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THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS: REFLECTIONS/INVERSIONS OF GENESIS STORIES IN THE BIBLE

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It is well known that the biblical narrators leave it to their readers to judge the characters in their writings according to their words and actions.[1] Only rarely is the reader given additional tools to evaluate characters, such as direct comments concerning their inner thoughts[2] or explicit evaluations of their character.[3] In this paper, I will discuss a strategy used by narrators to aid the reader in evaluating characters, a strategy that is one of the many instances of intertextuality so common in biblical literature. More precisely, I will examine the narrators' use of covert allusions to other narratives known to them and to their audience; specifically, instances where the biblical narrator shaped a character, or his or her actions, as the antithesis of a character in another narrative and that character's actions. The new creation awakens in the reader undeniable associations to the source-story; the relationship between the new narrative and its source is like that between an image and its mirrored reflection: the reflection inverts the storyline of the original narrative. Thus, the discerning reader, considering the implicit relation between the two narratives—the original and its reflection—and observing how the new character behaves contrary to the character upon which he or she is modeled, will evaluate the new hero in light of the model, both with regard to action and to lack of action. In addition, the comparison created between the two stories sheds new light on the source story and its protagonist.

I call these "inverted" stories *reflection stories*. Any attempt to identify reflection stories must be made with extreme caution: one must not be carried away by coincidental associations between one biblical narrative and another, but rather care must be taken from

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[1] See S. Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1989), pp. 64–86.

[2] Usually referred to as "saying in one's heart", see, e.g., Gen. 8:21; 17:17.

[3] Bar-Efrat, pp. 53–64.

the start to determine that a relation between the two narratives was intended: common expressions (which are not otherwise common in the Bible), plots with similar themes and which are constructed in parallel or similar fashion, or other such firm evidence. All the source stories I shall discuss here are from the book of Genesis, which served as a model—both positive and negative—for biblical writers.[4] In several examples the reflection story is also found in Genesis, either in the same story-cycle as the source-story, or in a different one.

I

I begin with a famous example of interrelationship within the book of Genesis, one in which the symmetrical inversion is an expression of an "eye for an eye" punishment. Laban's substitution of Leah for Rachel in Gen. 29:23–26 represents Jacob's punishment for pretending to be his brother Esau in the story of the theft of the blessing in Genesis 27. In Genesis 27, the mother, Rebekah, takes advantage of the father's blindness and replaces her elder son, Esau, with the younger Jacob. In ch. 29, the father, Laban (who is Rebekah's brother), takes advantage of the darkness of the night and replaces his younger daughter, Rachel, with the elder one, Leah. Similar language strengthens the connection between the two stories: Jacob complains to Laban למה רמיתני ("Why did you deceive me?" 29:25), and Isaac tells Esau, בא אחיך במרמה ("Your brother came with guile", 27:35). Laban's response, לא יעשה כן במקומנו לתת הצעירה לפני הבכירה ("It is not the practice in our place to marry off the younger before the older", 29:26), contains verbal associations to Jacob as צעיר in 25:23, and to Esau as בכור in 27:19. Furthermore, Laban's words, "It is not the practice in our place . . .", represent an implicit criticism of Jacob, as if to say, "It may be the custom in your home to deprive the older child of his or her rights, but not in ours".

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[4] I have discussed elsewhere other examples of this phenomenon; see, "The Threshing Floor Scene in Ruth 3", *Shnaton, an Annual for Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies* 3 (1978–9), pp. 28–33 (Hebrew); "Reflection Stories—Another Dimension of the Evaluation of Characters in Biblical Narrative", *Tarbiz* 54 (1985), pp. 165–176 (Hebrew); "More on the Ram Caught in the Thicket", *Tarbiz* 52 (1983), pp. 183–184 (Hebrew); *The Concept of the Miracle in the Bible* (Tel-Aviv: MOD Publishers, 1991), pp. 22–23.

The midrash was aware of the relationship between the two stories. For example, we read: "... but in the morning behold it was Leah. Jacob said to her: 'Why have you deceived me, o daughter of a deceiver!' She replied: 'Every scholar has pupils! When your father addressed you Esau, did you not reply?'" (*Genesis Rabbah* 70:19).[5]

The narrator thus covertly expresses his judgement of the theft of the blessing by this "eye for an eye" punishment. Yet it is not clear who is guilty and who is punished: Jacob who pretends to be Esau, or his mother who pushed her son to do the deed (see especially vv. 16–17). An answer to this question may be found in the discussion of the following example.

II

As in the previous example, here also the two stories are about sin and its "eye for an eye" punishment. The story of the theft of Laban's idols by Rachel (Gen. 31:19–32:1) finds its parallel in the false accusation of Benjamin for stealing Joseph's goblet (Genesis 44). Again, the midrash was aware of the relationship: "[The brothers] rained blows on [Benjamin's] shoulders exclaiming, 'Woe, thief you son of a thieving woman! You have disgraced us as a true son of your mother who disgraced our father by stealing her father's idols'" (*Tanḥuma Buber, Miketz* 13).[6] Indeed, many common threads bind the two stories about the mother and her younger son:[7]

a. Joseph's goblet is used for divination (44:5, 15); the idols (תרפים) serve the same function (see for instance Ezek. 21:26; Zech. 10:2), which may explain why Rachel stole the idols before Jacob fled Haran with his family and possessions. She stole them in order to prevent her father from tracing their escape route.

b. A group of people pursue the fugitives and overtake them (31:23, 25; 44:4, 6).

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[5] The translation is according to M.M. Kasher, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation*, vol. 6, (New York: American Biblical Encyclopedia Society, 1959), p. 93. Some modern scholars also note the relationship, see, for instance, J.P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art in Genesis* (2nd edn; Sheffield: Almond Press, 1991), pp. 126–130.

[6] Kasher, vol. 5, 1962, p. 244.

[7] The second story is part of the Joseph cycle, which many scholars believe to be an independent unit.

c. The robbed accuses the thief: ...למה גנבת ("Why did you steal?", 31:30); למה שלמתם רעה תחת טובה ("Why did you repay good with evil?", 44:4; see also v. 15).

d. The suspects, who are certain of their innocence, exclaim that the thief, if found, deserves the death penalty: עם אשר תמצא את אלהיך לא יחיה ... ("But anyone with whom you find your gods shall not remain alive ...", 31:32); אשר ימצא אתו מעבדיך ומת ("Whichever of your servants it is found with shall die", 44:9). The midrash makes a connection between these two verses: "'Whichever of your servants it is found with shall die', Whence did they learn to give this answer? From their father Jacob who had said: 'But anyone with whom you find your gods shall not remain alive'" (*Genesis Rabbati* 215).[8]

e. In both stories a search takes place (31:35; 44:12).

f. The last stop on the search is Rachel's tent (31:34–35), and her younger son's bag (44:12).

g. Both stories end with reconciliation (31:43–32:1; 45:1–15).

The resemblances between the two stories cannot blur the inversions:

a. The mother, who stole the idols, is not caught while her son, who did not steal, is caught.

b. Jacob, the accused, whose wife was not caught, complains about Laban's suspicions (31:36–42). Joseph, the accuser, who staged the crime, complains about the false theft (44:15).

c. The mother will die for her sin: Jacob prophesied, though he knew not of what, "... with whom you find your gods shall not remain alive".[9] Rachel dies before Jacob reaches his destination (35:16–20).[10] Benjamin will not die for an uncommitted sin.

The relationship between the two stories makes it clear that Benjamin pays for his mother's sin, following the rule, "Parents have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are blunted" (Jer. 31:29). The book of Genesis thus makes doubly clear that Rachel deserves punishment: both the story of her death and the story of her sons being suspected of theft suggest retribution for Rachel's crime of

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[8] Kasher, vol. 5, p. 243.

[9] For this phenomenon in biblical literature, see Y. Zakovitch, "Foreshadowing in Biblical Narrative", *Beer-Sheva* 2 (1985), pp. 91–93 (Hebrew).

[10] The story of the death of Eli's daughter-in-law (1 Sam. 4:19–22) is a reflection of Rachel's death story. Also in the Samuel story, the theft of a holy object—the ark of God—causes the death of the woman in labor. A separate study, in which I deal with this example, is in progress.

stealing the idols. This conclusion helps us to reevaluate our previous example, the relationship between Genesis 27 and 29. The replacement of Rachel with Leah was not only a punishment for Jacob, who indeed deserved to be punished, but also if we apply the same rule, "parents have eaten sour grapes . . .", for his mother, who initiated Jacob's theft of the blessing.

III

God's first command to Abraham, לך לך מארצך וממולדתך ומבית אביך אל הארץ אשר אראך ("Go forth from your native land and from your father's house to the land that I will show you", Gen. 12:1) is echoed in the story of the binding of Isaac: קח נא את בנך את יחידך אשר אהבת את יצחק ולך לך אל ארץ המריה והעלהו שם לעלה על אחד ההרים אשר אמר אליך ("Take your son, your favored one, Isaac, whom you love, and go forth to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the heights that I will say to you", 22:2). This interrelationship was already clear to the rabbis: "The Holy One blessed be He said to Abraham: The first test and the last test I try you with 'go forth': 'Go forth from your native land'; 'and go forth to the land of Moriah'" (*Tanḥuma Buber, Lech.* 4).[11]

The resemblance between the two commands is striking:

a. Both commands are structured so that the difficulty of the test is emphasized, with the test presented generally at first, but immediately qualified: "from your native land and from your father's house", "your son, your favored one".

b. The final destination is unknown: "to the land that I will show you", "one of the heights that I will say to you".

c. The name ארץ המוריה ("the land of Moriah") contains a word play on God's first command: אל הארץ אשר אראך ("the land that I will show you"). The name Moriah is understood and translated as derived from the root ראה (to see) by some textual witnesses,[12] and the same root reappears several times in the story of the binding of Isaac (vv. 8, 13, 14). Similarly we find a covert name

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[11] Many modern scholars recognize the relationship; see, e.g., N. Sarna, *Understanding Genesis* (New York: Shocken, 1966), pp. 160–161; C. Westermann, *Genesis*, vol. 2, trans. J.J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985), p. 357.

[12] Samaritan: המוראה; Samaritan Targum: חזיתה; Vulgate: *visionis*; Symmachus: τῆς ὀπτασίας.

derivation of Moriah in 2 Chron. 3:1: אשר נראה לדויד אביהו ("where [the Lord] appeared to his father David").

d. The language of the blessings is similar: ואברכך ... ונברכו בך כל משפחת האדמה ("And I will bless you ... and all the families of the earth shall bless themselves by you", 12:2–3); כי ברך אברכך ... והתברכו בזרעך כל גויי הארץ ("I will bestow my blessing upon you ... All the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by your descendants", 22:17–18).

Despite significant similarities, the relationship between the stories is an inverted one: in the first, Abraham is commanded to leave his father; in the second, to offer his beloved son. The first test does not threaten Abraham's chances for offspring; on the contrary, God promises him to make of him a great nation. The meaning of the last test, offering his son, on the other hand, represents a threat to the materialization of the blessing, and yet Abraham does not hesitate to obey his God. The blessing in ch. 22 appears only after Abraham has proved his readiness to obey the Lord's command. Abraham's devotion and trust in God is intensified with the transition from the first test to the last one; the reader's admiration grows with reading the second story. Yet ch. 22 helps us to evaluate Abraham's behavior in ch. 12: if the first "go forth" story suggests that Abraham obeys God only because of the blessings which accompany the command—it is relatively easy to be righteous when the sacrifice demanded is not enormous—the second story shows that this is not a correct judgement: Abraham is ready to obey any command from God, even it if demands the greatest of sacrifices.

The combination of the two "go forth" test-stories reminds us of the story with which the book of Job begins, in which the covert lesson of the Abraham stories becomes overt. The Satan (the adversary) accuses Job of fearing God only because God has made him prosperous (1:9–10). He assumes that Job's faithfulness will not survive God's test (v. 11). The adversary is proved wrong: even after his most difficult trial, the death of his children, his faithfulness is not shaken: "for all that, Job did not sin nor did he cast reproach on God" (v. 22).

IV

In Numbers 10, an allusion to the first "go forth" command sheds negative light on Moses' father-in-law. Moses tries to convince his father-in-law to join the Israelites in their journey through

the wilderness to Canaan, and promises him that God's blessing to Israel will cling to him: "We are setting out for the place of which the Lord has said, 'I will give it to you'. Go with us and we will be generous with you; for the Lord has promised to be generous to Israel" (v. 29). But the Midianite is selfish and leaves them. The words put into his mouth are a clear echo of God's first command to Abraham and present Jethro as an anti-Abraham: לא אלך כי אם אל ארצי ואל מולדתי אלך ("I will not go but will go to my native land", v. 30).[13] Moses persists and in his second attempt to convince his father-in-law he indicates that the Israelites need his services: "Please do not leave us, inasmuch as you know where we should camp in the wilderness and can be our eyes" (v. 31). In these words, God's command to Abraham is again echoed: אל הארץ אשר אראך ("to the land that I will show you", Gen. 12:1). From these words of Moses it would seem that it is not God who will show them the way, but Moses' father-in-law. Moses adds a promise: "So if you come with us, we will extend to you the bounty that the Lord grants us" (v. 32). This time we do not hear an answer, but soon enough we learn that the Israelites could manage well without Jethro, having a more reliable guide: "the ark of the covenant of the Lord traveled in front of them on that three days' journey to seek out a resting place for them" (v. 33). One can easily see that only politeness caused Moses to present his father-in-law's guidance as crucial to the success of the journey.[14] Finally, God's command to Abraham, "go forth to the land that I will show you", is realized once again: God—and not Moses' father-in-law—will be the Israelites' eyes.

In Numbers 10, one may trace further allusions to Genesis 12 and to other stories related to it:

a. The words לכה אתנו ("go with us", 10:29) recall the words וילך אתו לוט ("and Lot went with him", Gen. 13:4). The next verse mentions that Abraham's success extended to Lot: "Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds . . ." (v. 5), just as in Moses' promise to his father-in-law, the Israelites' success will become his also.

b. Moses' words נסעים אנחנו אל המקום אשר אמר יהוה אתו אתן לכם

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[13] For the relationship of v. 30 to Gen. 12:1, see M. Margaliot, "Hobab—Numbers 10:29–36", *Shnaton, an Annual for Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies* 7–8 (1983–4), pp. 96, 99 (Hebrew).

[14] Margaliot, p. 104.

("We are going to the place of which the Lord has said, 'I will give it to you'", 10:29) are an echo of the other "go forth" story, where God's second command to Abraham is ולך לך . . . על אחד ההרים אשר אמר אליך ("and go forth . . . on one of the heights that I will say to you", Gen. 22:2).

c. Moses' promise, והטבנו לך ("we will be generous to you", 10:29, 32), points to another story that echoes the "go forth" story: God's command to Jacob, שוב לארצך ולמולדתך ואיטיבה עמך ("Return to your native land and I will be generous with you", Gen. 32:10).[15]

V

Another clear allusion to God's command in Gen. 12:1 is found in Boaz' praise of Ruth: . . . ותעזבי אביך ואמך וארץ מולדתך ותלכי אל עם אשר לא ידעת תמול שלשום ("... how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people you had not known before", Ruth 2:11). This allusion invites us to examine the two stories, which are indeed reflection stories, whose similarities are found in inversions.

a. Abraham, in going to Canaan, obeys God's command. Ruth, on the other hand, goes with her mother-in-law, even though Naomi ordered her not to follow her but to cleave to her own family: "Turn back . . . each of you to her mother's house" (1:8).

b. God, who commands Abraham to go to Canaan, promises to make of him a great nation (Gen. 12:2); Naomi, in contrast, tries to discourage Ruth and Orpah by stressing that they have no chance for offspring if they go with her: "Why should you go with me? Have I any more sons in my body who might be husbands for you?" (1:11–13). Naomi makes it clear that her two daughters-in-law have a chance to remarry only if they stay in Moab: "May the Lord grant that each of you find security in the house of a husband" (v. 9). Only after Ruth has already acted nobly and followed her mother-in-law, does Boaz wish her well: "May the Lord reward your deeds. May you have a full recompense from the Lord the God of Israel, under whose wings you have sought refuge" (2:12).

c. Abraham sets out for Canaan with his wife—his chance for offspring—and his possessions: "Abram took his wife Sarai and his

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[15] For another inversion of God's command to Abraham, see Jer. 22:10.

brother's son Lot, and all the wealth that they had amassed, and the persons that they had acquired in Haran; and they left to go to the land of Canaan" (Gen. 12:5). Ruth, the widow, joins her mother-in-law, who leaves Moab empty-handed: "Accompanied by her two daughters-in-law, [Naomi] left the place where she had been living; and they went on the road back to the land of Judah" (Ruth 1:7).

d. God promises to show Abraham his destination: אל הארץ אשר אראך ("to the land that I will show you", Gen. 12:1); Boaz emphasizes that Ruth, on the other hand, left Moab for the unknown: אל עם אשר לא ידעת ("to a people you had not known before", Ruth 2:11). The roots ראה (to see) and ידע (to know) interchange freely in the Bible (see, e.g., Jos. 24:31 and its parallel, Judg. 2:7). The book of Ruth replaces the land with the people: Ruth's clinging to Naomi's people and God (1:16) is her ultimate virtue and reason for praise.

The inverted comparison between Ruth and Abraham testifies that this Moabite woman, who knows no selfishness, who leaves her country out of commitment to her mother-in-law with no hope to become a mother herself, is a more noble figure than the nation's father, Abraham.[16]

VI

In the story of Nineveh's evil and the danger destined for it in the book of Jonah, one can find echoes of the story of Sodom and its destruction (Gen. 18–19). In the book of Jonah, God sends the prophet to Nineveh כי עלתה רעתם לפני ("for their wickedness has come before me", 1:2); in the Sodom story, God informs Abraham about the city's crimes and says: ארדה נא ואראה הכצעקתה הבאה אלי ("I will go down and see whether they have acted altogether according to the evil that has reached me", 18:21).[17] The meaning of צעקה is indeed "evil", the opposite of צדקה, "justice", as we read in Isaiah 5:7, ויקו למשפט והנה משפח לצדקה והנה צעקה ("And he hoped for justice, but behold injustice, for equity, but behold iniquity").

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[16] In the book of Ruth one can discover many covert relationships to the book of Genesis. See Y. Zakovitch, *Ruth—Introduction and Commentary. Mikra Leyisra'el. A Bible Commentary for Israel* (Tel-Aviv/Jerusalem: Am Oved and Magnes Press, 1990), pp. 21–34.

[17] For the relationship between the two verses see, e.g., J.M. Sasson, *Jonah* (AB, 24B; Garden City: Doubleday, 1990), p. 75.

When Jonah finally reaches Nineveh and declares its fate, עוד ארבעים יום ונינוה נהפכת ("Forty days more and Nineveh shall be overthrown", 3:4), one becomes immediately aware of the allusion to the Sodom tradition, as the root הפך is associated many times in the Bible with Sodom's destruction, both in Genesis (19:21, 25, 29) and in other overt references to this tradition (Deut. 29:22; Isa. 1:7; 13:19; Jer. 20:16; 50:40; Amos 4:11; Lam. 4:6).[18]

Making the inevitable connection between the two stories, the reader becomes aware of the reflection phenomenon:

a. Abraham is a prophet, as God himself states in the story juxtaposed to the Sodom tradition, where the prophet's function is made explicit: to pray for those who are in danger ("Since he is a prophet, he will intercede for you", Gen. 20:7). Whereas in the Sodom story Abraham uses persuasive words in order to save the wicked city and does not hesitate to confront God (Gen. 18:23–32), the prophet Jonah flees from God in order to prevent him from being merciful and regretting his plan to destroy it.[19]

b. In the Sodom story God informs Abraham that if he finds enough innocent people in Sodom, לא אעשה ("I will not do it", 18:29, 30). When God does not find the required number of righteous people, he destroys the city. In the book of Jonah, God regrets his plan to destroy Nineveh after the people's repentance: ולא עשה ("and he did not do it", 3:10).

In some respects, Jonah is not only Abraham's opposite, but also that of Lot:

a. Whereas Lot warns his sons-in-law, who ridicule him (Gen. 19:14), Jonah does not try his best to warn the people of Nineveh. Jonah limits himself to one unreasoned declaration, "Forty days more and Nineveh shall be overturned" (3:4). Even so, the people of Nineveh repent (3:5–9).

b. Lot is brought out of the city by God's messengers after he delays and finds it difficult to leave: ויצאהו וינחהו מחוץ לעיר ("and [they] brought him out and left him outside the city", 19:16).

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[18] See Sasson, p. 234. Another sophisticated relationship with the destruction of Sodom can be discovered in the words of the courtiers of the king of Ammon (a nation which is the offspring of Lot) to their master, in which they refer to David's intentions: "David has sent his courtiers to you to explore and spy out the city, and to overturn it" (ולהפכה; 2 Sam. 10:3 = 1 Chron. 19:3).

[19] Since Jonah does not behave like a prophet, the king of Nineveh fills the vacuum, playing the role of the prophet and calling for his people's repentance. The words of the king contain a quotation from Jer. 36:3.

Jonah, on the other hand, is indifferent to Nineveh's doom and leaves the city: ויצא יונה מן העיר וישב מקדם לעיר ויעש לו שם סכה וישב תחתיה בצל עד אשר יראה מה יהיה בעיר ("And Jonah left the city and found a place east of the city. He made a booth there and sat under it in the shade until he should see what will happen to the city", 4:5). Winckler has already noted[20] that Jonah 4:5 is out of place, as it does not agree with its context, and that its original location was after 3:4, following Jonah's declaration of the city's doom. Jonah's leaving the city testifies to his indifference: he is not emotionally involved in the events and behaves as a spectator, not as a prophet. The unavoidable comparison between the stories of the two evil cities strengthens the impression that Jonah, who has no compassion whatsoever, is an anti-prophet, the opposite of Abraham, the first prophet.

VII

The tradition about the attempt of Potiphar's wife to tempt Joseph (Genesis 39) finds its parallel in the story of Tamar's rape by her brother Amnon (2 Samuel 13). There are many threads of resemblance between the two stories:

a. We are told that both victims are attractive (Gen. 39:6; 2 Sam. 13:1).

b. The seducer catches hold of the victim while revealing the scheme: ותתפשהו בבגדו לאמר שכבה עמי ("She caught hold of him by his garment and said, 'Lie with me'", Gen. 39:12; see also v. 7); ויחזק בה ויאמר לה בואי שכבי עמי אחותי ("He caught hold of her and said to her, 'Come lie with me, sister'", 2 Sam. 13:11). The imperative form of שכב with the word עמי does not appear elsewhere in the Bible.

c. The victim explains why the desire expressed by the seducer is inappropriate (Gen. 39:8–9; 2 Sam. 13:12–13).

d. The seducer calls out to her/his servants (although the object of the call is different): "She called out to her servants and said to them, 'Look, he had to bring us a Hebrew to dally with us", Gen. 39:14; "He called out to his young attendant and said, 'Get that woman out of my presence'", 2 Sam. 13:17).

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[20] H. Winckler, "Zum Buche Jona", *Altorientalische Forschungen* 2 (1900), pp. 260–265.

The similarities between the two stories suffice to attract the sensitive reader's attention to the relationship between them, and especially to the inverted nature of this relationship.

a. The seducer is a woman in Genesis 39, and a man in 2 Samuel 13.

b. In Genesis, the seducer is married and a relationship with another man is forbidden. In 2 Samuel, neither the seducer nor his victim is married so that a relationship (following marriage) is possible.

c. The attempts to seduce, including the final one, are spontaneous in Genesis. Potiphar's wife takes advantage of the situation that "none of the household [was] there" (Gen. 39:14); Amnon, on the other hand, plans the event carefully and dismisses all his servants from the scene of the crime ("and ordered everyone to withdraw", 2 Sam. 13:9).

d. There is no sexual intercourse in the first story, while a rape occurs in the second.

e. In Gen. 39:12, the victim escapes before he is attacked, וינס ויצא החוצה ("and got away and fled outside", Gen. 39:12). In the story of Amnon and Tamar, the victim is taken outside after being raped: ויקרא את נערו משרתו ויאמר שלחו נא את זאת מעלי החוצה ויצא אתה משרתו החוץ ... ("He called his young attendant and said 'Get that woman out of my presence' ... His attendant took her outside ...", 2 Sam. 13:17–18).

f. Joseph's garment, left in his seducer's house, serves as evidence of his alleged crime: "But he left his garment in her hand and got away ... When she saw that he had left it in her hand ... she called out to her servants and said to them ... he left his garment with me ... She kept his garment beside her, until his master came home. Then she told him ... he left his garment with me ..." (Gen. 39:12–18). Tamar's garment testifies to the seducer's crime: "She was wearing an ornamented tunic, for maiden princesses were customarily dressed in such garments ... Tamar put dust on her head and rent the ornamented tunic she was wearing ... Her brother Absalom said to her, 'Was it you brother Amnon who did this to you?'" (2 Sam. 13:18–20). An ornamented dress (כתנת פסים) is mentioned in the Bible only here and in the story of Joseph and his brothers (Gen. 37:2, 24, 32), an invitation to the reader to see the connection between the two plots.

g. Potiphar's wife, playing the victim, claims that she cried for

help and thus saved herself from being raped, "But I screamed loudly" (Gen. 39:14, see also vv. 15, 18); Tamar, the real victim, cries after being raped, after being taken out of the rapist's house: "She walked away screaming loudly as she walked" (2 Sam. 13:19).

h. Joseph, the victim accused of being the rapist, is punished and put in prison by his seducer's husband (Gen. 39:19–20) while Amnon, the rapist, remains initially unpunished. Absalom, Tamar's brother, tries to calm Tamar: "For the present, sister, keep quiet about it; he is your brother. Don't brood over the matter ..." (2 Sam. 13:20). David, the father, also does nothing about the rape (v. 21).

i. Joseph is freed from jail מקץ שנתים ימים ("after two years time", 41:1) while Amnon pays for his crime and is murdered by Absalom, ויהי לשנתים ימים ("two years later", 2 Sam. 13:23). The expression, שנתים ימים appears in the Bible only one other time, again in the Absalom story (14:28).

The reader who is aware of the relationship between the crimes committed by Potiphar's wife and Amnon compares the two and realizes that Amnon's sin is the weightier one: Potiphar's wife mistreated a foreign boy, while Amnon raped his own flesh and blood. Potiphar's wife was a victim of her lust, seizing an opportunity (the absence of servants); she did not plan the crime. Amnon, on the other hand, devised an evil scheme against his sister. Potiphar's wife could not gratify her passion except by sinning, since she was a married woman, but Amnon could have asked his father to let him have Tamar for his wife. Potiphar's wife had no choice but to blame Joseph in order to explain the presence of his garment in her house and to protect herself against any potential accusation Joseph might make. Amnon, however, had no reason to behave cruelly after the rape, and yet he cast Tamar out of his house, and did not even fear the consequences.[21]

Conclusion

I hope that the few examples discussed in this paper will suffice to demonstrate the importance of considering reflection stories. In

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[21] In the continuation of the Absalom story there is another use of the reflection technique; see Zakovitch, "More on the Ram Caught in the Thicket".

contrast to what we have been taught by biblical scholars in the past who isolated literary units and analyzed them with no interest in their canonical content, one realizes that the biblical narrators did not function in a cultural-literary vacuum but constructed their stories in a dialogue with existing compositions known to their audience. The narrators propound a riddle to their readers, from whom they expect a high level of sophistication—a reader who absorbs the links and discerns the relationships between stories and their sources and who will take note of the contrasts between protagonists of the stories. The biblical narrator expects readers to become active partners, leaving to them the job of evaluating characters but equipping them with an important (though covert) tool: the reflection story. I invite all students of the Bible to place the phenomenon of reflection stories on their agendas.