

THE LITERARY GENIUS OF THE JOSEPH NARRATIVE

The story of Joseph has been praised as a treasure of world literature. Voltaire confessed that it was one of the most precious documents which has been handed down to our own age from antiquity. Neither Egypt nor Babylon can offer anything even remotely comparable. The matchless narrative of the lost son moves old and young alike. As a literary work it is artistic perfection. The literary genius of the Joseph Narrative in its depth and beauty have still not been completely recognized by biblical scholars.

The Joseph Narrative demonstrates conclusively that this Narrative is structured not in an ad hoc or haphazard manner, but along well-conceived and deliberate lines. It is, by all accounts, the most literarily unified Narrative in Genesis, perhaps in the entire Pentateuch, and indeed in the entire Hebrew Bible. John Skinner called it “the most artistic and most fascinating of Old Testament biographies” (*Genesis*, 1969:438). Nahum Sarna spoke of its “unparalleled continuity of narrative” (*Understanding Genesis*, 1966:211).

After a close study of the Joseph Narrative, the reader is struck by the craft of the Joseph Narrative. Rarely in Western literature has form been woven into content, pattern sewn into meaning, structure forged into theme with greater subtlety or success. The result is a Narrative of profound paradox that first reveals then resolves itself in absolute symmetry. To look closely at the major patterns of paradox is to discover how the literal level of the Narrative fully engenders the meaning and how pattern finally unravels predicament.

The Joseph Narrative is the most intricately composed, complex and relatively long unit in the Old Testament. It is distinct from all previous patriarchal narratives because of its unusual length (446 verses), for it considerably exceeds the length of the longest of the patriarchal narratives. Furthermore, it has not attained this extraordinary length by means of a gradual comprehensive composition of individual narrative units as documentary source critics posit. The Narrative from beginning to end is an organically constructed Narrative, wherein no single segment of which can have existed independently as a separate element of tradition.

The author did not mind, however, breaking this complex Narrative up into manageable episodes. We define an episode as the simplest unit of narrative material displaying a significant level of independence from its context. For instance the Joseph Narrative (Gen. 37:2--50:26) consists of “Beloved Son, Hated Brother (Gen. 37:2-11), “Strife and Deceit” (Gen. 37:12-36), “To Champion Righteousness: Judah and Tamar” (Gen. 38:1-30), and so forth. These episodes vary in length and complexity, but they form relatively self-contained units.

Each of these episodes have its own exposition which is followed by the action itself, and this action always has a climax and at the end a definite conclusion, which does not detract from the suspense of the Joseph Narrative as a whole. It is only a temporary resting point for the action of the Narrative. This mastery of the material by a clear succession of episodes, this division of the massive and very complex occurrence into individual eventful waves, shows without rival a very superior artistry in narrative representation. Even in the central part of his composition, which is strictly coherent, our narrator has paid the greatest attention to the individual episodes. The grand effect of the Joseph Narrative is due to its parts melting into one continuous whole.

The Significance of Chiasmus as a Literary Device

Biblical scholars now recognize that ancient historians and theologians drafted their documents according to carefully predetermined plans. The actual content, phraseology, sequencing of events, and narrated direct speech were all subordinated to an overall literary strategy which itself served the theological purpose of the writer.

For the modern Western reader, such literary structure is foreign, and, therefore not appreciated, and not immediately obvious, although to ancient audiences it must have been. Once we recognize and appreciate the principles of literary composition that governed much of the writing in antiquity, we can attain fresh insight into those works, since our reading of them will correspond both to the method and to the intention of the author.

Definition of Chiasmus

One important literary form which has come to light in the past century, and especially in the past two decades, is called chiasm (pronounced as ky-asm), also called chiasmus. Structural analysis of the Old and New Testaments has proven beyond doubt that most if not all writers, relied heavily on chiasmus to produce their literary work.

Chiasmus may be defined as a stylistic literary figure which consists of a series of two or more elements followed by a presentation of corresponding elements in reverse order. The individual elements may consist of single words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, or even longer sections of material. Chiasmus produces balanced statements, in direct, inverted, or antithetical parallelism, constructed symmetrically about a central idea. The uniqueness of the chiastic structure lies in its focus upon a pivotal theme, about which the other propositions of the literary unit are developed. It therefore presupposes a center, a “crossing point,” illustrated by the Greek letter Xi (X).

The image of concentric circles, rather than that of parallel lines, illustrates this characteristic most clearly. Because of this central focus, genuine chiasmus is able to set in relief the central idea or theme the writer tries to express. Therefore it would seem useful, and even necessary, to make a clear distinction between various parallel

structures present in the biblical writings, in order to appreciate the rhetorical force of the chiastic pattern.

Significance of Chiasmus

All too often, however, chiastic structures are passed off in the scholarly literature as mere literary niceties, a structural tour de force which serves only aesthetic ends. Too little consideration has been given to the possible exegetical significance of such structures in the interpretation of biblical passages. In fact, theological studies which have used chiasmus for purposes of exegesis are rare.

Chiasmus as a literary analysis is a positive application of literary conventions. It is a positive, constructive art in that it calls for an attempt to hear the biblical narrator the way it was intended to be heard. All too often the grammatical-syntactic analysis fails in appreciating the *holistic* interpretation of the Joseph Narrative, not to mention the rest of Scripture.

The Significance of Chiasmus in the Joseph Narrative

The Joseph Narrative contains a number of chiastic elements building toward a climax, then follows a second series where matching units in reverse order bring the Narrative to resolution and fulfillment. The text, as it stands, exhibits clear unity. This is not only because of the chiastic structure but because of the organic cohesion of the entire Narrative.

Notably, beginning with Genesis 46:8 and extending to verse 27, the Joseph Narrative is interrupted by a census of the Israelite clans. It is very possible that this genealogical material works as a division marker between two major sections in the Joseph Narrative (Gen. 37:3--46:7 and 46:28--50:26), with the genealogical list, Genesis 46:8-27 (the offspring of Jacob--suspended at Gen. 37:1 and now climactically delineated), functioning as the center of this chiastic structuring, and not 45:1-15 as almost all commentators note.

A deep study of the Joseph Narrative will yield a symmetry, and this symmetry is dependent on the theme of reversals. The Narrative begins with Joseph on a high level but, despite his wisdom and capability, his fortunes sink step by step. Then, when he is at the very bottom, a series divine acts reverses his fortunes and brings him back to the height of glory.

A few of these reversals will be presented in large brush strokes in order to explain the alternative thematic chiastic structure. It should be noted that this structure functions beneath the larger structure of the text, with the genealogical record in Genesis 46:8-27 functioning as a division between the two "halves."

Joseph begins as his father's favorite in a richly ornamented robe, but he loses prestige before his father not because of any sin but because of the frank telling of a revelation he received (Gen. 37:1-11). He is sent out by his father to observe his brothers, but because of their treachery he is almost killed and finally enslaved (Gen. 37:12-36).

The story of Judah and Tamar does not directly concern Joseph, but it shows Judah to have been a man of character after what had been a poor showing on his part in the selling of Joseph (Gen. 38:26). Joseph then becomes chief steward of Potiphar's house, but the lust of Potiphar's wife lands Joseph in a dungeon (Gen. 39). He rises to prominence in the Egyptian prison and while there interprets dreams for two of Pharaoh's staff, the cupbearer and baker, but that act seems forgotten (Gen. 40). The very lowest point of Joseph's career is told in Genesis 40:23: "The chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him."

At that point, however, the reversal begins. Pharaoh has a dream, and the reader understands that behind that dream is the work of God to release Joseph from prison (Gen. 41). His fall into the dungeon has been reversed. In the next major reversal, God brings the brothers down to Egypt by means of the famine, and they bow to Joseph as the dream had predicted. Joseph deceives them and demands to see their younger brother, just as they had earlier deceived Jacob by saying their younger brother was dead. When they bring Benjamin to Egypt, Joseph frames Benjamin as Potiphar's wife had framed him. Here, too, there is a reversal: Joseph does not imprison his brothers but welcomes them after Judah proves his character at the end (Gen. 44:33), as he had in the story about Tamar.

At last, in a reversal of Jacob's decision to send out Joseph, Jacob himself sets out to join Joseph, and he is given divine assurance as he does so. The Narrative never tells us that Jacob bows to Joseph, as the dream seemed to predict (Gen. 37:10), but God tells him that Joseph's hand will close his eyes (Gen. 46:4). This is not in all points neat and tidy, but it is a subtle and free yet remarkably careful intertwining of all the major strands of the Narrative. This is what one would expect from a master narrator.

The final resolution of Genesis (Gen. 46:28--50:26) describes no threat to the tiny, emerging people. They are secure in the choicest region of Egypt (Gen. 47:11), and are given every courtesy as honored guests. Nevertheless, like the resolutions of Genesis 1-11, the ending does not have an entirely happy resolution. They are still aliens and strangers, living in a land that is not their own. The potential of threat, in light of Genesis 15:13, is certainly present. The complete resolution of the problem is to be found in the next grand act of God, the exodus.

CHIASTIC STRUCTURE OF THE JOSEPH NARRATIVE (37:2—50:21)

Introduction (37:1-2)

- A Hostility of brothers to Joseph (37:1-11)
- B Apparent death of Joseph, Jacob mourns (37:12-36)
- C Interlude: Judah and Tamar (38:1-26)
- D Unexpected Reversals (38:27—39:23)
 - E Wisdom of Joseph (40:1—42:57)
 - F Movement to Egypt (43:1—46:7)
 - X The Genealogy of Israel (46:8-27)**
 - F' Settlement in Egypt (46:28—47:12)
 - E' Wisdom of Joseph (47:13-26)
 - D' Unexpected Reversals (48:1-22)
- C' Interlude: Jacob blesses his sons (49:1-28)
- B' Death of Jacob, Joseph buries him (49:29—50:14)
- A' Joseph reassures brothers (50:15-26)

To be sure, there are other important parallels between the two major divisions (Gen. 37:3--46:7 and 46:29--50:26) which exhibit reversals. The story of the two brothers Perez and Zerah, in which the one who would be first-born loses his place (Gen. 38:27-30), and the story of the two brothers Ephraim and Manasseh, in which the younger is placed ahead of the elder (Gen. 48:13-22). In addition, the unfair treatment Joseph received at the hands of Potiphar in chapter 39 is contrasted with the “unfair” favorable treatment he receives from his father in being singled out among the twelve for a special blessing in Gen. 48:1-12). Two reversals are thus set against each other (D and D' in the chart). The first is the reversal of the positions of the younger and elder brothers and the second is the unfavorable/favorable treatment received by Joseph.

Genesis 42--45 also to some degree contrasts with Genesis 46:28--47:12. In the former, Jacob sends Joseph's brothers down to Egypt but has to send them a second time with Benjamin after Joseph accuses them of being spies. They are then tricked by Joseph, arrested by his Egyptian subordinate, but saved when he reveals himself to them. Then Jacob himself departs for Egypt.

In the latter, Jacob sends Judah ahead to make arrangements (as he had sent Benjamin in Judah's charge), is welcomed by Joseph (not threatened, as the brothers were) and introduced to the Pharaoh of Egypt, Joseph's superior, instead of being arrested by his Egyptian subordinate. Finally, Jacob moves to the prized district of Rameses, having departed for Egypt at the end of the previous section.

The Chiastic Structure Analyzed

As with other chiastic structures, the Joseph Narrative builds to a pivot point after which the themes are repeated in reverse order. There are six episodes (A, B, C, D, E, F) leading to the climax of Joseph's revelation of himself (X); then follow six parallel episodes (F', E', D', C', B', A'). The result is a neatly constructed palistrophe in what is already a remarkably unified story.

Everything in A through F has been structured to put Joseph in the position of power whereby he can surface his brothers' guilt by a series of tests and bring them to a repentant state. From F' through A' there is resolution. Jacob's family migrates to Egypt and settles in Goshen, famine continues, yet Joseph sustains the people, Joseph's children receive Jacob's blessing, Jacob breaths his last breath, and Joseph too dies, having lived the fullest of lives as indicated by his 110-year life-span.

Our narrator has not only artfully integrated this extraordinary Narrative into the Book of Genesis, but even the very last words of Genesis, "in Egypt," is a fitting conclusion to the Joseph Narrative which dovetails and neatly sets the scene for the book of Exodus.

The presentation of this chiastic structure will proceed along the following lines. First, the meatiest part of each episode will be explored, the presentation of each pair of matched units within each cycle, first A and A', then B and B', etc. After a brief discussion of the parallel ideas, motifs, and story lines, theme-words which highlight the relationship between the two units will ensue. Individual theme-words are not ranked in order of importance. Instead, they are listed in verse order, i.e., the order in which they occur in the text, specifically in the first of the matched units under discussion. I posit, with few exceptions, our author of this Narrative intended the various theme-words to operate collectively. They connect the matched units as a group, not just as single words.

Once matched units has been demonstrated, I next point out the midway point (X), coming between F and F', upon which the entire Narrative pivots.

Finally, there is another series of vocabulary items featured in the literary structuring of the Narrative. Not only do theme-words link units A and A', B and B', etc., but other words, called catchwords, link successive units, i.e., A and B, B and C, etc., through E' and F'. These catchwords act as bridges which aid the linear flow of the Narrative from unit to unit.

Since so much of literary structuring is tied to theme-words and catchwords, a brief description of these items is appropriate. They can be of several types. The most obvious are those where the same word is used in matching or successive episodes. Others are different words or, to use more precise grammatical terminology, different inflections, from the same Hebrew stem. Some theme-words and catchwords can be

like-sounding words which derive from separate stems, and still others may be merely similar in meaning or share a similar connotation. What links all of these variations is the ability to connect. If our author has achieved his goal, then the different units of the Narrative will successfully form into a composite whole.

The Chiastically Matched Units in the Joseph Narrative

A HOSTILITY OF BROTHERS TO JOSEPH (37:3-11)
A' JOSEPH REASSURES HIS BROTHERS (50:15-21)

These two units act as the introduction and conclusion to the Joseph Narrative. In A we meet Joseph for the first time (excluding his birth in Gen. 30:22-24) as a 17-year-old “lad” (גֶּבֶעַ). In A' he appears as the trusted adviser to Pharaoh who lives the full life of 110 years. The contrast is striking and illustrates the rise in Joseph's career.

The action of A is repeated in A' in two significant ways. In both sections Joseph is alone with his brothers, their father Jacob is not part of the scene. Also, in A father and son part due to the trumped-up death by the brothers of the latter, and in A' father and son part due to the actual death of the former.

A whole host of theme-words link the episodes still further:

1. “In the land of Canaan” occurs in 37:1; and “to the land of Canaan” occurs in 50:13.
2. The word “evil” appears frequently in both units (37:2, 20, 33; 50:15, 17, 20).
3. “Their father” is also prominent in both A and A', occurring in 37:2, 4 and in 50:15.
4. In 37:4 we read “his brothers saw”; and in 50:15 we have “Joseph's brothers saw.”
5. The Hebrew verbal root **דָּבַר**, “speak” is used in A in 37:4 and commonly in A' in 50:17, 21.
6. In 37:7, 9, 10, the hishtaphel stem of **תָּמַר**, “to do obeisance” or “prostrate,” is used in Joseph's dreams to illustrate his brothers' obeisance; this reverberates with “his brothers also came and fell down before him (Joseph), in 50:18.

B APPARENT DEATH OF JOSEPH, JACOB MOURNS (37:12-36)
B' DEATH OF JACOB, JOSEPH BURIES HIM (49:33--50:14)

Periodically, it has been demonstrated how attention to chiastic structuring can help explain many problems raised by liberal critics, especially those concerning supposed secondary accretions to the text. Another example of this is the admittedly peculiar reference to the unnamed stranger (Gen. 37:15-17) who assists Joseph in his search for his brothers. A closer look, however, reveals that it is integral. It is needed to counterbalance the reference to the local Canaanites in Genesis 50:11. In addition, these same liberal critics render the reading in Genesis 50:11 also as secondary, but it is odd that both “secondary” additions are among the points which cement the bond between B and B'.

Several theme-words link the two episodes together:

1. A local man assists Joseph in 37:15-17 and the local Canaanites witness Joseph's and his entourage's mourning for his father in 50:11.
2. The verbal stem נִכְלָל in the Hithpael, "plot," is used in 37:18, and the non-related but assonant root בָּלַל, "sustain," is used in 50:21.
3. Similarly, the verbal stem נִכְרַת, "recognize," is predicated of Jacob in 37:32-33, and Joseph reports Jacob's use of בָּרִיתִי, "I dug," from the non-related but assonant stem בָּרַת in 50:5.
4. The stem אָבֵל, "mourn," is used in connection with Jacob's mourning for Joseph in 37:34-35, and in 50:10-11 in connection with Joseph's mourning for Jacob.

C INTERLUDE: JUDAR AND TAMAR (38:1-26)

C' INTERLUDE: THE BLESSING (49:1-28)

It does not take a deep analysis into the Joseph Narrative to realize that B is an episode which does not exhibit clear cohesion and unity in relationship to the general story line. Joseph is nowhere mentioned, and although there are connections between C and B (see below), the Narrative is seemingly complete without Genesis 38:1-30. Indeed, this strange episode of Judah and Tamar does appear to be quite alien to the movement of the Joseph Narrative and something of an interruption. But it is not an alien intrusion. It is rather a digression--an interlude--meant to give background information, which is taken up later in the Narrative.

Although it has been worked into the story a little more directly, B' is also an interlude. It interrupts the Narrative, as a comparison of Genesis 48:21-22 and 49:29 exhibits. Joseph is altogether absent in Genesis 38:1-30 and only nominally present in Genesis 49:1-28; this is unlike D' and A' where he dominates. It will be noticed that Genesis 49:1-27 is clearly an independent poem, a poem of blessing. This is visually detected in the English versions (as well as the Hebrew) in the way our translators have structured the text. The setting for this poem is in Canaan, and in this sense it is a fitting parallel to 38:1-30 which deals with Judah's life in the same country. The Egyptian flavor which characterizes the Joseph Narrative is notably lacking in both units.

An important subplot of Genesis 37--SO is the question of which of Jacob's sons will have the right of the first-born. After all, he did have twelve sons, and the issue of who is to be regarded as first among the twelve is of no small importance. This theme is analyzed in detail by Judah Goldin, and what follows here is to a great extent dependent upon his work ("The Youngest Son or Where Does Genesis 38 Belong," *JBL* 96 (1977):27-44).

The obvious son to receive the right of the first-born is Reuben, the actual first-born, but Reuben does the unpardonable. In an effort to prove to his brother that he will indeed rule them, he sleeps with Jacob's concubine Bilhah (Gen. 35:22). Sleeping with his father's concubine implies that he has supplanted his father. It was not an act of

sexual passion (cf. 2 Sam. 16:21-22 and 1 Kgs. 2:20-22). Reuben's plan backfires, as the text cryptically indicates: "but Israel heard about it." From that time forward, Jacob never favors Reuben. This may be not only because of Reuben's detestable act, but also because Reuben is the son of Leah, the wife Jacob never wanted. Instead, Jacob gives every indication that he will bestow the right of the first-born on Joseph (Gen. 37:3), his first son by his beloved Rachel.

Having to submit to the very young Joseph is intolerable for all the brothers, but especially Reuben, who is being displaced. Nevertheless, when the brothers finally vent their hatred on Joseph and plan to kill him (Gen. 37:12-20), Reuben sees it as an opportunity to get back into his father's good graces. He will rescue Joseph and "take him back to his father" (v. 22b). It is important to understand, however, that this is not an act of goodness on Reuben's part but a ploy to insure that he will become first among the brothers.

The ploy fails. Judah persuades the brothers, in Reuben's absence, to sell Joseph to a band of Ishmaelite traders and thus robs Reuben of his chance to look heroic. It is not clear whether Judah detected Reuben's strategy and proposed the sale in order to thwart him, or whether it was simply an act of mercy. Regardless, his words in verses 26-27 do imply feelings of guilt and mercy. If all he had wanted to do was ruin Reuben's plan, he could have rescued and restored Joseph to Jacob himself, or he could have killed Joseph outright.

Reuben's dismay at Joseph's disappearance is complete. When he cries out, "What will I do?" (Gen. 37:30), the implication is that he has lost his opportunity to gain Jacob's favor. Thereafter, Reuben is a pitiful character. He reappears in Genesis 42:22, where he weakly casts an "I told you so" at his brothers. Then, in Genesis 42:37, he tries unsuccessfully to persuade Jacob to allow the brothers to take Benjamin to Egypt on a second journey. His offer, that Jacob may kill his sons (Jacob's grandsons) if he does not return Benjamin safely, is outrageous. Goldin rightly comments that "only a man in desperation uses such language." Jacob ignores the appeal.

Finally, Jacob rebukes Reuben from his deathbed in his "blessing." Reuben was indeed the first-born and should have inherited all the honor that went with it, but his impetuous power-grab in the detestable act of sleeping with his father's concubine could not be overlooked. Reuben is thus rejected (Gen. 49:3-4).

Simeon and Levi are the next two brothers in line after Reuben, but they are already excluded (Gen. 49:5-7) because of their actions in the affair of Genesis 34. Judah is the next in line.

The text gradually moves from a less favorable to a more favorable portrayal of Judah. His role in the selling of Joseph, if not above reproach, does at least show some sense of pity on his part (Gen. 37:26-27). His two sons, Er and Onan, are both so evil that the LORD puts them to death (Gen. 38:7-10), but Judah wrongly ascribes their

deaths to Tamar and refuses here the right of raising up children by Judah's third son, Shelah. Yet after Judah himself impregnates Tamar, he admits that she is more righteous than he, and that he and not she was at fault (Gen. 38:26).

An important sideline is that the episode of Onan also concerns the matter of the right of first-born. Onan's sin is not that he engaged in strange sex or practiced a primitive birth-control technique, but that he attempted to seize the right of first-born for himself. After the death of Er, Onan knew that the inheritance was his only if no "son" was born to Er. Although the child by Tamar would biologically be Onan's, the legal fiction that it would be Er's was of enormous significance. The inheritance would bypass Onan and be in Er's name (Gen. 38:9).

After this, Judah begins to emerge as the leader of the brothers. In Genesis 43:3-10, Jacob listens to Judah, after he had ignored Reuben, and allows the brothers to take Benjamin on the second journey. This is not all; Judah willingly risks his status as the one who would receive the right of the first-born in his pledge that he would bear his blame before Jacob all his life should harm befall Benjamin (Gen. 43:9). After Joseph frames Benjamin, Judah pleads for Benjamin's release and offers himself as a substitute (Gen. 44:16-34). Finally, when Jacob himself moves to Egypt, he trusts Judah with the task of going ahead to prepare the way (Gen. 46:28). Judah has assumed the position of first-born.

How does Genesis 38 parallel with that of Genesis 49:1-28? A central development is in the account of the birth of Tamar's twin sons, Perez and Zerah. In the story, Zerah put his hand out first and naturally would have been the first-born. A red thread was tied around his wrist. Yet to the surprise of all, his brother, Perez, was actually born before him and was thus first-born of the two.

This strange event is a sign of the divine election of Perez to that position. It follows the pattern of Isaac and Jacob, neither of whom were firstborn but both of whom obtained that position by God's choice. This phenomenon, divine preference for the younger son, reappears repeatedly in the Bible as in the election of David (1 Sam. 16:11-12).

The significance of the Perez-Zerah episode is implied by its parallel to the story of Jacob and Esau. In both cases, twins are involved and the one who is expected to gain the birthright, but loses it, is associated with the color red (Gen. 25:25; 38:30). Like his grandfather Jacob, Perez rushes ahead and supplants his brother.

The importance of Genesis 38 for the Joseph Narrative, therefore, is that it contributes materially to the story of how Judah achieves the status of first-born. The strange births of Perez and Zerab, following the pattern of special favor on the younger son, is a sign that the miraculous history of the chosen line has now come to Judah alone among the twelve.

This is confirmed both in Jacob's blessing on the sons of Joseph (Gen. 48) and in his blessing on Judah (Gen. 49:8-12). Out of his profound love for Joseph, Jacob desires to pass a special blessing on to him. He knows that this can be accomplished only if the pattern of divine favor going to the younger son is followed. Thus, he crosses his hands in the blessing and confers special favor on the younger Ephraim.

But when Jacob comes to his blessing on each of his twelve sons (Gen. 49:1-28), he cannot go against the sign of divine choice in the unusual births of Perez and Zerah. The true position of first-born is given to Judah. His brothers will praise Judah, they will bow to him, and the scepter will belong to him (Gen. 49:8, 10). A special bounty is promised to Joseph (Gen. 49:22-26), but the right of first-born is not. It is therefore indisputable that both Genesis 38 and 49 are integral to the story of Genesis 37--SO. Without these two episodes, a major subplot of the Joseph Narrative is left dangling.

It was earlier remarked that the blessings on all the brothers except Judah (Gen. 49:1-7, 13-28) have no counterparts in the first part of the chiasm. The reason for this is now apparent. Both Genesis 38 and 49:8-12 relate to the story of how Judah obtained the position of first-born. One would not expect parallels to Genesis 38 to appear in Genesis 49:1-7, 13-28.

The Judah and Tamar episode and the Blessing of Jacob might seem too different—beyond their role as interludes and their setting in Canaan—to have themes and theme-words linking them in any meaningful way. But such is not the case, for as the following list indicates, there are surprisingly more such items shared by C and C' than by any other matching units in the Narrative.

Since the only common material in C and C' is that concerning Judah, it is appropriate to begin by looking at Jacob's words to his fourth son in Genesis 49:8-12. These verses are filled with cruxes, but scholars in the last twenty years have begun to solve some of them by reading them as references to the Judah and Tamar episode!

1. The key to seeing the blessing to Judah as a reference to 38:1-30 is the similarity between שִׁילֹה, traditionally rendered "Shiloh," in 49:10, and שֶׁלֶה, "Shelah," in 38:5, 11, 14, 26.
2. The "scepter" shall not depart from Judah in 49:10, just as his "staff" was handed to Tamar in 38:18 and used as evidence against him in 38:25.
3. A sexual connotation can certainly be read into "the staff between his legs" in 49:10, and allied to Judah's visiting a prostitute in 38:15-19.
4. עִירָה, "his donkey," in 49:11, evokes עָרָה, "Er," Judah's first son in 38:3, 6, 7.
5. Similarly, בָּנִי אַתָּנִי, "son of his donkey" in 49:11, brings to mind אָוָנִי, "Onan," Judah's second son in 38:4, 8, 9.
6. שְׁרָקָה, "vine, stock," in 49:11, 'alludes to the valley of Soreq, which recalls Timnah in 38:12-13.
7. The verbal stem סִירַ in the Qal, "depart," appears in 49:10; and in the hiphil, "remove," it occurs in 38:14, 19.

8. **יבא**, “he comes,” in 49:10, suggests **ויבא**, “he came,” in 38:18.
9. **סוטה**, “his robe,” in 49:11, although not etymologically related to **בסתה**, “she covered,” in 38:15, but they share three consonants, sound alike, and both convey the idea of clothing.
10. The stem **לבש**, “clothe,” appears in both 49:11 and 38:19.

The few verses spoken to Judah thus contain ten theme-words which link C' with Judah's history in C. But the blessings to the other sons also contain similar expressions to those in Genesis 38:1-30.

11. **בכור**, “firstborn,” occurs in 49:3 and 38:6.
12. **און**, “my vigor,” in 49:3, might also suggest **אוןן**, “Onan,” in 38:4, 8, 9.
13. The word **ען**, “strong, fierce,” is used in 49:3, 7; and in 38:17, 20, we have **עזים**, “goats.”
14. **נט** is used in 49:15 and in 38:1, 16 meaning “to turn aside.”
15. In 49:17 we read **על דרכ**, “by the road”; and in 38:16 we have **אל הדרך**, “by the road.”
16. The alliteration **נד נדוד גודנו**, “Gad shall be raided by raiders,” in 49:19, suggests the important **גָּד**, “kid,” in 38:17, 20, 23.
17. **ינגד**, “He shall raid,” in 49:19, evokes **וינגד**, “it was told,” in 38:24.

In total, there are seventeen theme-words which highlight the parallel status of Genesis 38:1-30 and 49:1-28. As a comparison with other matching units in this Narrative or in other narratives will determine, seventeen such parallels is an unusually high number. Perhaps because the Judah and Tamar episode and the Blessings of Jacob are so dissimilar, the need was felt for more shared words and ideas than is customary. That is to say, A and A' and the other matching units of the Joseph Narrative are similar enough in action not to require that many theme-words. C and C' are less homogeneous, however, and thus our narrator has insured their correspondence through a veritable plethora of theme-words. Commentators have usually dismissed these two interludes, but they should be recognized as the balancing second and the penultimate sections in the Joseph Narrative.

D UNEXPECTED REVERSALS (38:27—39:23)
Perez and Zerah (38:27-30)
Potiphar's wife innocent, Joseph guilty (39:1-23)

D' UNEXPECTED REVERSALS (48:1-22)
Jacob favors Joseph (48:1-12)
Ephraim and Manasseh (48:13-22)

In the first of these units (D), a reversal of positions finds Joseph, who is innocent, found guilty, and Potiphar's wife, who in actuality is guilty, found innocent. In D', Ephraim, who actually is the second-born, is declared the first-born, and Manasseh, who naturally is the first-born, is reduced to the second-born. In both instances, Joseph's superior is ultimately responsible for the reversals whether it be his master

Potiphar or his father Jacob. In each case the action centers around the bed. This is explicit in D' where Jacob lies in bed (Gen. 47:31) and Joseph is beside him, and implicit in D where Potiphar's wife presumably is in bed or has the bed in mind and Joseph is beside her.

A series of theme-words link these two units together nicely:

1. The verbal stem **ברך**, “bless” is important to both units, occurring in 39:5 and in 48:3, 9, 15, 16, 20.
2. **וַיִּמְאַן וַיֹּאמֶר**, “he resisted and said,” appears in 39:8; the same words with the subject “his father,” interestingly interposed, occur in 48:19.
3. In 39:4 we read **וַיַּסֶּף חָן בְּעִינָיו**, “Joseph found favor in his eyes”; and in 47:29 we have **אָמַם נָא מִצְאָתִי חָן בְּאַיִלְךָ**, “if I have found favor in your eyes.”
4. The word “favor” is used in both 39:21 and 47:29.
5. The verbal stem “to lie”, **שָׁבַב** is prominent in D, occurring four times in 39:7-14, and it reverberates in D' in 47:30.
6. “Hand”, **יד** is extremely common and very important in D, occurring nine times. It is equally important to D' since the reversal results from Jacob's crossed hands and because it is used in Joseph's swearing to Jacob; see 47:29; 48:14, 17.
7. The term for “bread” **לְחֵם** is used figuratively for “wife” in 39:6, and **בֵּית לְחֵם**, “Bethlehem (house of bread),” occurs in 48:7.

Once more recognition of artistic structuring allows us to solve a problem which has plagued scholars. Von Rad, Davidson, Vawter, and Skinner all note that the reference to Rachel's death and burial in Genesis 48:7 is seemingly out of place or poorly related to the general context. A. Dillmann was less concerned about the notice as a whole, stating that ‘the absence of any apparent motive prevents our regarding the verse as a mere gloss,’ but he did note that the words “that is, Bethlehem” are out of place in Jacob's mouth, and are a late addition (*Genesis II*, 437-38).

Admittedly this is correct, for one would not expect to see such a gloss in direct speech. But by paying heed to the use of **לְחֵם**, “bread”/ “wife” in D in Genesis 39:6, where it is pregnant with meaning, we are able to uncover our author's reason for including **בֵּית לְחֵם** in D' in Genesis 48:7. The two act as theme-words which serve to cement the relationship between the two units.

E WISDOM OF JOSEPH (40:1—41:57) E' WISDOM OF JOSEPH (47:13-26)

Twice during the Joseph Narrative we have episodes which describe how Joseph saves Egypt from famine and becomes the national hero. It is clear that these units, one relatively long and one relatively short, are parallel. The following theme-words highlight the correspondence.

1. The word “famine”, רֻעָב, occurs ubiquitously in E and in E’ in 47:13, 20.
2. The word “bread”, לְחֵם, is used twice in E in 41:54-55, and commonly in E’.
3. “He hung/will hang”, תָּלָה, occurs in 40:19, 22, and “languished”, תָּלָה in 47:13; thus a perfect assonance is formed, since both words have the same consonants.
4. The verbal stem for “buy/sell grain”, שָׁבֵר, is used in 41:56-57 and in 47:14.
5. The word “stalk”, קָנָה, appears in 41:5, 22, and the verbal stem to “buy”, קָנָה occurs in 47:19, 22, 23.
6. “Cities”, עָרִים, is used both in 41:48 and 47:21.
7. “The land of Egypt”, הָאָרֶץ מִצְרַיִם, or simply “the land” are exceedingly common in E and E’; the latter also uses אָדָמָה, “land”, and various forms.
8. The Hebrew stem חָמֵשׁ, in the sense of dividing the land into fifths, occurs in 41:34 and 47:24, 26.

The similarity between Genesis 40:1--41 :57 with that of 47:13-26 is obvious and these shared theme-words only heighten the correspondence. Moreover, attention to the structure of the Joseph Narrative obviates the difficulty sensed by Redford that the story of the agrarian reforms in Genesis 47:13-26 is extraneous to the Narrative (*A Study of the Biblical Story of Joseph*, 1970:180). However, once the structure has been determined, we find that Genesis 47:13-26 is absolutely necessary to counterbalance the episode of Genesis 40:1--41 :57 where Joseph first appears as the hero of Egypt.

The fourteen verses of Genesis 47:13-26 are generally assigned to “J” by those who divide the sources. A few of these scholars go as far as to posit that this section has been misplaced and should have followed Genesis 41:56, but this position has been strongly opposed by other scholars and lacks substantial support.

F MOVEMENT TO EGYPT (42:1-46:7) F' SEITLEMENT IN EGYPT (46:28—47:12)

As the Joseph Narrative progresses there follows the account of the brothers’ two trips to Egypt. In the first trip they go merely to acquire food and in the second trip they return with Benjamin in order to free Simeon. Parallel to the two journeys are two reports of how Jacob’s family migrates to Egypt and settles in Goshen. The first account is comprised mainly of a genealogical list and the second describes the presentation of Jacob and his sons before Pharaoh.

Various items link these two units together:

1. In 42:1-2 “go down”, יָרַד, and “Egypt”, מִצְרַיִם, are collocated; in 46:3 we read “from going down to Egypt” מִרְדָּה מִצְרַיִם.
2. The brothers present themselves as “your servants” to Joseph in 42:10, 11, 13, and use the same term when speaking to Pharaoh in 46:34, 47:3, 4.
3. Judah has a prominent role in 43:3-10, and he appears in 46:28 as well.

4. The verbal stem **שָׁלַח**, “send” is used in connection with Jacob sending his sons led by Judah to Egypt in 43:4-5, and in 46:28 when he sends Judah ahead to pave the way.
5. “You shall not see my face” are Joseph’s words quoted to Jacob in 43:5; and “I have seen your face” are Jacob’s words to Joseph in 46:30.
6. Similarly, “is your father still alive?” are Joseph’s words quoted to Jacob in 43:7; and “that you are still alive” are Jacob’s words to Joseph in 46:30.
7. “Mouth of”, **בָּיִת**, occurs in the sense of the mouth of the bag in 44:1, 2, 8 and in the sense of a human mouth in 45:21.
8. Benjamin is essential to F, mentioned specifically in 44:12 and alluded to as the youngest brother throughout Judah’s speech in 44:18-34; he is also notable in F’ in 45:22.

Again we are able to alleviate a potential problem sensed by critical scholars by paying careful attention to chiastic structuring. Some critics have opined that Genesis 46:1-27 is secondary to the Narrative: “With the beginning of chapter 46 the reader has momentarily taken leave of the Joseph Story . . . It is clear, then, that these verses do not belong to the Joseph Story” (*A Study of the Biblical Story of Joseph*, 1970:18-22).

But since there are *two* journeys which the brothers make in F, there need to be *two* descriptions of the final migration to Egypt in F’. Since there was only one actual migration by Jacob’s family, our writer could only give one account (Gen. 46:28--47: 12). But in order to balance the two actual journeys of Genesis 42: 1--43:34, our writer incorporated a brief theophany at the time of the descent followed by a long genealogy describing the extent of the family which settle in Egypt. That we indeed have two accounts of the one migration may be clearly seen by comparing Genesis 46:6, “they came to Egypt” (see also Gen. 46:8, 27) with 46:28, “they came to the land of Goshen.”

X GENEALOGY (46:8-27)

The pivot point of the Joseph Narrative stands precisely in the center of the Narrative, Genesis 46:8-27, where the belated genealogical record of Jacob is cited. Because we have now arrived at the pivotal point in the Joseph Narrative, it will prove prudent to consider at length the overall structure of the Joseph Narrative before preceding to the balance of the Narrative in order to grasp the significance of the latter half, balancing with that of the first. Confirming that Genesis 46:8-27 is the chiastic pivotal point is by noting where the actual climax of each of the two major divisions occurs.

In Genesis 36:1--46:8, the Joseph Narrative, the climax clearly comes at the breaking of the extreme tension of Genesis 42: 1--44:34 (the visits of the brothers) in the self-revelation of Joseph to his brothers (Gen. 45:1-15). The departure of Jacob for Egypt with divine assurance of safety (Gen. 46:1-7) serves as an anticlimax to return the narrative to a zero-tension level. Genealogical data then forms a boundary to indicate the termination of the drama.

In Genesis 46:28--50:26, the dominant feature of the narrative is the blessings of Jacob on his sons (Gen. 48--49). The Israelites have settled in Egypt for a prolonged stay, and the aged patriarch of the small band is soon to die. What does the future hold for this little band of outsiders? Do they have a future at all? The blessings of Jacob serve to resolve these questions, end the story of the patriarchs, and look ahead to the story of the nation.

Structure of the Individual Episodes in the Joseph Narrative

Genesis 37:2b-11 (Episode 1)

Introduction: Joseph's background within the family in Canaan (2b-e)

- A Israel's preferential love of Joseph (3)
- B Brothers' hatred of Joseph (4a)
- C Brothers' silence toward Joseph (4b)
- D Brothers' reaction to Joseph's first dream (5)
 - E Joseph's first dream report (6-7)
 - X Brother's Embittered Hatred of Joseph (8)**
 - E' Joseph's second dream report (9-10a)
- D' Jacob's reaction to Joseph's second dream (10b)
- C' Jacob's speech to Joseph (10c)
- B' Brothers' envy of Joseph (11a)
- A' Jacob ponders the matter (11b)

Structure of Genesis 37:12-36 (Episode 2)

Introduction: Joseph's brothers leave to pasture the flocks in Shechem (12)

- A Israel's commission to Joseph (13a-b)
- B The father sends Joseph, the faithful son (13c-14)
- C Joseph seeks his brothers and finds them (15-17)
- D The brothers' first plan to eradicate Joseph (18-22)
 - X The Brothers' Violation of Joseph (23-24)**
 - D' The brothers' second plan to eradicate Joseph (25-28)
 - C' Reuben seeks Joseph and does not find him (29-30)
- B' The faithless sons send Joseph's tunic to their father (31-33)
- A' Jacob's lament over Joseph (34-35)

Epilogue: Joseph is sold and travels to Egypt (36)

Structure of Genesis 38:1-30 (Episode 3)

Introduction: Judah leaves his father's homestead and fathers three sons (1-5)

A The childless widow (6-11)

- a Tamar exchanges her widow's garb for that of a prostitute (14)
 - b Judah's proposition to Tamar (15-16b)

B **x Exchange of pledges (16c-18b)**

- b' Judah's consummation with Tamar (18c)
 - a' Tamar exchanges her prostitute's garb for that of a widow (19)

a The kid is sent for the pledge, Tamar is not found (20)
b The Adullamite's inquiry about the prostitute (21a)
X x The Response to the Adullamite's Inquiry (21b)
b' The Adullamite's report to Judah (22)
a' The pledge is forfeited, Tamar is not found (23)

- a Judah is informed that Tamar has a child by harlotry (24a-b)
 - b Judah's edict that Tamar should be burned (24c)

B' **x Judah's recognizes the items of his pledge (25-26a)**
b' Judah's edict that Tamar is more righteous than he (26b)
a' Judah does not have relations with Tamar again (26c)

A' The birth of twins to a widow (27-30)

Structure of Genesis 39:1-23 (Episode 4)

Setting: Joseph is sold into Egypt by the Ishmaelites to Potiphar (1)

A Joseph's success in Potiphar's house (2-6a)

B Editorial remark: Joseph was handsome in appearance (6b)

C Potiphar's wife desire (7a)

D Potiphar's wife request: "Lie with me"! (7b)

X Joseph's Refusal to Commit Sin (8-9)

D' Potiphar's wife request: "Lie with me"! (10-12)

C' Potiphar's wife desire spurned (13-18)

B' Editorial remark: Joseph was confined to the king's jail (19-20a)

A' Joseph's success in Potiphar's prison (21-23)

Structure of Genesis 40:1-23 (Episode 5)

- A Joseph's meeting of the cupbearer and baker (1-4)
- B The cupbearer and baker have dreams in the same night (5-8)
- C The chief cupbearer's dream narrated and explained (9-13)
 - X Joseph's Request for Intercession (14-15)**
- C' The chief baker's dream narrated and explained (16-19)
- B' The cupbearer and baker's dreams fulfilled in the same day (20-22)
- A' The cupbearer forgets Joseph [the baker is dead] (23)

Structure of Genesis 41:1-57 (Episode 6)

- A Pharaoh's dreams (1-8)
- B The chief cupbearer remembers Joseph (9-13)
- C Joseph comes to Pharaoh (14)
 - D Pharaoh recounts his dreams to Joseph (15-24)
 - E Joseph's interpretation and advice (25-36)
 - X Joseph's Divine Endowment (37-38)**
 - E' Pharaoh's recognition of Joseph's abilities (39)
 - D' Pharaoh makes Joseph lord over his land (40-45)
 - C' Joseph in Pharaoh's presence (46-49)
- B' Joseph forgets his trouble because of God's blessing (50-52)
- A' Pharaoh's dreams come to pass (53-57)

Structure of Genesis 42:1-38 (Episode 7)

- A Jacob sends his sons to Egypt to buy gain (1-5)
- B Joseph is the ruler over all the land (6)
- C Joseph recognizes and remembers (7-9a)
 - D Joseph accuses his brothers of being spies (9b-13)
 - E Joseph's first test to his brothers (14-16)
 - X Joseph Places His Brothers in Prison (17)**
 - E' Joseph's second test to his brothers (18-20)
 - D' Brothers confess their guilt (21-22)
 - C' Joseph understands and weeps (23-24)
- B' The brothers' dealings with the "lord of the land" (25-34)
- A' The opening of the grain sacks in Canaan before Jacob (35-38)

Structure of Genesis 43:1-34 (Episode 8)

- A The famine was severe in the land (1-2)
- B Israel's release of Benjamin (3-15)
- C Joseph sees Benjamin; a meal is prepared (16-17)
- D The brothers' fear of retaliation (18)
- E The brothers' speech to the steward near the house (19-22)
- X The Steward's response: God Has Given You Treasure in Your Sacks (23)**
- E' The brothers are brought into the house and provided for (24-25)
- D' The brothers' prostration and greeting (26-28)
- C' Joseph sees Benjamin; Joseph weeps and meal served (29-31)
- B' Joseph's preferential treatment of Benjamin (32-34b)
- A' The brothers feasted and drank freely (34c)

Structure of Genesis 44:1-34 (Episode 9)

- a Joseph's instructions to his steward concerning his ruse (1-2)
- b Brothers' departure from the city (3-4a)
- c Joseph's instructions to his steward (4b-6)
- A **x Brothers' protestation of innocence (7-10)**
- c' Steward's search and discovery of the silver goblet (11-12)
- b' Brothers' reaction and return to the city (13)
- a' Joseph's accusation: his ruse succeeds (14-15)

X Judah Acknowledges the Brothers' Guilt (16)

- a Joseph's judgment: Benjamin shall remain (17)
- b Judah's request for Joseph's judgment reversal (18)
- c Judah's rehearsal of the first journey (19-23)
- A' **x Brothers' justification before their father (24-29)**
- c' The consequences if Benjamin does not return (30-31)
- b' Judah's basis for Joseph's reversal (32)
- a' Judah's plea: He shall substitute himself for Benjamin (33-34)

Structure of Genesis 45:1-28 (Episode 10)

- A Joseph reveals his identity to his brothers (1-4)
- B Joseph's address to his brothers and God's provision (5-8)
- C Joseph's invitation (9-13)
- X Joseph Embraces His Brothers (14-15)**
- C' Pharaoh's invitation (16-21a)
- B' Joseph's provisions and address to his brothers (21b-24)
- A' Brothers reveal that Joseph is alive (25-28)

Structure of Genesis 46:1-30 (Episode 11)

- A God spoke to Israel in night visions at Beer-sheba (1-7)
- X Jacob's genealogical record (9-27)** [the structural center of the Narrative]
- A' Joseph appears [word used only for visions] to Israel in Egypt (28-30)

The Structure of Genesis 46:31—47:27 (Episode 12)

- A Joseph prepares his family to receive Pharaoh's favor (46:31-34)
- B Joseph chooses five brothers to present before Pharaoh (47:1-2)
- C Brothers' reason for being in Egypt: the famine is severe (3-4)
- D Pharaoh's decree that Joseph's family may settle in Egypt (5-6)
- X Jacob Blesses Pharaoh (7-10)**
- D' Joseph settles his family in Egypt (11-12)
- C' Joseph's reason for collecting money: the famine is severe (13-19)
- B' Joseph collects one-fifth from all the people [except the priests] (20-26)
- A' Israel (as a people) prospered and multiplied greatly in Egypt (27)

Many central elements are chiastic in themselves in order to underscore the importance of the action transacting. Genesis 47:7-10 serves as an excellent example of this phenomenon:

- a Jacob presented to Pharaoh (7a)
- b Jacob blesses Pharaoh (7b)
- c Pharaoh's question to Jacob (8)
- c' Jacob's answer to Pharaoh (9)
- b' Jacob blesses Pharaoh (10a)
- a' Jacob leaves Pharaoh (10b)

Structure of Genesis 47:28—48:22 (Episode 13)

- A Joseph promises to carry Israel back to Canaan (47:28-31)
- B Joseph brings Manasseh and Ephraim for Israel's blessing (48:1-12)
- C Israel crosses his hands to bless Joseph's children (13-14)
- X Israel Blesses Joseph! (15-16)**
- C' Joseph's protest of Israel's crossing of his hands (17-18)
- B' Israel blesses Ephraim and Manasseh (19-20)
- A' Israel's promise that God will bring the people back to Canaan (21-22)

Structure of Genesis 49:1-33 (Episode 14)

- A Jacob's sons gather to hear his words (1)
- B Prologue to the prophetic oracle (2)
- C Leah's sons are blessed (3-15)
- D Bilhah's first son is blessed (16-18)
- X Zilphah's Sons are Blessed (19-20)**
- D' Bilhah's second son is blessed (21)
- C' Rachel's sons are blessed (22-27)
- B' Epilogue to the prophetic oracle (28)
- A' Israel is gathered to his people (29-33)

Structure of Genesis 50:1-26 (Episode 15)

- A Burial arrangements for Israel (1-3)
- B Joseph's petition to Pharaoh (4-6)
- C Preparation to bury Israel (7-9)
- X The Mourning Over Israel (10-12)**
- C' Burial of Israel (13-14)
- B' Brothers' petition to Joseph (15-21)
- A' Burial arrangements and death of Joseph (22-26)

In characteristic fashion of the Joseph Narrative, Genesis 50:1-26 forms a tight chiastic structure, displaying as its literary center (X) the deep and profound mourning over Israel's passing. Genesis 50 contains a number of word and thematic chiastic elements building to a climax, which then follows a series where matching units in reverse order bring the entire Narrative to resolution and fulfillment. The test, as it stands, exhibits clear unity. This is not only because of the chiastic structure, but because of the organic cohesion of the entire chapter. The result is an artistic literary construction in what has already proven to be a remarkably unified Narrative.

Panels A through C have been structured to underscore Joseph's faithfulness to his father; just as he was always faithful to his father in life (cf. Gen. 37:2, 13), so he is now also faithful to him in death (cf. Gen. 47:29-31 compared to Gen. 50:4-8). Panels C' through A' is a final resolution, not only to this episode, but also to the entire Joseph Narrative. Israel is buried in the ancestral burial plot, Joseph brothers' petition, and finally, the embalmment of Joseph himself.

Each panel in this episode is chiastically structured to underscore the importance of this episode. A and A' act as the introduction and conclusion to Genesis 50 and are framed in the context of death and promises. After Jacob had blessed his twelve sons, he told them that he was about to join his ancestors in death. He made Joseph and his others sons swear to bury him in the cave of Machpelah where the other patriarchs and their wives (Gen. 47:27-31), as well as his own wife Leah (but notably not Rachel) had been buried (Gen. 49:29-32). Having given his sons his final command, Jacob died at the ripe old

age of 147 years old (Gen. 47:28). The action of A is repeated in A' in two significant ways. In both sections we have the process of embalmment, first with Jacob and then with Joseph. Also in A and A', we have point-counterpoint: Joseph prepares to keep his promise to his father by preparing for the long journey to Canaan by having him embalmed; then we have Joseph extracting a promise from his brothers (their progeny) to carry his bones up from Egypt and into Canaan when God will deliver them, and thus they embalm his body for safe keeping until such time (otherwise, the bones would have turned to dust).

A Burial arrangements for Israel (1-3)

- a Joseph weeps (1)
 - x **Joseph's command (2-3a)**
- a' Egyptians weep (3b)

B Joseph's petition to Pharaoh (4-6)

- a Joseph petitions Pharaoh's court (4a)
 - x **Joseph's petition (4b-5)**
- a' Pharaoh grants Joseph's petition (6)

C Preparation to bury Israel (7-9)

- a Joseph's entourage assent to Canaan (7a-8)
 - x The people who stayed behind in Egypt (8b)
- a' Additional details of entourage to Canaan (9)

X The Mourning Over Israel (10-12)

- a Place and duration of mourning (10)
 - x **The Canaanites observe the lamentation (11a-b)**
- a' Place renamed to reflect the duration of mourning (11c)

C' Burial of Israel (12-14)

- a Descent to Canaan (12-13a)
 - x **Israel is buried in Canaan (13b-c)**
- a' Ascent to Egypt (14)

B' Joseph brothers' petition (15-21)

- a Joseph's brothers fear (15)
 - x **Joseph's brothers petition and dream fulfilled (16-18)**
- a' Joseph reassures his brothers (19-21)

A' Burial arrangements and death of Joseph (22-26)

- a Joseph's age (22)
 - x **Promises remembered and made (23-25)**
- a' Joseph's age (26)

B and B' function to unite several thematic concepts in the Joseph Narrative. Joseph petitions Pharaoh to bury his father, but only indirectly (v. 4). Likewise, Joseph's brothers petition him indirectly concerning their past guilt (v. 16).

A large entourage of relatives and dignitaries, including Jacob's household and many prominent Egyptians, make the trip in C (vv. 7-9). The specific purpose of this entourage was to bury Jacob (v. 7a); however, it is not until C' (vv. 13-14) that Jacob is actually buried.

The pivotal point of the chiastic structure comes in X (vv. 10-12), which describe at length the people's mourning over Jacob's death. This in itself is ironic because it was Jacob who was going to mourn (cf. Gen. 37:33-35; 42:36; 43:14); however now, Jacob dies in peace because Joseph is alive (cf. Gen. 46:30) and those around him mourn!

Over half of Genesis 50:1-26 is occupied with a description of the mourning and burial of Jacob. Joseph himself mourned (v. 1), and then the Egyptians (v. 3). Great preparations were made both by Joseph and the Egyptians (v. 2). A special request was granted by Pharaoh to bury Jacob in his homeland (vv. 4-5), and a large entourage (lit. "a very large company") was provided by Pharaoh as a burial processional to carry Jacob's body back to Canaan. "All Pharaoh's officials . . . and all the dignitaries of Egypt" (v. 7), along with Pharaoh's chariots and horsemen, accompanied Joseph on his journey back to Canaan. Even the Canaanites recognized this as "a very large ceremony of mourning" (v. 11). Our author seems to go out of his way to emphasize in detail the magnitude of the ceremony of mourning.

CONCLUSION

At the outset of this analysis we noted that the Joseph Narrative follows a well-planned structure. This conclusion has been proven thoroughly, highlighted through theme-words shared by matching units in the chiastic structure and catchwords linking successive units.

Recognition of the theme-words, catchwords, and pivot point, placed on top of what is already a masterly constructed Narrative filled with emotion and suspense, permits us to reaffirm what earlier readers have already discovered: that the Joseph Narrative is truly the most beautiful of narratives.

Once we have recognized the chiastic structure of the Joseph Narrative and its central theme about which our author has developed other related elements in concentric symmetry, we are on the correct path in understanding the purpose for the Narrative. By failing to observe and appreciate that symmetry, we tend to misread the "conceptual center" and consequently distort the author's message. But we also miss the sense of balance and intensity that chiasm provides.

While one of the aims of the study of the chiastic structure of the Joseph Narrative was to demonstrate the well-conceived and deliberate lines by which our author wrote, we would be lessening its importance if we did not discuss the implications or the significance of this highly structural Narrative.

The most important implication of chiastic structuring of a Narrative is its bearing on *source criticism*. Source criticism tends to view the text through a microscope, breaking it apart into tiny pieces, which are then assigned customarily to J, E, or P. The literary approach pulls back the lens, and the wide-angle view results in a greater appreciation of how the literary creation works as a whole.

It will be sufficient to say now that chiasmus does provide a good foundation for arguing that a particular subsection of a larger text is not a later addition, and it also argues against a documentary source-critical approach to a text that radically cuts across the chiasm. That is, if there is no plausible explanation of how a group of hypothetical sources were combined into an evident chiasm, the hypothetical source documents probably never existed.