WHO WROUGHT THE BIBLE?

UNVEILING THE BIBLE'S AESTHETIC SECRETS

Yair Mazor

Who Wrought the Bible?

Who Wrought the Bible?

Unveiling the Bible's Aesthetic Secrets

Yair Mazor

To

B I L H A *and* **S A R A H**

And
As ever, for ever
To my parents

R A C H E L *and* **I T Z H A K**

Who left all earthly things
But not my heart

Your love is my shelter
I shall not lack

All one hundred fifty hymns of the Book of Psalms
Roared together.

<div align="right">

—YEHUDA AMICHAI, "Six Poems to Tamar"

</div>

Contents

Illustrations

Acknowledgments

My wholehearted gratitude is hereby extended to the following individuals who bestowed upon me their wisdom, prudent input, professional guidance, and amicable encouragement throughout the process of putting together this book:

Mr. Raphael Kadushin, UW Press senior acquisitions editor, whose graciously endowed help, enthusiastic support, insightful advice, and singularly friendly attitude were truly formidable. My debt to him cannot be verbalized in either English or Hebrew.

Ms. Sheila Leary, UW Press director, whose incredibly professional investment in the book deserves my heartfelt debt.

Ms. Sheila Moermond, UW Press editor, whose worthy dedication to the procedure of producing this book was splendid indeed.

Undoubtedly, Ms. Marganit Weimberger-Rotman, the language editor of this book, who should be justly considered my praiseworthy partner in putting together this book. Todah, Marganit!

Ms. Mary Sutherland, whose dedicated editorial work has proven to be highly laudable indeed.

The engravings are reproduced from both volumes of the *Biblia Sagrada Illustrada* (Porto: Empresa Editora da Biblia Sagrada Illustrada, 1891–1896).

Policy of Transliteration

The many different sounds in the Hebrew language not present in the English language naturally pose a problem of transliteration. This problem has, however, resulted in a variety of transliterations and policies, some of them considerably remote from each other. The transliteration system/policy adopted and practiced throughout this book follows one prominent, prevailing philosophy: to be as simple and as decipherable as possible for the reader who is not familiar with Hebrew. In some cases, however, that system is deliberately not fastidiously followed. For example, while according to this system the guttural sound produced by the Hebrew letter ח transliterates into *K,* there are cases in which it is transliterated into *h* or *ch.* These exceptions occur when different transliteration forms are commonly practiced in well-known names, concepts, terms, and the like. Hence these deviations from the transliteration system in this book are used in order to meet the reader's convenience and capacity to recognize and to produce the original Hebrew sounds as easily as possible.

In a few cases, the transliteration policy follows the one that is used in scientific studies that approach professional biblical scholars, for they may feel more comfortable with this policy. This is the only exception, and it does not introduce a problem on the part of the less professional reader to relate to the Hebrew pronunciation of the cited words.

Who
Wrought
the Bible?

Introduction

This book is a scientific study of biblical literature, an in-depth examination of the aesthetic devices that operate inside a literary text and of the means by which these devices serve the ideological message that the biblical text aims to convey. The ideological message may be religious, ethical, spiritual, historical, social, political, and so forth. Of course, the content of the message is always the main purpose of the text, and it takes precedence over all the aesthetic elements, literary devices, and artistic contrivances, which are there only in a secondary, ancillary capacity—to enhance, underscore, and convey the message of the text.

The Importance of Being Earnest about Definitions

There is a constant need to define objects, concepts, and abstract phenomena, not only in scientific investigations but also in daily life, in the way people conduct business and pursue activities. The definition of an object, be it concrete or abstract, is a necessary condition for valid and effective communication between people, since verbal communication is the foundation on which human civilization is built. Thus, accurate and cogent definition of both mundane objects and abstract concepts are the sine qua non of verbal communication and the guarantors of the existence of civilization. For example, if one person asks another: "Have you seen the new movie?" no communication will take place if neither know the definition of "movie." Similarly, if a philosopher states, "I disagree with Plato's theory of ideas," or a literary scholar asks a colleague, "What is your opinion of the theory of deconstruction in literature?" or a scientist asserts, "Quantum theory is less complicated than is generally assumed," each interlocutor needs to know the precise definition of "theory," "idea," "literature," and "complicated," respectively, or no further communication is possible.

One point has to be stressed: as a matter of principle, the definition is always secondary in importance to the object itself (the "signifier" is the *definition* of

the object while the *object* being defined is the "signified"), as is the case in literary metaphors and allusions that are based on the correlation between signifier and signified. For example, a sculpture, a painting, or a poem is more important than its specific definition, and a specific science is more important than its definition. When discussing a definition, one must bear in mind the relative significance of the definition vis-à-vis the object it defines.

I referred earlier to scientific definitions and would like to elaborate, since the subject matter of this book is a scientific study. Defining the study of literature as a science, however, is problematic because it is customary to designate as "science" only such areas as physics, zoology, botany, mathematics, astrophysics, nuclear chemistry, and the like; in other words, those bodies of knowledge pertaining to the world of flora, fauna, and technology, and excluding areas of liberal arts, such as history, philosophy, literature, the Bible, and art. Disciplines dealing with social issues, such as psychology and sociology, are in a twilight zone between science and nonscience. Thus, many scholars who study liberal arts take it for granted that physics is a science, but history is not; that chemistry is a science, but philosophy is not; that biology is a science, but literature is not, and so on. These are false and erroneous allegations, based on a misunderstanding of the nature and essence of science. Science is not merely a body of specific knowledge in a specific area. It is not a static body of knowledge but a dynamic process of investigation of a certain area. What is relevant to the definition of science is the *method* in which the dynamic process of research is being conducted. This process starts with a certain theory pertaining to the specific area of study, which maps or delineates an area in order to examine the processes governing its inner structure and to analyze the interrelations among its component parts. In order to make the theory operative and capable of fulfilling its stated purpose, one needs *methodology*. The methodology is based on different kinds of mechanisms that are applied to the given subject in order to test the validity of the theory. Often, methodology derives from the theory (or is at least relevant to the theory), and its functioning is the start of dynamics that characterize the scientific process. Applying a dynamic methodological process should prove and substantiate a theory, or it should refute it. If the theory is confirmed, its development can be further continued. But if the methodology disproves the initial theory, one is obliged either to revise the theory or abandon it. In either case, the methodological process is conducted in a systematic, objective, controlled, and responsible manner, devoid of subjectivity or impressionism.

The definition of science does not involve the subject matter of study, but rather the systematic methodological process by which the theory about the

subject matter is examined. Hence, the subject matters of physics, history, biology, or literature are not, in themselves, sciences, but they become scientific when a theory about them is either confirmed or refuted by an objective and systematic method.

In certain scientific areas (such as chemistry, physics, botany, zoology, etc.) the theories and methodologies are more exact and complex than in others (such as literature, art, history, and philosophy); this does not render them more or less scientific, just as one would not claim that a simple, rough-hewn, and ungainly table is not a table simply because there are other more elegant and finely wrought tables. Thus, we should be careful not to confuse the subjective with the objective criteria, nor the judgmental with the descriptive ones.

Here we return to the subject of this book: literature (the literary nature of biblical text) and art (the artistic devices used in the creation of the biblical text). In view of the preceding discussion, this book is a scientific study of the area of art and literature. We must begin with definitions of art, literature, and biblical literature by using a specific, concrete example.

Art versus Objects

A certain Mr. Smith was about to visit an art museum in a large city. Mr. Smith was very excited. This was a red-letter day for him. He was an art enthusiast, especially partial to baroque and impressionist painting, although other styles such as expressionism, cubism, and modernism appealed to him as well; Picasso, with his various styles and periods, also appealed to him. In short, Mr. Smith was not only an enthusiast but also a connoisseur well versed in trends, periods, and schools of art. On the very day that Mr. Smith was to visit the museum, the media announced that the museum had purchased a very special modern painting for half a million dollars, money obtained, in part, from the sale of entry tickets. All agog, Mr. Smith rushed to the museum. In his mind he saw himself standing in front of the painting, studying it and savoring its minute details, appreciating its harmony of shapes and colors. When he got to the museum, however, a multitude of people had already formed a long line at the admissions counter. He was not deterred. The long wait only whetted his appetite and heightened his expectations with the promise of redoubled joy. After half an hour of waiting in line, in steamy, humid weather, he finally reached the admissions counter. Even though he was a card-carrying member, eligible for a 50 percent discount, he was required to pay full price. Slightly taken aback, he nevertheless paid the full amount, since this was, after all, a gala unveiling of a unique masterpiece of international fame. Thus, Mr. Smith made his way to the hall where the rare painting was

displayed. There, too, he was obliged to stand in a slow-moving line, under the watchful eye of the museum guards. Finally, the long awaited moment arrived, the culmination of many expectations, inconveniences, and expenses.

And this was the picture that met Mr. Smith's gaze:

This picture is in homage to a painting titled "Today Series: April 5, 1966." The painting was made in 1956 by the renowned painter Kawara, a leading artist in the "Poor Art" school. The original painting was slightly changed due to copyright constraints. The picture hereby displayed, however, possesses the same aesthetic quality as the original picture.

Mr. Smith thought he had suddenly gone blind. The shock of the encounter with the painting, which he had so eagerly awaited, created an extreme physical reaction in him: his eyes glazed over, his knees buckled, he almost collapsed on the museum floor. But the momentary weakness soon passed, making way to an extreme emotional-intellectual reaction: astonishment, shattered expectations, fury, disappointment, frustration, as well as a sense of profound insult. Could this, he asked himself, be "the sublime art" that every newspaper in town was extolling? Is this the reward he deserves for having his artistic expectations raised so high for so long? Is this why he stood in line in the heat and humidity and paid double and got almost crushed by the throngs? Mr. Smith felt cheated. His expectations were cynically, disdainfully, dashed. He also felt offended that his taxpayer's money was squandered on a putative work of art not worth the canvas it was painted on, and which could have easily been produced by his own five-year-old grandchild. The painting

was an insult to his intelligence. There was an implied condescension in the presentation, as if the presenters were mocking him, taunting him for his inability to appreciate the deeper meaning of the masterpiece.

Angry, dispirited, and frustrated, Smith made his way through the crowd, which seemed equally incredulous and perplexed, saying out loud, "This is no masterpiece! This is a disgrace! This is not art but a travesty and a mockery! A slap in the face of the public, a cynical waste of our money!" Flustered and enraged, he made his way to the cafeteria, ordered a cup of coffee, found an empty table, and sat down on a creaky and not particularly comfortable chair. Sipping his coffee, his face twisted in disgust. The coffee was cold and tasteless. Worse yet, when he pushed the cup away from him, the rickety chair creaked noisily and collapsed under him. Mr. Smith found himself slung on the floor, which smelled rather musty. It certainly wasn't his day. Mr. Smith picked himself up, feeling sharp pains in his back and knees, and a bitter, almost venomous fury at this series of affronts. Choking with rage, he approached the counter and hoarsely called out to the attendant, "Have you no shame serving such cold and disgusting coffee? And why can't you get rid of that ramshackle chair that almost broke my back!" The attendant's reply is not relevant at this point. What is relevant is that even though the tasteless coffee and rickety chair caused Mr. Smith great physical and mental pain, it did not occur to him to question their definition as "coffee" and "chair." From his point of view, the definition of *chair* remained valid even though it collapsed; the definition of *coffee* was valid enough even though it was cold and foul. In contrast, when the work of art (the painting) caused him consternation and offended his sensibilities, he did not hesitate to deny its definition as art; he felt justified in claiming that an art object that caused him disappointment should be banished from the realm of art and be divested of its definition as art.

Why, we may ask, does Mr. Smith differentiate the coffee from the painting? And in what way is he wrong when he treats *coffee* and *chair* differently from *art?* There are inveterate historical/social/aesthetic reasons why Mr. Smith treated the painting differently from the chair, reasons that go back thousands of years and to which he—and most art consumers—are oblivious. According to Plato's theory of ideas, every concrete object (either natural or man-made) has an abstract idea that contains all the object's attributes, except in a perfect, sublime, ideal form. Thus, all concrete objects are deemed mere imperfect imitations of the idea. Art and artists, according to Plato, commit a moral and educational transgression when they do not aspire to imitate the perfect ideal but instead copy concrete objects, which are in themselves

defective representations of the sublime idea. While a carpenter fashions a tree out of wood, thereby imitating the idea of Tree and aspiring to attain it, the artist has no such purpose. On the contrary, the artist imitates the concrete, the imitative, hence imperfect object, thereby widening the distance between it and the ideal. Artists teach us to eschew perfection and to adhere to the defective and the imperfect, and thus contribute to depravity and moral deterioration. Artists, argues Plato, should be banished from the "Ideal Republic."

Even though there is a marked difference between Plato and Aristotle in their discussions of art, they do have one thing in common: both philosophers agree that the artist is not different from the artisan, the craftsman who uses talent and ability to create concrete objects.

In the two ensuing millennia (until the beginning of the eighteenth century) artists continued to be viewed as artisans, although not necessarily for the same philosophical reasons. Further proof that artists were treated as craftsmen is the fact that they were employed by the wealthy like other workmen. For example, in Italy and Northern Europe during the Renaissance (1400–1600), artists were indentured to potentates—such as Lorenzo de Medici, who was a rich banker; Pope Julius II, Michelangelo's patron; and Lodovico Sforza ("The Moor"), duke of Milan, who was da Vinci's patron—who used them in the same way that masons, carpenters, architects, and gardeners were employed. In Spain, during the period known as "court painting," noblemen and rich patrons dictated to the artists they hired which details to include in the paintings, including clothes, furniture, or atmosphere. Louis XIV, the "Roi Soleil," hired thousands of artists to decorate Versailles, just as he hired thousands of other artisans and craftsmen, all of which cost French taxpayers 60 percent of the national budget. Even Rembrandt's famous *Night Watch,* one of the world's most revered masterpieces, was commissioned by a nobleman, who later berated the artist because the picture did not seem to him respectable enough: there was too much motion in it, he claimed.

It was only in the Romantic period, which began in England around 1820, that the attitude toward art and artists changed. Artists were no longer considered mere carpenters and gardeners. The reason for the dramatic change in attitude was that the Romantic period celebrated the imagination, the emotions, and the creative spirit of the artist. Art was now conceived as creation and artists as creators, endowed with talents that placed them above the common man.

A new approach to art was born, one that is still current today, an approach based on the assumption that a work of art is a unique object, a product of inspiration, emotion, and superior skill. And so, when Mr. Smith confronted

the painting in the museum, all his expectations were shattered. He felt not only frustrated and resentful but also humiliated and slighted, because the curators saw some sublime quality in that picture that he, in his ignorance and stupidity, failed to discern.

Mr. Smith (like most people today) would judge this picture in the same way:
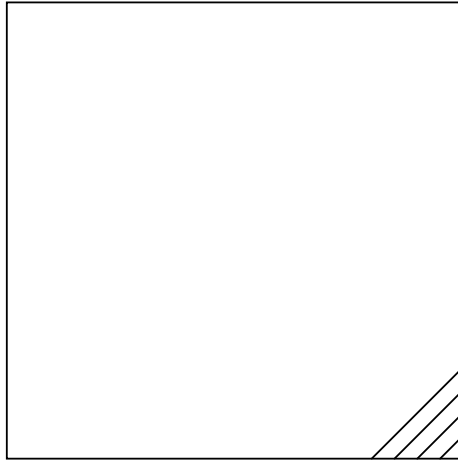
This picture is a tribute to abstract painting, painted by the artist Ad Reinhardt in 1959 and displayed at the Ludwig Museum in Cologne. It would have elicited the same resentment and fury from Mr. Smith (and probably most other art consumers); they would be outraged at what they perceive as fraud, chicanery, and manipulation.

But why doesn't Mr. Smith balk at the definitions of coffee or chair? Why do these concepts not arouse such high dudgeon in him? Here is where Mr. Smith errs. While a definition is, by its very nature, objective and free of any subjective judgment regarding an object's shape or function, the evaluation of the object (by one person or by many) is purely subjective, since it depends on personal taste and preference, which in turn derive from the reservoir of personal, subjective experiences of the beholder. The distinction between the objective definition and the subjective evaluation must be absolute and un-qualified. Indeed, people have no trouble accepting and observing this distinction, as did Mr. Smith regarding the coffee and the chair. Despite their poor quality, he neither challenged nor denied their fundamental definition as coffee and chair. As a general rule, people intuitively make that basic distinction

between an objective definition and a subjective value judgment regarding the quality of the object or its aesthetic properties. Not so when it comes to art. Art is perceived as something spiritual, inspiring, possessing subtle intellectual attributes, and these set it apart from other man-made objects, be they mundane and functional or complex and sophisticated. A work of art is deemed more noble, uplifting, and sublime. The discrepancy between the objective nature of the definition and a spectator's personal, private judgment must never be blurred.

A further complication arises from the fact that the definitions of concrete everyday objects are, for the most part, familiar, solid, and distinct. A chair is an object that serves for sitting, with four legs, seat, and back. Similarly, coffee is defined as a drink made from roasted ground seeds of the fruit of a tropical tree. It is usually consumed hot, with cream or sugar or both or neither.

Defining art, however, is much more challenging, if not impossible. Let us examine a few definitions culled from several dictionaries and books.

Art: "An occupation requiring knowledge and skill." What kind of knowledge? What kind of skill? This definition is as relevant to the study of parrots in the rain forest as it is to the study of the solar system.

Art: "A creation that displays invested thought, impressive skill, and excellent taste." This definition could aptly apply to a well-wrought TV set or an elegant briefcase.

Art: "Thing in which skill may be experienced." Again, a definition that could fit countless man-made products.

Art: "Skill designed to an imitation and design, as in a painting." A definition as enigmatic as the previous one.

Art: "When men copy the beauties of nature and make beautiful things that they invent themselves, and do so skillfully, it is called art." The major flaw in this definition—besides its obvious sexism—is that it assumes that "beauty" and "beautiful" are objective concepts whose definitions are universally agreed upon, which is patently erroneous.

Once more, we are faced with the basic question: Why is it so easy to define objects that serve us in daily life, and there is no debate about their definition, whereas the definition of "art" is so elusive, abstruse, and controversial? Perhaps it is because art is perceived (at least since the Romantic period) as a product/concept, which transcends daily life and calls for subjective evaluation. And when subjectivity is involved, there is little chance of general agreement.

The ambiguity and vagueness surrounding the definition of "art" are not merely the result of changing attitudes toward artists and art. Until the beginning of the twentieth century, the definitions of poetry and fiction, for example, were clear and well established. Poetry was associated with lofty language, metaphors, rhyme schemes, rhythms, and so on. Prose fiction, on the other hand, was associated with the spoken language (though slightly higher than the colloquial), a sequential plot, climax, denouement, and characters who imitate real persons engaged in such human conditions as love, hate, jealousy, and the like.

The second and third decades of the twentieth century saw an aesthetic earthquake that resulted in radical blurring of the boundaries between poetry and prose. The Russian movement known as acmeism (Nicolai Gumilyev, Osip Mandelstam, Anna Akhmatova) fostered a poetry that defied all the previous poetic conventions. Surprisingly, at the same time, in England and in the United States, the imagism movement in poetry emerged (Amy Lowell, the early Ezra Pound, Hilda Doolittle, T. E. Hulme, Richard Aldington). Despite obvious differences between Russian acmeism and Anglo-American imagism, the aesthetic platforms of these two poetic movements have much in common: rejection of heavily metaphorical language; adoption of unadorned, minimalistic, emaciated language; sharp focus on everyday objects ("acme" in Greek means pinnacle, the utmost) or on the "image" in the Anglo-American school; the use of simple, transparent, easily absorbed themes; and a rejection of regimented meters and rigid versification. In sum, both styles sought to distance themselves from the poetic traditions of the previous schools, in particular, the symbolist poets' heavy metaphors, seductive mystique, and hypnotic rhythms. The practice of the new poetry now blurred the traditional boundaries between poetry and prose, and created confusion among traditional consumers of poetry and prose.

At the same time, a similar development occurred in fiction writing, with the introduction of "stream of consciousness" by James Joyce (*Ulysses*), Virginia Woolf (*To The Lighthouse, Mrs. Dalloway*), and Marcel Proust (*Remembrance of Things Past*). This movement sought to renounce the traditional characteristics of fiction writing and adopt instead some of the attributes of poetry. Thus, an internal plot, revealing the psychological portrait of the protagonist (comprised of thoughts, dreams, reveries, free associations, real and imagined existence) replaces the well-wrought, sequential, external plot of the traditional novel. The stream of consciousness movement was significantly influenced by Freud's theories of the human subconscious.

Facing such migrations from one aesthetic domain to another is bound to

confound the art consumer, whose traditional aesthetic norms are shattered and whose long-held and revered definitions of genres become dim and fuzzy.

It is not clear why such dramatic changes in art occur. Presumably, several reasons are at work simultaneously. First, a natural evolution resulting from young artists' typical inclination to deviate from earlier aesthetic traditions and to establish their own "turf." This is corroborated by the psychological need of children to rebel against their parents in order to fashion their individual, autonomous existence. Historical events, too, have their impact on artistic movements. The horrors of the two world wars shattered many firmly held traditions and concepts, generating a sense of loss, panic, and desperation across Europe. This may explain, at least partially, the emergence of literature of the absurd—and particularly the theater of the absurd—with authors such as Franz Kafka (*The Trial, The Castle, Metamorphosis*) and Albert Camus (*The Stranger, The Plague, The Myth of Sisyphus*). Among the playwrights we see Jean Genet (*The Screens*), Eugene Ionesco (*The Bald Soprano, The Chairs, Rhinoceros*), Samuel Beckett (*Waiting for Godot*), Fernando Arrabal (*Picnic in the Battlefield*), and Antonin Artaud ("Theatre of Cruelty"). The fiction and the theater of the absurd tend to center around marginal characters, alienated, confused, and oppressed, who face a cruel, indifferent, and meaningless world. This, too, can be attributed to the effect of the devastation of the world wars. By the same token, the "deconstructed" cubism of Pablo Picasso and Juan Gris is a conscious attempt to reflect the shattered, fragmented reality left in the wake of World War I. Although the philosophy of existentialism initially had stemmed from the writings of the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1813–55), it further sharpened the idea of a world devoid of order (Jean-Paul Sartre, 1905–80) while being influenced by the horrors of World War I that crushed all solid historical orders and traditions.

The rise of impressionism was also a result of natural evolution in art. Yet it may also be a corollary of the invention of the camera; since art cannot reproduce reality more accurately than photography (even the most naturalistic art cannot copy reality without interpreting and deconstructing it), the need arose to represent reality in a texture of shapes and colors, which does not adhere faithfully to the laws of the imitated reality. Impressionism, and later pointillism, achieved this effect by breaking down reality into minute particles, the focusing on the effect of light on the imitated reality. Similar developments were seen in music and dance. No more classical ballet (such as *Swan Lake*) but "modern dance" in which performers move very quickly, or very slowly, deliberately destroying the "rounded" harmonious motion that typifies classical dance. Modern composers, starting with Schoenberg and

Stravinsky, rejected the perfect harmonies of Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, and Schumann, to create music that surprises and baffles with its sudden transitions of tones and rhythms, and grating cacophonous sounds. It is quite possible that both modern dance and modern music reflect the fractured, shattered world that World War I left in its wake.

Several social developments left their impact on art, notably the rise of the bourgeoisie, the middle class, and the proletariat that brought about changes in the subject matter of artistic creation. Thus, Rodin's majestic sculptures gave way to Marcel Duchamp's bidet. There is a clear artistic-social-philosophic statement here: a rejection of "noble" materials and shapes for a focus on minimalistic, elementary objects accessible to the masses, not just to the ruling classes.

This analysis is far from profound or exhaustive; it merely underlines one fundamental fact: the dramatic changes that took place in the twentieth century with regard to art and art appreciation no longer permit us to adhere to previously held definitions. Again, we see that a definition is always secondary in importance to the object it defines. The moment a change occurs in the object (be it painting, poem, story, music, or dance), we are called upon to update the definition according to that change. And quite often, when the change is extremely dramatic, we need to abandon the definition altogether and come up with a new one, relevant to the changes in the object. The challenge facing us, then, is to redefine art in view of the changes in artistic perceptions. But before we attempt this, we need to clarify the definition of *definition,* namely, what are the desired properties of a valid definition?

The definition of *definition* must succinctly formulate the fundamental characteristics and functions of the object, phenomena or situation (either concrete or abstract) in the most precise, accurate, and unambiguous manner, leaving no doubt in the recipient's mind as to what the object, phenomenon or situation is. Moreover, a good, objective, and valid definition must satisfy two basic conditions. First, it has to be general and inclusive, so as to accommodate as many of the objects, phenomena or situations as possible, excluding as few exceptions as possible. (A minimal number of items that do not fit the definition will only attest to its validity and efficacy.) Second, the definition should not be too broad or inclusive lest it allow items that do not belong in it to infiltrate. If we define a kettle as "an item found in a kitchen," it is a shaky and unreliable definition that admits a large number of items that have no relation to the object of the definition, such as a fork, oven, faucet, or towel.

A valid, effective and reliable definition has to strike a delicate balance between being flexible and inclusive on the one hand, and precise and circumscribed on the other. And thus we return to our initial example: Mr. Smith's outraged reaction to a modern painting, which shattered his expectations of a "traditional" work of art and revoked the definition of painting he had (perhaps not totally consciously) held. Artistic reality has drastically changed. Whereas in the past, art consumers were presented with Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa,* today they face posterlike portraits such as Andy Warhol's *Marilyn Monroe* or Roy Lichtenstein's comics-inspired paintings. Rembrandt's *Night Watch* and Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* have been replaced by Piet Mondrian's Formica-like squares or Jasper Johns' *Flag on an Orange Field,* or Joseph Kosuth's *One and Three Chairs,* featuring a wood folding chair, a photo of this chair, and a dictionary definition of "chair." Michelangelo's *David* and Rodin's *The Kiss* now share museum space with a pile of straw, while the Bulgarian artist Christo wraps swathes of plastic around the Arc de Triomphe in Paris. Thus, we must fashion a definition that includes all the past and present (and perhaps future) works of art. A definition must be flexible and inclusive enough to embrace any work regardless of aesthetic attributes or complexity; but on the other hand, it must not be too weak or too broad so as to admit nonartistic objects.

What Is Art?

An object is a work of art if it has been organized (moved from its previous or natural position), fashioned or created (such as a sculpture out of marble or wood), not for any practical, utilitarian purpose but rather for an *aesthetic* purpose; that is, it aims to elicit in the target audience only an emotional, sensory, intellectual, and psychological reaction. A rock, for instance, cannot be considered a work of art, despite possible aesthetic qualities, because it is not a human creation.

If we think about the works of Leonardo, Raphael, El Greco, Goya, Van Gogh, Gauguin, Kandinsky's abstracts, Mark Rothko's lyrical cubism, Reinhart's black canvases, or the Israeli artist Igael Tumarkin's glued tattered pants on canvas, we are bound to reach the conclusion that all these works, despite their profound differences, satisfy the definition of works of art. They are all made with paint (except Tumarkin's picture, which combines paint, metal, and fabric), and they all have an aesthetic raison d'être not a utilitarian one, aiming at arousing excitement, admiration, or awe, or conversely, resentment, hostility, and revulsion. The same applies to sculpture. If we think of Michelangelo (*David, Pietà*), Donatello (*David*), Rodin (*The Thinker*), Henry

Moore's semi-abstract sculptures, Degas' dancers, Duchamp's bike on a stool ("ready made") or his bidet, Tumarkin's repulsively greasy, wrinkled pants, Picasso's bike handlebar (looking like a charging bull, a recurrent erotic motif in Picasso)—despite the enormous aesthetic differences, they all fit the definition of art. None of them has a pragmatic purpose—not even the bidet or the chair, since it is not suggested that the spectators wash in the bidet or sit on the chair, just as they are not expected to hang their coats on the sculptures of Michelangelo, Donatello, or Rodin.

An article in the newspaper is not a work of art such as a poem or a short story is, although it might possess impressive aesthetic or artistic properties, for it has a practical, pragmatic purpose—to supply information. Its artistic qualities are ancillary, secondary to its primary, "real" purpose—to render the material more persuasive or attract the reader's attention.

Let us take the argument a step further and do the following experiment. Let us assume that the article in question gives information about the unexpected appearance of whales in the North Sea:

> The ocean spread like an aquamarine fan, dappled here and there with spots of silvery green streaks. Mighty breakers crashed onto the shore, leaving trails of white foam on the water. It seemed that nothing would change in this scenery. Thus it has been from time immemorial. But suddenly, the blue tranquility was disrupted. Two enormous bodies, like a brace of gigantic gray planes, leapt from the azure depths, spouting jets of water, then plunged in the deep with a thunderous thud.

The article continues describing whales in great detail, citing experts' attempts to explain the unexpected presence of the whales in that region. It is evident that the writer attempted to invest the article with artistic qualities: poetic language, images, dramatic suspense, and the like. Do these artistic attributes make the article a work of art? The answer is simple and unambiguous: No! because the article has a pragmatic purpose to report, inform, educate, and edify the reader. Its artistic qualities are merely subordinate to its main purpose, which is to lure the reader to its content. The article does not fit the definition of art and therefore is not art. However, if we were to take the opening paragraph of the article and place it in a novel, it might well become a work of art. Why does this metamorphosis occur when a text migrates from one context to another? The pragmatic qualities of the text are not lost, and its artistic qualities are certainly still there, but there is a change in the relationship of those qualities. When the message is transferred from the newspaper

(pragmatic, informative) to the novel (artistic), the artistic qualities of the article acquire primary position. The article is still informative and edifying to the reader, such as historical novels like *War and Peace* or *Gone With The Wind,* but like those novels, the article is now a work of art because its pragmatic objectives have become secondary.

Let us consider another example, from the domain of sculpture. My watch is on the table, and I look at it with pleasure. It has attractive aesthetic properties: an elegant leather band, a graceful dial whose golden hue matches the band, delicately designed hands, and the numbers in Roman numerals giving the watch a classical look. The watch has pleasing, artistic qualities. But is it an object of art? Not really. Its primary function is to tell time. But if I were to take this watch and hang it on a wall in a museum, it would become a work of art (a sculpture, since it is three dimensional). What has brought about this metamorphosis? The moment I hang my watch on a museum wall, I revoke the primacy of its pragmatic function and give pride of place to its artistic attributes. From now on, its main purpose is to display its artistic essence and to elicit a spectator's aesthetic reaction. Even if the watch continues to fulfill its utilitarian function (to tell time), this role is now secondary. Thus, the watch in the museum conforms to the artistic definition: an object arranged (transported from place to place) for an exclusively artistic purpose. But, since it is now a work of art, who is the artist? Mr. Smith and others would probably bristle at this point: Is it that easy to become an artist? The answer is that one must not confuse a subjective, judgmental reaction with the objective, descriptive definition of the object. On the level of judgment and evaluation, do I compare myself to Rodin or Michelangelo? Of course not. But on the objective level, we are all artists when we have created an art object.

Let me conclude this section with a humorous anecdote that will illustrate the relationship between a functional object and a work of art. A man who has spent long hours in a museum in Paris is tired and is looking for a place to sit down. He spots a plushy, velvet-covered chair in one of the halls and plunks down with a great sigh of relief. A guard rushes to him, shouting furiously, "Sir, get off that chair at once!" The visitor wonders, "Why? I just want to rest for a moment." "Don't you see? Don't you realize? This is Louis XIV's throne!" The man responds calmly, "Don't worry. When Louis returns, I'll get off his chair." When Louis XIV used the chair, it was a functional, not an artistic object, despite its obvious attractive qualities. But years later, when placed in the museum, a change occurred in the relationship between its pragmatic purpose and its artistic attributes. Its utilitarian aspect has been completely suspended—it is no longer permissible to sit on it—and its sole purpose now

is aesthetic. Whoever placed the royal chair in the museum and made it into an object of art was an artist, performing an act of organization. However, when the tired visitor sits momentarily on the sumptuous royal chair, it reverts to its primary, original function. When the visitor is roused from the chair, it becomes once again an exclusively artistic object whose sole purpose is to elicit aesthetic response from the spectator. For a fleeting moment, the museum guard inadvertently became an artist: he reassigned the object to its artistic goal.

What Is Literature?

The same applies to literature, the verbal medium of art, as we saw earlier in the example of the newspaper article that metamorphosed into a literary work of art when it migrated to a new context. In particular, our definition of art also applies to literature, art that is expressed in verbal terms. Hence, literature is the result of any human effort that organizes, fashions, or creates an object whose sole purpose is aesthetic. It elicits, for example, an aesthetic (emotional, sensual, intellectual, or psychological) reaction in the consumer of that creation.

For example, to discern the distinction between prose and poetry, we need to consider the dramatic changes that took place in the aftermath of World War I, which shattered previously held conventions and traditions.

Poetry was once considered an art form in which the text exhibited the following characteristics: high-flown rhetoric, complex metaphors, lofty themes and ideas that transcended mundane everyday reality, stanzas of short verse, lack of sequential plot (at least in lyrical poetry), and meticulous rhythm and rhyme schemes. Prose fiction, on the other hand, used more practical, accessible language, tending to metonymy rather than metaphor (to use Roman Jakobson's formalistic terminology), was devoid of meter and rhyme, and dealt mostly with subjects of daily existence. It used a plot line, causality, conflict, and denouement. However, acmeist and imagist poetry, together with the stream of consciousness technique blurred the traditional boundary between prose and poetry. A new reality emerged, requiring new definitions that could delineate the two literary genres, preserving their uniqueness and at the same time keeping them from being too open-ended and inclusive.

Thus, we may define *poetry* as literature in which the length of the line (short for the most part) is determined by the poet alone; the choice is dictated only by aesthetic considerations. *Prose* is literature in which the length of the line (long for the most part) is determined by the publisher of the text for technical or economic reasons.

The poet's decision regarding the length of a line, done for aesthetic reasons, often results in a discrepancy between the length of the line and the syntactic unit, a discrepancy that tends to create run-on lines (enjambment). Sometimes, the poet's aesthetic reason for creating run-on lines is obvious, and sometimes it is obscure or altogether inscrutable. But only in poetry—and not in prose—is the length of the verse a consequence of the poet's aesthetic choice, and not of technical or economic considerations.

Here are four examples, each focusing on the aesthetic function embodied in the run-on lines. The first excerpt is from Archibald MacLeish's "Ars Poetica":

Dumb
As old medallions to the thumb

Even before attempting to determine the aesthetic reasoning behind the poet's arrangement of the lines, we should note that the position of the word "Dumb" alone, followed by a longer line, draws the reader's attention to the dramatic disproportion of the lines, underlining the fact that the arrangement is neither arbitrary nor mechanical. Now, we can attempt to discern the aesthetic intention behind the arrangement of the lines. Positioning the solitary word "Dumb" as an independent line certainly draws attention to its prominence. And since the next line ends with "thumb," a rhyming pattern is created, which is a typical aesthetic device aiming at pleasing the ear. But the function of the run-on line is even more complex. When the two lines are read together, it becomes apparent that the second, longer line is in fact an image describing the "Dumb" of the first line, which is, syntactically, the subject of the sentence and thus its thematic focus. But this recognition comes only after reading the second line. This illustrates the "dynamics of the literary text," which are based on the sequential nature of the literary text: words, phrases, and sentences are strung together in a cumulative continuum. A dialogue is created between later and earlier information. Sometimes the later information is merely added to the earlier one in the textual continuum, without changing the initial meaning, and sometimes it sheds new light on the earlier information, which calls for a reinterpretation. Occasionally, the later information leads to a realization that the reading of the earlier information was completely erroneous and must be rejected.[1]

In our example, the second line sheds new light on the earlier information ("Dumb"), which proves to be the subject of the phrase, but in addition, something called *chiasm* takes place here, that is, contradictory thematic directions

meeting at a crossroads. The second line, though more poetic than the first, is in fact an image describing it and thus secondary to it. The short line ("Dumb") whose very brevity is a function of the poet's aesthetic choice is indeed less poetic but more central to the thematic-conceptual structure of the poem. It becomes clear that the basic characteristic of poetry—the poet's decision regarding the length of the verse—contains a richness and complexity that endow the poetic text with great profundity.

The next example is, perhaps, less aesthetically and conceptually complete, but it illustrates well the fundamental nature of poetry, as distinct from that of prose. Here we have the last verse of the same poem by MacLeish:

> A poem should not mean
> But be.

The basic distinctive characteristic of poetry is present here in the run-on line, highlighting the second line, which consists of only two words. The fact that it is also the last line of the poem lends it even more prominence. The truncation of the first line draws attention to the second line, underscoring the aesthetic reasoning behind the choice. The poem should not be a mere conduit for ideas and themes; it should stand as a unique, purely aesthetic unit, without ideological "baggage."

Another instructive example is from e. e. cummings's "Buffalo Bill":

> How do you like your blueeyed boy
> Mister Death.

The poet's decision to cut the line after "blueeyed boy" creates a run-on line with only the two words "Mister Death" and heightens the presence of death while at the same time emphasizing the sharp contradiction between Death and the "blueeyed boy" (with its connotation of affecting innocence). Once more, the truncated line creates an intriguing chiasm, an intersection of two unequal lines: the longer, heftier one, speaking of the blueeyed boy and touching innocence; the shorter, seemingly lighter one (which is, in fact, the heavier) focusing on Death.

A final example comes from the Israeli poet Nathan Zach's poem "Doomed to Death":

> Othello bent over Desdemona in order to put an end
> To the play.

Again, there is a blatant disproportion between the two lines and a running over of the sentence. What is interesting in this example is that the later information—the phrase "to the play"—does not merely throw new light on our understanding of the information conveyed previously (in the first line), but in fact destroys that information and thwarts the expectations that it engendered (since every piece of information is bound to create expectations regarding the themes and ideas of the subsequent text). The first line is an obvious reference to Shakespeare's tragedy, which culminates with Othello murdering his faithful wife, Desdemona, at Iago's instigation. The reader, relying on the dramatic allusion, will naturally assume that the next line will say "To her life" (in order to put an end to her life). But this expectation is frustrated, and instead, the unexpected phrase "To the play" appears, creating an enjambment, reinforcing the distinctive characteristic of poetry. This, then, shows the aesthetic choice of the length of the verse and, at the same time, injects humor and irony into the text. Whereas the first line had tragic overtones, harking back to the cruel Shakespearean drama, the concluding phrase completing the syntactic unit undermines that effect and invests it with a comic, ironic touch. Othello is no longer a fictional, dramatic persona of a well-known play but an actor on the stage who hastens to smite Desdemona (another cast member) so that the curtain may fall . . . and he can hurry home to an early dinner.

Irony, in Greek drama and in classical comedy in particular, derives from the figure of the *eiron,* the dissembler, who pretends to be a fool but who is, in fact, shrewd and manipulative. The aesthetic decision to divide the lines thus is based on a discrepancy between two levels of consciousness.[2] The decision regarding the length of a poem is the poet's alone. In this poem, as in many others, aesthetic considerations are tightly linked to thematic considerations. Injecting humor and biting irony into a text having to do with homicide (note that the title of the poem is "[She's] Doomed to Death") serves as a comic relief, a safeguard against pathos and gushing sentimentality.

The examples cited illustrate the difference between the definitions of poetry and prose, within the context of the definition of the art of literature. What is left is the definition of drama.

Drama is a literary genre that does not generally use a narrator to mediate between the text and the reader; thus, the dramatic text comprises only dialogue, monologue, and soliloquy. This is the definition of drama. Some clarification is in order here. A narrator is a mediator between the text and the reader; he is the one delivering the text, and thus can be seen as a rhetorical entity embedded in the text. The narrator can be exposed and known to the

reader (such as a first-person narrator, as in *Our Town*) or completely absent. But even when the text seems to tell its own story, there is always a narrator, a rhetorical mediation between text and reader. A deep and penetrating interpretation of the text will yield the absent narrator's characteristics. Some narrators are external to the plot, and some are internal, active participants, either in a central or a marginal role. Some narrators comment on other characters, voice opinions, and interpret events. Some narrators limit their point of view to one character and tell the entire story exclusively from that angle. However, in drama, there is no mediating consciousness between the text and the reader. Drama is based on action alone (harking back to the meaning of the word in Greek), conveyed through verbal activity: dialogue, monologue, and soliloquy.[3]

What Is Biblical Literature?

When we refer to the definition of art and literature in the context of biblical literature, we are bound to reach a provocative conclusion: there is no biblical literature. What, then, is this book about? And why is there no biblical literature? The Bible itself is not literature, because its text does not satisfy the definition of art and hence of literature. In defining these terms, we noted that the sole purpose of the product is aesthetic, designed to elicit in the reader or listener or spectator an aesthetic (emotional, sensual, intellectual, or psychological) response.

The Hebrew Bible has many complex, challenging, and superb aesthetic qualities, varying in degree from book to book and from chapter to chapter. But its objective is not aesthetic. Scripture has several purposes, the chief of which is religious, that is, to document the evolution of the Jewish faith (Leviticus, Deuteronomy), to depict the histories of its precursors (Patriarchs), its spiritual teachers and disseminators (Prophets) as well as its leaders, the kings, priests, judges, and so forth. The second purpose of the Bible is to trace the spiritual development of the Jewish people and to record its history. Other concomitant purposes are ethical (Prophets, Job, Ecclesiastes, Proverbs), and educational (Proverbs). The book of Job, for instance, combines philosophical and moral issues. Lamentations combines religious and historical issues, and Psalms joins religious, moral, and historical issues. The primary objectives of the Hebrew Bible—religious, philosophical, historical, moral—are not discrete (as in Deuteronomy, which focuses on the history of the nation and its consolidation) but intertwined, and they are all pragmatic, seeking to educate, teach, preach, and impart knowledge, values, and religious instruction. Being devoid of aesthetic objectives, the Bible cannot be considered a literary

work but a collection of books with a defined pragmatic goal, making use
of an astounding array of aesthetic patterns and devices. These patterns and
devices are there only to serve the main purpose.

However, there is one book in the canon, the Song of Songs, which seems
to be an exception, having a clear aesthetic objective. The exceptional quality
of this book posed a problem for those who wished to include it in the canon.
Rabbi Akiva (ca. 50–135 CE), the father of rabbinical Judaism, succeeded in
including it only by arguing that its true purpose is educational: to present
allegorically the love between God and his chosen people. I presume that
Rabbi Akiva himself knew that his argument was rather feeble, but in his wis-
dom and out of the appreciation for a true work of art, he saved the book
from oblivion.

Thus, the Bible is neither art nor literature, and following, there is no bib-
lical literature. What we do have in the Bible is a plethora of complex and
rich aesthetic aspects, and those aspects are the subjects of this study. The var-
ious chapters examine certain books (some with clear aesthetic purposes, such
as Psalms, and some, such as Genesis, where the aesthetic purposes are less
pronounced). They offer a methodical, systematic analysis of the aesthetic
aspects of the biblical passages while demonstrating how those aspects serve
the primary purpose of the text, be they religious, ethical, or historical.

Although chapter 1 is replete with examples of aesthetic aspects of the bib-
lical text, here is one brief example from Proverbs 37:10:

A close neighbor is better than a distant brother.[4]

The first literary device in evidence here is the parallel structure so prevalent
in biblical poetry. It is based on two hemistiches, or half a poetic line, divided
by a caesura, or break. The two hemistiches can be similar in meaning, con-
tradictory, or complementary. In this case, they seem to be complementary:
the second limb completes the idea conveyed in the first limb.

The aesthetic quality imbued in the parallelism does not just confer an
attractive poetic tinge on the text; it serves the basic idea of the verse. The divi-
sion between the two parts, achieved through the rhythmic caesura, under-
lies the antithesis between the approved close neighbor and the less desirable
distant brother, and stresses the preference of the one over the other. But the
aesthetic mechanism of the verse is more complex. One would expect that
the antithesis to "brother" would be "friend," due to the fact that "brother"
normally indicates a close relationship, which might be compared to a rela-
tionship with a good friend, whereas one does not necessarily maintain close

relations with a neighbor. One wonders, then, why the verse prefers "neighbor" to "friend"? This query itself is a rhetorical device; it is a trigger to arouse the reader's curiosity and steer it toward the hidden intention behind the choice of "neighbor" over "friend," which is to underline what is good and worthwhile in life. To wit: even a close neighbor (with whom you don't have very personal relations, only those based on convenience and perhaps the absence of unpleasantness) is preferable to a distant brother, since a relationship with a distant brother is, in fact, an unreal, insubstantial one. Now the challenging and complex mechanism of the verse is exposed to serve the basic idea of the text:

1. Presenting a complementary parallelism that sets "close neighbor" against "distant brother."
2. Using a thematic device: a deliberate choice of "neighbor" over "friend."
3. The same thematic device entails a rhetorical device consisting of arousing the reader's curiosity to wonder about the choice of words.
4. The rhetorical device further leads the reader to seek the hidden logic behind this curious choice.
5. The reader discovers the hidden logic and realizes that it is anchored in the ideological message that the text wishes to convey.
6. The reader realizes the causal relationship among the three aesthetic devices: compositional (the parallel structure), thematic, and rhetorical.
7. The reader further discovers how the aesthetic devices anchored in the text underline the ideological message (which is the primary purpose of the text): an everyday, practical wisdom, in the spirit of Proverbs, and how they all serve this purpose.

What we have is an ideologically driven text, not a literary text, one that enlists complex and enticing aesthetic devices in order to drive home its message. In short, it is a typical biblical text.

Here we have to make absolutely clear one basic fact that has to do with the literary study of the biblical text and its relation to the "traditional" studies of the biblical text that focus on linguistic, philosophical, religious, historical, archaeological, social, and other aspects of the Bible. The "traditional" interpretation of the Bible started very early on, at the beginning of the Second Temple era (ca. 400 BCE). It was initiated by Ezra (as described in Nehemiah

8:13) and his disciples, the scribes, and in subsequent generations carried out
by the sages of the Mishna and the Talmud, the Amoraim and the Savoriam.
They dealt mostly with aspects of the Bible that have to do with the laws of
the Torah and with ethical and moral issues.

Much exegetical material is also found in the ancient translations of the
Torah, mostly into Aramaic, such as Onkelos's translation and Jonathan's trans-
lation of the Prophets. Pride of place among the ancient exegetes of the Bible
surely goes to Philo of Alexandria, who sought to incorporate Greek philos-
ophy into the Bible. During the Gaonite period (starting in the fifth century
BCE), the focus of the study was the Talmud, but there were several sages who
engaged in the interpretation of the Bible, such as Yehuda Yurgan (Mahmadan)
who, in the eighth century, determined that the Torah had two interpreta-
tions—internal and external. Rabbi Saadya Gaon (892–942 CE) translated the
Bible (with interpretations) into Arabic. Saadya was greatly influenced by the
rationalistic thinking of the time. His translation and exegeses ushered in a
new school of biblical interpretation, called *P'shat* (literalness), which focuses
on the text itself without looking for hidden meaning or allegories. Saadya
Gaon was superseded by Rabbi Shmuel bar Hofni (?–1034), who produced a
new Arabic translation with interpretations of other books of the Bible. His
son in law, Rabbi Hai Gaon (939–1038 CE), also engaged in biblical exegesis
and is known to have interpreted the book of Job and perhaps other books
that have been lost. Biblical interpretation later flourished in Spain. Among the
prominent exegetes are Rabbi Yehuda Ibn Hiuj (b. 950 CE) and Rabbi Yona
Ibn Janah (the first half of the eleventh century). They focused mainly on
the linguistic interpretation of the Bible but also dealt with the ideals and phi-
losophy of many books of the Bible. Two famous philologists, Rabbi Moshe
Ibn Gikatilla and Rabbi Yehuda Ibn Balam, studied the language of the Bible.
Rabbi Shlomo Ibn Gabirol (1021–58), the greatest poet of the eleventh cen-
tury's "Golden Age," was probably also engaged in biblical interpretation, as was
certainly the poet and philologist Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra. After the decline
of biblical interpretation in Spain, it was taken up by Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo
Yitzhaki), who lived in Northern France (1040–1105). Rabbi Shmuel ben Meir
(the Rashbam), the grandson and disciple of Rashi, continued using Rashi's
interpretative methods, which focused on the text as given and which is close
to an aesthetic approach to the Bible. After him came Rabbi Yosef Karo and
Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra (Raba; 1092–1167) who focused on the linguistic
study of the text. Rabbi David Kimchi (Radak; 1160–1235) was one of the promi-
nent exegetes of the Bible who tended to add philosophical interpretations.
A combination of textual analysis and philosophical interpretation was also

the hallmark of the greatest Jewish intellectual, Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam; 1135–1204), whose great philosophical book *A Guide to the Perplexed* contains many biblical exegeses in a philosophical guise.

Another great biblical exegete is Rabbi Levi ben Gershom (Ralbag; 1288–1344), who first interpreted the Bible literally, then philosophically and ethically, influenced as he was by classical Aristotelian philosophy. At the end of the Middle Ages, there were several exegetes who interpreted the Bible in the spirit of the *Kabbalah* (Jewish mysticism). Prominent among them was Rabbi Moshe Alseich (the second half of the sixteenth century, in Safed, Israel) and Rabbi Hayyim ben Moshe (1690–1740), who wrote *The Light of Life.* During the period of Hebrew Enlightenment (beginning in Germany in 1760), many exegetes were influenced by the rationalism that informed the European Enlightenment movement, itself inspired by neoclassical philosophy. Prominent among them were Moses Mendelssohn (1729–85), who translated the Pentateuch into German with commentary in Hebrew (*The Paths of Peace*). Mendelssohn wrote only the interpretation to Numbers, while the rest was written by his contemporaries, Shlomo Dubna, Naphthali Hertz Wessely, Aharon Yaroslav, and Hertz Homburg. The most prominent exegete of the nineteenth century was Shmuel David Luzzatto (Shadal; 1800–1865), who wrote insightful interpretations to the Pentateuch and to the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job, all written in the spirit of rationalism that typified the Age of Enlightenment. Another sage worth mentioning is Rabbi Leibush of Kapna (Malbim; 1809–79), who wrote a commentary on the Bible designed to show the unity of the written and oral law and to base the traditional aggadic interpretations on the text's literal meaning.

In the modern period (from the beginning of the twentieth century), the interpretation of the Bible continued with great momentum. The study of the Bible was greatly enhanced and reinforced by archaeological discoveries in sites in ancient Assyria and Babylon, with the deciphering of the cuneiform script and the ancient Assyrian language that had direct influence on biblical Hebrew. The new research was thus aided by a comparative linguistic study of biblical Hebrew and ancient Semitic languages, archaeological findings, and the historical conclusions they led to. Among the prominent biblical scholars of the modern period are Abraham Kahana, S. Kreuss, Z. P. Hayot, M. Z. Segal, Cassutto, and S. L. Gordon.

The aesthetic study of the biblical text in this book does not intend to undermine the "traditional" methods mentioned earlier and certainly not to challenge or refute their findings. It seeks instead to steer the research toward the examination of the aesthetic aspects employed by the biblical text and

their contribution to the enhancement of the message the text sets out to convey, be it religious, philosophical, ethical, social, or historical.[5]

The claim that this book will give the ultimate answer to the question of who wrought the Bible sounds, of course, exceedingly pretentious and provocative. Is it at all possible—let alone in one study—to convincingly identify and describe the author or authors of the Bible? Of course, the answer is no. No doubt, the Bible was composed over hundreds of years (possibly a thousand) and fashioned by many scores of people. There may indeed be some validity to the recently made claim that the entire Bible was written during the Second Exile in Babylon (fourth century BCE) out of the desire of a deracinated people to create a common denominator, a unifying history, a glorious mythical past, based in part on fact and in part on fiction and aspirations. Yet we must assume that many people took part in processing the material and in fashioning it, even if the final redacting was done by only a few. The different layers, distinguished and discrete, are clearly discernable in the Bible as a whole. Behind the provocative title of this book, which asks "Who wrought the Bible?" lurks a compelling question: Who gave the biblical chapters discussed in this book their aesthetic qualities, and how was this done? Let me hasten to explain that there is no attempt here to engage in detective work to trace the biographies of the people who endowed these chapters with aesthetic qualities.

Whom, then, do we seek when we ask that titular question? It may be helpful to make use of a term coined by W. C. Booth, who suggested an insightful distinction between three "literary entities" that are behind the construction and aesthetic design of a literary text as it is conveyed to the reader.[6] First, there is the biographical author of the text. Literary study focuses on the aesthetics of the text, its themes and ideology, not on the author nor on the author's intentions in writing the text. Second, the literary study begins the moment the biographical author is done with the composition of the text. Third, it is inconceivable for the aesthetic study of a literary text to hinge on an extratextual factor (e.g., the author of the literary text), since it will make the text forever dependent on the author for the validity of the findings in the study. The aesthetic study of a Shakespearean sonnet, a poem by Donne, or a novel by Tolstoy should be independent of their respective authors. Even if the author is still alive, does this mean he or she is the ultimate arbiter of the findings in the study? Suppose a certain elegy was analyzed by a hundred different scholars the world over, and that they all reached the same conclusion: the elegy makes use of aesthetic devices that underline its somber, menacing tenor. Suppose, moreover, that a hundred different nonprofessional readers, when

given the elegy, immediately recognized elements of gloom and doom in it. If the author challenges all these conclusions, claiming that his intention was to write a happy, amusing poem, whom should we believe? The author or the literary text itself? We must trust only the text and not the author's intentions, which may have misfired. The text is the only reliable medium a scholar has, and a skilled scholar should be able to detect aesthetic devices, ideas, and interpretations without outside help. Thus, the biographical author must remain outside the picture when it comes to analysis of a text.

What about the author who is identified in the text, either as an internal or external narrator, and who may or may not be involved with the plot and the characters? Can he or she be considered the author of the text? Certainly not. The narrator is only a rhetorical function that mediates between the text and the reader.

Who then is the author of the literary text, from the point of view of the literary scholar? The implied author is neither a concrete nor a fictive character but an apparatus anchored at the bottom of the text. He is the creator, the producer, and the coordinator of all aesthetic phenomena included in the text, of all the themes, ideas, and intentions. In other words, every aesthetic, thematic, or conceptual phenomenon embedded in the text is a product of the implied author and his sole responsibility. This is the meaning of the title of this book: not to deal with specific persons who may have authored or fashioned the biblical text, but to expound and examine the implied authors of the biblical texts under discussion here—the creators of the aesthetic mechanism that serves the ideological goals of these texts. Each of the texts has it own particular authors. The ensuing book is an "aesthetic voyage" in search of these implied authors, for they are the ones who wrought the Bible. Discovering the implied authors and drawing their aesthetic and thematic portraits is the central purpose of this book.

1

One More Mandatory Introduction

A glory gilds the sacred page,
Majestic like the sun:
It gives a light to every age,
It gives, but borrows none.

—WILLIAM COWPER,
"Olney Hymns, No. 30."

How Does the Aesthetic Mechanism of the Biblical Text Operate?

This chapter explains how the tools outlined in the introduction function within the aesthetic and ideological systems of the biblical text. I present thirteen examples demonstrating how the aesthetic mechanism works, how it is "harnessed" to the Bible's ideology, and how the Bible is designed to serve its purposes.

The first two examples are somewhat unusual in that they do not serve any particular ideological purpose, but they are good illustrations of the working of the aesthetic mechanism. Both examples are from the Song of Songs because this particular book is unique in the biblical corpus for having no ideological purpose, only an aesthetic one.

SONG OF SONGS 2:3

Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest so is my beloved among the youths. Under his shade I have sat and lusted, and its fruit is so sweet to my palate.

The speaker here is a young woman in love with a rustic youth. Her ardent love impels her to use the simile of the apple tree. The beloved, who is superior to all his peers, is compared to an apple tree whose beauty and fruit are superior to those of all the other trees in the wood.

The choice of apple tree is not accidental, for it immediately brings to mind the temptation of Eve and the eating of the forbidden fruit. Eve's temptation was not really erotic but was, rather, based on intellectual curiosity. In addition, there is no indication in Genesis that the forbidden fruit was an apple. Despite all this, the collective memory of humankind has always characterized Eve's sin as an erotic sin and the forbidden fruit as an apple, perhaps because apples tend to be red (a color with erotic connotations), and the act of eating symbolizes sexuality since it has to do with penetration into a cavity, an image that preceded Freudian theories by thousands of years, and which can be found in the Talmud and other textual sources. Similarly, the serpent's phallic shape and the fact that the "knowledge" acquired by Adam and Eve was carnal knowledge ("they knew that they were naked") reinforce the erotic connotations of the biblical apple. Thus, comparing the lover, the rustic shepherd, to an apple tree is an image fraught with erotic connotations. And since it is the woman who uses this image, it reveals her strong erotic attraction to him.

The verse in the Song of Songs consists of two parallelisms: the first synonymous, the second complementary, a construction that confers on the verse a distinct poetic quality, since this kind of parallelism is one of the hallmarks of biblical poetry. In the second part of the verse the woman acknowledges her passion for the man ("I . . . lusted") and ends up eating the apple with delight, both of which underscore the great sexual attraction of the young woman to her beloved. But the aesthetic mechanism exhibited in this verse is even more complex than meets the eye. At first, the apple tree is used as an image, a metaphor describing the lover's superior qualities, as seen by the adoring woman. It is not a concrete apple, only a figure of speech. In the complementary parallelism that concludes the verse, the apple tree has undergone a metamorphosis; it has become a real tree, one offering shade, a place to sit and revel in erotic pleasure, and, finally, its sweet fruit to be eaten and enjoyed. This metamorphosis underscores the speaker's desire for her beloved: The apple tree is no longer an abstract metaphor but a concrete, tangible entity. The woman's erotic passion becomes more concrete and corporeal. This is the full extent of the aesthetic mechanism: it is, on the one hand, a passive device, a metaphoric parallel between the beloved and other youths, including the erotic connotations associated with the apple; on the other hand, it is an active device, involving a dramatic transformation from the metaphoric to the concrete state. This clash between the passive and active devices gives the aesthetic mechanism a dramatic dimension, an added quality of unresolved tension, which invests the verse with freshness and vitality.

SONG OF SONGS 1:17

The beams of our houses are made of cedars, the rafters are made of cypress.

To fully appreciate the aesthetic mechanism of this verse, the reader must see it in the original Hebrew, which is presented here in transliteration:

Korot [beams] *bateynu* [our houses] *arazim* [cedars], *rahiteynu* [our rafters] *brotim* [cypresses].

This verse presents a complementary parallelism: the content of the second hemistich complements the content of the first. But this is just the beginning of the aesthetic mechanism used here, which is based largely on sound, tone, and the interrelations of the sounds of the words threaded along the textual continuum. Our starting point in examining the sounds should be the word "cypresses" (*broshim*). One wonders why the word for cypresses here is *brotim.* A "traditional" biblical scholar, one rooted in comparative philology, would easily explain this usage by noting that an interchange of certain letters and sounds between the language of the Bible and other ancient Semitic languages was quite common. The word for ox, for example, is *shor* in Hebrew, but *tor* in Aramaic, the language of the Talmud, prevalent in the region from the end of the first millennium BCE until about 200 CE. The spelling of the word *broshim* and its pronunciation as *brotim* testify to an Aramaic influence. The use of Aramaic was widespread in northern Israel, near Lebanon; to this day, there are pockets of Aramaic-speaking populations in Syria. Since cedars are identified with Lebanon and are mentioned in the verse, it stands to reason that the use of *brotim* is a result of Aramaic influence on the predominant Hebrew. Or, perhaps, *brotim* is a northern dialect, just as the words *sibolet* and *shibolet* (both meaning eddy, vortex) are essentially the same word that had different pronunciations in two dialects of the biblical language as it developed in two different parts of the country.

But beyond the comparative philological explanation of *brotim/broshim,* there is another explanation, a purely aesthetic one, which is relevant to the aesthetic mechanism at work in this verse. Let us examine the transliterated verse and the levels of sound it exhibits:

<div align="center">

Korot bateynu arazim // rahiteynu brotim

↓ ↓   ↓   ↓

T T   T   T

</div>

The first level demonstrates why the implied author of the text preferred to use the dialect word *brotim* instead of the more commonly used *broshim,* since only *brotim* provides the requisite alliteration of four *t*'s equally distributed. And here a second layer of alliteration, a richer one, emerges:

<div align="center">

Korot bateynu arazim // rahiteynu brotim

↓ ↓   ↓   ↓   ↓

RT T   R   RT   R

</div>

Here, the alliteration is based on a much more complex pattern of sounds. There are three sets of R+T (RT), in the same order (first R, then T). Only two words in the verse do not fit that pattern:

<div align="center">

Bateynu   arazim

↓   ↓

T   R

</div>

And yet together they obey the same alliterative principle, creating an RT unit, except that here the T precedes the R. The regimented alliterative pattern is thus disrupted or broken, adding variety and freshness to what might otherwise become too mechanical or monotonous. We can now recognize in this verse a comprehensive aesthetic mechanism that uses a slight lexical aberration based on comparative philology, which helps construct a complex and sophisticated alliterative pattern.

PSALM 15:5

He who has never lent money with usury // nor accepted bribe against the innocent.

Here, too, we note an effective use of sounds, but the text goes a step further. The sound pattern does not function as an aesthetic device for its own sake, as in the previous examples, but as a tool that underlines and enhances the message that the text wishes to convey to its readers.

Again, transliteration of the verse will aid those who are not proficient in Hebrew, in order to identify the ideological alliteration in the parallelism (which is a complementary synthetic one):

Kaspo loh natan be-neshech
ve-shochad al naki loh lakach.

Here is a short glossary introducing the semantic field (i.e., the meaning) of the original:

> *Kaspo*—his money
> *Loh*—[did] not
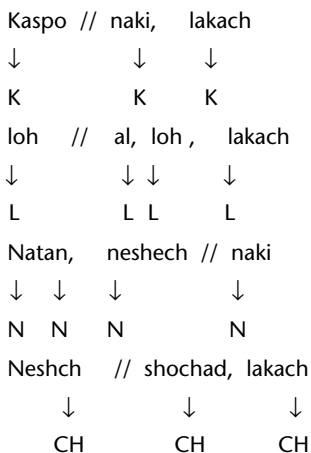> *Natan*—gave [in this context: lent]
> *Neshech*—usury, exorbitant interest [*be* = in/at; *Neshch* = biting]
> *Ve-shochad*—and bribe
> *Al naki*—on [in this context: against] clean [innocent]
> *Loh lakach*—did not take [accept]

In the diagram we see a multilayered complex alliteration:

```
Kaspo  //  naki,     lakach
↓            ↓        ↓
K            K        K
loh    //  al, loh ,    lakach
↓          ↓ ↓          ↓
L          L L          L
Natan,     neshech  //  naki
↓    ↓     ↓            ↓
N    N     N            N
Neshch    //  shochad,  lakach
     ↓           ↓          ↓
     CH          CH         CH
```

Although each alliteration cluster (K, L, N, CH) has a small number of identical sounds, the multiplicity of alliterative layers renders the pattern as a whole complex and exceptionally dramatic. The various layers seem to conduct an internal dialogue with one another and, at the same time, complement and reinforce each other.

But, here again, the attractive aesthetic pattern is merely an introduction to the real focus of the biblical text; the pattern is subservient to the ideological message conveyed in the text. That focus is found in two words, one placed at the end of the first hemistich, and the other following it and opening the second hemistich:

neshech (usury) // shochad (bribe)

↓ ↓   ↓ ↓

SH CH   SH CH

The fact that these two words—*neshech* (usury) and *shochad* (bribe)—are adjacent (unlike the other alliterative pattern noted earlier) is a compositional device that stresses the link between the two words and draws attention to their alliterative structure. In addition, the alliteration consists of two sounds. The aesthetic alliterative pattern thus renders better service to the ideological message, which is the portrait of the just and ethical person—someone who never lends money at an exorbitant ("biting") interest and who never takes bribes from the innocent (i.e., never takes advantage of his fellow man). The two words "usury" and "bribe" in the verse that most typify the righteous man (although preceded by the negatives "never" and "nor") are the most prominent words in the verse by dint of their peculiar alliteration. Moreover, the first word of the pair, *neshech* (usury), is the last word in the first hemistich, while the second word, *shochad* (bribe), is the first in the second hemistich. From a rhetorical point of view, and one that determines the reception of the text by its target audience, the end and the start are the most effective and prominent rhetorical points. Thus, we discern here a compositional device (the arrangement of the words along the textual continuum), which yields a rhetorical device, together highlighting the ideological message.

The three aesthetic devices (alliterative, compositional, and rhetorical) are cleverly orchestrated to enhance and reinforce the ideological-educational content that, in this case, is the depiction of the ethical, righteous man, the one the text holds as a paragon of human behavior.

EXODUS 4:16

He shall be your mouth / And you shall be his God.

Moses, it will be remembered, was "slow of tongue," rhetorically challenged, a fact that put him at a disadvantage when dealing with people, especially with mighty potentates like Pharaoh. Hence, God tells Moses that his brother Aaron will be his spokesman and deliver the message for him. The verse presents a perfect parallelism: in the first hemistich, God states that Aaron will be Moses's mouth and, in the second, that Moses will be like God to Aaron. Both structurally and thematically, this is a complementary (synthetic) parallelism. But here the aesthetic mechanism comes into play, proving that beneath the seeming perfect balance lurks total imbalance.

When God says that Aaron will be Moses's mouth, he means, of course, his mouthpiece, his spokesman, and the medium through which he will convey his moral, political, and prophetic message. One would expect the second hemistich to state that Moses will be Aaron's source, his inspiration, the provider of his rhetorical message. But this anticipated equilibrium is foiled. Instead, Moses is supposed to be like a God to Aaron! This surprising disequilibrium is, in fact, a rhetorical device consisting of raising expectations in the reader only to dash them farther along the textual continuum.[1] From an ideological point of view, the reasoning is quite logical. Since Moses is a prophet who speaks directly to God and who receives instructions from him, Moses will serve as God to Aaron, in the sense that he will convey God's words to him, and Aaron, due to his superior rhetorical skills, will further relay God's message to others. Despite this reasoning, we still see the following aesthetic phenomena at work here: first, a balance between two limbs of a complementary parallelism that is equal in its thematic import; second, a thematic imbalance (God versus mouth); and third, a rhetorical device of frustrated expectations that causes surprise and wonder in the reader. This complex aesthetic structure is channeled toward the ideological message: just as there is imbalance between the two limbs of the equations (Aaron [mouth] in one, Moses [God] in the other), there is inequality between Moses and Aaron. Moses is infinitely superior to Aaron, just as "God" is infinitely superior to "mouth" (which is metonymy for rhetorical mediation).[2]

EXODUS 6:9

> When Moses told this [God's many gifts to His people] to the Israelites, they refused to listen to Moses because they were extremely impatient and crushed by hard labor.

This passage is a report by an irate biblical narrator chastising the people of Israel for their refusal to heed the word of the Lord, despite all the mighty deeds that God had wrought for them as he liberated them from bondage and led them to the Promised Land. In effect, this is the narrator's complaint about the people's stubbornness and ingratitude.

When focusing on the two reasons the implied narrator supplies for the Israelites' recalcitrance (impatience and being crushed by hard labor), it becomes apparent that the text employs an effective and clever compositional device here. The device consists of distributing the various lexical items (words, phrases, and sentences) along the textual continuum. The result is unexpected and surprising. It would be logical to assume that the people refuse to heed

Moses's words because of the hard work imposed on them, which naturally mades them extremely impatient, and so they are unwilling to listen to his censure and exhortations. But in the verse, the order is reversed. First, we are informed of their stubbornness, and as an afterthought, of the harsh labor they were subjected to. The compositional order seems arbitrary and defies logic. This is reinforced by the semantic-etymological designation of the Hebrew expression used for "extremely impatient" (*kotzer ru'ach.*) The word *ru'ach* is linked to a host of meanings, such as "ghost," "spirit," "wind," "breath," and the like. The given context naturally activates one of the meanings and suspends all the others as irrelevant to the theme and semantics of the context. Here, *ru'ach* has the meaning of "breath," and is modified by *kotzer* ("shortness"), suggesting shortness of breath, difficulty in breathing, presumably caused by the harsh conditions of work. Thus, the reversal effected by the order of words seems illogical and produces surprise. The ideological reasoning behind this aesthetic mechanism relies on causal linkage between compositional and rhetorical devices. How does the aesthetic mechanism serve the ideological message embedded in the text? The surprised reaction that the text elicits from its target audience, in fact, robs the Israelites of a justification for impatience and refusal to listen to Moses's censure. Hard labor and exhaustion would be a reasonable cause for impatience and disobedience. But the disruption of the logical order (a compositional device) and the surprise reaction it creates in the reader (a rhetorical device based on the compositional one) weaken the Israelites' case and deprive them of an excuse. The true narrative the text presents is the following: The people's impatience is the main reason for their disobedience, and thus they are blameworthy and deserving of reprobation. In the subsequent verse, the reader is apprised of the people's burden of hard labor, but their impatience and recalcitrance have already been established; these reprehensible traits have made them turn a deaf ear to Moses's exhortations, which is tantamount to ignoring God.

How the Aesthetic Mechanism Serves the Ideological Message Delivered by the Biblical Text

EXODUS 25:8

> They shall build me a sanctuary / and I shall dwell among them.

Here, again, we have a complementary, synthetic parallelism; the thematic unit of the second hemistich is a continuation of the one expressed in the

first hemistich. The aesthetic mechanism at work here is based on an ironic gap (i.e., a gap between two levels of consciousness, of intention, or of statement, as exemplified by the figure of the Greek *eiron* (irony). The ironic gap in this verse is determined by the thematic/conceptual nature of the contrastive parallelism. While the first hemistich asserts God's knowledge that the people will build him a sanctuary—a sumptuous place where he will reside—the second hemistich proclaims God's intention to ignore that sanctuary and, instead, reside with the people. There is a noticeable contrast between the two ideas expressed in the two hemistiches. The aesthetic mechanism underlines the ironic gap between the people's intentions and God's. The ideological message embedded in the verse is therefore a scathing criticism of the people. God seems to be saying: "You are about to build me an edifice, a concrete building, forgetting that the basis of your relationship with me is a spiritual one and has no need of bricks and beams. God should reside in your heart. If you do build me a sumptuous building, hoping that I reside in it, you will be disappointed because I shall not reside there. It behooves you to conduct yourselves in a spiritual and moral way that will accord me a proper place in your hearts and minds." God's ironic criticism of his people is thus predicated on their thwarted expectations that he will reside in the temple they are about to build. The aesthetic mechanism is comprised of three interconnected levels: (1) contrastive parallelism, creating an ironic gap, which then yields (2) a rhetorical device of thwarted expectations, all leading to (3) the ideological message that God's harsh criticism of the people for their naïve and misguided belief that the abstract, spiritual God can reside in an edifice of stone and wood, whereas, in fact, his place is in their hearts.

The next examples, drawn from Genesis 1 and 2, contain accounts of the creation of humans (male and female), but the descriptions in the relevant chapters are very different. The explanation supplied by so-called traditional biblical scholars is a valid and cogent one. The book of Genesis (like all the other books in the canon) is a mosaic made up of various narrative layers, written over many historical periods. The different versions of the same story were drawn from ancient pre-biblical sources that attest to different provenance and to different periods of composition. The Pentateuch, for example, is believed to have been written over four different periods. The first two versions (Jahwist and Elohist) are identified by the way God is referred to: Jehovah (J) or Elohim (E). Another layer is known as the Priests's or Priestly (P) accounts, found in the book of Deuteronomy.[3] It is not our intention here to focus on philological or historical aspects of the biblical text, but rather on the aesthetic mechanisms the text employs for the furtherance of its ideology.

And with this approach in mind, we will examine the two accounts of creation in the order of their appearance in Genesis.

GENESIS 1:27–28

> And God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him:
> male and female, he created them.

This first version of the creation brings two important facts to the fore. First, God created man and woman in his own image (since God is devoid of corporeal form, it is a spiritual image), and the "raw material" was hewn from the "divine quarry" of God himself. Second, there is a marked preference of man over woman, since the verse first describes creating *man* in the image of God, and only later, as an afterthought, mentions that woman, too, was made in the image of God. God's special relationship to man and woman is expressed in this version in two ways: he blesses them, and he gives them dominion over all living things.

> God blessed them, and God said to them, be fruitful and multiply, fill the
> earth and dominate it; and rule the fish of the sea, the fowl of the sky, and all
> living things that crawl upon the earth.

God enjoins the newly created humans to multiply and procreate, thus filling the earth with people like themselves. This is a token of God's special affinity for the creatures he had made in his image and of his appreciation of them.

GENESIS 2

> The Lord God said, It is not good for man [Adam] to be alone. I shall make
> him a fitting helper [*ezer kenegdo*]. (2:18)

This second version of the creation of man and woman is dramatically different. Here, God's preference for man over woman is much more pronounced. In the second version he creates man alone (2:7). Woman is mentioned only later, in verse 18. Whereas, in the first version, man and woman are created in God's image, here woman is created in order to help man and to serve him.

Moreover, in this version God grants Adam the privilege of naming the animals. In the Bible, the act of giving a name means bestowing an identity; it is a kind of verbal creation. Similarly, when a name is changed—Abram becomes Abraham, Sarai becomes Sarah, Jacob becomes Israel (changes wrought either

by God or by his emissary)—it betokens an upgrading of the person's spiritual, ethical, and existential status.

When God bestows on Adam the sacred function of naming the animals, God turns him into a verbal creator, thereby elevating his status and rendering him considerably superior to his mate. This last point is emphasized twice. First, Adam is the one giving the woman her name, first "Isha" (from the Hebrew *Ish,* "man") and then *Hava,* meaning "the mother of all living things." Second, while in the first version both man and woman were created from the same nonspecific raw material, in the second version, the woman is created from Adam's rib (2:21–22), stressing her subordinate status: he is the whole, she is but a part of the whole. In the earlier version, man and woman were created in God's divine image; here the raw material is significantly inferior. They are made from the dust of the ground (2:7). Adam's very name indicates his provenance, as it derives from *Adama,* "earth."

The two versions are evidently very dissimilar. A traditional scholar could justly argue that we have here one basic story coming from two different sources (perhaps Ugaritic and Assyrian) and written down (or transmitted orally through generations) at different periods and, eventually, included in Genesis and placed in close proximity. One may ask why two contradictory versions were included, inevitably confusing readers. Why wasn't one version chosen over the other? There is no obvious answer, but perhaps the authors or redactors felt too much awe and reverence toward the two versions and decided to include both.

Or, not bound by aesthetic norms prevailing in later periods, they saw merit in the inclusion of two contradictory versions, thus creating dramatic heterogeneity. A similar aesthetic norm can be found in Hebrew and Arabic poetry of the early Middle Ages in Spain. The genre known as *qasida* ("broken song") consisted of cramming the textual continuum with diverse, heterogeneous thematic clusters, and forgoing thematic homogeneity as an aesthetic ideal. Perhaps, the inclusion of two versions is a compromise reached after a power struggle between proponents of the opposing stories.[4]

The reader is, however, faced with two divergent versions of the creation of man and woman. And here the aesthetic mechanism comes into play, as always, harnessed to the ideological message: to protect the text (at least partially) from inherent contradiction, and to bridge the two disparate versions. This mechanism consists of two words: *zot ha'pa'am.* When God brings the woman to Adam, after having created her from his rib, Adam says, poetically, "This time [*zot ha'pa'am*], at last, this is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh. This one shall be called Woman [*Isha*] because she was taken from man

[*Ish*]" (2:23). The aesthetic mechanism that bridges the two versions and lends them ideological unity is anchored in the somewhat baffling phrase "This time, at last." The only possible meaning is that, unlike the previous process of creation, *this time* things took a different turn, which implies that the first procedure was not successful and therefore required a second attempt. But is it conceivable for a man created in the second process to be aware of the previous process? And to criticize God's work into the bargain? "This time," as Adam says, the result is better. The text conveys this rhetorical surprise that dictates the reader's reaction.

It would appear that a (probably later) redactor was uneasy about the contradictory versions and thus put into Adam's mouth these crucial words that serve as a "rhetorical bait" to not only draw the reader's attention to an attempt to reconcile the two versions but also create the impression that a causal link exists between the two stories. The inclusion of the second version shows that it was done intentionally, in order to emphasize that there were two separate attempts at creating man and woman, and God preferred the second.

The next aesthetic device is a particularly complex one, serving simultaneously two ideological purposes embedded in the same textual continuum.

GENESIS 11:31–12:2

> Terah took his son Abram . . . and they set out together from Ur of the Chaldeans for the land of Canaan; and they came to Haran and settled there. The days of Terah were two hundred and five years; and Terah died in Haran.

> The Lord said to Abram, Go forth from your country, from your homeland, and from your father's house, and go to the land that I will show you. And I will make you a great nation; and I will bless you, and make your name great, and your name shall be a blessing.

Here we see a compositional device that organizes and distributes the thematic elements along the textual continuum, in addition to the rhetorical device that sets out to frustrate and foil the reader's expectations. This is how the rhetorical device works. God orders Abram to leave his homeland and his father's house and go to a new, unfamiliar land where God will bless him and make him into a great nation. Here we wonder why God turns to Abram. The answer is that, for undisclosed reasons, God has chosen Abram to be the first monotheist, the first believer, God's prophet and emissary who will spread God's name and faith among the chosen people (as indeed Abram will do later). However, nothing of this is revealed when God first makes himself known to Abram. Why does God focus on the land (the "Promised Land"),

on tangible rewards (blessing, a great nation)? Why does God make such an onerous demand upon Abram (to uproot himself and abandon the world he has known all his life) and hide from him the spiritual reason behind this demand? Why does God use a real estate agent's argument (move to another location, it will be worth your while)?

And so, why indeed does God turn to Abram? This question is obviously a rhetorical device aimed at thwarting expectations, since the reader expects God to say to Abram: "I have chosen you to be my prophet, my herald, to disseminate the monotheistic faith, which I represent. You must go to the Promised Land, where I will bless you and make you a great nation." But this does not happen. The purpose of this rhetorical device is twofold. First, Abram hastens to fulfill God's injunction, even though he does not know the real reason behind it, which testifies to his innocent trust in God and to his need to obey God without hesitation or question. Abram thus reveals the greatness of his spirit. True, he is promised material rewards and blessings, but Abram had never encountered God, nor even heard of him, and so why should he believe his promises? It is his utter belief and trust in God and his greatness of spirit that prompt Abram to obey. Second, Abram is human, and so will be his progeny after him. Yet here they are required to believe in a totally abstract being, having up to now worshiped only tangible graven images. The belief in an abstract, immaterial, bodiless God—even today—is an extremely demanding and challenging proposition, emotionally, psychologically, and intellectually. This is why the text focuses on the material gains—a Promised Land, prosperity, and a great nation—to offset the huge spiritual challenge of believing in an abstract God.

The rhetorical device of thwarting the reader's expectations is anchored in the fact that we have already learned, at the conclusion of Genesis 11, that Abram had left his homeland and his father's house (at the instigation of his father, Terah) and was on his way to another land, which he knows to be the land of Canaan. Why, then, did that omniscient God ignore Abram's history? The rhetorical device here is reinforced by a compositional device, which organizes the textual continuum, juxtaposing the conflicting narratives with no attempt to gloss over the contradiction by any linkage, as was the case in the two versions of creation discussed earlier. But this conjunction of devices is not motivated by aesthetic considerations but by an ideological goal. God ignores Abram's antecedents and his personal history prior to their first meeting in order to highlight the idea that the origin of monotheism and of the Hebrew nation started with God's first encounter with Abram, and whatever happened earlier is irrelevant and as good as nonexistent.

The next aesthetic mechanism also presents a clever combination of compositional, thematic, and rhetoric devices, all in the service of the ideological lesson embedded in the text.

GENESIS 11:10–30

These are the descendants of Shem: Shem was a hundred years old when he begot Arpachshad, two years after the flood. After he begot Arpachshad, Shem lived five hundred years and begot sons and daughters. When Arpachshad had lived thirty-five years, he begot Shelah. After the birth of Shelah, Arpachshad lived four hundred and three years and begot sons and daughters. When Shelah had lived thirty years, he begot Eber. After the birth of Eber, Shelah lived four hundred and three years and begot sons and daughters. When Eber had lived thirty-four years, he begot Peleg. After the birth of Peleg, Eber lived four hundred and thirty years and begot sons and daughters. When Peleg had lived thirty years, he begot Reu. After the birth of Reu, Peleg lived two hundred and nine years and begot sons and daughters. When Reu had lived thirty-two years, he begot Serug. After the birth of Serug, Reu lived two hundred and seven years and begot sons and daughters. When Serug had lived thirty years, he begot Nahor. After the birth of Nahor, Serug lived two hundred years and begot sons and daughters. When Nahor had lived twenty-nine years, he begot Terah. After the birth of Terah, Nahor lived one hundred and nineteen years and begot sons and daughters. When Terah had lived seventy years, he begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Now this is the line of Terah: Terah begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begot Lot. Haran died in the lifetime of his father, Terah, in his native land, Ur of the Chaldeans. Abram and Nahor took to themselves wives, the name of Abram's wife being Sarai and that of Nahor's wife Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah and Iscah. Now Sarai was barren, she had no child.

Although the passage is very lengthy and detailed, the reader can easily discern a thematic thread that unifies all the component elements. It is a genealogical list detailing births, generational continuity, and an unstinting chain of procreation. A father begets a son, the father dies, naturally, and the son begets offspring of his own, then dies, naturally, and the sons' grandchildren beget their own issue, and so on. In view of this continuous line of procreation, the concluding verse comes as a surprise: "Now Sarai was barren; she had no child." It is immediately arresting and grabs the reader's attention. First, it is the only verse in the passage to use structural parallelism, so typical of biblical poetry. It is based on an analogy, since the information in the

first hemistich is repeated or echoed in the second. The analogous parallelism is essentially tautological: the thematic material is duplicated, which is a thematic device, yielding in turn a rhetorical device that directs the reader's attention and determines how the text should be received. The information in the concluding verse (barrenness, childlessness) stands in stark contrast to the uninterrupted fecundity of the previous verses. The contrast is further emphasized by the shortness and terseness of the last verse in contrast to the lengthy, detailed description of the generations. This is yet another thematic device that makes use of the difference in volume between two thematic materials. Placing the barrenness theme at the end of the unit is a compositional device through which the implied author governs the organization of elements in the textual continuum. All these devices determine the effect of the encounter between the reader and the text.

What ideological purpose is served by this complex set of aesthetic mechanisms? We can find the answer in Genesis 17.

GENESIS 17:15–16

> And God said to Abraham, As for your wife, Sarai, you shall not call her name
> Sarai any more, but her name shall be Sarah. I shall bless her, and I shall give
> you a son by her. I shall further bless her and she will give rise to nations, and
> rulers of people will issue from her.

Now the function of the sophisticated aesthetic mechanism becomes clear: Sarah's barrenness is purposefully heightened by comparison to the fruitful previous generations, in order to underscore and magnify her future fertility, she being the mother of nations.

The next example of aesthetic mechanism and its ideological function involves Noah.

GENESIS 6:9

> This is the genealogical line of Noah: Noah was a righteous, blameless man in
> his generation; Noah kept to God's path. And Noah begot three sons: Shem,
> Ham, and Japhet.

For a traditional biblical scholar, focusing on the historical-genealogical aspect of the text, this verse poses no difficulty. It is a matter-of-fact report, by an objective author, on Noah's family history and of his superior ethical attributes. But a scholar of the aesthetics of the Bible sees this verse in an entirely

different light. There are three consecutive textual units here, each containing a different thematic import.

The first unit—"This is the genealogical line of Noah"—raises the reader's expectations that a history of Noah's family will follow. The second unit acquaints the reader with Noah's righteousness and virtue: a man of integrity and morality, who follows God's ways. The third unit tells the reader about Noah's familial situation: he begot three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japhet.

When we examine the distribution and placement of these units along the textual continuum, we notice something peculiar. The first unit leads readers to assume that the subsequent unit will acquaint them with the history of Noah's family, only to frustrate this expectation and launch, instead, a description of Noah's virtues and outstanding integrity. Only the third unit, apparently, recalls the earlier promise and belatedly delivers the goods on Noah's family history. Here we have a conjunction of two aesthetic devices: (1) a compositional one, which disrupts the logical textual sequence, thereby creating (2) a rhetorical device of setting up expectation in order to frustrate. How do these dual mechanisms serve the ideology the text aims to convey? The answer is in the phrase "in his generation." When the text tells us that Noah was a righteous man "in his generation," a subtle, almost imperceptible note of reservation can be discerned regarding Noah's righteousness. Why thus qualify Noah's righteousness? Perhaps because Noah's generation was so immoral, sinful, and iniquitous that Noah's virtue seems so only by comparison. It is relative and far from perfect. In a generation of sinners, Noah was considered righteous, but in a generation of righteous people, he would be found wanting in virtue.

Thus, the cooperation between the two aesthetic devices brings to the fore the textual unit that deals with Noah's righteousness and emphasizes it; at the same time it compensates for the possible skepticism that might put this righteousness into question. The ideological intent is accomplished—to preserve Noah's virtue and integrity, without fracturing them or casting doubts and reservations upon them. Once more, the biblical aesthetic mechanism proves its complexity and sophistication, as well as its commitment to the ideological import of the text.

The last example is no less compelling. Once again, it proves the biblical narrator's ability to convey scathing criticism indirectly.

2 SAMUEL 11:1

And it came about after the return of the year, at the time that the emissaries [messengers? kings?] left, that David sent off Joab, and his servants with

him, and all Israel, and they devastated the Ammonites, and they laid siege to
Rabbah, and David sits in Jerusalem.

The last phrase, "and David sits in Jerusalem," has captured the imagination
of numerous commentators, biblical scholars, and readers for generations.[5]
The tone of chastisement in this verse, voiced by a critical narrator who re-
bukes David for staying behind while his army and people risk their lives
on the battlefield, can be easily discerned by the reader. Commentators and
scholars agree that the narrator's criticism of David is too obtrusive to be
ignored. In fact, this scholarly view has been reflected in the many transla-
tions of the phrase "*veDavid yoshev b'Yerushalayim*" ("and David sits in Jerusa-
lem"), rendered variously as "But David himself remained in Jerusalem,"
"While David was dwelling in Jerusalem," "But David tarried in Jerusalem,"
and the like. Some translators put a period at the end of the phrase to further
stress the gap between the people of Israel, who risk their lives in war, and
their shameless king, who stays behind, commits adultery, and plots murder.

Curiously, while scholars and commentators missed the equally sharp crit-
icism of Abraham in the example cited earlier, they seem to be unreserved
in their condemnation of David. This may be due to the fact that Abraham
has a much higher status than David does in Jewish biblical history.

Literary scholars, too, have examined the ironic criticism of David in this
verse. The best-known literary analysis comes from Menahem Perry and Meir
Sternberg in their essay "*HaMelech beMabat ironi*" ("The King through Ironic
Eyes").[6] In this insightful and detailed discussion, Perry and Sternberg exam-
ine this verse, stressing the ironic criticism arising from the unequal and un-
balanced syntactical structure of the phrase. Accordingly, though the first part
(hemistich) of the phrase includes most of the information, the second part
includes only the words "and David sits in Jerusalem." This lack of syntactical
balance between the two parts of the phrase attracts attention to the second
part. Perry and Sternberg add that as the reader notices this lack of balance,
he or she unconsciously tries to compensate for it and, consequently, reads
this second part slower (in order to stretch it to the length of the first part).
In this way, the reader's reaction further emphasizes the critical irony reflected
in the ending "and David sits in Jerusalem."

While the following reading fully supports all the arguments mentioned
above regarding the narrator's ironic criticism of David, it aims to contribute
further insight to the aesthetics in this phrase that produce the chastisement.

The concluding words of the passage derive critical irony from their location
at the culmination of the phrase (the end is always stressed on a rhetorical

level) as well as from the lack of syntactical balance. These concluding words gain further emphasis of a metonymic-thematic nature; this ending clause is the only one of eight in this passage that does *not* refer to the subject of war. Even the beginning clause, "And it came about the return of the year," serves to locate the forthcoming war in a time frame. The second clause, "at the time that the emissaries left," not only refers to war but also reinforces the link to the previous clause. The messengers referred to were mediators who tried to negotiate terms of peace (hence my suggestion to translate *melakhim* as *malakhim* ["messengers"] and not "kings," as other translators do). In light of this translation, the first clause becomes more firmly connected to the topic of war. "And it came about the return of the year" means that the year of peace negotiations ended fruitlessly; the *malakhim* left, and David began preparing for war. The king's chain of command is reflected in three sequential clauses: "And David sent off Joab," "and his servants with him," "and all Israel." David first communicates with Joab, his chief of staff, who in turn communicates with his leading commanders and generals (the "servants"), and then these commanders call up the rest of the army ("all Israel"). The next clause "and they devastated the Ammonites" clearly refers to war, reporting as it does the Israelites' victory on the battlefield. The following clause, "and they laid siege on Rabbah," refers to the Israelites' incursion into the heart of enemy territory and the siege laid to their capital city.[7]

Each clause then is a metonym of the war (or rather a synecdoche, a part representing the whole to which it belongs), as each clause reports a progressive stage in the prosecution of the war: its time frame, the collapse of the peace negotiation forcing the *malakhim* to leave, the preparations for war, the breakout of hostilities, the first victory, and the siege of the enemy capital. The difference in subject between the last clause ("and David sits in Jerusalem") and the seven preceding clauses is especially noticeable and further strengthens the ironic criticism leveled at a king who has detached himself from his fighting men. Nevertheless, this ironic criticism by an ostensibly objective narrator reporting the progress of the war gains further sharpness through the creation of suspense.

As in thrillers where the success of the work depends on the skillful building up of tension toward a final, surprising climax, the biblical narrator builds up suspense by describing the war between the Ammonites and the Israelites. It might be helpful to envision the structure used here as a cone: the entire structure begins in broad general terms and gradually progresses toward a sharp, narrowed climax. The passage begins in general terms, as it sets the time frame for the war and gives historical background (the failure of peace

negotiations), and gradually chronicles the breakout of hostilities, the Israelite victory, and the siege of Rabbah. Yet, the narrator does not inform the reader whether the siege of Rabbah was successful and resulted in the conquest of the city. Instead, the narrator hurls a "punch line" at the unsuspecting reader: "and David sits in Jerusalem." The narrator denies the reader crucial information about the outcome of the siege, much as a detective writer who does not reveal "who done it" but instead digresses to an unrelated matter. The reader soon realizes that the unexpected concluding clause is a deliberate and carefully placed device to highlight the narrator's scorn and censure of the king. What was initially construed as an objective, informative report of war is found to be a ploy to expose David's shameful conduct during that war. Thus, the final clause is not *lapsus calami* (slip of the pen) but a calculated device to express rebuke and scorn.

As a note of interest, the narrator is not King David's only critic; the prophet Nathan condemns the king's behavior in the context of the fable of the poor man's lamb in 2 Samuel 12:1–6. King David, upon hearing the fable, does not recognize himself and reacts with fury: "As God lives, such a person deserves death!" Although both men acknowledge that such a deed deserves scorn and censure, neither displays the level of artistry in the choice of words that the narrator of 2 Samuel 11:1 does.

2

What You See
Is Not What You Get

When Unity Masquerades as Disarray

Can two walk together unless they are meant for each other?

—AMOS 3:3

Psalm 23 and Genesis 4 deal with the stories of Cain, Abel, Lemech, and the descendents of Adam and Eve after the murder of Abel by Cain. At first sight, both texts seem to dwell on two divergent, seemingly unrelated topics, where characters, plots, and themes have been haphazardly lumped together. However, a close interpretive reading of the texts reveals a fascinating system of affinities and analogies connecting the seemingly discrepant parts.

In both cases, the complex analogies are there for the sole purpose of advancing the ideologies of the biblical text. In this respect, the texts echo and complement each other while at the same time demonstrating the function of aesthetics in the Bible in general, which is not only to embellish and enrich the text but also to highlight the embedded ideological message.

Psalm 23: The Lord Is My Shepherd . . . or Is He My Host?

The grace and power of the Twenty-third Psalm have always captured the critics' attention and spurred them to seek the source of these qualities. But though the critics have been impressed by the psalm's lyrical appeal, they find its composition perplexing, even disturbing. The sharp transition from the shepherd-sheep metaphor to the host-guest metaphor may seem awkward, upsetting the psalm's coherence. Some have attempted to uncover the psalm's unity by philological interpretation or language emendation. Others have suggested that the psalm's bisected composition should be tolerated in light of the psalm's remarkable aesthetics and message, both of which fully compensate for its loose organization.

The psalm's unity is likely manifest in the text in its present form, but too, we may find the secret of the psalm's dynamic unity in the interaction of its two metaphor clusters. The decisive literary phenomena in the psalm are its metaphor patterns and its composition. The psalm begins with the metaphor "The Lord is my shepherd" (*YHWH ro'î*) and elaborates it until it resembles in scope an epic simile in which the tenor seems to be abandoned while the vehicle is developed independently: "He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside still waters, He restores my soul" (vv. 1–3a).

The cumulation of the shepherd-sheep imagery leads the reader to expect more of the same. Such paratactic patterns require something external to break their momentum and bring them to a closure. The hemistich "for His name's sake" does this, playing the role of *deus ex machina,* disturbing the momentum of the imagery while yet propelling the psalm toward its conclusion. Suddenly we emerge from the metaphor and leave the first paratactic sequence ready for something new.

This rhetorical technique of violated expectations is not part of the metaphorical development alone. It also serves the psalm's ideology. The phrase "for His name's sake" shifts our attention from the believer—who is the focus of the previous stichs—to God. In this way the author prevents the believer's role from overshadowing God's. This rhetorical-ideological stratagem is supported by another literary device that may be called a textual circularity.

The phrase "for His name's sake" thematically resembles the opening of the psalm, "The Lord is . . . ," as it also makes God the focus of attention. Opening and closing the unit with analogous elements evokes a sense of circularity and demarcates the unit. By drawing our attention back to God, this circularity compensates for the previous concentration on the believer. Subsequently, the believer is allowed to be the focus of attention without overshadowing God's role:

Key:
  L – The Lord
  B – believer
  ⟶ – paratactic sequence
  ⇢ – forcing the paratactic sequence to an end
  ⌒ – textual circularity
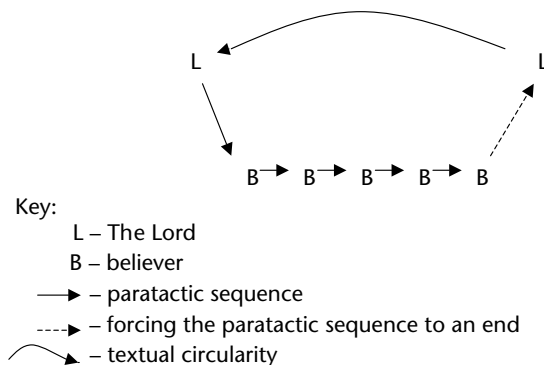
The second literary system that plays a significant role in molding the aesthetics of Psalm 23 may be called dynamic metaphorical evolution. The opening metaphor of the psalm, "The Lord is my shepherd" (*YHWH ro'î*), depicts God as a shepherd and the believer as a sheep. This keeper-animal figuration is extended: "He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside still waters." But the process of animal-like figuration is disturbed by a thematic deviation: "He restores my soul" (*napšî yᵉšôbeb*). The thematic concentration upon the believer's soul—the most distinguishing characteristic of human beings—shifts the attention from animal to human characteristics. This shift is echoed by alliteration as *napšî yᵉšôbeb* produces a significant sound pattern (based on repetition of *p/b; š*), which shifts from the psalm's preceding alliterative trail. The animal figuration is weakened and is gradually diminished by an increasing emphasis on the believer's human characteristics. To be sure, one may argue that the soul (*næpæš*) is not less animal-like than human since its detonation refers to all living things (see Job 12:10, *næpæš kål-hāy* [the soul of every living thing]; Gen. 1:30; and others). Yet, the fact that *næpæš* most often designates human beings (Gen. 36:6, *napšot bĕtô* [people of his house]; Exod. 12:4, *napšot ´îš* [people]; Exod. 1:5, *kål- næpæš yoṣ´ê yæræk Yaˋᵃqob šibˋîm næpæš* [all the people who came out of Jacob's loins, seventy people]) brings *næpæš*'s connotation closer to humans' characteristics than to an animal's.

Although the animal-like figuration is not dropped, the animal characteristics gradually fade while the human characteristics are emphasized. This metaphorical evolution reaches its peak at the psalm's climactic conclusion, where the believer completely drops the animal-like figuration and is elevated to an exclusively human figuration: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever." The gradual metamorphosis of the animal figuration into a human one (begun in v. 3 [*napšî yᵉšôbeb*]) evolves in the verse's continuation: "He guides me in straight paths . . ." The expression "straight paths" (*maˋglê ṣædæq*) advances the metaphorical evolution: the word "righteousness" is exclusively in the domain of human beings. Only human beings, not animals, may be judged by criterions of righteousness because that attribute derives from a moral choice and an intellectual discrimination, possessed by human beings only. Therefore, using the concept of righteousness at this stage of the figurative metamorphosis strengthens the human characteristics of the sheep metaphor while simultaneously contributing to the fading of the animal figuration.

As the animal figuration fades, it is not completely dismissed. The expression *yanhenî* (will guide me) is syntactically engaged with *maˋglêê* (paths/

circles) and both are still permeated with animal-like characteristics. The word *ma`glê,* "paths," literally means "circles." The root ע.ג.ל., from which *ma`glê* derives, appears in numerous places in the Bible meaning "circle" (Prov. 2:9; Ps. 4:11; Ps. 17:20; and others). The common translation of *ma`glê* as "path" is certainly valid. That word often refers to a man's way in his life's course (Ps. 65:12; Ps. 2:9; Prov. 4:26). Yet, the etymological-connotational origin of "circle" is evidently heard in *ma`glê;* it gives rise to connotations of a labor routine of a domestic animal, working for man and guided by him. Thus, the animal figuration of the shepherd-sheep metaphor can still be heard.

The figurative metamorphosis continues: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death / I will fear no evil." On the one hand, the gradual development of the metaphorical dynamics is accelerated in this verse. The frightening picture of walking in a somber valley reinforces the human characteristics of the image because it relates to humans walking in paths full of perils and traps, physical as well as moral. On the other hand, the roaming in a valley still reminds us of the wandering sheep, and consequently does not let the animal figuration drop although it is in a gradual process of fading away. The same process is repeated in the following hemistich: "Your rod and staff, they comfort me." The rod (*šebæṭ*) and the staff (*miš`ænæt* [*maš`enâ*]) refer to equipment that a shepherd uses in guiding his sheep. Though the human characteristics of the sheep metaphor increase in this hemistich— "comfort" [*yᵉnᵃhamunî*] suits human nature much better than animal—the reference to rod presents and consequently preserves the animal-like figuration. Verse 5 begins with the host metaphor ("You prepare a table before me") and designates a turning point in the process of the dynamic metaphorical development. As the host-guest metaphor begins, the shepherd-sheep metaphor is abandoned. The new metaphorical scene of host and guest completely exposes the latent human characteristics. Now we can see that the first impression of compositional looseness in the psalm is nothing but a delusion. The ending metaphor (of human characteristics) is not at odds with the opening metaphor (of animal-like characteristics) but plausibly evolves from it through a gradual process of figurative metamorphosis:

A. The gradual metamorphosis within the shepherd metaphor

sheep image

human
figuration

animal-like
figuration
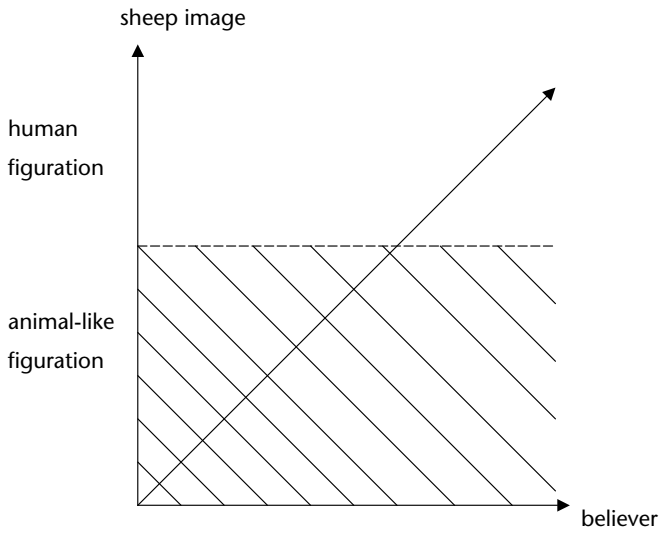
believer

B. The gradual integration between the psalm's two predominant metaphors

Figurative
Characteristics

Believer's

Textual continuum

1   4.5   6   in verses' terms
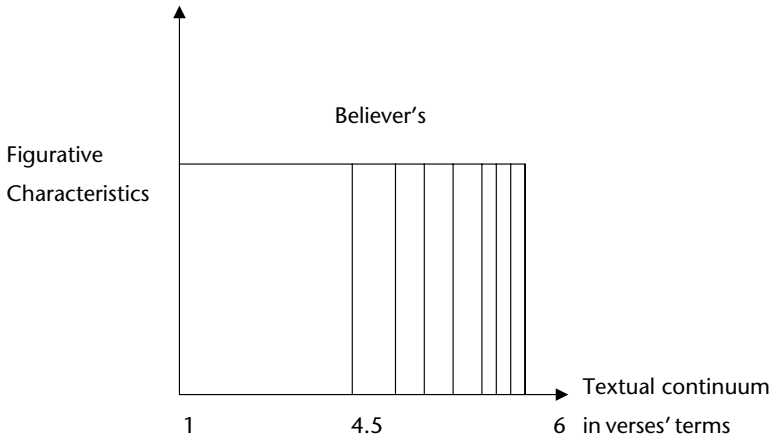
Key:

animal-like characteristics

human characteristics

The movement in the focus of attention from the believer to God in the first system adumbrates the shift from animal to human figuration in the second. In both cases there is a shift from a lower to a higher spiritual level. The difference in the nature of the shifts—a sudden shift in the first system as opposed to a gradual shift in the second system—is of a considerable rhetorical merit; it moderates and softens the precise parallelism's rigidity, and subsequently grants the psalm a sense of authentic flexibility. Thus, the Lord is the believer's host no less than his shepherd. The two metaphors that seemed to be in conflict are indeed logically interlocked and convey an integrated picture of God's dual grace: the stern protector and the generous host.

Cain, Abel, Lemech, Adam, and Eve:
Who Lumped Them Together . . . and Why?

A similar phenomenon—a conflict between two metaphors—can be observed in Genesis 4. Just as in Psalm 23, one encounters two very dissimilar, apparently unrelated limbs of a verse yoked together. And as in Psalm 23, a meticulous and penetrating interpretation yields a link and reciprocal analogies connecting the two seemingly disparate parts. This again demonstrates how the same compositional device (connecting two different bodies of texts in one textual continuum) and the same thematic device (the contents of the materials used in these texts) function, in both poetry and prose, not only on the aesthetic level but also as a vehicle for furthering the ideology of the biblical text.

Identifying a method in the seeming jumble of the diachronic textual continuum depends on two things: a meticulous and detailed study of each of the component parts that comprise the given textual continuum, and an examination of these components synchronically, with a view to identifying a cogent and convincing analogy that creates an inner dialogue between the disparate parts, thereby contributing to the ideological message.

> And Adam knew Eve, his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and she said,
> "I have gotten a son with the help of God." She then bore his brother Abel.
> Abel became a shepherd and Cain became a tiller of the soil. (Gen. 1–2)

On the face of it, we have a little story presenting sequential events. But on closer inspection of its basic structure, we discern the thematic-ideological kernel around which the passage revolves: life itself—giving birth, creating life, granting life. This is not surprising, given that Adam and Eve, having tasted of the forbidden fruit, gained carnal knowledge, the knowledge of how to

create life. "And their eyes were opened and they knew that they were naked" (Gen. 3:7). Genesis 4 introduces an alternation between the two poles of Life and Death. The next story, following the one about giving life, is the story of murder and death. Cain, envious of his brother because Abel's offering was accepted by God while his was not, "set upon his brother Abel and killed him" (4:8). Thus, the pendulum swings: shortly after the first birth in history, the first taking of life occurs. What immediately follows the story of Cain, however, is the genealogical detailing of Lemech's progeny:

> And Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch . . . And unto Enoch was born Irad, and Irad begat Mehujael, and Mehujael begat Methusael, and Methusael begat Lemech. And Lemech took unto him two wives, the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah. And Adah bore Jabal. He was the father of those who dwell in tents and of those who have cattle. And his brother's name was Jubal. He was the father of those who handle the harp and organ. And Zillah bore Tubal-cain, an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron. And the sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah. (Gen. 4:17–22)

The pendulum once more swings toward life, but not for long. What immediately follows is Lemech's bragging song to his wives: "For I have slain a man in wounding me, and a young man for bruising me" (4:23). Lemech's song, extolling a murder, which he compares to Cain's killing of Abel—"If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lemech seventy and sevenfold" (4:24)—brings the pendulum back from life to death. One may wonder why Cain was punished for his murder while Lemech was not. Perhaps the answer is that Cain's transgression was an incontrovertible fact, while the murder that Lemech confesses in his song is just a verbal account. The fact that it *is* couched in a song (constructed in the traditional biblical parallelism) confirms the conclusion that his tale of the slaying is nothing but empty braggadocio; in reality he did not kill, unlike Cain, and therefore was not punished, unlike Cain. Still, the thematic focus of the text is the loss of life, following the genealogical description of Lemech's progeny.

The chapter concludes with the mention of new life. Adam and Eve give birth to Seth, Seth begets Enos (4:26). The text presents a fascinating structure with unresolved tension between two opposing movements: the oscillation between life and death, and a complete circle, immutable and unalterable. The chapter begins with a birth, with life, and ends with birth and life. The fact that in both cases life emanates from the same people (Adam and Eve) only

heightens and reinforces the rounded, circular structure. A conflict is thus created between two different movements: the fluctuation of life and death, and the placid circularity that begins with life and ends with life. As always in the biblical text, aesthetics is in the service of ideology. The oscillating movement brings to the fore the peacefulness implied by the circular movement. The chapter as a whole emphasizes and celebrates life, which is here the ideological focus.

The graph of life and death

Life
+
Death

| Adam & Eve give birth to Cain & Abel | Cain murders Abel | Adam & Eve give birth to Enoch & the generations of Lemech | Lemech brags about a murder | Adam & Eve give birth to Seth who gives birth to Enos |
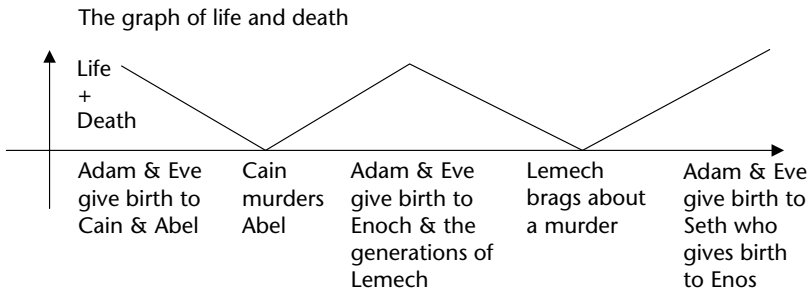
This ideological message is, indeed, one of the fundamental principles of the Bible: "Choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live" (Deut. 30:19). The ideological crux of the chapter—the sanctity of life—reflects one of the most basic tenets of the Bible. And here the connection to Psalm 23 becomes clear. Genesis 4:26, too, is an apparent amalgam of disparate limbs that, in fact, is revealed to be a façade masking an aesthetic and ideological unity.

This unity can be taken a step further, beyond the affirmation of the principle of the sanctity of life. The two main protagonists in this chapter are Adam and Cain. A curious and fascinating analogy between the two emerges: both committed a sin. Cain murdered; Adam disobeyed the Lord and ate of the forbidden fruit. There is a marked similarity in their punishments. Cain's punishment is: "When thou tillest the earth, it shall not yield unto thee her strength" (4:12). Similarly, Adam is told: "Cursed is the earth for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life" (4:17). Adam was created from the earth (hence his name) and Cain, too, is connected with the earth ("The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the earth" [4:10]). Similarly, in both cases the curse pertains to the earth: "cursed is the earth" in Adam's case, and "now art thou cursed from the earth" in Cain's case. Adam and Cain resemble each other also in their character traits—they both exhibit cowardice. Adam shows his fearfulness on several occasions. First, he hides behind a tree in the garden when he hears God's voice. Then, when asked,

"Where art thou?" (3:9), Adam lies, saying that he is hiding from God because he is ashamed ("because I was naked and I hid myself" [3:10]). The truth is that Adam hides because he is afraid of God's reaction to his disobedience. Later, Adam cravenly tries to excuse his eating of the forbidden fruit by shifting the blame to Eve. "The woman who thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (3:12). Adam, in fact, blames not only his wife but also God, implying that had not God created woman, he, Adam, would not have been tempted to sin against God. Cain, too, exhibits pusillanimity when answering God's question about the whereabouts of his brother: "And the Lord said unto Cain, 'Where is Abel thy brother?' And he said, 'I know not: am I my brother's keeper?'" (4:9). Both Adam and Cain are expelled from their habitat as a result of their transgressions. Adam is banished from the garden of Eden, and Cain is banished from his land, becoming a fugitive and a vagabond.

Another interesting analogy exists between the two. Adam, the verbal creator who named the animals and his wife, signifying rebirth or re-creation, becomes a slave to the earth, doomed to eke out a meager subsistence from a land that will yield him only thorns and thistles. All this is a result of his disobedience. We note an ironic reversal here. Adam, who was so highly placed earlier (on an existential-mental level), becomes abject and lowly on an existential-physical level, not unlike the crawling serpent that brought about his fall. A similar reversal occurs in Cain's fortunes. From a tiller of the land (a permanent settler with deep solid roots), he becomes a nomad, a homeless wanderer. Thus, the farmer, firmly rooted in the land, having murdered his brother (the nomadic shepherd) himself becomes a nomad.

By drawing an elaborate analogy between two central figures, the authors of Genesis 4 establish its cohesive unity. The unity is further strengthened by a comparison of Cain and Lemech.[1] First, there is the analogy of murder: Cain's actual killing of Abel, and Lemech's "verbal" killing of someone who had "wounded" him, which is unsubstantiated and mere bluster. The similarity between the two is further reinforced by the fact that both Cain and Lemech become progenitors of builders and creators. Cain's son, Enoch, is credited with being the builder of the first city (4:17), while Lemech's son Jubal is "the father of those who handle the harp and organ" (4:21). Lemech's other son, Tubal-cain, is the forger "of every tool in brass and iron" (4:22). Furthermore, Jabal, Lemech's firstborn, is "the father of all who dwell in tents and all who have cattle" (4:20), i.e., shepherds, as was Cain's brother Abel. Two of Lemech's sons are named Jabal and Jubal. Etymologically, the name derives from *yevul* (crop), harking back to Cain's original occupation as tiller of the soil.

Thus, the structural/thematic/ideological unity of the chapter is exposed through the complex web of analogies at work here. This unity is in fact twofold. One complex system of analogies between the chapter's component parts can be defined as synchronous unity, since it is based on a reciprocal relation between at least two parts. The other is diachronic unity, based on a dynamic movement along the textual continuum, straddling the two opposing poles of Life versus Death. The pendulum motion of this dynamic system also confers cohesion and unity on the chapter.

Like Psalm 23, Genesis 4 contains much more than meets the eye; it is a complex, diverse, and unified structure beneath its seemingly disjointed appearance. In the psalm, the aesthetic mechanism serves the ideological purpose of exalting and glorifying God. In Genesis 4, the aesthetic mechanism emphasizes the ideological goal of presenting the life-death cycle. It opens with life and concludes with life, thus stressing the supremacy of life in the human sphere, which was created according to divine plan. The two textual units reveal sophisticated aesthetic mechanisms that render exceptionally good service to the ideological goals of the respective texts.

Joseph is placed in the pit (Gen. 37:24)

Jacob descends to Egypt (Gen. 46:29)

Moses found in the basket on the Nile (Exod. 2:5–6)
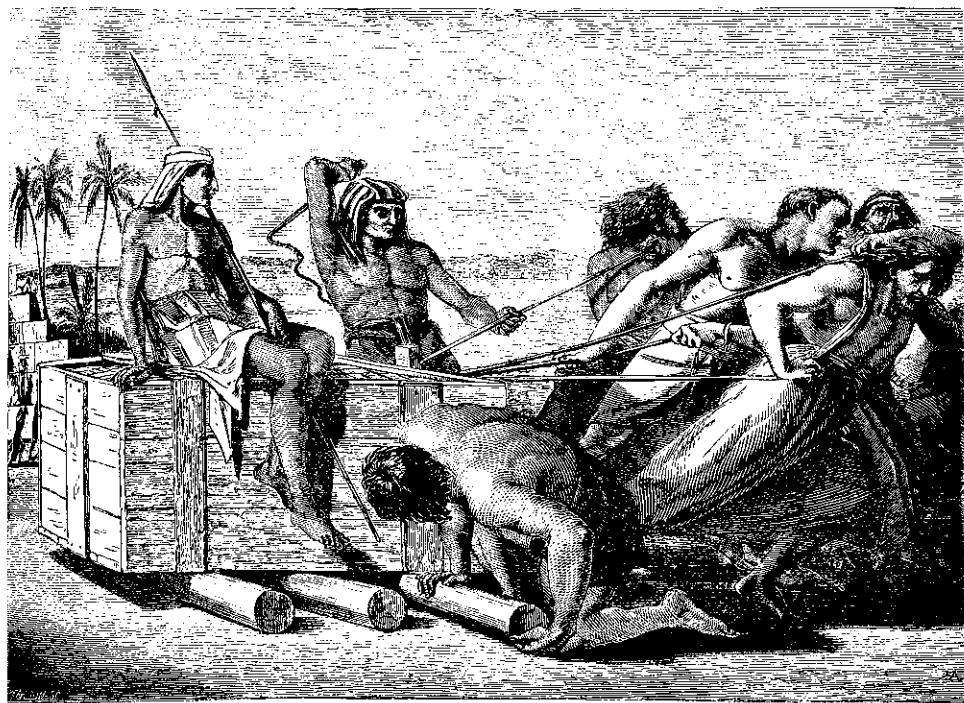
Hebrew slaves in Egypt (Exod. 2:23)

Moses approaches Pharaoh (Exod. 5:1)

The hail plague in Egypt (Exod. 10:24–25)

The plague of killing the firstborn son in Egypt (Exod. 12:29)

The sin of the golden calf (Exod. 32:4)

Moses and the tablets of the Ten Commandments (Exod. 20)

The end of looting Achan (Jos. 22:20)

Joshua commands the elders of Israel (Josh. 23:2)

The death of Abimelech (Judg. 10:53)
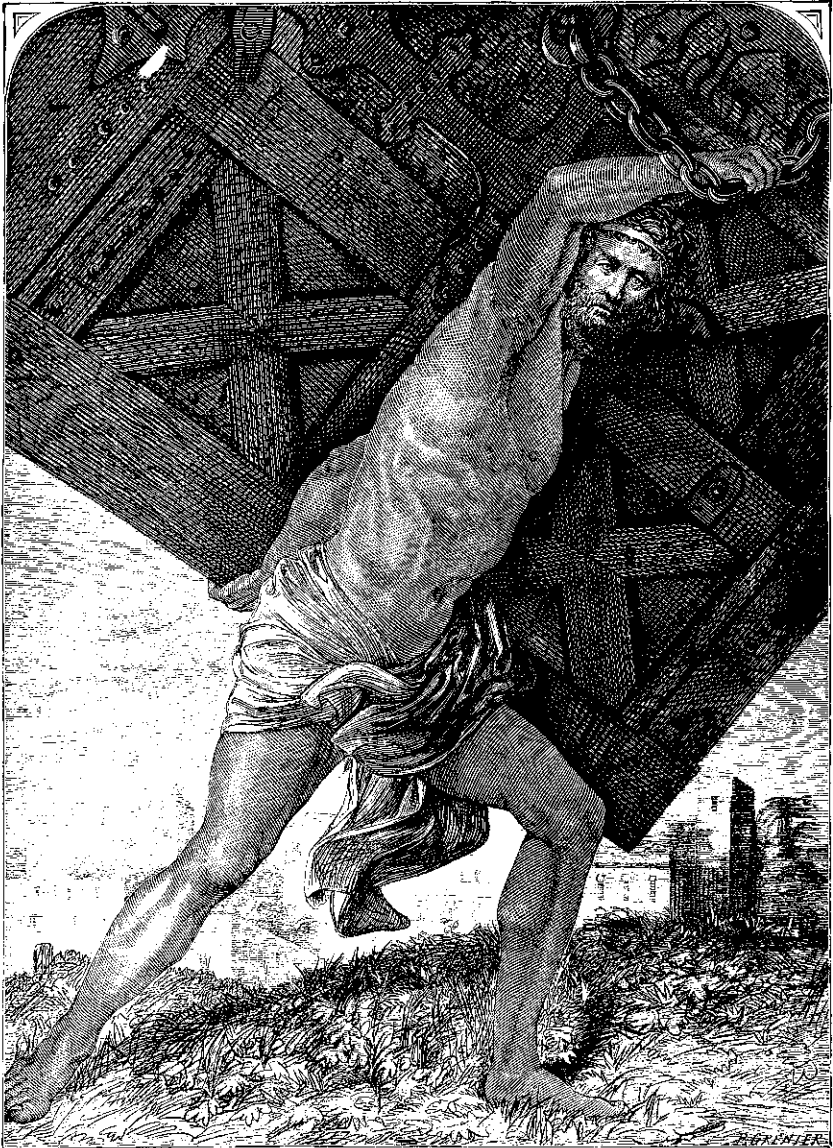
Samson carries the gate of Gaza (Judg. 16:3)

Samson slays the lion (Judg. 14:5–6)

Boaz at the gate of the city (Ruth 4:1)

Naomi and Ruth (Ruth 1:14–19)

3

Abraham versus Abraham

The Real *Aqeda* Story

In the older days of Art,
Builders wrought with greatest care
Each minute and unseen part;
For the Gods see everywhere.

—LONGFELLOW, "The Builders"

The story of Isaac's binding (*aqeda*) seems to be one of the most widely discussed chapters in biblical exegesis. The chronicle of the father whose profound faith in his God almost led him to sacrifice his only son has been examined from humanistic, theological, psychological, moral, historical, literary, and philosophical standpoints.

The critical tools of the literary approach perhaps provide the critic with insight and investigative means to discover new sites in this overly plowed biblical territory.[1] In discussing the rhetorical and compositional layers of the story of Isaac's binding, this chapter also demonstrates that literary devices employed in both rhetoric and composition are there not only for artistic purposes but also directly link to the foundations of the story, to ideology, theology, and psychology.

RHETORICAL STRATAGEMS

The first rhetorical phenomenon is found in the chapter's overture: "And it came to pass after things that God did tempt Abraham and said unto him . . . Take now thy son . . . and offer him . . . for a burnt offering" (Gen. 22:1–2). By using the expression "did tempt" (*nisāh*), the narrator shares with the reader crucial information that was denied Abraham. Had Abraham been acquainted with the intention of the divine command to slay his son, the trial would have been emptied of its value.[2]

Thus, an informational gap (which is ironic because any gap between two levels of awareness produces irony) created by the narrator occurs between Abraham and the reader from the very beginning. The reader, in contrast to Abraham, is able to follow the ensuing chronicle without fear, since he expects a happy ending to the story. The menacing features of the plot will not intimidate him.

On the other hand, the narrator's rhetorical policy of notifying the reader of the happy conclusion of the story at the very beginning seems disturbing and questionable. The rhetorical policy appears to be carried out by an implied author unaware of the rhetorical potential existing in any fictional conclusion, especially one ending a very gripping story.[3]

Instead of cultivating the story's thrilling features to create a suspenseful reading process, the narrator seems to overlook the story's most effective and promising rhetorical potential. But behind this apparent rhetorical misstep an ideological virtue emerges. While the thrilling plot of the binding story has literary merit, it also has an ideological weakness. By capturing the reader's complete attention, the plot may divert attention from the ideological message behind it. A literary cover that is too attractive may eclipse the inner ideological lesson. Thus, once the reader is freed from worrying over the end of the story, he is capable of deciphering the ideological message—Abraham's absolute faith and devotion to God—that emerges from the whole story. Losing some of the fictional interest enables the ideological lesson to become more obvious and consequently more effective. The seemingly faulty rhetoric is in fact an effective literary tactic, which adroitly harnesses the rhetorical layer to the ideological purpose.

The second rhetorical stratagem is embedded in the divine command "and get thee in to the land of Moriah" (v. 2, *Lech Lecha* [leave, go forth]). This divine command echoes the one opening Genesis 12, "Get thee out of thy country . . . unto a land that I will show thee." And again we read *Lech Lecha*. The repetition of the most significant components in both commands—*Lech Lecha*—underlines the analogy between the two commands and, consequently, reinforces the allusion.

This allusion is a source of both rhetorical and ideological virtues. Although the analogy between the two commands is solid (based upon verbal resemblance and thematic similarity, i.e., extrication from homeland), it still allows a considerable discrepancy between affective connotations.

The divine command in Genesis 12, which ordains Abraham to leave his country for a new one, carries happy connotations as the new country is the promised one—the one in which the Lord will make Abraham "a great

nation." The command in Genesis 22, which ordains Abraham to leave his country and go to the Moriah country, is just the opposite. The act Abraham is compelled to commit here has the direst connotations one can imagine. The disparity in connotation between the two components of the pair of illusions produces an ironic distance that accentuates the somber nature of Abraham's mission at Moriah. The literary-ideological phenomenon demonstrated here is very intricate: it forms an allusion founded upon an analogy producing a contradictory analogy whose rhetorical impact is ironic and thus ideologically expressive.

One may also discern a rhetorical pattern of unfulfilled expectations. Once the reader identifies the analogy between the two components of the pair of allusions, he is expected to assume that the first component in Genesis 12 is auspicious and, consequently, portends the connotative character of the forthcoming component. As the reader reaches the second component in Genesis 22, he finds out that the analogy has led him astray, and his optimistic expectations are frustrated.

Denied expectations produce "reverse" reading as the reader needs to return to previously read information after later information casts a revealing light upon it. This pattern of frustrated expectations has an ideological function.

Specifically, the disappointment that results from frustrated expectations sharpens the reader's awareness of the unexpectedly bleak nature of the story of Isaac's binding and consequently reinforces his awareness of Abraham's firm faith. Thus, the biblical author uses literary patterns for ideological purposes.

Composition

The second literary layer to be examined is composition. The predominant idea that the psychological and emotional world of the biblical character is obscure and opaque was introduced by previous generations of biblical scholars. The biblical means of characterization cannot be conceived as an opening into the heroes' internal lives, but rather as an opaque barrier. The reader has no knowledge of the heroes' psychological composition, their inner reflections, their doubts. Erich Auerbach first suggested this particular view of the art of biblical means of characterization in *Mimesis*: "Thoughts and feelings remain unexpressed, are only suggested by the silence of fragmentary speeches."[4] Yet, Auerbach's idea about the impenetrable nature of biblical characters' psychogenic life did not prevail in the field of biblical study. Critics have wisely pointed out that the psychological world of the biblical persona may not be as obtuse as one might assume.[5] The actions of a biblical hero may indeed reflect his thoughts and feelings. Once the critic acquaints

himself with the behaviorist code of the biblical persona, he is able to solve that character's psychological riddle and decipher his psychogenic mechanism. The Bible's evident parsimony in using direct means of psychological characterization is fully compensated for by the usage of indirect means, which enables the reader to enter the recesses of the character's inner life.

An example of the Bible's indirect means of psychological characterization is found in the compositional stratum of the biblical text and may be referred to as the expressive order of presentation. When Abraham is notified by God of the grave mission he is expected to carry out, he takes the following steps: "And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him" (Gen. 22:3).

Abraham's first act ("rose up early in the morning"), as well as the last ("rose up and went . . ."), is certainly both nonconvertible and irreplaceable; any alternative order should start with rising up in the morning and end with leaving. Only the following acts by Abraham are a legitimate matter for alternative orders of presentation: saddled his ass, took two of his young men, took Isaac, clave the wood for the burnt offering. This order of Abraham's acts is undoubtedly one of many possible sequences. Thus, the biblical author may take the liberty of presenting Abraham's acts in any order for satisfying both artistic and ideological purposes.

In light of this, the question that the critic encounters is: What made the biblical author choose this order over others? What did he hope to achieve, in terms of aesthetics and ideology, by giving up other possibilities of presentation and opting for that particular one? The answer is in the last component in the chosen order, "and [Abraham] clave the wood for a burnt offering." This is the act that most reminds Abraham of the painful mission that he is about to execute. Since Abraham puts off this emotionally loaded act to the very end, he shows not only a reluctance to obey God's command but also ambivalence and a powerful inner struggle. Abraham, the loving father, procrastinates as much as possible over the act that reminds him most of his obligation as a believer. The order of presentation proves to be an effective, indirect means of psychological characterization, enabling the reader to break through the seemingly opaque psychogenic world of the biblical character to discover the concealed corners of his mind and heart.

"Everything remains unexpressed," Auerbach concludes in his discussion of the Bible's treatment of feelings.[6] But not quite—everything is, in fact, expressed, though differently than we might expect.

The presentational order of Abraham's acts in verse 6 also has an expressive-psychological nature: "And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand and a knife." As in the previous order of presentation, the order in this verse has many possibilities. Abraham's decision to take the knife is delayed to the very last moment. Obviously, taking the knife is the act that foreshadows most tellingly the imminent slaughter. The connotations of devouring and preying implied in the Hebrew word for knife, *ma'ăkhelet,* underline the semantic gravity of the knife. Thus, the fact that Abraham stalls as much as possible before taking the knife is another example of mobilizing composition for psychological characterization of the seemingly impervious emotional world of the biblical persona.

There are more examples in Isaac's binding story that exhibit the biblical text's tendency to enlist literary devices to portray the emotional and psychological world of the biblical dramatis personae. The first revealing instance is found in the opening of verse 6: "And Abraham took the wood of the burnt-offering and laid it upon Isaac his son." Abraham's behavior here, loading his innocent son with the very wood that will consume him, is disturbing indeed. The fact that the biblical narrator refers to Isaac not only by his name but as "his [Abraham's] son" reinforces the emotionally charged atmosphere permeating this verse and sharpens our criticism of Abraham's act.

A practical explanation for Abraham's astonishing behavior might point out that Abraham was quite old and unable to carry much, whereas Isaac was in the prime of his life. But the validity of this explanation is doubtful since Abraham's physical ability has been proven by his three-day march to Moriah. This explanation also fails in light of the preceding verse (v. 5), which informs us of Abraham's decision to leave the ass behind with the two young men. If Abraham had burdened Isaac with the wood for the burnt offering for practical reasons, he could certainly have taken the ass and loaded it with the heavy wood. That Abraham avoids this practical solution not only stresses his upsetting attitude toward his beloved son but also sends the reader on an explanatory trail in a direction void of practical nature.

Abraham's seemingly cynical treatment of his son is in fact an expression of his emotional distress, a touching, fatherly attempt to withhold from his well-loved son his woeful fate for as long as possible. Abraham-the-father is still not ready for Abraham-the-believer's mission. Once again, he enlists every ruse to delay the execution of this mission. "Venerable Father Abraham" loads up his son with the firewood, pretending that nothing unusual is about to happen.[7] He acts as if they are headed toward a usual worship, and the son

is being granted the honor of carrying the wood. Abraham's confusing attitude toward Isaac is therefore one more pitiful attempt to repress—even if only for a few moments—the thought of the apparently unavoidable atrocity and to protect Isaac from the startling truth.

The reader's first impression of Abraham as an obstinate, hard-hearted, and cynical parent is misleading; behind that deceptive façade beats the heart of a merciful and desperate father. Yet, this initial, baffling impression has its purpose. Abraham's deceitful command to his two young men, "abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you" (v. 5), is no less perplexing.[8]

Let me suggest the following justifications for Abraham's evasion. First, Abraham sought to protect Isaac, who was apparently present when Abraham spoke to his young men, from the horrible truth. Although he knew that this protection was temporary, Abraham's fatherly instinct spurred him to delay the disclosure of the truth. Second, it was a humanistic concern and psychological instinct that led Abraham to also spare his young men the atrocious truth for as long as possible.[9] Finally, there was another impulse that kept Abraham from verbalizing the dreadful event. Perhaps he wanted to believe that if he did not speak about the atrocity, there might be some possibility of avoiding it. One should be aware, in this context, of the psychological concepts of the ancient world that attributed great powers to words, which served as a bridge between verbal expression and its materialization. Thus, Abraham's avoidance of expressing the truth was wishful thinking—a verbal articulation of the horrible truth might entail its execution.

We may speculate as to which of the three options motivated Abraham's decision to conceal the truth, but there is a possibility that all three played an equal part. Although these potential justifications differ from each other, they share one common denominator: Abraham's great desire to repress the thought of the nightmarish future. Abraham's attempt to delay the atrocity gains more emphasis in light of the speed with which he follows God's instructions ("rose up early in the morning") when no time has been specified for the sacrifice. But again, we may conjecture that all three reasons for Abraham's reluctance to reveal the truth are equally valid, and the evasiveness of the author of these verses renders Abraham's character even more complex and intriguing.

In this respect, the rhetorical device, which makes the reader wonder about Abraham's perplexing acts (loading Isaac with the burnt-offering wood; hiding the truth from his young men), has the same psychological function as the expressive presentational order: they both provide the reader with a peephole

through which to view the biblical character's inner psychogenic mechanism, and they both deny the view that calls for an opaque and impenetrable psychological portrait of the biblical persona.

Another example of an intriguing rhetorical device enhancing psychological characterization can be found in the questionable role of the two young helpers Abraham calls before leaving for the sacrifice. These young men are supposed to assist Abraham with the preparations for the trip. Abraham's considerable wealth and high social status lead one to expect that his servants will carry out all necessary work. Thus, it is very surprising that Abraham does not let these servants perform their task but prefers to do it himself. He is the one who saddles the ass and splits the wood for the burnt-offering. By taking over his servants' duties, Abraham aims to occupy himself with matters that will divert his thoughts from the frightful task at hand. Perhaps by engaging in his servant's duties, Abraham temporarily postpones the execution, and this delay offers another peek into Abraham's psychological makeup. Thus, Abraham's confusing behavior is nothing more than a rhetorical signpost calling the reader's attention to the character's psychological characterization.

It would seem that binding Isaac's chronicle to the altar of literary criticism can be quite rewarding: it brings to light not only the inner workings of the biblical text, its artistic and literary devices, but also its psychological motivations and underlying emotional currents.

4

Psalm 24

Sense and Sensibility in Biblical Composition

Something there is more needful than expense,
And something previous even to taste—'tis sense
Good sense which only is the gift of heav'n
And though no science, fairly worth the seven

—POPE, *Moral Essays*

Even though many interpreters have scrutinized Psalm 24, its composition calls for more investigation.[1] The psalm's compositional and thematic integrity are somewhat baffling, even disturbing. The psalm opens with ardent praise to God's might ("The earth is the Lord's") but this topic is soon abandoned ("for He has founded . . . and established . . .")—replaced by a detailed portrayal of the God-fearing and piously righteous person. Then the psalmist returns to God's portrayal, depicting him as a king of glory ("mighty in battle") who brings about an epiphany through "everlasting doors" and celestial gates. Here we might see an A-B-A pattern: the psalm's conclusion follows logically its beginning, and consequently the psalm's integrity is preserved.

Still, the extended "righteous portion," disrupting as it does the causal continuum of the psalm, undermines thematic coherence and compositional integrity. The quick transition from one thematic portion to another appears to be a compositional error by a careless implied author who loses control of his medium and botches his piece.[2] Instead of what may be seen as shoddy composition and loose thematic structure, there is a concealed aesthetic-ideological virtue underneath the surface of thematic-compositional arbitrariness.

The first impression of a careless composition is not intended to mislead the reader but can be read as a carefully calculated rhetorical device, one that directs the reader to the psalm's ideological message and allows the reader to discover the poetic intersection where aesthetics and ideology unite. Thus, the psalm's compositional sense is not lost.

The "deep structure" (borrowing Noam Chomsky's useful term of generative transformative grammar) of the psalm's composition comes from the relationship between its three major sections, and these relationships can be fully comprehended in light of its thematic characteristics.

<div align="center">Verses 1–2</div>

> The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof;
> The world, and they that dwell thereon.
> For He has founded it upon the seas
> And established it upon the floods.

This section is devoted to the narrator's fervent assertion of God's unlimited dominion over the earth. The narrator cites the historical source and justification of God's domination of the earth: God founded it (*yesādaāh; yekonenehā*), God rules over it. Hence, God's unchallenged command of earthly creation is justified in terms of might, history, and ownership.

The references to geographical elements in the two verses strike the reader right away. Four of the fourteen words (which make up about a third of the psalm) are references to geographical elements: earth (*ereṣ*), world (*tēbēl*), seas (*yamim*), and floods (*nĕhārôt*). The parallelism of theme and meter, containing these four geographical elements cause the reader to assume an identity between *ereṣ* and *tēbēl* and between *yamim* and *nĕhārôt*. Yet, they differ from each other. The word *tēbēl* derives from the root *T.B.L.,* which means in *Hif'il* to transport, to convey, to haul, and to flow (see Psalm 60:11: "*mi yobileni ʿir matzor*" ["who will lead me to a besieged city"]; Jeremiah 31:40: "*ubĕtahnunim obilem*" [And I will lead them with supplications"]; Zephaniah 3:10: "*yobilūm minhātî*" ["my offering will be conveyed"]). The noun, which derives from the root *Y.B.L.,* is *yebul.* Its original meaning was to transport the harvest, produce, and crop (Leviticus 26:4: "*wĕnātnâ hāʿāres yĕbulâ*" ["and the land yielded its crop"]; Haggai 1:10: "*wĕhāʿāres kāʾā yĕbulă*" ["And the land is stayed from her crop"]; Habbakkuk 3:17: "*wĕʿē yĕbul bagfānim*" ["the fruit shall not be in the vines"]). Thus, the geographical boundary of *tēbēl* (world) is much smaller than *ereṣ* (earth). While *ereṣ* refers to the entire globe (Gen. 1:1), *tēbēl* refers to the inhabited and cultivated areas where the land yields agricultural crops.[3] This geographical difference between *ereṣ* and *tēbēl* is echoed in the relative proportions of *yamim* and *nĕhārôt*.[4] Consequently, in verses 1–2 the geographical references have a systemized order, which presents two pairs of geographical elements where the relatively small is preceded by the larger.

tēbēl [S1]   <   ereṣ [L 1]   key: S = small

                                                              L = large

nĕhārôt [S2]   >   yamin [L2]
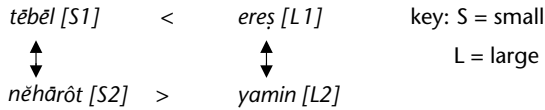
This order is stressed by alliterative means. While the first brace (*ereṣ–tēbēl*) alliterates the vowel *ē*, the second brace (*yamim–nĕhārôt*) alliterates the vowel *a*. Furthermore, these two alliterative patters ($e + e = a + a$) together produce a combined, chiasmic pattern. The size differences between the two geographical elements (which produces a contradictory analogy) are chiasmatically compensated for by an alliterative analogy. The same geographical elements, which differ from each other by geographical measures, demonstrate a similarity in sound.

tēbēl ←→ *ereṣ*	→	[L1 = S1] [e = e]
nĕhārôt ←→ *yamin*	→	[L2 = S2] [a = a]
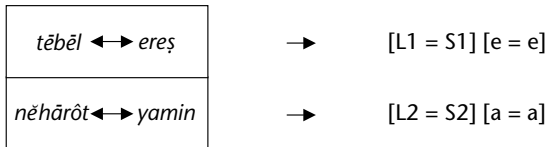
The chiasmic interplay between the patterns of contradictory analogy and alliterative analogy is a useful rhetorical device. While the repeated contradictory analogy (L1 = S1; L2 = S2) produces the effect of a well-wrought, celestial order, the alliterative analogy stems from a resonant geographical basis. These entities differ from each other and produce a deviation from the meticulous order, which yields rhetorical flexibility.

A closer look at the psalm reveals more geographical references that distinguish between large and small geographical elements. Its comprehensive context casts light on all the artistic functions of that geographical distinction: it is not of an aesthetic merit only but also of an ideological one.

Verse 3

Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord?
And who shall stand in his Holy place?

The psalm's second portion (vv. 3–6) leaves an impression of compositional carelessness as it abandons the main theme (the might of the Lord reflected in his creations) and picks up a new theme (the pious God-fearing man and his righteous behavior). Indeed, the first impression of compositional weakness (as well as a lapse in thematic integrity) disappears when the deep structure of the composition emerges. Yet, even at this early stage of the textual

sequence, the psalmist is aware of the impression of compositional slackness and thematic incoherence, and verse 3 reflects this awareness.

There are two major components in this synonymic parallelism: a reference to a sacred geographical element (the mountain of God [*har-YHWH*] and God's holy place [*mĕqôm qodšô*]), and a reference to a human being (*mi*), later described as the longed-for righteous man. This combination is not arbitrary. While the reference to God's mountain and to his holy place are connected to the first portion (geographical elements related to the Lord) of the psalm, the reference to the righteous leads to the heart of the second portion, which focuses on the ideal, pious, righteous man. Hence, verse 3 is a transition between the two seemingly detached portions (like the one in Arabic and medieval Hebrew *qasida*), which forms a bridge from the previous section to the next one by providing a common denominator. This function of verse 3 may be illustrated in a sketch:

> Portion 1: Verses 1–2
> Geographical elements
> related to God

verse 3: Who . . . mountain of the Lord/ . . . who . . . His holy place

> Portion 2: verses 4–6
> The pious righteous man

Verse 3 also links two portions with alliteration. The ending with its open syllables in the first hemistich of the verse (*ya'leh, YHWH*) agrees with the first portion's alliteration (*umĕlôâ, bâ yĕsādâ, yĕkoňnehâ*). The alliteration in the second hemistich, founded on *q* (*yāqûm, bimqôm, qodšô*) fully agrees with the alliteration of the second portion's beginning (*nĕqikapayim*). Thus, the purpose of verse 3 as a link functions on both the theme and sound level and is therefore reinforced.

Verses 4–5

He that has clean hands, and a pure heart;
Who has not taken the Lord's name in vain
And has not sworn deceitfully.
He shall receive a blessing from the Lord
And righteousness from the God of his salvation

The moral demand, which the righteous man must meet, is a challenge. The insistence on purity both in thoughts (*bar-lēbāb*) and deeds (*nĕqi kāpāyim*),

as well as the parallelism between "has not taken the Lord's name in vain" and "has not sworn deceitfully" (*lŏh nišbā' lemirmâ*), emphasize the spiritual nature ascribed to righteous man's morality. This redundancy forces the reader to recall another epithetical depiction in the psalm's first section, which relates to God's might. A simultaneous look at the two epithets reveals a chiasmic pattern. While the Lord (the very zenith of a spiritual existence) is portrayed through concrete, physical references (*ereṣ, tēbēl, yamim, nĕhārôt*), the pious man elicits another aesthetic pattern, which is rhetorical and may be considered a "frustrated expectations pattern."[5]

Though the reader is familiar with the Bible's tendency to portray God in material terms, the depiction of the earthly believer in spiritual terms suggests role reversal of God and his worshiper. God adopts epithetic terms that suit his mortal disciple and vice versa. Although this interchange can be comprehended on the metaphorical level, it violates normal conceptions on the literal level. Earthly attributes relate to human beings, and spiritual attributes relate to God. This pattern of frustrated expectations is again a rhetorical signpost, drawing the reader's attention to the puzzling chiasmic pattern and then causing him to uncover the psalm's concealed nature and latent rationale. It is this concealed meaning, with its ideological characteristics, that decodes the rationale behind the first impression of a disturbing composition.

The chiasmic "confusion" between God and the God-fearing puts God and the pious, flesh-and-blood disciple on the same level. This enables them to exchange roles and offers an ideological message about the God-fearing man's greatest reward: to share a spiritual integrity with his divine master.

The chiasmic pattern and its ideological meaning are a rhetorical signpost since they channel the reader's awareness to the ideological rationale in the psalm's composition. Because the impression of careless composition comes from the seemingly arbitrary transition from the psalm's opening (which focuses on God) to the second section (which focuses on the God-fearing), the composition resembles the chiasmic pattern since they both refer to God and his pious follower. Thus, the compositional leap from God to his believer conveys the ideological message in the chiasmic pattern: the same spiritual closeness between God and the God-fearing that enables a role exchange also provides a sharp transition from God to his faithful disciple. In this light, the compositional leap from the first section to the next is a structural metaphor of the chiasmic pattern as it mirrors the same ideology. Since the chiasmic pattern fulfills an ideological function (uttering, through exchanged roles, the spiritual intimacy between God and his mortal follower), its structural metaphor (the compositional leap) can offer the same ideological message.

The psalm's compositional deep structure is now uncovered. Beneath the surface of an apparent disconnected composition, there is a well-wrought composition, which is carefully connected to the psalm's ideological essence.

Verse 6

zêh dôr doršāb
mēbaqšey pānekâ Y'aqob, Selah

Such is the generation of them that seek after him
That seek thy face, even Jacob, Selah.

Verse 6 is usually considered the closing verse of the second section devoted to the portrayal of the righteous man. But it was not included in the previous discussion, which refers to that section. This deviation is not random. Like verse 3, verse 6 acts as a link, connecting the second and the third, or closing, section—though they do not share content. Consequently, verse 6 shares verse 3's ability to move from the topic of the righteous to a new topic in verses 7–10—the mighty God. Like verse 3, this link establishes a transition that reduces the sharp effect of the thematic leap.

Verse 6's emerging capacity stems from many thematic elements of both sections. On the one hand, verse 6 continues the description of the righteous man by concentrating on his eager search for God.[6] On the other hand, verse 6 shifts from the previous reference to the righteous in a singular context to a plural reference (see the pronominal suffixes: *doršāb, mēbaqšey*).[7] This shift contains grammatical characteristics and predicts the detachment from the previous section as well as from the next section. The intimate approach to God in verse 6 foreshadows the next section, as it is exclusively devoted to God. Since the same literary technique used in verse 3 is in verse 6, the intimate approach strengthens the validity of the present interpretive approach to these two verses and underlines the author's awareness of the artistic nature of the verbal medium, which has recourse to the flowing composition-thematic sequence.

Verses 7–10

Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors,
That the king of glory may come in.
Who is the king of glory?
The Lord strong and mighty.

The Lord mighty in battle.
Lift up your heads O ye gates!
Yea, lift them up, ye everlasting doors,
That the king of glory may come in.
Who then is the king of glory?
The Lord of hosts,
He is the king of glory. Selah.

This section of the psalm closes the circle. Psalm 24, which began with praise to God's might, ends with God extolled as "the King of glory" (*melek hakābôd*), so "strong and mighty" (*ʿizūz wegibor*) that everlasting doors and gates are compelled to "lift up their heads" to enable his heavenly epiphany.[8] The psalm, which opened with references to grand geographical elements (*ereṣ, tēbēl, yamim, nĕhārôt*), concludes with references to the grandeur of celestial gates (*šĕʿārim*) and everlasting doors (*pithêy ôlam*), all of which produces a sense of roundness and textual circularity.[9]

The pattern of textual circularity enhances the psalm's thematic coherence and compositional integrity, which compensates for the impression of chaos. In addition, the circularity supports the ideological structure in two ways. First, it stresses God's might by presenting his celestial performances in the beginning and in the end, the most effective rhetorical moments.[10] Second, the textual circularity reflects the tight bonds between the believer and the creator, placing them on the same level. This mutuality between God and his pious worshiper (God→Believer→God) gives the God-fearing man a role as an equal partner in a rhetorical-compositional system. Consequently, an intimate closeness between the Lord and his earthly disciple is fostered, and in this way the pattern of textual circularity distinguishes itself from aesthetics (realized in terms of rhetoric and composition) to ideology. This textual circularity in the psalm is underlined by its "twin" textual circularity— the one conveyed through references to geographical elements. The relationship between the master textual circularity (God→Believer→God) and its attendant on (grand geographical elements→smaller geographical elements→ grand geographical elements) resembles the relationships between a concept and its vehicle in a metaphor.

Now, these two patterns of textual circularity are joined by a third. Though of the same rhetorical-compositional nature, it is materialized by alliteration.[11] Two major alliterative groups prevail in the psalm's resonant texture; one is larger than the other. The large alliterative group is interplayed among the toothy sounds *š/s*; the smaller group is based on the palatal sounds *k/q*.

The psalm starts with two representatives of the large alliterative group (*wĕyōšbê, yĕsādâ*), but it quickly shifts to a display of the small alliterative group (*yāqûm bimqôm qōdšô / nĕqi kāpāyim*). Since this is the first condensed sound pattern of the psalm's beginning (the first two representatives of the large sounds pattern are too weak at this point), the *q/k* sound pattern opens the psalm and seals its resonant texture. From this stage until it approaches its vertical ending, the psalm's continuum prevails by the sound pattern based upon *š/s*: *ăšer, nāsā lašāb nafšô nišbāʿ, yisāh, yišēʾô dōršāb, mĕbaqšê, sĕû šĕʿārim rošēkem wĕhinasĕu, šeu šeʿārim rosēkem ūšeû*. This presence (43 percent of this section's words participate in this sound pattern) of the *š* sound pattern's components warns of a shift from the previous sound pattern (q/k) and therefore echoes the shift materialized on both thematic and compositional levels.

Also, the second thematic-compositional shift in the psalm (from the second section, which concentrates on the righteous, to the third, which concentrates on God) is restored and is echoed by alliteration: the first sound pattern (q/k), though modestly quantitative, takes over the previous sound pattern (š/s) and returns to force itself on the psalm's texture by repeating *melek hakābôd* three times. And so the circle is closed. The sound pattern of the beginning returns to end Psalm 24.

The two major patterns of textual circularity, which are thematic in nature (the one that is founded on references to God, and the one that is founded on references to great geographical elements), are reinforced by the intertwined pattern of textual circularity based on alliteration. This, consequently, reinforces the ideological message in these two textual circularity patterns.

There is also a rhetorical quality that springs from the relationships between the two thematic patterns of textual circularity and the alliterative one. These reciprocal relationships produce a compositional-ideological reinforcement as well as a chiasmic pattern. Given the case of the two thematic patterns of textual circularity, the physical elements (great geographical references) and spiritually superior references (references to God) appear at the beginning and at the end of the pattern. While the smaller ones are between (his sacred mountain; the moral believer), the order of the alliterative pattern of textual circularity is inverted. Both the pattern's beginning and end contain an alliteration that has a weak quantitative character (q/k) and the more condensed, vigorous, and consequently "superior" alliteration (š/s) is the one pressed in between.

The interesting relationships among the three patterns of textual circularity, which echo those in verses 1–2, have multiple rhetorical virtues. While the existence of three patterns of textual circularity (two of which relate to

the psalm's ideological message) strengthens the composition and ideology, the chiasmic deviation freshens the fastidiously repeated order, softens its mechanical rigidity, and consequently bestows authenticity on the psalm. The two contradictory trends compensate, illuminate, and emphasize each other. Thus, the balance between the meticulously ordered repetitions on the one hand, and the deviation from them on the other, is delicate. These branched and refined relationships among the three patterns of textual circularity may be illustrated as follows:

Key

L = Large

S = Small

G = God

b = believer

GE = geographical elements

TS = textual circularity

Thematic ideological patterns

Alliterative patterns
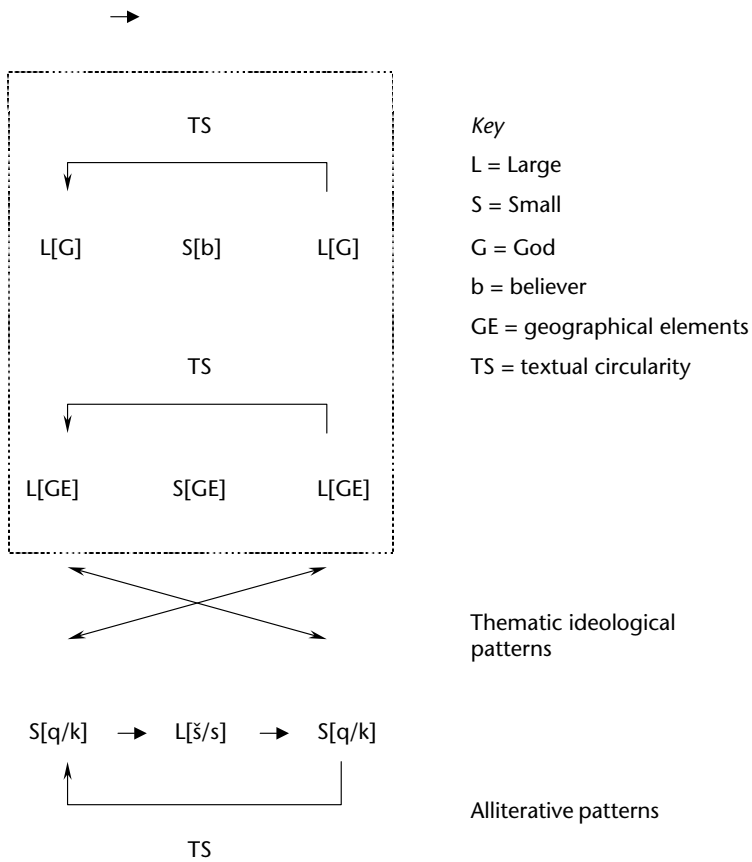
The fact that these symbiotic, chiasmic relationships between thematic and alliterative patterns are already found in the psalm's beginning (v. 2) points out that this branched system is indeed not random but the deliberate effort of an alert and skilled author.

5

The Song of Songs,
or The Story of Stories?

That book in my eyes doth share the glory
That in gold clasps in the golden story.

—SHAKESPEARE, *Romeo and Juliet*

BETWEEN GENRE AND UNITY

The aesthetic quality of the Song of Song*s* is beyond doubt. However, the
nature of the book, its unity, its presumed date of composition, and other
matters involving its characteristics and its writer have been a source of schol-
arly doubts and debates. Even the book's canonization evokes questions,
which are not satisfied by Rabbi Akiva's statement that the Song of Songs is
the holiest of all books in the scriptures. Although the allegorical reading of
the Song of Songs—which argues God's implied presence in the book—seems
a solid basis for the book's canonization, it is still an interpretation that
encounters more debates than agreements.

There are three scholarly approaches to the Song of Songs: allegorical,
cultic-mythological, and literary. (The dramatic approach to the Song of
Songs is strongly related to the literary approach but does not cover the whole
scope of the Song.) The allegorical approach reads the Song as a symbolic
depiction of the reciprocal love between God and his people.[1] The cultic-
mythological approach reads the Song as a poetic document that maps pagan
rituals of fertility, or perhaps even the wedding chronicle of Tammus and
Astarte, the Canaanite god and goddess, a view strongly advocated by Karl
Budde's *Das Hohelied*. One literary approach treats the Song as a work of
literature per se, narrating the vagaries of love, its fervent zeniths as well as its
frustrating nadirs. Another approach may be considered of a literary nature
as it views the Song as literature of the dramatic genre. Among those who
advocate the dramatic approach are Franz Delitzsch, Guillaume Pouget, and
J. Guitton. Further support of the literary approach to this book may be found

in Y. G. Wetzstein's findings concerning wedding songs in Syria. Although the following study is primarily literary, it does not examine the conflicting views that emerge from the different approaches to the Song; there are already numerous studies that dedicate detailed discussions to those approaches, including works by Robert Gordis, John B. White, and Keith Schoville.[2]

Despite the conceptual differences among those approaches, however, they have one thing in common: none of those approaches sees a full, comprehensive, literary unity in the Song of Songs, but rather treats it as a collection of poems amalgamated on the basis of a common denominator. Thus, Hartmut Schmökel's view of the Song's unity, based on reciprocal relations among its dramatis personae, derives from his cultic approach.[3] Morris Segal detects an internal evolvement, a sort of ascending evolution that is founded on love's spiral development, and Cheryl Exam formulates the sense of unity in terms of "ring composition" founded on recurring elements and motifs, which function as integrative hooks.[4] Michael V. Fox argues that the Song earns a considerable sense of cohesiveness and stylistic homogeneity, which is the result of four unifying factors: (1) a network of repetends, (2) associative sequences, (3) consistency of character portrayal, and (4) a (loose) narrative framework.[5] Although Fox adverts to unifying aspects in the Song, he underlines that "the project did not arrive at the cohesiveness that we would expect to see in a unified work" (220). Fox denies the book's unity because he believes that it is not "structured according to a narrative or schematic design" (224), and there is "no overall schema or continuous development in the poem beyond the loose narrative framework provided by 1:5–6 and 8:6–12." He expands on that argument: "Within this framework, the course of events does not move in the straight line of narrative progression, but rather twists and wanders affectionately through different parts of the one territory" (225).

Although I appreciate Fox's contribution to the study of the Song's unity, I take issue with his last observation. In fact, the aim of this study is to prove the opposite by emphasizing the unity of the Song of Songs, which is founded on evolving narrative and a meticulously designed pattern of plot progression. Thus, Fox's statement that "the order in which the facets were shown does not much matter" (225) is hereby challenged: the order in which the facets were shown does in fact matter most significantly.

The view that the Song lacks an inner evolving principle that would endow the piece with a robust unity seems to be shared by all scholars who approach the issue. As Marvin Pope writes, "The present writer . . . has not been convinced by any of the efforts to demonstrate or restore order or logical sequence and progression."[6] Hence, White's statement seems to represent the current

scholarly attitude regarding the unity of the Song: "Moreover, among those scholars who see unity, there is no unanimous agreement regarding criteria for understanding the Song as a literary whole."[7]

The present study argues that the age-long failure to trace a plausible solid unity in this book is related to the traditional generic approach, which categorizes it exclusively as poetry. In this respect, Fox's emphasis on the Song's art of narrative—while discussing elements of unity in the piece—is of considerable importance. Although Fox denies the work's unity on the narrative level, he effectively draws attention to the piece's narrative characteristics. Fox neither attempts to exclude the book from the domain of poetry nor to "rob" it of its lyrical features. Its poetic nature is clearly evident and beyond doubt. However, it does not possess only a poetic-lyrical layer but also a layer of narrative; the Song of Songs does indeed narrate a story. And that layer of narrative, that story, is where the Song's unity can be found. In this respect, the search for the seemingly lost unity of this book creates a new generic approach, or rather an investigative transition from one generic form in the book (poetry) to another (narrative). The emphasis on plot calls attention to the book's dramatic qualities. The lack of a mediating narrator in the book (which is expected in prose-fiction), as well as the significant frequency of monologues, soliloquies, and dialogues, may tempt one to consider the Song as a piece of drama, a play, which obeys the aesthetic conventions of the dramatic genre. Nevertheless, the present study recognizes the dramatic qualities of the Song but at the same time subscribes to White's view that "one may almost accurately say that the Song does have a quality of dramatic dialogue, but it is not of the dramatic genre" (34).

Although White bases his observations on somewhat questionable considerations (such as his argument that the Song lacks either the conflict or catharsis expected of drama [33–34]), his concluding statement has considerable validity: "[this] is not a play—in the traditional sense of the term—but rather a literary work in which both poetry and narrative are dramatically employed" (34). In a traditional play, the dramatic action is of both physical and verbal characteristics, and the verbal action may be produced by dialogues rather than by monologues and soliloquies. Although a traditional play is not necessarily devoid of monologues and soliloquies (like the famous soliloquies of Hamlet), it certainly possesses more dialogues than monologues. While a monologue provides intellectual reflection on the action or psychological motivation, dialogues speed up the action and even shape and advance it. And following the famous Aristotelian formulation (in his *Poetics*), action is the driving force of drama. Thus, the fact that the Song exhibits a clear preference for monologues

over dialogues precludes the finding that the dramatic genre was alien to the literary climate of Canaan (notably at the presumed period of the Song's composition) contributing to the conclusion stated above. However, in looking for the seemingly lost unity of the Song, this study will concentrate primarily on the book's narrative: the plot, the characters and their reciprocal, dramatic interplay within the plot.

The Unity of the Song of Songs

The Song's unity is revealed in the book's narrative stratum, and the very embodiment of the book's narrative stratum is its plot's chronicles. Here we carefully trace them in order to uncover the unity and present the major outlines and developmental trends of the plot.

The plot's chroniclers involve three prominent protagonists and two appendant characters who have "collective" features. The protagonists are Shulammite (the young woman, the bride), her rustic lover, and her royal lover, King Solomon. Although the royal lover's role in the plot is not as central as that of the young woman and her lover, Solomon's prominence in the plot results from his dramatic function in it. The two sets of appendant, "satellite" characters are the daughters of Jerusalem (the young women in King Solomon's harem) and Shulammite's brothers.

The plot's chronicles earn a developmental momentum—or rather dialectic inertia—by frequent changes in the rustic lover's attitude toward his pining bride, Shulammite. Pendulum-like swings occur between two opposite poles, denial and refusal on the one hand, willingness and eager responses on the other. In most cases, the royal lover's presence precipitates the responses by the rustic lover toward the bride. As King Solomon displays a fervent interest in the bride, and his influence and skills seem to threaten the rustic lover's superior position, the rustic lover drastically changes his attitude from reluctant denial to conciliation and willingness.

Another dialectic swing takes place in the reciprocal relations between the bride and the daughters of Jerusalem: Shulammite oscillates between a patronizing, haughty rhetoric and submissive, humble rhetoric in her approaches to the daughters of Jerusalem. That fluctuation, which is directed by drastic changes in Shulammite's emotional state and alternating self-images, creates a systematic, predictable periodicity in the appearances of the daughters of Jerusalem on the plot level. The appearance of the other "collective" characters, Shulammite's brothers, is also cyclical. In this case the systematic periodicity is circular, although the brothers appear in only two points of the plot's evolution: the beginning and the conclusion. That circular fluctuation has an

expressive function. Thus, one may discern in the plot a dialectic evolution, evoked by reciprocal, evolutionary relationships among the three prominent characters. Those relationships are energized by two relatively marginal, shadowlike dramatic motions: the roles of the daughters of Jerusalem and of the brothers. The fact that only the bride is dramatically engaged with these marginal yet dramatically stimulating collective characters underlines her prominence in the plot.

The plot opens with a monologue by the yearning bride: "Let me drink the kisses of his mouth for thy love is better than wine; Your oils are a delight to inhale, thy presence as oil wafted about, therefore do the maidens love you; Draw me after thee, Let us hasten; The king has brought me to his chambers; We will be glad and rejoice in you, we will find your love more fragrant than wine" (1:2–4).[8] Despite the confusion of grammatical persons (me/his/your/we), the bride's addressee is clear and evident: after she has been taken to the king's chambers, she yearningly addresses her rustic lover who has been left behind. This monologue possesses expositional characteristics as it alludes to the plot's background as well as to the reciprocal relationships among the three leading characters.

The young girl had an affair with her rustic lover. When she is taken to the king's chambers, her relationship with the rustic lover suffers. Thus, once the girl reaches the royal chambers, she is determined to revive her severed contact with her rustic lover, and she urges him to join her (probably secretly; the apparently large number of women in the king's chambers may enable them to meet in secret). The girl's complaint, that her brothers "were incensed against me, they made me keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard I have not kept" (1:6), reinforces the assumption that the girl's arrival in the king's chambers was not of her initiation and was against her natural inclination. The brothers, who maltreated her in the past by putting her to work in others' vineyards, do the same in the fictional present by "trading" her to the king, to please him as well as for their financial benefit. This conclusion gains validity in light of the brothers' confession, toward the plot's conclusion: "What shall we do for our sister in the day when she shall be spoken for?" (8:8). This question is answered at the plot's commencement: on the day when the sister was spoken for, they gave her to the king, to serve in his chambers.

Here, for the first time, the young girl addresses the daughters of Jerusalem—her mates in the king's harem—who probably eavesdrop on her confessional monologue: "I am black but comely, daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon; Look not upon me that I am

swarthy, that the sun has tanned me; my mother's sons were incensed against me, they made me keeper of the vineyards; But mine own vineyard have I not kept" (1:5–6).

All of Shulammite's addresses to the daughters of Jerusalem are governed by her fluctuating states of mind. She approaches them either in boastfully patronizing language or in that of humble pleading. She uses haughty rhetoric when she feels indulged by her rustic lover's affection, and submissive rhetoric when her rustic lover withdraws, denying her fervent call for him. Correspondingly, in her first approach to the daughters of Jerusalem, on her separation from her beloved, Shulammite exhibits a submissively apologetic tone; she makes a meek apology for being swarthy and suntanned. The logical conflict displayed in her explanatory argument (on the one hand she apologizes for her dark skin, putting the blame for it on her brothers; on the other hand, she boasts of her dark skin, associating it with comely charm) manifests her confusion, which makes her approach to the daughters of Jerusalem docile and humble.

Following this rhetorical vein, the young girl submissively addresses her beloved: "Tell me, O you whom my soul loves, where you feed, where you make your flock to rest at noon; For why should I be as one that veils herself beside the flocks of your companions?" (1:7). But the young girl's submissive plea meets nothing but frustration as she encounters the rustic lover's reply: "If you don't know, fairest among women, Go your way forth by the footsteps of the flock and feed your kids beside the shepherds' tents" (1:8). The lover's reply is clearly disappointing. He ignores her plea to avoid his fellow shepherds (as they might take her for a loose woman—"One that veils herself") and ignoring her distress, he directs her to the very place she wishes to avoid. In light of this, the "intrusion" by King Solomon, the royal lover, who "invades" the plot for the first time, is more than expected. The cool reaction of the rustic lover—Shulammite's preferred lover—provides a good opportunity for the rejected royal lover to take his chances. Solomon hopes that the rustic lover's refusal will open his path to the bride's heart, and he makes his first speech, which exhibits shrewdly wrought rhetoric. Combining appealing compliments to Shulammite's beauty with references to his own wealth and might, the king aims to impress the rustic girl: "I have compared you, my love, to a steed in Pharaoh's chariots; Your cheeks are comely with circle, your neck with beads; We will make you circlets of gold with studs of silver" (1:9–11). However, the speech does not sway the bride's heart, which is still given to her rustic lover: "While the king sat at his table, my spikenard sent forth its fragrance; My beloved is unto me as a cluster of henna in the vineyards of En-Gedi" (1:12–14).

While the king sat at his table, the girl's perfume set forth its fragrance to another man, the rustic lover. He, and not the king, is unto the girl as "a bag of myrrh" that lies between her breasts. The rustic lover—not the king—is "unto [the bride] as a cluster of henna in the vineyards of En-Gedi."

Although the bride is not taken by the king's impressive might and wealth, her rustic lover seems to be quite impressed and consequently threatened. It appears that the royal interference did not leave the rustic lover indifferent, and he is concerned that the king's might and wealth will eventually undermine his position as the preferred lover, and he returns to the scene armed with a flattery for his beloved: "You are fair my love, you are fair, your eyes are as doves" (1:15). The nature of the simile undoubtedly associates it with the rustic lover who is, of course, anchored in nature.

The willing reply of the bride is immediate: "You are fair, my beloved, and pleasant also; Our couch is leafy as well" (1:16). The reference to the leafy couch triggers the royal lover's second attempt at courting, as it provides him with an opportunity to display his own "leafy couch"—his adorned mansion: "The beams of our house are cedars, our panels are cypress" (1:17).[9] But the bride is still not taken by the royal lover's splendor, and she continues to prefer her rustic lover. Consequently, the royal lover withdraws, and the next scene involves only the bride and the rustic lover.

The bride, greatly pleased with her rustic lover's enthusiasm, takes the liberty of extolling her own beauty: "I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys" (2:1). This proclamation triggers a poetic dialogue between the bride and compliant lover: "As a lily among thorns so is my love among the daughters," declares the rustic lover (2:2). The bride's answer follows the same metaphorical trail: "As an apple tree among the trees or wood so is my beloved among the sons; Under its shadow I delighted to sit, and its fruit was sweet to my taste" (2:3).[10]

The process of metaphorical dynamics, in which the tree simile goes through a concretization process and turns from a person compared to a tree into an actual tree that gives pleasant shade and taste, grants the whole poetic image a touch of authentic vividness.[11] The metaphorical dynamics complete a circle as the bride returns to the starting point where the rustic lover drops the metaphorical "woody garment" and is once more depicted in his initially human characteristics: "He has brought me to the banqueting-house and his banner over me is love" (i.e., regarding the Accadian *dagalu,* "he looks at me with love") (2:4). Hence, the bride makes it very clear: she prefers being taken to the banqueting-house by the rustic lover over being taken to the royal lover's mansion, despite its cedar beams and cypress panels.

Now, as the bride feels that she has regained her rustic lover's passionate attention, she readdresses the girls of Jerusalem. This time she drops her earlier meek demeanor (derived from her previous lack of self assurance) and replaces it with haughty, almost provocative, rhetoric: "I adjure you, daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles and by the hinds of the field, that you awaken not, nor stir up love until it please" (2:7). In other words, don't even try, girls, to compare your love to mine. Unlike my love, your love is not ripe yet; it is immature and therefore should not be awakened before its time. The psychological-rhetorical pendulum, however, swings again: as the bride's emotional-psychological state shifts dramatically from nadir to zenith, it is echoed in her approach to the girls of Jerusalem.

In the meantime, the intimacy between the bride and her rustic lover gathers momentum and becomes stronger. She uses metaphorical terminology to depict him as "a gazelle or a young hart" who "stands behind our wall, looking through the windows, peering through the lattice" (2:9). The use of the words "our wall" (*kotlenu*) brings to mind the previous use of "our houses" (*bateynu*) by King Solomon, the royal lover (1:17). The affinity between *bateynu* and *kotlenu* derives from morphological-inflection, alliteration, and semantics (wall and house are reciprocally metonymic and belong to the same semantic field). The closeness between the two words alludes to the fact that when the bride says that the rustic lover is like a gazelle that stands behind "our wall" (*kotlenu*), she is still in the king's quarters (which have been previously designated by *bateynu*). The fact that the bride is still with the king (to whose chambers she has previously been taken), in his very house referred to by *kotlenu,* reinforces the image of the rustic lover as a jealous voyeur, who secretly watches his beloved while she is with someone else. The voyeurism enhances the erotic atmosphere. The rustic lover's jealousy is inflamed as he witnesses the bride at the king's mansion, and he encourages her to leave: "My beloved spoke and said unto me: Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away" (2:10). There is a drastic change in his attitude toward the bride, from arrogant withdrawal to fervent eagerness. Thus, the rustic lover, wishing to intensify his call to the bride, directs her attention to nature's erotic awakening: "For the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig tree puts forth her green figs, and the vines in blossom give forth their fragrance" (2:11–13a).

The rustic lover's subsequent reference to the small foxes (*mekhablim* [2:15]) bestows upon the elaborate picture of nature's erotic (*k'ramim*) awakening a firmer sexual touch; *mekhablim* means in this context giving birth (compare

8:5b: *khibletekha yeladetkha*—gave birth to you).[12] The bride's eager response follows: "My beloved is mine, and I am his, that feeds among the lilies; until the day breathes and the shadows flee away; Turn my beloved and be like a gazelle or a young hart upon the cleft mountains" (2:16–17).[13]

The love between the two young lovers has not yet materialized. The bride is still in the king's house (*bateynu*), delaying their union. Her distress echoes through her moving soliloquy: "By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loves; I sought him, but I found him not; I will rise now and go about the city, in the markets and in the streets, I will seek him whom my soul loves; I sought him but I found him not; the watchmen who go about the city found me; 'Saw you him, whom my soul loves?' Scarce had I passed from them when I found him whom my soul loves; I held him and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house and into the chamber of her that conceived me" (3:2–4). The last part of the bride's soliloquy is nothing but wishful thinking: her rustic lover is still absent, away from her, away from the chamber of "her that conceived me." Here again, the rhetorical-psychological pendulum makes the expected swing: the bride readdresses the daughters of Jerusalem. As the bride finds herself longing and alone, deprived of love, she again puts on the shield of haughtiness, hoping to hide her distress and perhaps to compensate for it. Following this emotional-psychological vein, she blatantly readdresses the daughters of Jerusalem: "I adjure you, daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles and by the hinds of the field, that you awaken not, nor stir up love until it please" (3:5).

One may argue that the bride makes a sincere attempt to warn the daughters of Jerusalem of the agony of love, to spare them her own unfortunate experience. That interpretation, however, is not supported by their reply, one that underscores the haughtiness in the bride's rhetoric: "Who is this that comes up out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant? Behold, it is the bed of Solomon, threescore mighty men are about it, of the mighty men of Israel; They all handle the sword and are experts in war; Every man has his sword upon his thigh because of dread in the night; King Solomon made himself a palanquin of the wood of Lebanon; He made the pillars thereof of silver, the top thereof of gold, the seat of it of purple, the inside thereof being inlaid with love, from the daughters of Jerusalem" (3:6–10). Clearly, this is the sneering response of the daughters of Jerusalem to the bride's haughtiness. They ironically depict the bride as a country girl, who emerges from the wilderness (*midbar*), armed with "pillars of smoke," "perfumed with myrrh and frankincense," aiming to invade Solomon's chambers and displace them in the king's

favor. And now Shulammite's harem mates emphasize in their derisive response that the bride's attempt is both doomed and pathetic: Solomon's bed (the very metonym for his love) is surrounded (metaphorically indeed) by "threescore mighty people" who make any intrusion impossible. Furthermore, Solomon's sedan chair or palanquin (*apiryon*) is not only richly upholstered in a way that does not fit a country girl who "comes up out of the wilderness," it is also upholstered with the daughters of Jerusalem's love, which does not admit the intrusion of another love. The harem mates' concern that the bride aims to drive them out and to make her own place in Solomon's chambers may seem rather ironic to the reader who already knows that the bride prefers her rustic lover over Solomon, the royal lover. However, whether the other girls are unaware of this fact (taking for granted that when the bride expresses her love she refers to Solomon), or they know of Solomon's attempts to attract the bride (and fear that they will be ignored or deserted as a result), their concern at being usurped by the newly arrived young woman is not only understandable but also to be expected. Naturally, that concern is reflected in their discouraging and derisive response to the rhetorically assertive bride. That response, however, is not left unanswered. The bride's previous rhetorical skills are exhibited once again, enhanced by a tinge of irony: "Go forth, you daughters of Zion, and gaze upon King Solomon, upon the crown wherewith his mother had crowned him the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of this heart" (3:11). The bride's ironical reply here is sharply mocking indeed: despite the daughters of Jerusalem's (physical) love, which "upholsters" it on Solomon's palanquin, it is another woman's love that will "upholster" it on Solomon's wedding day.

Thus, what the daughters of Jerusalem feared comes true . . . because of another woman. In light of this, the bride's scoffing response to the daughters of Jerusalem is biting indeed: it mocks them for their pathetic and doomed attempt to hold something that was never—nor ever will be—in their possession, the king's love. Whether the bride's bold rhetoric fully, or only partly, restores her self-esteem, it completely recovers on her rustic lover's arrival. His eagerness is translated into a long poetic address to her, which possesses a pictorial figuration of delicate and imaginative nature: "Behold you are fair, my love, behold you are fair; your eyes are as doves behind the veil, your hair is as a flock of goats that trail down from Mount Gilead; Your teeth are like a flock of ewes all shaped alike, which are come up from the washing; Whereof all are paired and none fails among them; Your lips are like a thread of scarlet and your mouth is comely; your temples are like pomegranate split open behind your trees" (4:1–3). The next image that the rustic lover bestows upon

his beloved seems of particular interest: "Your neck is like the tower of David, built with turrets, whereon there hang a thousand shields all armor of the mighty men" (4:4). Here, he expresses a desire that his source of similes and metaphors should not fall behind Solomon's. Hence, enlisting elements that seem natural to the king enables the rustic lover to show his beloved that he can successfully compete with the king, that the royal metaphorical reservoir is not beyond his reach. On the other hand, one may cogently argue that the image under consideration (v. 4) is used by King Solomon, who enlists the rustic lover's poetic approach to the bride, aiming to improve his chances by showing his intellectual superiority. While the first possibility has some rhetorical-psychological merit (the rustic lover aims to compete with his royal rival by enlisting the royal lover's "verbal ammunition"), the second possibility evokes a rhetorical sense of dramatic combat. Indeed, neither the text nor the context gives sufficient indication as to which possibility is more likely. However, either interpretation endows the section with a sense of deftly executed rhetoric.

The nature of the images and similes that further populate the rustic lover's long address to his beloved (which ends at v. 15) can be easily related to his natural environment. Those images and similes refer to landscapes, pastures, orchards, and fragrances, which are part of a young shepherd's daily experience. The fact that this address to the bride could have been made only by the rustic lover is strengthened by his use of the same metaphors ("the smell of your ointments" [4:10]) that have been previously utilized by the bride in addressing him ("Your ointments have a goodly fragrance" [1:3]). The long, delicately poetic and ardent address to the bride elicits a reciprocal response from her: "Awake, north wind and come thou south; Blow upon my garden that the spices thereof may flow out; Let my beloved come into his garden and eat his precious fruits" (4:16). The bride's sexual readiness toward her rustic lover, the metaphorical meaning of spices, and the lover entering the girl's garden and eating its delightful fruits are all obvious and call for no further explanation. The rustic lover's response, however, is of much interest. He first gives a physical response to this beloved's sexual call (enlisting his beloved's metaphorical images for depicting sexual intercourse) and later the detailed process of the sexual intercourse is documented from the bride's standpoint.

The rustic lover tells of his physical response: "I came into my garden, my sister, my bride; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk; Eat, friends, get drunk of love" (5:1). Indeed, the last phrase in the rustic lover's response

may seem odd as he invites friends (*re'im*) to participate in the intimate en-
counter he experiences with his beloved. Nevertheless, the odd sense that may
emerge from the rustic lover's attitude is perfectly justified in light of the
immediate context. That invitation resembles a previous call by the rustic
lover to join the sensual awakening in nature (2:11–15), as well as the bride's
inviting call to the wind, north and south (4:16) to join the forthcoming inti-
macy between her and her rustic lover. In other words, that seemingly odd
invitation is an innocent expression of great happiness, a wish to share with
close friends the experience of sensual love. The bride's eager response fol-
lows: "I sleep but my heart wakes; Hark! My beloved knocks, open to me my
sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled; For my head is filled with dew, my
locks with the drops of the night" (5:2).

The bride not only quotes her rustic lover's appeal to open her door but
also performs the woman's traditional love play of apparent reluctance (which
indeed means to sexually provoke the lover and to inflame his lust): "I have
put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile
them?" (5:3). However, that coy game is not prolonged (after all, it aims to
encourage the lover, not discourage him), and it is rapidly replaced by lustful
willingness translated into an explicitly depicted intercourse: "My beloved put
in his hand by the hole of the door and my heart was moved for him; I rose
up to open to my beloved and my hands dropped with myrrh and my fingers
with flowing myrrh, upon the handles of the bar; I opened to my beloved"
(5:5–6a). But here again, the old pendulum swings. Once the rustic lover
reveals his love to his bride, once he feels that he has made a conquest and
the royal lover is no longer a threat, he takes his leave and his bride's heart as
well: "But my beloved turned away and was gone; My soul failed me when he
spoke; I sought him but could not find him; I called him but he gave me no
answer" (5:5–6b). Once again, the bride roams the deserted streets, looking in
vain for her vanished lover. This time her search brings her further agony as
the watchmen abuse her, taking her for a loose woman: "The watchmen that
got about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; The keepers
of the walls took away my mantle from me" (5:7). The bride's emotional fall
from euphoria to distress again propels her emotional-rhetorical pendulum,
and it is expressed in her new address to the daughters of Jerusalem: "I adjure
you, daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved what will you tell him?
That I am love-sick" (5:8). The drastic thematic change—in terms of content—
in the bride's new address to the daughters of Jerusalem (until now, she repeat-
edly adjured them to avoid awakening or stirring up love "until it please")
demonstrates the rhetorical pendulum swing from patronizing haughtiness to

humble plea. High pride gives way to meek entreaty to help her to track down her lover, to find him, to notify him of her desperate need for him. The daughters of Jerusalem ask in return: "What is your beloved more than another beloved, you fairest among women? What is your beloved more than another that you do so adjure us?" (5:9). Whether one discerns a hint of schadenfreude in the daughters of Jerusalem's response (in light of the bride's previous patronizing attitude toward them) or a sincere curiosity to solve the riddle of the bride's obsession with her beloved, to witness for themselves his fabulous charms, their question launches a long and poetic depiction of the rustic lover by his lovesick bride (5:11–16).

This superbly moving depiction seems to make a significant impression upon the daughters of Jerusalem. They forsake their resentment of the bride as a result of her conceited attitude toward them, and they display a sincere readiness to help her find her lover: "Whither has your beloved gone, you fairest among women? Whither has your beloved turned him, that we may seek him with you?" (6:1). Indeed, their willingness to help the bride may be rationalized on another ground: once the daughters of Jerusalem realize that the bride's love is channeled to the rustic lover and she has no interest in the royal lover—*their* focus of interest—the concern that she might undermine their position in the king's chambers vanishes. Once the bride is no longer a threat, they are willing to assist her. After all, a Machiavellian consideration is also involved: the sooner the bride consummates her love with the rustic lover, the sooner the royal lover will cease competing with him and concentrate his interest on the daughters of Jerusalem.

Encouraged by their readiness to help her find the elusive lover, she directs the daughters of Jerusalem to his presumed location: "My beloved is gone down to his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens and to gather lilies" (6:2). The next phrase by the bride seems an attempt at self-assurance on her part, wishing to fortify her spirit: "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine, that feeds among the lilies" (6:3). As the search for the lover intensifies, King Solomon makes his next move. That move is translated into a long, metaphorical and delicately poetic address to the bride, attempting once again to persuade her to make him her choice (6:4–12—7:1–7).

Indeed, many of the similes and the figurative expressions strewn in that long speech can be easily associated with the rustic lover rather than the royal lover, as they clearly belong to the rustic lover's immediate environment, his natural elements. Such similes as "your hair is a flock of goats" (6:5b) or "your teeth are like a flock of ewes which come up from the washing" (6:6a) should confuse us. King Solomon, the frustrated and defeated lover, starts what may

be his last battle. Fully conscious of this, he sagely and shrewdly enlists all his rhetorical skills, all his imaginative resources. One of his best-calculated devices for reaching his goal is adopting his rival's rhetorical strategy, beating him on the rival's field of figuration, utilizing those similes, metaphors, and figures of speech that are aptly used by the rustic lover and apparently make a considerable impression on the bride. However, success of a strategy is strongly dependent on its appropriate "dosage." A royal lover may enlist some rhetorical devices used by a successful rustic lover. However, the wall separating the royal and the pastoral should not be lowered nor cracked. Thus, the king does not abandon his own rhetorical "ammunitions" that proclaim his royal might and grandeur: "You are beautiful, my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem" (6:4). The direct references to the capital of the kingdom, royalty's source of pride and power, should remind her of what he has to offer. So should the reference to the "chariots of my princely people" (6:12b). Perhaps the following verse carries a similar spirit: "Return, return, Shulammite; Return, return, that we may look upon thee; What will you see in the Shulammite? As it were the dance of two companies" (6:13). The call for Shulammite, the bride, to return to the dances of "two companies" may refer to festive occasions celebrated in the royal chambers. The next reference to the bride as *Bat-Nadiv* ("a prince's daughter") in reference to her dancing shoes (7:2) reinforces the thesis that the royal lover urges the bride to return to her natural element— from his standpoint—the royal chambers.[14]

Another indication that the love speech here is by King Solomon can be found in the following verse: "There are threescore queens and fourscore concubines and maidens without number; My dove, my undefiled, is but one" (6:8–9a). Despite the king's possession of endless lovely women, he chooses only one as the desirable bride. Thus, the royal lover stresses the bride's uniqueness and assures her that no woman on earth can ever replace her or hold a higher position in the palace. As the rustic lover "is gone down to his garden, to the beds of spices to feed in the gardens and to gather lilies" (6:2), so the royal lover, too, "went down into the garden of nuts, to look at the green plants of the valley" (6:11a). But once again, imitating the rustic lover does not yield the desirable outcome: the bride's heart is for the rustic lover only.

Now the countryman returns to the arena of love. As before, his return is precipitated by the king's impressive plea. As before, the rustic lover is concerned that he went too far with his haughty sense of victory and that this time the king's might and glamour might succeed in winning the bride's heart. So, the countryman hurries back to the scene, properly armed with metaphors and other forms of figurative rhetoric, which aptly reflect his rustic environment:

"This your stature is like a palm tree, and your breasts like clusters of grapes; I said: 'I will climb up onto the palm tree, I will take hold of the branches thereof; And let your breasts be as clusters of the vine and the smell of your countenance like apples, and the roof of your mouth like the best wine; That glides down smoothly for my beloved, moving gently the lips of those that are asleep" (7:8–10). The explicitly sexual connotation of the rustic lover's climbing up the palm tree (an obvious metaphor for the bride) calls for no further comment. This speech, addressed to the bride by the rustic lover, is of a verbal nature: while referring to wine in the context of *meisharim* (smoothly glided) he echoes the language previously used by his bride in addressing him: "We shall find your love more fragrant than wine, *meisharim* (smoothly glided) do they love thee" (1:4). Here, again, the ardor of the rustic lover is enthusiastically reciprocated by his eagerly waiting bride: "I am my beloved's and his desire is toward me; Come my beloved, let us go forth in to the field; Let us lodge in the villages; Let us go early to the vineyards; Let us see whether the vine has budded, whether the wine-blossom has opened and the pomegranates be in flower; There I will give you my love; The mandrakes give forth fragrance and at our doors are all manner of precious fruits, new and old which I have laid up for you, my beloved" (7:11b–14).

Once the bride regains her self-confidence, having secured the rustic lover's attention and love, she expresses her wish to deepen their love. She asks to base it not only on erotic attraction but also on a more enduring, solid basis by cultivating a familial closeness: "Oh that you were as my brother that sucked the breast of my mother; When I should find you without, I would kiss you and none would despise me" (8:1). Of course, the bride does not simply express a wish to convert her intimate relationship with her lover into an innocent, asexual relationship. The brother-sister relationship she alludes to signifies a legitimate relationship between a man and a woman, which calls for neither secrecy nor fear. She does not want to be despised or abused again by the keepers of the walls, the town sentinels. She wishes to be able to manifest her intimacy with her rustic lover. The bride's next statement follows the same vein: "I would lead you and bring you into my mother's house that you might instruct me" (8:2a). Here, the emotional-rhetorical pendulum makes another swing. Once the bride feels secure again in her lover's affection, she displays arrogance and self-assurance, and addresses the daughters of Jerusalem patronizingly: "I adjure you, daughters of Jerusalem, why should you awaken or stir up love, until it please?" (8:4). The bride's previous meekness and humble plea is again replaced by haughtiness and pride. Now the daughters of Jerusalem react with tolerance and gallantry. They neither take vengeance

nor bear any grudge. They gracefully admit the bride's superiority and voice their admiration: "Who is this that comes up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?" (8:5a). Here is a lesson in reverse-semantics: the very same words that the daughters of Jerusalem previously used to scoff at the bride ("Who is this that comes up out of the wilderness?" [3:6]) are repeated here, but their meaning is now reversed. The words that previously showed contempt are now loaded with flattery for the one who came up out of the wilderness and conquered love. The bride's answer is triggered by the daughters of Jerusalem's last word, *doda* (her beloved). She uses it to depict in detail her intimacy with her beloved: "Under the apple tree I awakened you; There your mother was in travail with you, there was she in travail and brought you forth" (8:5b). The bride's implication that she was intimate with her beloved under the very same apple tree where her mother gave birth to him amplifies her relationship with her beloved, bestowing a familial character. The bride's next statement introduces a philosophical note into the topic of love: "Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; For love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave; The flashes thereof are flashes of time, a very flame of the Lord" (8:6).

This newly expressed philosophical approach to love, which differs from the previous consideration of one specific love, not only elevates the text to a higher level of intellectual abstraction but also brings a sense of finality to the text: this is the principal nature of any kind of deviation that terminates a previous long, horizontal continuum.[15] The next phrase carries the same philosophical concluding spirit. Whether it is said by the bride in response to the daughters of Jerusalem (who act as the chorus in old Greek drama, fulfilling the rhetorical-ideological function of *le voix de raison*), both the philosophical and concluding characteristics are evident. The philosophical characteristics, however, are twofold: Love is joyful and enchanting and the source of worthy pleasures, but at the same time it possesses an unknown, threatening aspect, which may be the cause of much pain and grief. Whether love is joy or suffering, its mighty impact is constantly sweeping: "Many waters cannot quench love; neither can the flood drown it" (8:7a). But the ending of that verse may sound confusing at first: "If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, he would be utterly contemptible" (8:7b). Seemingly, this statement negates the essence of the previously presented credo (which is, indeed, the Song of Song's credo) that no property on earth can compete with the precious value of love. There are two possible ways to address this apparent contradiction. The first way assumes that the given text is incorrectly transcribed. Accordingly, one word—"not"—was mistakenly deleted. Thus, the

original, correct verse should be: "If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, he would *not* be utterly contemptible." Thus, amending the presumably incorrect text by adding the word "not" eliminates the apparent confusion. The other way of addressing the apparent confusion is to interpret it as an ironic comment. The crucial word in this seemingly contradictory phrase is "contempt" (*yabuzu*). This word was used earlier in the same chapter (attached, by the way, in reference to the word "not," which supports the first explanation) to the watchmen who erred in judgment when they showed contempt for the bride.

Hence, the word *yabuzu* is associated with those people who lack understanding of love's power and fail to appreciate its immeasurable value. Thus, the confusing statement relating to those who despise "a man who would give all the substance of his house for love" is indeed an ironic statement, a critical and judgmental one, exciting those who fail to comprehend that a man should indeed give all the substance of his house for love. We need not prefer one explanation to another, as they both proclaim the Song's very credo: nothing on earth competes with love.

Once the Song reaches its vertex (like in the traditional plot of a comedy, when the young lovers overcome all stumbling blocks and are united), its plot is elevated from the concrete level toward a philosophical level—it is time to round the plot; it is time to complete the play. That sense of completion is achieved with the return of the bride's brothers, who were mentioned at the very beginning: "We have a little sister, and she has no breasts; What shall we do for our sister in the day she shall be spoken for?" (8:8). The brothers' return is of much interest for several reasons. First, as already mentioned, the brothers' return yields circularity, roundness, which endows the Song with a sense of completeness.[16] Second, while the brothers' first appearance in the beginning is literary, conveyed by a "telling" narrative technique (their appearance is conveyed through their sister's testimony, but in fact, they neither act nor speak), their second (and concluding) appearance is literary, conveyed by a "showing" narrative technique. They actually present themselves and directly deliver their speech. The rhetorical difference between the brothers' first appearance and their second naturally draws some attention and serves aesthetic purposes. The rhetorical differences create a deviation from perfect, round structure and yield a touch of flexibility that eschews the impression of structural stiffness.

Another matter of interest that emerges from the brothers' final appearance is a denial of their sister's sexual maturity: "she has no breasts" (8:8a). The previous depiction of the sister's matured breasts ("Your breasts [are like]

clusters of grapes" [7:8]), as well as her evident sexual desire, both undermine the brothers' statement concerning her immaturity. There is a solid rationale behind the brothers' conscious, deliberate denial of their sister's maturity. As indicated in the Song's beginning, they had already sent her to King Solomon (presumably for considerable profit). But now they realize that the "deal" has failed, and their profit is jeopardized. Consequently, they declare that they are available for a new deal—offering their sister to another wealthy person. This is why they deliberately and shrewdly deny her sexual experience, since a previous sexual experience drastically reduces her value in the "marriage market." The brothers are neither naive nor blind, yet they are aware of their sister's unexpected ability to control her own life and to disobey them. Thus, they realistically gauge her independence. Still, they are not ready to give up easily: "If she be a wall, we will build upon her a turret of silver; And if she be a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedars" (8:9). But the self-assured sister is not impressed by her brothers' "boards of cedars" as previously she was not impressed by the king's mighty "beams of . . . cedar" (1:1a). The brothers underestimate their now mature sister; she has fully completed the process of her psychological individuation; she has reached independence, and her days of obedience and submission are over: "I am a wall, and my breasts like the towers thereof" (8:1a). Her assertive answer to her brothers is tinged with a mockery: their hypocritical claim that "she has no breasts" (8:1a) is both proudly and emphatically denied by her metaphorical depiction of her breasts as "towers."

Another textual circularity is found in references to the vineyards. In the Song's beginning, the bride complains: "My mother's sons were incensed against me, they made me keeper of the vineyards; But my own vineyard I have not kept" (1:6b). A similar combined reference to the vineyard—both concrete and metaphorical—is repeated by the bride at the Song's conclusion, "Solomon had a vineyard at Baalhamon; he gave over the vineyard to keepers; Every one for the fruit thereof brought in a thousand pieces of silver; My vineyard, which is mine, is before me; You, Solomon, shall have the thousand and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred" (8:11–12). Although the reference to the (metaphorical) vineyard is slight and rather implicit, it is unmistakable: "My vineyard, which is mine, is before me." Namely, my love (my vineyard) is fully realized. The maturation process has reached its completion: the bride, who complained at the beginning that "my own vineyard I have not kept" (1:6), proudly declares at the conclusion that her vineyard (love) is fully purchased and achieved. The reference to the vineyard as a metaphor for love at the plot's conclusion is so brief and implicit that it proclaims the

bride's self-assurance in her achievement: her deeds (achieving love, completing the maturation process) speak loud and clear, so words and declarations are no longer necessary.

The transition from the metaphorical reference to the vineyard in the beginning to the concrete reference to the vineyard at the end has two aesthetic merits. First, its rhetorical merit is already displayed in previously discussed patterns of textual circularity: the difference between the opening component and the concluding component introduces an element of flexibility in an otherwise rigid circular pattern. Second, the pragmatic, businesslike reference to the vineyard at the plot's conclusion dramatically exemplifies the change in the bride's state, her assertiveness and independence. Before, she was compelled by her brothers to keep others' vineyards. Now she moves to a higher social class: instead of being the vineyard's hired keeper, she is the vineyard's owner who boldly does business with the king. Her domineering brothers are now completely overcome by her. The fact that she addresses the king by his first name, Solomon, reflects her newly earned status.

A book like the Song, in which love permeates every verse and phrase, cannot conclude without some pragmatic comment and a sense of earned power and mastery. Thus, the book ends with a poetic love dialogue between the bride and her lover. The fact that he is the first to address the bride (and not vice versa) is surely significant. It reflects and reinforces the new status earned by the bride. The lover makes the first move toward his beloved (in contrast to preceding occurrences): "You that dwell in the gardens, the companions harken for your voice; Cause me to hear it" (8:13). The fact that he addresses the bride as one who "dwells in the gardens" is significant. Until now, only two dwelt in the garden: the rustic lover who went "down to his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens" (6:2) and the royal lover who "went down into the garden of nuts" (6:11a). Until now, the bride did not dwell in the gardens but rather chased her recalcitrant rustic lover there. Thus, her joining the "community" of "garden dwellers" manifests her new status: the status of those who possess power and wisely use it.

The lover's reference to his "companions" who wish to hear the bride's voice creates an analogous link with the bride's previous wish to take him to her family; in both cases there is a need for society's recognition of the relationship and consequently, of making the relationship public and accepted. It is therefore one more indication of the bride's new status: her rustic lover feels the need to make their relationship public no less than she does.

One may draw a more abstract conclusion from this indication. When true love is achieved, all power games are called off. Full equality enables full love.

The bride's answer, too, carries a conclusive note as it echoes one of the most poetic and powerful love metaphors in the Song of Songs: "Make haste my beloved, and be you like to a gazelle or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices" (8:14).[17] Now the bride can send her lover, her beloved, to leap upon the mountains, to skip upon the hills: she can be certain he will return to her.

Toward Conclusion

"Toward conclusion" instead of "conclusion"—because despite the detailed, close reading in this chapter, the study of the Song of Songs is far from concluded. Too many questions have not been asked, too many questions have not been answered, and too many answers still call for further consideration.

Those unasked questions as well as those questionable answers have to do with various aspects and layers of this book, such as origins, the writer's (or writers') identity, the possibility and the nature of editorial work, the precise period of composition, the historical validity of some mentioned facts and the geographical identity of some named sites, the unity of language as well as its morphological characteristics and their relevance to the presumed period of composition, the originality of the plot and of the metaphors, and more. This study, however, directs itself to one aspect of the Song—its unity and structural coherence. One of the basic tenets of this study is that the Song's unity, its structural coherence, is strongly bound to its generic identity. Emphasizing the Song's narrative-generic quality rather than its lyrical-generic quality affords us a new investigative avenue, a new angle that sheds a new light upon the seemingly absent unity.

Focusing on the narrative features—which are embodied primarily in the plot—the close reading identified and mapped a coherent, complete dramatic plot, which adheres to Aristotle's definition of dramatic plot: a causal, tight sequence of events, each of which derives logically from the previous one and leads logically to the next one, until the climactic ending that calls for no further continuation. The close reading also detected in the plot the two necessary Aristotelian conditions: *dezis* (complication) and *luzis* (untying, solution), which are causally bound to each other. Thus, the Song's narrative character—its plot—is tightly causal, intricate, and logical. It has a gradually ascending momentum toward a climactic conclusion, two rival protagonists engaged in a central conflict, ups and downs, accelerated tensions and released tensions, and overall an enduring dramatic momentum. Two collective characters join the main plot: the daughters of Jerusalem and the brothers. The relationships between the main plot and the two satellite plots are marked by expressive and systematic patterns.

The relationship between the main plot and the more dominant of the two secondary plots (the collective character of the daughters of Jerusalem) is systematically maintained by an emotional-rhetorical pattern—the bride's constantly alternating states of mind. The bride's emotional peaks produce a submissive and meek rhetorical address by the daughters of Jerusalem. This relationship between the main plot and the secondary plot might well be represented by a graph, whose constant ups and downs are both systematical and predictable.

The second relationship between the main plot and a secondary plot is based on the recurrent appearance of another collective character in the work—the bride's brothers. This relationship is also carefully constructed and effectively systemized. The circular nature of the brothers' appearance in the plot—at the very beginning and toward the end—is of compositional-rhetorical merit as it grants the plot a measure of tight and firm roundness. However, the differences observed between the two components of that circular pattern—the brothers' first appearance and their final one—are also of considerable merit. Those deviations from a complete and strict sense of roundness produce a certain flexibility that eschews an undesirable mechanical effect. They also show the bride's process of emotional and sexual maturation as well as psychological individuation. As indicated earlier, the progression of the plot brings to mind traditional comedy: through the plot's complications, turns, and obstacles, the young couple wend their way toward the final triumph of their love.

It is always an intriguing question whether the intentions of the writers (or in this case probably the editors) correspond to the interpretation of the commentator. However, if we refer to Wimsatt's and Beardsley's "The Intentional Fallacy" and to T. S. Eliot's statement "To divert interest from the poet to the poetry is a laudable aim," then the literary critic's task is to examine the poem rather than the intentions that prompted its composition.[18] Thus, it is not the question of the intention behind "the piece" that should concern us, but its relevance to the literary study of the text. Furthermore, even when one has sources (such as the writer's diary) that show that the writer's initial intention is at odds with the interpretation, this does not necessarily undermine the critic's aesthetic findings. More likely, the writer's intention was not successfully transferred into the poem. An absolute congruity between the intention and its actualization should never be taken for granted.

Whether this critical approach to the literary text is adopted or discounted, one practical fact is clear: one can never be in full possession of all the writer's intentions. After all, it is possible—primarily from a psychological standpoint—that the writer himself was not fully aware of all his intentions, specifically

the latent and the subconscious ones. And so, let the text speak for itself. The Song of Songs does so by spectacular aesthetics that display its solid unity. Once critical attention is shifted from the Song's lyrical layer to its narrative layer, the seemingly absent unity is "excavated" and uncovered.

There is no conflict between the current critical emphasis on the narrative layer of the Song and its manifest lyrical quality. It is indeed the Song of Songs, or perhaps the Story of Stories.

6

Sex, Lies, and the Bible

The Roman excavation dig
Was left behind, wide open on its back
And abandoned like a woman who was raped
In the field:
Everything is unveiled, exposed and known
Although she did not cry.

—YEHUDA AMICHAI, "The End of the
  Digging Period in Ein Gedi"

IDEOLOGICAL, SOCIAL, AND LITERARY CRITICISM OF FEMINISM

This chapter reflects a feminist view based on observation and analysis of the various ways in which the Bible treats women, many (although not all) of whose stories are narrated in its chronicles. What clearly emerges from the portrayal of women in the Bible is that they are intellectually inferior to males, morally deficient, and lacking in integrity. Above all, they are subservient to males; they are "property," worth little more than cattle. The biblical text consistently belittles women, stressing their insignificance and inferiority. This unfair, degrading, and humiliating attitude may be explained on social, psychological, and personal levels. The Bible was composed and edited by males only, and their attitude reflects the desire to assert their manhood and their patriarchal authority in accordance with the social norms and standards of the time. However, it is not the purpose of this chapter to focus on antifeminism, despite its evident importance to an understanding of the Bible. This chapter, like the other chapters in the book, aims primarily to examine and analyze the aesthetic mechanisms, the literary and artistic devices employed by the biblical text for the furtherance of its ideological ménage.

As this chapter is introduced to the reader from a feminist point of view, it is appropriate to preamble it with a brief review of prominent feminist literary, ideological, and moral criticism. The first instances of feminist ideas

can be traced back to the ancient Greek playwright Aristophanes (448 BCE–385 BCE). The feminist message in his play *Peace* is embedded in the victory of women over men. By denying sexual favors, the women force men to stop fighting a war. The play not only emphasizes the supremacy of women over men, as women appear much more prudent than men, less governed by their "primitive," animal-like instincts, but also mocks men's putative superiority over women.

Aristophanes' hesitant beginnings had no follow-up for many centuries. In 1792 Mary Wollstonecraft published *Vindication of the Rights of Women.* In it she stresses the urgent need on the part of women to gain equality with men in the public arena, to struggle for their rights of which a male-dominated society has robbed them, and to redefine their characters, their roles, and their functions as women. Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929), and later, *Three Guineas* (1938), address feminism from aesthetic, social, and historical perspectives. Woolf's writings heralded the first wave of modern feminist writings, most of them by female writers, critics, and sociologists. She coined the term "looking glass" to metaphorically describe those women who had been oppressed by a male-dominated society, one that had made all the rules, practically ensuring that women would be excluded from positions of power, deprived of equal opportunities, and unable to control their own destinies. The "looking glass" is the one in which women see the reflection of the dominant males, as well as the reflection of themselves as subordinate, second-class citizens in male territory—again, one specifically designed to keep women from positions of power and control. One of the most significant contributions by Virginia Woolf to the feminist discourse is her observation that gender identity is socially constructed and can, and should, be challenged and transformed to enable women to enter the arena of "fair game," becoming equal to males in status and opportunities.

It is interesting to note, however, that August Strindberg, the renowned Swedish playwright (1849–1912), viewed the rapport between the genders in a dramatically different way. He saw contradictory roles for females and males in the human equation; he viewed the woman as a cunning creature, resembling the Roman god Janus, with its two faces, one good and one evil.[1] In Strindberg's eyes the woman possesses two conflicting personalities. One side can be described as *la belle dame sans merci,* the attractive, cruel woman who lures the man only to dominate and humiliate him (compare the *Kabbalah's* legendary female figure, Lilith), a "spirited murderer"; the other side, as Eric Johannesson put it, shows that "Woman is the salvation; she is the angel, for since she represents the mother, she also represents the origin of things, the

bliss of childhood to be experienced anew."[2] In Strindberg's plays, the compassionate, motherly aspect of the woman is clouded and eclipsed—almost entirely erased—by her "sinister side," the one that abuses and crushes her male partner. For an example of Strindberg's dichotomy, see his 1889 play *Den Starkare* (*The Stronger*).[3] However, the very vertex of the woman's sinister, evil side—according to Strindberg's view—shows up in *Fadern* (*The Father,* 1887), which depicts the struggle for dominance between the woman and the man. Here, the dishonest, unscrupulous woman shrewdly and diabolically lays a trap, planting in her husband's heart the idea that their daughter was conceived with another man, which eventually leads the husband to a tormenting, haunting madness and death. But, conversely, Strindberg also wrote *Fröken Julie* (*Miss Julie,* 1888) in which the young woman is snared by hypocritical social standards that eventually drive her to suicide.

In contrast to Strindberg's view of the woman as a diabolic creature possessing the power and dominating the male, the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen (1828–1906), no less famous than his Swedish peer, wrote *Et Dukkehjem* (*A Doll's House,* 1881), justly considered a feminist work. The play focuses on Nora, an oppressed "little housewife," who feels trapped by her authoritarian, overbearing husband and rebels against him. At the end of the play, Nora leaves her oppressive husband but at the price of having to give up her children. She carries out the feminist agenda by embarking on a new chapter in her life, free from her husband's tyranny. Now she is her own mistress, independent of the male. When Nora slams the door behind her, leaving her husband's house, she opens a new door, leading her to freedom and self-fulfillment.

Of contemporary literary critics and social scholars, the French philosopher and writer Simone de Beauvoir is associated with the first wave of feminist advocates. *The Second Sex,* published in 1949, boldly attacks the oppression of women by men in the name of biological and psychological differences between the genders. De Beauvoir's argument is a refutation of such statements as Aristotle's assertion that nature dictates that women should be ruled by men, those by Thomas Aquinas and St. Augustine, both of whom wrote that women are "imperfect" by nature, or even Charles Darwin's statement in *The Descent of Man* that women belong to a lower stage of civilization. Simone de Beauvoir further argues that there is a lack of symmetry between descriptions of men and women, which is reflected in men defining themselves as "human," but women defining themselves as "women," indicating that women are inferior even by their definition of themselves. The second wave in feminist writings, delayed by the Great Depression of the 1930s and World War II, did not appear to have enough intellectual and emotional energies to promote

and advocate the just cause of feminism. When that second wave was launched, however, the feminist writer Judith Viorst enlisted the Cinderella fairy tale to help explain the inferior condition of women, imposed by male social standards. Cinderella symbolizes women's lesser social status as she is compelled to wait for a man to redeem her from degrading slavery. Feminism began to challenge those pernicious stereotypes—unattractive women are bad by nature (a stereotype reinforced by the figures of the stepmother and stepsisters in *Cinderella*), marriage is a woman's ultimate aspiration, and beauty is the key to happiness—pointing to the thesis that feminine sexuality need not be manipulated to attain success in life. In that men have made women their own "nonsignificant others," women must separate and individuate themselves from men in order to form and define their own being, their own "I." They must realize that "sex" is biologically oriented, and "gender" is socially oriented.

Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* was one of the harbingers of the second wave in feminine criticism and scholarship. Friedan focuses on the need to divert the collective, public attention from the politics of women's reproduction to the celebration of women's sexuality, thus enabling women to elevate themselves from the "primitive" stage (dictated by male-dominated society) of *Tolla mulier in utero* (A woman is nothing but a womb). The unique character of women's sexuality enables them to go through complex, enriching, and challenging experiences beyond men's physiological, emotional, and psychological ken. Those uniquely feminine experiences associated with women's sexuality are ovulation, menstruation, and parturition.

Kate Millet's approach to feminism is more active and assertive. In her *Sexual Politics* (1978), also associated with the second wave of feminist criticism and scholarship, she analyzes the injustice done to women and the deprivation they have suffered for countless generations, on political, cultural, social, and economical levels: the "phallic state" has exploited women so unjustly that only a total revolution can correct it.

Elaine Showalter, one of the most vocal and influential American feminist critics, authored *A Literature of Their Own* in 1977. Showalter maps the literary history of women writers by the subjects and contents of their writing, their psychological drives, and their ideological affinities. Showalter claims that there is a wide gap between women's and men's modes of writing, and that male critics, being blind to the unique character of women's writings, have sadly overlooked a considerable body of writing with special perspectives as produced by women writers. Showalter discusses misogyny in literature and the way that attitude is displayed in male writing. Showalter coined the term "gynocriticism," which defines the study of women's writings from a feminine

perspective. Nowadays this term is used a bit more broadly and systematically, indicating the study of works of literature produced by women by using four models: biological, linguistic, psychoanalytical, and cultural. Further contribution to the aesthetic, psychological, and social discourse of feminism in literature was made by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (1979). This book addresses, among other things, images of women portrayed by male authors. The book discusses the "anxiety of authorship" afflicting women writers due to the overbearing presence of male authors in the literary arena. Here, the authors recommend developing what they call a "women's sentence," one that conveys the feminine voice in women's literature without fear of being "castrated" by the male-oriented standards that dictate the terms of the "name of the literary game." Those standards are immediately associated with Freud's theory of woman's "penis envy," which is said to cause women to feel inferior because of their lack of the male organ, the alleged instrument of power. The French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, however, takes issue with Freud in regards to the penis envy theory, defining it as a psychoanalytical form of misogyny.

The French-Bulgarian author, psychoanalyst, and literary critic Julia Kristeva approaches feminist writings from a more comprehensive, panoramic perspective. She does not differentiate between the oppression of women and that of other marginalized or underprivileged groups. Kristeva considers the feminist revolution as part of a political revolution, which she ardently advocates, and hopes this will bring about a "form of anarchism" reflecting the "discourse of the avant-garde" in the political as well as poetic domains.

On the other hand, the French feminist critic Hélène Cixous narrows down her own feminist credo. In her essay "The Laugh of the Medusa" (1976), she encourages women writers to "install" their "bodies" in their writings, to fill their belles lettres with the essence of their "bodily womanhood."[4]

Admittedly this brief survey of various aspects of feminist criticism cannot do justice to the subject, even as an introduction. But it should suffice as a preamble to a more detailed discussion of the ways in which the biblical text portrays women.[5] My aim is to demonstrate how the aesthetic mechanisms and artistic literary devices are enlisted and utilized by the biblical text and in what ways these mechanisms and devices convey and enhance the ideological trends and messages of the Bible. The ideological messages that these complex devices help to convey are far from laudable; in fact, those ideological messages reveal the sad and gloomy reality that biblical women are totally dominated by men. Deprived of independence and rights, they have no voice

and cannot protest. In the biblical reality, women are exploited, degraded, and unappreciated. The Bible may forgive a woman for wrongdoing, as Miriam is forgiven and healed of the leprosy God inflicted on her after she unjustly scolds her brother Moses for marrying a black woman. And too, the biblical text forgives a woman when she displays exceptional intellectual abilities. Such exploitation of women was widespread and customary when the biblical texts were composed. The modern reader, however, cannot help but recoil from such unjust and unfair treatment of the women, particularly when such an attitude is displayed by Abraham, God's herald, or by God himself.

Literary Rhetoric

Prior to addressing some specific examples of how women are maltreated by biblical texts, it would be helpful to clarify certain points of methodology. As we saw in chapter 1, the methodological orientation of this aesthetic-literary study of the biblical text is primarily of a structuralist nature. Accordingly, the given text is considered a ramiform, or branchlike, system in which various elements and patterns operate and interact simultaneously. The structuralist-aesthetic approach aims to locate and identify the textual system's elements and patterns, to follow and describe their interactions, and to reveal their aesthetic functions and the ways they contribute to the ideological goals. In this respect, literary phenomena such as composition and order of presentation are key concepts in the structuralist approach to the literary text.

In this chapter we see that the rhetorical layer of the biblical text primarily consists of the narrator, his point of view, and the aesthetic devices he enlists in order to communicate with the reader. The narrator of a literary text is a rhetorical figure, a device embedded in the text. The narrator can be an internal character, a distinctive figure, a character that takes part in the plot either as the main protagonist (often a first person narrator who "confesses" to the reader and shares with them the unfolding events), or as a marginal character whose role in the plot is peripheral and who offers observations on the events. The narrator who takes no part in the plot, yet is still part of the literary text, is an external narrator, one who reports on action and the evolving events from a distance, as an observer. That the external narrator is *not* part of the plot and has no role in it confers more objectivity in narration.[6]

Moreover, while the internal narrator is a visible one, the external narrator is invisible. The internal narrator who is a prominent or marginal character in the plot can be easily identified by his or her appearance, actions, expressed views, and the like. The external narrator, however, is a purely rhetorical vehicle, in the sense that she has no bodily presence and her views can be

deciphered only through a close examination of how she conveys the textual information to the reader. However, even an external narrator, one who has no part in the plot, can never be entirely free of a subjective perspective. The very fact of selecting specific events and reporting on them testifies to subjective predilections and personal attitudes. Although one hardly ever finds a biblical narrator who is not external, that narrator is not limited to reporting only the narrated events but often injects his own subjective opinion, even interpretation, of the recounted episodes. In cases where the biblical narrator includes his subjective, judgmental perspective, he enlists aesthetic/rhetorical mechanisms that convey his censorious attitude toward the characters in the chronicle. The way women are maltreated in the biblical text via the narrator's rhetorical function, operation, and "services" as a scolding, rhetorical entity, seem almost cynically, disturbingly irrelevant. In many cases where women are maltreated, the narrator refrains from exercising his rhetorical capacity and does not voice any "scolding aesthetics." He does not use the aesthetic/ rhetorical devices that the biblical text has at its disposal to rebuke those who commit offenses against women. However, there are a few cases in which the narrator cannot keep silent when a woman is shamefully wronged. In these instances, the narrator goes against the Bible's customary practice of denigrating its female characters and enlists instead aesthetic mechanisms and rhetorical, compositional, and thematic devices to scold, subtly or blatantly, those who wrong women and cause them pain and humiliation.

United by Maltreatment, Torment, and Sexual Manipulation

This section focuses on a comprehensive, general perspective of biblical antifeminism, without discussing any detailed, subtle structure. In this respect, this section complements the previous one and the following ones. Here I aim to limit the ideological credo behind the Bible's attitude toward women rather than spotlighting the aesthetic mechanisms used to denigrate women. It is important to note that some women in the Bible are treated very differently from others. In the book of Judges, for example, we learn about "Deborah, the prophetess, wife of Lappidot" (this phrase can also be translated as "a woman of might" [*Lappidot* derives etymologically from *Lapid,* a torch, used mostly in war time]). This accords better with the tenor of the context, which extols Deborah. "She led Israel at that time—and the Israelites would come to her for decisions" (Judg. 4:4–5). Deborah is the nation's leading judge and also the one who not only recruits the warrior Barak, son of Avino'am, to command the Israelites in the war against Sisera, Jabin's army commander, but who also

infuses him with courage: "and I shall deliver him [the enemy] into your hands." This promise made by Deborah was neither vain nor idle since she prudently planned and orchestrated the military victory (Judg. 4:7). Deborah's stature as a woman of power and substance is much in evidence when the prominent military leader of the entire nation tells her the following: "And Barak said to her, if you shall go with me, I shall go; if not, I shall not go" (Judg. 4:8). And yet, Deborah's response testifies that there is a limit to the Bible's willingness to portray a woman in a superior position, one which threatens the man's supremacy: "'I will go with you,' she answered, 'however, there will be no glory for you in the course you are taking, for then God will deliver Sisera [Israel's enemy] into the hands of a woman'" (Judg. 4:9). In that same story, however, another woman—Yael, the wife of Chever—earns both prominence and encomium. Yael is the one who actually kills Sisera, the enemy leader: "When he was fast asleep from exhaustion, Yael approached him stealthily and drove the pin through his temple, till it went down to the ground and [Sisera] died" (Judg. 4:21). The Bible's male-oriented perspective is in evidence in this case as well (as in Deborah's argument that it will be shameful for a male if a woman led him to victory in the battlefield). First, Deborah is referred to as somebody's wife ("Deborah the wife of Lappidot"); Yael, too, is defined by her marriage to a man: "Yael the wife of Chever [Hever]." Second, the way Yael kills Sisera brings to mind a sexual act from the male perspective (she violently pierces and penetrates the man's head with a pin or tent peg). And so we can see that even when a woman is extolled and lauded in the Bible, it is still done from a predominantly male perspective.

Moses's sister, Miriam the prophetess, also earns respect from the biblical text. First, she is called a prophetess. Second, her poem of victory of the Israelites over Pharaoh's hounding chariots is created under her guidance (Exod. 15:21: "Sing to God, for He has triumphed gloriously; Horse and driver He has hurled into the sea"). Yet in this case too, the biblical text does not let the woman ascend too highly. In fact, the text belittles her achievement and detracts from her prominence on four separate occasions: (1) her poem is dramatically shorter and less aesthetically and ideologically impressive than Moses's poem; (2) her poem is presented only after Moses's poem ends; (3) she is not called "Moses's sister" although she was indeed his sister but is associated with Moses's less prominent brother ("Miriam—Aaron's sister" [Exod. 15:20]), Aaron, who was the one who committed the grave sin of making a golden calf (Exod. 32:4), while Moses received the Ten Commandments from God (Exod. 34); hence, connecting Miriam to sinful Aaron detracts from her

status. Finally, (4) Miriam herself transgresses when she and Aaron rebuke Moses for marrying a black woman. This rebuke is reprehensible: not only is it followed by God's punishment of Miriam but Aaron is not punished equally: "And the cloud [representing God] withdrew from the Tent, there was Miriam stricken with snow-white leprosy" (Num. 12:10). This punishment may be seen as somewhat ironic: Miriam, who rejects Moses's black wife, turns as white as snow. Those four examples have a common denominator: even women who earn prominence are still denigrated by the biblical narrator, as if he cannot tolerate their prominent status and therefore does his best to take them down a peg or two. For the most part, biblical women are deprived of rights, put down, humiliated, and mentally and physically abused.

Sarah and Her Sisters

The way Sarah is portrayed and treated is representative; it serves as a test case, wherein all the manifestations of biblical women's maltreatment and the biblical narrator's antifeminist attitudes are amalgamated. First, Sarah is "sold" by the male (Abraham, her own husband and God's chosen herald, the forefather of the Hebrew/Israelite/Jewish nation!) as "sexual merchandise." Abraham sells, to the Egyptians and eventually to Pharaoh, Sarah's sexual services in order to gain entrance to Egypt and improve his economic situation. Sarah is deprived not only of her personal freedom but also of her elementary rights as an independent human being. Similarly, the biblical narrator (who is a mouthpiece of the implied author and his ideology) robs Sarah of the ability to express her own feelings and voice her opinion when Isaac, her beloved son, to whom she gave birth after long years of agony and frustration, is about to be killed. A male-dominated society delivered to Sarah a clear and cruel message: without children, without a fertile womb, she is nothing, she has no importance as a human being. No wonder that Sarah is willing to surrender her self-respect and to give up her intimacy with her husband, when she gives him her servant Hagar, to act on her behalf as a surrogate mother, as a womb for hire. Sarah seems to have accepted and internalized the cruel social dictates of her male-dominated society. As a result, Sarah tries to compensate for her failure to give her husband a child and also to prevent him from divorcing her and leaving her destitute (the Bible, being male-oriented, fails to consider the possibility that the male may be the infertile one). Sarah has no value from the biblical perspective; she is the embodiment of the adage *Tolla mulier in utero*—a woman is nothing but a womb. These observations about Sarah's situation apply to the portrayal of most women in the Bible.

Sexual Exploitation and the Entrapment of Women

The first example of cynical sexual exploitation is the sale of Sarah by her husband Abraham as a piece of merchandise, in order to improve his economic situation. Genesis 12:10–20 narrates Abraham and Sarah's descent to the land of Egypt because of a famine in the land of Canaan. All the early scholars who addressed this chronicle commented on Abraham's questionable conduct: not only does Abraham lie in asking Sarah to pretend she is his sister, he also informs Sarah that she may have to pay a sexual price so that "it may be well with me on account of you [*lema'n itav li ba'avourekh*] and my soul shall live thanks to you [*vehayta nafshi biglalekh*]." While most of the commentators and biblical scholars have attempted to reason Abraham's sins on legalistic-formal grounds, the biblical narrator harshly and sarcastically scolds Abraham.[7] Despite the fact that the narrator's criticism is introduced subtly, through literary devices, his rebuking voice is clear and strongly ironic.

Interestingly enough, while modern biblical scholars ignore Abraham's questionable morality and instead discuss legal technicalities of the Ancient Near East, the thirteenth-century commentator Nahmanides (Rabbi Moshe ben Nahman) openly condemns Abraham. Nahmanides does not rebuke Abraham on moral grounds but on the basis of pious faith: Abraham should have *trusted* God to extricate him from misfortune and should not have lied about Sarah's marital status. While the majority of commentators and scholars have overlooked Abraham's disturbing morality that led him to offer his wife's sexual services not only to save his own life but also to make a profit, the biblical narrator has a totally different reaction. His chastisement is aesthetically sophisticated and very forceful; the fact that it may have gone unnoticed until now is no reflection on its force and merit. How has this aesthetic sophistication managed to remain undiscovered for so long? The narrator, in an impressive display of poetic skill, groups five literary devices into one harmonious system that effectively expresses the sarcastic chastisement criticism aimed at Abraham.

The first literary device is the chastisement context. The narrator centers his report on Abraham's sin in the context of Abraham's descent from Canaan. The famine in Canaan is hardly a good reason for leaving the Promised Land, particularly when God himself assures Abraham that he will make Abraham "a great nation" (*goy gadol*). In Genesis 12:1 God notifies Abraham that he has given him the Promised Land and tells Abraham to move there. In verse 4 Abraham follows God's command and goes to the Promised Land. In verse 5 Abraham arrives in the Promised Land, and five verses later he leaves the Promised Land.[8]

The argument that Abraham left because of a famine is both true and false: although archaeological data prove that there was a famine in Canaan, not all the land's inhabitants chose to leave. Abraham, who was an affluent tribal leader and presumably had at his disposal all the privileges associated with such a rank, did choose to leave. The narrator uses the verb *yrd* (descended). This choice is not random for it expresses all the negative connotations associated with "descent." Abraham proves himself too hasty when he leaves the Promised Land, given to him by God, not for reasons of survival but for purely economic motives. Abraham's shameful departure from the Promised Land parallels his equally shameful conduct in heading for Egypt.

In the narrator's eyes, Abraham could indeed have remained in Canaan and survived the famine with little or no difficulty due to his status. His subsequent behavior (namely the selling of his wife's sexual services in Egypt) becomes less the action of a desperate man trying to survive and more the action of a man trying to gain economic or material benefits and is, as such, open to negative comment. Although many who have examined this case concluded that Abraham's questionable behavior was a matter of survival (he sacrificed his wife's honor and body on the altar of her husband's life), the validity of this argument seems as questionable as Abraham's conduct. Was it truly a matter of life and death on the part of Abraham? Did anyone actually force him to leave Canaan and cross the Egyptian border? As we know, Abraham was a wealthy and influential man who could certainly have remained in Canaan (as did others) and suffered little or no hardship. Apparently, then, it was economic and materialistic concerns that motivated Abraham, rather than survival.

The reader may deduce all this from the censorious tone of the narrator, who criticizes Abraham's materialistic action through careful use of words and impressive aesthetic dexterity. Although we may never know what crossed Abraham's mind when he asked his wife to pretend that she was his sister, we may certainly deduce that if the Egyptians had known that Sarah was Abraham's wife they would probably have killed him and taken her (Gen. 12:12–13). If they suspected that she was his sister, they were more likely to pay him something for her, in which case he would not only survive but possibly earn something extra as well. Abraham must have realized this, so the question remains: Why did he leave Canaan? Why did he not stop at the Egyptian border? Why did he not forgo the wealth of Egypt, purchased by his wife's sexual services?

The narrator leads the reader to surmise, through indirect criticism, that Abraham most likely could have avoided this entire situation, yet did not. In

his implicit criticism of Abraham, the narrator's *j'accuse* subtly paints a picture of a man who leaves the Promised Land after a divine promise that he will become a great nation, who goes in search of easy wealth, and who sells his wife's sexual services in an attempt to gain material profit and perhaps preserve his own life, a situation he could have easily avoided by remaining in the Promised Land. The fact that Abraham's descent from the Promised Land *could have been avoided* (the implication by the narrator is that it should have been avoided) combines with the fact that he evidently left solely to gain material wealth.

This last supposition is stressed by the narrator when he reports that Abraham asks Sarah to pretend that she is his sister: *lema'n itav li ba'avourekh* (in order that it may be well with me). As the narrator frames the incriminating story of Abraham's questionable conduct within the context of his descent from the Promised Land, the story, with its message of chastisement, is effectively emphasized. We encounter Abraham's questionable conduct after having learned of his descent from the Promised Land, and the reader is more alert to Abraham's next sin.

The second literary device the narrator uses in his subtle aesthetics of chastisement is thematic. Since all informational data supplied by the textual continuum can be classified as thematic, the fact that the narrator enables Abraham to verbalize his selfish argument (*lema'n itav li ba'avourekh*) can be considered a thematic literary device as well as critical rhetoric. Abraham's argument "in order that it may be well with me" further incriminates him as it reflects his selfish desire for material gain deriving from indifference to his wife's well being.

The third literary device used by the narrator is compositional, namely, the order of presentation of the thematic materials along the unfolding text. Abraham formulates two supportive arguments for asking his wife to pretend she is his sister: (1) *lema'n itav li ba'avourekh* (that it may be well with me because of you), and (2) *vehayta nafshi biglalekh* (I may remain alive thanks to you). The coexistence of these two arguments is further stressed because they are constructed as two analogous components within one poetic parallelism (a characteristic of biblical poetry). Each of the arguments is based upon three metrical stresses, and each of them ends with the same rhyme (*ba'avourekh, biglalekh*), all of which strengthens the impression that the two sequential arguments resemble two analogous components (hemistiches) fused into one poetic equation (parallelism). The reader is guided to treat the two sequential arguments equally while noting that despite their formal affinity (on the grounds of syntax, meter, and sound pattern) they differ dramatically

in context. Correspondingly, while the first argument is concerned with mate-rial benefit, the second is concerned with survival. The shrewd narrator, in an effort to subtly convey his condemnation of Abraham, reverses the logi-cal order of the two arguments, beginning with the materialistic argument and delaying presentation of the more urgent one. Consequently, the narra-tor sheds a sarcastic light on Abraham's conduct: Abraham is presented as a materialistic person whose prime interest is to be handsomely rewarded, while his second argument is mere lip service, claiming that his life is in seri-ous danger. The literary-compositional device thus proves effective: the order of presentation is neither a random syntactical structure nor does it echo an "indifferent structural container," in which the content is poured and framed. The order of presentation is a clever literary device, skillfully enlisted by an able narrator in order to convey disapproval.

The fourth literary device, of thematic-rhetorical nature, is founded upon textual repetition. Again, we see that Abraham introduces his selfish argument in the following stylistic fashion: *lema'n itav li ba'avourekh* (that it may be well with me because of you). The narrator echoes the same verbal pattern when he refers to the successful outcome of Abraham's plot: *ule Abraham heitiv ba'avourah* (and because of her, it went well with Abraham). This ver-bal repetition stresses that Abraham's materialistic plot succeeded and yielded the result that Abraham had planned and desired. The narrator's use of the same formula reveals yet another critical arrow aimed at the Patriarch. What Abraham greedily desired and planned for, he got—at the expense of his wife.

The fifth literary device, like the third and fourth, is thematic. After in-forming the reader of the success of Abraham's plan, the narrator goes into a surprising amount of detail listing the valuables that Abraham receives from Pharaoh in payment for Sarah's services: "and he [Abraham] acquired herds of sheep and cattle, and asses, and slaves, and maidservants, and she-asses, and camels" (Gen. 12:16). Not only is this list long, it is further lengthened by the use of the conjunctive *waw* (and). One of the most distinctive characteristics of the biblical text is its concise and economical use of words. But the nar-rator in this particular case deviates from the norm in detailing a lengthy list of presents, which really doesn't have much to do with the chronicle. Thus, the obtrusiveness of this list, which seems almost clumsily grafted onto the unfolding tale, is a deliberate rhetorical signpost (one might call it rhetorical "bait"), which draws the reader's attention by piquing his curiosity. In pur-posely calling the reader's attention to the list, the narrator causes the reader to become more alert and sensitive to the narrator's latent criticism. In the same manner, the reader realizes that the narrator has purposely drawn his

attention to the long list of presents, thus ironically emphasizing Abraham's materialistic plan and how handsomely he was rewarded for his wife's sexual services. In addition, we later learn that Abraham was so pleased with the results of this plan that he repeated the whole distasteful process with Abimelekh, king of Gerar (Gen. 20:1–2).

Although the narrator never openly utters a single word of direct criticism against Abraham, he conveys his censure and scathing scorn in a powerful, albeit indirect, manner. The aesthetics of chastisement in the Bible assume, in this case, an impressive artistry. The narrator manages to orchestrate an intricate array of literary devices, which he operates in order to express sharp criticism of Abraham without upsetting the surface impression of an objective and unobtrusive report. That the narrator's chastisement is not direct does not lessen its effect. And the "interpretive excavation" that uncovers the narrator's latent criticism is no less important. It not only provides the reader with an "unofficial" perspective of Abraham's conduct, one that the "official" surface text pretends not to possess, it also provides the reader with an excellent opportunity to witness biblical aesthetic artistry at its best.

Now look at Genesis 3. Here, too, the woman is doubly deprived, although in a different manner. First, the woman—Eve—is shortchanged intellectually. The narrator, inspired by the implied author, does not or can not accept that the female is intellectually superior to the male; he applies several ingenious aesthetic devices to trip her up and put in question her intellectual faculties. Then, we discern that the woman is also a loser on the sexual level. In the story of the temptation, she is presented as the instigator, the beguiler. Therefore, the woman's deprivation is twofold: the sexual and intellectual dispossessions are linked, the former giving rise to the latter.

The narrator of the next example of aesthetics of chastisement, Genesis 3:6, enlists the best of poetic abilities as he scolds Eve for disobeying God's command and eating the forbidden fruit. This case, however, differs somewhat from the two previous examples, in that the criticism here is not entirely justified. On the one hand, Eve merits criticism (as does Adam) for challenging God's restriction and his divine command. On the other hand, while Eve deserves criticism on moral grounds, she does not deserve to be scolded on an intellectual basis. It is Eve, not Adam, who displays curiosity and who is tantalized by the idea that she might possess the divine knowledge that only God possesses.[9] It is evident that Eve is tempted not on sensual grounds but only on an intellectual basis: the only reason that drives her to eat the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge is the serpent's promise that she will gain divine knowledge. This underlines the fact that Eve cannot resist the thought that

she might acquire knowledge shared only by God. Indeed, the serpent's promise that Eve would not die if she touched the forbidden tree further goaded her to taste its fruit. However, this does not negate the fact that Eve's only motivation in eating the forbidden fruit was purely intellectual. Eve's claim to intellectual power is further substantiated when she, not Adam, speaks out, demonstrating verbal skill, which is one of the most salient manifestations of intellectual capacity. Despite the fact that God bestowed Adam with verbal superiority (by making him name all living creatures, including woman) Adam does not utter a word, but Eve proves articulate. In this context, one can discern the narrator's scolding aimed at Adam: although he supposedly possesses verbal superiority, he is mute and speaks out only when God addresses him directly, and then only to incriminate his wife for an act in which he was a full participant. Neither his silence nor his eventual speech earns him much respect. The narrator's version of Genesis 3:6 chides Adam on intellectual grounds for failing to exercise his verbal capacity, and on character flaws as well (he proves to be a coward who tries to escape blame by incriminating his wife). Although the narrator's principal criticism is reserved for Eve and not for Adam, her transgression should neither cloud nor belie her intellectual faculties. The narrator enlists an intricate literary system that joins three aesthetic devices in order to cast a shadow on Eve's intellectual powers.

The fact that God wished to bestow verbal superiority on Adam is connected with the narrator's latent criticism of Eve on intellectual grounds. Indeed, the narrator does not do justice to Eve in belittling her intellectual faculties. As in criticizing Abraham, the narrator of Genesis 3:6 repeats the literary device of utilizing the context while combining it with a comprehensive rhetorical system of critical aesthetics of chastisement. Fifteen verses earlier, the narrator reports the amazing task that God gives Adam, to name all living creatures on earth (Gen. 2:19–20). Adam completes this task, finishing by naming woman (Gen. 2:23).[10] Naming all living creatures demonstrates Adam's intellectual superiority over all creatures, including woman, and points out the irony when Eve speaks out. When Adam finally does talk, his words are far from flattering to his humanity (Gen. 3:12). Secondly, the act of naming in the Bible carries connotations of creation ("The world was created by a word" [*haOlam nivra beMilah*] is a well-known Rabbinic adage) and of new birth. Such is the case when God renames Abram and Sarai as Abraham and Sarah (the letter *h* designates God) and when the celestial messenger renames Jacob Israel (after Jacob proved his mettle in the struggle with God's angel, as the Hebrew etymology attests). Thus, naming all living creatures made Adam a partner in God's creation: his verbal creations completed God's concrete

creations. The Hebrew text reinforces the creative function connected with Adam's naming the living creatures: "and whatever Man will name it, living soul is its name." This seemingly clumsy syntax is particularly significant: once Man names an animal, the animal earns life and turns into a "living soul" (*nefesh haya*). Thus, naming truly equals creation. But, scolding Eve while stressing Adam's intellectual-verbal superiority proves a shrewd literary device on the part of the narrator, who wishes to lessen the woman's intellectual qualities that prompted her to disobey God. The context is an effective tool in conveying latent criticism. While Eve deserves criticism on moral grounds for disobeying God, her intellect does not merit criticism. The fact that intellectual curiosity made Eve sin on moral grounds probably makes the narrator do her the injustice of denigrating her intellectual acumen. Using the context as a critical tool is just part of the narrator's latent, intricate system of (wrongly) criticizing Eve on intellectual grounds.

The narrator first insinuates that it is the physical, rather than intellectual, attractions of the forbidden fruit that tempted Eve. Then he reports that she confuses the names of the two trees in the garden of Eden. In Genesis 2:9 we read that the full name of the tree of life is the "tree of life in the middle of the garden" (*etz hHayyim betokh haGan*); the full name of the tree of knowledge is the "tree of knowledge of good and evil" (*etz haDa't tov vaRa*). But in Genesis 3:3, when Eve speaks with the serpent and refers to the forbidden tree (the tree of knowledge), she mistakenly refers to it as "the tree in the midst of the garden" (*haEtz asher betokh haGan*). Eve seems to confuse the names of the two trees, which might be her own fault. However, the narrator's ascribing the wrong words to Eve is part of his shrewd attempt to discredit her on an intellectual-verbal basis, in order to belittle her intellectual abilities. The third stage in the narrator's attack on Eve makes his second phase more evident.

As previously stated, Eve is attracted to the tree of knowledge on purely intellectual grounds. The serpent makes two promises when he tempts Eve to try the fruit of the tree of knowledge: (1) that she will gain immortality (when God banished them from Eden), and (2) that the fruit will bestow on her divine knowledge possessed only by God. The attraction of the first promise certainly tempts Eve, but it has no effect on the purely intellectual nature of the second promise, which concerns only intellect and does not even hint at sensual pleasure. Although Eve's intellectual curiosity was probably aroused prior to her encounter with the serpent, that encounter finally drove her to satisfy that curiosity. Thus, it was only Eve's intellectual faculties that made her break the word of God. Now, the narrator deviates from this when he

names the three reasons that were the grounds for Eve's attraction to the tree of knowledge: "And woman saw that (a) the tree was good for eating [*ki tov haEtz lema'khal*], (b) and a delight to the eyes [*veKhi ta'va hou laEinayim*], and (c) that the tree was desirable as a source of knowledge or wisdom [*veNechmad haEtz leHaskil*], she took of its fruit and ate" (Gen. 3:6). The narrator's rhetorical deceit is so effective that none of the commentators or biblical scholars who studied Genesis has ever doubted its accuracy.[11] The narrator who aims to conceal Eve's intellectual motivation in being attracted to the tree of knowledge attributes to her two clearly sensual motivations, while delaying the third, intellectual motivation, to the end of the list and presenting it in a sensual context.

The use of the Hebrew word *ta'va* (delight), which also means lust and sexual passion, in the context *ta'va hou laEinayim* (delight to the eyes), underlines the sensual drives that the narrator tries to attribute to Eve. Although he grudgingly offers the third motivation as well (the promise of knowledge), he still manages to anchor it in the context of sexual passion, to lessen any intellectualism connected with that motivation. The narrator states that Eve realized that the tree was *nechmad lehaskil*—desirable as a source of knowledge (wisdom). Since *nechmad* derives from the Hebrew root *ch.m.d,* which designates lust or sexual passion, its appearance in the context of *lehaskil* (to impart knowledge) considerably reduces any claim to intellectualism, and therefore Eve's wish to acquire intellectual knowledge is seemingly motivated by nothing more than a low sensual passion. The narrator thus enlists two aesthetic devices (attributing sensual motivations to Eve, and anchoring her intellectual motivation in a sensual context), based on theme and composition, in order to belittle her intellectual motivation.

Moreover, in order to mislead the reader and leave the impression that Eve's temptation was brought about by an erotic quest, not an intellectual one, the narrator strews the story with erotic allusions: the injunction against sexual contact between humans and animals, the suggestive phallic shape of the serpent, and the fact that the knowledge acquired by Adam and Eve is sexual, carnal knowledge. Before tasting of the forbidden fruit, "they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed" (Gen. 4:25). After eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge, they possess sexual awareness, which engenders shame, "and their eyes were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons" (Gen. 3:7).

The narrator's effort to denigrate Eve and discount her intellectual capabilities is reflected also in his attitude toward the name of Eve and the name

of Lot's wife. It should be noted, as far as names are concerned, that the Bible ascribes much higher verbal and intellectual abilities to Adam than to his wife. By naming and defining the woman, Adam seems to create her. He names her twice: woman (Gen. 2:23) and then Eve (Gen. 3:20). (In Hebrew, Eve's name is *Chava*, which derives from *Chaim,* life.) The woman's identity is thus partially erased, and she is inextricably linked to Adam.

Lot's wife suffers from similar discrimination. Like Eve, Lot's wife, too, disobeys God's command out of intellectual curiosity and is duly punished. Lot's wife looks back to see the destruction that God had wrought ("But his wife looked back behind him, and she became a pillar of salt" [Gen. 19:26].) While Eve is diminished when she is given a name (being defined in relation to man and from his perspective), Lot's wife does not even deserve a name; she is referred to only as Lot's wife.

Eve is presented as inferior to her husband on other levels as well. While Adam was created for his own sake (in the second version of creation), Eve is created solely for the purpose of serving him.

> And the Lord said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an helpmeet for him . . . And the Lord caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof. And the rib, which the Lord had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. (Gen. 2:18, 21–22)

Thus, the woman is not created for her own sake, and she is made from part of Adam's body. He is the whole; she is a part of the whole and thus inferior.

The process of name giving further underscores Eve's inferior status. Adam receives his name from God, yet Eve receives her name from Adam, not just once but twice. And this is after he has given names to all the animals. The discrimination against the woman is made more manifest when the two contradictory stories of the creation are compared.

> And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply, replenish the Earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that creeps on the earth. (Gen. 1:27–28)

In this version God creates man and woman together, making them completely equal: they are both created in God's image, both are enjoined to

multiply and fill the earth, and both are commanded to subdue and domi-
nate all living things. Woman is man's equal in all respects; there is no hint
of discrimination or denigration. The second version, however, presents a
very different picture: Adam—as his name indicates—is created from the soil
of the earth and not in God's image, but this is compensated by his elevation
to "verbal" creator when he is entrusted with naming the animals and woman.
"And whatever name man gave [to each creature], that was the name thereof"
(Gen. 2:19), or, perhaps more accurately, this semantically ambiguous verse
should be rendered as, "Whatever name Adam gave, the name was a living
thing." As previously mentioned, the act of naming thus infuses the creature
with a living soul. Though not created in God's image in this version, Adam
becomes God's deputy, his assistant in creation. Adam's verbal creation com-
pletes God's physical creation.

Woman's status in this version is significantly lower than in the previous
one. She is created to satisfy the man's needs; she is created from his body,
indicating her incompleteness, and she is on par with the animals when Adam
gives them all names. One wonders why it is this second version—with the
tree of knowledge, the serpent, the temptation, and the expulsion from the
garden of Eden—that has become etched in the collective human memory
and is so much a part of the intellectual and religious human experience,
and not the more egalitarian first version. The ideological motivation is obvi-
ous: it reflects the male chauvinist antifeminist tendencies of the biblical text.
In order to propagate this ideology, the text uses a cluster of aesthetic devices
that complement each other and reinforce the message.

The first device, a compositional one, yields a rhetorical device: the second
creation story (the one underscoring woman's inferiority) is the last one, thus
acquiring added rhetorical force and assuring it a permanent place in the col-
lective human memory.

The first creation story is ambivalent and raises troubling, unresolved ques-
tions. God is an abstract being, so how can man be created in God's image?
Then, at first, Adam is alone, but later, out of the blue, a woman, who is his
absolute equal, joins him.

The second version, however, is more concrete, more down to earth, so to
speak. Adam is created from the earth, and only then is woman created in a
dramatic, surgical fashion out of Adam's body. Thematically, the first version
is vague and enigmatic. It is conveyed in an indirect, static, concise manner;
there is "telling" but no "showing." The second version is presented in a much
more dramatic manner, with action, plot, and vitality. It is more aesthetically
complex and attractive than the brief, pale first version, and thus more likely

to be remembered, thereby serving the ideological purpose of the text, which is to obliterate the egalitarian version and inculcate woman's inferiority to man. One must bear in mind, of course, that the biblical text was written by men for men, at a time when gender equality did not exist. Its chauvinistic ideology is problematic for the modern age, but it is supported and buttressed by aesthetic sophistication and complexity that commands admiration.

The antifeminist ideology of the biblical text is anchored in an exclusively male point of view, which blatantly and knowingly ignores women's needs and rights. Women are subservient to men, perceived as chattel, barred from exercising their will and natural inclinations. The Bible, unfortunately for many of us living in the twenty-first century, is replete with examples of women's subjugation.

The first chapter of 1 Kings opens with a description of King David in his old age. Since he cannot keep warm, his servants seek a young virgin

> and let her stand before the king, and let her cherish him and lie in his
> bosom, that the king may get heat. So they sought for a fair damsel
> throughout all the coasts of Israel, and found Abishag a Shunammite, and
> brought her to the king. And the damsel was very fair, and cherished the king,
> and ministered to him, but the king knew her not. (1 Kings 1:2–4)

A couple of questions arise: If the function of the woman is to serve as an "electric blanket" to the old and shivering king, why stipulate that she be a virgin and fair? The two qualifications (virginity, beauty) make it clear that her function must also be sexual. The fact that the king "knew her not" only testifies to his dotage, not to her job description. Abishag is treated as a commodity; she is chosen for her beauty and sold to the aging king for her services, sexual and otherwise, and her voice is never heard. Again, this was the case with Sarah, who was sold by her husband, Abraham, to Pharaoh; and also the case with Esther, who was chosen by Ahasuerus's servants from among a host of "fair young virgins" following Vashti's banishment (Esther 2:2). A similar fate befell Saul's daughter Michal, who was wrenched from a loving husband: "And David sent messengers to Ishbosheth, Saul's son, saying, 'Deliver me my wife Michal, which I espoused to me' . . . And Ishbosheth sent and took her from her husband, Paltiel, the son of Laish. And her husband went with her along weeping behind her" (2 Sam. 3:14–15). Ruth, too (on the advice of her mother-in-law, Naomi), is willing to offer herself to Boaz as a piece of merchandise, because a single woman is unclaimed property, valueless chattel.

King David, in the Bathsheba affair, appropriates the wife of Uriah the Hittite. Sending the husband to fight on the front, the king stays in his palace enjoying his recent conquest. Here, too, the woman's voice is not heard. After enjoying her sexual favors, the king sends her back ("and she returned to her house" [2 Sam. 11:4]). In this instance, the biblical text not only treats the woman as merchandise but also implies that she colluded in the affair. When she is brought to the king, the text says "And she came in [*yba*] unto him" (2 Sam. 11:4), as if she took an active part in the illicit affair. Bathsheba is thus presented as a loose woman, unfaithful to her husband. The verb used here (*yba*) has a connotation of sexual intercourse, as in "And he [Abraham] went in unto Hagar and she conceived" (Gen. 16:4).

Another example of chauvinistic treatment of women can be found in the first chapter of the Song of Songs. The Shulammite describes how the king "brought me into his chambers" (1:4) and, a little later, explains that her brothers have sold her to the king (1:6). Using lovely metaphoric language, she says, "They [my brothers] made me keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard I have not kept" (1:6). The "vineyards" later become the arena for hectic sexual activity: "The little foxes making love in the vineyards." (The common translation of *mechablim* as spoil or ruin is erroneous and irrelevant to the context. The root *Ch.b.l.* has the additional connotation of "breed" as in Song of Songs 8:5, "It was there your mother conceived you," which uses the same root.) Thus, when the Shulammite complains, "my own vineyard I have not kept," she is saying "I was not allowed to carry out my own love affair." In fact, she was prevented from realizing her own love for her rustic beloved (an obstacle she overcomes at the end of the book) because her brothers have sold her to the all-powerful king for some very tangible remuneration (8:11).

The Bible is replete with examples of disenfranchised women, deprived of basic human rights, traded like objects, and sexually abused. Genesis 19 describes how Lot welcomes God's emissaries and entertains them lavishly and generously (not knowing that they are godly messengers, which earns him even bigger praise). However, in the dead of night, "the men of the city surrounded the house, both old and young, all the people from every quarter. And they called to Lot, 'Where are the men who came to stay with you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may know them'" (Gen. 19:5). The sinful citizens of Sodom demand that Lot surrender his two guests to them, so they can sexually abuse them. Lot, ever the perfect host, makes the assailants the following offer in an attempt to protect his guests: "I pray you, brothers, do not act so wickedly. Behold now, I have two daughters who have not known men, let me bring them out to you, and do to them whatever you want, only

to these men do nothing, for they came under the shadow of my roof" (Gen. 19:7–8). Lot makes a great sacrifice here, but it is at the expense of his two innocent daughters. Since the men of Sodom were after homosexual sex, would it not have made more sense for Lot to offer himself instead of his daughters?

A similar story is recounted in Judges 19, in the affair of the Levite and his concubine. The owner of the concubine and his servant are offered lodgings by a kind old man. But the domestic idyll is soon disrupted by cruel and vicious assailants.

> Now as they were making their hearts merry, behold, the men of the city, evil, depraved people, surrounded the house and beat at the door. They said to the old man, the master of the house, "Bring forth the man that came into your house, that we may know him." So the master of the house went out to them and said, "Nay, my brothers, I pray you, don't do such evil, seeing that this man came to my house, do not behave so abhorrently. Behold, here is my daughter, a maiden, and his concubine; I will bring them out now, and you can use them as you will, but don't do such evil thing to this man." But the men would not listen to him; so the man took his concubine and brought her to them, and they knew her and abused her all night long, until morning, and when dawn came they let her go. (Judg. 19:22–25)[12]

This account is nearly a verbatim repetition of the Lot story. Again, the man of the house displays generous hospitality while at the same time sacrificing the womenfolk and subjecting them to brutal sexual assault (even though the evildoers evince clear preference for men).

Sexual discrimination in the Bible is often coupled with contempt and disdain for women. The Jericho woman who risked her life hiding Joshua's spies is known only as Rahab the Harlot (Josh. 6:17). King Solomon, we are told, "loved many foreign women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonites and Hittites" (1 Kings 10:1), but the voices of these women are never heard. Tamar had to disguise herself as a prostitute in order to prove to her father-in-law, Judah, that he had reneged on his promise to her (Gen. 38:14–16). Portraying women as prostitutes, or comparing the people of Israel to a strumpet (a metaphor in which God is the husband and Israel is the erring wife) is very common in the Bible: "How is the faithful city become a harlot!" (Isa. 1:21); " . . . therefore your daughters shall commit whoredom and your spouses shall commit adultery" (Hosea 2:13), and we must note that it is the women who commit the sin of prostitution, not the men. In Amos 4:1, the sinners are described as "cows of

Bashan" (females); Nahum 3:1 states, "Woe to the bloody city! It is full of lies and robbery . . . Because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the well-favored harlot, the mistress witchcraft that sells nations through her whoredom and families through her witchcraft." Once again, the sinful people are represented as women practicing prostitution and witchcraft—not the men! When God commands Hosea to carry out a symbolic act, he uses a woman as the medium of sin and corruption. "And the Lord said to Hosea, 'Go take a wife of whoredom and children of whoredom, for the land has committed great whoredom, departing from the Lord'" (Hosea 1:2). In Zephaniah 2:15, the sinful nation is described metaphorically as female: "This is the rejoicing city that dwells carelessly, that says in her heart, I am and there is none beside me." In Proverbs 2:16, the sinful people are, again, cast in the image of a treacherous, meretricious woman: "To deliver thee from the strange woman, even from the stranger that flatters with her words, which forsakes her husband and forgets the covenant of her God." And further on, "For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil. But her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her step take hold on hell" (Prov. 5:2–5).

In the Bible, impurity attaches only to the woman following copulation, while the male remains clean and unblemished. For instance, in the Bathsheba affair King David, having forced his sexual attentions on the woman, sends her away. "And David sent messengers and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness; and she returned to her house" (2 Sam. 11:4). Similarly, Leah and Rachel, the daughters of Laban the Aramite, are sold to Jacob in return for his work, and their voices are never heard in the matter. The patriarch Abraham, who once sold his wife to Pharaoh, does so again when he returns to the Negev kingdom of Gerar: "And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister, and Abimelech of Gerar sent and took Sarah" (Gen. 20: 2). Not only Abraham resorts to selling his wife twice; Isaac follows in his father's footsteps.

> And there was a famine in the land, besides the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went to Abimelech king of the Philistines at Gerar. And the men of the place asked him of his wife; and he said, "She is my sister, lest the men of the place should kill me for Rebekah, because she was fair to look upon." (Gen. 26:1, 7)

These are just a few examples of the Bible's attitude toward women: they are considered chattel, sexual objects, or—literally and metaphorically—sinners

and whores. The presentation of women as deceivers, dissemblers, and con-nivers is also common in the Bible. In Genesis 27, we encounter Rebekah bamboozling her ancient, blind, and feeble husband so he would bless her preferred son, Jacob, over Esau. She dresses Jacob in his twin's clothes and thus extracts from Isaac the desired blessing.

Rachel, too, is presented as a schemer who uses wily subterfuges, in addi-tion to being an idol worshiper. "And Laban went to shear his sheep; and Rachel had stolen the images that were her father's" (Gen. 31:19), and later, "Rachel had taken the images and put them in the camel saddlebag" (Gen. 31:34). One of Israel's mothers is thus represented as a thief and a worshiper of pagan fertility icons.

Women's inferior status is especially apparent in the story of the Binding of Isaac. God commands Abraham to sacrifice his son, and Abraham com-plies obediently. Sarah, the mother of the boy—conceived after long years of frustration and despair—is never consulted. The sacrifice of a son brings to mind the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter in the book of Judges. Before going out to battle, Jephthah makes a vow to God:

> If thou shalt without fail deliver the Ammonites into my hands, then
> whatsoever comes forth of the doors of my house to meet me when I return
> in peace from the Ammonites, shall surely be the Lord's and I will offer it up
> for a burnt offering. (Judg. 11:30–31)

What is the meaning of this barbaric pagan custom of offering to God human sacrifice? Whence Jephthah's hubris that he can thus bribe God and that his sacrifice will be accepted? In the Binding of Isaac, at least, it is God's injunc-tion to Abraham, and in this case God intervenes and prevents the actual sac-rifice. In Jephthah's case, the sacrificed daughter does not even have a name. Her personality is obliterated: she is presented merely as her father's property to dispose of as he wills. While the male victim is rescued, the female victim is slaughtered like a sacrificial lamb. It is hard to find a more blatant exam-ple of the Bible's cruel treatment of women.

In Judges 15:2, the father of Samson's Philistine wife regrets having given his eldest daughter to Samson, so he offers him her younger sister instead: "Is not her younger sister fairer than she? I pray you, take her instead." There is, however, one exception to the biblical rule of denigrating women. In Genesis 24:57, Rebekah is consulted about a possible match ("We will call the maiden and enquire at her mouth"). King Saul, on the other hand, offers his daugh-ter Meirav to David without asking her (1 Sam. 18). In Leviticus 21:9, we read:

"If the daughter of a priest profanes herself by playing the whore, she profanes her father; she shall be burnt with fire." Her sin is not so much that she engages in prostitution, but that she tarnishes her father's reputation. Her male accomplice, however, is not punished, while she is doomed to the stake. In Numbers 27:8, we read, "If a man die and have no son, you shall cause his inheritance to pass unto his daughter," implying that as a rule, a woman has no inheritance rights; only the death of her brothers qualifies her as an heir.

In fact, all the textual examples in this chapter emphasize that the woman's inferior status and her subjugation to the male, found at the very beginning of the Bible, are part and parcel of the punishment God metes out to Eve for having eaten of the forbidden fruit: "your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" (Gen. 3:16). Immediately following the account of the creation of the world, woman's fate is sealed. The same misogynistic code permeates all the other books of the Bible, and examples abound.

Isaac (Yitzhak)'s name is commonly associated with laughter, and with Sarah's incredulous reaction to God's promise that she will bear a child in her old age. But this may be "folk etymology," since the root *z.h.k.* in Hebrew also has the connotation of sexual activity and hence procreation ("Isaac and Rebekah his wife were making love" [Gen. 26:8]). When God hears Sarah laugh in disbelief, he scolds her (Gen. 18:14–15). Interestingly enough, Abraham, too, laughs at God's promise of an offspring, even before Sarah does, but the collective memory ignores this fact and focuses only on Sarah's incriminating behavior. "And Abraham fell upon his face and laughed, and said in his heart, 'Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? And shall Sarah that is ninety years old bear?'" (Gen. 17:17). Abraham, the man, is not scolded for his distrust and incredulity.

Tolla mulier in utero—A Woman Is Nothing but a Womb

The Bible is replete with examples of how women are reduced to their biological function as breeders. As discussed earlier, Sarah's barrenness comes at the conclusion of a long genealogical list stressing breeding, procreation, and descendants (Gen. 11:30). The compositional and rhetorical devices used in that text serve to emphasize and underline Sarah's childlessness. This aesthetic mechanism serves the ideological purpose revealed in Genesis 12:3, where God promises Abraham, "And I will make of thee a great nation." Sarah's barrenness is emphasized in order to lead to the crowning outcome: the birth of a great nation. Sarah, the barren wife, is to give birth to a great nation, but it is only the man that is given the promise of a birth. Her role is confined to giving birth; she has become a receptacle.

A sad comment about this reduction of women to breeders is heard in Rachel's complaint to Jacob: "When Rachel saw that she had born Jacob no children, she became envious of her sister, and Rachel said to Jacob, 'Give me children or I shall die'" (Gen. 30:1). And note the expression "bore no children to Jacob" implying that children—preferably sons—are only for her husband's sake.

Fearing she may bear no children, Rachel gives her handmaid Bilhah to Jacob, so that the maid's offspring may be considered, indirectly, Rachel's children: "that I may also obtain children by her" (Gen. 30:3). And let us not forget that Sarah gave Abraham her handmaid Hagar to bear him (and indirectly, her) a son, using the same expression of obtaining children through the maid, thus redeeming her personal and social status. However, as soon as Hagar conceives, she takes liberties and "her mistress was despised in her eyes" (Gen. 16:4), which underscores the fact that a woman's sole function is to serve as a womb and her ability to breed determines her status. Even the maid looked down on Sarah.

Both Rachel and Sarah were so desperate in their childlessness and loss of stature that they were willing to sacrifice their intimacy with their husbands in order to function, albeit vicariously, as a womb. In her desperate attempt to conceive, Rachel resorts to stealing her father's fertility idols and to practicing idolatry. The male point of view determines a woman's status: a man's social standing is dependent on the number of offspring he has, and the woman's personal and social position is dictated by her ability to give him children. When she fails to do so—infertility was never assumed to be the man's fault—she loses her status. When both of Tamar's husbands die, she decides to trick Judah, her father-in-law, into impregnating her, so as not to remain childless (Gen. 38). As a widow, her status is already shaky and vulnerable, so to improve her position, she disguises herself as a harlot and seduces Judah in order to conceive a child by him. In a similar fashion, Lot's daughters are ready to commit incest, sleeping with their father (whom they trick the same way Tamar tricks her father-in-law) in order to fulfill their function as breeders (Gen. 19:22–36). Particularly affecting is Hannah's supplication to God to give her a child (1 Sam. 1:11). Hannah's husband, Elkana, is indeed a kind and compassionate man, who loves her despite her inability to conceive. But Hannah suffers from the hands of her husband's other wife Pnina, who is fecund and therefore enjoys a higher status, one that allows her to scorn and abuse the childless Hannah, even though Hannah is the preferred and beloved wife.

It is a distinct and widespread phenomenon that certain narratives, comprising specific plots, and key characters, repeat and reverberate in several

different contexts. What we have here is a narrative model that is used with variations and with various degrees of similarities. (These similarities enhance our ability to recognize the basic narrative patterns and the characters, which are common to all the variations.)

This poetic phenomenon is marked by the presentation of women as breeders, reduced to their function as procreators. In Genesis 19:30–38, we read about Lot and his two daughters, who have escaped from the devastation of Sodom and find shelter in a mountain cave. Having lost their sinful husbands, and believing that there are no more humans left in the world who could copulate with them "in the manner of all the Earth" (v. 31), the elder urges the younger, "Let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve the seed of our father" (v. 32). They are willing to go to the extreme of committing incest in order to fulfill their prescribed biological function.

The same narrative model is repeated in the story of Tamar and Judah (Gen. 38). Here, too, the woman is a widow of two husbands who died because they were sinners in the eyes of God. Judah, Tamar's father-in-law, refuses to give her his third son as a husband (as prescribed by the laws of levirate). Like Lot's daughters, in order to conform to her function as a womb, she initiates by subterfuge a sexual encounter with her father-in-law. And again, the same model can later be found again in the book of Ruth. Here the narrative focuses on two widows (Ruth and Orpah) of two sinners who died for their sins (as indicated by their names: Mahlon, connoting disease; and Chilion, connoting death).

Ruth's story later diverges from the plot line of the previous stories, but the basic similarity is still there. At the instigation of her mother-in-law, Naomi, Ruth initiates a sexual encounter with Boaz, which is carried out with stealth and deceit. Ruth goes to the threshing ground at night and lies down at Boaz's feet (Ruth 3:4–13) The text is ambiguous about what exactly happened between the two that night, but the subterfuge leads to the marriage of Boaz and Ruth and to the fulfillment of her biological function, as was the case with Lot's daughters and with Tamar. The three stories follow the same narrative plot and have the same motif; their purpose is to emphasize the woman's subordinate position and her function as repository for man's seed.

Joseph and Tamar (Genesis 37–45)

These chapters comprise two segments, each based on a separate plot line that develops with progressive complexity and sophistication. The first section centers on the sale of Joseph by his brothers, his subsequent rise to power

in Egypt, and the revenge he wreaks on his perfidious brothers (Gen. 37), which involves disguise and deception but later, reconciliation and restoration of familial love. The second section tells the story of Judah and Tamar (Gen. 38), whose theme is also betrayal and revenge involving deceit, dissembling, and the eventual payoff. From a compositional point of view, the text uses a curious and fascinating device in presenting the two stories. Instead of combining the two stories that share themes and plots, the shorter narrative (that of Tamar) breaks up the unfolding narrative of the longer story (that of Joseph), and only when the former is complete does the text resume the chronicle of Joseph and his brothers. What we have here is a distinct compositional device, involving cutting one story short and interpolating another, which yields a rhetorical device creating surprise. A short outline of the plots of the two stories so curiously intertwined brings to light the significance, aesthetic function, and underlying ideology that drives home the woman's exclusive function as a breeding machine.

Joseph was his father's favorite son, manifested by the special robe with long sleeves ("coat of many colors" in the Greek translation; in Hebrew, *kutonet passim,* which means "striped blouse") that Jacob made for Joseph. Joseph has dreams, which he recounts to his brothers, and which indicate that he might rule over them. His brothers resent him, and even his doting father sees fit to rebuke him for his conceit. Soon afterward, the brothers go to feed their father's flock in Shechem (Gen. 37:12). Jacob sends Joseph to inquire after them, and when the brothers see Joseph, they plot to kill him out of resentment, irritation, and envy: "Let us slay him and cast him into some pit, and we will say, 'Some evil beast has devoured him, and we shall see what will become of his dreams'" (v. 20). Joseph's brother Reuben foils this murderous plot, but he is unable to prevent his brothers from throwing Joseph into a pit, but not before divesting him of his ornamental robe. Later, at brother Judah's suggestion, they sell Joseph to a convoy of Ishmaelites, who take him to Egypt. When Reuben finds out that Joseph has been sold, he rends his clothes as a sign of bereavement, and cries, "The child is gone, and I, wither shall I go" (v. 30). In desperation, he joins his brothers' subterfuge; they slaughter a goat, dip Joseph's coat in its blood, and bring it as evidence to Jacob, who cries bitterly: "It is my son's coat, an evil beast has devoured him. Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces" (v. 33). Jacob mourns for his son for many days, finding no consolation. In the meantime, Joseph is sold in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and captain of the guard.

Joseph's story has only just begun, and the reader, naturally, expects events to further unfold. But at this fraught junction in Joseph's life, the narrative

abruptly breaks off, and two aesthetic devices are put in place: a compositional device (the truncation of the narrative continuum) and a rhetorical device (the introduction of an entirely different story, resulting in the creation of surprise and the frustration of the reader's expectations). The rhetorical surprise is particularly heightened due to the dramatic nature of the events involving Joseph. The interpolated story (Gen. 38) centers on Judah, who departs from his brothers, marries the daughter of a Canaanite, and fathers two sons, Er and Onan.

When Er reaches maturity, his father finds a wife for him, whose name is Tamar. But Er is "wicked in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord slew him." According to the laws of the levirate, Onan, Judah's second son, was supposed to marry the widow, but Onan, too, displeases God and soon dies. According to custom, Judah should have given Tamar to his third son, Shelah, as husband, but fearing that this son would also die, Judah misleads Tamar and sends her to her father's house, supposedly to wait there for Shelah to reach maturity. In fact, Judah has already resolved not to keep his promise to Tamar.

Tamar decides to teach her father-in-law a lesson. She disguises herself as a harlot and sits by the side of the road. When Judah wants to sleep with her, he promises to give her a kid from his flock, but she demands a pledge, and so he gives her his signet, cord, and staff. When he sends her the kid, the woman is nowhere to be found. Three months later, Judah is told that his daughter-in-law has been acting like a whore and is pregnant. In his fury, Judah orders her to be burned, whereupon Tamar sends him his pledge. Judah realizes that he has wronged her, first by deceiving her and denying her right to a husband, and then by sleeping with her. Tamar later gives birth to twin boys. Thus ends the interpolated story in chapter 38, and Joseph's story resumes.

Joseph, in the meantime, had prospered in his Egyptian master's house, becoming the overseer of the household. Since he was handsome, his master's wife tried to seduce him. Loyal to his master, Joseph rejected her advances. She caught him by his robe, but Joseph left the garment in her hand and fled. Fearing the truth might come back to bite her, the wife accused Joseph of attempting to rape her, presenting his garment as evidence. Joseph was sent to prison; there, too, he prospered, and the chief jailer put him in charge of all the prisoners. Among the prisoners were two of Pharaoh's ministers, and they told Joseph their dreams. Joseph interpreted the dreams, and soon afterward his predictions came true: the chief of the butlers was restored to Pharaoh's service, and the chief of the bakers was hanged. When Pharaoh himself had two dreams that no one could interpret, the chief of butlers was

reminded of Joseph and his interpretative gifts. Joseph was released from prison and brought before Pharaoh; he interpreted Pharaoh's two dreams successfully, thus saving Egypt from a devastating famine. Joseph became deputy to Pharaoh, got married, and had two sons, Manaseh and Ephraim. The famine predicted by Joseph afflicted Canaan, too, so Jacob sent his sons to Egypt to buy corn. They came to plead with Joseph, since he was the governor, but they did not recognize him. Joseph did not reveal himself to his brothers, and instead spoke harshly to them and accused them of spying. He demanded that they bring his younger brother Benjamin from Canaan but leave Simon with him as security. The brothers obeyed and brought Benjamin over. After several confrontations, Joseph could no longer contain himself, and revealed himself to his brothers. He sent them back laden with food and gifts for his father, Jacob, who was elated to find out that his beloved son was alive and well (Gen. 39–45).

Why is Tamar's story inserted into Joseph's story? Why is Joseph's story cut short so abruptly at the most crucial juncture in the plot, and why are two such disparate tales strung together? The compositional collocation of the two stories, which is so unexpected, serves as a "rhetorical signpost" for the reader, who is bound to ponder the strange intermingling of the two stories and ask what the intention is behind this narrative ploy. Is there a connection between the two stories, or are they lumped together arbitrarily, amounting to nothing but a narrative failure?

A close examination of the two stories will yield ten points of similarity and analogy: (1) Both stories mention a pledge, a guarantee, a token of security (a kid in Tamar's story; Simon in Joseph's story). (2) In both cases the guarantee is requested not because of distrust but as a ruse, as part of a punishment meted by the wronged party (Tamar and Joseph). (3) Both stories focus on a younger brother whose father (Jacob, Judah) fears for his fate (Shelah in Tamar's story; Joseph, and then Benjamin, in Joseph's story). (4) In both stories a kid is associated with a pretense and a subterfuge. Tamar, pretending to be a harlot, demands a kid as a harlot's payment, and Joseph's brothers slaughter a kid in order to deceive Jacob and make him think it is Joseph's blood. (5) In both stories, the main protagonist suffers a great wrong at the hands of a close relative from whom protection and loyalty were expected. (6) In both stories, the wronged party puts on a disguise, masking the protagonist's true identity when meeting with the wrongdoing relative. Tamar disguises herself as a harlot, and Joseph does not reveal his true identity when his brothers come to him in Egypt. (7) Both stories mention garments as a vehicle of deception. Tamar deceives her father-in-law by donning a harlot's

cloak; Joseph's brothers dip his cloak of many colors in blood to deceive their father. Potiphar's wife rips Joseph's coat and uses it later to deceive her husband and incriminate Joseph. (8) In both cases, the garment is an agent of deceit associated with sexual activity. Tamar wears a prostitute's garb to deceive Judah, and Potiphar's wife uses Joseph's robe to mislead her husband. (9) In both stories, the climax of the plot is the moment of recognition when the mask is removed and the protagonist's true identity is revealed. Having divested herself of the harlot's disguise, Tamar appears in front of Judah and is amply rewarded (with the birth of twins). Joseph, at the culmination of the story, reveals himself to his brothers and is rewarded with reconciliation and unification (once the brothers get their punishment and show contrition). (10) Both stories stress migration from place to place. In Tamar's story, Judah "went down from his brothers" (Gen. 38:1) and Joseph is taken down to Egypt (Gen. 39:1).

And now we can see that the two disparate, intertwined stories echo each other in an intricate web of similarities, analogies, and thematic overlapping. The interpolation of one story into the other is nothing but a compositional device, creating surprise and wonder in the reader, thus steering attention to the thematic device that eventually proves the two plots to be twin stories. On a diachronic level, the aesthetic mechanism has a domino effect: one poetic device leading to another. On a synchronic level, the aesthetic mechanism functions horizontally, meaning that all its poetic devices are placed on one line, interacting with each other through analogies and points of similarities.

The aesthetic mechanism that unifies the two stories leads the reader to the moral of the stories, the ideological message behind the text. The wronged party, the innocent victim, is the one handsomely rewarded in the end: Tamar gives birth to two sons, and Joseph gains stature and prominence.

Behind this worthy ideological message, however, lurks another one, which is not so praiseworthy, and which is prevalent throughout the Bible: the denigration and discrimination of women. Joseph receives the highest reward: he becomes governor of the land, and once his brothers repent, he is reunited with them. Compared to this, Tamar's reward is puny. She becomes a mother but she remains alone, a widow, deprived of status and entitlements. The man who wronged her receives no punishment and expresses no regrets. Tamar's "reward" simply reinforces the woman's destiny and function as a breeder. It stresses her inferior status as man's chattel, echoing the Genesis description of woman as a "helpmeet" (Gen. 2:18) and the injunction "he shall rule over thee" (Gen. 3:16).

And so we return to the title of this chapter, "Sex, Lies, and the Bible." *Sex* implies the exploitation of women, their reduction to a sexual commodity and, ultimately, to an organ of reproduction. *Lies* refers to the deceptions men often use against women to keep them subjugated. And the *Bible* exposes the weaknesses of men and of the laws they devise to malign and marginalize women.

Moses and Joshua descend from Mount Sinai (Exod. 19:14)

Moses anoints Aaron (Lev. 8:9)

Dathan and Abiram, sons of Cora, offer a strange fire before God (Num. 16:18)
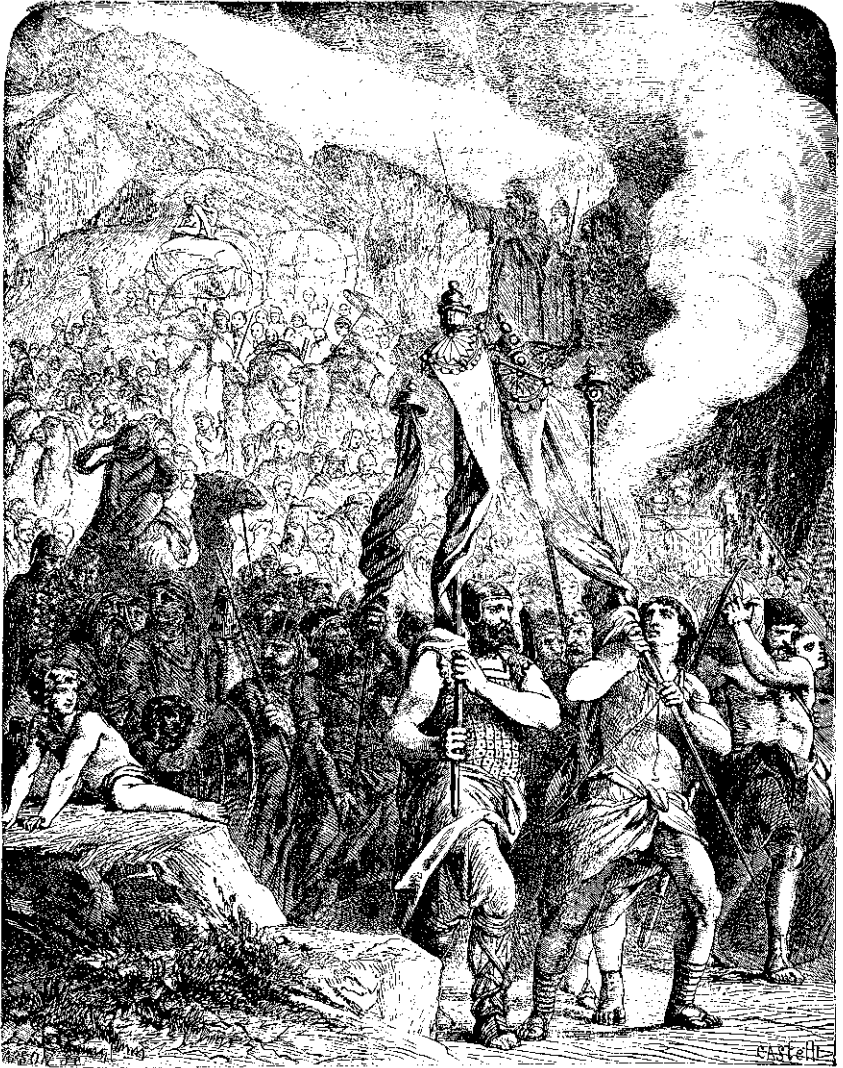
The pillar of smoke protects the Israelites in the desert (Exod. 14:21)
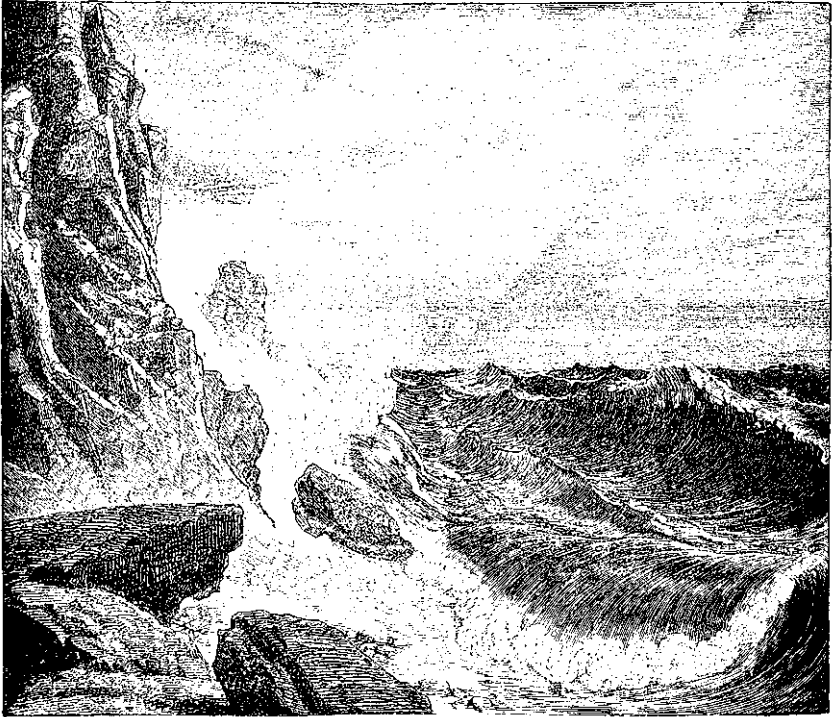
The Flood (Gen. 7:11–12)

Job's friends come to console him (Job 2:11–13)

Jonah in the tempestuous sea (Jon. 1:4)

Elijah ascends to heaven in a chariot (2 Kings 2:1)
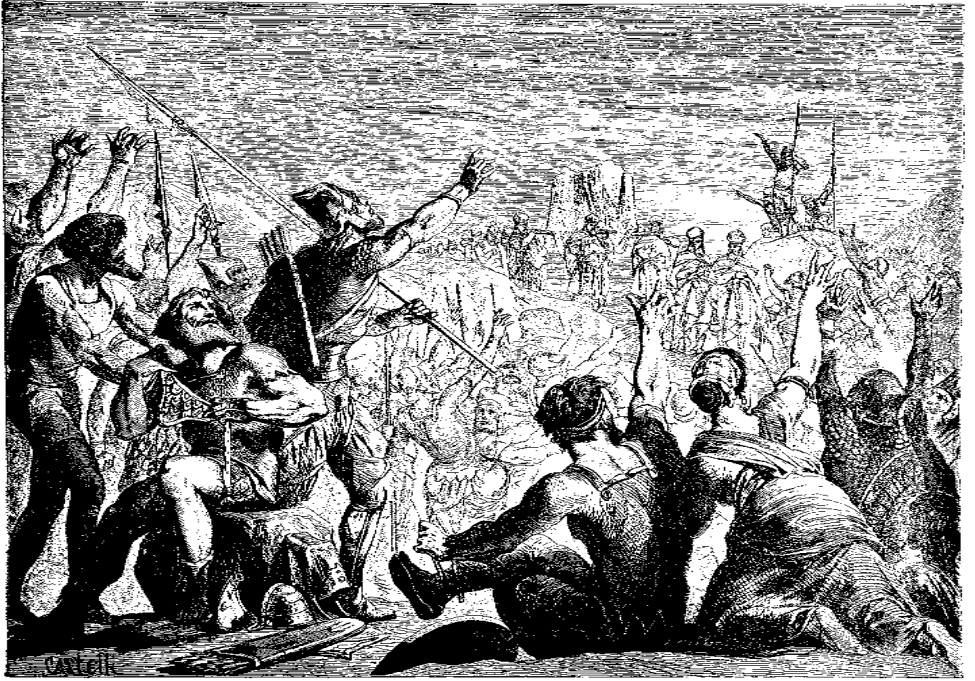
The Israelites and the ark confront the Philistines (1 Sam. 4:5)

The Israelites defeat the Philistines in the battlefield (1 Sam. 7:10)

Samuel anoints Saul to be the king of Israel (1 Sam. 10:1)

Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden (Gen. 2:25)

Cain slays his brother Abel (Gen. 4:1)

Hagar and Ismael are sent to the desert (Gen. 21:14–15)
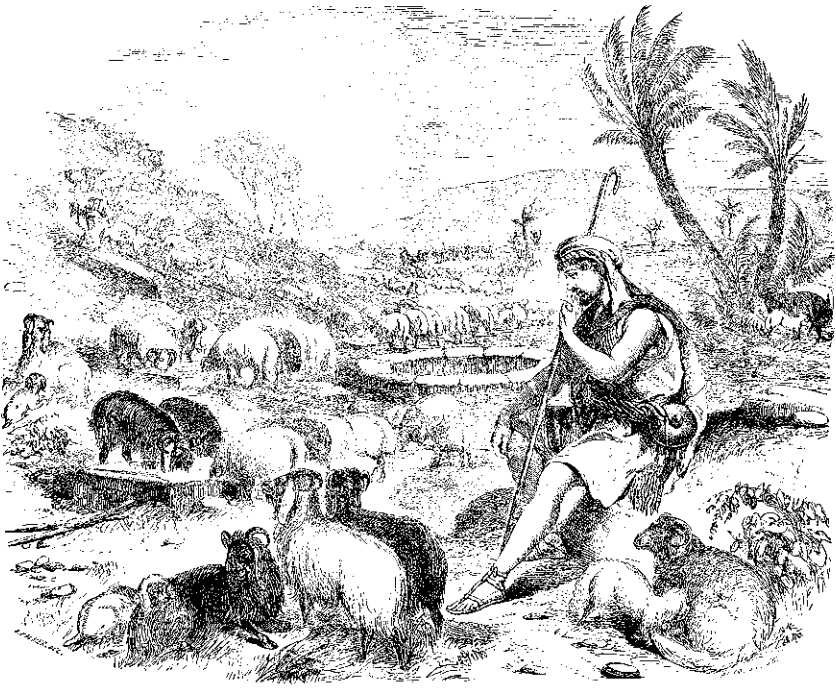
Jacob tends Laban's flock of sheep (Gen. 29:20)

Joseph dreams (Gen. 37:6–7, 9)

7

Rewarding Aesthetic Excavation in a Biblical Literary Site

Are not you frightened of the circumcision plan?
Are you not afraid to be circumcised and circumcised
Until nothing shall be left of you
Except a Jewish pain?

—YEHUDA AMICHAI, "To a Convert"

Chapters 17 and 18 in Genesis give us the opportunity for an in-depth look, first of all, at an aesthetic-ideological study examining a variety of literary devices (associated mostly with composition and rhetoric) whose sole aim is to underline Abraham's superior status both as God's elected disciple and his herald. And second, we focus on a comparative analysis of Genesis 17 and 18, where extended comparisons and analogies to his cousin, Lot, further enhance Abraham's elevated status.

From a structural point of view, Genesis 18 is divided into two distinctive parts. One part focuses on a visit by three celestial harbingers who announce to Abraham and Sarah that they are about to conceive a long-awaited male heir, despite Sarah's advanced age and her persistent barrenness. The other part focuses on Abraham's (and the three celestial harbingers') visit to the city of Sodom, where Abraham is informed by God that he has resolved to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah as punishment for their iniquitous and abominable practices. It is here that Abraham engages in the famous bargaining argument with God in which he tries to convince the Creator to rescind the verdict and spare the city of Sodom for the sake of the ten righteous men who may be residing there. Why were two such dramatically different textual corpora welded together? The first corpus bespeaks of good tidings: the birth of a much-desired son. The second corpus also involves a visit, this time by Abraham himself, accompanied by God. But here the tidings are of gloom and

doom, foretelling the destruction of many lives. The juxtaposition of the two texts and the surprising contrast between the two chronicles have a significant thematic import. There is intervention from above in both stories, for the tidings in both cases are delivered by supernatural beings. In this respect, the analogy is direct and straightforward. In the first story, the tidings are positive and salutary, and given to a pair of excellent and deserving people: Abraham, God's disciple, and Sarah, his wife. In the second story, however, the tidings carry a message of death and mass destruction to a sinful and wicked people whose evil ways have invoked God's wrath. These compositional and rhetorical devices are put into deft and effective use, as the text draws an analogy between the two events and, at the same time, contrasts and juxtaposes them, bestowing a thematic unity without being schematic and overly rigid.

The compositional device that unites the two divergent sections of the chapter also serves an ideological purpose. This is the case in the vast majority of the Hebrew Bible stories: the aesthetic-literary-poetic devices employed by the text are not there for their own sake but are, rather, mobilized and harnessed in the service of a particular message. The aesthetic devices, underscoring and reinforcing the ideology promulgated by the text, is an educational lesson imparted to the reader. And these devices, with their enticing poetic appeal, operate as "bait," attracting the reader to the ideological content.

Abraham and Sarah

The most significant event recounted in chapter 18 is the announcement that Sarah is about to conceive a son. This long-awaited offspring will ensure the fulfillment of God's earlier promise to Abraham (Gen. 15:5) when God took Abraham outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and count the stars, if you be able to number them: and He said unto him, So shall thy seed be." Thus, the prophecy of the birth of an heir is crucial to the existence of the Hebrew nation, God's chosen people. Yet despite the paramount importance of these tidings, they constitute only a tiny fraction of the chronicle, which is devoted mostly to the narration of Abraham's hospitality toward the three strangers (whose true identity as God's messengers is unknown to him), to God's decision to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, and to the subsequent argument in which Abraham pleads with God to spare the doomed cities for the sake of a few righteous men. These latter events are presented to the reader in great detail and with much elaboration, while the most significant event in the chapter is singularly brief and squeezed between lengthy narratives. This lack of proportion, however, is neither random nor arbitrary. It is a deliberate device to focus the reader's attention on Abraham's supreme status and

his unparalleled importance in the narrative of the birth of the nation. The advent of an heir, important as it may be for the future existence of the people, cannot eclipse Abraham's prominence as the prime progenitor of God's chosen people. Thus, all the literary, rhetorical, and aesthetic strategies occurring in the text are mobilized toward enhancing Abraham's status and function as God's first disciple and the first ancestor of God's chosen people. The announcement of an heir to Abraham is the beginning of the fulfillment of God's earlier promise to Abraham, "I will make you a great nation" (Gen. 12:2) and "I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth, so that if one can count the dust of the earth, then your offspring too can be counted" (Gen. 13:16). It is interesting to note that Sarah's and Abraham's reaction to God's promise of a son is essentially the same: they both respond with a laugh. But when Sarah laughs, she is scolded and rebuked by God: "Sarah lied, saying 'I did not laugh,' for she was frightened. But He replied, 'No, you did indeed laugh'" (Gen. 18:15). However, when Abraham is told earlier by God, "I will bless her [Sarah]; indeed, I will give you a son by her" (Gen. 17:16), Abraham, too, expresses his disbelief in God's promise with laughter: "Abraham threw himself on his face, and laughed, as he said to himself, 'Can a child be born to a man a hundred years old, or can Sarah bear a child at ninety?'" (Gen. 17:17).

   In fact, Abraham further expresses his distrust of God's word when he says, "Oh, that Ishmael might live by Your favor!" (Gen. 17:17), implying that if he fails to conceive a son with his wife in old age, at least he should be grateful to God for keeping Ishmael alive. But surprisingly, God takes no offense at Abraham's skepticism nor does he rebuke him. Instead, God further reassures Abraham: "Sarah, your wife, shall bear you a son, and you shall name him Isaac [Itzhak, in Hebrew, from the verb *Litzhok,* meaning "to laugh," as Abraham did] and I will keep my covenant with him and his descendents forever. It is an everlasting covenant" (Gen. 17:19). Although God reproaches Sarah for her disbelieving laughter, Abraham, no less distrustful and skeptical, receives only reassurance of the divine promise. This discrepancy in God's reaction to Abraham and to Sarah further underscores Abraham's centrality, and his unique status as God's herald and the forefather of the chosen people. Abraham is the ultimate focus of interest in this story, even if ostensibly another person (i.e., the future heir) seems to occupy center stage.

Poetic Devices Linking Abraham to God

We have noted so far the use of "straight analogy" and juxtaposition, or contradictory analogy in chapter 18. We also discern an additional aesthetic device

that serves as a unifying element. This device consists of several uses of the Hebrew roots *I.' R. E* (*Yod-Resh-Alef*) and *R. E.' H* (*Resh-Alef-He*). Although these two roots differ semantically, when they are conjugated, they sound quite similar. Thus, when the two roots are used in this chapter on three separate occasions, they produce alliteration and draw attention to the connection between those three separate parts, while eschewing a monotonous repetition.

At the beginning of chapter 18, the verb *I.' R. E* (he saw/he has been seen = appeared) occurs three times: "The Lord *was seen* to him [to Abraham] by the terebinths of Mamre; he [Abraham] was sitting at the entrance of his tent as the day grew hot. Looking up, he *saw* three men standing near him and he *saw* them, and he ran from the entrance of the tent to greet them, bowing to the ground." The fact that the second and third cases of the conjugated verb "to see" are both compositionally and semantically questionable further underscores their function as attention-getters, coming as they do at the very beginning of the narrative. There is an obvious redundancy in the phrase: "he saw three men near him and he saw them . . ." Syntactically, this use of the verb "to see" is highly unusual. Moreover, the fact that the infinitive opens and closes the phrase produces an effect of circularity, flanking the phrase on both sides. This compositional device of placing the verb on a textual continuum contributes significantly to its high visibility in the opening paragraph.

The second portion of the chapter chronicles the delivery of the message to Abraham. The three harbingers ask Abraham about Sarah's whereabouts, and he replies that she is inside the tent. The three messengers, in choruslike unison, tell Abraham that, in the course of a year, Sarah will give birth to a son. In the meantime, we are told that Sarah "was listening at the entrance of the tent, which was behind him" (Gen. 18:10). This apparently furtive approach of Sarah confers a dramatic character on the scene. The narrator then observes that Sarah and Abraham were too old to conceive a child and proceeds to describe Sarah's reaction: "And Sarah laughed to herself, saying, 'Now that I am old and worn out, shall I have enjoyment [renewal of my youth] with my master [husband] who is old too?" (Gen. 18:12). For that laughter, which expresses lack of trust in God, Sarah is scolded, and the narrator comments: "Sarah lied, saying, 'I did not laugh' for she was afraid [*YERE'AH*]" using a verb (*I.' R. E*) that resembles in sound the verbs (*R. E.' H*) used in the opening and the conclusion of the chapter. While in the first section the verb is associated with Abraham, in the third section it refers to God. Abraham joins God in punishing the sinful cities, for "the outrage of Sodom and Gomorrah is so stupendous and their iniquities are so grave" (Gen. 18:20). Thus, God expresses his resolution, "I shall go down and I shall see [*ve-E'RE'H*] whether they have indeed acted according to the outcry that has reached Me; if not,

however, I shall take note" (Gen. 18:21). Whereupon Abraham engages God in a lengthy argument in an attempt to persuade him to refrain from wreaking havoc on the sinful cities for the sake of the ten righteous men who might reside there. The compositional/thematic circle is now complete: in the first section, one traces the verb *R. E.' H* (three times), in the second section, one traces the verb *I.' R. E,* and in the third section, one retraces the verb *R. E.' H*. It is worth noting that the verb *R. E.' H* (to see) in the Bible is also associated with prophecy. For example, the prophet Samuel is called *Ha-Roe'h*—a seer, one who sees (i.e., the one who can predict the future, who possesses the power of prophecy) as in 1 Chronicles 26:28: "All that Samuel the seer [*Ha-Roe'h*] . . . had dedicated." Interestingly, even false prophets, imposters who mislead the people with their prognostications, are associated with the verb *R. E.' H* (to see) as, for instance, in Ecclesiastes 11:4: "and if one who sees in the clouds [who falsely tries to predict the future from seeing/observing the clouds] shall not reap." Clearly, the verb "to see" (*R. E.' H*) is associated with the ability to prophesy. This is of particular importance, as chapter 18 is associated with two kinds of prophecy: the first pertaining to the imminent birth of Abraham's heir, Isaac; the second presaging the imminent destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. These two separate and contradictory prophecies underscore God's power to both give and extinguish life. It also evokes the sense of cyclical existence associated with human destiny, beginning with life and leading toward death. Moreover, it reflects the Bible's oft-repeated message: the righteous shall be rewarded (Abraham is granted a son, despite his and Sarah's advanced age) while the transgressors will be punished (the sinners of Sodom and Gomorrah shall perish). By predicating the verb *R. E.' H* first to Abraham, then to God, an analogy is created between Abraham and God, implying equality and elevating Abraham to a sublime status. The aesthetic devices used in the text serve to aggrandize Abraham and at the same time to reinforce the Bible's ideological message.

From a thematic point of view, it is worth noting that chapter 17 ends with God's command to Abraham to perform circumcision on himself, his son Ishmael, and all the males in his household, while chapter 18 deals with the future birth of Isaac. A link is created here between the male sexual organ, the means of procreation and virility, and the actual birth of a son, as a demonstration of fertility and continuity. The conjunction of these two texts underscores God's repeated promise to Abraham that his heir will "become a great and populous nation, and all the nations of earth shall bless themselves through him" (Gen. 18:18).

The purpose of this analysis is to demonstrate how aesthetic devices in the text help underscore Abraham's exalted status. Aesthetic devices in the Bible

are always employed for higher, ideological purposes (faith-related, moral, historical, social, and the like). Certainly, in the Bible, the medium is *not* the message: indeed, the aesthetic device is a vehicle for delivering the text's ideological message. Poetic tools are there to enhance, amplify, and shed light on the moral content. In chapter 18, compositional and rhetorical devices interact to underscore the biblical text's ideology while at the same time elevating Abraham to a superior status.

The Three Emissaries

Chapter 18 opens with the phrase "And God was seen [appeared] to him [Abraham] at Alonei Mamreh [the oak trees of Mamreh] while he was sitting at the entrance of the tent in the heat of the day" (Gen. 18:1). The next verse describes Abraham's encounter with the three visitors. "Looking up, he saw three men standing near him. As soon as he saw them, he ran out of the tent to greet them, bowing down to the ground" (Gen. 18:2). He invites them to stay as his guests, displaying gracious hospitality: "Abraham hastened into the tent to Sara, and said, 'Quick, take three portions of choice flour, knead and bake cakes!' Then Abraham ran back to the herd, picked out a calf that was tender and fat and gave it to the servant who hastened to prepare it. He took curds and milk and the meat and set the food before them, and he waited on them under the tree while they ate" (Gen. 18:6–8). The narrative components here consist of God's appearance to Abraham, the visit of the three emissaries, and Abraham's eagerness and generosity in serving them. The close collocation of these elements creates an impression of causality. Because God appeared before Abraham at the beginning of the chapter, did Abraham conclude that the three visitors were heavenly harbingers bringing him God's tidings? Due to the possible connection between the first two verses, Abraham's eagerness to serve God's emissaries is a foregone conclusion.

This causal connection may be misleading. One need only recall E. M. Forster's distinction between "story" and "plot" in his *Aspects of the Novel,* where the phrase "the king died and then the queen died" illustrates the difference between the two concepts. It would be false to infer from the phrase any causal connection between the king's demise and the queen's, although readers weaned on fairy tales and romantic literature may be tempted to assume that the queen died of a broken heart after the loss of her mate. But the phrase presents only a temporal sequence: one death preceded the other. No corollary, no cause and effect.

The same is true about the sequence of verses in this chapter describing God's appearance before Abraham, the arrival of the three men, and Abraham's

exceeding generosity toward them. The juxtaposition of these three events may suggest to the reader a causal connection: since God appears before Abraham, he immediately concludes that the three visitors must be God's emissaries, and consequently he treats them with special respect and generosity. But a closer examination of the text will show that there is no cause and effect here, merely compositional collocation. This lack of causal connection clears Abraham of any suspicion that he treats the three strangers so hospitably only because he knows that they are God's messengers. Thus, Abraham is put on a higher moral level; he is seen to be respectful and magnanimous to strangers who happen to pass by his tent. The aesthetic device of placing certain events on a continuum confers upon the text a compositional structure. One may call it a "misleading composition" since the sequential structure produces a false impression of causality. There is an element of surprise in the realization that there is no causal link between the two events, and this is a rhetorical device used deliberately to bait the reader and to drive home the ideological message of the text. In fact, the more complex the aesthetic device (in this case, a cluster of devices that operate synchronically in one aesthetic intersection), the better it serves the ideological goal of the Bible.

Command, Covenant, and Fulfillment

A somewhat similar compositional device (though less intricate or challenging) can be found at the "seam" connecting chapter 17 and 18. In chapter 17 God delivers an extremely demanding command to Abraham and couples it with a handsome reward: "You shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and that shall be the sign of the covenant between you and Me" (Gen. 17:11). The demand is immediately followed by a promise: "Sarah, your wife, will bear you a son, and you shall name him Isaac, and I will maintain my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring to come" (Gen. 17:19). This promise of future fertility and continuity is expanded in the following verse to include Abraham's first-born son, Ishmael, who is about to be deprived of his status as Abraham's sole heir at Isaac's ascendancy. In order to compensate Ishmael for the loss of his primogeniture, God blesses him with prodigious fertility: "As for Ishmael, I have heeded you, I hereby bless him. I will make him fertile and exceedingly numerous . . . and I will make a great nation of his descendents" (Gen. 17:20). Thus, the two portions of the text under discussion are united by the common theme of fertility, and are thus placed along a textual continuum. Here the causal connection appears plausible and natural; the act of circumcision has to do with the male sexual organ, the instrument of procreation and fertility, which is the theme of the

following portion of the text, namely, the birth of Isaac and his future descendants, as well as the proliferation of Ishmael's offspring.

The concluding portion of chapter 17 focuses on Abraham, God's faithful disciple, carrying out God's command and circumcising himself and all the menfolk close to him: "Then Abraham took his son Ishmael, and all his homeborn slaves and all those he had bought, every male in Abraham's household, and he circumcised the flesh of their foreskin on that very day, as God had spoken to him. Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised and his son Ishmael was thirteen years old when he was circumcised. Thus, Abraham and his son Ishmael were circumcised that day, and all his household, his homeborn slaves and those he had bought were circumcised with him" (Gen. 17:23–27). In this instance, contrary to the Bible's notoriously economic and concise style, the description of the circumcision process is considerably lengthy and redundantly repetitious. These, too, are deliberate aesthetic devices whose purpose is to underscore Abraham's absolute obedience to God and the great alacrity he shows in fulfilling a command that is extremely painful and inscrutable.

Chapter 18, however, begins with the divine message delivered to Abraham and Sarah by the three harbingers: "Then one said, 'I will return to you next year, and your wife Sarah shall have a son'" (Gen. 18:10). Thus, the sequence of events is as follows: the narrative begins with God's command to Abraham to perform circumcision as a sign of the covenant between God, Abraham, and his offspring. Then follows God's promise to Abraham, that despite his and Sarah's advanced age, they will conceive a son, to be named Isaac. Abraham's firstborn son, Ishmael, though deprived of his heir's status, will be amply compensated and his offspring will be numerous. Next, the chronicle depicts with elaboration and repetition Abraham's compliance with God's command. The final portion focuses on God's messengers who deliver the good tidings. There is a certain jauntiness and oscillation in the narrative, a pendulum movement between the portions of the chronicle. This underlines the causal, thematic connection between circumcision and birth, between the male organ and procreation. The uncharacteristic repetition and redundancy is a rhetorical means that lures the reader to the ideological message that lies behind the aesthetic mechanism: God's promise to Abraham that his offspring will be "as countless as the stars in the sky." Thus, the biblical text creates an aesthetic intersection where two aesthetic devices (compositional and rhetorical) conjoin, not only for poetic purposes, but, more importantly, as an enhancement of the ideological message that they corroborate and amplify.

8

When Job and Genesis
Visit Psalm 139

Most of our lives are laments on what had happened
And mourning on what shall never happen.

—YEHUDA AMICHAI, "Jericho Last Time"

MAJOR TRENDS IN PREVIOUS CRITICISM OF PSALM 139

Most of the works that address Psalm 139 are primarily dedicated to detailed
linguistic commentary. Nevertheless, scholars have not neglected the prevail-
ing theme *in esse* in the psalm, which is God's absolute control of mankind's
life on earth. God not only created human beings but also closely monitors
even our tiniest activities and most private thoughts, from the cradle to the
grave. An early medieval commentator, Moshe Ibn Ezra, wrote the following:
"This is a very important psalm about God's ways: it has no peer in all five
books of the Psalms. A man will comprehend its meaning in proportion to his
comprehension of the ways of God and the ways of the soul."[1] Modern com-
mentators, however, underline the psalmist's response to God's relentless and
constant observation. Mitchell Dahood argues that the psalm is "A psalm of
innocence composed by a religious leader who was accused of idol worship."[2]
Dahood further explores this line of interpretation: "Since he has been accused
of worshiping idols, the psalmist asks Yahweh to examine him, concerning the
accuracy of the charge."[3] As is quite often the case, Dahood's commentary
suggests attractive explanations, which are not always sufficiently anchored in
solid ground. In this case, Dahood aims to corroborate his reading by trans-
lating *'anŝê dāmim* as "men of idols." Such a translation is rather dubious;
while *'anŝê* is indeed "men" (in construct, "men of . . ."), *dāmim* should more
properly be translated as "murder." *Dāmim* never occurs in the Bible as "idols"
(*pæsæl, pāsil, ṣelem, aṣabim* [pl.], *trāpim* [pl.]) but always as "bloodshed," or
"murder" (in Mishnaic Hebrew it also means "money"). Hence, the text itself
does not support Dahood's otherwise appealing interpretation.

Artur Weiser, in his reading of Psalm 139, emphasizes God's omnipresence on earth.[4] The studies of Leopold Sabourin, Sigmund Mowinckel, and Erhard S. Gerstenberger offer essentially the same commentary as Weiser; although these and other studies contribute to a better understanding of the psalm, they take only passing interest in its *ars poetica,* aesthetic textures, and poetic properties.[5]

Zvi Adar's approach to Psalm 139 maintains that Psalm 139 belongs to a group of psalms, which he calls *hagut utehiyah* (meditation and examination).[6] These are of a universal-philosophical nature: they focus on human life on earth, Man's fate, and general requests from God.[7] Such psalms are philosophical monologues about human life addressed to God: sometimes they demonstrate a spirit of acceptance and humble reconciliation, at other times they display resentful bitterness, even to a degree of rebellious complaint.[8] Correspondingly, Adar maintains that God's portrayal in this cluster of psalms—including Psalm 139—is of a dual character: impressive and mighty but also terrifying, precluding any notions of escaping his notice. Furthermore, this split character of God's presence in the philosophical-universal psalms engenders conflicting feelings (on the psalmist's part) of fright and of confidence, neither one of which is absolute. Another study of Psalm 139, by Hulda Raz, also relates to God's frightening presence.[9] One might wonder why only Adar and Raz chose to focus on the intimidating aspects of God's omniscient control of human life as portrayed in Psalm 139. Despite the enlightening critical considerations displayed in those two studies, their poetic findings and aesthetic discussion do not go beyond an embryonic state. In this chapter I adopt those embryonic aesthetic statements as a starting point for further consideration, leading to a comprehensive exploration of the psalm's complete *ars poetica.*

Between a Rhetorical Pendulum and Psychological Characterization

Indeed, the most salient rhetorical impression left by Psalm 139's narrator derives from the constant—almost obstinate—fluctuation between his two attitudes toward God: one, ardent admiration; the other complaint, even recoil. On the one hand, the speaker expresses great admiration of God's constant presence and of his meticulous control of our daily activities, including our most intimate thoughts. On the other hand, the psalmist utters bitter complaints about the divine presence in his life: he feels hounded, surrounded by a suffocating snare that affords no relief. The poetic device, which conveys that pattern of conflicting rhetorical emotions, is neither arbitrary nor random.

All these fluctuations are systematically distributed along the textual continuum of the psalm: positive and negative sentiments appear alternately along the sequence, strictly obeying that order of presentation with no variation at all. In other words, the psalm's implied author (using W. Booth's useful term) displays a great mastery of literary dynamics while skillfully harnessing it to its immediate aesthetic aim—the psychological characterization of the psalmist.

Accordingly, the psalmist opens at the positive end of the emotional spectrum, expressing his ardent admiration of God's presence in his life: "You know my sitting and my standing / you discern my thoughts from a distance" (*atta yada'ta shikhvi vekumi / banta lere'i merakhok*).[10] This positive attitude toward God's absolute control of life goes on, in the same appreciative vein, until the end of verse 4. Verse 5, however, presents for the first time a negative attitude: "Behind and before you besiege me // and you lay your palms upon me" (*akhor vakedem tzartani // vatashet alay kapekha*).[11] While "besiege me" possesses a derogatory connotation expressing intimidation and suffocation, the second hemistich ("you lay your palms upon me") obeys that negative vein, notably in light of its numerous similar appearances in other biblical contexts.[12]

In verse 6 the narrator returns to his former "positive" pole: "Your [such] knowledge is too wonderful [hidden] for me // [It is] too sublime to attend it" (*pli'ah da't mimeni // nisgava veloh ukhal lah*). That admiration of God's divine knowledge is soon replaced by the psalmist's blatant resentment of God's hounding of him: "Where can I go [flee] from your spirit? // Where from your face shall I escape?" (*ana elekh merukhakha? // veama mipanekha evrakh?*). The psalmist expands on the theme of escape: will he flee to high heaven or to the bottom of the realm of the dead (*she'ol*)? Whether he flees on dawn's wings or dwells at the end of the ocean, he will find neither rescue nor shelter from God's haunting omnipresence (vv. 8–9).

The following stich, however, is of much interest: "Even there your hand guides me // And your right hand holds me" (*gam sham yd'kha hinkhani // vatokhazeni yeminekha*). On the one hand, this stich concludes the previous bitter complaint and, therefore, should convey a derogatory, denouncing message aimed at God. On the other hand, however, that stich evidently holds positive connotations as it relates to God's divine guidance (in contrast to previous statements, which contain derogatory verbs such as "besiege" [*tzartani*] or "escape" [*evrakh*]). In light of this, the stich in verse 10 exhibits a dual meaning: it simultaneously concludes a previous complaint and commences a new laud of the Lord. In other words, the swinging "pendulum" of the psalmist's

attitudes toward God in verse 10 is of a delicate nature; interweaving negative and positive messages, it yields a subtle rhetorical fluctuation. While the negative message is evident in the context of the previous verse (which v. 10 belongs to and concludes), the positive message is not only evident by the independent etymology of "guide me" (*tanheni*), but also in light of the analogy that binds that verse to the well-known verse of Psalm 23: "Your rod and your staff (will) comfort me" (*shivtekha umishantekha hema yenakhamuni*). The alliterative sound analogy between *tanheni* (in Psalm 139) and *yankhuni* (in Psalm 23) reinforces analogy between the two words (it is a matter of interest that Dahood reads *yankhuni* as *yankhu meni* ["guide Meni," the Canaanite god of luck]). Thus, Dahood's reading—although problematic—reinforces the analogy between *tanheni* in Psalm 139 and *yankhuni* in Psalm 23.[13]

The swinging rhetorical pendulum continues oscillating as systematically as ever. A negative swing follows a "positive" one: "And I have said: darkness only crushes [strikes] me // And night replaces [would be] light for me" (*va'omar akh khoshekh yeshufeni // velailah or ba'deni*). The negative nature of this statement by the psalmist earns further denunciatory connotations due to the analogy between "crushes [strikes] me" (*yeshupeni*) and the very same derogatory verb in God's curse of the serpent in the book of Genesis following the temptation: "He will strike [crush] your head and you will strike [crush] his heel" (*hou yeshufkha rosh ve'atta teshufenu akev* [Gen. 3:15]). In the following verse (v. 12), the psalmist further develops Psalm 139's complaint that neither light nor darkness cloud God's absolute power to operate, while for the psalmist, the replacement of light with darkness shutters his life.

The rhetorical pendulum continues its back-and-forth motion with a return to the positive side, as anticipated: in verses 13–18 the psalmist praises the Lord for creating him, as well as the Lord's principal power of creation. The narrator argues that he is fully aware of God's marvels of creation despite the fact that his intellectual faculties cannot comprehend God's divine plans and meditations. Nevertheless, the narrator feels sheltered and shielded by God's divine ideas, which are innumerable, like grains of sand. The psalmist concludes this relatively long section of praise by claiming that he is so taken by God's marvels that as soon as he wakes up, he is preoccupied with meditations on that subject.

This laudatory section, the last positive "swing" of the rhetorical pendulum, is significantly longer than all other previous sections, whether positive or negative in nature. This compositional deviation, however, is not accidental—as it anticipates the stop of the pendulum, it stops its swinging back and forth from positive to negative poles, and stabilizes on the positive side. It is

as if the psalmist's internal conflict has reached a resolution and he makes peace with his Creator. The complaints fade away once the psalmist stops the rebukes, and a positive attitude takes over, leading to further expressions of gratitude and praise. Although one type of negative attitude remains in Psalm 139, the psalmist directs it not toward the Lord but rather toward God's foes and rivals. This remaining negative emotion is part of an intricate poetic pattern present in Psalm 139 (this pattern is discussed in the following section).

One may cogently argue, therefore, that both the rhetorical pendulum and its swing between positive and negative emotions—and its eventual stabilization on the positive side—reflect the psalmist's inner psychological mechanism, his internal conflict, his conflicted feelings toward his Creator. For quite a while he is torn between grievance and admiration, resentment and appreciation, bitter complaint and praise. God's absolute presence in his life engenders this conflict on the part of the psalmist. Eventually, the believer makes peace with God as well as with himself; the previous resentment is forsaken, and the haunting internal conflict turns into peaceful reconciliation.[14]

The psychological mechanism of the psalmist, reflected by the swinging pendulum, may be illustrated as follows:

Psalmist's laud of God
Psalmist's denunciation of God
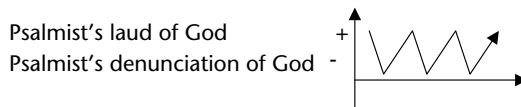
This diagram operates as an illustrative metaphor depicting the believer's turbulent meditations, psychological discomfort, and emotional dissonance. Erich Auerbach (in his well-known *Mimesis*) was indeed wrong when he argued that the biblical *dramatis persona* is impermeable as his or her meditations, internal psychological, and emotional deliberations are concealed, and inscrutable. Indeed, the Bible does not easily reveal its protagonists' internal world, nor does the biblical narrator display a natural inclination to verbalize the protagonist's feelings or to directly discuss his or her thoughts. However, an absence of direct means of characterizations does not condition, nor does it signal an absence of any means of characterization. While the biblical text exhibits strict austerity when it comes to direct means of characterization, it simultaneously demonstrates a rich variety of indirect means of characterization. This aesthetic preference on the part of the implicit author bestows upon the text a subtle sophistication. Latent, indirect means of characterization, which may be unveiled through a meticulously attentive and sensitive process of textual

deciphering, are not only effective but also possess an aesthetic delicacy that enriches the textual fabric.

In Psalm 139, systematic rhetoric, using literary dynamics (sequential order of presentation) in a way that produces an expressive "swinging pendulum," confirms the rule formatted in the diagram and solidifies its validity.

Breaching Paratactic Pattern as a Further Means of Psychological Characterization

Although the rhetorical pendulum ends its swinging on the positive side of the emotional poles (with the psalmist displaying a correspondingly positive attitude toward God), the psalmist still allows his emotion to swing once more to the negative poles. This time the emotion is directed not toward God but rather to his enemies and rebels. This change operates as a deviation from the original pattern and as a contributor to the termination of that pattern.

One may wonder about this unexpected move at the conclusion of Psalm 139. The animosity expressed toward God's foes and the ardent eagerness to fight them differs drastically from the previously cultivated theme and structure of the psalm, based on the psalmist's internal conflict and conflicting attitudes toward God and his absolute control over the psalmist's life. Thus, the ending of the psalm takes a completely new tack, different from the previous one, that appears to be a random, artificial addition, clumsily upsetting the psalm's unity and sabotaging its integrity. But one should not jump to conclusions.

One possible way to reason the seemingly arbitrary addition to the psalm's ending is to assume that it was wrongly attributed to Psalm 139, when it should by rights belong to the following Psalm 140. The fact that Psalm 140 focuses on the psalmist's plea to God to redeem him from his enemies would seem to support this theory. The ending of Psalm 139, with its concentration on the theme of the wicked, obviously belongs to the beginning of Psalm 140, in which the focus of interest is also the wicked.

Despite the appeal of such a supposition, the last two verses (23 and 24) of Psalm 139 echo, almost repeat, its first two verses (1 and 2) and lends credence to the theory that the psalm's seemingly clumsy ending does indeed belong to 139 and not to 140. Psalm 139 begins with the speaker's request that God will closely examine him: *bantāh lere'i merakhok* ("You discern my thoughts from a distance"); it also ends with this same request: *bekhaneni ve'da sara'-pai* ("examine me and know my thoughts"). Beginning and ending the psalm with very similar verses displaying a solid reciprocal analogy both confirms

and strengthens the unity and integrity of the psalm, while dismissing the possibility that Psalm 139 suffers from a lack of unity due to a botched ending.

What might have inspired the deviation from the rhetorical pendulum's original pattern at the end of Psalm 139? From a thematic-compositional point of view, that rhetorical pendulum and its swings between positive and negative emotional poles may be defined as a paratactic structure, a literary pattern founded upon a sequential principle but possessing no internal mechanism, which would guide the pattern toward a point of termination.[15] Correspondingly, a paratactic structure is of horizontally sequential inclination and can, theoretically, continue on and on without the ability to extricate itself from its horizontal momentum toward a culmination. Thus, a paratactical structure calls for an alien component, which may divert it from its horizontal endless continuum, disrupt and cut its perpetual momentum, and lead it toward a climactic culmination.[16]

The rhetorical pendulum in Psalm 139 seems like a clear case of paratactic structure, one that calls for an alien deus ex machina in order to stop its constant swings between two opposite poles. In light of this, the insertion of Psalm 139's unexpected ending section about God's enemies makes perfect aesthetic sense. As the pendulum here does not possess an internal, natural mechanism for halting its movement, operating as it does on a basis of *perpetuum mobile,* the unexpected ending effectively functions as a thematic-compositional device, which stops the pendulum. And so the psalm's culminating section, which differs radically from its previous theme, is far from being either an aesthetic error or a result from poetic negligence; it is, instead, carefully crafted to serve as the psalm's poetic resolution. This surprising deus ex machina has one other important function, since it further serves as means of psychological characterization.

Ending Psalm 139 with the psalmist's attack on God's enemies manifests a significant change in the psalmist's previous contradictory attitudes toward God. During the previous operation of the rhetorical pendulum, the psalmist demonstrated much resentment against God, and that resentment is dismissed as, in the end, he boldly condemns God's enemies. Thus, the break in the rhetorical pendulum's motion, and the consequent insertion of the culminating deus ex machina, signals a dramatic change in the psalmist's psychological characterization. It demonstrates how he redeems himself from his early criticism of God while replacing that criticism with enthusiastic reconciliation. In other words, the braking of the rhetorical pendulum reflects the active and progressive nature of a psychological process that takes place in the psalmist's characterization. Thus, the unexpected theme of the concluding

section, which deviates from the previously cultivated tone, serves two poetic functions: the first is the halting of the rhetorical pendulum; and the second, related function is the definition of the psalmist's characterization. This seemingly clumsy poetic device is in fact a clever, subtle way of accomplishing two poetic functions while lending the psalm an attractive touch of aesthetic sophistication.

Between Aesthetic Bisection and Poetic Unity

Psalm 139's concluding section (vv. 19–22) deviates from the previous theme in focusing upon God's enemies and clearly bisects the psalm on an aesthetic basis of both theme and composition (although the first part is significantly larger than the second). Despite these two poetic functions, it may appear to upset the psalm's compositional integrity as well as its thematic unity (the very nature of a bisection seems at odds with unity and integrity). In this respect, the two poetic contributions of that bisection may be clouded by a seemingly aesthetic disadvantage. However, the psalm's implied author shows sensitive aesthetic awareness as well as poetic capacity.

The psalmist adopts an aesthetic strategy of textual circularity to circumvent the pitfalls of the psalm's bisection. The psalm opens and closes with the same theme: an appeal to God to know the psalmist's heart so that his righteousness will be proven.

Beginning and ending the psalm with the same component (indeed, with two thematic components that display a solid analogy) evokes a strong sense of circularity.[17] Accordingly, the psalm seems to be almost surrounded by textual circularity, lending it a sense of fortified unity. The textual circularity here compensates for its bisected nature and thus redeems the psalm from the risk of disunity. In this way, the psalm simultaneously cultivates two contradictory inclinations, neither of which upsets its counterpart; both bisection and unity are present in the psalm without conflicting with each other. The bisection in this psalm, however, possesses one other important poetic function: the internal conflict on the part of the narrator, who simultaneously lauds and condemns God's presence in his life, produces a definite sense of bisection.

In light of this, we can see two sets of bisection in the psalm: one that results from the narrator's dual attitudes toward God, and another that derives from the split structure of the psalm. While the first bisection is based on theme, the second is based on composition.

The simultaneous presence of these two systems significantly contributes to the psalm's multilayered structure. In this respect, the psalm's most fundamental poetic portrait, its aesthetic DNA, effectively uses various layers of the

psalm's aesthetic fabric. Although each layer colors that fundamental poetic portrait (the bisection) with its own unique character, its principal presence on every layer does not fade, nor does it lose its evidence.

Job's "Invasion" of Psalm 139

The attractive and sophisticated multilayered structure of the psalm is further evidenced in two more layers of literary allusions. Even upon *prima vista* of Psalm 139, one can neither deny nor miss some salient affinities between a cluster of verses in that psalm and more than several verses in the book of Job. Although some commentators mention such a similarity, to date they have not attempted to further investigate them, which is surprising since there are indeed parallels between Psalm 139 and the book of Job.[18]

Two sets of verses from Psalm 139 display particular affinity with verses from Job: verses in which the narrator condemns God for hounding him to such an extreme that he feels hopelessly besieged, and verses in which the narrator describes mankind's creation by God. When the psalmist bitterly complains, "Where shall I flee from your spirit? Where shall I escape from you?" (Ps. 139:7), he echoes Job, who also complains, "For now you keep counting my steps" (Job 14:16). The psalmist's words, "You lay your palm upon me" (Ps. 139:5), again evoke Job, who addresses God with, "Take away your palm off me" (Job 13:21). The psalmist's accusations against God ("You know my sitting and standing / You control [*hiskantāh*] all my ways" [Ps. 139:3]) again echo Job's complaint: "You inspect him [mankind, but referring here to Job] every morning / And you test him every moment / Will you never look away from me?" (Job 7:18–19).

The similarity between certain verses of the psalm and the book of Job continues in the psalmist's complaint that he is oppressed by the darkness that has overcome the light in his life while God is not affected by the dark: "And I have said: darkness only strikes me / And night replaces light [day] for me / Even darkness does not prove too dark for You / For You night shines like a day and darkness [shines] like light" (Ps. 139:11–12). Job, too, uses images of darkness and light when he voices his bitter complaint: "My days have passed . . . They replaced day with night / 'Light is near' in the face of darkness" (Job 17:11–12).

The psalmist also expresses mankind's inferiority in comparison with God's stupendous might, indecipherable marvels, and unlimited knowledge. Hence, humans are doomed to fail in their attempts to comprehend God's marvels and wisdom: "Your knowledge is too wonderful [hidden] for me / [It is] too sublime to attend it" (Ps. 139:6). So, too, does Job address God's

limitless might and splendor: "He does stupendous things, which are un-searchable / And marvels which are not countable" (Job 9:10).

The similarities between Psalm 139 and the book of Job combine to form a further detailed and ramiform analogy, as the psalmist and Job each de-scribe their creation. In the case of Psalm 139's narrator, "I was created [made] in a secret place / I was formed [embroidered] at the bottom of the earth" (v. 15); and in Job's words, "Your hands molded and shaped me // You formed me like clay" (Job 10:8–9). It is interesting to note here that Job enlists images of the bottom of the earth when he describes man's last resting place (e.g., Job 3:21–22). Hence, while the psalmist uses the metaphor of the bottom of the earth to depict man's birth, Job uses that same metaphor in relation to man's death. The well-known phrase "from dust to dust" (*'āpār* = earth [Gen. 3:19]) provides the grounds for both metaphorical images, while maintaining their common denominator. The affinity between the psalm and a variety of verses in Job is supported even more firmly by the following hemistich: "Till you kill [*tiqtol*] God, the wicked" (Ps. 139:19). The root *q.t.1.* (to kill), in *kal* conjugation, appears only two more times throughout the entire Bible; both of which occurrences are found in the book of Job: *yiqtol* (will kill [Job 24:14]), and *tiktol* (will kill me [Job 13:15]).

The many similarities between this psalm and the book of Job, which are manifest in theme, metaphorical language, style, and rhetoric, naturally raise the question of influence: who influenced whom, and how can one tell for sure? Certainly, the most crucial issue here is whether the composition of the book of Job predates Psalm 139 or vice versa. Although it is probably impos-sible to determine the dates, Marvin Pope discusses the uncertainty with re-spect to the date of composition for the book of Job, then, "is still an open question."[19] Yair Hofman suggests that it was composed between the sixth and fifth centuries BCE.[20] However, scholars debate even over the original lan-guage (Aramaic?) of the book of Job.

The dating of the book of Psalms is similar: none of the psalms's dates can be determined with any degree of accuracy. Nevertheless, it is certain that many of them were composed in relatively late periods, notably during the Babylonian Exile (586 BCE) and during the Greek rule of Israel (third century BCE–first century CE). We can also assume that the book of Psalms was com-piled and edited sometime around the first century BCE, and it appears that some psalms (such as Pss. 27, 44, and 74) were composed in the Hasmonean period (up to the first century BCE). The medieval commentator Rashi asso-ciated Psalm 80 with the Hasmonean period; thus, generally speaking, the book of Job would appear to be older that the book of Psalms. Based on this

theory, it is likely that Psalm 139 was composed after the book of Job, thus lending support to the theory that the psalmist was inspired and influenced by that book. Such a theory further explains the structure present in Psalm 139.

The multilayered, polyphonic structure in the psalm (namely, its bisection), which forms its chief poetic portrait, its aesthetic DNA, exists on more than one level of Psalm 139. Until now, the reader has discovered bisection in layers of theme, composition, and rhetoric: the psalm is made up of two different sections (theme and composition), and its narrator displays a dual (bisected) attitude toward God (theme and rhetoric). In the case of the similarities between Psalm 139 and the book of Job, the bisection reveals a layer of allusion as well.[21] Furthermore, the analogous bonds between Psalm 139 and various verses in Job, as well as the bisected nature of Psalm 139, effectively illustrate the concept of bisection in the book of Job. Like the psalmist, Job manifests a dual attitude about God: Job voices bitter complaints; he not only blames God for his suffering but also for the fact that God does not explain why such disaster befell Job. And again, like Psalm 139's narrator, Job displays absolute trust in God and never breaches his deep faith. When Job's wife urges him to "Curse God and die," he responds, "You talk like a villain. Shall we accept good from God and not evil?" (Job 2:9). Hence, the very same division that characterizes the psalmist characterizes Job as well. Based on the theory that the book of Job influenced the psalmist, one may argue that these similarities are of an allusive nature.

The presence of the divisions in the psalmist's and Job's characters is founded upon a literary allusion. Now we can see that the multilayered structure of Psalm 139 is even further extended: the concept of the bisection is not anchored only in levels of theme, composition, and rhetoric but is also found in the level of allusion.

Allusive Echoes of Genesis in Psalm 139

The intriguing literary reality in Psalm 139 gains further validity with the presence of yet another "allusive territory" marked by bisection. The psalmist in Psalm 139 praises his creation by God; he relates this twice, in two different ways. He first describes it as: "You created my inmost self [*kilyotāy*] / You have sheltered me in the womb of my mother" (v. 13). Later, though, the psalmist praises God the second time, and this time quite differently: "I was created [made, formed] in a secret place / I was formed [embroidered: *ruqqamti*] at the bottom of the earth" (v. 15).

The psalmist refers to two different types of creation: his creation in his mother's womb, and his creation in the very bottom of the earth. The second

version, which links humans' creation *with* earth, evidently alludes to Man's creation *from* the earth in Genesis: here the narrator reports the first version of man's creation by God: "And God created Man in His image, in the image of God He created them, male and female He created them" (Gen. 1: 27). Not too many verses later, the narrator reports the second version: first God creates man from earth (Gen. 2:7); only later does God create a woman as well from man's rib (Gen. 2:21–22). In light of this, the allusive connection between Psalm 139 and Genesis seems more elaborate. As Psalm 139 relates two different fashions of the psalmist's creation by God, they faithfully echo the idea of two separate versions of creation mentioned in Genesis. This literary allusion also contains the concept of bisection: in both texts the tale of man's creation is divided into two. The allusive connection between the psalm and Genesis gains further strength when the psalmist declares that he fails to comprehend God's divine ideas because they are as limitless as grains of sand (*mehôl yirbûn* [v. 18]), here alluding to the divine promise to Abraham in the Genesis. God promises Abraham that his many offspring will be as uncountable as grains of sand (Gen. 13:16). As this allusion is strongly connected to the concept of bisection, it clearly joins the psalm's allusion to Job, which also manifests the concept of bisection.

Thus, the concept of bisection, which is Psalm 139's most fundamental poetic portrait, its literary DNA, reaches a vertex of multilayered structure: not only does it inhabit the levels of composition, theme and rhetoric, it also "invades" the level of allusion twice.

Conclusions

The aesthetic intricacy of Psalm 139, its structural complexity, harnessed as it is to the psalm's comprehensive *ars poetica* and ideological credo, is not limited to the territory of aesthetics only. The psalm bestows on its querulous narrator (characterized by his internal conflict) a touch of authenticity and realism. Thus, the psalm's intricacy turns into a predominant component in the comprehensive process of psychological characterization. The result of such interaction between aesthetics and human feeling is neither delayed nor suspended: the marriage between the two conceives an authentic, worthy poetic-human document. Furthermore, the poetic fact that the psalm's aesthetic essence is interwoven in various levels of the psalm's textual fabric manifests a state of aesthetic climax. A well-constructed and polyphonically orchestrated multilayered structure calls for an impressive aesthetic mastery. Such is the pattern of the rhetorical pendulum and its conflicting swings. Such is the cleverly wrought breach of paratactic sequence. And such also is

the prudent mobilization of all those literary patterns for the dynamic process of psychological characterization of the psalm's narrator. All those literary patterns simultaneously produce an aesthetic network, which synchronically operates while serving the psalm's demanding aesthetic and ideological needs. In this respect, Psalm 139 displays a ramiform literary system that successfully produces an aesthetic orchestration, which is effectively harnessed to the psalm's ideological trend. That reciprocal interweaving of intricate aesthetics with a cluster of ideas undoubtedly demands the highest critical appreciation.

The literary approach to the biblical text seems to earn its ultimate justification: its capacity to unearth some of the worthiest values of the Bible, values that, like the Bible itself, are beyond doubt.

We have depicted the literary intersection in the biblical text of Psalm 139 where aesthetic phenomena and psychological trends meet and interact. This reciprocal interaction between aesthetics and psychology yields a poetic outcome of great interest. Throughout the entire length of the psalm, the lyrical speaker continually alternates between two contradictory attitudes toward the role of God in his life. These two conflicting attitudes consist of appreciation and admiration on the one hand, and recoil, resentment, and even a reluctant anger on the other hand. The psalmist starts by lauding God and then expresses his blatant resentment toward God, but then returns once again to another expression of appreciation of God, and so on. These attitudes are reflected and alternated along the psalm's textual continuum in a meticulous and systematic fashion, creating in the psalm's text a punctual sort of pendulum. This alternation, or pendulum, reveals the psalm's most covert and important values as it creates an intersection where both aesthetics and psychology meet. On the one hand, this energetic pendulum bestows upon the psalm a dimension of vital literary dynamic and rhetorical flexibility. On the other hand, this same pendulum also reveals the psalmist's most hidden and complex psychological mechanism in which admiration and resentment toward God are disclosed. This aesthetic-psychological pattern consistently maintained throughout the psalm is further reinforced in the psalm through the allusions to two other biblical texts: the two versions of creation in Genesis, and the book of Job, both of which manifest similar conflicting attitudes. Thus, the dialogue that the psalm conducts with other biblical texts, which share its poetic-ideological proclivities, serves to reinforce the psalm's tendencies and to further elucidate its values.

9

Hosea 5:1–3

Between Compositional Rhetoric and Rhetorical Composition

All things within't
Are digested, fitted, and composed
As it shews Wit had married Order.

—BEN JOHNSON, *The Staple of News*

This chapter aims to cast new light upon one aspect of Hosea's literary art, and its persuasive impact, by enlisting the investigative techniques of structuralist rhetorical criticism as inspired by the Russian formalists.[1]

The literary critic has a different perspective from those who employ more traditional methods of analyzing a text, for he attempts to see *how* the writer is communicating as much as *what* he is communicating. Yet this vantage point is not isolated. In fact, the results of literary criticism can often clarify aspects that are in the domain of traditional study. Hence, the disciplines are not contradictory; modern literary criticism does not deny the validity of traditional exegesis nor diminish its excellence. On the contrary, the literary approach complements the traditional one by arming the latter with new, penetrating insight.

Thus, a new reading of Hosea 5:1–3 along literary lines not only affirms what is apparent through conventional methodology concerning the chapter's beginning, it also suggests a new division of these opening verses. This new reading involves an analysis of a framework used in rhetoric that may be considered part of the deep structure of the passage and that affects the reader's perception of the progression in Hosea's argument.

The initial rhetorical structure is latent in the two opening stichs. To expose the pattern, however, it is helpful to identify the various parties in Hosea's audience.

šm ʿw zʾt hkhnym
whqšybw byt yśrʾl
wbyt hmlk hʾzynw
ky lkm hmšpṭ

Hear this, O priests,
And attend, O house of Israel,
And give ear, O house of the King;
For to you pertains the judgment.
(HOSEA 5:1a)

The first party (priests) and the third party (king) present no difficulty. But the expression "house of Israel" refers only to the elders of the people.[2] While several commentators agree with Wolff, others prefer a more general referent.[3] Y. M. Ward, for instance, suggests that the phrase includes "the whole people" of Israel, and his reading seems plausible, as it best fits the context.[4] The prophet's rebuke, which is evident throughout the chapter, is not limited solely to the leaders; it is also addressed to those who emulate their wicked example. The leaders and their followers share the same abominations.

Ward's reading of "house of Israel" appears convincing from the rhetorical standpoint as well. The parallelism between the first three hemistichs is obvious in terms of both content and meter. In each hemistich, the prophet singles out a particular social group as the object of his condemnation, and each address contains three metrical beats:

šm ʿw zʾt hkhnym // whgšybw byt yśrʾl // wbyt hmlk hʾzynw

If *byt yśrʾl* is not as limited in the number of people it includes as are the other two social groups (*hkhnym* [priests]) and *hmlk* [king]), the expression provides some variation in what might otherwise be a simple list and, consequently, prevents the unaesthetic effect of mechanical rigidity, giving the parallelism a refreshing sense of flexibility.

The cumulative nature of the parallel hemistichs, each of which seems to echo the preceding one, compounds groups in Hosea's audience to the point of congestion. From a theoretical standpoint, the parallel components seem endless because there is no evident progression (e.g., from the largest group to the smallest) that promises some resolution to the apparently random sequence. More and more parallel components could in fact join the horizontal continuum without drawing it closer to a vertical conclusion.[5]

The fourth hemistich, "for to you pertains the judgment" (*ky lkm hmšpṭ*), plays an important role, for it disrupts that paratactic continuum and provides a conclusion for the parallel hemistichs that precede it. Because it differs from the previous three hemistichs, it serves to disengage the *perpetuum mobile*. Moreover, the concluding hemistich syntactically completes that sequence by providing a causal ending.

In a diagram of this process, the author establishes a pattern with the first three hemistichs (PH), which are a cumulative series of parallel units, and then introduces the fourth hemistich (EH) in order to extricate himself from this continuum:
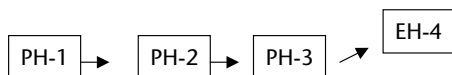
The absence of an internal component that moves the cumulative series of parallels toward a natural conclusion finds compensation in the external components, which close the cumulative series by interrupting its continuous thematic progression. But this disengagement is not limited to the structural aspects of the passage; it is also a basic feature of the text's message. The deviation of the last hemistich from the previous stichs, which summon both leaders and people, provides the reader with the reason for the prophet's call ("The judgment pertains to you") and anticipates the indictment of specific sins that follows.

One may argue that the pattern is more sophisticated than the diagram suggests, because of the manner in which the third hemistich relates to the first, and the second anticipates the resolution that the fourth hemistich provides. Although the third hemistich contains the same components as the previous parallel hemistichs, it deviates from them syntactically. That is, each of the first two hemistichs opens with a verbal predicate [V] (hear, attend) and ends with a noun [N] (priests, house of Israel), but the third hemistich chiasmatically inverts the word order by opening with a noun (house of king) and ending with a verbal predicate (give ear).

This pattern of syntactical chiasm may be illustrated in the following diagram:

	[V]	[N]
Hemistich 1:	*šm 'w z't*	*hkhnym*
	[V]	[N]
Hemistich 2:	*whkšybw*	*byt yśr'l*
	[N]	[V]
Hemistich 3:	*wbyt hmlk*	*h'zynw*

Many scholars acknowledge that this kind of chiastic pattern is common in much of the biblical poetry as well as in other ancient examples of poetry (e.g., Ugaritic). Yet its function in this context extends beyond the aesthetic. Since Hosea places this syntactical deviation in the text continuum just before the conclusion of the fourth hemistich, it may be considered a foreshadowing of the change. The result of such anticipation is both a reduction in abruptness that the reader might sense as he moves from one hemistich to another, and an enabling of the extricating feature to function in a more intricate and refined manner than the simple addition of the fourth hemistich would allow. The complete extricating pattern (including the chiasm) can be schematized as follows:
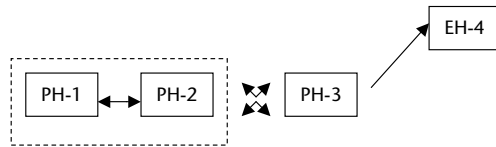
Both the parallel sequence and the extricating devices (the chiasm and the break in parallelism) are common elements of structure, but the combination of these elements or their juxtaposition within a literary unit provides a specific rhetorical effect. In Hosea 5:1a, the structure of the passage heightens the rhetoric of the message. As we will see, the extricating pattern is not limited to this one verse but colors the literary units that follow, and influences the chapter as a whole.

Furthermore, the extricating pattern helps in making certain exegetical decisions. For example, the final word of the extricating hemistich (*hmšpṭ*) is a matter of dispute among scholars. Wolff and Ward translate *mšpṭ* as "justice," while Mays straddles the fence, wavering between "justice" and "judgment."[6] Andersen and Freedman, however, argue on contextual grounds for "judgment" because "the reference to judgment could go with what precedes, as is usually supposed, giving the reason for the call to attention: Listen . . . because this verdict applies to you."[7] On the surface, either denotation of *mšpṭ* is possible ("you are responsible for justice" or "judgment pertains to you"), but a recognition of the extricating pattern favors "judgment" over "justice," because the former gives that device more rhetorical force. When coupled with the context later in the chapter, "judgment" is the better exegetical option.

The second rhetorical structure appears in verses 1b–2:

ky ph hyytm lmsph
wršt prwśh ʿltbwr

wšḥth śṭym h'mygw
w'ny mwsr lklm

For you have been a snare for Mizpah
And a net spread upon Tabor.
And the revolters are deeply involved in slaughter,
Though I am a chastener for them all.
(HOSEA 5:1b–2)

As with the previous unit, it is helpful to examine the specific components before attempting a more detailed analysis. The words Mizpah (*mṣph*), slaughter (*šḥth*), revolters (*śṭym*), and chastener (*mwsr*) elicit considerable discussion in the commentaries. Some scholars consider *mṣph* as a common noun used by a military or cultic center.[8]

Similarly, attempts to solve the difficulties that attend *šḥth* generally employ one of two major readings.[9] The first reading derives from the root in the Masoretic Text (MT), *šḥṭ*, which means "to slay" or "to slaughter." Its figurative use here is a biting criticism of iniquities committed by the people's dissenting leaders as well as by the people themselves. The second reading sees an exchange in the *t* and reads *taw* instead of *ṭet*. The resulting noun *šḥt* refers to a pit, pitfall, or grave. Many scholars have adopted this second view, including Wolff, who defines the word further as "a pit for all kinds of game, including the gazelle, fox and rabbit, as well as the lion."[10] Moreover, as Kaufmann notes, *šḥt* is also used for both moral and religious corruption (see Gen. 6:12, "and God saw how corrupt [*nšhth*] the earth was"), an evident concern of Hosea.[11] Of these two options, *šhth* (pitfall) seems preferable, as it best fits the context by conforming to the passage's inclination for triple systems such as *priests/house of Israel/house of the king* and *hear/attend/give ear*. Thus, *šhth* (pitfall) joins *ph* (snare) and *ršt* (net) to form a triple system that matches those already discussed. The context again proves to be a reliable determinant for selecting the most likely exegetical option.

In a similar way, one should approach *śṭym,* which the King James Version translates as "revolters." Indeed, this reading seems rather appealing. It is also based on a letter exchange (in this case between *śin* and *sameh*) in the root *sṭh,* which means "to deviate or digress from the path of righteousness." Although the reading is plausible because it fits the rhetoric (condemnation), there is an alternative that has accord with both the rhetoric and the structure. As Mays, Wolff, and Bewer all propose, *śṭym* should be read as "Shittim," a geographical reference to "Abel Shittim on the eastern edge of the plain at

the mouth of the Jordan where 'Israel yoked himself to the Baal of Peor'"
(Num. 25:3).[12] The priority of this suggestion is that it erects one more triple
system, which follows the context's existing compositional norm. Understand-
ing *śtym* as a place name completes the sequence that the other two geo-
graphical references began: Mizpah/Tabor/Shittim (see v. 8 for another triple
geographical structure: Gibeah/Ramah/Bet Awen). This is one more instance
where the interpretation of the text shows in the text itself. The best speaker
for the text is always the text.

Detecting this triple system leads to the heart of the structure of verses
1b–2. The same extricating pattern discussed in the first unit is rediscovered,
having the same rhetorical function. The emendation *šhth*—and the under-
standing that both *msph* and *śtym* are geographical references—distinguish
the first three hemistichs of this four-hemistich unit into three parallel com-
ponents. In each, the leaders' and the people's transgressions are embodied
in the figurative terms of setting traps (*ph, ršt, šhth*) in specific geographical
districts (Mizpah, Tabor, and Shittim).

Consequently, a cumulative, sequential momentum is formed. This momen-
tum has noticeable paratactic features, but the parallelism produces a redun-
dancy without any ascending motion that can act as an extricating principle.
Like the preceding paratactic-extricating pattern, the fourth hemistich serves
to disrupt the continuum, delivering it from potentially unending movement
and drawing the unit to a close. The fourth hemistich does not conform to
the previously established parallelism, but it deviates to guide the unit toward
its vertical conclusion: "But I am a chastener for all." Once again, the absence
of an inner, natural principle that could bring the paratactic sequence to some
resolution finds deft compensation in the intrusion of an external compo-
nent, which interrupts the continuous theme. Moreover, the extricating pat-
tern operates on more than just the structural level; it heightens the unit's
message by bringing the continuum of human iniquity to an abrupt end with
the promise of divine punishment ("But I am the chastener for them all").

Nevertheless, the line is not without its difficulties. Indeed, most scholars
read the word *mwsr* as "chastener."[13] Andersen and Freedman, however, inter-
pret *mwsr* as a participle of *swr,* meaning "to deviate or depart from." Hence,
they translate *w'ny mwsr lklm* as "And I turned aside [or have been removed]
from you."[14]

Here again, the context—or to be more accurate, the juxtaposition of the
two paratactic-extricating units—appears to be a helpful criterion in select-
ing the more plausible alternative. Though both readings of *mwsr* seem con-
vincing, since they both meet the ideological thrust of the text, reading *mwsr*

as "chastener" agrees better with the overall structure. There is a distinct affinity between *ky lkm hmšpt* (for the judgment applies to you) and *w'ny mwsr lklm* (for I am a chastener for them all). They both function as extricating hemistichs, contain the prophet's response to the moral calamities of his day, and share a syntactical resemblance. Such similarities between these two hemistichs suggest that they may also share a similarity concerning the denotations of their two leading words, *mšpt* and *mwsr* (an assumption perhaps encouraged by their alliterative similarity as well). If reading *mšpt* as "judgment" is correct, then reading *mwsr* as "chastener" (and not as "deviation") is preferable, being more semantically congruent with "judgment."

The extricating device within the hemistichs is the prominent feature of the structure, and the resulting interpretation is based on an affinity between these extricating functions. It is evident, then, that biblical literary criticism and biblical philological exegesis are related. The apparent disciplinary gulf is a solid bridge. Furthermore, uncovering the structure informs one's understanding of the received divisions of a text. The unified nature of the two paratactic-extricating patterns may suggest that a different versification of this passage is in order, as the current one seems to disrupt their texture by marking a new verse before the second pattern reaches its end. Instead, each paratactic-extricating pattern should be restricted to one verse only. Such a division would offer better congruity between form and content.

The third rhetorical structure shows in 5:3:

'ny yd'ty 'prym
wyś'l l' nkhd mmny
ky 'th hsnyt 'prym
ntm' yśr'l

I myself know Ephraim;
Israel is not hidden from me;
for now you, Ephraim, have played the harlot;
Israel is defiled.
(HOSEA 5:3)

Once the reader is acquainted with the two consecutive paratactic-extricating patterns in the first two verses, he is encouraged to cultivate expectations that the pattern will be repeated a third time as well. Indeed, his initial encounter with the third verse appears to confirm his expectations. The parallelism

between the unit's first two hemistichs, the sequence of three conjugated verbs, and the metrical deviation in the fourth hemistich (which has only two beats rather than three) all suggest a point of closure. This encourages the reader to assume that there is an affinity between the third unit and the two preceding units, both of which have paratactic-extricating characteristics. This initial view, however, is deceptive. In fact, a close scrutiny of the fourth unit yields quite the opposite impression, one that frustrates the nourished expectations.

The first two hemistichs of the unit, "I myself know Ephraim / Israel is not hidden from me," display a cogent parallelism, but this parallelism is not continued by the third hemistich. Although the third hemistich, "for now you, Ephraim, have played the harlot," certainly fits the ideology of the preceding hemistichs, the common denominator—both in terms of content and syntax—is not sufficiently firm to satisfy the parallelism's requirements (for example, content: divine knowledge versus Ephraim's action, and syntax: shift in address from third person to second person). Since the paratactic process fails at a relatively early stage of its evolution, its cumulative inertia is curtailed as well and, consequently, it never reaches its potential. The third hemistich has some features in common with the preceding two hemistichs, but it fails to build the horizontal continuum necessary to form a paratactic sequence.

At first, the reader's failure to discover familiar characteristics in this unit gives it a rhetorically confusing feel. Whereas the reader looks for the same paratactic-extricating feature, further consideration challenges his assumptions and forces him to revise his expectations. This alteration in structure does not lead the reader astray in vain; rather, it prepares him for the next stage in the text's argument. From verse 3 until the chapter ends, neither paratactic sequences nor extricating devices are found within the text continuum. Although the pattern of three consecutive hemistichs concluded by a fourth bears some resemblance to many of the chapter's verses, none of the patterns that follow the initial two verses have the same paratactic-extricating characteristics.

In light of this, the pseudoparatactic-extricating pattern of verse 3 serves as a rhetorical signpost, deviating from the two previous patterns and acting as a predictive element that foreshadows change—the abandonment of the text's initial inclination to form paratactic-extricating patterns. Therefore, the virtue of the pseudoparatactic-extricating pattern is not only in the structural variation that it offers but also in the rhetorical effect that it elicits.

Evoking at first impression a semblance of the paratactic-extricating pattern, the pseudoparatactic-extricating unit in verse 3 acts as a meditative

link between the preceding units in verses 1 and 2, and later units lack any paratactic-extricating features. This amalgamating function of the unit enables a gradual transition between two textual sections and thus avoids a disruption in various parts of the chapter by imparting to it a sense of unity.

One finds in Hosea 5 a gradually diminishing momentum, starting with two patterns that contain paratactic-extricating characteristics followed by a similar but incomplete third pattern. Nevertheless, the pattern does not altogether vanish from the chapter's textual fabric. The concluding verse of the chapter ("I will go and return to my place, / till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: / in their affliction they will seek me early" [v. 15]) appears to revive and restore the introductory paratactic-extricating patterns in the first two verses. The reestablishment of this pattern springs from the reciprocal relationship between the chapter's final verse and the preceding text. While the whole chapter's textual format is filled with repeated references to the leaders' and people's transgressions, and the prophesied consequences (crime and punishment), verse 15 conspicuously deviates from this vein and foreshadows consolation.

At this point we may see the chapter's textual sequence as a paratactic, crime-punishment listing, disrupted by a verse that finally resolves the sequence. Hence, the paratactic-extricating pattern is not exhausted in the first verses of chapter 5. Although the repeated rebukes throughout the chapter serve as a common denominator, there is not always a sufficiently accurate parallelism between statements to develop clear, horizontal, paratactic structure. Yet, one should not miss the paratactic-extricating function of verse 15, which is evident in its unmistakable deviation from the thematic features of the long, preceding sequence. It is now possible to trace analogical cords between the paratactic-extricating patterns in verses 1 and 2 and the paratactic-extricating relationship that exists between the body of the chapter and its concluding verse.

This analogical equation may be depicted in terms of dialectic relationships between microcosm and macrocosm. Because the microcosm (the two initial paratactic-extricating patterns) foreshadows the macrocosm (the larger relationship between the body of the chapter and its concluding verse, which imitates the paratactic-extricating pattern) and acts as its germ, the macrocosm springs from the microcosm. These dialectic relationships between the micro- and macrocosmic components in the chapter not only endow the text with a dimension of refined intricacy but also fortify the chapter's integrity.

The chapter's diminishing momentum and its dialectic relationships between the two elements may be schematized as follows:
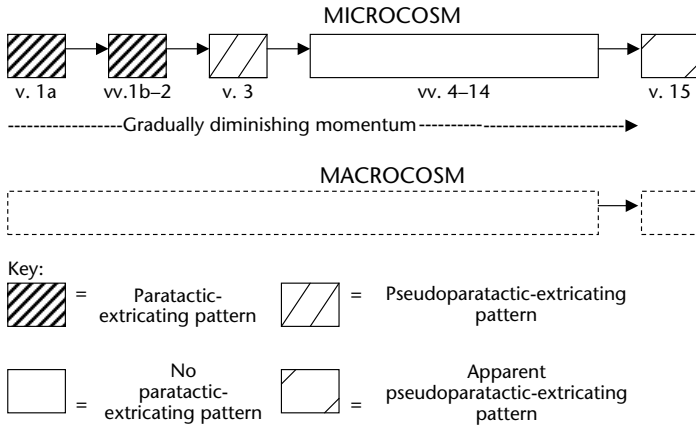
One may, at this point, argue that considering Hosea 5 as a unified and closed unit is somewhat questionable, because the Bible's chapter divisions were determined first in the Vulgate, at the dawn of the thirteenth century CE, while Hosea's prophecy dates back to the second half of the eighth century BCE. Following this argument, one might object to ending the passage with verse 15 since the author (Hosea or a later editor) died hundreds of years before the verse earned its official, terminating position in the chapter. But the reader proposed here does not depend on (and at points, transgresses) standard divisions. Indeed, it is possible that the author was fully aware of the implications of this final verse, extricating the verse from its "horizontal," cumulative momentum. And whether the author or the version's editor was cognizant of this extricating potential does not blur or negate the fact that the extricating potential is, in reality, in that verse.

The textual *data* is the object of investigation, not the writer's *intentions*. Often there is an unbridgeable abyss between the writer's intentions and the final product. A literary piece should never be taken as a simple depository of the artist's intentions.

D. H. Lawrence says that one prominent function of literary criticism is to save the piece from its author. Similarly, T. S. Eliot remarks that "to divert interest from the poet to the poetry is a laudable aim."[15] These observations are not limited to secular texts. When David N. Freedman considers biblical poetry, he recognizes that "[s]ince there is no way finally to resolve such questions about the intention of the poet, it is a safer, and better procedure to restrict or extend ourselves to the visible data and describe what we see there, rather than try to probe to the recesses of the poet's mind."[16]

In the biblical portion discussed, the artistic virtue of the text is embodied in the dialectic interplay between structure and rhetoric. The paratactic sequence and the extricating device are both in the domain of structure and may be used for rhetorical effect. The apparent antithesis between the paratactic sequence and the extricating device produces a synthetic literary unit in which structure and rhetoric join to heighten the argument. Structure is not just an indifferent container into which one pours rhetorical thought; it is a framework that shapes rhetoric to achieve a particular effect. Therefore, one may speak in the same breath of structural rhetoric (a rhetorical concept that lends itself to a particular framework) and rhetorical structure (a particular framework that lends itself to a rhetorical concept). There is nothing between them but the artist's genius.

Notes

1. For the dynamics of the textual continuum see, among others, Wolfgang Iser, "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach," *NLH* 3 (1972): 279–99; Wolfgang Iser, "Interdeterminacy and the Reader's Response in Prose-Fiction," in *Aspects of Narrative,* ed. J. H. Millen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), 1–45; Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978); Menahem Perri, *The Semantic Structure of Bialik's Poetry: A Contribution to the Theory of Meaning Evolvement in the Literary Text's Continuum* (Tel Aviv: Siman Kri'a, 1976); Menahem Perri, "The Dynamics of the Literary Text: How the Order of Presentation Dictates the Meaning of the Text," *Hasifrut* 28 (1979): 6–46; Jacob Steinberg, *Leket Sipurim* (The Blind) (Jerusalem: Tarbut Ve-Hinuch, 1967); Meir Sternberg, "The Structure of Suspense: Plot and the Detective Story," *Hasifrut* 18–19 (1974): 164–80; S. E. Fish, "Literature and the Reader: Effective Stylistics," *NLH* 2, no. 1 (1970): 123–62; Yair Mazor, "Unearthing Dynamics in the Varied Poem," *Rosh* 4 (1979): 11–16; Yair Mazor, *The Dynamics of Motifs in S. Y. Agnon's Fiction* (Tel Aviv: Dekel Academic Press, 1979). The theoretical observations and definitions that are presented in the beginning of the introduction are also addressed in Yair Mazor, *Israeli Poetry of the Holocaust* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2008).

2. For the term "irony" see, among others, *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics,* ed. Alex Preminger (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974), s.v. "Irony"; Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957), 186–233; Charles E. Bressler, *Literary Criticism* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1999), 43–45.

3. For the narrator in fiction see Norman Friedman, "The Point of View in Fiction: The Development of a Critical Concept," in *Approaches to the Novel,* ed. R. Schorer (San Francisco: Chandler, 1961), 11; Joseph Ewen, "Writer, Narrator, and Implied Author," *Hasifrut* 18–19 (1974): 137–63.

4. For biblical quotes throughout this work, I have used several translations (including my own) of the Bible to produce a version that best does justice to the original Hebrew text.

5. For the poetic nature of parallelism see *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics,* s.v. "Parallelism"; Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic

Books, 1984); Shmuel Shrira, *Introduction to the Bible* (Jerusalem: Mevo'ot, 1956), s.v. "Biblical Interpretation"; Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981); Zvi Adar, *The Biblical Narrative* (Jerusalem: World Zionist Organization, 1959); Merir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985); Robert Alter and Frank Kermode, eds., *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).

6. W. C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1961).

Chapter 1. One More Mandatory Introduction

1. For a discussion of the rhetorical device of frustrated or thwarted expectations, see Meir Sternberg, "Retardatory Structure, Narrative Interest, and the Detective Story," *Hasifrut* 18–19 (1974): 164–80; Yair Mazor, *A Well-Wrought Enlightenment: The Compositional Poetics of the Hebrew Enlightenment Narrative* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Papyrus Press of Tel Aviv University, 1986), 50–52.

2. For metonymy and metaphor, see Joseph Ewen, *Dictionary of Literary Term, Academon* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press, 1978), 129–34; Babette Deutch, *Poetry Handbook* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 84–90; Azriel Ukhmani, *Themes and Structures* (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Ha'poalim, 1957), 148; Patricia Harkin, *Acts of Reading* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1999), 66, 232–35.

3. For a discussion of various linguistic/historical strata of the Torah (J, E, P, D [Deuderonomist]) see *Encyclopedia Hebraica,* ed. Joshua Prawer (Jerusalem: Encyclopedia Publishing Company, 1972), vol. 24, s.v. "Bible"; Richard Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997), 22–32; Yair Hofman, *Aspects of Modern Biblical Criticism* (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense, Publishing House, 1977), 49–62; Julian Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel* (New Haven, CT: Meridian Books, 1957).

4. For a discussion of the *qasida*, see Stephan Sperl, *Mannerisms in Arabic Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 216; G. E. von Grunebaum, ed., *Arabic Poetry: Theory and Development* (Weisbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1973), 72, 73, 74, 95, 96; Israel Levin, "Lamenting over the Ruins and the Wandering Nocturnal Image," *Tarbitz* 3 (1967): 278; Alex Preminger, ed., *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974), s.v. "Arabic Poetry," 43; Philip Hitti, *History of the Arabs* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), 90–93.

5. See, for example, Juda Keel, *The Book of Samuel* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1981), 413.

6. Menaham Perry and Meir Sternberg, "The King through Ironic Eyes: The Narrator's Devices in the Biblical Story of David and Bathsheba and Two Excursuses on the Theory of the Narrative Text," *Hasifrut* 1 (1968): 265–66. Moshe Garsiel takes issue with some aspects of their interpretation. See Moshe Garsiel, *The Kingdom of David* (Tel Aviv: Don-Israel Antiquities Department Publication, 1969), 93–126.

7. Here one notices a triple structure descending from the highest military rank (Joab, the chief of staff), through middle ranks (commanders, the "servants"), to the lowest (soldiers, "all Israel"). However, this structure also contains a chiasm. On the one hand, there is gradual "descent" through the ranks from highest to lowest; on the other, there is a reverse movement from the largest quantity (the whole army) to

the smallest quantity (the chief of staff). Although the triple structure forms a strictly structured pattern, the schism (which yields conflicting movements and contradictory directions) provides a sense of freshness and flexibility while, at the same time, avoiding the undesirable effect of a mechanical, too-orderly pattern.

Chapter 2. What You See Is Not What You Get

1. Cain is an ancestor of Lemech. However, the Bible introduces two different lineages associated with the two. Genesis 4:17–21 introduces a very abridged lineage. In this lineage, Methusael is Lemech's father. Genesis 5:5–25 introduces an exceedingly long and detailed lineage in which Methuselah is Lemech's father. The difference between the two lineages stems from the fact that the first one is the English version and the second one is the Hebrew version.

Chapter 3. Abraham versus Abraham

1. The structuralist movement cultivated by Russian formalists such as Jakobson, Eichenbaum, Shklovsky, Tynjanov, and Tomaschevskij largely inspires the literary approach suggested here. For a useful survey of Russian formalism's literary scholarship see L. T. Lemon and M. J. Reis, eds., *Russian Formalist Criticism* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965); V. Erlich, *Russian Formalism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1969). A useful survey of various trends of the post-structuralist criticism is found in J. V. Harari, ed., *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1979).

2. This rhetorical phenomenon has already been noticed by biblical critics, such as Z. Adar, *Genesis: An Approach to the Biblical World* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Magnes, 1981) 64; see also Z. Adar, *The Biblical Narrative* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Dept. of Education and Culture, World Zionist Organization, 1968), 31; and N. M. Sarna, *Understanding Genesis* (New York: Schocken Books, 1970), 161. Both critics compare this rhetorical phenomenon to an ideological demonstration of the Bible's recoil from human sacrifice. Gerhard von Rad detects an aesthetic-ideological function in this rhetorical phenomenon, which resembles the one explored in this chapter (see G. Von Rad, *Genesis* [Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1956], 234). Though the critics have pointed out this rhetorical phenomenon discussed, they have not attempted to describe its aesthetic mechanism nor trace its ideological function.

3. See Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961).

4. E. Auerbach, *Mimesis* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1953), 11.

5. Among works that display a useful awareness of the biblical hero's behavior as a metaphor that mirrors his inner psychological foundation, see A. Bentzen, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Copenhagen: G. E. C. Gad, 1957), 1:244: "We get no psychological pictures of the soul of the acting persons. The inner life of the men and women brought on the stage reveals itself in dialogues and acts"; Von Rad, *Genesis,* 235; Z. Adar, *The Educational Values of the Bible* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Neuman, 1953), 66; Z. Adar, *The Biblical Narrative,* 31, 45. Adar also maintains that biblical silence is no less expressive than biblical dialogues (*Educational Values of the Bible,* 60). B. Vawter alludes to this useful observation in his *On Genesis: A New Reading* (New York:

Doubleday, 1977), 259. For two penetrating studies of various biblical means of psychological characterization, see M. Sternberg, "Between the Truth and All the Truth in the Biblical Narrative: Points of View and Molding of Psychological Life by Summarizing Penetration and Interior Monologue" [in Hebrew], *Hasifrut* 8 (1979): 110–46; M. Sternberg, "Language, World, and Perspective in the Biblical Art: The Indirect and Free Expressions and Ways of Implied Penetration" [in Hebrew], *Hasifrut* 9 (1983): 88–131.

6. Auerbach, *Mimesis,* 11.

7. S. Kierkegaard, *Frygt og Baeven (Fear and Trembling)* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983 [1843]).

8. Adar, *Biblical Narrative,* 34; Vawter, *On Genesis: A New Reading,* 254.

9. Ibid.; S. D. Goitten, *Studies in Bible* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Yavneh, 1967), 77.

Chapter 4. Psalm 24

1. See Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms I,* Anchor Bible Series, vol 16 (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 151–53; S. R. Hirsch, *The Psalms,* 2 vols. (New York: Philipp Feldheim, 1960–1966), 1:172–77; Apostolos Makrakis, *Commentary on the Psalms of David,* trans. D. Cummings (Chicago: Orthodox Christian Educational Society, 1950), 148–51. Many commentators maintain that the ritualistic origins of Psalm 24 are revealed in its compositional character. Yet they don't discuss the psalm's composition beyond this observation. See Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship,* 2 vols., trans. D. R. Thomas (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), 2:232; Artur Weiser, *The Psalms,* Old Testament Library (London: SCM, 1962), 232; Artur Weiser, *Introduction to the Old Testament,* trans. D. M. Barton (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961), 285; Aage Bentzen, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Copenhagen: G. E. C. Gad, 1957), 152, 161, 162; Leopold Sabourin, *The Psalms* (New York: Alba House, 1970), 408.

2. W. C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961).

3. References to the fact the *tēbēl* is much smaller, in geographical terms, than *ereṣ,* can be found in many commentators: cf. David Kimhi ["Radak"], *Psalms* (critically edited from nineteen manuscripts and the early editions by S. M. Schiller-Szinessy) [in Hebrew] (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, 1883), 73: "and *hā'āres* contains all the earth (Gen. 1:1) . . . and *tēbēl* is an inhabited site"; Makrakis, *Commentary on the Psalms of David,* 149; Isaac Haught, *Zerah Itzhak Al Tehilim* [in Hebrew] (New York: World Zionist Organization, 1971), 33: "*tebel* is an inhabited site"; Hirsch, *The Psalms,* 1:173. Although the latter exegete discriminates *tēbēl* from *ereṣ,* maintaining that *ereṣ* is much smaller than *tebel,* he bases his distinction on a blundered etymological prognosis, confusing *tebĕl* (f) with *tebel* (m). While *tebĕl* derives from the root *Y.B.L.,* *tebel* derives from a strictly different root, *B.L.L.,* which means to blend, to mix, and to confuse. Based on this meaning, *tēbēl* means a shameful confusion, a perverted mixing, an abomination; Lev. 18:23: "Let no woman lend herself to a beast to mate with it, it is perversion" [*tebel hu*]. Thus, basing his distinction on that faulty observation, Hirsch reaches the following incorrect conclusion about *tēbēl*: "the world where human arbitrariness and selfishness, instead of God's law" (173), prevails.

4. Indeed, Dahood assumes an identity between *yamin* and *nĕhārôt* in light of Ugaritic "where *ym* is parallel to *nhr*"; M. Dahood, *Psalms I,* 151. Yet, one should discriminate between semantic identity and poetic parallelism (such as in the Ugaritic text, which is based on a certain affinity), which is evidently true in the case of *yamim* and *nĕhārôt.* Hence, despite the closeness between *yamim* and *nĕhārôt,* which is a connotational foundation for literary parallelism, the Bible emphasizes the size difference between them when it comes to geographical references. While *yām* (sea, ocean) designates a great body of standing water (Gen. 1:10), *nāhār* (river, flood, stream, current) always refers to flowing and streaming water; it derives from the root *H.H.R.,* which means (also in Arabic and Aramaic), to stream, to swarm, to flow; Isa. 2:2: "*wĕnāhărŭ elāyb kol hagôyim*" ["and peoples shall flow unto it"]. Thus, the Hebrew Bible invariably refers to *nāhār* in the river meaning such as "*nĕhar pĕrāt*" ("the Prat River," Josh. 1:4), or the four streaming rivers in the garden of Eden (Gen. 2:1–14). Numerous exegetes such as Makrakis, *Commentary on the Psalms of David,* 149, and David Kimhi, *Psalms,* 73–74, point out this distinction between *yamim* and *nĕhărŏt.*

5. A theoretic-methodological discussion of frustrated expectations pattern is found in Yair Mazor, *The Dynamics of Motifs in S. Y. Agnon's Fiction* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Dekel Academic Press, 1979), 101–5.

6. The Hebrew expression for "the generation of them that seek after him"—*dôr doršāb*—is interesting. It resembles the common biblical expression *dŏr dŏr* (whose Ugaritic parallel is traced by Dahood in his *Psalms I,* 152) found in various contexts, such as Ps. 45:15 (*bĕkol dor wādōr*); Ps. 10:6 (*lĕdor wādor*); Isa. 34:10 (*midôr ledōr*). The expression *dŏr dŏr* is a good example of a semantic collocation that obeys the following definition: "A collocation is defined according to the concept of the London (Firth) School in linguistics: a sequence of words, which tend to occur together in a fixed order. This definition is almost statistical" (Gideon Toury and Avishai Maraglit, "On Deviant Uses of Collocations," *Hasifut* 4, no. 1 (1973): v. Following Toury's and Maraglit's observations, the expression *dôr doršāb* appears as a deviant use of the collocation *dŏr dŏr.* Since this complete collocation is obviously kept in its deviant use ([*dŏr dŏr*] *šāb*), its original designation is not omitted, but serves as a semantic Arichimedian point: the traditional collocation issues originality.

7. Though the text refers to Jacob in the singular, it indicates the plural as Jacob stands in this context (like in many other biblical contexts) for *all* the people of Israel. See Kimhi ["Radak"], *Psalms,* 75; Yehoshua Steinberg, *The Bible's Dictionary* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Isre'L Press, 1961), 176.

8. Concerning God's image as a king, see Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship,* 1:170, 172. Concerning God's image as the Lord of hosts [*YHWH sĕbaôt*], see W. O. E. Oesterley, *A Fresh Approach to the Psalms* (New York: Scribner, 1937), 209. Mitchell Dahood comments that the Ugaritic collocation *melk t'gr*—king of the gate— was one of the common royal titles attributed to King Niqmepa. See Dahood, *Psalms* I, 15. Dahood also points out that the expression "lift up your heads" is an idiom denoting "to rejoice, be of good hope" and is found in *Vetus Testamentum* 126:12–16 [*nšu riš* . . .] relating to the plowmen lifting up their heads as the first rain falls after the long summer drought.

9. Textual circularity is a rhetorical-compositional pattern founded on two analogous elements: one is at the piece's beginning, and the second is in the piece's texture near its conclusion. The affinity between the components produces a sense of circularity. This circular structure may be considered an indifferent compositional container because the specific nature of the thematic materials poured into it yields a specific thematic tinge. For a discussion of the rhetorical-compositional pattern of textual circularity from both theoretical and methodological standpoints, see Mazor, *The Dynamics of Motifs in S. Y. Agnon's Fiction,* 55–56; Yair Mazor, *A Well-Wrought Enlightenment: The Compositional Poetics of Hebrew Enlightenment Narrative* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Papyrus Press of Tel Aviv University, 1986), 52; Yair Mazor, "A Study of the Circularity Phenomenon in Fiction and Its Application to Works by Agnon, Gnessin, and Brenner" [in Hebrew], *Katiff* 14 (1983): 207–14; Yair Mazor, "Strindberg and Agnon: Scandinavian Regions in the Realms of Hebrew Literature," *Scandinavica* 24, no. 1 (1985): 35–55. The biblical nature of textual circularity is examined in Yair Mazor, review of "The Patriarchs in Hebron and Sodom: Genesis 18–19; A Study of the Biblical Story's Composition," by T. Rubin-O'Brasky, *Hebrew Studies* 24 (1984): 214–16.

10. N. Miller and D. T. Campbell, "Recency and Primacy in Persuasion as a Function of the Timing of Speeches and Measurements," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 59 (1959): 1–9; A. A. Barrios, "Primacy Effects in Personality Impression Formation," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 63 (1961): 346–50.

11. Dealing with the book of Psalms and its musical characteristics, Abraham Ibn Ezra maintains four advantages of the ear (which is the sense exposed to the musical features of the Psalms, including alliteration) over the eye: (1) the ear functions both day and night, while the eye can function only in the day; (2) the ear absorbs sounds from all directions, while the eye is limited in its operation to only one direction; (3) the ear hears through physical obstacles, which block the eye's view; (4) the ear enables a verbal-vocal communication in which the eye does not participate. Uriel Simon, *Four Approaches to the Book of Psalms: From Saadlya Gaon to Abraham Ibn Ezra* [in Hebrew] (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1982), 140, 237–38.

Chapter 5. The Song of Songs, or The Story of Stories?

1. The allegorical approach is of two orientations, Jewish and Christian.

2. Franz J. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes,* trans. M. Easton (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1891); Guillaume Pouget and J. Guitton, *The Canticle of Canticles,* trans. J. L. Lilly (New York: Delcan X. McMullen, 1946); Robert Gordis, *The Song of Songs and Lamentations* (New York: Ktav, 1954); John Bradley White, *A Study of the Language of Love in The Song of Songs and Ancient Egyptian Poetry,* SBLDS 38 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1978); Keith Norman Schoville, *The Impact of the Ras Shamra Texts on the Study of the Song of Songs* (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin–Madison, 1969).

3. Hartmut Schmökel, *Heilige Hochzeit und Hohes Lied* (Wiesbaden: DMG, 1956), 42–43.

4. Morris Segal, "The Song of Songs," *VT* 12 (162): 470–90; Cheryl Exam, "A Literary and Structural Analysis of the Song of Songs," *ZAW* 85 (1973): 48–49.

5. Michael V. Fox, *The Song of Songs and the Ancient Egyptian Love Songs* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 209–26, esp. 209. Further citations are parenthetical in text.

6. Marvin H. Pope, *Song of Songs,* Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1977), 54.

7. White, *Study of the Language of Love,* 28.

8. For reasons of space, the Hebrew text is not presented with the English translation.

9. It is a matter of interest that the word "cypresses" is given in a rather irregular form: *b'rotim* instead of the regular *b'eroshim.* Gordis's view that it is "a dialectic pronunciation for the classical" form, "probably influenced by the Aramaic" is apparently valid (Gordis, *Song of Songs and Lamentations,* 80). However, one may argue for an additional justification for that deviant form of the regular form. That justification is of an aesthetic nature. The fact that a heavy alliteration, based on the sound "t," is inlaid in the verse (*korot* [beams]; *bateynu* [our house]; *rahitenu* [our panels]) encourages the assumption that the preference of *b'rotim* over *b'roshim* is due to a deliberate alliterative-aesthetic rationale.

10. This poetic dialogue between the bride and her lover displays two literary devices of much interest. The first literary device is based on the reciprocal relationships between the first simile ("As a lily among thorns so is my beloved among the daughters") and the second simile ("As an apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons"). On the one hand, the analogy between the two similes is evident and tight: in both, the beloved—the tenor in the metaphorical equation—is depicted in vegetal terms; in both, his aesthetic value is much higher than his immediate surroundings (which is also depicted in a vegetal-metaphoric terminology). On the other hand, the analogy between the two similes is not identical but is marked by a semantic gap. Namely, the difference between the lily and the thorns is much more blatant than the difference between the apple tree and the trees of the woods. That semantic gap derives from the connotational gap between the thorns and the wood's trees; while the wood's trees evidently possess pleasant connotations (although not like the apple tree's), the thorns possess undesirable connotations. Thus, while the solid analogy between the two similes endows their reciprocal relationships with a touch of firmness, the "crank" in that analogy avoids an undesirable sense of mechanism and adds a desirable sense of flexibility and authenticity. Hence, the thematic-poetic density (which derives from the tight analogy between the two similes) is sensitively compensated for by the rhetorical flexibility (which derives from the deviation from the tight analogy). The second literary device may be titled "metaphorical dynamics" and is used in verses 3–4. It starts with a simile that compares the rustic lover to an apple tree. That simile, however, does not end. It continues as follows: "Under its shadows I delighted to sit and its fruit was sweet to my taste." The metaphorical dynamic here is evident: while establishing the simile, the tenor (the simile's subject, the rustic lover) kept its human characteristics. Despite being compared to an apple tree, in the simile's further evolution, the tenor's human characteristics seem to be dropped and it is not considered a man compared to a tree but rather a concrete tree in the shade of which one (the girl) can sit and taste its fruit. In light of this, one

may define that evolving process in terms of metaphorical dynamics: the simile's vehicle (following I. A. Richard's terminology), which starts as the tenor's modifier, eventually "dominates" the tenor, "trespasses" it, and "dislodges" it from its natural role in the metaphorical equation. Also, one may discern here a process that resembles the one involving an epic simile (as in Homer's poems) in which the modifying component extends and transforms into an enlarged, independent image, no longer bound to its initial metaphorical system in which it was of secondary importance.

11. I have discussed in detail the nature of metaphorical dynamics from both theoretical and methodological standpoints in "Studies in the Phenomenon of Variating Poem: The Exposing Dynamics" [in Hebrew], *Rosh* 4 (1979): 15. This article is included in *A Sense of Structure: Hebrew and Biblical Literature* (Tel Aviv: University Publishing Projects, 1987).

12. See also Ps. 7:14.

13. Some prefer to translate *bater* as "spices" rather than "cleft"; see Gordis, *Song of Songs and Lamentations,* 84.

14. Note the traditional link between shoes and sexuality, as thoroughly explored in Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975). See also Yair Mazor, *The Triple Cord: Agnon, Hamsun, Strindberg: Where Hebrew and Scandinavian Literatures Meet* (Tel Aviv: Papyrus Press of Tel Aviv University, 1987), and Yair Mazor, *Not By Poem Only: The Art of Narrative by David Fogel* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: University Publishing Projects, 1987), 29–37.

15. I discuss in detail the aesthetics of the extrication pattern in various of my studies. See esp. Mazor, *Sense of Structure;* "Psalm 23: The Lord Is My Shepherd—or Is He My Host?" *ZAW* 100 (1988): 416–20; "Hosea, 5:1–2: Jephet's Beauty in the Biblical Tent" [in Hebrew], *Bet-Mikrah* 3 (1987): 271–76.

16. I discuss textual circularity in detail, from both theoretical and methodological standpoints, in some of my other studies. See especially Yair Mazor, *The Dynamics of Motifs in S. Y. Agnon's Fiction* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Dekel Academic Press, 1979), 55–66.

17. See n. 13.

18. M. C. Beardsley, *Aesthetics* (New York: Hackett, 1958), 17–28; and T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in his *Selected Essays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1932), 22.

Chapter 6. Sex, Lies, and the Bible

1. Yair Mazor, *The Triple Cord: Agnon, Hamsun, Strindberg: Where Hebrew and Scandinavian Literatures Meet* (Tel Aviv: Papyrus Press of Tel Aviv University, 1987), 181–210; Robert Burnstein, "Male and Female in August Strindberg's Works," in *Modern Drama,* ed. T. Bogard and W. I. Oliver, 320–21 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965).

2. Eric Johannesson, *The Novels of August Strindberg* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 75, 100–107. For a portrayal of women's dual nature, see Strindberg's narrative *Tjänstekvinnas Son* (*The Son of a Servant*).

3. Ibid. See also *History of Swedish Literature,* ed. Lars Warme (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), s.v. "August Strindberg."

4. Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980); Janice Doane and Devon Hodges, *From Klein to Kristeva: Psychoanalytic Feminism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992).

5. See pp. 119–26, this chapter.

6. Norman Friedman, "Point of View in Fiction: The Development of a Critical Concept," in *Approaches to the Novel,* ed. R. Shorer, 113–42 (San Francisco: Chandler Press, 1961).

7. Sarah was indeed Abraham's sister because they shared the same father but not the same mother (Gen. 20:12) but also because of an ancient Hurrian legal action of adopting a wife as a sister in order to fortify her status. W. G. Plaut, *The Torah: A Modern Commentary* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1981), 99. See also Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis* (New York: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1989), 94–96; and E. A. Speiser, *Genesis,* Anchor Bible 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 91–94.

8. This observation has already been made by A. B. Yehoshua, the prominent Israeli novelist, in *Bizchout haNormaliyout* (Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1980) [in English, *Between Right and Right,* trans. Arnold Schwartz], 1980).

9. M. D. Cassuto argues that because Eve's imaginative powers are greater than Adam's, she is naturally tempted first. See M. D. Cassuto, *From Adam to Noah: Commentary on the Book of Genesis* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Eisenbrauns, 1954), 97.

10. God's decision to endow Man with the creative privilege of naming all the animals on earth is anchored in an intriguing and meaningful context. "And God said: 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I shall make a helpmate for him.' And out of the ground God created every beast of the field, and every fowl on the air; and brought them unto the man to see what he would call them" (Gen. 2:18–19). The ending of the paragraph repeats the seemingly causal connection between the man's need for a woman and his verbal act of naming the animals: "And the man gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found a helpmate for him" (Gen. 2:20). However, that odd connection between two matters, which on the face of it, appear divorced from each other, is meaningful: God enables Adam not only to participate verbally in the creation process but also to realize that he should not look for a mate among the animals. In this respect, the seemingly confusing context is seen to be a shrewd device to teach man sexual morality.

11. Nehama Leibowitz, *Studies in the Book of Genesis* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: World Jewish Organization, 1966), 25. See also Cassuto, *From Adam to Noah,* 96–97.

12. The follow-up is most horrendous indeed: "When he came home, he picked up a knife, and took hold of his concubine and cut her up limb by limb into twelve parts and sent them throughout the territory of Israel. And all who saw that said, 'Never has such a thing happened since the Israelites came out of Egypt to this very day'" (Judg. 29–30).

Chapter 8. When Job and Genesis Visit Psalm 139

1. Hereafter any reference to "the psalm" refers to Psalm 139 unless otherwise specified.

2. Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms III,* Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 284.

3. Ibid., 285.

4. Artur Weiser, *The Psalms,* trans. Herbert Hartwell, 5th rev. German ed., OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962).

5. Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Psalms I,* The Forms of the Old Testament Literature, vol. 14 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988).

6. Zvi Adar, *The Book of Psalms* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: World Zionist Organization, 1976).

7. Ibid., 107.

8. Ibid.

9. Huldah Raz, *The Psalm's Songs* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Hadar, 1970), 3.

10. The translated quotations from Psalm 139 mostly follow Dahood's translation. All deviations from this translation are by Yair Mazor.

11. Dahood (deliberately?) misses the psalmist's extreme discomfort caused by God's presence in his life. He avoids the accurate translation of *ṣartāni* as "besiege me," using instead "encompass me" (Dahood, *Psalms III,* 139).

12. See for example: "Your palm—take away off me" (Job 13:21); "off the palm of all his foes" (2 Sam. 22:1; also Ps. 18:1); "off foe's and ambusher's palm" (Ezra 8:31); "off our enemies' palm" (1 Sam. 4:3); and many more.

13. Mitchell Dahood, "Stichometry and Destiny in Psalm 23:4," *Biblica* 60 (1979): 417–19. I discuss this psalm at length, including Dahood's reading, in Mazor, "The Lord Is My Shepherd—or Is He My Host?" *ZAW* 100 (1988): 416–20.

14. This ambivalent attitude resembles children's split feelings toward their parents, which mix both love and rebellion. In this respect God acts toward the psalmist as an authoritative-parental figure. The observation underlines the closeness that the psalmist exhibits toward his "parental" God.

15. Barbara Herrnstein-Smith, *Poetic Closure: A Study of How Poems End* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).

16. I discuss paratactic structures at length in Mazor, *A Well-Wrought Enlightenment* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Papyrus Press of Tel Aviv University, 1987), 140–45.

17. I discuss circularity in Mazor, *The Triple Cord: Agnon, Hamsun, Strindberg; Where Hebrew and Scandinavian Literatures Meet* (Tel Aviv: Papyrus Press of Tel Aviv University, 1987), 229–34. See also Mazor, *Not By Poem Only: The Art of Narrative by David Fogel* (Tel Aviv: University Publishing Projects, 1987c), 44–48.

18. Leopold Sabourin, *The Psalms: Their Origin and Meaning,* 287.

19. Marvin H. Pope, *Job,* Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1965), xxxvii.

20. Yair Hofman, *Job,* in Hofman, ed., *The Israeli Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Tel Aviv: Massada/Am Oved, 1995), 1:54.

21. Ziva Ben-Porat, "The Poetics of Literary Allusion," *PTL* 1 (1976): 108.

Chapter 9. Hosea 5:1–3

1. Victor Erlich, *Russian Formalism* (Paris: Mouton, 1956); L. T. Lemon and M. J. Reis, eds., *Russian Formalist Criticism* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965); J. P. Tomkins, ed., *Reader-Response Criticism: From Russian Formalism to Post-Structuralism* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).

2. H. W. Wolff, *Hosea,* trans. G. Stansell (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), 97.

3. E.g., J. L. Mays, *Hosea* (London: SCM, 1969), 79; Imanuel Halpern, *Hosea: A New Exegetical Attempt* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1976), 118; F. L. Andersen and D. N. Freedman, *Hosea,* Anchor Bible Commentaries (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1980), 384–85.

4. Y. M. Ward, *Hosea: A Theological Commentary* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 93.

5. For a discussion of this literary device, see Barbara Hernstein-Smith, *Poetic Closure* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).

6. Wolff, *Hosea,* 97; Ward, *Hosea,* 94; Mays, *Hosea,* 79.

7. Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea,* 384–85.

8. See Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea,* 385; Wolff, *Hosea,* 98; J. A. Bewer, *The Prophets,* Harper's Annotated Bible Series (New York: Harper & Row), 49:501.

9. See the detailed review by Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea,* 386–88.

10. Ward, *Hosea,* 94; Halpern, *Hosea,* 119; Bewer, *Prophets,* 501; Wolff, *Hosea,* 98.

11. Yehezkel Kaufmann, *History of Israelite Religion* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1963), 3:110.

12. Mays, *Hosea,* 81; Wolff, *Hosea,* 98; and Bewer, *The Prophets,* 501.

13. From *ysr*; so Wolff, *Hosea,* 99; Ward, *Hosea,* 92; Mays, *Hosea,* 81.

14. Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea,* 384–85.

15. T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in *Selected Essays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1932), 22.

16. D. N. Freedman, "Pottery, Poetry and Prophecy: An Essay on Biblical Poetry," *JBL* 96 (1977): 12.

General Index

Index of Biblical Citations