EXPOSITION OF GENESIS

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by

Jason Coke

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Canonical Context

All 66 inspired books of the Protestant canon relate to the progressively revealed Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative of the Bible, but not in the same way. Each book either *carries* the metanarrative,[1] *contributes* to it but does not carry it,[2] or *contemplates* the metanarrative.[3] A book's placement into one of these three categories does not necessarily depend on genre, even though a correlation frequently exists. Rather, a book's categorization depends on its contents and its relationship to other books.[4]

In the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative of Scripture, the following compose the major elements of the story:

Table 1: Elements of the Metanarrative of Scripture

Setting:	Heaven and earth	Gen 1–2
Hero:	God the Father	Gen 1–2
Hero's desire:	Image bearers to rule the earth	Gen 1:26–28
Problem:	Image bearers gave their rule to the serpent	Gen 3
Solution (the plot):	Promise seed will strike the serpent and restore rule to image bearers	Gen 3:15–Rev 19
Turning point:	The Cross	Gospels
Climax:	The Great Tribulation	Rev 6–19
Resolution / denouement:	Image bearers again rule the earth	Rev 20–22

[1] The carrier category refers to biblical books that carry the primary plotline of the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative of the Bible. Many books of historical narrative and certain parts of prophetic books fall into this category because they carry the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative. Such books describe the outworking of the promise in Genesis 3:15–16.

[2] The contributor category refers to biblical books that contribute to, but do not carry, the plot of the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative of the Bible. Most prophetic books and certain parts of the NT epistles fall into this category because while they do not carry the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative, they contribute important (often prophetic) information about that metanarrative. Additionally, certain historical narratives run in parallel to one another (e.g., Kings and Chronicles, the four Gospels). In these cases, 1–2 Kings function as the carrier and 1–2 Chronicles as the contributor. Among the Gospels, Matthew functions as the carrier and the other three as contributors.

[3] The contemplator category refers to biblical books that neither carry nor contribute to the plot of the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative of the Bible. Rather, these books reflect upon (contemplate) the realities of that narrative. Books of wisdom, poetry, and most NT epistles fall into this category, because in light of the Genesis 3:15 promised seed having come, they address how the people of God should live until he returns to establish his kingdom.

[4] For this reason, certain biblical books fit into more than one of these three categories.

These elements shown in Table 1 constitute a well-made plot.[5] The Bible as a whole presents God as the hero of the story who desires his image bearers to rule the world on his behalf. This metanarrative begins in the book of Genesis and concludes in the book of Revelation. Genesis presents the setting,[6] the characters,[7] the plot problem,[8] and the beginning of the rising action. The problem identified in Genesis 3 did not change God's desire for his image bearers to rule the world. The prophecy of Genesis 3:15–16 indicates a war between the serpent's seed and the woman's seed. This battle is the central conflict in the entire biblical narrative; a conflict not resolved until Revelation 20. In this prophecy, God promised the seed of the woman—a man—would defeat the serpent, restore humanity to the garden, and restore rule of the earth to God's image bearers. The anticipation of this promised seed drives the plot of the biblical narrative. The entire plot of the metanarrative thus revolves around how Genesis 3:15–16 comes to fruition. This prophecy reaches the first phase of its fulfillment in Revelation 20 in the thousand-year kingdom of Christ on earth, and its final phase of fulfillment in Revelation 21–22 in the new heaven and earth.

In narrative (or a metanarrative such as the whole Bible), "The story is the meaning."[9] Every book must be interpreted in light of the plot problem, rising action, and resolution. Recent decades have seen advances in narrative criticism applied to biblical texts which have brought to light the complexity and skillful crafting of biblical narratives. Such complexity is not merely limited to individual biblical books. As one scholar noted, "Narrative structure, usually interconnected to plot or characterization, may extend across several books, supporting the evangelical concept that the divine author provides unity and continuity in the biblical story."[10] Thus, even though this paper will argue for Mosaic human authorship, it recognizes the place of Genesis in light of the divine author's total metanarrative. Indeed, "The Bible's total story is a metanarrative … [which] sketches in narrative form the meaning of all reality."[11]

The book of Genesis traces the line of promise from Adam to Noah to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Judah. God's covenant with Abraham and his descendants through Isaac and Jacob identified their role to be a blessing to all nations (Gen 12). This Abrahamic Covenant serves as the foundation of God's covenant program with Israel. At a high level, it promised land, seed, and blessing. Each of those promises would then be amplified by further covenants

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[5] As per this document's glossary of literary terms, a well-made plot is, "A plot that unfolds according to the following pattern: exposition (background information), inciting moment (or inciting force), rising action, turning point (the point from which, at least in retrospect, the reader can begin to see how the plot conflict will be resolved), further complication, climax, and denouement."

[6] Heaven and earth, Genesis 1–2.

[7] God, the hero of the story; mankind, the object of God's desire; and the antagonist, the serpent.

[8] Despite God's desire for mankind to rule the earth on his behalf, the man and woman gave their rule over to the serpent (Gen 3).

[9] Leland Ryken, *Words of Delight: A Literary Introduction to the Bible*, 2nd ed (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992), 88.

[10] J. Daniel Hays, "An Evangelical Approach to Old Testament Narrative Criticism," *BSac* 166 (2009): 8.

[11] Richard Bauckham, *God and the Crisis of Freedom: Biblical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 64.

later in the story.[12] The Abrahamic Covenant includes many provisions that even to this present day remain unfulfilled.[13]

The story begun in Genesis is very much incomplete by the close of chapter 50. It began with innocent humanity in a garden but ends with a coffin in Egypt, outside the land of promise. There remain unfulfilled promises of the woman's seed and unfulfilled covenant promises to Abraham and his descendants. Idyllic creation was marred by rebellion and sin, but God promised a chosen seed who would defeat the serpent and bring humanity back to the garden. The book of Genesis thus provides the setting, the characters (protagonists and antagonists), the plot problem, and the anticipated solution. As such, it is a carrier of the biblical metanarrative. The rest of the literary works in the canon of Scripture will either carry the plot, contribute to it, or contemplate it. The turning point occurs at the cross and the resolution to the conflict will come only at the end of Revelation 20 with the defeat of Satan and all those aligned with him.

Genesis, then, opens the metanarrative (*carrying* it), but does not conclude it. Indeed, the books of the Pentateuch (and beyond) form a unified narrative. Genesis depends on further books to continue carrying the metanarrative, just as much as the latter books depend on the former. Jesus called the Pentateuch "the book of Moses" (Mark 12:26). These five books, then, form one successive narrative: the conclusion of Genesis portrays the blessing of Yahweh on the sons of Israel as they settle in Egypt, and Exodus begins in Egypt with the family growing over numerous generations. Exodus concludes with the Israelites' tabernacle in the wilderness being filled with Yahweh's glory, while Leviticus and Numbers open with Yahweh speaking to Moses from that tabernacle. Numbers closes where Deuteronomy begins and ends, on the plains of Moab. Just as humanity was banished east of the garden (Gen 3), now the nation of promise camped on the eastern shore of the Jordan ready to head west into the Promised Land. Deuteronomy closes with the death of Moses, and Joshua begins, "After the death of Moses" (Josh 1:1) and recounts Israel's failed attempt to dispossess the Canaanites of the land, and closes with Joshua's death. Judges opens with, "After the death of Joshua" (Judg 1:1) and closes with the failure of the judges. 1–2 Samuel and 1–2 Kings successively trace Israel's history as the priests, kings, and prophets fail to produce covenant faithfulness in the nation. Just as post-flood humanity had descended into rebellion at the tower of Babylon (Gen 11), now the chosen nation was exiled east into the new Babylon, echoing the exile east of the garden.[14] Thus, Genesis through Kings *carry* the plot of the Messiah-redeemer-rule metanarrative.

While the Scriptures certainly have an overarching message based on the entire metanarrative, each book does indeed have a specific message and intended response for its original audience. For the book of Genesis, the message and intended response are discussed in the sections below on occasion and proposed argument exposition. While Genesis opens the canonical metanarrative and relies on other books to continue the narrative, it is still a self-

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[12] Amplification of the promises for land, seed, and blessing occurs by, respectively, the Land Covenant, the Davidic Covenant, and the New Covenant.

[13] For example, Abraham and his descendants still do not possess all of the land allotted to them in Genesis 15.

[14] Gary E. Schnittjer, *Torah Story: An Apprenticeship on the Pentateuch*, second edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2023), 38.

contained story as evidenced by the apparent literary framing at the beginning and end of the book (demonstrated in Table 2 below).

Table 2: Literary Framing in the Book of Genesis[15]

Beginning of Genesis	End of Genesis
The first days (ch. 1)	The latter days (ch. 49)
Man made from the ground (ch. 2)	Jacob returned to the ground (50:13)
Man granted life (ch. 2)	Major characters face death (ch. 50)
God is the life-giver (chs. 1–2)	God is the life-taker (50:19)
Exile from the garden (3:24)	Children of Israel settle in Egypt (46:8)
Snake deceives to incite rebellion (3:4–5)	Lion rules to secure obedience (49:9–10)
Destruction of mankind by flood (chs. 6–8)	Salvation from famine through Joseph (41:54)
Cain killed his brother (4:8)	Joseph forgave his brothers (50:21)

This table demonstrating the literary framing of Genesis suggests the completion of Genesis as a self-contained unit. Various plot elements at the beginning of Genesis find their juxtaposed contrast at its conclusion. Such literary framing does not negate the ongoing metanarrative continued in later books. Rather, it demonstrates that Genesis can and should be understood as both a self-contained book alongside its contribution in opening and carrying the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative.

Glossary of Literary Terms and Devices[16]

Acrostic: A poem in which the successive units begin with the consecutive letters of the Hebrew alphabet.
Allegory: A work of literature in which some or all of the details have a corresponding other meaning and refer to either a concept or historical particular.
Alliteration: involves the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words in close proximity, used to create rhythm or emphasis.
Allusion: a reference to another work of literature, person, or event, often used to enhance meaning or provide deeper insight.
Ambiguity: the use of language that allows for multiple interpretations or meanings, adding complexity and depth to the narrative.
Anti-hero: a literary protagonist who exhibits an absence of the character traits that are conventionally associated with literary heroes.
Anti-romance: a work of literature, or part of a work of literature, that presents unideal experience; a literary world of total bondage and the absence of the ideal.
Anthropomorphism: the attribution of human characteristics, emotions, or behaviors to animals, inanimate objects, or deities.
Antagonist: the character or force that opposes the protagonist, thus creating conflict in the narrative.

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[15] Adapted from Schnittjer, *Torah Story*, 31.

[16] This list is a composite of terms from three sources: (1) Ryken, *Words of Delight*, 513–17, (2) Schnittjer, *Torah Story*, 8–19, and (3) David R. Klingler, "Bible Exposition Template and Instructions," unpublished manuscript, 2023.

Antithetic parallelism: a two-line poetic unit in which the second line states the truth of the first in the opposite way or introduces a contrast.
Aphorism: a short, memorable statement of truth.
Archetype: an image, plot motif, or character type that recurs throughout literature and is part of a reader's total literary experience.
Blazon: a love poem that praises the attractive features and / or virtues of the beloved by means of a catalogue or listing technique.
Calling stories: in the Gospels, stories in which Jesus calls a person to follow him or to respond to a command. Also called vocation stories.
Characterization: the process by which the author reveals the personality, traits, and attributes of a character or group of characters in a narrative.
Climax: the moment of peak tension / plot conflict in the story.
Climactic parallelism: a form of parallelism in which the first line is left incomplete until the second line repeats part of it and then makes it a whole statement by adding to it.
Comedy: a story with a U-shaped plot in which the action begins in prosperity, descends into potentially tragic events, and rises to a happy ending.
Conflict / plot tension: the central struggle or problem between opposing forces that drives the plot forward. This can be internal (within a character) or external (between characters or between a character and an external force). The plot tension generally revolves around the protagonist's desire and the antagonistic elements (see "antagonist") working against that desire.
Conflict stories: Gospel stories that narrate Jesus' controversies with an opposing person or group. Also called controversy stories.
Denouement: the last phase of a story, following the climax; literally the "tying up of loose ends."
Didactic: having the intention or impulse to teach.
Discourse: an address to an audience.
Dramatic monologue: a literary work in which a single speaker addresses an implied but silent listener and in which various details keep this dramatic situation alive in the reader's consciousness.
Emblem: a symbolic and sometimes pictorial image to which a person or thing is compared.
Emblematic blazon: a love poem that lists the features of the beloved and compares them to objects or emblems in nature or human experience.
Encomium: a work of literature that praises an abstract quality or a generalized character type.
Encounter stories: gospel stories in which a person is confronted with the claims of Jesus, which that person must either accept or reject.
Epic: a long narrative having a number of conventional characteristics.
Epiphany: a moment of heightened insight in a literary work.
Epistle: a letter that attains literary status by virtue of the literary techniques used in it.
Epithalamion: a lyric poem that celebrates a wedding.
Epithet: an exalted title for a person or thing; a feature of the high style, especially as found in epic.
Explication: the literary term for close reading of a text. It implies not only careful analysis of a text but also putting one's analysis into organized form for written or oral presentation to an audience.
Exposition: the opening phase of a story in which the writer presents the background information that the reader needs in order to understand the plot that will subsequently unfold.

Expository writing: writing whose main purpose is to convey information.
Ellipsis: the author may drop an element of what is expected in the story in order to draw attention to it.
Extended Echo Effect: the repetition of parallel ordering, elements, or features in multiple narrative units (A-B-C, A-B-C). Similar to "typological pattern," but without the inclusion of prophetic expectation.
Flashback: a scene that interrupts the narrative to show events that happened at an earlier time, providing background or context.
Foil: something within a work of literature that heightens or sets off a main element in the work. A foil is usually a contrast (either a character, event, or image), but sometimes it is a parallel.
Foreshadowing: involves hints or indications of what is to come later in the story, creating anticipation or suspense.
Folk literature: literature couched in the language of everyday speech and appealing to the common person. Also called popular literature.
Genre: a literary type or kind.
Hero: a protagonist who is exemplary and representative of a whole community.
Hero story, heroic narrative: a story built around the character and exploits of a protagonist who is exemplary and representative of a whole community.
Hybrid forms: narratives that combine elements of one or more genres.
Hyperbole: a figure of speech in which a writer uses conscious exaggeration for the sake of effect, usually emotional effect.
Imagery: descriptive language that appeals to the senses, helping to create a vivid mental picture for the reader.
Image: any concrete picture of reality or human experience, including any sensory experience, a setting, a character, or an event.
Inclusio: the bracketing of a unit of text identified by the repetition of features or elements at the beginning and end of the unit.
Interchange: an alternation of elements in the story which can cause heightened literary irony or develop comparative imaging.
Irony: a contrast between expectation and reality which can take various forms:

- **Verbal Irony:** occurs when a speaker says one thing but means another.
- **Situational Irony:** occurs when there is a discrepancy between what is expected to happen and what actually occurs.
- **Dramatic Irony:** a situation where the reader knows something which some or all the characters in a story are ignorant.

Janus: a bidirectional turning point looking both backward and forward.
Juxtaposition: placing two contrasting elements side by side to highlight their differences or create a particular effect.

- **Comparison:** the juxtaposition of similar elements such as words, imagery, or events.
- **Contrast:** the juxtaposition of dissimilar elements such as words, imagery, or events.

Lyric: a short poem containing the thoughts or feelings of a speaker. The emotional quality, even more than the reflective, is usually considered the differentia of lyric.
Metaphor: a figure of speech in which the writer makes an implied comparison between two phenomena.
Miracle stories: gospel narratives that focus on miracles that Jesus performed.

Motif: a recurring element, theme, or idea in a narrative that has symbolic significance and helps to develop the story's themes.

Narrative Perspective (Point of View): the lens through which the story is told, affecting the reader's perception. Common perspectives include:

- **First-Person:** the narrator is a character in the story, using "I" or "we."
- **Second-Person:** the narrator addresses the reader directly using "you."
- **Third-Person Limited:** the narrator is outside the story but knows the thoughts and feelings of one character.
- **Third-Person Omniscient:** the narrator knows all the thoughts and feelings of all characters.

Narrative space: narrators may employ physical space / locations as part of the setting, but may also assign symbolic meaning to certain physical spaces.

Narrative sequence: narrators may employ dischronological narrative in the form of previews or flashbacks in an advantageous way to the story.

Narrative time: in real history, time is a constant. But in narrative literature, the narrator may speed up (pass many years briefly) or slow down (focus an extended portion of text in a brief window of time) according to his discretion.

Normative character: a character in a story who expresses or embodies what the storyteller wishes us to understand is correct.

Occasional literature: a work of literature that takes its origin from a particular historical event or a particular situation in the writer's life.

Ode: an exalted lyric poem that celebrates a dignified subject in a lofty style.

Parable: a brief narrative that explicitly embodies one or more themes.

Paradox: an apparent contradiction that upon reflection is seen to express a genuine truth; the contradiction must be resolved or explained before we see its truth.

Parallelism: the verse form in which all biblical poetry is written. The general definition that will cover the various types of parallelism is as follows: two or more lines that form a pattern based on repetition or balance of thought or grammar. The phrase thought couplet is a good working synonym.

- **Stairstep parallelism:** a type of parallelism in which the last key word of a line becomes the first main word in the next line.
- **Synonymous parallelism:** a type of parallelism in which two or more lines state the same idea in different words but in similar grammatical form; the second line repeats the content of all or part of the first line.
- **Synthetic parallelism:** a type of parallelism in which the second line completes the thought of the first line, but without repeating anything from the first line. also called growing parallelism.

Parody: a work of literature that parallels but inverts the usual meaning of a literary genre or a specific earlier work of literature.

Passion stories: gospel stories that narrate the events surrounding the trial, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

Pastoral: literature in which the setting, characters, and events are those of the shepherd's world.

Personification: a figure of speech in which human attributes are given to something nonhuman, such as animals, objects, or abstract qualities.

Plot: the sequence of events in a story, usually based on a central conflict and having a beginning, middle, and end.

Plot Twist: an unexpected or surprising turn of events in a narrative that alters the direction of the story or changes the reader's understanding of the plot.
Poetic justice: the feature of stories by which good characters are rewarded and evil characters are punished.
Poetic license: figurative language that is not literally true or factual.
Proportion: highlighting a work's emphasis by the quantitative amount it occupies in the narrative.
Protagonist: the leading character in a story, whether sympathetic or unsympathetic.
Proverb: a concise, memorable expression of truth.
Pun: a play on words, often using a word that sounds like another word but that has a different meaning.
Repetition: the recurrence of similar or identical elements (words, actions, concepts).
Resolution: following the climax, the part of the story where the conflict is resolved and the narrative comes to a conclusion. It ties up loose ends and provides closure for the characters and the plot.
Rhetorical question: a figure of speech in which the writer asks a question whose answer is so obvious that it is left unstated; a question asked, not to elicit information, but for the sake of effect, usually an emotional effect.
Rising Action: rising action is the building of tension as the plot conflict escalates towards the climax.
Sarcasm: the use of irony to mock or convey contempt, often through exaggerated statements that are not meant to be taken literally.
Satire: the exposure, through ridicule or rebuke, of human vice or folly.
Satiric norm: the standard by which the object of attack is criticized in a satire.
Setting: the time and place in which a story occurs.
Simile: a figure of speech in which the writer compares two phenomena, using the explicit formula "like" or "as."
Suspense: the feeling of anticipation or anxiety about what will happen next in the story, often created through uncertainty or danger.
Symbol: any detail in a work of literature that in addition to its literal meaning stands for something else.
Symbolism: involves the use of symbols to represent ideas or concepts beyond their literal meaning, often conveying deeper significance.
Theme: a generalization about life that a work of literature as a whole embodies or implies.
Tone: the attitude or emotional stance of the narrator or author towards the subject matter, conveyed through word choice and style.
Tragedy: a narrative form built around an exceptional calamity stemming from the protagonist's wrong choice.
Turning point (character): the place in a narrative where a character's characterization changes significantly due to events in the plot.
Turning point (plot): the point from which, at least in retrospect, the reader can begin to see how the plot conflict will be resolved.
Typological pattern: the prophetic expectation of similarities in character or events. Similar to "extended echo effect," but with the inclusion of prophetic expectation.
Voice: the distinct personality and style of the narrator or author, influencing how the story is perceived.

Well-made plot: a plot that unfolds according to the following pattern: exposition (background information), inciting moment (or inciting force), rising action, turning point (the point from which, at least in retrospect, the reader can begin to see how the plot conflict will be resolved), further complication, climax, and denouement.

Witness stories: gospel stories in which either Jesus or another character testifies about Jesus or his works. Also called testimony stories.

Occasion

Who?

While the text of Genesis never explicitly identifies its author, multiple places in the Pentateuch noted Moses writing (Exod 17:14; 24:4; 34:27–28; Num 33:2; Deut 28:58, 61; 29:20–21, 27; 31:9, 22, 24). Joshua noted the Mosaic origin of the written law (Josh 8:31–34). Similarly, Jesus and other New Testament authors believed in Mosaic authorship.[17] While Moses was an eyewitness to most of the events recorded in Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy, the events of Genesis preceded Moses' life. Thus, he must have composed Genesis from any combination of oral tradition,[18] written tradition,[19] or direct revelation from God.[20] This paper, then, assumes Mosaic authorship, although allowance for later inspired revisions is acceptable.[21]

The name "Moses" is a wordplay on the verb מׁשׁה, "to draw out."

To Whom?

The text never explicitly identifies its audience. However, it is highly probable that Moses wrote Genesis for the generation of Israelites who grew up during the wilderness wanderings and would soon enter the Promised Land—that is, the "second generation," those who were children of the participants of the Exodus. He probably also intended it to be read by subsequent generations of Israelites, who would need much of the same information. Given that (1) the rest of the Pentateuch seems targeted for that second generation of Israelites from the Exodus, and (2) the Pentateuch forms a unified narrative, it is quite reasonable to understand the primary audience as that second generation of Israelites, and a secondary audience as the subsequent generations of Israelites.

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[17] See Matthew 8:4; 19:7–8; Mark 7:10; 10:3; 12:26; Luke 5:14; 20:37; 24:44; Rom 10:19; 1 Cor 9:9; 2 Cor 3:15; etc.

[18] Passed down from generation to generation.

[19] There are no extant manuscripts of written sources Moses may have used.

[20] Yahweh spoke face to face with Moses, as a man speaks to his friend (Exod 33:11).

[21] Presumably the editorial work, if any, was of the minor sort. This argument for Genesis, as with all Bible arguments by this present author, reject wholesale the Graf-Wellhausen hypothesis of JEDP composition of the Pentateuch / Hexateuch. The hypothesis suffers from several fatal flaws. First, they applied a biological evolutionary framework—all the rage in the nineteenth century—to the development of religion, from simple to complex. Second, they had rationalistic prejudices against the supernatural. Third, they committed the gross logical fallacy of begging the question, commencing (and concluding) with their *a priori* beliefs. They were selective in highlighting evidence if it aligned with their view and ignoring or downplaying that which that did not. Fourth, they blatantly ignored developments in archaeology and other fields that would have forced them to revise their views. Fifth, they freely emended or excised portions of text inimical to their theory. Sixth, the use of names of God as deterministic of authorship has long since been shown as fallacious. Lastly, Graf and Wellhausen, as with other German liberals of their century, exhibited an arrogant over-assurance in their own work. They employed circular logic, assuming their starting hypothesis as true and then forcing all the evidence to support it. See R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1969), 505–42.

When and Where?

Moses most likely wrote Genesis during the forty years of wandering in the wilderness. The two most commonly accepted dates for the Exodus and subsequent wilderness wanderings are either the late 15th century BC or the late 13th century BC.

Why?

The major inciting event for which Moses wrote Genesis was the upcoming Israelite conquest in Canaan. After the Israelites had wandered in the wilderness for decades and an entire generation fell in death, Yahweh was about to lead the new generation (those under age 20 at the time of the Exodus, as well as those born in the wilderness) into the Promised Land in accordance with his promises and covenant with Abraham. As a whole, Moses wrote the Pentateuch so that the Israelites would (1) courageously enter Canaan and possess it by driving out its current inhabitants, and (2) live in covenant fidelity to the Laws of Yahweh, thus fulfilling their role as a holy nation and a kingdom of priests while awaiting the blessing of the promised seed who would restore what was lost in the garden. Moses wrote Genesis in particular to explain the identity of the Israelites in relation to Yahweh, the patriarchs, the line of promise, the land of Canaan, and the surrounding nations. Based on these truths, Moses sought to provide the foundational background required for the remainder of the Pentateuch (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) and so persuade his Israelite audience to trust Yahweh and return to Canaan.

Genre

Moses wrote Genesis as an historical narrative.

Proposed Message Statement

In order to address the Israelites' upcoming conquest of Canaan after decades of wandering in the wilderness, Moses wrote an historical narrative to the generation of Israelites about to enter the Promised Land in order to explain why they should take possession of Canaan from its current inhabitants,[22] so that the Israelites would trust Yahweh[23] and embrace the blessings of their birthright[24] by fearlessly conquering Canaan.[25]

Proposed Outline

This paper will follow the organization of Genesis according to the תּוֹלְדֹת structure presented in the text. An idiomatic rendering of תּוֹלְדֹת is, "what became of … ."[26] A *toledot*, then, is not necessarily interested in the named individual of the *toledot*. For example, the *toledot* of Terah is not about Terah per se, but about what *became of* Terah: namely, his son, Abraham. The *toledot* structure is important because it contributes to the message of the book of Genesis: *toledots* in the line of promise contain the same literary pattern.[27] It starts off good and takes a

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[22] In Genesis, Moses reveals the descendants of Ham and Canaan, as a group, are serpent seed. The Israelites, as carriers of the promised seed of the woman, could thus expect that conflict between themselves and any of the descendants of Ham, and particularly the Canaanites. But they could also anticipate that such conflict would result in Canaanite defeat. The lines of Lot, Ishmael and Esau—although not Canaanite—will also be characterized as troublesome and antagonistic to Israel, and thus serpent seed as well. Moses wanted his Israelite audience to know—or reaffirm—the identity of these serpent seed nations.

[23] In Genesis, Moses reveals a God who, (1) created everything, and thus exists outside of creation itself, (2) offered a way of blessing and a way of cursing, (3) responded to sin with both severe punishment and grace, (4) was more powerful than all the nations, and (5) entered into a covenant relationship with Abraham, their ancestor, and his offspring through Isaac and Jacob. Moses wanted his Israelite audience to know—or reaffirm—these things about Yahweh so that they would trust him in leading them into Canaan.

[24] In Genesis, Moses reveals Israel (the twelve tribes) as the chosen nation of God to carry the promise of the woman's seed. The Abrahamic Covenant includes provisions of land, seed, and blessing. As a nation, Israel represented the seed of the woman, and could know that from their midst would come the promised man who would crush the serpent, lead humanity back to the garden, and restore rule of the earth to God's image bearers. Their birthright as a nation included the enjoyment of, and blessing in, the land of Canaan. Moses wanted his Israelite audience to know—or reaffirm—their identity as this chosen nation and their place in the story of God.

[25] The land of Canaan was deeded to Abraham by divine fiat and confirmed through the Abrahamic Covenant. Furthermore, Abraham, Sarah, and others of their descendants were buried in the land. Moses wanted his Israelite audience to know—or reaffirm—their connection to, and ownership of, the land of Canaan so that they would courageously take possession of it. While the rest of the Pentateuch further develops the idea of conquest in Canaan, early hints of this intended response do appear in Genesis. These hints will be discussed in the proposed argument below.

[26] Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Ariel's Bible Commentary: The Book of Genesis* (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2008), 6.

[27] That is, each *toledot* starts with a subject who is good (or very good, like the heavens and earth [1:31]), but what became of that subject was a tragedy brought about by human failure. In the final verse or verses, each *toledot* in the line of promise concludes with a brief comedy (a positive, hopeful turn) before Moses moves to the next *toledot*. One exception to this pattern is the *toledot* of Shem (11:10–26) which simply contains genealogical records. As such, there is no narrative that can turn either tragic or comedic.

tragic turn, but the conclusion of the *toledot* always offers a kernel of hope. *Toledots* not in the line of promise (e.g., Ishmail and Esau) do not follow this structure. Instead, the characters simply die, and there is hope or comedic turn. This contrast plays out the difference between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. The seed of the woman, while facing tragedy and death because of the reality of the Genesis 3:15 enmity, always have a glimmer of hope. But for the serpent seed, they could only look ahead to death.

I. Introduction (1:1–2:3)
II. *Toledot* of the Heavens and the Earth (2:4–4:26)
III. *Toledot* of Adam (5:1–6:8)
IV. *Toledot* of Noah (6:9–9:29)
V. *Toledot* of the Sons of Noah (10:1–11:9)
VI. *Toledot* of Shem (11:10–26)
VII. *Toledot* of Terah (11:27–25:11)
VIII. *Toledot* of Ishmael (25:12–18)
IX. *Toledot* of Isaac (25:19–35:29)
X. *Toledot* of Esau, that is, Edom (36:1–8)
XI. *Toledot* of Esau, the Father of Edom in Seir (36:9–37:1)
XII. *Toledot* of Jacob (37:2–50:26)

Use of Rhetoric in Genesis

Classical rhetoric employs three modes and three species of rhetoric. The three modes of rhetoric include *logos*,[28] *pathos*,[29] and *ethos*.[30] The three species include judicial,[31] epideictic,[32] and deliberative[33] rhetoric.[34] As will be demonstrated in the proposed argument exposition below, Moses' primary purposes in writing were both epideictic and deliberative. They were epideictic because he wanted his Israelite audience to know—or reaffirm—who Yahweh was, who they were, who the nations around them were, and their relationship to the Promised Land. They were deliberative because Moses wants his audience to courageously take possession of the Promised Land, and the characters and events in the plot of Genesis contribute to the argument of *why* they should do so.

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[28] The rhetoric of *logos* employs logical arguments intended to appeal to rational principles found within the author's discourse.

[29] The rhetoric of *pathos* employs arguments intended to arouse an emotional reaction and play upon the audience's feelings.

[30] The rhetoric of *ethos* makes ethical appeals on the basis of credibility: good character or authority.

[31] With judicial rhetoric, the author seeks to persuade the audience to make a judgment about events that occurred in the past. This judgment often deals with questions of truth or justice, and can be positive (a defense or "apology" of correctness / innocence) or negative (a prosecution, emphasizing guilt).

[32] With epideictic rhetoric, the author seeks to persuade his audience to hold or reaffirm a certain point of view in the present time. The author wants to increase (or decrease / undermine) his audience's asset to a certain value or belief. To this end, epideictic rhetoric will frequently use examples of *praise* and *blame*.

[33] With deliberative rhetoric, the author seeks to persuade the audience to take (or not take) some action in the (often near) future. Deliberative rhetoric deals with questions of self-interest and future benefits for the audience, and appears in the form of exhortation (positive) or warning (negative).

[34] For a complete discussion of classical rhetoric in biblical studies, see George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, Studies in Religion (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984).

Proposed Argument Exposition

In his **introduction (1:1–2:3)**, Moses depicted the creation of the cosmos and all that fills it. This demonstrates God's identity as the omnipotent Creator who himself is outside of creation. That creation comes into being by God speaking attributes the utmost gravity and authority to God's words,[35] and sets up the most unassailable ethical argument based on authority, for Yahweh (*ethos*). The omniscient third-person narrative perspective grants the Israelite audience a view from Yahweh's perspective, reinforcing that their God was unique, all-powerful, and different from the Egyptian gods who were considered *part of* creation rather than outside of it. Based on the power and authority of Yahweh's words, Moses intended the audience to trust God's revealed promises for them in granting them the Promised Land. The creation account thus contributes to his argument that the audience should courageously take possession of the Promise Land simply because Yahweh said so (*ethos*).

Moses' employment of repetition through that which filled creation "according to its kind," לְמִינוֹ, used ten times in ch. 1, is then juxtaposed by comparison with the creation of אָדָם, "in our image and according to our likeness," בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כִּדְמוּתֵנוּ (1:26). God created the man[36] as his image-bearer in order to rule and reign the earth on his behalf, showing God's intended purpose for humanity, and by extension, an aspect of God's intended purposes for Israel.[37] God also provided for the man all of his needs, including a wife. This would show the Israelites the goodness of God's character and his plan for humanity to multiply and spread God's mediatorial kingdom and the paradise of the garden over all the earth. Literarily, this introduction provides the metanarrative's setting[38] and introduces several of its main characters: God and אָדָם, man.[39] The idyllic setting in the garden functions as the archetype that will be broken will the fall and restored in Revelation 20–22 when the promised seed returns to rule. Rhetorically, the introduction is epideictic in that it seeks to convince (or reaffirm) beliefs about Yahweh as the supreme God and creator of the universe (*ethos*) and thus provided rationale for why the audience should obey this God and go to Canaan.

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[35] Schnittjer, *Torah Story*, 24.

[36] Interestingly, the Bible never explicitly mentions women as being image-bearers. See, for example, the silence on women's image bearing status in 1 Corinthians 11:7, "For indeed a man ought not to cover his head, because he is the image and glory of God, but the woman is the glory of the man." Unless otherwise noted, all English quotations of Bible text come from the Lexham English Bible (LEB). Arguments that אָדָם in Genesis 1:26–27 refers to all mankind are probably overstated. A careful reading of Genesis 1:27 notes that (1) God created אֶת־הָאָדָם, "the man" in his image, (2) that man was in the likeness of God, and (3) the female is mentioned as being created, but neither the image nor likeness of God are associated with her. The strongest argument in favor of woman's image bearing status comes from Genesis 5:2, where God "called their name, אָדָם" (וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמָם אָדָם), despite אָדָם in 5:1 and 5:3 referring to Adam specifically, and not mankind in general. But even 5:2 emphasizes the creation and blessing of humanity, while making no mention of the image and likeness of God for both sexes.

[37] God's universal kingdom is thus manifest—in a mediatorial sense—on earth through the rule of a human Israelite male image-bearer.

[38] The heavens and the earth; mankind in the garden in Eden. God declared all of this, "very good" (1:31).

[39] God is the hero of the story. His desire is that humanity rule the world on his behalf (Gen 1:26–28). The human characters (the man and the woman) are not yet named.

Literarily, in the ***toledot* of the heavens and the earth (2:4–4:26)** Moses described the plot problem. This *toledot* describes what became of the "very good" heavens and earth (1:13): God cursed the earth because humanity gave their rule of it over to the serpent, and the wickedness of man only increased with each successive generation. The *toledot* thus takes a tragic turn. It concludes, however, with a brief hopeful note because, "At that time he began to call on the name of Yahweh" (4:26).

Moses used a pun in stating that the man, הָאָדָם, was made of dust from the ground, הָאֲדָמָה (2:7). The placing of the man in the garden and offering all the trees as food with one exception that would lead to death (2:4–25) would communicate to the Israelites that God offers a way of blessing and a way of cursing. The watering of the ground by a mist (2:6), the four rivers flowing out of Eden (2:10–14), the wealth of precious stones (2:11–12), and the abundance of potential food (2:8–9) serve to (1) describe the setting, and (2) demonstrate God's generosity toward humanity. Moses' audience—the generation born following the Exodus—had lived their entire lives in the dry and barren wilderness of the Sinai. No doubt Moses' descriptions of an abundance of water and plants and food would contrast sharply with their own meager experience eeking out life in the wilderness. The threat of death (2:17) would show them God's severe response to sin. God's declaration that the man being alone was לֹא־טוֹב, "not good" (2:18), is juxtaposition by contrast to the sevenfold repetition of God seeing that his creation *was* good, טוֹב. The creation of Eve and her suitableness for Adam (2:21–24) reveals that the task of filling the earth could not be accomplished alone. It would require the multiplication of humanity, something Adam could not do by himself.

A serpent[40] appeared in the garden and subverted God's word to deceive the woman. Falling for the deception, the woman ate from the forbidden tree and the man[41] joined her rebellion (3:1–6). As an image-bearer of God, the man was to rule (רדה) among all the animals of the earth (1:26). But by submitting to the serpent, Adam and Eve inverted the intended divine order, and so handed over their kingdom rule to the serpent. From this point on, the serpent will rule over the kingdom of the world and function as the antagonist in the story. Man's rebellion and the serpent's usurping of God's mediatorial kingdom[42] are the inciting events that cause the conflict which the biblical narrative aims to resolve. The serpent's deception to the woman that eating the fruit would cause both her and the man to become like God, וְהְיִיתֶם כֵּאלֹהִים is (1) situational irony because the man was already made according to God's image and likeness

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[40] A wordplay exists between 2:25 where the man and his wife were עֲרוּמִּים (naked), 3:1 where the serpent was עָרוּם (clever / shrewd), and 3:14 where the serpent was אָרוּר (cursed). As the narrative unfolds, this wordplay seems to emphasize that initially, the serpent was shrewd / clever while the man and woman were naked. But later, the serpent is cursed and the man and woman were covered (see NET note 3 on Gen 3:1). עָרוּמִּים or עָרוּם "naked" comes as a by-form of the root ערה, "to be bare," or עור, "to be bare," while עָרוּם as in crafty / shrewd / clever comes from the root ערם (John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*, International Critical Commentary [New York: Scribner, 1910], 69–70). In attempting to reproduce such wordplay in English, one commentator wrote, "They will seek themselves to be shrewd but will discover that they are "nude"" (Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, Vol. 1, Word Biblical Commentary [Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1987], 72).

[41] There is no indication that Adam was deceived, either here or elsewhere in the Scriptures. While Eve fell for the deception, Adam made a deliberate choice to join Eve in her rebellion.

[42] That is, the mediatorial earthly kingdom of God.

(1:26–27), and (2) provides further suggestive evidence for the idea that the woman was not already an image bearer (see comments above on 1:26–28). The temptation was to become something she wasn't meant to be. Having fallen (3:6), that the couple turned to a tree (3:7) for covering rather than God is situational irony because eating from a tree is what cause their trouble in the first place.[43]

Moses' Israelite audience would thus be hoping for the resolution to the plot problem: an image-bearer of God, a male coming from the woman (3:15) to take back the kingdom and reverse the serpent's rule. Even though God foretold enmity[44] between the woman and the serpent, he promised that the woman's seed would bruise the serpent's head (3:15). Moses intended the Israelites also to hope for this promised seed.[45] The woman's desire (3:16) was for her man (אִישׁ), namely, the promised one who would bruise the serpent[46] and rule with her.[47] Moses intended the Israelites to share in this desire of the woman.

That God promised offspring at all (3:15) meant he would mercifully extend the time of their death (2:17; 3:17) long enough to provide offspring so that the promised seed could defeat the serpent and resurrect those who shared the woman's hope and grant them rulership in the restored garden, thus fulfilling God's intended purpose for the earth. This would communicate to the Israelites about (1) the serious consequences of rebelling against God, but also (2) the gracious and merciful nature of God.

Being judged and expelled from the garden (3:22–24), the woman and those who share her desire long for a return to the garden through the promised אִישׁ, the seed of the woman. By contrast, the serpent desires to deceive humanity that humanity might rule with him (4:7) contrary to God and the woman's promised seed.[48] Two desires thus conflict with each other. On the one hand, there exists the desire for the promised אִישׁ of the woman to take back the kingdom of the world from the serpent. On the other, the desire exists for the serpent to keep his kingdom and deceive man into ruling with him. The conflict between these two desires will drive the plot

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[43] Schnittjer, *Torah Story*, 63.

[44] Three levels of enmity appear in Gen 3:15. (1) between the serpent and Eve. Since Eve died, this enmity no longer applies. (2) Between the serpent's seed and the woman's seed. Taken in the collective sense, this means enmity will exist between those who share the desires of the serpent and those who share the desires of Eve. (3) Between the serpent himself and the (singular) woman's seed who will bruise the serpent's head.

[45] Later in the narrative of Genesis, they would come to learn that the promised seed is being carried by the tribe of Judah through either Perez or Zerah.

[46] The אִישׁ of 3:16 is not the husband (Adam), but a son who would come forth from her (David Klingler, "Genesis 3:16; 4:1, and 4:7: A Case of Mistaken Identities?," unpublished manuscript).

[47] The final clause of 3:16 reads, וְהוּא יִמְשָׁל־בָּךְ, "and he, he will rule with you." The preposition בְּ never means "over," as virtually every English version incorrectly translates it here. *HALOT* identifies 24 uses of the preposition בְּ, and *none* of them mean, "over" (*HALOT*, s.v. בְּ). The word most commonly means "in," "with," "by," or "among." "With" is perfectly suitable here in Genesis 3:16. The promised seed, the אִישׁ with will with the resurrected woman because he will have struck the serpent and restored rule of the earth back to humanity.

[48] Klingler, "A Case of Mistaken Identities?." The final clause in 4:7 carries the same structure as the final clause in 3:16: וְאַתָּה תִּמְשָׁל־בּוֹ, "and you, you will rule with him." The same use of the preposition בְּ occurs here as in 3:16. In other words, while Eve desired that Cain be the fulfillment of the promised seed, the serpent desired to deceive him (Cain) so that Cain would rule with him (the serpent).

of the entire biblical narrative. Thus, the battle between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman will serve as the primary tension / plot problem in the biblical narrative between antagonist and protagonist. Since the man and woman had given their rule of the earth to the serpent, he is able to deceive humanity into ruling with him in his earthly kingdom *against* the rule of God. For this reason, those who join the serpent (i.e., the collective serpent seed) do not want the promised seed to come because it means the end of their rule. Thus, they will do everything in their power to cut off the line of the promised seed to prevent his coming. Since the nation of Israel will be identified as the chosen nation to carry the line of promise, and the surrounding nations will be identified as serpent seed, the Israelites would be able to anticipate conflict between them and the neighboring nations.

It is situational irony that the woman who was naked and unashamed (2:25) thought the fruit would make her wise (3:6) like the crafty serpent, but instead it only *revealed* their nakedness and made them ashamed (3:7, 10–11). In providing clothing for Adam and Eve through a slaughtered animal (3:21), God showed both his grace to mankind and the severe cost of sin: death. In this case, the death of a substitutionary animal. With the skins of the animal, God provided a covering for their nakedness (עֵירֹם, 3:10, 11). The Israelites could thus know God's severe response to sin, but also his gracious character in providing a substitute for sin.[49]

Eve's hope of the first son being the promised seed quickly disappeared when Cain murdered Abel (4:1–8). Moses' employment of repetition with the seven-fold use of "brother," אָח, emphasizes the heinous nature of the sin, and the ground is personified as it "cries out" for Abel's blood (4:10).[50] Instead of Cain, Abel had become the carrier of the promise, while Cain was of the serpent seed. Cain murdering Abel is an outworking of the seed battle of Genesis 3:15, and sets the stage for future conflict between seed of the woman and seed of the serpent. The Israelites could then expect violent conflict between themselves as the carrier of the promise and those nations and individuals who aligned themselves with the serpent.

An extended echo effect occurs between the sins of Cain and the sin of his parents, as described in Table 3 below:

Table 3: Extended echo effect in the sin of Cain and the sin of his parents[51]

Cain's Parents	Cain
Where are you? (3:9)	Where is your brother Abel? (4:7)
Cursed is the ground because of you (3:17)	You are under a curse and driven from the ground (4:11, 14)
Yahweh God banished him from the Garden of Eden [to the east] (3:23–24)	Cain went out from Yahweh's presence and lived in the land of Nod [Wandering], east of Eden (4:16)

The line of Cain (4:17–25) is the line of the serpent seed, and they attempted to make a name for themselves.[52] Evil begat evil, and the seventh generation (Lamech) was a polygamist

[49] This idea would become foundational in Israel's sacrificial system.

[50] Schnittjer, *Torah Story*, 18, 67.

[51] See Schnittjer, *Torah Story*, 67.

[52] For example, Cain built a city a named it after his son, Enoch.

and murderer (4:23–24).[53] Thus far, this *toledot* has described human sin defiling a very good creation and resulting in a cursed earth and human descent into murder and polygamy. The serpent had turned humanity away from God's purpose for creation. The *toledot* has become a literary tragedy.

However, the *toledot* also includes 4:25–26 which provides a contrast to the wickedness of Cain's line: Seth became the carrier of the promise[54] in replacement of Abel (4:25). And at the birth of Seth's son Enosh, people began[55] to call on the name of Yahweh (4:26). Thus, these final two verses form the literary comedy that follows the tragedy. *Toledots* in the line of promise typically follow this literary pattern: what starts good takes a tragic turn, but the *toledot* concludes with an optimistic note. Literarily, then, this *toledot* forms a tragedy that, at the last moment, offers hope of a comedic outcome.

Rhetorically, the *toledot* of the heavens and the earth is epideictic in that it seeks to convince (or reaffirm) the audience's beliefs about Yahweh and mankind. Moses wanted the Israelites to know that while God's creation was originally very good (טוֹב מְאֹד) in God's eyes, through human rebellion it had become cursed and humanity had descended into polygamy and murder (i.e., sin). Nevertheless, hope for the promised seed still existed through the line of Seth and for those who called on Yahweh's name. As the Israelite audience would subsequently learn, they came from the line of Seth. Further, seeing the conflict between Cain and Abel, the Israelites could expect there would always be two opposing lines to be at odds with each other: those aligning themselves with the hope of the woman, and those aligning themselves with the serpent. This provided rationale for why the audience should obey Yahweh and conquer the Canaanites, who were serpent seed nations.

In the ***toledot* of Adam (5:1–6:8)**, Moses recorded what became of Adam. The closing of the previous *toledot* had offered hope for the promised seed through Adam's Sethite line in contrast to the evil Cainite line. Seth's name, שֵׁת, is a pun on the verb שִׁית, "to put / place" used in 3:15. Moses juxtaposed by contrast Lamech, the seventh in the line of Cain as a murderer and polygamist (4:23–24) with Enoch, the seventh in the line of Seth who walked with God and did not die (5:24). In another juxtaposition by contrast, the Lamech of Seth's line was hoping in

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[53] If "seven" is indeed a biblical / Hebraic number for completion, then perhaps the message for the Israelites was that the line of the serpent seed has reached a fullness of evil.

[54] Eve called Seth "another seed," זֶרַע אַחֵר (4:25), pointing back to God's promise in Genesis 3:15. The line of the promised seed thus continued through Seth instead of the deceased Abel.

[55] 4:26 seems to carry an enigmatic use of חלל. This Hophal perfect 3ms is usually translated as "began." This is the only use of the Hophal stem for this verb in the entire Hebrew Bible. However, the meaning of the root in Niphal, Piel, Pual, and Hiphil is usually "to profane" or "to defile." In Hiphil, it also has good attestation for meaning, "to begin." The subject of the verb in 4:26 is also in question. Viable options include Seth, Enosh, or the name of Yahweh. The meaning of the verb in this verse remains mysterious and would have a considerable impact on the message of this *toledot*. If even the line of Seth were *profaning* the name of Yahweh, then the *toledot* ends in complete disaster. If (1) חלל in Hophal does mean "begin," and (2) calling upon the name of Yahweh is positive, then a contrast would be intended between the line of Cain and the line of Seth. If this is the case, the message of the *toledot* is that despite the disaster of the line of Cain and his murder of the promised seed (Abel), Yahweh still offered hope for the promised seed of the woman through Seth. Given that this latter interpretation forms a literary pattern (tragedy followed by a brief comedy at the conclusion of each *toledot* in the line of promise), this second option seems more likely.

the promised seed as evidenced by the naming of his son Noah, נֹחַ, which means "rest," and by his hope that Noah would give them rest from their labor, their sorrow, עִצָּבוֹן (5:29), the very word used in 3:16 of the woman's sorrow. He also hoped that Noah would relieve the curse from the earth (5:29). Moses used repetition with the phrase every generation, "and he died … and he died," but a plot twist appears with Enoch who did not die (5:24). Moses intended his audience to recognize this break in pattern and what it taught about God, namely, that God offered a path of blessing, and those who walk with God have a different relationship with death.[56] That God had already mentioned eternal life in a post-Fall context (3:22) and Enoch's circumvention of death demonstrate this.

The seed promise was carried through the line of Seth to Noah. In Noah's day, however, the world was filled with wickedness (6:1–5) and so, demonstrating the severity of sin, Yahweh determined to wipe out mankind with a flood (6:6–7). However one interprets the marriages of 6:2[57] and the Nephilim of 6:4,[58] the seed of the serpent were attempting to corrupt

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[56] Not that the godly won't suffer death, but they have hope in life beyond death, as was the case with Enoch.

[57] The בְּנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים (6:2) may refer to: (1) men from the line of Seth, or (2) angels. If referring to the line of Seth, then the line of promise (thus far characterized as those who are aligned with the woman's desire) would be responsible for the excessive wickedness that came upon the earth resulting in the flood. If 4:26 (see comment above) does refer to some aspect of "profaning" Yahweh's name (and thus seen in negative light), this might be a possibility. But 4:26 more likely referred (positively) to calling on Yahweh's name in the salvific sense. In this case, Cain's line is characterized by evil, and Seth's, by godliness. As such, why would the offspring of godly men become known as "giants" (see next footnote) and "men of name," when it was Cain's line that sought to make a name for itself (4:17)? Alternatively, בְּנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים could refer to angels. Outside of Genesis 6, the term appears twice in Job (Job 1:6; 2:1) referring to angels. In the NT, Peter and Jude write of angels that sinned (2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6), and the citation in 2 Peter even places the context of the angel's sins at the flood of Noah. Such angelic sins cannot refer to Lucifer's fall (Isa 14; Ezek 28) since in 2 Peter and Jude note the sinning angels are imprisoned in Tartarus, unlike Lucifer, who apparently enjoys greater freedom in the heavenly and earthly realms (John 13:27; 1 John 5:19; Rev 12:10) than the imprisoned angels who sinned. Jude even likened the sin of the angels to that of the men of Sodom and Gomorrah, where wicked men attempted to rape angels. Thus, the sons of God going into the daughters of men seems to refer to fallen angels intermarrying with human women. However disturbing, this angelic view seems more amenable to the biblical data. Further argumentation will continue in the next footnote regarding the identity of the Nephilim.

[58] In Numbers 13:33, the spies reported seeing אֶת־הַנְּפִילִים. The root of this word is נפיל or נפילא. This word, נְפִילָא (pl. נְפִילִים) is Aramaic for "giant," and middle Hebrew used נָפִיל for "giant" (*HALOT*, s.v. נְפִילִים). This is not the same root word as נפל, "to fall." In Numbers 13:33, however, the text offers two spellings (one with the *yod*, the other without) but clearly refers to the same entities: those of such size who saw the Israelite spies as grasshoppers. In Genesis 6:4, other translations render the word as "giants:" LXX (γιγάντες) and Vulgate (*Gigantes*), as do the Syriac and various Targumim (*BHQ*, Gen 6:4). If הַנְּפִילִים in Numbers 13:33 refers to giants (which it does) and is equivalent to הַנְּפִלִים in the same verse (and it is), and if Genesis 6:4 refers to giants (as the various translations suggest it does), then נְפִלִים in 6:4 is equivalent to נְפִילִים, a word meaning "giants" in both middle Hebrew and Aramaic. While it may be tempting to assume the root נפל in 6:4 and connect it back to the "fallen face" of Cain (4:5–6, from נפל), the proper root in 6:4 is נָפִיל, through written defectively in 6:4 without the *yod*, and should not be understood as "fallen ones." Since the marriages of 6:2 results in the bringing forth of "giants" in 6:4, and marriages between godly and ungodly spouses do not result in giant offspring, the marriages of 6:2 are best understood as unions between fallen angels and human women. The result of their union was the monstrous Nephilim.

the line of the promised seed.[59] This corruption by the serpent seed was so successful that Noah alone—the carrier of the promise—found favor in God's eyes (6:8). Only he and his immediate family would be saved from the flood.

The first *toledot* of Genesis began with the "very good" heavens and earth, a descent into chaos and sin, and ended on a brief note of hope. The *toledot* of Adam described how the glorious status which was Adam's beginning ended with his descendants falling into such rampant sin and corruption at the hands of the serpent seed that God determined to wipe everyone out in the flood. A literary tragedy has ensued. But like the first *toledot*, the second ended with a brief note of hope: that Noah had found חֵן, "favor / grace" in Yahweh's eyes (6:8). What became of Adam was thus a literary tragedy, but the final verse of the *toledot* offers hope of a comedic outcome. Rhetorically, the *toledot* of Adam is epideictic in that it seeks to convince (or reaffirm) the audience's beliefs about Yahweh as both severe and gracious regarding sin, and his power in judgment. It also sought to convince (or reaffirm) the audience's understanding of their own identity in contrast to the other nations aligned with the serpent. This provided rationale for why the audience should obey Yahweh and conquer Canaan.

In the ***toledot* of Noah (6:9–9:29),** Moses described what became of Noah. Given the pattern for the *toledots*, the audience can expect Noah to start off well, descend into tragedy, but conclude with hope. Indeed, Moses characterized Noah very positively as a righteous man, blameless (6:9). That Noah walked with God (6:9) is a repetition and motif that links him back to Enoch.[60] Noah's positive description is juxtaposed by contrast against the prevailing wickedness, corruption, and violence of all humanity (6:11–13). The flood demonstrated that God has a severe response to sin. It also showed his incredible power as ruler of the universe. That God granted 120 years for the people to repent demonstrates God's mercy, as did his preservation of Noah and Noah's family. Moses' audience could thus recognize both God's severe response to sin and his mercy. This section of narrative also identifies God as one who makes covenants with men (6:18; 9:9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17). With Yahweh's remembering of Noah and sending his wind, רוּחַ (8:1), to clear the flood waters, Moses employed repetition by inviting the reader back to 1:2 where God's spirit, רוּחַ, hovered over the waters of creation, thus suggesting a new beginning.[61]

God's command to Noah and his sons to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth (9:1) is repetition (from 1:28) and suggests a new start for humanity to rule the world on God's. The flood, however, did not wipe out the serpent seed. Ham, emphatically mentioned as "the father of Canaan" (9:22) sinned while Noah was drunk in some effort to attack the seed of the woman. Ham's "seeing the nakedness of his father" (Gen 9:22) most likely refers to him sleeping

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[59] As happens throughout Genesis, the Pentateuch, and beyond. Here, the corruption was a corruption of humanity. By intermixing angels with humans, the resulting Nephilim offspring were not human and could not carry the promised seed. Only Noah was תָּמִים (6:9), a word used of unblemished sacrifices. In other words, he was genetically pure, unlike the corrupted Nephilim. The seed of the serpent had nearly wiped out the genetic purity of the human race, thus nearly succeeding in preventing the promised seed's arrival. The vast corruption of humanity also explains the necessity of a worldwide flood.

[60] Perhaps the reader may expect that Noah will also avoid death—and in a manner of speaking, he does. While the whole world will pass away in the flood, he and his family alone survived.

[61] Schnittjer, *Torah Story*, 46.

with Noah's wife.[62] This resulted in Noah's cursing of Canaan (9:25–27). All this has the effect of characterizing Ham, Canaan, and their descendants as serpent seed. The Israelites of Moses' day could thus know that Hamites and Canaanites are serpent seed, and so expect conflict with them. By contrast, Shem and Japheth are characterized as the honorable sons (9:23) who receive blessing from their father (9:26–27). Yahweh is also said to be the God of Shem (9:26), indicating his line carries the promise of Yahweh. The Israelites could know that their ancestry is from the honorable line of Shem, the line of promise, and that Yahweh is their God. Noah's fall, as demonstrated in Table 4 below, is an extended echo of Adam and Eve's fall in the garden.

Table 4: Extended echo effect of Noah's fall to the fall in the garden[63]

Adam and Eve	Noah
Yahweh God had planted a garden (2:8)	Noah … proceeded to plant an orchard (9:20)
And she took some [fruit of the tree] and ate it (3:6)	He drank some of its wine and became drunk (9:21)
And they realized they were naked (3:7)	[Noah] lay naked inside his tent (9:21)
And [they] made coverings for themselves (3:7)	They [Shem and Japheth] … covered their father's naked body (9:23)
Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked (3:7)	When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done (9:24)
Curse of the serpent and the ground (3:14, 17)	Curse upon Canaan (9:25)

The fall of Noah functions as the literary tragedy. As with the previous *toledots* having a hopeful conclusion, Noah's blessing on Yahweh, Shem, and Japheth (9:26–27) concludes the *toledot* on a note of optimism, and thus takes a comedic turn. Rhetorically, the *toledot* of Noah is epideictic because it seeks to persuade (or reaffirm) the audience's beliefs about the identity of Yahweh, themselves, and the surrounding nations. It therefore provided rationale for why the audience should obey Yahweh and conquer Canaan.

In the ***toledot* of the Sons of Noah (10:1–11:9)**, Moses described what became of the sons of Noah. As the descendants of Noah's three sons multiplied, they grew into nations and had names that Moses' Israelite audience would recognize. The sons of Ham included Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan. Cush was the father of Nimrod, who led the rebellion against God at Babylon[64] (11:1–9). Rebellion is apparent from the desire to do exactly the opposite of God's command to "multiply and fill the earth." Their journeying "from the east" (11:2) foreshadows the problems to come because in Moses' use of narrative space, east is a negative direction.[65] Instead, their desired to stay in one place and make a name for themselves (11:4) is a repetition

[62] Leviticus 20:20 shows the parallel in meaning: "If there is a man who lies with his uncle's wife, he has uncovered his uncle's nakedness." See also Lev 18:6–7. Perhaps he was staking claim as patriarch of the family over against Noah. In any case, Ham committed some untoward act with apparently sexual implications as an act against the promised seed, so demonstrating that he himself is of the serpent seed.

[63] Adapted from Schnittjer, *Torah Story*, 83.

[64] For consistency, "Babylon" is used here instead of the more traditional "Babel" because the Hebrew word בָּבֶל, everywhere else in the Hebrew Bible refers to, and is translated as, "Babylon."

[65] For example, Adam and Eve are exiled east of Eden, and Cain goes east to the land of Nod.

of Cain building a city after his son's name (4:17) and the wicked "men of name" in 6:4. This will soon be juxtaposed by comparison with God making Abram's name great (12:2), who is himself a descendant of Shem, whose name means, "name." The entire account of the tower of Babylon makes extensive use of word plays, paronomasia, and alliteration.[66]

In the genealogy, Mizraim is Egypt, whom the audience would recognize as the nation that enslaved them and from which they had just escaped. Canaan was cursed by Noah, and his descendants filled the territory that the Israelites were meant to enter, the Promised Land. The use of negative characterization of these nations as serpent seed and the use of narrative space where they settled foreshadows the coming conflict between Israel and the Canaanite inhabitants of the Promised Land. The descendants of Ham are thus characterized as the serpent seed, who, since the time of Cain, were actively fighting against—indeed, trying to wipe out—the seed of the woman.[67] The line of Ham brought constant trouble and wickedness. This *toledot* clearly shows to Israel the identity of the Canaanites whom they were to conquer and take land from.

This *toledot* thus describes what became of the sons of Noah: their descendants became the nations of the world, and particularly the lines of Ham and Canaan were characterized as serpent seed. The literary pattern of tragedy followed by a brief comedic conclusion applies here also. The rebellion of Babylon functions as the tragedy, and the comedy occurs in the final two verses (11:8–9), where judgment and mercy meet in the scattering of the people around the earth as per God's intent. The scattering suggests a future hope that God's purposes for humanity may yet be fulfilled. Rhetorically, the *toledot* of the sons of Noah is epideictic because it seeks to persuade (or reaffirm) the audience's beliefs about their identity as the nation of promise and the identity of the surrounding peoples as rebellious, serpent seed nations. It therefore provided rationale for why the audience should obey Yahweh and conquer Canaan.

In the ***toledot* of Shem (11:10–26)**, Moses described what became of Shem, and it follows his genealogical line down to Terah. Shem (with Japheth) were shown as the honorable sons of Noah (9:23) in contrast to the wicked Ham and his son, Canaan. This *toledot* does not follow any literary pattern at all because it is simply a genealogy. Its only function is to connect Terah and his three sons (including Abram) back to the godly line of Shem. In doing so, Moses demonstrated for his Israelite audience that the seed promise would be carried through one of Terah's three sons (11:26). The specific son will be identified in the *toledot* of Terah.

In the ***toledot* of Terah (11:27–25:11)**, Moses explained what became of Terah, namely, his son Abram. The account frames Abram as a literary hero, and the *toledot* as a hero story. Following Terah's death, Yahweh made several promises to Abram (12:1–3). These promises included: (1) Abram becoming a great nation, (2) blessing to Abram, (3) Abram's name

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[66] One example is a wordplay on נִלְבְּנָה, "let us make bricks" (11:3) which sounds very similar to נָבְלָה, "let us mix up [the languages]" (11:7). See various other examples in Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 234–35.

[67] No doubt, fresh on the minds of the Israelites would be their slavery in Egypt, and even Pharaoh's attempt to wipe out the male line of the Israelites.

being great,[68] (4) Abram being a blessing, (5) cursing or blessing to those who curse or bless Abram,[69] and (6) blessing to all the families of the earth through Abram (12:2–3). These promises would come about to Abram as a result of obeying God's command to leave his country, his relatives, his father's house, and going to a land which God would show him (12:1). By obeying (12:4), Abram thus became the carrier of the promise and heir to the promises Yahweh had foretold (12:2–3). Knowing of their own ancestry from Abraham, the Israelite audience could therefore know of their own relationship to Yahweh and the substance of the promises made to them.

When Abram arrived in the land of Canaan, God promised that land to him and his descendants (12:7). This constitutes the first articulation of the land promise which will be further revealed as the story progresses. The presence of the Canaanites in the land (12:6) adds tension to the story. Their presence foreshadows the struggle over the land between serpent seed and the seed of the woman. No doubt Moses' Israelite reader would relate to the idea of Canaanites being present in the land they are to inherit, because they faced the same situation at the time Moses wrote Genesis for them.

God's protection of Abram and Sarai during their Egyptian sojourn (12:10–20) and Abram's victory over the invading Mesopotamian armies (13:1–14:24) serve as two demonstrations of God's faithfulness to his promise to Abram in cursing those who cursed Abram (12:3).[70] Melchizedek, a priest of God, likewise confirmed Yahweh's blessing over Abram (14:18–24).[71] These events of cursing and blessing would confirm for the Israelites Abram's status as a man blessed by God, and also communicate the same reality for themselves. God's second articulation of the land promise (13:12–15)[72] would confirm to the Israelites of Moses' day that despite their absence from the land for hundreds of years, it still belonged to them as an eternal possession. Abram's deception (12:12:10–20; later also 20:1–18) would become characteristic of his entire family (Isaac, 26:1–11; Jacob, 27:1–29; Laban, 29:21–30; Rachel, 31:17–21, 34–35; ten of Jacob's sons, 37:31–35; and even Joseph, 42:7).[73] This family deception is an example of literary repetition throughout Genesis.

The Lord's promise to Abram for a son (15:4) and a multitude of descendants (15:5) demonstrated his faithfulness in fulfilling the initial promise of becoming a great nation (12:2).

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[68] This great name is juxtaposed by contrast against the various attempts of the serpent seed trying to make their own names great (i.e., Cain [4:17], the Nephilim [6:4] and those at the tower of Babylon [11:4]).

[69] This cursing or blessing presumably extends to Abraham's descendants in the line of promise as well. Thus, even in the present day, those who curse or bless the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob can expect a reciprocal response from the Lord.

[70] As the first example, Pharaoh took Abram's wife (a curse), so God cursed Pharaoh's household with a plague until he gave back Abram's wife. Second, the invading Mesopotamian armies took Abram's nephew (likewise a curse), and despite Abram being vastly outnumbered (318 servants against the armies of four allied kings), Abram conquered the invaders and brought back everything (14:16).

[71] Melchizedek means, "King of righteousness," and he reigned in the city of Salem (i.e., the city of Peace) which would later be renamed Jerusalem. Melchizedek's function as a priest-king in Jerusalem foreshadows Jesus, the future priest-king who will also rule from Jerusalem.

[72] God promised that the land of Canaan where Abram settled (13:12)—all that Abram could see in every direction (13:14)—would belong to Abram and his descendants forever (13:15).

[73] Schnittjer, *Torah Story*, 33.

The Israelites would know that they, now a great nation with a multitude of descendants, had come from Abram's line. God's faithfulness in giving the land of Canaan is demonstrated by promise (15:7) and by covenant (15:9–21).[74] This covenant formally established the relationship between the land of Canaan and Abram and his descendants. God's proclamation of slavery for 400 years, judgment on the oppressive nation, and then returning to the land of promise demonstrated God's omniscience in knowing the future. To the Israelite audience of Moses, they would, at the time of writing, recognize their period of slavery (15:13) followed by the judgment on Egypt (15:14). Such prophetic declarations—fulfilled by the time of Moses writing these words—would bolster the audience's faith in Yahweh's ability to bring them into the Promised Land, thus providing rationale for why they should trust the God of Abraham.

The account of Hagar and Ishmael (16:1–16) revealed that Ishmael is not the son of promise, but the son of the slave woman. It also identifies Ishmael and his descendants as living in perpetual defiance of their brothers (16:12), which would highlight for Israel their antagonistic relationship to Ishmael's line.

A year before Isaac's birth, God again confirmed his covenant with Abram (17:1–27). God established circumcision as a sign of the covenant (17:10–14), changed Abram's name to Abraham (17:5), and confirmed his promise to multiply Abraham's descendants (17:6). In this confirmation of the Abrahamic Covenant, God also added some new information: first, that kings would come from the line of Abraham (17:6). Second, that the Abrahamic Covenant is everlasting to Abraham's descendants (17:7).[75] Third, that the land of Canaan is an everlasting possession to Abraham's descendants (17:8).[76] Fourth, that Abraham's God will be the God of his descendants (17:7–8). To the Israelites of Moses' day, these statements would clearly demonstrate to Israel who they are. As descendants of Abraham, Yahweh was their God in covenant relationship, Canaan was their eternal possession, and their nation would include royal rule. Furthermore, the covenant obligation of circumcision would continue from Abraham to all future generations of Israel (17:9–13). This would communicate to the Israelites both the reason —and the need—for circumcision. God also promised a son *through Sarai*, whom he renamed Sarah (17:15). Though Abraham wanted Ishmael to carry the promise and the covenant (17:18), Yahweh confirmed that honor would pass to his son Isaac (17:19), even though Ishmael would be blessed in other ways as a great nation (17:20). This would reveal for the Israelites (coming, as they did, from the line of Isaac) their relationship to the Ishmaelites. They were recipients of the promise, while the Ishmaelites, despite their respective blessing, were not. This account of Abraham desiring Ishmael to carry to the promise serves as the prototypical pattern whereby the father carrying the promise selects the wrong son as recipient of the promise.[77]

The first time Yahweh promised a son through Sarah, Abraham laughed (17:17). When the Lord visited again[78] and made the same promise, Sarah laughed (18:12). By the time Moses wrote Genesis, Isaac (a child of the "impossible") had been born and they had indeed

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[74] That is, the Abrahamic Covenant.

[75] Further revelation will show how this covenant relationship does not apply to *all* descendants of Abraham, but only to the line of Isaac and Jacob.

[76] Yet another reiteration of the land promise.

[77] Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and even Joseph chose the wrong son for the line of promise.

[78] This time, as a physical man (the pre-incarnate Christ?) and with two angels appearing as men.

become a large nation. If Yahweh could be trusted to fulfill past promises that defeated the impossible, then the Israelites could be sure the same is true of unfulfilled promises, such as their possession of Canaan. Perhaps this is why, after Sarah's laughter, the Lord reiterated his promise of Abraham becoming a mighty nation (18:17–21).

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (18:22–19:29) demonstrated the severity of Yahweh's judgment against sinners, but also his mercy in foregoing judgment on behalf of just ten righteous (18:32). This would have the effect of bolstering the faith of the Israelites following Joshua into the Promised Land. Not only did the land belong to them by an eternal divine covenant, but had there been even ten righteous (18:32) among the Canaanites, Yahweh might have spared them judgment. Any who might have questioned the morality of their conquest and extermination of the Canaanites could be assured that the conquest was ordained by a merciful and just God. Indeed, Yahweh had granted the Amorites 400 years in which to repent before their wickedness had been fulfilled (15:16).[79]

With the account of Lot's inebriation and rape by his daughters in the cave (19:30–38), Moses employed an extended echo effect from the account of Noah's drunkenness (see Table 5 below).

Table 5: Extended echo effect of Sodom and Gomorrah with the Flood of Noah[80]

Flood of Noah	**Sodom and Gomorrah**
Sinfulness of humanity (6:5-8)	Wickedness of the cities (18:20–21)
Door of the ark shut (7:16)	Door of Lot's house shut (19:10–11)
All humanity destroyed (7:21–23)	All inhabitants of the cities destroyed (19:24–26)
Noah's family escaped (7:23–8:1)	Lot's family escaped (19:30)
Noah's drunkenness (9:20-23)	Lot's drunkenness (19:31–35)
Ham's sexual sin (9:22)	Lot and his daughters' sexual sin (19:33–36)
Canaan the result of Ham's sin (9:25)	Moab and Ammon the result of the daughters' sin (19:37–38)

The drunkenness and sexual sin involved in Noah's and Lot's families resulted in the genesis of the three great cursed enemies of Israel—the Canaanites, Moabites, and Ammonites.[81] These two accounts led to the cursing of the Canaanites, Moabites, and Ammonites. Moses employed repetition with the eleven occurrences of "father," אָב, primarily of Lot to his daughters, but then of the sons as "fathers" of nations. This is also an example of situation irony because Lot had offered his daughters up for gang rape (19:8), but ended up being raped by them. It is also of dramatic irony because Lot had offered his daughters ostensibly as a show of hospitality to the visiting men, but the Moabites and Ammonites will become extremely inhospitable to Israel (Deut 23:3–4).[82] Because of the sordid beginnings of the Moabite and

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[79] The rescue of Lot and his family shows them as righteous individuals, despite the incestuous beginnings of the Moabites and Ammonites. In the New Testament, Peter confirmed Lot's righteous status (2 Pet 2:7).

[80] Adapted from Schnittjer, *Torah Story*, 101.

[81] The Moabites and Ammonites were cursed not as a result of their genesis, but because of their unfavorable disposition to the Israelites who wanted to purchase food and water from them (Deut 23:3–6; Judg 11:18).

[82] Schnittjer, *Torah Story*, 11, 17.

Ammonite peoples (portrayed by Moses' characterization of Lot and his daughters), the Israelites could expect the descendants of Moab and Ben-Ammi would likewise purvey sexual immorality, and indeed, that is exactly what occurred in Numbers 25 at Shittim.

Abraham's time in the Negev with Abimelech (20:1–18) is another demonstration of Yahweh cursing those who cursed Abraham (Gen 12:3). The Israelite audience of Genesis had just seen Yahweh curse Egypt through the plagues, after Egypt had cursed them with slavery and death of the male children. Thus, they could trust Yahweh to likewise curse those who would curse them in the future, such as the Canaanites.

The conflict which arose between Ishmael and Isaac (21:1–8) amplified and repeated the previous conflict between Sarah and Hagar (21:9–10). With this, the Israelites could anticipate animosity between themselves and the descendants of Ishmael. Yahweh's reiteration that Isaac was the son of promise (21:12) while sending away the slave woman and her son demonstrated to the Israelites that they, being of the line of Abraham and Isaac, were in the line of promise while the Ishmaelites were not. Nevertheless, God's promise to Abraham regarding Ishmael (21:13) had immediate effect (21:14–21).

With the account of Abraham and Abimelech's covenant (21:22–34), Moses highlighted a Gentile who showed חֶסֶד to Abraham because he recognized God's blessing on Abraham (21:23).[83] The covenant also testifies to Abraham having dug the well at Beersheba. It proved—for any who might doubt—that Abraham truly had a genuine presence in the land of the Philistines, as testified by the local inhabitants Abimelech and Phicol. The Israelites could know for certain they were returning to the land of promise where their ancestor Abraham lived.

The testing of Abraham (22:1–18) demonstrates at least two major points. First, that Yahweh is willing to test the faith of his covenanted servants (22:1–2). The wilderness generation surely was having their faith tested, both during their time in the wilderness where they depended on Yahweh for daily survival, and in the upcoming conquest of Canaan. They could expect testing as an aspect of their relationship with Yahweh. And second, that a faithful and obedient response to Yahweh brings blessing in accordance with his covenant promises (22:16–18). The Israelites' very existence as a nation was the result of Abraham's obedience and the covenant blessings of Yahweh.[84] The location of Isaac's sacrifice—Mount Moriah will become important later in the biblical metanarrative as the place of the temple in Jerusalem (2 Chron 3:1), and is an example of narrative space regarding an important biblical location.

At the time of Sarah's death at age 127, she and Abraham had been in the land for about 62 years.[85] Yet his request for a burial plot (23:4) shows that he did not yet *own* any of the land God had promised to him. The rest of this account (23:1–20) demonstrates that Abraham was deeded a possession of land near Mamre in Canaan. He buried Sarah there in the cave of Machpelah (23:19) and was later buried there himself (25:9), so communicating to the Israelites

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[83] The descendants of Abimelech are included in the covenant, but no further mention of Abimelech or his descendants are made later in the biblical narrative. The blessing to Abimelech and his descendants is an outworking of Genesis 12:3.

[84] This does not imply the Abrahamic Covenant was a "conditional covenant." Rather, "The reception of covenant blessings was conditioned on obedience" (J. Dwight Pentecost, *Thy Kingdom Come: Tracing God's Kingdom Program and Covenant Promises throughout History* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1995), 67.

[85] Abraham was ten years older than Sarah. If they came to Canaan when she was 65, then they had been in the area for about 62 years.

that they do hold a heritage within Canaan. This provides rationale for why they should return to Canaan.

The account of Isaac marrying Rebekah (24:1–67) demonstrates several major points. First, Abraham emphatically did not want his son to marry a Canaanite (24:3). This would communicate to the Israelites by example the importance of staying distinct and not intermixing with the Canaanites. Second, Abraham insisted that whether married or not, Isaac stay in land Yahweh promised him and his descendants (24:6–8). This emphasized the important relationship between Abraham's seed and the land of promise, which was the nation's birthright according to the covenant. Third, finding Rebekah—the granddaughter of Abraham's brother Nahor—as a wife for Isaac (24:10–67) shows the faithfulness of Yahweh in providing a means to multiply the descendants of Abraham. The Israelites could look at the multitude they had become and realize their large nation was the result of God's faithfulness to Abraham and Isaac according to the covenant promises.

The account of Abraham's other sons through Keturah and his concubines (25:1–6) demonstrates that Isaac is still the one and only son of promise. Indeed, the blessing of God continued through Isaac (25:11). The mention of Midian as a son of Abraham would explain for the Israelites why Moses' father-in-law Jethro (or Reuel) was a priest of Yahweh (Exod 2:16; 18:1)—Abraham had apparently told his other sons about Yahweh.

Like Sarah, Abraham's burial in Machpelah near Mamre (25:9) demonstrated to the Israelites that their progenitors had a presence in the land of promise. Thus, the *toledot* of Terah, or "what became of Terah," was Abraham with whom God covenanted to provide land, seed, and blessing to his descendants forever. Through Abraham was carried the promise of the woman's seed. After Abraham died, the blessing and the promise passed to his son, Isaac. The literary structure of this *toledot* also follows the pattern previously identified: tragedy followed by a concluding comedy. Abraham faced famine, war, exile, internal family strife, and the testing of Yahweh. But at the close of the *toledot*, he died happy and satisfied with life. Hope of the promise passed on to his son, Isaac. Rhetorically, the *toledot* of Terah is epideictic because it seeks to persuade (or reaffirm) the audience's beliefs about the relationship between Yahweh, the nation Israel, and the land of Israel. It also showed the audience the identity of the surrounding nations: it distinguished the Israelites from the Ishmaelites and affirmed that *only* the Israelites are in the line of promise and possessors of the land, and it identified the genesis of the Moabites and Ammonites. In all these ways, this *toledot* contributed to Moses' rationale for why his Israelite audience should obey Yahweh and conquer Canaan.

In the ***toledot* of Ishmael (25:12–18)**, Moses showed what became of Ishmael: he had twelve sons who became twelve princes and settled in the large region of Havilah to Shur, east of Egypt (25:13–18). In contrast to Isaac who was blessed of God (25:11), Ishmael and his descendants lived in hostility to Isaac (25:18). This state of animosity was originally foretold even prior to Ishmael's birth (16:12). For the Israelites of Moses' day, such characterization identifies the Ishmaelites as serpent seed who oppose the woman's seed—the descendants of Isaac. Thus, the Israelites could expect conflict from the descendants of Ishmael.

Toledots within the line of promise share the repetitive literary structure already identified. But those *toledots* not in the line of promise, such as here with Ishmael, do not follow that structure. Instead, they simply have sons, take possession of land, and die. If the pattern is valid, the literary message of this differing *toledot* structure is that those outside the line of promise who share the serpent's desire have no hope but death. By contrast, those who share the

woman's desire for the promised seed, even though they will face difficulties and opposition, still have hope beyond the grave.

In the ***toledot* of Isaac (25:19–35:29)**, Moses revealed what became of Isaac: his sons Jacob and Esau. The miraculous conception in Rebekah—for she was barren (25:21)—reveals the faithful character of God by bringing about the fulfillment of his covenant with Abraham. God also revealed that two nations were represented by Jacob and Esau, but only Jacob was chosen to carry the promise and the covenant (25:22–26). Moses strongly contrasted Jacob and Esau. Esau was a fleshly, earthly man, while Jacob was תָּם, "complete" or "perfect"[86] and more comfortable in a domestic environment (25:27-34). That Jacob was born clutching the heel of his brother (25:26) initially links him to the heel-striker of 3:15, but the prophecy of rule over his brother and blessing that paralleled Abraham's blessing in 12:3 (27:29) indicate he will be the son of promise. Furthermore, that Esau despised his birthright (25:29–34) characterizes him as unworthy of carrying the promise. Moses made a pun of the word "red" / "red stew," הָאָדֹם, with the name of Edom, אֱדוֹם. Such characterization would inform the Israelites about the contrast in identity between themselves and the Edomites, who, at the time of Moses writing, had also grown into a large nation.

God's promise to Isaac (26:1–5) clearly demonstrated that the covenant with Abraham was then passed down to Isaac and not Ishmael. Despite Isaac sharing the same basic lack of faith as his father Abraham (26:6–9),[87] God still protected him and his wife (26:11–17) and blessed him greatly in harvest, wealth, a large household, and in finding wells of water (26:12–22, 25, 32). This demonstrates the faithful character of God in keeping his covenant promises, which God again reaffirmed to Isaac (26:24–25).

Just as Abraham had done, Isaac also made a covenant with Abimelech and Phicol (26:26–33). Even Abimelech and Phicol could see that the blessing of God had passed from Abraham to Isaac (26:29).[88] This would communicate to the Israelites that their blessing as a nation should be obvious to the nations around them, and that even the Gentiles could be blessed if they aligned themselves with the promise to Abraham and his descendants.[89]

Esau's marriage to Hittite women and the subsequent grief they brough to Isaac and Rebekah (26:34–35) characterizes Esau not only further as a man of the flesh, but also as one who forsook the precepts of Abraham by mixing with the Canaanites who had already been

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[86] תָּם refers to an upright, devout life, physical perfection as applied to the body, social perfection, rightness in relation to law, and moral correctness (*HALOT*, s.v. תָּם). Jacob, then, was a "complete" man.

[87] See Genesis 12:13; 20:2. Isaac told the same lie as his father had, about his wife being his sister. This act of deceit inherently displays a lack of trust in God's promise to bring about the line of promise, as both men feared for their lives on account their attractive wives.

[88] Abimelech declared, "you are now the blessed of Yahweh." Neither this covenant, nor Abimelech's descendants, ever appear to be mentioned again in the biblical narrative. However, that both Abraham and Isaac made a covenant with Abimelech suggests that Abimelech is an example of Genesis 12:3, that the Gentiles could receive blessing by aligning themselves with the promise to Abraham and his descendants.

[89] In Exodus, Moses revealed Yahweh's intent for the nation of Israel to mediate his blessing to the Gentiles through their function as a holy nation and a kingdom of priests (Exod 19:6).

characterized as serpent seed (9:25–27; 10:15–20). This would inform the Israelites of the identity of Edom as serpent seed, and also serve as a warning against intermarriage.[90]

The account of Jacob's deception where he stole Esau's firstborn blessing (27:1–45) would explain for the Israelites the antagonistic relationship between Israel and Edom. Although Isaac had not intended to do so, he gave Jacob the blessing (27:27–29) in alignment with God's promise to Rebekah (25:23) that the older (Esau) would serve the younger (Jacob). Jacob thus became the carrier of the promised seed. Esau's desire to murder Jacob (27:41) characterizes him as serpent seed. Not only had he married into the Canaanite bloodline, but he was actively seeking to wipe out the woman's seed. Like his father Abraham, Isaac had misidentified the son of promise.

Jacob's flight to Haran, subsequent marriages, and abundance of offspring (27:43–30:24) demonstrate the faithful character of God in keeping his covenantal promises to Abraham and Isaac, and now to the next generation, to Jacob. Isaac finally realized Jacob was the son to carry the promise (28:3–4), and he urged Jacob to marry within the family line rather than to Canaanites (28:1–2). This would reinforce to Moses' Israelite audience the importance of not intermarrying with Canaanites as Esau had. Esau's subsequent marriage to the daughter of Ishmael (28:6–9) connects the lines of Ishmael and Esau, so characterizing all their descendants as serpent seed and as those who are outside the covenant of promise. God's appearance to Jacob in a dream and repetition of Abrahamic promises to Jacob (28:10–22) further fortifies that the line of promise is through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Moses' Israelite audience could be all the more certain of their identity as inheritors of the promises, including the land.

That Jacob easily found his relatives in Haran (29:1–14) and quickly procured a wife for himself—although the number of wives would grow from one to four (29:15–22)—shows that God was fulfilling his promise to bless him (28:13–15). That Jacob the deceiver was himself deceived by Laban and Leah (29:23–25) is dramatic irony, and it showed that God would not merely glaze over his sin but instead force him to recognize, through the irony of the situation, that the right of the firstborn must be respected (something he did not do with Esau) and that deception by wearing a siblings clothes (as he had done to Esau, and as Leah had done to him) was wrong. This situation thus reveals of the character of God that he treats sin seriously, and that sinners—even in the line of promise—could expect consequences for sin.

A total of twelve sons and one daughter would be born to Jacob from these four wives (29:31–30:24). The ease with which Jacob's family and possessions grew were an outworking of God's promise to Jacob (28:14), so demonstrating his faithful character. It would also explain to the Israelites why they existed as twelve tribes. The names of the sons are frequently puns playing upon the mothers' desires. Rachel's naming of her first son, Joseph, anticipated a further son (30:24), but ironically, she would die giving birth to that second son (35:17–18).

When Jacob desired to return to the Promised Land (30:25–26), Laban used bribery to prevent him (30:27–31). God blessed Jacob's flocks immensely (30:31–42) and this served to increase Laban's resentment of Jacob (31:1–2). God used this rift with Laban to impel Jacob to return to Canaan (31:3–13), an idea his wives readily agreed to (31:14–21). God's protection of Jacob from both Laban (31:22–55) and Esau (32:3–33:16) show God's faithful character in bringing about his promise to Jacob (28:15) to bring him back to the Promised Land. Jacob's prayer of protection against Esau (32:10–13 MT [32:9–12]) and the subsequent positive

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[90] Satan regularly attempted to corrupt the line of promise through intermarriage. Unfortunately, Israel frequently fell for this ploy.

encounter with him (33:1–16) would serve to bolster the Israelites' faith that God would protect them from the Edomites, who had grown into a large nation by the time of the Exodus.[91] The account of Jacob wrestling with God (32:25–33 MT [32:24–32]) explains why Jacob was renamed "Israel."[92] The Israelites would thus recognize in their very namesake their relationship to God himself. As the text itself highlights, the Israelites did not eat the tendon of the hip (32:33 MT [32:32]) and the reason why would draw them back to this account of God and Jacob, renamed "Israel." Moses used a pun on Jacob's name, יַעֲקֹב, with the River Jabbok, יַבֹּק.[93] That Jacob had seen God face to face (32:31 MT [32:30]) would be significant to Moses' Israelite audience because Moses also had seen God and spoken with him face to face (Exod 33:11). Thus, the progenitor of the nation and their current leader (Moses) both had similar experiences with God.

Jacob settled in Shechem in Canaan, where his daughter Dinah was raped (33:18–34:4). Simeon and Levi avenged their sister by slaughtering the men of the city (34:13–29). This account characterizes the Canaanites as wicked and as a threat to the purity of the line of promise, for Abraham and Isaac had both made great pains to avoid intermarrying with the Canaanites, the very thing Shechem was eager to do (34:8–9).[94] That merely two brothers succeeded in wiping out all the men of Shechem would bolster the Israelites' courage in their own ability—under God—to wipe out the Canaanites of their day. Even Jacob's fearful response that the Canaanites would wipe out his small family (34:30) was unwarranted because God put terror upon the surrounding peoples as his family traveled to Bethel (35:5). This would likewise encourage the Israelites to be fearless in battle against the numerically superior Canaanites. For Simeon and Levi, their actions at Shechem would disqualify them from being carriers of the line of promise.[95] The author of Samuel will use the extended echo effect to point out various parallels between the first four sons of Jacob and the first four sons of David (Table 6 below).

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[91] Despite the earlier negative portrayals of Esau, when he met Jacob later in life he appeared to act like a man of חֶסֶד, contrary to his earlier characterization. Jacob's distrust is still apparent, but Esau appears to be forgiving and generous. Moses made no note of his kind actions contributing to a cunning or deceptive purpose.

[92] יִשְׂרָאֵל means, "he contends with God." Jacob's prevailing during the wrestling match meant "Not that Jacob defeated God, but that he finally attained God's covenantal requirement of yielded submission (dramatically signalized by his injured thigh)" (*TWOT*, s.v. יִשְׂרָאֵל).

[93] Schnittjer, *Torah Story*, 121.

[94] Corruption of the promised seed through intermarriage has been a consistent problem since at least Genesis 6.

[95] In Genesis 49, Jacob will highlight Levi and Simeon's anger, violence and cruelty based on this event. This act rendered them ineligible to be carriers of the promised seed.

Table 6: Extended echo effect between Jacob and David's first four sons

Jacob	David
Shechem *saw* Dinah (34:2)	Amnon loved Tamar his sister, but it was difficult *in his eyes* to do anything to her (2 Sam 13:2)
He [Shechem] took her [Dinah] and lay with her and he raped her (34:2)	He [Amnon] lay with her [Tamar] and he raped her (2 Sam 13:14)[96]
Brothers angry about such a *disgraceful thing* in Israel (34:7)	"Do not do this *disgraceful thing*!" (2 Sam 13:12)[97]
Brothers angry about such a disgraceful thing happening *in Israel*—"*something that should not be done*" (34:7)	"Such a thing should not be done *in Israel*" (2 Sam 13:12)
Marriage to the uncircumcised Shechem would be a disgrace (חֶרְפָּה, 34:14)	The rape is called a disgrace (חֶרְפָּה, 2 Sam 13:13)
Jacob remained silent (34:5)	David was angry but said nothing (2 Sam 13:20)
Shechem died violently at the hands of avenging brothers (34:26)	Amnon died violently at the hands of an avenging brother (2 Sam 13:28–29)
Incident robbed Jacob of peace in the land (34:30)	Incident robbed David of peace in the land[98]

In Bethel, God reaffirmed with Jacob the covenant promises made to Abraham and Isaac (25:11–12) and again gave Jacob the name Israel (35:10). This account would communicate to the Israelites their unquestionable connection to the God of Abraham and identify them as heirs of the covenant and rightful heirs of the Promised Land.

The account Reuben sleeping with Bilhah, Jacob's concubine (35:22), would lead to his disqualification from carrying the line of promise (49:4). The birth of Benjamin (35:16–18) and the listing of the twelve sons (35:22–26) conclude the *toledot* of Isaac. Thus, what became of Isaac were his sons Jacob and Esau, and their descendants. Esau, not the son of promise, left the land of promise to dwell in Seir. Jacob, who is the son of promise, had twelve sons who became the twelve tribes of Israel, heirs of the covenant and heirs of the Promised Land. Isaac, like his parents before him, was buried by his sons (35:29) in the cave in the field of Machpelah (49:30-31), so indicating to the Israelites even more of their ancestral presence in the land of promise, and thus their connection to it.

At this point in the narrative, the Israelite reader would probably be wondering which of the twelve sons would become heir of the promise. Given that both Abraham and Isaac were incorrect in their initial assessments regarding which son would be heir, perhaps Jacob would be incorrect as well.[99] Simeon, Levi, and Reuben have been disqualified from the line of promise through their actions. Literarily, the close of this *toledot* seems to follow the pattern established in earlier *toledots*. Despite a tragic middle, this *toledot* concludes with a comedic ending: a note of optimism as the promise is passed on to the descendants of Jacob (35:12) and Isaac dies old and happy (35:28–29), just as his father had (25:8). Rhetorically, the *toledot* of Isaac is epideictic

[96] Both passages use the verbs שׁכב and the Piel form of ענה.

[97] Both passages use נְבָלָה, of a willful sin or disgraceful thing.

[98] The incident ultimately led to Absalom's rebellion and civil war in Israel.

[99] Thus far, it has not been the older son (Ishmael or Esau). Perhaps Jacob will correctly choose one of the younger sons.

because it seeks to persuade (or reaffirm) the audience's beliefs about the origins of the twelve tribes as inheritors of the land and the promise, while distinguishing the identity of the Edomites as those outside the line of promise and inheritors of a different land. In all these ways, this *toledot* contributed to Moses' rationale for why his Israelite audience should obey Yahweh and conquer Canaan.

In the ***toledot* of Esau, that is, Edom (36:1–8)**, Moses explained what became of Esau. Unlike the line of Isaac and Jacob that avoided intermarrying with the Canaanites, Esau married three Canaanite women and one of Ishmael's daughters (36:2–3). Because the land of Canaan could not support both Esau and Jacob, he moved to the hill country of Seir (36:6–8). This *toledot,* in contrast to the next, seems to focus on the *movement* of Esau / Edom away from the land of Canaan and to the land of Seir. Rhetorically, this *toledot* is epideictic because it seeks to persuade (or reaffirm) the audience's beliefs about the origins, identity, and land ownership of the Edomites. The Israelites in Moses' day could thus know that the Edomites, while related to them, had mixed Canaanite blood and that they lived outside of Canaan in the region of Seir. They had no inheritance in the land of Canaan. As Esau was not in the line of promise, this *toledot* does not follow the same literary pattern as those in the line of promise.

In the ***toledot* of Esau, the Father of Edom in Seir (36:9–37:1)**, Moses explained what became of Edom in Seir. While the first *toledot* of Esau focused on Esau's relation to the land of Canaan (by focusing on his *movement* away from the Promised Land) the second *toledot* focused more on his genealogy, and what happened to Edom once they were in Seir: Esau's descendants had chiefs and kings before Israel did (36:31), and they multiplied and lived in the land of Seir. As noted previously, *toledots* outside the line of promise do not follow the same literary structure. Instead, they simply have sons, take possession of land, and die. If the pattern is valid, the literary message of this differing *toledot* structure is that those outside the line of promise who share the serpent's desire have no hope but death. By contrast, those who share the woman's desire for the promised seed, even though they will face difficulties and opposition, still have hope beyond the grave. Rhetorically, this *toledot* is epideictic because it because it seeks to persuade (or reaffirm) the Israelite's beliefs about the nation of Edom and their land inheritance (Seir), in contrast to Jacob, who lived in Canaan (37:1).[100]

In the ***toledot* of Jacob (37:2–50:26)**, Moses explained what became of Jacob / Israel. He explained how the Israelites came to be living in Egypt, how Joseph received the birthright, and how Judah received the blessing.[101]

By the conclusion of ch. 37, with the ten older brothers selling off Joseph for slavery in Egypt, Moses had set the expectation for Benjamin to receive the birthright and the blessing

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[100] The disjunctive clause in 37:1 is clearly contrastive and should, ideally, have been placed at the close of chapter 36, rather than as the opening verse in chapter 37. The emphasis is that the Edomites lived in the land of *their* possession (36:43), while Jacob lived in Canaan, the land of *his* possession. Moses intended to contrast the two brothers and their descendants.

[101] This understanding is validated by later Scripture: "The sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel (for he was the firstborn, but when he defiled the couch of his father, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph, the son of Israel, so that he was not enrolled in the genealogy as the firstborn, though Judah became strong among his brothers and a chief came from him, but the birthright belonged to Joseph)" (1 Chron 5:1–2).

for several reason. First, the pattern so far in Genesis has seen the younger take the blessing instead of the older. Second, Rachel is the only of Jacob's wives whom he loved, and she, like Sarah and Rebekah, had struggled with infertility. Third, the three oldest sons—Reuben, Simeon, and Levi—disqualified themselves because of their evil acts. Lastly, Jacob favored Joseph over all his other sons, being the firstborn of his favorite wife (37:2–4).[102]

But Joseph's jealous brothers had other plans for him, and sold him into slavery in Egypt (37:13–36). Egypt (Mizraim) had already been characterized negatively as serpent seed, coming as it did from the line of Ham (10:6). Joseph's slavery in Egypt and later miraculous release function as foreshadows of the Israelites' slavery in, and miraculous deliverance from, Egypt (portrayed in the book of Exodus). The Ishmaelites (37:25–28) to whom the brothers sold Joseph were likewise previously characterized negatively. This account of Joseph entering slavery would explain to the Israelites the initial act that led, ultimately, to the Israelites living in Egypt for 400 years in accordance with God's promise to Abram (15:13–14). That the brothers killed a goat and used its blood to deceive Jacob about Joseph's death (37:31) is situational irony because Jacob and his mother Rebekah and killed a goat to deceive Isaac a generation earlier (ch. 27).[103]

The account of Judah leaving his family and marrying a Canaanite woman (38:1–2) serves multiple functions. First, the resulting evil offspring (38:3–10) would communicate to Israel the danger of Canaanites and the negative effects of intermarrying with them.[104] Second, it shows that the line of promise gets carried from Judah to Tamar. With Reuben, Levi, and Simeon disqualified from carrying the promise, Judah received the blessing and carried the promise in his generation. When Judah's eldest son Er married Tamar, they carried the promise together as one flesh (as per 2:24). But with Judah's first two sons (Er and Onan) killed, the promise still resided with Tamar. So Tamar, acting on faith in the promise, secured seed for herself from Judah (also a carrier of the promise) and gave birth to the twins Zerah and Perez. Tamar's deception using a garment and a goat is a literary repetition of Jacob and Rebecca deceiving Isaac (ch. 27) and the ten sons of Jacob deceiving Jacob (ch. 37). There is ambiguity as to which of Tamar's twins (Zerah or Perez) will carry the blessing. The name זֶרַח Zerah is a wordplay (pun) on זֶרַע, "seed," suggesting he might carry the promise. On the other hand, Perez actually came out first (38:29). Thus, the line of promise will continue through one of these two sons, but at the conclusion of Genesis it remains ambiguous as to which one.[105] The language of "behold, there were twins in her womb!" (38:27) is identical to the wording of Rebecca giving birth to Jacob and Esau (25:24). And like Esau, the first (hand), Zerah, is associated with the color red / crimson (different Hebrew words are used). The name Zerah, meaning "seed" also makes it seem

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[102] Jacob's father and grandfather had both assumed their firstborn son was heir to the promise. Jacob likewise selected the eldest son of his favorite wife, assuming he would inherit the promise.

[103] Schnittjer, *Torah Story*, 134.

[104] This theme of avoiding intermarriage with Canaanites (and those of the serpent seed, in general) is repeated multiple times throughout Genesis.

[105] In the book of Joshua, the crimson cord tied around Zerah's hand (38:28, 30) would later be tied to Rahab's house (Josh 2:18). Achan, a descendant of Zerah, along with all his house, perished on account of his sin (Josh 7). The line of promise would return to Perez and his descendant Salmon who married Rahab (Matt 1:5).

like he would be the one carrying the promised seed, but Perez "breaches" out as the firstborn,[106] so ambiguity remains as to who will carry the promise. Judah's recognition that Tamar was more righteous than he (38:26) is a character epiphany and a turning point in his characterization. Up to this point, his marriage outside of bounds, his desire to kill Joseph, and other immoral acts have negatively characterized him. But after this point, Moses characterizes him as a new man, a worthy and self-sacrificial leader of the brothers, and ultimately, the one who carries the promise.

That God blessed Joseph even as a slave outside the Promised Land (39:1–6) demonstrates God's faithful character. Joseph's imprisonment (39:19–23) as a result of avoiding the advances of Potiphar's wife (39:7–18) reveals that God can—and does—offer חֶסֶד (39:21) in times of difficulty. It is situational irony that a garment had previously identified him as the favored son (37:3–4), but now a garment would be used as (ostensible) evidence of his crime (39:12–18). That the Lord was "with Joseph" (39:2, 3, 21, 23) continually would remind the Israelites that God had been with them throughout the wilderness wanderings and would also be with them during the conquest of Canaan. The prison account also shows that God may grant both dreams and the interpretation of dreams as a way of foretelling future events (40:1–23). It would reinforce for the Israelites that Yahweh is a God who both knows the future and is willing to reveal it to men.

God used Pharaoh's dreams (41:1–7) and Joseph's ability to interpret them (41:14–37) to elevate Joseph as the second ruler over Egypt (41:38–46). Joseph's sudden elevation in status is a turning point in the plot of Genesis, because the audience can begin to imagine how Joseph might save his family from famine. Joseph's elevation also demonstrates that God has the power to dramatically change one's fortunes in a short period of time, as would likewise later happen during the judgments on Egypt. It would also demonstrate to the Israelites that God is sovereign over the rulers of the world; that he may elevate or depose at will. This truth would encourage the Israelites as they prepared to enter the promised land against formidable kings. With the famine in the land (41:54) and the entering of Egypt by the family of Israel, Moses employed an extended echo effect of the famine in Canaan in Abraham's time (12:10) and his entrance to Egypt (12:11).[107]

God then used Joseph's position of rule to preserve his entire family (42:1–45:28) by storing up Egyptian grain. If Joseph had not been sold into slavery and risen to his position of power, the whole line of promise might have been wiped out, for even in Canaan the rest of his family was at risk of starvation (42:2).[108] This risk of starvation is a point of significant plot tension that drives the subsequent events. The multiple trips that the brothers made to Egypt and their interactions with Joseph (chs. 42–44) serve to reveal Judah's character as leader of the brothers (43:3, 8) and primary spokesperson of the brothers before Joseph (44:14–34). This is important in Judah's character development, for it was Judah who recommended selling Joseph for profit (37:26) and later married a Canaanite woman with tragic results (ch. 38). But with the events of ch. 44, Moses portrayed Judah as having changed significantly for the better. Linguistic clues also signal the change in Judah's character: it was a pledge, עֵרָבוֹן, which he gave to Tamar

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[106] The name Perez, פֶּרֶץ is a pun on the noun פֶּרֶץ, "breach."

[107] Schnittjer, *Torah Story*, 95–96.

[108] Joseph recognized this in 45:7, "So God sent me ahead of you to ensure for you a remnant on the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance."

(38:17) and by which he recognized her righteousness and led to the turning point in his character (38:25–26). Now, Judah had made himself a pledge for the safe return of his brother Benjamin (43:9; 44:32). This is a startling reversal for the man who had previously led the brothers in selling Joseph into slavery (37:26-27), for now he offered himself in the place of Benjamin (44:32-33).[109] This portrayal and characterization is important because Judah will ultimately be selected as the one to carry the promise from among the twelve brothers (ch. 49).[110] Indeed, "Judah and his brothers" (44:14) becomes the term used for the ten sons of Israel. Plot tension is finally resolved when Joseph announced his true identity to his brothers (45:1–3), a literary epiphany, and saved them from the famine by inviting the entire household down to Egypt (45:9–11). As shown in Table 7 below, an extended echo effect reveals Judah's key role that lands him as the son to receive the blessing.

Table 7: Extended echo effect between Judah and Tamar and the other sons of Jacob[111]

Judah and Tamar (Gen 38)	**The Sons of Jacob (Gen 37–46)**
A history of bad relationship between Judah and Tamar, including Judah refusing his third son in marriage to Tamar (38:1–13)	A history of bad relationship between Joseph and his brothers (37:2–11)
Judah's act initiated a lengthy separation between Tamar and his family (38:11)	Judah led the way in the brothers' crime against Joseph which initiated an extended separation between Joseph and the family of Israel (37:12–36)
Judah desired sexual intercourse and met a transformed Tamar—disguised as a prostitute—and did not recognize her (38:12–16)	The family of Israel needed food and met a transformed Joseph—"disguised" as an Egyptian ruler—and did not recognize him (42:1–24)
Judah tried but failed to pay for the prostitute's services (38:20–23)	The sons of Israel tried but failed to pay for the food (42:25–36)
Tamar showed Judah the pledge and he confessed his wrongdoing (38:18, 25–26)	Judah offered himself as the pledge of his brother Benjamin (43:8–10; 44:14–34)
Tamar saved Judah's line and bore him twin sons (38:27–30)	Judah's act ended the deception and reunited Israel and his beloved son (45:1–3; 46:28–30)

Once Jacob received confirmation from God (46:2–4), the entire family moved from Canaan to Egypt (46:1–47:12) according to their clans (46:8–27), so explaining how the Israelites came to live in Egypt. The fact that God both approved of the move (46:3) and promised to bring them back to Canaan (46:4) would comfort the Israelite readers that everything from their time in slavery up to the Exodus had gone according to God's plan and purpose. He could be trusted to restore them to the land of Canaan. Moreover, they *should* go back to Canaan since that is where they came from.

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[109] Schnittjer, *Torah Story*, 138.

[110] In answering the question, "Why did Judah get the blessing?" Schnittjer notes, "When Judah finally was honest about himself—confessing his unrighteousness—he gained the moral tools to end the deception, in this case Joseph's, that divided the sons of Israel. His act of substitution reunited the brothers together and Israel with his beloved son. Joseph and Judah are both saviors. Joseph saved the world from starvation and Judah saved the family of Israel from themselves" (*Torah Story*, 138–39).

[111] Adapted from Schnittjer, *Torah Story*, 139.

To prevent their own starvation, the Egyptians willingly gave all their money (47:13–15), livestock (47:16–17), their land and their bodies (47:18–20). Joseph further implemented a permanent tax to Pharaoh on all grain (47:24–26). Such consolidation of power into the hands of the Pharaoh would explain for the Israelites how Egypt could quickly turn into a tyranny, which it later did.

In contrast to the plight of the Egyptians, however, Jacob's family prospered in Goshen and multiplied greatly (47:27–28). Jacob's request to be buried in Canaan rather than Egypt (47:29–31) would communicate to the Israelites that by returning to Canaan, they are returning to the place of their progenitors. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were all buried there; if Joseph were as well, it would only make sense for the Israelites to likewise return there. The desire to be buried in Canaan also implies the hope of resurrection in the Promised Land.

Jacob's blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh (48:1–20) would explain for the Israelites why those two tribes existed *as* tribes when they were not among the original twelve sons of Jacob: Joseph had received the birthright and thus a double portion (48:5). Jacob's reiteration of the covenant promises regarding Canaan as an eternal possession (48:3–4) and his prophecy of their certain return (48:21) would reinforce for the Israelites their right to the land and the confidence they could have in God bringing them to it. That Jacob honored the younger of Joseph's sons (Ephraim over Manasseh) demonstrates that he had finally learned that God's blessing does not automatically pass to the firstborn son. Jacob himself had been the third generation to make this mistake, and even Joseph's displeasure (48:17) showed that a fourth generation was falling into that same way of thinking.

Jacob's prophecy about his sons (49:1–28) employs poetic license and it forms a poetic janus because it functions as a critical hinge that both looks both back and ahead in the story. As demonstrated in Table 8 below, all the major sections of the Torah contain poetic conclusions:

Table 8: Poetic conclusions to the major sections of the Torah[112]

Major Section	Poetic Conclusion
Beginning (Gen 1–50)	Last words of Israel (Gen 49)
Exodus from Egypt (Exod 1–14)	Song of the Sea (Exod 15)
Wilderness travels (Exod 15–Num 21)	Oracles of Balaam (Num 23–24)
Preparations for the land (Num 26–Deut 34)	Song of Moses (Deut 32)

Of particular note in Israel's speech is the preeminence[113] given to Judah (49:8–12). In confirmation of previous promises, Judah was to be the praise of his brothers (49:8), and

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[112] Adapted from Schnittjer, *Torah Story*, 147.

[113] שְׂאֵת, "preeminence" is also used of God's offer to Cain if he should "do good" (4:7). Cain could have been the carrier of the promise if he had done right in God's eyes. Indeed, the tribe of Judah will have a preeminent leadership role among the twelve tribes as the story carries on: "They grew the largest, reflecting the creational blessing of life from God (see Num 1). They led the people through the wilderness and camped on the privileged side of the tabernacle (see Num 2; 10). They were the first tribe in the dedication of the tabernacle (Num 7). Caleb, the representative of Judah, was the first to resolve to obey God and fight the mighty Canaanites—and he did (Num 13:30; Josh 15:14–15; Judg 1:20). After Joshua's death, the Israelites inquired of God who should go first to fight the Canaanites. "Yahweh answered, 'Judah is to go; I have given the land into their hands'" (Judg 1:2). During a civil war, it was Judah that went first to fight the Benjamites (Judg 20:18). The careful reader comprehends how God's chosen king, David of Judah, fits into the larger story" (Schnittjer, *Torah Story*, 141).

rulership would belong to him (49:10). Thus, the line of promise had passed from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob and now to Judah. The tribe of Judah, in Moses' time, would know that they carried the seed promise within their tribe.

Jacob's request to be buried in the field of Machpelah like Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, and Leah (49:29–33) and Joseph's fulfillment of that request (50:1–14) demonstrate the solid connection between the Israelite people and the land of Canaan. Since the patriarchs and their wives were buried there, the Israelites could trust in their ancestral relationship with the land. Traveling to Canaan would mean going "home" to their fathers. Indeed, the geographical reference to Canaan (50:11) as "beyond the Jordan" (50:10) takes the perspective of an author and audience outside the land, and thus an "exilic" perspective that longs for a return to the land of promise.[114]

The account of Joseph forgiving his fearful brothers (50:15–21) shows that all the tribes are seed of the woman. The brothers ask, לוּ יִשְׂטְמֵנוּ יוֹסֵף, "Will Joseph not be at enmity with us?" (50:15, author's translation).[115] Joseph's reassurance shows that all Israel is the seed of the woman. Their enemies (the serpent seed) will come from outside of Israel, not within.

Lastly, at Joseph's death he made his brothers swear to take his remains to the land of promise (50:22–26). Since the Israelite generation reading the book of Genesis indeed carried Joseph's bones with them (Exod 13:19), the bones would be a reminder of the imperative to return to Canaan. Joseph had been absolutely sure of God's promise to return the Israelites to Canaan (50:24), so by extension, the Israelites could likewise trust God to fulfill his covenant promises.

Rhetorically, the *toledot* of Jacob is epideictic because Moses sought to persuade (or reaffirm) the Israelites' beliefs about how they came to be living in Egypt, how Judah became the son among the twelve to carry the promised seed of the woman (3:15), how Perez or Zerah became the next carrier (ch. 38). It further linked the Israelites to their ownership of the land of Canaan. Literarily, the pattern found in many of the previous *toledots* likewise holds for the *toledot* of Jacob. Joseph's last recorded words emphasized that, "God will assuredly take care of you" (50:24, 25), and also that God would "bring you up from this land (Egypt) to the land which he promised on oath to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." In doing so, Joseph connected the Abrahamic Covenant to his generation (his brothers) and all their descendants with the certain hope of return to Canaan.

For Moses' Israelite audience in the wilderness of Sinai, they were the living proof that God had kept his word through 400 years in Egypt, slavery, and the Exodus. At the precipice of crossing over into the Promised Land, then, the Israelites under Joshua's leadership could read the book of Genesis and be assured of several things. First, they could be assured of the identity of the God whom they were following; that he had created everything, and thus exists outside of creation itself, that he offered a way of blessing and a way of cursing, that he responded to sin with both severe punishment and grace, that he was more powerful than all the nations, and that he entered into a covenant relationship with Abraham, their ancestor. Second, they could be

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[114] Schnittjer, *Torah Story*, 155.

[115] שׂטם means "to be at enmity with" or "to be hostile towards" (*HALOT* s.v. שׂטם). While not the same as "enmity" in 3:15 (אֵיבָה), שׂטם is a near synonym. The Israelites of Moses' day might have wondered if some tribes would function as the seed of the woman, and others as serpent seed. But Joseph's reassurance to his brothers confirmed that the entire nation could be united in their sharing of the woman's desire. Enmity would instead occur between the Israelites and the surrounding serpent seed nations.

assured of their own origins as God's chosen and covenanted nation and as the carriers of the promised seed of the woman. Third, they could be assured of their relationship to the land of Canaan. By divine grant and by covenant, the land was their birthright. The fact that many of their fathers were buried there showed the ancestral connection to it. Lastly, the book of Genesis revealed to them the identity of the Canaanites and the surrounding nations. It demonstrated that the descendants of Ham and Canaan, as well as the lines of Lot, Ishmael, and Esau, were—as a group—the seed of the serpent. The Israelites could thus expect conflict with them.

Because of all these truths, Moses' overall deliberative purpose was that his Israelite audience would fearlessly conquer Canaan and embrace the blessings of their birthright, the Promised Land. Throughout Genesis, Moses had sought to answer questions of, "Who are we?" "Who is Yahweh and what is our relationship to him?" "Who are the nations around us?," and "What is our relationship to the land of Canaan?" Having answered these questions, the intended response was for the Israelites to enter Canaan and possess it as their birthright. The rest of the Pentateuch will further develop this intended response.

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