

day, the mini-דמיון of Aaron and his sons, would God's presence be manifest. The natural process was interrupted and repairing the damage, of literally restoring the loving relationship between God and the Israelites, required that much more work.

Amnon and Tamar: A Case Study in Allusions

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I. Introduction

The tale of Amnon, Tamar, and Absalom recounted in II Samuel 13 is liberally sprinkled with words and phrases also found in Genesis. These parallels would seem to indicate conscious authorial intent to recall to the reader's mind sections of Genesis,¹ and I seek to examine their literary roles within the story and establish their contribution to its meaningful interpretation.² Meaningfulness initially involves placing particular allusions within the context of broader comparisons that relate the alluding and alluded-to texts. On a deeper level, it involves determining what, if anything, an allusion adds to the development of a narrative – in other words, interpreting the allusion. In very general terms, allusions serve three functions in developing the narrative: a) generation of character development; b) heightening of plot expectations; and c) development of theme.

*Based on a paper by Robert Klapper, edited by Gavy Posner, annotated by Mordey Friedman. In determining what is an intended allusion and what is coincidentally similar to another text, I have used two criteria, distinctiveness and clustering:

1. Distinctiveness is a function of the frequency with which a particular phrase or word is attested in the Bible, as well as its emotional or artistic memorability.

2. Allusions should cluster; that is, several should occur within one literary unit and allude to the same other literary unit. An unusually large number of allusive words or phrases in a unit can compensate for lack of distinctiveness and vice versa. In addition, once allusive intent is established via particularly distinctive phrases, less distinctive references can be given more interpretational weight.

² For more general readings on biblical allusions, see: Moshe Garsiel, "Models of Analogy and Sets of Comparison in the Bible" (Hebrew), *Milet* 2 (1985), pp. 35-48; Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), pp. 365-440; Yair Zakovitch, *Through the Looking Glass: Reflection Stories in the Bible* (Hebrew), (Tel Aviv: Hakibutz Haneuchad, 1995). See also several articles written by Zakovitch on the subject, such as "Through the Looking Glass: Reflections/Inversions of Genesis Stories in the Bible," *Biblical Interpretation* 1 (1993), pp. 139-152, and "Reflection Story – Another Dimension for the Valuations of Characters in Biblical Narrative," *Tarbiz* 54:2 (1985), pp. 165-176. For an excellent case study, see Moshe Garsiel, *The First Book of Samuel: a Literary Study of Comparative Structures, Analogies, and Parallels*, (English and Hebrew, Ramat-Gan: Revivim, 1985). See especially his introduction, in the English, pp. 16-32, and in the Hebrew, pp. 9-31.

A. Character development - allusions can draw comparisons or oppositions between characters in different texts that ask readers to view one as a parallel or antithesis of the other. By comparing and contrasting the actions and behavior of two characters in the same role, brought to the foreground through the use of allusions, the reader gains a sharper understanding of the biblical portrayal and assessment of the story's characters.

B. Plot expectations- allusions can lead readers to anticipate, correctly or incorrectly, the development of the plot.³ This function raises a special problem: while for most purposes allusions seem useful even if perceived only after careful re-reading, plot expectations are irrelevant when the reader already knows the entire plot. However, such allusions may be significant not because they tell first-time readers what might transpire, but rather because they tell even familiar readers what might have been.

C. Development of theme- allusions can clarify the moral or purpose of a text by placing it within the framework of a past tale or tradition.

Some allusions are tied to a particular alluding word or phrase, while others serve to recall entire stories or units; many function on both levels. All such allusions will be explored and treated in terms of the three categories defined above.

The Amnon and Tamar episode alludes to four distinct literary units: sections of the Joseph narrative (Genesis 37, 39-45), that of Judah and Tamar (Genesis 38), the narrative detailing the relationship between Shechem and Dinah (Genesis 34), and the laws of sexual libel in Deuteronomy 23.⁴ Below I examine the role that allusions to these episodes assume in literary analysis of the story's characters and plot.⁵

³ The implicit assumption is that multiple biblical narratives can share an identical plot. For a useful exposition of this assumption, see Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), pp. 47-62, where Alter relates to the issue within his discussion of biblical typescenes. ⁴ The purpose of this last allusion in our story is quite obvious: reference to these verses convicts Amnon immediately. There is, therefore, no need to elaborate on this point. ⁵ Although scholars have already noticed some of the parallels that will be discussed, none undertakes an exhaustive survey. See Shimon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible* (Sheffield: Almond, 1989), pp. 259, 263, 271, 274, who cites several of the parallels, but fails to clarify their contribution to the meaningfulness of the passage, only using the parallels to help define words. There are several scholars who develop the parallels to Dinah alone (cf. Robert D. Bergen, *The New American Commentary: 1.2 Samuel* [Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996], pp. 380-381, and David Noel Freedman, *Divine Commandment and Human Obligation*, vol. 1 [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1997], pp. 485-495). There are also those who compare Amnon and Tamar to Joseph (cf. Amnon Bazak, "Tov Lifnei HaElokim Yemaler Mimmehmah, Vahote' Yishked Bah" - Bein Yosef Le-Amnon" (Hebrew), *Megadim* 27 (1997), pp. 29-41 and Zakovitch's "Through the Looking Glass"). However, they do not extensively detail the comparisons to the original Judah and Tamar incident in detail, and more importantly, they do not highlight all three allusions together. My treatment will introduce a more meaningful interpretation of the passage by taking a closer look at

II. Establishing Character Roles

The substance of the Amnon and Tamar episode is largely the behavior and interaction of the story's characters. To understand them is, to a great degree, to understand the story. Understanding them, in turn, requires interpreting allusions, as the text develops characters roles, personalities, and motives by deliberately paralleling them with other biblical characters and episodes.

A. Joseph's

Amnon is initially depicted as the antithesis of Joseph through a series of stark contrasts that make him everything Joseph is not. In 13:2,⁷ he seeks to perform "חַמְדָּוָה," precisely what Joseph was known for not performing.⁸ The term, though commonly used throughout the Bible, is clustered densely in the section of the Joseph narrative detailing Joseph's relationship with the wife of Potiphar.⁹

In 13:9, Amnon intensifies the character opposition by commanding "וַיִּצְוֵהוּ בְּעַד אִשְׁתּוֹ" as Joseph did in Genesis 45:1; the phrase occurs nowhere else in the Bible and its emotion-laden tone and the drama of its context in Genesis make it unforgettable.¹⁰ However, Joseph used the phrase before revealing/transforming himself from stranger to brother; Amnon uses it before revealing/transforming himself from brother to stranger.

In 13:11, Amnon tries to seduce Tamar with the words "וַיִּצְוֵהוּ"; Potiphar's wife employs the identical and rare¹¹ phrase "וַיִּצְוֵהוּ" in her attempts

each allusion and by then incorporating all three allusions into the broader explication of the narrative.

⁶ The comparison of Amnon and Tamar to Joseph is already found in Ecclesiastes Rabbah 7:42, and in the Geonic commentary of R. Samuel ben Hofni (Genesis 39:7, 9). This parallel between the two stories is developed further by A. Bazak, "Tov Lifnei HaElokim," although he only notes the similarities between the two, while we will also stress their differences. Yair Zakovitch (*Through the Looking Glass*, pp. 81-82; "Through the Looking Glass," pp. 149-151), develops several areas in which the accounts diverge, as well: whether the seducer is a man or a woman, if the seducer and seducee are married or not, whether there is a formulated plan or not, who rips whose garments, who cries out, who is punished, and whether the outcome is death or salvation. ⁷ All references are to II Samuel unless specified otherwise. ⁸ See Genesis 40:15: "חַמְדָּוָה רָצוּהוּ אֵלָיו בְּעַד אִשְׁתּוֹ."

⁹ See Genesis 39:6, 9, 23, 40:15.

¹⁰ We see from Judges 3:19 and Eglon of Moab's command of "וַר" that there are alternative ways of expressing a command to evacuate the area, justifying our assertion of allusion here.

¹¹ "וַיִּצְוֵהוּ" is attested only one other time in the Bible, in Genesis 19:34. This is duly noted by R. Samuel ben Hofni.

to seduce Joseph in Genesis 39:7 and 39:12. However, whereas Joseph resisted the incessant call of the seducer, Amnon refuses to listen to the resister.

In 13:16, Tamar accuses Amnon of performing a "הַלֵּלָה בְּרַחֲמֵיךָ," precisely what Joseph was unwilling to commit (Genesis 39:9).¹²

Ironically, Tamar too is consistently contrasted with Joseph. While Joseph escapes "הַרְחֵקָה" Tamar is expelled (by Amnon) "הַרְחֵקָה." Joseph escapes by slipping out of his clothing; in 13:18-19, the narrator first tells us of the clothing Tamar is wearing as she leaves, violated. The opposition is made nearly explicit when Tamar tears the כִּסְיָהּ בְּרַחֲמֵיךָ, symbolically rending her initial identification with Joseph as potential victims of seduction.

Thus, in a story of sexual entanglement, the narrative has interwoven contrasts to Joseph's sexual purity into all the characters involved.

B. Judah and Tamar¹³

The name Tamar itself immediately recalls Genesis 38, aside from Absalom's daughter, who appears later within our tale, Tamar-Genesis and Tamar-Samuel are the only Tamar's in the Bible. Other, more subtle allusions reinforce the connection. In 13:3, a "יָרֵךְ" named Jonadab enters, recalling Judah's "יָרֵךְ הַיְהוּדִי" of Genesis 38.¹⁴ In 13:20, "וַתִּשְׁמַע בִּתְּמָר אֵת דְּבָרֵי אָחִיהָ" recalls "וַתִּשְׁמַע בִּתְּמָר אֵת דְּבָרֵי אָחִיהָ" (Genesis 38:11).

In 13:23-24, "וַתִּשְׁמַע בִּתְּמָר אֵת דְּבָרֵי אָחִיהָ" and "וַתִּשְׁמַע בִּתְּמָר אֵת דְּבָרֵי אָחִיהָ" recall Genesis 38:12-13, "וַתִּשְׁמַע בִּתְּמָר אֵת דְּבָרֵי אָחִיהָ" and "וַתִּשְׁמַע בִּתְּמָר אֵת דְּבָרֵי אָחִיהָ."

Finally, the plot parallelism is so convincing, and the shared name such an obvious opportunity, that an author would have to make more of an effort to avoid allusion than to use it. Most strikingly, both Tamars engage in an illicit and seemingly incestuous relationship.

These allusions determine our expectations for Tamar of II Samuel 13. Parallelism in plot and language to the Tamar-Genesis narrative unavoidably create expectations of apparent immorality that will lead to children and redemption. However, it remains unclear who in the episode of II Samuel 13 will redeem Tamar and play the role that Judah does in Genesis.

¹² The rarity of this phrase in the Bible would seem to underscore its use as an allusion here. The phrase appears in only three other places, Jeremiah 16:10, 32:42 and Nehemiah 13:27, despite the fact that one could suggest many other cases where the Bible could have used the formulation and chose not to.

¹³ For another study on allusions to the Judah and Tamar episode that are beyond the purview of this article, see Ellen van Wolde, "Texts in Dialogue with Texts: Intertextuality in the Ruth and Tamar Narratives," *Biblical Interpretation* 5 (1997), pp. 1-28.

¹⁴ Hiram and Jonadab are two of only four בָּרֵךְ named in the Bible (see I Chronicles 27:33 and Job 2:1 for the others), although there are numerous unnamed בָּרֵךְ.

C. The Rape of Dinah¹⁵

Several literary parallels can be identified as alluding to the rape of Dinah in Genesis 34. Thus, in 13:12, the phrase "וַתִּשְׁמַע בִּתְּמָר אֵת דְּבָרֵי אָחִיהָ" closely matches the phrase in Genesis 34:7 describing the brothers' indignation following the rape of Dinah: "וַתִּשְׁמַע בִּתְּמָר אֵת דְּבָרֵי אָחִיהָ" "וַתִּשְׁמַע בִּתְּמָר אֵת דְּבָרֵי אָחִיהָ."

In 13:20, the word "וַתִּשְׁמַע" appears, which shares a root with the word "וַתִּשְׁמַע" in Genesis 34:5. The word is not distinctive, but its juxtaposition to other, more convincing allusions argues for it as an intended parallel. In addition, in both texts it surprises: silence is not the expected response to rape, strengthening the likelihood of allusion.

In sum, a number of linguistic parallels connect II Samuel 13 and Genesis 34, though they are given weight mainly because of the plot and theme parallels.¹⁶ The allusions to Dinah suggest comparing David to Jacob: both react passively to a "וַתִּשְׁמַע בִּתְּמָר אֵת דְּבָרֵי אָחִיהָ" allowing their children to assume authority. Absalom adds irony to the identification by telling Tamar "וַתִּשְׁמַע": she should be passive, not David. Absalom, of course, plays the morally ambiguous role of Simeon and Levi at Shechem.

III. Plot Development

With a sense of the story's characters and their roles within it, we may now turn to the literary progression of the story. Here too, the narrator uses allusions as a method through which he conveys the details of the story to the reader.¹⁷

II Samuel 13 opens by introducing Amnon, Absalom, and Tamar. The description of Amnon and Absalom as David's sons immediately plants a seed of suspicion in our minds, just twenty verses earlier, in 12:11, the prophet Nathan had warned David in the name of G-d that "וַתִּשְׁמַע בִּתְּמָר אֵת דְּבָרֵי אָחִיהָ."¹⁸

¹⁵ This parallel has already been noticed and independently developed in Bergen, pp. 380-381, and Freedman, pp. 485-495.

¹⁶ Besides the obvious rape theme, both accounts share other similarities in plot. Both Amnon and Shechem were the first born sons of a ruler, and both narratives culminate in their demise at the hands of the sibling/s of the girl.

¹⁷ I assume throughout this paper that Samuel is a text to be re-read. Thus, my interpretation of allusions assumes that readers are aware at the outset of which texts are alluded to, i.e., that they are aware of the evidence presented in this paper's second section.

¹⁸ Interestingly, Tamar is described in terms of her brothers instead of her father, and thus remains unainted. The fact that she is strictly referred to as "וַתִּשְׁמַע" would seem to be a literary device used

The adjective "גַּזְזִי" that modifies Tamar's name, as well as Amnon's just for her, implies that the plot will be sexual. This gives added significance to Tamar's name, which recalls her namesake in Genesis. The allusion enhances our plot expectations, as Tamar-Samuel's fate may parallel that of Tamar-Genesis; we now anticipate an illicit, possibly even incestual relationship. The presence of two brothers of the royal line, one of who is an eldest son, raises several intriguing possibilities. Will Tamar marry Amnon, and will he then die young, as Er and Onan, husbands of Tamar-Genesis, did? Will she then marry David, her father? Will she have sexual relations with Absalom at some point? No matter which, if any, of the above scenarios transpires, one may reasonably assume two things based on the allusion: Tamar will be blameless, and the ending will be fortunate, probably involving the birth of children. Tamar gains our sympathy, and though her immediate fate is daunting, any long-term fear for her is assuaged.

As verse one ends, then, Tamar has gained our sympathy, whereas Amnon and Absalom are somewhat shady characters. In verse two, Amnon is degraded further; he is represented as wanting, though unable, to do "תַּמְרוֹת" to Tamar. The use of "תַּמְרוֹת" is significant; Joseph uses the very same word in his assertion that he is innocent (Genesis 40:15). Of course, that tale has not as yet been clearly alluded to, and so the implications are not immediately apparent; however, as we read on, this verse will help develop an important character opposition.

Verse three introduces Jonadab, the "גַּר" of Amnon. Judah also had a "גַּר," and Jonadab's appearance intensifies our expectation that Tamar-Samuel's fate will parallel that of Tamar-Genesis. But Jonadab is not, unlike the Adullamite, an ordinary man; he is a "צַדִּיק." Joseph was also described as "צַדִּיק" and although the word appears often elsewhere in the Bible, the comparison intensifies when Jonadab asks in verse four essentially the same question that Joseph asked to Pharaoh's imprisoned servants: "כִּי אֲנִי וְעַמְּךָ אֲנִי וְעַמְּךָ" (Genesis 40:7). The comparison to Joseph, as well as the generally positive connotation of "צַדִּיק," creates a positive impression of Jonadab. On the whole, then, the reader is optimistic at this stage of the story, as allusions to Tamar-Genesis and to Joseph imply that, despite difficulty and challenge, the plot will culminate with a positive resolution.

by the narrator to highlight the fact that this episode is occurring between siblings. See Bar-Efrat, p. 241, who already noted this fact.

Verses 5-7 appear redundant at first glance. Jonadab advises Amnon what to ask David to tell Tamar, Amnon asks David to tell Tamar, and then David tells Tamar. But the repetition is not exact, and the seemingly minor linguistic variations have major implications. Both Amnon and Jonadab stress the former's desire to see Tamar, but David omits that component of Amnon's request in his instructions to Tamar. This dramatizes his ignorance and helplessness throughout the episode. David instructs Tamar in verse 6 "וְאָמַר לְיָהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ וְאָמַר לְיָהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ" in Genesis 37:14, Jacob instructs Joseph "וְאָמַר לְיָהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ וְאָמַר לְיָהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ" before sending him to his brothers and slavery. The text thus begins to implant ambivalent expectations for the ensuing plot in the reader's mind. While the allusions to Tamar-Genesis forecast an authoritative, strong-willed character who brings about her own redemption in a favorable plot ending, the allusions to Joseph's fateful journey anticipate a character who will be helpless and in grave danger.

Tamar arrives at Amnon's house as ordered by the king. At this point she still seems completely passive and blameless. But she also seems rather forward, for she does prepare the remedy "וְיָצְאָה" even though David had not instructed her to. She also agrees to Amnon's request, made after the room empties, that she serve him personally.

Amnon initially refuses to eat, then suddenly cries out "וְאָמַר לְיָהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ" (Genesis 45:1), and Amnon now proceeds to expose his true self. Joseph, despite his "תַּמְרוֹת" never did the "תַּמְרוֹת" that Amnon now uses Jonadab's תַּמְרוֹת to do to Tamar. The opposition is completed with his words to Tamar, "וְאָמַר לְיָהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ" the phrase used by Potiphar's wife in her attempted seduction of Joseph.

With those words, of course, Tamar is cast once more into the role of Joseph, and we extend her our sympathy even as we anticipate her escape. At the same time, though, we wonder why she is still in Amnon's reach. He has sent all the servants from the room for no reason, invited her into an inner room without justification; why is she not suspicious? And so a note of worry creeps into our minds as we await her response to Amnon - and she intensifies that concern with the answer that she provides.

Tamar's response to Amnon is "וְאָמַר לְיָהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ" whereas Joseph's to Potiphar's wife was flight. Casting Tamar as the parallel to Joseph serves to highlight and emphasize the instances in which the characters differ. Expecting Tamar to flee like Joseph, the reader is jarred by the dissonance between the characters. The effects are a sharpened focus upon Tamar's passivity, and an

implied criticism that while Joseph made the right move, Tamar has made the wrong one. Suddenly, the situation bodes quite poorly.¹⁹

The substance of Tamar's response serves to undermine what had been the reader's optimism. Mention of rape recalls the turbulent story of Dinah. This specter gains solidity with her next words, "וְעַתָּה כִּי בִישַׁרְאֵל אֶל תַּעֲשֶׂה, כִּי לֹא יִעָשֶׂה כִּי תִּשָּׂא אֶת בְּתוּלַת בְּרָתִי" – the words used to describe the reaction of Dinah's vengeful brothers to her being raped. A similar phrase, "וְעַתָּה בְּרָאֵל בְּיַדְּךָ עָשָׂה" occurs in Deuteronomy 22:21 regarding a man who takes a woman and then develops a hatred for her. Another possible resolution is thus brought to the fore.

Amnon disregards Tamar's plea, "וְלֹא אָבִי לַעֲרֹת לָךְ." This again opposes him to Joseph, who similarly disregarded Potiphar's wife, "וְלֹא אֶבְיָא אֶת אִשְׁתִּי" (Genesis 39:12). Amnon then proceeds to rape Tamar, "וַיִּשְׁכַּב אִתָּהּ" similar language was used to describe Shechem's rape of Dinah: "וַיִּשְׁכַּב אִתָּהּ" (Genesis 34:7). We anticipate that, like Shechem, Amnon will now wish to marry his victim.²⁰ Instead, having taken his woman, he develops an unreasonable hate for her and in a sudden, ironic reversal of his earlier "וְעַתָּה עֲשֵׂה" tells her "וְעַתָּה עֲשֵׂה." She replies that he is magnifying his sin by sending her away.

Thus far, Tamar has been identified with three Genesis characters: Joseph, Tamar and Dinah. The comparisons are as yet indeterminate; the expected evil has occurred, but we do not know whether there will be a resolution. The dialogue to follow will capitalize on our expectations to emphasize the irony and tragedy of what has transpired.

After Tamar condemns Amnon for his actions, he responds with words that emphasize Tamar's failure to flee; whereas Joseph escapes with "וַיִּפְּטֹר" (Genesis 39:12, 13, 15 and 18), Amnon commands his servants "וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶת אֲמֹנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ" (17).

As Tamar reaches the street, the narrator suddenly informs us that she is wearing a "וְעַתָּה עֲרֹתָ" cementing the parallel to Joseph even as it distinguishes Tamar from him. Joseph, of course, is the only other biblical wearer of a "וְעַתָּה עֲרֹתָ" but it was stripped from him when the brothers attacked him. He also left his clothing in the hands of Potiphar's wife when escaping from her. The lack of congruence raises the possibility that there will be no happy ending after all, a scenario made even more likely when she goes

on in verse 19 to rip the coat, thus symbolically rending her identification with Joseph.

In verse 20, Tamar meets her brother Absalom, who tells her "וְהִנֵּה אֲנִי" She then remains in his house, "וְהִנֵּה אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי" raising our hopes again as we recall that regarding Tamar-Genesis, the verse stated that "וְהִנֵּה אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי" (Genesis 38:11). Is Amnon the equivalent of Judah, who also at first rejected a Tamar? Is he the equivalent of Er or Onan? Perhaps. But the next verse points to more depressing possibilities.

The text next tells us that "וְהִנֵּה אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי" rather than "וְהִנֵּה אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי" This recalls Jacob's reaction to the rape of Dinah, "וְהִנֵּה אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי" (Genesis 34:5), as does the word "וְהִנֵּה אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי" of Genesis 34:6. This is the second time within the narrative that David has been compared with Jacob (see verse 7), and both times the comparison conveys his inability to control his children. The comparison is made more ominous in verse 22 as Absalom's anger reaches a level at which "וְהִנֵּה אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי" (Genesis 37:4), the brothers hated him to the extent that "וְהִנֵּה אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי" (Genesis 37:4), the similarity again indicating that the children will take action beyond the knowledge and control of their father. Absalom, however, may not be a blameless instrument of retribution; he is compared to Simeon and Levi at Shechem and the brothers at the selling of Joseph, comparisons that make his motivations suspect.

Verse 23 strikes a new note of hope as "וְהִנֵּה אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי" have passed; Joseph's final redemption after the brother's sold him occurred "וְהִנֵּה אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי" (Genesis 41:1). And furthermore, the context provided is "וְהִנֵּה אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי" Knowing that Judah met Tamar-Genesis when "וְהִנֵּה אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי", the prospects for redemption are temporarily revived as we hope that we will get our happy ending after all. However, in verse 24, Absalom asks the king "וְהִנֵּה אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי" an ominous recalling of verse 17's "וְהִנֵּה אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי". David at first puts Absalom off, but he finally agrees to send Amnon and the rest of his own sons. When Absalom has Amnon killed, the possibility of salvation by the most likely party dies as well. At last the fading possibility of salvation seems to have disappeared, and there shall be no happy ending after all.

Finally, the episode concludes with David's reaction to Amnon's death, rightly portrayed through the prism of Amnon and Joseph's contrasting characters. David mourns Amnon ("וְהִנֵּה אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי") as Jacob had for Joseph ("וְהִנֵּה אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי"), but the opposition between Amnon and Joseph concludes with poetic justice in verse 39 as David is "וְהִנֵּה אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי" whereas Jacob was "וְהִנֵּה אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי".

¹⁹ Cf. however, P.K. McCarter, *The Anchor Bible: II Samuel* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1984), p. 322, where the author adopts an entirely different perspective by comparing Tamar's response to Abigail's in I Samuel 25:24-31.

²⁰ For the rabbinic solution as to how they could be wed despite their sibling status, cf. b.Tal. Sanhedrin 21a; for discussions of the issue, see McCarter, p. 323, and A. A. Anderson, *Word Biblical Commentary: 2 Samuel* (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), pp. 172-175.

IV. Establishment of Theme/Purpose

As the narrative ends, we review it in light of the allusions that we have established. The Deuteronomic allusions serve no purpose other than immediately emphasizing the reprehensible nature of Amnon's actions, but the allusions to Genesis provide insights which are not apparent at first.

The character of Amnon is uniformly downgraded by the allusions; he is portrayed as the antithesis of Joseph, as worse than Shechem, and as one who rejects Judah's role as Tamar's redeemer. But while he is uniformly downgraded, he is not downgraded uniformly; the various means by which his failings are exposed help identify and clarify them.

Amnon is crown prince and heir apparent as the tale begins. His failure to succeed David is at least literally inevitable, however, since Solomon must eventually become king. (We readers may not know yet that Solomon must become king, but the author knows we will find out soon). The author preempts any sympathy for Amnon, however, by portraying him as unfit to follow in the shoes of Judah and Joseph, Israel's monarchical ancestor and prototype respectively. Joseph's integrity qualifies him for royalty in Egypt and leadership among his brothers; Amnon disqualifies himself by acting deceitfully. Joseph uses his wisdom for good; Amnon uses Jonadab's for evil. Judah accepts responsibility for Tamar-Genesis; Amnon has Tamar-Samuel removed from his house. Finally, and most tellingly, Amnon can hardly become king if he fails to match even Shechem's behavioral standards!

Absalom also invites some apparently unfavorable comparisons. He is associated with the brothers' cabal against Joseph and with Simeon and Levi's disobedience to Jacob. Although Absalom's actions seem more justifiable than Amnon's, who is the anti-Joseph and deemed worse than Shechem, he still is not worthy of kingship. His motives may be impure, as suggested by the last allusion to the Shechem story; whereas Simeon and Levi "וַיִּזְכֹּר" Jacob for the sake of their sister's honor, Absalom does so to satisfy his own hatred. Furthermore, as Amnon stood between Absalom and the monarchy, the fratricide may have been prompted by ulterior motives.

Tamar is associated with Joseph, Tamar-Genesis, and Dinah. The comparisons to Joseph and Tamar seem favorable, but that interpretation is cast into doubt when she fails to merit the good fortune they received. The contrast with Joseph highlights her failure to take action when necessary. In fact, Tamar's failure to act decisively marks her role in the story, as she never

captures the energy and vigor of Tamar-Genesis. Despite the initial comparisons, Tamar-Samuel remains remarkably passive and manipulated.

David is compared only to Jacob, and the identification is obvious and apt; both are past their prime and losing control over their children through inaction. David, like Jacob, is fated to see much trouble in his lifetime, and his anguish is all the more affecting when compared to Jacob's.

Each story alluded to in II Samuel 13 highlights an aspect of the narrative, while their combination allows for meaningful interpretation from numerous vantagepoints. The parallels with the Joseph story remind the readers that this is a family struggle, those with the Tamar-Judah story that this is a story of justice, and those with the Dinah tale that this is a story of crime and base, human tendencies. Finally, the mere placing of the story in the biblical tradition emphasizes the rabbinic version of historical repetition; the deeds of the fathers foreshadow those of the sons, and those who learn history are required to improve upon it.