temple period is known mainly through the work of Athenaeus in his book “The Learned Banquet” written in the early second century C. E. There he quotes the Athenian Mnesitheus as saying that wine was revealed by the gods to men. One custom that was particularly enjoyed by the “upper class” of Greece was called the symposium. The word itself signifies “drinking together” or entertainment with sexual undertones.<sup>318</sup> Often drinking to excess was almost the goal of the party.<sup>319</sup> The Romans adapted the symposium to their culture, making it a place for ostentation, drunkenness and debauchery.<sup>320</sup> It is therefore more than conceivable that

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<sup>317</sup> See Atheneus 2.36a-b. In order to keep the number to twelve, another deity was forced into retirement. The goddess Hestia (a gentle maiden deity) is included in the depiction of the Olympian twelve on a mid-fifth century marble relief from Tarentum. However, when the Parthenon in Athens was completed (432 BCE) the frieze on this temple, which depicted the twelve gods of Olympus, omitted Hestia but included Dionysus.

<sup>318</sup> Both Xenophon and Plato wrote works entitled *The Symposium*, each describing a party by this name at which the philosopher Socrates (last half of the 5<sup>th</sup> Century BCE) was the prominent guest. Xenophon in *Symposium* 2:1, describes a lengthy floor show in which three attractive and naked young people provided the entertainment. The two girls and the boy were accomplished in music (instrumental and vocal) in dancing, and even acrobatics. One girl, as Xenophon describes it, somersaulted effortlessly over several upright swords, amazing the guests with such courage exhibited by a member of the gentle sex.

<sup>319</sup> See Potter J. 1974, in his work *The Antiquities of Greece*, new ed. 2 vols. New York.. He describes how there were many of these dinner parties at which drinking to excess was the norm. First one would drink to the gods, then to absent friends, these drinks being of unmixed wine. This must not have been done too rarely in later Greece, since the Roman Cicero considered such drinking to be “after the Greek manner”. See also Seltman C. 1957. *Wine in the Ancient World*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., where he describes how the wives of the Greeks often became drunk in the privacy of their homes as well.

<sup>320</sup> Petronius in his work *Satyricon*, describes how in conversation and entertainment there is a lowering of standards from the early Greek practices. Potter, *Antiquities* 1827:358 indicates that many Romans did not

early rabbinic views about drunkenness developed as a reaction against Greco-Roman cultural norms.

As has been noted earlier in the study, the ancient interpreters of the Lot's daughters' narrative, especially in the early rabbinic Midrash, did not dwell on the evils of intoxication as evidenced in the daughters getting their father drunk and committing incest with him. This is somewhat surprising considering the severity of the act as compared to Noah's drunkenness. True, Noah was responsible for his actions and performed them with full knowledge, unlike the unintentional drunkenness brought on to Lot by his daughters. However, one would have thought that Lot's inebriated state which led to incest would have called for an unambiguous condemnation of the evils of strong drink especially by the early Rabbis of the Midrash. Such condemnation is indeed found in the early writings of Jubilees, but here the emphasis is on the severity of the act of incest rather than Lot's intoxication. Hints of the bad effects of drunkenness are also found in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan's interpretation of the narrative where he introduces four times the phrase, "he got drunk" in a biblical text that does not explicitly mention drunkenness at all. However, the vast body of ancient interpretation including the early Midrash and later talmudic commentaries not only ignore the issues of drunkenness in the narrative but paint a positive portrayal of the daughter's actions as saviors of mankind. Moreover, in the later talmudic literature, one finds positive praise for the elder daughter, the instigator of whole affair, for having been zealous to perform a mitzvah—a positive precept! An appreciation of the methodology of the ancient exegetes, particularly their approach to understanding the harmonious nature of scripture as a whole as in the third assumption discussed above can, I suggest, assist in providing a possible explanation for this puzzling exegetical phenomenon. I discuss this point further on in this concluding

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consider the drunkenness which resulted at such parties to be a problem. Seneca, for example, believed that drinking even to the point of intoxication was a panacea for the tormenting cares of life. The older Cato, according to Horace in *Odes* 3:21, was apparently at his best when heavily under the influence of wine. See also Pliny 1945. *Natural History*, 10 volumes. Loeb Classic Library. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press. pp. 137-48.

chapter in the discussion of some of the other exegetical motifs developed by the ancient interpreters in these narratives.

### **Prostitution in the Biblical Narrative, Second Temple and Early Rabbinic Literature**

What messages have the ancient interpreters have to share with the reader about their view of prostitution and immodest behavior? Whereas there are very forceful opinions, especially among the early rabbinic writers, about the evils of intoxication one does not find a similar treatment regarding these other types of inappropriate conduct. Does this mean that these ancient interpreters did not consider such behavior as in fact not befitting? This question will now be considered in more detail through a review and analysis of the major points referring to prostitution in the biblical narrative of Judah and Tamar and the ancient exegesis of that story.

I have already noted that the biblical narrator provides no explicit moral evaluation, either of Judah's eagerness to consort with a prostitute or of the supposed profession of the woman who made herself available by sitting "at the entrance of Enaim which is on the road to Timnah" (Gen 38:14). In the observations of other scriptural texts on prostitution, I also noted that although prostitution does not seem to be a respectable profession in biblical times, biblical law does not prohibit a man from associating with a female prostitute and that prostitution was part of the social reality in the land inhabited by Israel. It is also interesting to note that the biblical narrator is extremely circumspect in his portrayal of Tamar as a prostitute. He never directly states that Tamar was a prostitute (זונה) or a consecrated woman (קדשה). In fact, Tamar's covering herself with a veil seems incongruous for someone impersonating a prostitute. Rather than charging that Tamar "played the harlot"(Gen 38:24), the narrator reveals Judah and Hirah's perception of her as a prostitute and consecrated woman. Later in Genesis 38, the narrator does not directly express the opinion that Tamar engaged in illicit sexual activity; rather, he presents this as the perception of those who report anonymously to Judah. Ultimately, the narrator leaves the reader to judge Tamar's actions at Enaim. This leaves plenty of room for

ancient interpreters to provide their own exegesis of the text and they do so in a number of different ways.

The Testament of Judah gives a particularly novel interpretation of the Judah and Tamar prostitution narrative. Tamar is depicted as a bride who follows Amorite law which specified that all women who were soon to marry should sit publicly by the city gate for seven days for fornication. As such, Tamar is not a common prostitute (זונה) but a (קדשה). By suggesting that Tamar intended to marry Judah and that she was following an Amorite custom in her behavior, the Testament seems to be ameliorating Tamar's conduct as it appears in the biblical text. This motif eliminates the idea that she intentionally dressed as a common prostitute and it also removes the charge that Judah responded to a prostitute. Clearly the encounter of Judah, a future king of Israel, with a common prostitute is not befitting behavior for such a personality and so the Testament changes the narrative to improve his character. This is especially interesting because the focus point of the Testament's exegesis is that Judah succumbed to the wiles of two women and that he repented for his acts of drunkenness and fornication. In his messages to his children, he strongly condemns these actions. The Testament could have left the prostitution motif as in the biblical narrative and still have achieved his aim of describing Judah's moral metamorphosis. But it seems that the prostitution motif so disturbed the author of the Testament that even when describing Judah's moral weaknesses for women and wine, he feels the necessity of recontextualising the biblical account of Judah's meeting with Tamar to exclude Judah's consorting with a common prostitute.

The dangers of immodest clothing and appearance are also stressed by the Testament. Tamar seduces Judah "through the fashion of adornment" (T. Jud 12:3). This has no basis in the biblical text which simply indicates that she concealed her identity when "she wrapped herself" (ותתעלף) in a veil. Clearly the Testament wishes to emphasize how Tamar manipulated her looks to heighten Judah's desire and to seduce him.

Targum Neofiti responds to the unseemly prostitute episode in the Judah and Tamar narrative in a different way. He does not change the details of the narrative as does the

Testament. By concentrating its wealth of material at the climax of the story and having very little expansive material elsewhere in the chapter, Targum Neofiti deflects the attention of the reader from the morally problematic issues in the narrative such as Judah's sexual encounter with Tamar. The characters become exemplars of fine character under threat of death. Tamar becomes a pious and prayerful woman and an illustration of the concept of "sanctification of the divine Name." Judah becomes a teacher of ethics and a biblical exegete as well as an exemplar of willing confession of sin. This transformation of character does not lessen the morally questionable actions at the beginning of the biblical narrative. On the contrary; the need for such an expansive deflection at the climax of the story seems to suggest that the author of Neofiti believes that only a complete transformation of character and admittance of guilt for previous inappropriate actions can offer recompense for what has happened.

If the Testament has dealt with the uncomfortable issue of Judah's consorting with a prostitute by reinterpreting the narrative and Targum Neofiti by deflecting the reader's attention from the incident, Genesis Rabba provides two different explanations of the event. In the first, Judah does not recognize Tamar because her face is exposed for the first time in his presence, since she constantly veiled herself when she lived with him as a daughter-in-law. She indeed dresses as a prostitute and the lesson implied is that one should be careful to avoid inadvertent sexual relations with female relatives. According to this explanation there is no censure of Judah for consorting with a prostitute only for failure to acquaint himself with his daughter-in-law. In the second explanation, Judah does see a veiled woman on the way to Timnah as in the biblical narrative, but he declines the opportunity to go to her since it is obvious from her conservative dress that she is not a prostitute. An angel intervenes and forces Judah to consort with Tamar against his will. Clearly this second reformulation of the encounter wishes to acquit Judah from all charges of inappropriate intention and conduct.

In concluding the remarks on the ancient interpreters' views on prostitution as seen from their exegesis of the Judah and Tamar narrative, I can make a number of observations. Firstly, there is a clear difference between their presentation of the evils of drunkenness

which is expansive, especially in rabbinic Midrash, and the almost complete absence of comments in their exegesis regarding the inappropriateness of prostitution. This is especially so regarding the first interpretation of Genesis Rabba above which positively ignores any negative comment regarding prostitution even when an opportunity to do so arises. Only the author of the Testament has a clear message of condemnation in this regard. However this does not mean, I suggest, that these early interpreters had no views on the subject. Most were clearly bothered by the act. Targum Neofiti's deflection from this part of the story and Genesis Rabba's introduction of an angel who forces Judah to behave as he does are clear testimony that Judah's consorting with a prostitute was regarded as inappropriate. However, these observations are inferred from their commentaries. They do not expand on their views as in the case of the Noah drunkenness narrative.

### **Central Exegetical Motifs Developed by Ancient Jewish Interpreters**

Following these concluding comments on the themes of drunkenness and prostitution, I wish to focus on other central exegetical motifs in these narratives. Is it possible to identify particular exegetical motifs that are common to many of these interpreters? Obviously, as pointed out in our introduction to this study, interpreters from different historical and cultural backgrounds bring to their exegesis different expectations, associations and exegetical strategies and therefore discover different resonances within the same biblical narrative. They go even further, crossing the line between interpreter and author when they reshape that narrative so that it better expresses a particular meaning and incorporate this revised narrative within a new literary composition. However I can highlight at least one exegetical motif that is common to almost all of these interpreters—the introduction of God, his divine voice or his messenger into the narrative plot of each of the stories in this study. In the Noah drunkenness story, for example, Targum Pseudo–Jonathan contemplates the question when Noah made his wine. According to the biblical text, no statement is offered which suggests an answer. Pseudo–Jonathan comments that God's presence is acting behind the scenes of the text. The vine grew miraculously the same day that it was planted. Similarly in the Lot's daughters episode, the Midrash asks where these daughters had access to wine in the cave, next to

Sodom. One of the two answers given suggests that God himself provided the wine in order to ensure that the antecedents of the Messiah were brought to the world through the sexual liaison between Lot and his daughters. In the Judah and Tamar narrative, according to Genesis Rabba, an angel sent by God forces Judah into the union with Tamar, against Judah's own will. All three examples demonstrate the desire of the ancient interpreters to introduce God into the narrative plot where the biblical text does not.

Not only is God introduced into these stories but in some instances a divine voice is introduced which accepts responsibility for the events that occur. A variant of this motif appears in all three of the interpretive works we have examined in Genesis 38. In Genesis Rabba, the Holy Spirit cries out in the courtroom, "These things are from me" (Gen Rabba 85.12). In Targum Neofiti, a heavenly voice delivers the verdict, "Both of you are innocent. From before the Lord is the decree". In the Testament of Judah the actual divine utterance is missing, but it is paraphrased by Judah, who refrains from killing Tamar when he realizes that what has happened "was from the Lord." In each of these interpretive works, the motif of divine acceptance of responsibility appears in connection with the interpretation of Gen 38:26, which contains Judah's declaration that Tamar "is more righteous than I" (צדקה ממני). At some point in the exegetical history of this phrase, Judah's unfavorable comparison of himself with Tamar was broken into two parts, and the second part, "from me" (ממני) was designated as divine speech.

The question arises concerning this motif whether or not the biblical phrase "She is more righteous than I" (צדקה ממני) was actually problematic for early Jewish readers of scripture and therefore required a creative solution, such as the introduction of a divine voice. Significantly some of the earliest translators of Genesis 38 had no difficulty with the phrase. For example, the Septuagint translates the Hebrew phrase as "Tamar is more righteous than I." This translation is quite literal, with only the addition of Tamar's name to the subject of the verb. The Samaritan Targum and the Peshitta also preserve the comparative sense of this phrase. Perhaps then the difficulty lay not in the grammar of this phrase, but in its content. The comparison casts an extremely negative light on Judah,

since through it he acknowledges the superiority of his daughter-in-law, who intentionally tricked him into having incestuous relations by assuming the identity of a prostitute. Perhaps at a first stage in the development of this exegetical tradition, Judah's negative comparison of himself with Tamar was severed into two parts becoming a declaration of Tamar's righteousness ("She is righteous") and an admission that he was the father of the important twins ("It was from me,"). Targum Neofiti presents both of these statements, in fact, in an expanded interpretive form.

But what is particularly important for the discussion is what then motivated the reassignment of the second part of the phrase "It was from me" (ממני) to a divine voice? This question is especially perplexing in light of the clear specification in the Hebrew text that Judah spoke these words: "Judah recognized and said, "She is more righteous than I." The interjection of divine speech at this point in the narrative contradicts the plain and simple sense of the biblical text. The reassignment, therefore, does not respond to a problem in the Bible. In fact, the opposite appears to be the case. The interjection of divine speech appears to be a response to a problem pious readers had as they pondered the text. As members of religious communities, these readers expected scripture to depict aspects of the relationship between humanity and divinity. But except for two punitive interventions, God is not an active presence in Genesis 38, nor in fact in the Noah's drunkenness or Lot's daughters' narrative. To correct this situation, some bold interpreter found a pliant point in the Hebrew text of Genesis 38 at which to interject an active divine presence into the narrative. This pliant point occurred at the dramatic climax of the biblical narrative in the phrase "It was from me". By designating this phrase as divine speech, this interpreter indicated that the events in Genesis 38 happened by the design of providence, not merely by chance. The reassignment of a single phrase from Judah to the divine voice therefore indicates a religious interpretation of Genesis 38 as an example of God's involvement with human history.

There is also one further example of how ancient interpretations came to be. Individual exegetical motives may be found not only in the problematic of the Hebrew text, but also in the perspectives of later readers whom "have an axe to grind." Certainly rabbinic

exegesis does involve close attention to and manipulation of the words and grammar of scripture. But to concentrate on difficulties in the Hebrew text as the primary motivating force in exegesis is to miss some of these more interesting and important dynamics of biblical interpretation, including particular theological presuppositions and cultural perspectives.

However, the introduction of the God exegetical motif in these narratives does more, I suggest, than just involving the divine presence in the course of human history. It also provides an answer to the perplexing moral issues that arise in all these narratives. If God is involved in the course of events between Lot and his daughters then their actions cannot be as morally reprehensible as it seems on the surface. Likewise, if God announces at the climax of the Judah-Tamar narrative that "it was from me", then God himself is giving his approval to the course of events even though they seem puzzling to the reader. In this way, the ancient interpreters have developed a common exegetical motif which makes it easier for the pious reader to accept a morally questionable tale.

One further exegetical motif, which is related to the ancient interpreters attempt to make the biblical text more palatable for his religious reader, is their desire to ameliorate the behavior of the main characters of the story and to develop them as worthy ancestors of an important lineage. Noah then, according to Jubilees and Philo, is not a drunken agriculturist but a righteous man whose drunkenness is the result of a religious ceremony rather than debauchery. The daughters of Lot, according to Midrash Rabba, are not the initiators of an unsavory act of incest but the saviors of mankind and the antecedents of Ruth and Naama, the mothers of the Davidic lineage and the future Messiah. Judah and Tamar are not behaving in a sexually inappropriate way, according to Midrash Rabba, but are acting in line with the divine plan to provide kings and leaders for the Jewish people.

Even when the ancient interpreters are critical of a patriarch's behavior as in the Testament of Judah's exegesis of the Judah and Tamar story, they still often try to find creative methods of ameliorating, in some way, the behavior of the major characters.

Judah, therefore, is described as being drunk when he married Bathshua and consorted with Tamar. The description of Judah's drunkenness state also acts to modify somewhat Judah's inappropriate behavior. As he was drunk, he did not know exactly what he was doing when he sinned. Likewise, Judah is described as waiting after his wife's death for two years before he consorts with Tamar. This time addition is not mentioned in the biblical text. Judah thereby is given credit for his patience during this difficult mourning period.

To what extent do the ancient interpreters go in ameliorating the inappropriate behaviors of biblical ancestors? As emphasized in the discussion below regarding the methodology of the ancient interpreters, they are prepared to add, change and delete information in the biblical text. In the case of Josephus, who consistently portrays the patriarchs in glowing terms in these narratives, he is even prepared to delete a whole story completely from his exegesis. This is what he does in the Judah and Tamar narrative. It is possible to assume that the actions of these ancestors seemed so inappropriate to him that he decided not to include the narrative at all in his "*Antiquities*". This approach of Josephus raises many questions about the relationship between text and interpretation. If an interpreter ignores the inclusion of a whole narrative text, for whatever reason, in his version of the Bible story, is he not rewriting the history of Israel to suit his own particular religious or cultural agenda? At what point is an addition or deletion of information written in the biblical text a legitimate interpretation and when is it inappropriate? These questions deserve further study, but go beyond the scope of this thesis.

One final exegetical motif is important for our understanding of how ancient interpreters understood both the Lot's daughters' narrative and the Judah and Tamar story. The theme of kingship is developed, particularly in the exegesis of Genesis Rabba, in both these narratives and in the interpretation of the Testament of Judah. In the Lot's daughters' narrative, Genesis Rabba praises the acts of the two daughters as leading to the advent of kings and leaders in Israel. Similarly, in the Judah and Tamar story Genesis Rabba, using a variety of literary techniques, repeatedly and consistently interprets the narrative as the story of Israel's king's and redeemers. These interpretations demonstrate an awareness of

the third assumption mentioned above; namely the harmonious nature of scripture as a whole. The theme of kingship, implicit in the biblical narrative of Genesis 38 through its conclusion with the birth of David's ancestor, Perez, links also to the birth of Moab, the ancestor of Ruth in the Lot's daughters story. The emergence of the Davidic dynasty, therefore, has its roots in these two narratives in the book of Genesis. These narratives can therefore not be understood in a superficial way which may paint a rather unsavory picture of the characters involved. Rather God, according to these interpreters, is masterminding the future birth of kings, in many centuries of time.

The particular exegesis of Genesis Rabba on the theme of kingship leads to the question whether it is possible to identify particular ideological standpoints that unite interpretations across various narratives in the book of Genesis. I have argued in this thesis, following Neusner, that Genesis Rabba is in fact a unified work based on the overall thematic statement that this work makes about "Israel's salvific history." The examples brought above, concerning the origins of kingship in Genesis Rabba's interpretation of both the Lot's daughters and Judah and Tamar narrative, seem to strengthen this assertion. This point of view also helps us understand why Genesis Rabba does not condemn the drunkenness of Lot as it did the intoxication of Noah. In the eyes of Genesis Rabba, the focus of the Lot's daughters' narrative is on the origins of kingship. As such, it is not an appropriate place to include a condemnation of the act of drinking in a narrative which, through this very act, is planting the seeds of Messiah. Rabbinic views of the evils of drunkenness have not changed in this interpretation. Rather here the focus of interpretation is on messianic origins and the birth of Davidic royalty. It is this theme which drives its exegesis and directs its particular innovative hermeneutical innovations.

### **The Methodology of Ancient Exegetes-Literary and Rhetorical Devices**

I now wish to turn to the methodologies by which the ancient interpreters presented their ideas both in literary and rhetoric terms. What conclusions can be drawn from the way they presented their messages on scripture? Firstly I will compare the interpretation of these exegetes at the level of narrative structure. Certainly all their interpretations refer to characters, motifs and episodes in the biblical texts studied, since the biblical narrative is

their common point of departure. However, they differ greatly as to which parts of the biblical text they wish to emphasize. This is particularly marked as regards the Genesis 38 narrative. Genesis Rabba emphasizes the final birth scene towards which the biblical narrative moves (Gen 38:27-30). Targum Neofiti emphasizes the dramatic climax of the biblical narrative depicting the crisis and resolution of the embedded plot development, in which Tamar risks her life to engender the next generation (Gen 38:25-26). The Testament of Judah emphasizes Judah's questionable relations with the women of Genesis 38 and the problem of his evil sons. In the Noah's drunkenness story, ancient interpreters place a different emphasis on the narrative structure as compared to the biblical story. Whereas the focus of the biblical Noah's drunkenness narrative is on Noah's nakedness and the ensuing blessings and curses given by him, the emphasis of the early rabbinic interpreters in the Midrash is on Noah's drunkenness and the severity of his actions.

Upon closer inspection, one notices that not only do these works selectively emphasize portions of the various narratives, but they also add to the plot structure of the biblical story in order to express their messages. Examples of these additions or what has been called narrative expansions have been examined throughout the thesis. A particularly interesting example of a plot addition is in the Noah drunkenness story. No mention is made in the biblical narrative of how long Noah waited for his vine to grow before he made his wine nor about why he drunk it. The author of Jubilees, followed by Philo and Josephus, adds that Noah, being a righteous man, followed biblical law and waited for four years before he made the wine. His drinking was the result of his celebrating a religious feast. Sometimes, the additions are more subtle. For example, Targum Pseudo-Jonathan in the Noah drunkenness story adds the epithet, "righteous" in his description of Noah's son Shem. The suggestion is that Noah, as a result of his drunkenness, is losing his "righteous" title in favor of his son, Shem.

Altering plot structure is a further literary methodology practiced by these exegetes. An extreme example of this phenomenon can be found in the Testament of Judah's interpretation of Genesis 38. In this work, there is not even a passing reference to the

birth of twins towards which the biblical narrative moves. Rather, it divides Genesis 38 into two stories illustrating Judah's weaknesses for women and other vices that lead to his loss of royal status. Narrative elements of the biblical plot are used freely and recombine into new structures according to the larger purposes of the interpretation. For example, the Testament of Judah transfers the biblical search for the mysterious woman (Gen 38:20-23) to the very end of its version of Genesis 38 in order to conclude with the theme of shame suggested by this episode. In addition, this work recontextualises its version of Genesis 38 within the longer narrative of Judah's autobiography, so that accounts of Judah's manly exploits preface it and his humble penitence follows it.

Another related area that has been a major focus of this thesis is the poetics of interpretation. This means how interpreters implicitly argue for their understanding of scripture through literary and rhetorical means. In the interpretations studied, the poetics of interpretation include the genres within which exegesis of these biblical narratives occur, as well as the methods through which new meanings are integrated into the original biblical narrative. Through a variety of techniques all these interpretive works claim authority for their very different articulations of the biblical narrative. Genesis Rabba accomplishes its interpretations through the means of anthological commentary. In this commentary, quotations of the biblical narrative are clearly demarcated from rabbinic comments about the text. This practice might appear to draw attention to the distinction between biblical narrative and later commentary and thus to highlight the innovative quality of rabbinic interpretation. In actuality, most interpretive comments in Genesis Rabba contain a reference to a specific detail of the Hebrew text, such as spelling, word choice, grammar, or connection with another biblical passage. These references integrate rabbinic interpretation with the particulars of the Hebrew text, implying that later exegetical motifs and traditions arose directly from scripture itself. The alternating quotation of scripture and rabbinic commentary in Genesis Rabba also tacitly ascribes to the latter an authority comparable to scripture. Genesis Rabba thus implicitly argues for the authority of the rabbinic sages to determine the significance of scripture. Another interesting feature of Genesis Rabba's interpretation is its tendency to offer various interpretations to a particular text, even if they are in conflict with each

other. This is especially noticeable in its commentary on the Genesis 38, Judah and Tamar narrative. For example, he brings two different and even somewhat opposing traditions regarding the portrayal of the character of Judah at the encounter with Tamar in Enaim. One emphasizes Judah's guilt, while the other emphasizes his innocent intentions and his compliance with divine designs. This intentional juxtaposition of two disparate portraits of Judah is, I suggest, an intentional rhetoric technique. It reflects the inherent tension within the biblical text which vacillates between Judah's lustful behavior and the fact that this illicit union leads to the origins of the royal and messianic lineage. Genesis Rabba does not resolve the tension by forwarding one potential interpretation of the biblical narrative and suppressing the other. Instead both presentations are presented side by side with no attempt at harmonization. Though this technique, the contradictory voices within scripture itself are amplified, so that they can easily be heard by the reader of Genesis Rabba.

Other rhetorical devices used by the Midrash have been discussed in this thesis. In particular, the use of dialogue, allegory and metaphor heightens the dramatic effect of the interpreter's message. For example, in the Midrash Tanhuma's interpretation of the Noah drunkenness story, Satan opens an apparently innocent conversation with Noah about the fruits he is planting. The initial apparent innocence of Satan and his later eloquence regarding the effects of wine make for interesting dramatization of the midrashic message. Later in the same Midrash, Satan slaughters four different animals whose blood seeps into the earth watering the vineyard. The evils of drinking are being portrayed, through this allegory, in quite violent and graphic terms. The animals also act as a hidden rabbinic metaphor for the four exiles that Israel is to undergo. These rhetorical devices aim to deepen and strengthen the messages being conveyed by the rabbis of the Midrash.

Genesis Rabba and other Midrashim in this study link their interpretations to the particular details of the Hebrew text more strongly than some of the other interpretations that have been discussed. Targum Neofiti, Pseudo-Jonathan and the Testament of Judah, among others for example, are written in languages other than Hebrew. This means that even where links exist between inherited exegetical motifs and details in the biblical text,

these links are obscured by the translation into Aramaic and Greek. But translation is not the only difference between the Midrash and these other works. These works compensate for the loss of specific connections between exegetical traditions and the Hebrew text by employing genres that incorporate interpretation into the biblical narrative more directly than the commentary found in Genesis Rabba does. In Targum Neofiti, for example, the genre of expanded, paraphrastic translation includes a narrativization of the themes in rabbinic exegesis. In the narrative expansion of the Judah and Tamar narrative, biblical text and rabbinic commentary become one seamless whole. Targum Neofiti presents the narrative and thematic content, if not the precise details, of rabbinic interpretation without demarcating it from the biblical text. Because the content of rabbinic exegesis actually becomes incorporated into the biblical narrative, the distinction between the two is obliterated. In similar fashion, in Jubilees and the Testament of Judah, extra-biblical motifs appear incorporated into their version of the biblical text. This new formulation of the narrative has been coined by scholars as the "Rewritten Bible".

However, though these elements of literary technique are common to interpreters like Targum Neofiti and the Testament of Judah, they each present their own distinctive rhetorical features as well. Targum Neofiti, for example, uses aphorisms and elements of surprise to heighten the dramatic impact of Judah's confession in its version of the Judah and Tamar narrative. Judah compares the embarrassment that confession brings in this world to that of the next and thereby the author transforms Judah's dubious character in the biblical narrative to one who is a model for sincere confession. Judah's confession not just to one but to two misdemeanors creates an element of surprise for the reader and heightens the drama of the narrative. The Testament of Judah has a number of particularly distinctive literary and rhetorical features. Firstly it presents the narrative in Judah's own words. The single voice of Judah, sincerely recounting his flawed life, eliminates both the biblical author's implied support of Tamar and his ironic attitude towards Judah. Instead, in this Testament Judah himself bids for his descendants' sympathy and respect-and by extension for the general reader's sympathy and respect-by fully disclosing his sincere motives, his honest failures and his deep remorse for his actions. In addition, the pseudepigraphal aspect of the Testament genre garners the

authority of this biblical figure in support of a reworked account of the biblical narrative. Thus, the Testament of Judah makes a claim for the validity of its interpretation of Genesis 38 through an implicit appeal to the status of Jacob's son. A further distinct literary technique employed by the Testament is his expansion of the minor characters in the Judah and Tamar narrative. Batshua, Judah's wife, and Er take on a much more central role as compared to the biblical narrative where Judah's wife is not actually named. It is she who leads Er to sin and she is the one who prevents Judah from giving Shelah to Tamar. The purpose of this expansion, it seems, is to divert the blame of not giving Shelah to Tamar, from Judah to his Canaanite wife.

To conclude this section on the methodology of the ancient exegetes, the recognition that the ancient interpreters' encounter with three biblical narratives produced such dissimilar results returns the reader full circle to the hermeneutic issues explicitly raised in the introductory chapter of this thesis. The differences between the interpretive treatments of the narratives analyzed in this study concretely illustrate the critical role of historically situated readers for determining the religious meanings of biblical narratives. These interpreters emphasized certain episodes, themes and points of contact between these narratives and other biblical passages while ignoring or rejecting other potentially productive features of these puzzling stories. Their elaborations and clarifications therefore restricted and channeled the meaning of the biblical narrative in distinctive directions. Historical and cultural contexts predisposed these interpreters to focus on certain features of the text and to perceive the central message of that narrative in particular ways. Also decisive were the hermeneutic strategies and received exegetical traditions that influenced the interpreters' understandings of the narrative. The striking differences between the treatments also stem from the very active nature of the interpreters' engagement with the biblical narrative, which included reshaping the narrative into forms capable of expressing the values and ideals of different types of ancient Judaism.

### **Moral Issues Raised by this Study**

What can be concluded from this study about rabbinic morality and belief in the 3-5 century C.E. in ancient Palestine? As regards one of the central themes in this study, the attitude to drunkenness, one can make some clear cut observations. The Rabbis of Genesis Rabba and later midrashic and talmudic works unquestionably viewed the drinking of wine to intoxication as not only inappropriate but sinful. This is despite the fact that no such view is unequivocally stated in scripture. They expressed their negative opinions through their interpretations on the Noah drunkenness story. These views though rooted in the Noah biblical text, clearly express a much wider historical and cultural context in which wine drinking to excess was to be disdained. It is likely, as has been noted, that the Greco-Roman cultural background was a catalyst in the development of this negative stance, but the fact that this view developed without any dissenting rabbinic opinions and to the extreme position which it did, is evidence that this became the universal rabbinic stance to the question of drunkenness in the post-destruction period.

Can one make the same conclusions about rabbinic attitudes to prostitution? The answer here is clearly more nuanced. One can find no parallel dogmatic statements in the rabbinic early literature against prostitution as found against drunkenness. Certainly the Rabbis had the opportunity to present their views on the subject in their exegesis of the Judah and Tamar narrative. But they chose to be silent. How is their position to be understood here? There is, I suggest, evidence that the Rabbis were at least uncomfortable with the whole episode of Judah and Tamar by the gate of Enaim. It is for this reason that Genesis Rabba suggests that Judah did not think the lady was a prostitute at all and that he was persuaded forcibly by the angel to consort with her. Clearly, the Rabbis in this interpretation, wished to ameliorate Judah's behavior as described in the biblical text. However, in another interpretation of the incident, Genesis Rabba suggests Judah's guilt lay in not having got to know his daughter-in law better before hand, rather than pointing out the inappropriateness of his sexual liaison with a prostitute. Here it seems that the rabbinic interpreter was less concerned about the moral implications of Judah consorting with a prostitute. Even if one views the first interpretation as dominant

in rabbinic thought at the time, it is also possible that the Rabbis wished to portray Judah, the future leader and ancestor of kings, as one who would not voluntarily allow himself to go with a prostitute. However they may have not seen such a difficulty for the masses as a whole. For another reason, it is in fact almost impossible to derive rabbinic views about prostitution from the Judah and Tamar narrative. The major focus of their exegesis on both the Lot's daughters and Genesis 38 stories is on the theme of kingship. As such, both Judah and Tamar are the ancestors of kings and leaders. As this is the major exegetical motif, the Rabbis seemed to have wished to play down and divert attention from the issues of prostitution. This was not the focus of their interpretations here. The Rabbis may indeed have firm negative views about the subject but this was not the place in which they wished to express them. As a result of this study therefore one cannot come to a clear conclusion as to their attitude towards prostitution.

This study also raises further questions about rabbinic morality during this period. In the Lot's daughters' narrative early midrashic comments do suggest a tension between the Rabbis about the moral culpability of the incestuous act but it is not unequivocally denounced. On the contrary, in the later midrashic comments of *Pesiqta Rabati* and *Talmud Babli Baba Kamma*, we find that the opinion of the Rabbis has tended to even consider the daughters actions as a *Mitzva* or praiseworthy deed! But the midrashic authors go one step further. God himself provides the means, by providing the wine in the cave, for enabling the act of procreation to take place. He, in the perception of some of the Rabbis of the Midrash, actually encourages the act of incest in order to precipitate the birth of the ancestor of the Messiah. What is the rabbinic message being shared here through the words of the Midrash? Do the Rabbis teach that the ends justify the means and that the daughters' immoral incestuous act can be justified because it serves a greater end-the saving of mankind? If so, God's active involvement in precipitating the act, can perhaps be better understood. If this view in the Midrash is indeed accepted, as later Midrashim seem to suggest, then what are the limits of such actions and where are its boundaries? Does then rabbinic morality make the claim that the ends may justify the means?

The reader is faced with similar questions in his understanding of the Judah and Tamar narrative. How can one understand the midrashic comment that God, through the services of an angel, encouraged Judah to consort with a prostitute in order to ensure the birth of kings? Certainly the Godly encouragement of incest seems more morally reprehensible than his support of prostitution, but the latter appears to be also inappropriate. Does the goal of preparing kings for Israel justify such actions? The answer, as I conclude this study, appears to be yes. These questions though deserve further study, as the answers to them have great ramifications about the understanding of how rabbinic views about what they considered moral behavior were formed in the early 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> centuries C.E. This thesis leaves room for further study in this area.

Beyond the questions about rabbinic morality that arise in this study, one must also consider how rabbinic interpretations reflect on the beliefs of the Rabbis in this period. I have already pointed out that one of the central exegetical motifs which are shared by many interpreters is the role of God in the narrative. God, his divine voice or his messenger are frequently introduced at crucial turning points in the text. What are the implications of this phenomenon on the religious beliefs and perspectives of the early Rabbis? What is the place of man's free will in a world in which God is constantly interfering in the affairs of man? How do these interpreters reconcile man's active role as expressed in the biblical narrative with God's guiding hand and omniscient presence in the interpretation?

Clearly, the ancient Rabbis wished to emphasize to their pious readers that the events of the narratives happened by the design of God and not merely by chance. Their religious interpretation ensured that these somewhat puzzling narratives were interjected with values and religious ideals with which their readers could identify. And by so doing these Rabbis may have succeeded in enabling scripture to retain its normative and vital function within these living religious communities.

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## Abstract

A number of narratives in the Hebrew Bible deal with seemingly inappropriate behaviors such as drunkenness and prostitution. These stories include, Noah's drunkenness after the flood in Genesis 9:18-29, Lot's drinking of wine with his two daughters in Genesis 19:31-38 and the narrative of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38:1-30. The unseemly aspects of these stories are the more puzzling because the major protagonists are often characters who are portrayed as models of righteous behavior. Noah, for example, is the only character in the Bible who is referred to as a righteous (צדיק) man (Genesis 6:9 and Genesis 7:1). Yet, after he leaves the ark after the flood, his first action is to plant a vineyard and to get drunk. The biblical narrative does not dwell on Noah's inappropriate behavior. Similarly, in Genesis 19:31-38, the Bible describes the actions of Lot and his two daughters after the destruction of Sodom. The two daughters make their father drunk and commit incest with him so that they can conceive children. In this narrative, the act of drunkenness is compounded by the sin of incest. Yet this provocative biblical narrative is elliptical in style giving no judgment of their behavior. The story of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38:1-30 is also a puzzling moral narrative. Tamar intentionally deceives her father-in law by impersonating a prostitute and Judah engages a woman who he considers to be a prostitute. Moreover, he and his daughter-in-law commit what appears to be incest. This seemingly inappropriate behavior on the part of royal ancestors creates an intolerable tension within the narrative that calls upon the reader for meaningful resolution.

These provocative and perplexing biblical narratives invite and even demand interpretation. This study explores how ancient interpreters provided new meanings to these ancient texts. Despite their varied cultural and historical backgrounds, this study details how these interpreters shared common perceptions about the underlying hermeneutic principles of biblical interpretation. These include the ideas that the Bible is a cryptic document, that scripture is fundamentally a relevant text and that the Bible is harmonious and divinely inspired.

While the narrative features, themes and canonical contexts of these three biblical stories guided early Jewish interpreters to some natural conclusions, this study shows how these interpreters also made hermeneutic decisions at critical junctures in the biblical narrative and sometimes reconfigured the story's plot and characters to correspond with their understanding of its central message. Their elaborations and clarifications therefore restricted and channeled the meaning of the biblical narrative in distinctive directions.

The study focuses on the literary and rhetorical strategies and received exegetical traditions that influenced the interpreters' understandings of the narrative. The striking differences between the treatments also stem from the very active nature of the interpreters' engagement with the biblical narrative, which included reshaping the narrative into forms capable of expressing the values and ideals of different types of ancient Judaism.

The study also explores how ancient interpreters and particularly the authors of early midrashic literature, established standards of rabbinic morality by reshaping and developing the early biblical narrative. Their interpretations of the biblical narrative may in fact offer an assessment of what the early Rabbis considered moral behavior. While drunkenness is clearly denounced by the Rabbis, we find much more nuanced postures about the evils of prostitution. The introduction of exegetical motifs such as the Messiah and Godly intervention in their interpretations ensured that these somewhat puzzling narratives were interjected with values and religious ideals with which their readers could identify, thereby enabling scripture to retain its normative and vital function within these living religious communities.

## Opsomming

‘n Aantal verhale in die Hebreuse Bybel handel oor oëskynlik onfatsoenlike gedrag soos dronkenskap en prostitusie. Hierdie verhale sluit in Noag se dronkenskap na die vloed in Genesis 9: 18-29, Lot wat wyn drink saam met sy dogters in Genesis 19:31-38 en die verhaal van Juda en Tamar in Genesis 38: 1-30. Die onbetaamlike elemente in hierdie verhale is juis verbysterend, omdat die hooffigure gewoonlik karakters is wat uitgebeeld word as toonbeelde van regverdigheid. Noag, byvoorbeeld, is die enkele karakter wat deur die Bybel beskryf word as ‘n regverdige (qydc) man (Genesis 6:9 en Genesis 7:1). Nogtans, sy eerste handeling nadat hy die ark verlaat na afloop van die vloed is om ‘n wingerd aan te lê en dronk te word. Die Bybelse verhaal wei egter nie uit oor Noag se onvanpaste gedrag nie. In Genesis 19: 31-38 beskryf die Bybel soortgelyke dade van Lot en sy twee dogters na die vernietiging van Sodom. Die twee dogters maak hulle vader dronk en pleeg daarna bloeskande met hom sodat hulle sy kinders kan baar. In hierdie verhaal word die daad van dronkenskap vererger deur die sonde van bloedskande.

Tog is hierdie aanstootlike Bybelverhaal nietemin in ‘n elliptiese styl aangebied wat geen oordeel oor die dade uitspreek nie. Die verhaal van Juda en Tamar in Genesis 38: 1-30 is ook ‘n verbasende morele relaas. Tamar mislei haar skoonvader opsetlik deur haar as ‘n prostituut voor te doen en Juda maak ‘n afspraak met ‘n vrou wat hy as bloot ‘n prostituut beskou. Hy en sy skoondogter pleeg oëskynlik boonop bloedskande. Hierdie skynbare onvanpaste gedrag van vorstelike voorvaders skep ondraaglike spanning binne die verhaal wat die leser dwing tot betekenisvolle gevolgtrekkings.

Hierdie tergende en verwarrende Bybelse verhale vereis interpretasie. Die studie ondersoek hoe antieke interpreteerders (vertolkers) nuwe betekenis aan hierdie verhale toegedig het. Daar word in besonder gekyk na die wyse waarop interpreteerders, ten spyte van verskillende kulturele en historiese agtergronde, algemene insigte gedeel het aangaande onderliggende hermeneutiese beginsels van Bybelse interpretasie. Dit sluit

onder andere die gedagte in dat die Bybel ‘n kriptiese dokument is, dat die Skrif in beginsel ‘n relevante teks is en dat die Bybel ooreenstemmend en godgegewe is.

Terwyl die narratiewe kenmerke, temas en kanonieke kontekste van hierdie drie bybelse verhale vroeë Joodse interpreteerders tot natuurlike gevolgtrekkings gelei het, toon hierdie studie hoe die interpreteerders ook hermeneutiese besluite geneem het betreffende kritieke momente in die bybelse verhaal en soms die verhaal se verloop en karakters gewysig het om ooreen te stem met hulle begrip van die kernboodskap. Hulle verwerkings en verduidelikings het dus die betekenis van die bybelse verhaal beperk tot en gekanaliseer in ‘n bepaalde rigting.

Die studie fokus op die literêre en retoriese strategieë en eksegetiese tradisies wat die Rabbynse interpreteerders se begrip van die verhaal beïnvloed het. Die kenmerkende verskille tussen die verskeie verwerkings spruit vanuit die aktiewe aard van die interpreteerders se betrokkenheid by die bybelse verhaal en het meegebring dat die verhaal geherformuleer is om gestalte te gee aan die waardes en ideale van verskillende vorme van antieke Judaïsme.

Die studie ondersoek verder die wyse waarop antieke interpreteerders en in besonder die outeurs van vroeë (Midrash) literatuur die standaard vir Rabbynse moraliteit daargestel het deur die vroeë bybelse verhaal te herformuleer en te ontwikkel. Hulle interpretasies van die bybelse verhaal kan selfs aandui wat die vroeë Rabbi's as morele gedrag beskou het. Terwyl dronkenskap streng deur die Rabbi's afgekeur is, vind ons meer genuanseerde houdings teenoor die euwel van prostitusie. Deur eksegetiese motiewe soos die tussenkoms van die Messias en God in hulle interpretasies in te sluit, is verseker dat die verwarrende verhale deurspek is met waardes en religieuse ideale waarmee die lesers kon identifiseer, sodat die Skrif se normatiewe en lewenskragtige rol in die bestaande geloofsgemeenskappe behoue kon bly.

## **Key Terms Describing the Subject of the Thesis**

**Drunkenness**

**Nakedness**

**Prostitution**

**Hebrew Bible**

**Midrash**

**Post-Biblical Literature**

**Jewish Hermeneutics**

**Exegesis**

**Rhetoric**