

Human Vengeance in Old Testament Narrative in Light of the Narratives
of the Ancient Near East

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Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>
ANE	Ancient Near East
ANET	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i>
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
ASJ	<i>Acta Sumerologica</i>
AYB	<i>Anchor Yale Bible</i>
BA	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BDB	<i>Brown, Driver, Briggs English- Hebrew Lexicon of the OT</i>
BHS	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i>
BN	<i>Biblische Notizen</i>
CAD	<i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the University of Chicago</i>
CBC	Cambridge Bible Commentary
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CRRAI	Compte rendu de la Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale
CTH	<i>Catalogue des Textes Hittites</i>
DCH	<i>Dictionary of Classical Hebrew</i>
ETCSL	Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature
GE	<i>Epic of Gilgamesh</i>
HALOT	<i>Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the OT</i>
HB	Hebrew Bible
HAR	<i>Hebrew Annual Review</i>
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
ICAANE	The International Congresses on the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East
ID	Inana's Descent to the Netherworld
IDB	<i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i>
JANES	<i>Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JCS	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i>
JETS	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
JJS	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
JNSL	<i>Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages</i>
JQR	<i>The Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	<i>Journal for the Study of the OT, Supplement Series</i>
JSS	<i>Journal of the Semitic Studies</i>
KTU	<i>Keilalphabetische Texte aus Ugarit</i> M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, J. Sanmartin, (1976)
KUB	Keilschrifturkunden aus Bogazköi
LH	Laws of Hammurabi
MAL	Middle Assyrian Laws
NAC	New American Commentary
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
NICOT	New International Commentary of the OT
OTE	<i>Old Testament Essays</i>
OTL	Old Testament Library
PEQ	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i>
SBL	<i>Studies in Biblical Literature</i>
SBV	Standard Babylonian Version

TDOT *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*
UF *Ugarit-Forschungen*
VT *Vetus Testamentum*
VTSupp *Vetus Testamentum Supplement Series*
WBC *Word Biblical Commentary*
ZA *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und verwandte Gebiete*
ZAW *Zeitschrift Für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*

Abstract

This work examines personal revenge narratives from the Hebrew Bible and the literature of the ancient Near East. Revenge, an outward expression of emotion, has far-reaching implications for society as a whole, and for individual and group social interactions in particular. Ancient and modern reactions to acts of vengeance span the fields of politics, psychology, philosophy and theology, and are highly variable. Aristotle's view of revenge as an essential aspect of moving past one's anger at having been slighted assigns a positive valence to vengeance. Much of the current research in the fields of psychology and conflict resolution, however, supports the Platonic idea that only punishment to prevent future recurrence is rational. Revenge, through this modern lens, looks to the unchangeable past, is thus irrational, and should be avoided.

The study of a society's approach to revenge as reflected in its laws, literature, and art, reflects the ethics of that society. Narratives in particular express a community's convictions and assumptions in practice rather than in theory, and inform the society's ideology. The elements each culture chooses to include in its narratives are significant in revealing and determining the moral fabric of that community. Examining many narratives of the same type and comparing the issues they address sheds light on the ethics and practices of the societies from which they emerged; such an examination is necessary to identify patterns rather than merely quote anecdotes. Comparing the results to other cultures yields an even clearer picture of the nature of the values that are reflected in the literature.

To date, an in-depth study of HB or ANE narratives of personal revenge as a group has not been conducted. This work seeks to fill that lacuna in the scholarship by arguing for the existence of a surface structure that defines a tale-type not currently identified in HB or ANE research: the personal revenge narrative. This work will demonstrate how personal revenge narratives contain basic structural elements that facilitate an analysis of approaches to revenge in various cultures as reflected in those cultures' narratives. Because narratives intentionally utilize structures and symbols to represent the nature of society's values, analyzing those structures and symbols is particularly valuable in a quest to understand the ethos of a culture.

Identifying structural elements whose presence is orderly, predictable, and consistent across multiple texts allows for three important levels of analysis: First, each narrative may be assessed on the basis of its surface structure, to ascertain what is and is not typical in the pericope compared to other examples of the tale-type. Second, the narratives may be assessed as a group within each corpus to evaluate how a particular culture treats revenge. Third, a cross-cultural study of the narratives can clarify how two (or more) cultures are similar and different in their appraisals of revenge. By linking the content with the form on all three levels, establishing the tale-type enhances our understanding of the content of the narratives.

The HB narratives included in this study are: Genesis 34 (Simeon & Levi on Shechem), Genesis 37 (Jacob's sons on Joseph), Judges 8 (Gideon on Succoth & Penuel, Gideon on Zebah & Zalmunna), Judges 14-16 (Samson on the Philistines), I Samuel 22 (Saul on Nob), II Samuel 2-3 (Joab on Abner, Abner on IshBoshet), II Samuel 13 (Absalom on Amnon), and I Kings 21 (Jezebel on Naboth). In addition, the following ANE narratives are examined: *Enuma Elish* (Apsu on younger gods, Tiamat on the older gods), *Illuyanka* (Storm-god on the Serpent), *Aqhat* (Anat on Aqhat, Pughat on Yatpan), the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (Ishtar on Gilgamesh), *Inana & Shukaletuda* (Inana on Shukaletuda), *Inana and Bilulu* (Inana on Bilulu & Girgîre), *Inana and Mt. Ebiḥ* (Inana on Ebiḥ), and *Descent of Inana* (Inana on Dumuzi). All the narratives will be assessed using the method pioneered by Vladimir Propp in his 1928 *Morphology of a Folktale*. Propp's model, developed for the Russian fairy tale, identified a sequence of thirty-one structural elements, which he called functions, that appeared in the fairy tales in his corpus. Adapting his model as a tool for studying the HB and ANE revenge tales, I have identified those functions that consistently appear in narratives of personal revenge: WRONG, REACTION TO THE WRONG, PLAN FOR REVENGE, COMPLICITY, INTENT/OATH TO AVENGE, COUNCIL, PREPARATION/COMMAND FOR REVENGE, REVENGE ACT, REACTIONS TO THE REVENGE, DEPARTURE and AFTERMATH. As with Propp's original corpus, these functions generally appear in the above order in this tale-type. Deviations from the order are evaluated on a case-by-case basis and the significance of the morphological deviations is discussed in the analysis of each narrative.

The study has yielded important results in all three of the areas mentioned above. Individual narratives are seen to contain morphological anomalies, including the deletion, repetition, and oscillation of functions, which indicate the use of structure to convey meaning and elucidate the narratives in question. Three of these narratives are of particular interest, as they have helped to identify narratological structures within the narratives. The first of these is the Samson cycle, Jud. 14-16. In these chapters, using the morphological structure facilitated a clear categorization of Samson's actions according to whether a given episode fit or did not fit the morphological criteria for an act of personal revenge. As a result, both the character of Samson and the structure of the Samson cycle emerged as more complex and sophisticated than is traditionally suggested. Commonly held assumptions about Samson's vengeful nature and his personal and professional failures are seen in a different light.

The second narrative of interest is the double tales of revenge by Gideon in Jud. 8. The intertwining of these tales is a deliberate choice by the author to convey the impression that Gideon is enmeshed in a web of vengeance. The split narrative results in reader entrapment, a device that forces the reader to read one narrative against the backdrop of the other, and vice versa. What

ultimately appears is a conflicted leader who vacillates between his own ego and the service of God.

The third narrative whose study reveals narratological structures through an examination of the morphology is in the Joab-Abner narrative of II Samuel 2-3, in which an embedded narrative was identified. The identification of *mise-en-abyme* highlighted the parallel structures in the embedded and main narratives of the Joab-Abner revenge narratives. This allows each general's revenge to be interpreted in light of the other, revealing Abner's bloodless revenge to be as brutal as Joab's.

The next area of findings relates to how the cumulative results of each corpus illuminates our understanding of a culture's approach to revenge. In the HB corpus, for example, the function of *COMPLICITY* — when Avengees unwittingly help the Avenger advance the vengeance against them — appears consistently and has been observed to incriminate the Avenger, the Avengee, or both for the act of vengeance. Shechem readily agrees to the terms of Simeon and Levi, enabling their revenge by walking into their trap (Genesis 34). Similarly, Abner, an experienced general, returns to Hebron and to Joab's malfeasance, alone and off his guard (II Samuel 3). Such actions, seen regularly in the HB revenge narratives, cast blame on the Avengee, while the Avenger is often disdained for being deceptive.

The focus on the *AFTERMATH* in HB revenge narratives suggests that although revenge is not necessarily viewed as negative, a successful revenge act in ancient Israel is marked by a return to normal life for the Avenger; the status of Avenger is intended to be temporary. The ANE corpus, on the other hand, reveals an emphasis on the presence of Allies, the appearance of the function of *COUNCIL* (in which the Avenger seeks aid or permission from authority), and the trebling of *REVENGE ACTS*. Before committing acts of revenge, ANE Avengers seek permission or approval at a formal council and/or from a parent, as Pughat asked her father, Dan'el, before avenging her brother's murder in the *Tale of Aqhat*. In the *Tale of Inana and Bilulu*, Širru, friend of Bilulu, the thief and murderer of Dumuzi, is swept away with his friend when Inana avenges the murder, though he committed no crime. In the same narrative, avenging the murder by killing the murderers was not enough of a punishment; the guilty are also transfigured and their names are destroyed. These extreme measures, which are not seen in HB narratives, indicate the communal nature of revenge and its acceptance as a cultural norm. The return of the Avenger to society was an objective value in assessing revenge.

Finally, comparing HB and ANE personal revenge narratives allows us to distinguish between the cultural values of the two societies. HB revenge narratives posit the Avenger status as liminal, or transitory, at least in the ideal. Furthermore, there is little or no social support for the Avenger in these narratives, leading to the conclusion that although the HB acknowledges the

need—or existence—of personal vengeance, it should be short in duration and limited in scope. This stands in sharp contrast to the ANE corpus, which indicates that despite the social dangers inherent in revenge, indicated by the frequency with which Allies (such as Bilulu, mentioned above, or Ḫupašiya, the mortal Ally of the Storm-god who suffers for his involvement in the revenge of the *Illuyanka* narrative) are harmed by their proximity to the vengeance, there is no cultural bias against it. Moreover, an Avenger who remains in his Avenger state does not suffer for it in the ANE narratives. Ishtar/Inana (Babylonian/Sumerian), the goddess known for her affinity to love and war, appears repeatedly as an Avenger (*GE, Descent, Shukaletuda, Bilulu, Ebiḥ*) and is praised at the close of the narrative. This reflects a fundamental difference between the HB dignity culture, in which a person's value is based on objective internal principles, and the ANE honor culture, in which a person's value is based on the approbation received from others.

This study's findings contribute to the fields of HB narrative studies, comparative cultural studies, and revenge research. While recorded laws shape a society's ideals, narrative is crucial in shaping our understanding of the society's norms and expectations. In addition, canonical narratives provide an evaluative rubric by which to measure societal moral valences. The deliberate use of narrative is a valuable tool to establish normative behavior while maintaining the values and continuity of the community across generations. By recognizing tale-types through the surface structure of the narratives, a composite understanding can be reached of a given societal value (in this case, vengeance), against which individual instances of the type can be compared and contrasted. These comparisons yield insights into the individual narratives against the background of the whole.

This method can be utilized to identify and investigate additional HB tale-types that share surface structures, enhancing our understanding of each societal feature to a higher resolution. Comparing such analyses with those carried out on the corpora of other cultures, both ancient and modern, fosters mutual understanding of the similarities and differences among cultures and thus highlights what makes each unique. This process will continue to refine how we perceive the values of societies, rather than merely identifying isolated points of comparisons among individual narratives.

Finally, this study impacts the field of revenge research. While the basic elements of revenge remain consistent within the narratives, each story stands both on its own and in a dialectic with others. Some functions are repeated while others are omitted; other functions oscillate as tensions escalate. So, too, with real-life revenge. While philosophers, psychologists, and legal experts debate the desirability of revenge and the degree to which revenge is accepted in a society, this study reinforces the multiple considerations that enter into the evaluation of a revenge scene.

Introduction

0.1 *Revenge*¹

0.1.1 *Psychology and Philosophy of Revenge*

The topic of vengeance has been examined in various genres from many angles including philosophical, psychological, legal, and literary. The concept of revenge and the question of its desirability have undergone considerable development; therefore, a brief survey will be instructive for the assessment of revenge narratives in the Hebrew Bible and ancient Near East.

Aristotle's discussion of revenge links it directly to the emotion of anger at being belittled. Revenge, claims Aristotle, carries with it an attendant pleasure² but the anger — and with it the desire for revenge — can nonetheless be mitigated or avoided by either representing the object of the anger as a formidable opponent of the subject, worthy of reverence, or as a benefactor to the subject, regretful of the slight.³ Allaying the anger that is at the foundation of revenge can therefore be accomplished by a show of humility on the part of the object or a show of strength by the subject; either strategy results in the avoidance of revenge. In antiquity, however, the avoidance of

1 For background on revenge in ancient and classical sources, see: Moses Bittenwieser, "Blood Revenge and Burial Rites in Ancient Israel," *JAOS* 39 (1919): 303–21; Arthur S. Diamond, "An Eye for an Eye," *Iraq* 19, no. 02 (1957): 151–55; Tikva Frymer-Kensky, "Tit for Tat: The Principle of Equal Retribution in Near Eastern and Biblical Law," *BA*, 43, no. 4 (1980), 230–34; John Barton, *Ethics in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Raymond Westbrook, "Introduction: The Character of Ancient Near Eastern Law," in *A History of Ancient Near Eastern Law, 2 Vols* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 1–90; Hubert Joseph Treston, *Poine: A Study in Ancient Greek Blood-Vengeance* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1923); Anne Pippin Burnett, *Revenge in Attic and Later Tragedy* (Sather Classical Lectures, 62; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Douglas Cairns, *Aidōs: The Psychology and Ethics of Honour and Shame in Ancient Greece* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Kenneth James Dover, *Greek Popular Morality in the Time of Plato and Aristotle* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994); Fionnuala O'Neill, "Seeking Vengeance: Revenge Tragedy, Coherence and Skepticism from Sophocles to Shakespeare," *FORUM: University of Edinburgh Postgraduate Journal of Culture & the Arts*, 13, (2011), <https://doi.org/10.2218/forum.13.678>; David Konstan, "Assuaging Rage: Remorse, Repentance, and Forgiveness in the Classical World," *Phoenix*, 62, no. 3/4, (2008), 243–54; Kate Whitaker, "The Victim's Justice: Vengeance in Ancient Greco-Roman Homicide Law" (Ph.D. diss., University of Iowa, 2019); William Allan, "The Ethics of Retaliatory Violence in Athenian Tragedy," *Mnemosyne* 66, no. 4–5 (2013): 593–615; Adam Hansen, "Civil Vengeance: Literature, Culture, and Early Modern Revenge by Emily L. King," *Modern Language Review* 117, no. 2 (2022): 276–78; Fredson Thayer Bowers, *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy, 1587-1642* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966). A sample of the studies on revenge in tribal societies include: Christopher Boehm, *Blood Revenge: The Enactment and Management of Conflict in Montenegro and Other Tribal Societies* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987); Karen Paige Ericksen and Heather Horton, "'Blood Feuds': Cross-Cultural Variations in Kin Group Vengeance," *Behavior Science Research* 26, no. 1–4 (1992): 57–85; Jon Elster, "Norms of Revenge," *Ethics* 100, no. 4 (1990): 862–85; Stephen Beckerman and Paul Valentine, *Revenge in the Cultures of Lowland South America* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008); Surveys on the history of vengeance and its ramifications include: John George Peristiany, ed., *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society* (London: The Trinity Press, 1965); Susan Jacoby, *Wild Justice: The Evolution of Revenge* (New York: Harper & Row, 1983); Robert C. Solomon and Mark C. Murphy, eds., *What Is Justice?: Classic and Contemporary Readings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Martha Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: Facing History after Genocide and Mass Violence* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998); Joshua Conrad Jackson, Virginia K. Choi, and Michele J. Gelfand, "Revenge: A Multilevel Review and Synthesis," *Annual Review of Psychology* 70 (2019): 319–45.

²Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric*, 2.2, 142.

³ *Ibid.*, 2.3, 147–8.

revenge was not seen as a virtue. Indeed, simply overlooking the wrong was not believed to be an appropriate response because it entailed a miscarriage of justice.⁴

While Aristotle viewed revenge as a necessary (though perhaps insufficient) element in the process of dealing with anger, modern psychology generally supports the opposite opinion. Current psychological research has demonstrated that acts of revenge tend to increase, rather than decrease, the emotional energy expended on a perceived injury. Vengeance, unlike closure, inhibits the ability to put the offending behavior behind us,⁵ and a higher level of revenge is then required to salve the festering wound.

The field of conflict resolution emphasizes the pitfalls of revenge. First, Avengers are prone to generalize the objects of their revenge with the social/national/religious group or caste to which they belong, thereby justifying vengeance on an entire group. Second, victims and perpetrators may assess damage and pain differently, leading the victim to retaliate in a disproportionate manner. This is especially true when the victim's honor was offended, as it is particularly difficult to assess such damage.⁶ Third, revenge acts have a proclivity to devolve into depraved quests for punishment that are out of proportion to the original offence.⁷ This tendency is particularly disastrous when the offended party possesses power and, in seeking revenge, reverses the roles of victim and aggressor, turning revenge into a national vendetta led by a paranoid tyrant.

Jacoby traces the history and development of social, legal, and religious attitudes toward revenge, noting that modern Western societies tend to regard revenge as uncivilized and barbaric (in part due to the abuses listed above). However, such an evaluation is hardly universal:

[Revenge appears] as comedy and tragedy; as a sickness of the soul and as emotional liberation; as disgrace and as honor; as an enemy of social order and as a restorer of cosmic order; as mortal sin and as saving grace; as destructive self-indulgence and as justice...[It is] a mixed substance. It has both a private and a public aspect; its effects on the individual and on society are sometimes at odds.⁸

Thus any study of vengeance must not a priori assume a negative moral value for all acts of revenge.

⁴ Konstan, "Assuaging Rage," 244; *Seneca, De Clementia; Edited with Translation and Commentary* (ed. S. Braund, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009) 188, 414–15. Braund explains Seneca's assessment of pardon as a defect, though he does acknowledge that *clementia* can involve overlooking the letter of the law in favor of "higher principles of equity."

⁵ Michael Price, "Revenge and the People Who Seek It: New Research Offers Insights Into the Dish Best Served Cold," *Monitor on Psychology* 40 (2009): 35-37; Kevin M. Carlsmith, Timothy D. Wilson, and Daniel T. Gilbert, "The Paradoxical Consequences of Revenge," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 95, no. 6 (2008): 1317, 1320–22; Brad J. Bushman, "Does Venting Anger Feed or Extinguish the Flame? Catharsis, Rumination, Distraction, Anger, and Aggressive Responding," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 28, no. 6 (2002): 729–30.

⁶ Solomon Schimmel, *Wounds Not Healed by Time: The Power of Repentance and Forgiveness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 23.

⁷ Roy F. Baumeister, *Evil: Inside Human Violence and Cruelty* (New York: Macmillan, 1999), 23.

⁸ Jacoby, *Wild Justice*, 14

The non-valence — that is, the absence of a positive or negative value for the event — attached to revenge in the legal realm is similarly posited by Eisenstat, whose definition of revenge stresses its neutrality and requires case by case details before value judgment can be rendered. He points out that a rape victim slapping her rapist across the face and a driver who shoots another driver who cut him off are both acts of revenge but are clearly not of the same valence. Details necessary for judgment include the motivation of the act, the legality of the act, and the justice effected by the act, plus any attendant consequences.⁹

Barton, a criminal justice ethicist, questions common assumptions for the immorality of revenge, including the presumption that a victim's desire for revenge is perverse and indicative of an evil, vindictive disposition.¹⁰ Also writing from a legal perspective, Minow stresses the need for proportionality, as indicated by the biblical talionic formula of an eye for an eye. Vengeance, far from constituting a perversion of justice, "is also the wellspring of a notion of equivalence that animates justice." At the same time, she warns, vengeance can lead victims to "exact more than necessary, to be maliciously spiteful or dangerously aggressive" in their quest for justice. Furthermore, by doing so, they risk becoming hateful, a person who will harm others unprovoked.¹¹

Frankel, a professor of law and politics, identifies factors that are currently contributing to the revival of certain revenge-based principles in the legal system. She contends that since the Middle Ages, legal systems have denied the concept of a victim's right to revenge in favor of monetary and compensatory damages, resulting in a loss of humanity and a lack of catharsis for the victim. The resultant feelings of disenfranchisement may be mitigated by awarding punitive damages (in addition to compensatory damages) that acknowledge the victim's intangible losses.¹²

Uniacke asserts that revenge is wrong philosophically because it is "morally inappropriate in that it derives satisfaction from another person's suffering."¹³ This follows the Platonic notion that punishment is rational and forward-thinking while Avengers act as "mindless brutes" who look only to the past. In contrast, those who punish rationally do so "not for the sake of the wrongdoing, which is now in the past — but for the sake of the future, that the wrongdoing shall not be repeated."¹⁴ Zaibert, on the other hand, argues against those who, like Uniacke, make a clear distinction between revenge and punishment, pointing out that they are essentially two extremes of the same action, with the latter being socially acceptable. Furthermore, pathological cases exist

⁹ Steven M. Eisenstat, "Revenge, Justice, and Law: Recognizing the Victim's Desire for Vengeance as a Justification for Punishment," *Wayne Law Review* 50, (2004): 1121–27.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 25–29; Barton, *Getting Even: Revenge as a Form of Justice* (Chicago: Open Court Publishing, 1999), 9–11.

¹¹ Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness*, 20–21.

¹² Tamar Frankel, "Lessons from the Past: Revenge Yesterday and Today," *BUL Rev.* 76 (1996), 1–5.

¹³ Suzanne Uniacke, "Why Is Revenge Wrong?," *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 34, no. 1 (2000), 63–65.

¹⁴ Plato, *Plato: Protagoras*, (ed. E. J. Kenney et al.: Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 324 a-b.

among all emotions and their resultant actions, including benevolent ones.¹⁵ In a return to the ideas of Aristotle, philosopher Robert Solomon brings the Kantian argument that revenge possesses the unique ability to afford victims a sense of equitability and closure, granting the individual and society the ability to move on.¹⁶

What emerges from this brief survey is the need to view acts of vengeance in their temporal, geographic, and situational context. Opinions calling for the universal rejection of vengeance as an unethical and ineffective means of resolution are far from uniform even among contemporary scholars. The present study will discuss the ethical valence of HB and ANE narrative acts of vengeance against a background of structural analysis of the pericopes in question. It will be demonstrated that HB narratives in aggregate take a nuanced approach to revenge, combining Minow's assertion that justice and vengeance are often complementary, with a rejection of the tendency toward the disproportionality described by Schimmel (note 6, above). No such distinction will be seen in the ANE narratives.¹⁷

0.1.2 *Defining Revenge*

Revenge is defined as an action taken in response to a perceived wrong by another party that is intended to inflict damage, injury, discomfort, or punishment on the responsible party.¹⁸ The current work will utilize Nozick's definition of revenge, summarized as follows: (1) Revenge may be taken for an objective wrong, but also for a more subjective injury, harm, or slight. (2) Revenge sets no limits regarding the amount of punishment applied. (3) Revenge is personal and is exacted by one related to the wrong. (4) Revenge carries with it an emotional tone. (5) Revenge is not generalized; only this act interests the avenger while the same act committed by or to another party will not necessarily elicit the same reaction.¹⁹

0.1.3 *Goals of Revenge: Honor - Shame/Dignity - Guilt*

Barton classifies categories of motivations for applying punishments, among them instrumental and retributive motivations. Instrumental motivations, such as deterrence or rehabilitation, may be achieved through means other than punishment, for example, through education or a reward system. Retributive goals, on the other hand, necessarily link the goal with the punishment itself. The retributive motivation is most intimately tied to revenge; without it,

¹⁵ Leo Zaibert, "Punishment and Revenge," *Law and Philosophy* 25, no. 1 (2006): 81–118; Michael S. Moore, *Placing Blame: A Theory of the Criminal Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 117.

¹⁶ Solomon and Murphy, "What Is Justice?," 252-255.

¹⁷ See below, Section 21.4.1 for a more complete analysis.

¹⁸ Karl Aquino, Thomas M. Tripp, and Robert J. Bies, "How Employees Respond to Personal Offense: The Effects of Blame Attribution, Victim Status, and Offender Status on Revenge and Reconciliation in the Workplace.," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 86, no. 1 (2001), 53.

¹⁹ Robert Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1981), 366–68.

revenge cannot be achieved because a penalty must be linked to the wrong committed.²⁰ The Aristotelian view on anger and thus revenge, according to Konstan, is focused on the restoration of the honor and social status that were diminished through the wrong. Scheiter adds to this the restoration of justice and deterrence against future mistreatment by the offender, demonstrating the importance of the offenders understanding that the pain they now experience is a result of the wrong they inflicted.²¹

Berger differentiates between an honor culture, in which individuals regard their worth as tied to their external, societal roles, and a dignity culture, in which individuals regard their “intrinsic humanity” as being unconnected to his roles in society. Both honor and dignity serve as bridges between individuals and their society: Both may be lost or stolen, and both must be actively maintained because their loss would be devastating.²² Honor is described as a “limited good..[meaning it] exist[s] in finite quantity and [is] always in short supply.”²³ As such, honor is a zero-sum game; an increase in the honor of an individual necessitates a concomitant decrease in the honor of another member of the society.²⁴ When honor is taken or lost, it is subsequently replaced with shame.²⁵ In an honor-based society, worth is based on standing and reputation; thus any insult can bring shame and must be avenged.

In a dignity-based society, worth is measured by adherence to principles, even if no one else other than the individual is aware of it. Dignity is therefore unrelated to power and the societal roles which generate it; dignity is “impervious to insults and threats.”²⁶ Ayers compares honor to a suit of armor: It is cumbersome, external, and once pierced will fail its wearer, forcing him to “strike back in desperation.” Dignity, on the other hand, may be compared to a hard, internal skeleton that keeps its owner standing tall from within.²⁷ Whereas the loss of honor results in shame, the loss of dignity results in guilt. A society’s place on the honor-dignity spectrum affects the acceptable responses to a decrease in a victim’s honor, as will be borne out in the analysis of the individual narratives.

²⁰ Barton, *Getting Even*, 73–75.

²¹ David Konstan, “Aristotle on Anger and the Emotions: The Strategies of Status,” in *Ancient Anger: Perspectives from Homer to Galen* (eds. Susanna Braund and Glenn W. Most; Yale Classical Studies 32; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 109–10; Krisanna M. Scheiter, “Aristotle on the Purpose of Revenge,” in *Best Served Cold, Studies on Revenge* (eds. Sheila C. Bibb and Daniel Escandell; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 5–8.

²² Peter Berger, “On the Obsolescence of the Concept of Honor,” *European Journal of Sociology* 11, no. 2 (1970), 341–43.

²³ George M. Foster, “Peasant Society and the Image of Limited Good,” *American Anthropologist* 67, no. 2 (1965), 297.

²⁴ Julian Alfred Pitt-Rivers, *The Fate of Shechem: Or, the Politics of Sex* (Essays in the Anthropology of the Mediterranean 19; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 92.

²⁵ Saul M. Olyan, “Honor, Shame, and Covenant Relations in Ancient Israel and Its Environment,” *JBL* 115, no. 2 (1996), 204.

²⁶ Angela K.-Y. Leung and Dov Cohen, “Within-and between-Culture Variation: Individual Differences and the Cultural Logics of Honor, Face, and Dignity Cultures,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 100, no. 3 (2011), 509–11.

²⁷ Edward L. Ayers, *Vengeance and Justice: Crime and Punishment in the 19th Century American South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 20.

It will be demonstrated that ANE narratives reflect societies in which honor is valued above all else. The HB narratives, mitigated by the HB legal sections, promote, or at least idealize, a dignity culture in which value is based on independent principles rather than on the esteem of others.

0.2 *Liminality*

Liminality, from the Latin *limen*, or threshold, is an idea used for the passage through a stage with a clear delineation between the stages that preceded and followed the passage. The concept of the liminal was formerly applied to rites of passage in small societies. The transitional, or liminal, state inhabited during the rite is exited upon its completion, whereupon the initiands reintegrate into society.²⁸ Passage through the liminal state is meant to be transitional, not permanent, as this state does not exist in society.²⁹ The most common example, cited by van Gennep, is that of the transition from childhood to adulthood in some tribal societies. The child leaves behind the *preliminal* state of childhood and reemerges *postliminally* as an adult member of society. Between childhood and adulthood is a liminal state that consists of various rituals specific to that society.³⁰ It is significant that the liminal state is often accompanied by a temporary move through a threshold to a space such as a field or a desert that lies outside of the settlement of normal societal activity.

Van Gennep describes Semitic (Arabic), European, and Australian vendetta rites, which place those responsible for avenging in a liminal state until the completion of the revenge, at which point they are reintegrated into society.³¹ Atherton cites the avengers of Early Modern Japanese vendetta literature (1600-1867) who are “defined by their liminality.” During this time, the avenger is not bound by many of society’s rules and expectations but is expected to return to that society upon the successful completion of the revenge act. What emerges is that the liminal state is not sustainable; those who dwell in it are “simultaneously of two worlds, but wholly of neither.”³² We will see an example of this phenomenon in Samson in his role as avenger. He lives in the Philistine society in order to exact his revenge, but he is still identified as a Danite, a member of the family into which he was born and which will bury him.

In order to be viewed positively, revenge acts, like any rite involving a liminal state, require that avengers pass through the liminal state without undue harm to themselves, ideally returning to

²⁸ Bjorn Thomasson, “Liminality,” in *Encyclopedia of Social Theory* (eds. Austin Harrington, Barbara L. Marshall, and Hans-Peter; Müller London: Routledge, 2005), 322.

²⁹ Victor Turner, “Betwixt and between: The Liminal Period in Rites of Passage,” in *Betwixt and between: Patterns of Masculine and Feminine Initiation* (eds. Louise Carus Mahdi, Steven Foster, and Meredith Little; La Salle: Open Court Publishing, 1987), 95.

³⁰ Arnold Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 20-26.

³¹ Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, 39, 191-192.

³² David Atherton, “Valences of Vengeance: The Moral Imagination of Early Modern Japanese Vendetta Fiction” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2013), 28, 59.

society transformed for the better as a result of their experience. This feature of revenge will be examined in the narratives of the ANE and HB against the background of the structural analysis conducted on each narrative.

0.3 *Law vs. Narrative*

Both ANE and HB legal sections discuss the regulations that govern the implementation of revenge in different cultures. The importance of narrative in shaping our cultural norms, however, cannot be overstated. Richardson notes that, “people make sense of their lives through the stories that are available to them.”³³ The ethically correct and appropriate behavior of a society is learned through its stories as much as through its legal codes. Furthermore, the narratives of a culture shape its norms and even how its members experience events.³⁴ Burke endorses the use of art forms (literature among them) as “equipments for living,” in which the study of the “typical ingredients” of the form are sought. In doing so, he argues, an “overall strategy” can be formed for the “inspection of the lot.”³⁵ Regarding the narratives of ancient cultures, Jacobsen notes that the individuals who committed stories to writing were clearly depicting a society intimately related to the immediate experience of their audience.³⁶ We can conclude, therefore, that the study of ancient narrative, alongside the study of ancient legal codes, is essential to an understanding of the evaluation of choices made in the context of that milieu.

0.4 *Methodology*

0.4.1 *Morphological - Syntagmatic Semiotic Analysis*

The field of semiotics, which is based on the linguistic and semiotic theories of de Saussure, can be divided between semantics (the study of meaning), syntactics (the formal relationship between signs), and pragmatics (the connotations of signifiers and their relation to one another). White, researching the nature of historiography, states that “narrative is not merely a neutral discursive form...but rather entails ontological and epistemic choices with distinct ideological and ... political implications,” and that even historical accounts utilize “semiological apparatuses” in order to produce a “meaningful relation” between the signified and the audience that is essential to the “social vitality of the ethical system.” Thus we can discuss the concept of the “content of the form” as an essential component in the study of a narrative.³⁷ The form imparts to the content an additional layer of meaning and aids in its explication.

³³ Laurel Richardson, “Narrative and Sociology,” *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 19, no. 1 (1990), 129.

³⁴ Howard Brody, *Stories of Sickness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 186.

³⁵ Kenneth Burke, “The Philosophy of Literary Form,” in *The Philosophy of Literary Form* (3d ed.; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 303–4.

³⁶ Thorkild Jacobsen, “Early Political Development in Mesopotamia,” *Zeitschrift Für Assyriologie Und Vorderasiatische Archäologie* 52, (1957), 99–100.

³⁷ Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), ix–xi.

Tolson notes that structural analyses of narratives reduce the unique or unusual to familiar and regular patterns.³⁸ A syntagmatic analysis reveals what is unique to each narrative, a morphology is established, and individual examples are compared to the standard model. The structure represents a system that is “fundamental to intelligibility, not merely one aspect of it.”³⁹ In the current study, morphological analysis is not an attempt to reduce all revenge narratives to a single archetypal Ur-story of revenge, but rather to view each narrative as both part of a group and as an individual narrative. Related narratives can exhibit cultural aspects that a single narrative cannot, and individual narratives can edify with regard to their particulars against the background of the group.⁴⁰ This investigation will combine a structuralist approach based on the syntagmatic approach of Vladimir Propp with literary analysis and a social semiotic approach that seeks to identify the significance of the morphology that is revealed.

Propp’s method, outlined in his *Morphology of a Folktale*, consists of: (1) identification of a narrative’s component parts, (2) comparison of the sequence of each narrative’s components with that of every other narrative examined, and (3) comparison of the sequence of functions in a particular narrative with the sequence defining the genre in order to determine if it can legitimately be said to represent the genre.⁴¹ Among the more salient elements of Propp’s research is the adherence to a fixed ordering of functions among the members of a genre. A strictly sequential,⁴² formalist approach will examine the functions present in each narrative and the narrative’s sequential nature as it fits into the rubric of the genre.

The “component part” mentioned above is what Propp calls the function. Each function is a noun, described in one sentence. It is given a symbolic representation, generally a capital letter. The significance of a function lies in its outcome, not in who performs it or how it is performed.⁴³ While the function’s significance remains constant during the action of the story, variables can also be present; their role is to connect the functions, conveying necessary information to the reader.⁴⁴ In Propp’s most basic formulation, the sequence of the functions remains stable, though not all functions appear in every narrative. We shall see modifications to this formula below. Informative

³⁸ Andrew Tolson, *Mediations: Texts and Discourse in Media Studies* (Glasgow: Hodder Arnold, 1996), 43.

³⁹ Peter Caws, *Structuralism: The Art of the Intelligible* (London: Humanities Press International, 1988), 112–14.

⁴⁰ Robert C. Culley, “Structural Analysis: Is It Done with Mirrors?,” *Interpretation* 28, no. 2 (1974), 179.

⁴¹ Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale* (2d ed., trans. Lawrence Scott: Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968), 19–24.

⁴² I have used the term sequential to indicate the importance of a fixed sequence in Propp’s method despite the use of the term diachronic (as opposed to Lévi-Strauss’ synchronic approach) in most works on semiotics and structuralism. I have done this in order to avoid any confusion with the use of the term diachronic in biblical studies as it applies to the genesis of a text. Clearly, a structuralist analysis must approach any text synchronically (in the biblical studies meaning of the word), as mentioned above, nts. 4-5.

⁴³ Propp, *Folktale*, 67.

⁴⁴ Pamela J. Milne, *Vladimir Propp and the Study of Structure in Hebrew Biblical Narrative*, (Bible and Literature Series, 13; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988), 72–80.

connectives, notifications that inform the characters or the reader of something that is not a function, often supplement the narrative.⁴⁵ Functions are combined into “moves” or “sequences” of action that operate as a unit within the larger narrative, and moves are often repeated, interrupted, or inverted, or are missing a function. Tale-roles (Greimas’s actants) are, like functions, abstractions consisting of empty slots filled by the story’s characters. Like the functions, they are limited in number and consistent across the corpus of tales. Not every tale has every tale-role filled, and a character can fill more than one tale-role. The term “actant” will be used in the present study rather than referring to the “characters” in a narrative, as the former emphasizes the slot filled by the character. While Greimas focused on actants in pairs such as Subject – Object, Helper – Opponent, and Sender – Receiver, the main pair in this study is Avenger - Avenged.⁴⁶

0.4.2 *Modifications of Propp - Alterations in Morphological Sequence*

Propp’s assertion that “no [tale function] will fall out of order”⁴⁷ is among the most contentious of his theories in his landmark *Morphology of the Folktale*. Propp himself has more than a few cases of functions falling out of sequence in his survey of Russian fairy tales. His “transformed sequence” presents an arrangement in which functions DEF precede function A.⁴⁸ Propp is not bothered by this and claims it to be a “variation” rather than a new scheme. Similarly, an “inverted sequence is commonly found with [some of] Propp’s function pairs.” Taylor feels that Propp’s claim to a single “hypothetical original” fairy tale is dubious at best and prefers to cite three types, all of which fall under the heading “biographies of a hero.”⁴⁹ Milne points to functions that are often inverted, as well as individual functions that “tolerate” positional fluctuations.⁵⁰ Milne does not see particular variations in function sequence as negating Propp’s primary thesis. He is prepared to accept the model despite its lack of strict sequencing, which is mitigated by a certain regularity in the occurrence of the disruptions to the sequence.⁵¹ Any work applying Propp’s method needs to establish acceptable variations in sequence, depending on the genre being studied. The variations that occur in the revenge narratives will be discussed in the analysis of the data.

Propp’s morphological analysis, the isolating of “schemes of action,” has been compared to discourse analysis as well as to grammatical analysis.⁵² Both of these fields include accepted grammar whose structure contains some universal features. Changes to the classic structure reveal

⁴⁵ Propp, *Folktale* 71–72.

⁴⁶ Algirdas Julien Greimas, *Structural Semantics: An Attempt at a Method* (eds. Ronald Schleifer, and Alan R. Velie, trans. Daniele McDowell; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 202–10.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁴⁹ Taylor, “The Biographical Pattern in Traditional Narrative,” *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 1,1/2 (1964): 126–7.

⁵⁰ Pamela J. Milne, Vladimir Propp and the Study of Structure in Hebrew Biblical Narrative, 282, nt. 25.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 94–96.

⁵² Robert C. Culley, *Themes and Variations: A Study of Action in Biblical Narrative* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 11–12.

the differences in the impact the author seeks to effect.⁵³ Jobling credits Propp with inspiring readers to search for patterns that remain constant in different stories in order to determine their significance.⁵⁴ Jason's comparisons of sentence structure with tale structure illustrate how variation can highlight sufficient regularity to identify the nature of variations.⁵⁵

Although Propp applied his initial identification and allowance of non-sequential functions to the examination of the corpus of Russian fairy tales, others have used his method in the study of other corpora. Schenck, in her study of 16th century fabliau, identified ten discrete functions and a sequence they generally followed, but she also allowed for a varying, though not random, order. She identified transitional functions that may occur in an inverted order and at varied times in the narrative, as well as functions and cycles of functions that are often repeated. There does exist, however, what Schenck labels an "ideal" form, though there are only a few examples extant in her corpus.⁵⁶ Perhaps most similar to an analysis of OT narratives is Jason's analysis of fairy tale portions of larger folk tales. These mixed-genre works contain variations in sequences that result from their being part of a larger narrative.⁵⁷ In such narratives, delimiting the text is especially important.⁵⁸ Propp's original corpus, as well as studies that used his methodology, have found instances of inversions, transpositions, incomplete forms, doubling, and the elimination of functions through assimilation. This does not indicate a negation of the fundamental morphology, nor does it necessarily indicate a new tale-type.⁵⁹ Jason discusses the uses of Agreement, Deletion, Recursiveness, and Embedding devices in a Proppian style analysis.⁶⁰ Examples of these and other devices will be discussed in the analyses of the individual pericopes.

0.4.3 *Scope of the Current Study (Pericopes & Functions)*

The work of Heda Jason, Ilana Dan, and Rina Drory demonstrate the method employed in the current study. All use Propp's method, though not his model, altering the number and definitions of tale roles and functions from Propp's original analysis of Russian fairy tales in order

⁵³ Heda Jason, "A Model for Narrative Structure in Oral Literature," in *Patterns in Oral Literature* (eds. Heda Jason and Dimitri Segal; reprint Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 103-105.

⁵⁴ David Jobling, "Structuralist Criticism: The Text's World of Meaning," in *Judges and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies* (ed. Gale Yee; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 96-97.

⁵⁵ Heda Jason, "The Narrative Structure of Swindler Tales," (Santa Monica: Rand Corp. 1968), 141-43; Jason, "A Model for Narrative Structure in Oral Literature," 110-15.

⁵⁶ Mary Jane Schenck, "Functions and Roles in the Fabliau," *Comparative Literature*, 30.1 (1978), 25.

⁵⁷ Heda Jason, *Ethnopoetry: Form, Content, Function* (Forum Theologiae Liguisticae 11; Bonn: Linguistica Biblica, 1977), 46-47; Heda Jason, "The Lion Slayer and the Clever Princess: A Case Study of a Multigenre Folktale," in *Studies in Turkish Folklore, in Honor of Pertev N. Boratav* (eds. İlhan Başgöz, Mark Glazer, and Pertev Naili Boratav; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), 110-134.

⁵⁸ Milne, Vladimir Propp and the Study of Structure in Hebrew Biblical Narrative, 156.

⁵⁹ Diane M. Sharon, *Patterns of Destiny: Narrative Structures of Foundation and Doom in the Hebrew Bible* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 173. Sharon analyzes the fluctuations in each narrative and demonstrates how the change in morphology does not invalidate it.

⁶⁰ Jason, "A Model for Narrative Structure in Oral Literature," 110-14.

to suit the tale-type under examination.⁶¹ Propp’s method of structural analysis is on a very low level of abstraction.⁶² Kafalenos, using Propp’s model, abstracts ten functions in order to describe their recurrence across a broader generic, chronological, and cultural spectrum than Propp’s original work showed.⁶³ The present study will remain on the low level of abstraction of Propp but tailors or eliminates many of the functions to fit the tale-type of the personal revenge narrative in the HB and ANE.

This study defines the personal revenge narrative as one in which an identifiable or perceived wrong is committed, followed by a conscious action or attempted action carried out as recompense for harm done to the victim of the wrong. The HB and ANE narratives of personal revenge selected for this study were those in which there is a clear retaliatory act taken by either the individuals who were wronged or their representative. Moreover, this retaliation had to occur outside legal channels. As this is primarily a structural study, only non-speculative, developed narratives will be included rather than fragments of revenge that do not form a developed narrative. The emphasis is on personal affronts, whether physical, emotional, or as a slight to one’s honor/power, rather than those carried out for some social, political, or religious purpose. A more detailed explanation of the selection of each group of narratives is presented in the introductory chapter of each section.

The analyses contain the following actants (tale-roles) and functions, with examples given from Genesis 34, the revenge of Simeon and Levi on Shechem for the rape of Dinah:

Actants

Victim of the WRONG (may or may not be the Avenger) – Dinah, the brothers, Jacob

Perpetrator of the WRONG (may or may not be the Avenger) – Shechem

Avenger – Simeon & Levi

Avengee – Shechem, Ḥamor, and the city

Ally to Avenger – none

Ally of Avengee - none

Sequence of Functions

WRONG – Commission of an act contrary to the interests of the Avenger

Shechem kidnaps and rapes Dinah.

Ḥamor and Shechem insult Jacob and sons with offers of financial incentive to allow Dinah to marry Shechem and for exogamous marriage in general.

REACTION TO THE WRONG – Reaction (often emotional) by the Avenger or Victim connecting the WRONG to the act of revenge.

⁶¹ Jason, “The Narrative Structure of Swindler Tales.”; Heda Jason, *The Fairy Tale of the Active Heroine: An Outline for Discussion* (Jerusalem: Israel Ethnographic Society, 1982); Ilana Dan, “The Innocent Persecuted Heroine: An Attempt at a Model for the Surface Level of the Narrative Structure of the Female Fairy Tale,” in *Patterns in Oral Literature* (eds. Heda Jason and Dimitri Segal: reprint Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 13–30; Rina Drory, “Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves: An Attempts at a Model for the Narrative Structure of the Reward and Punishment Fairy Tale,” in *Patterns in Oral Literature* (eds. Heda Jason and Dimitri Segal: reprint Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 31–48.

⁶² Jason, “A Model for Narrative Structure in Oral Literature,” 130–36.

⁶³ Emma Kafalenos, *Narrative Causalities* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2006), 5.

Shechem loves Dinah and wants her for a wife. Jacob is silent.
 The brothers are indignant and very angry.
 PLAN/PLOT FOR REVENGE – Advance planning by the Avenger. May include deception.
 Jacob’s sons deceive Shechem as they plot their revenge.
 COMPLICITY - Victim unwittingly helps the Avenger advance the REVENGE.
 Hamor and Shechem agree to be circumcised.
 They convince the townspeople to follow suit.
 INTENT/OATH TO AVENGE – Avenger announces his intent and takes an oath to that effect.
 Often serves to justify the revenge. It becomes a threat if it is done in the presence of the Avengee.
 No INTENT is stated.
 COUNCIL – Avenger seeks permission and/or material aid to avenge the WRONG.
 There is no COUNCIL.
 PREPARATION/COMMAND FOR REVENGE ACT - Avenger undertakes preparations for the revenge act. Can include commanding a third party.
 Simeon and Levi wait for the most opportune moment.
 They arm themselves and stealthily approach the town.
 REVENGE ATTEMPT/ACT - Avenger causes, or attempts to cause, harm/injury to the Avengee.
 Simeon and Levi kill Hamor and Shechem. All the males of the town are killed.
 FLIGHT/DEPARTURE – Flight/Departure of the Avenger and /or the Avengee.
 Simeon and Levi retrieve Dinah and exit Shechem
 REACTION TO THE REVENGE ACT - Avenger, Avengee or Ally assesses the post-revenge attempt situation.
 Jacob reprimands Simeon and Levi for their recklessness.
 Simeon and Levi justify their action.
 AFTERMATH – A postscript to the act of revenge, tells of the next step for the Avenger or the Avengee. May appear as an epilogue at a later time.
 There is no AFTERMATH. There is an Epilogue in Genesis 49:5-7.

0.5 Comparative Literature

Narrative is critical both to moral discourse and moral action. As Day and Tappan claim:

The stories people tell describe not a frame of mind apart from themselves, but outline, instead, the forms they rely on to know what to do, what will happen to them, and what the consequences will be for their further credibility and place in the world... Consequently, narrative is not incidental, but rather critical, both to moral discourse and moral action.⁶⁴

Within this approach, the study of narratives of a given type provides insight into the experiences of the society that generated those narratives.⁶⁵ After examining individual works from the HB and ANE corpora, we will be positioned to view revenge across each culture, as well as to compare and contrast the two. The study is thus both comparative and contrastive in that the shared morphology facilitates the identification of similar functions, while the varied ways in which they are eliminated, repeated, or filled promotes the contrast of disparate views on personal vengeance within and across the two cultures.⁶⁶ Walton, whose “Principles of Comparative Study” prescribes

⁶⁴ James M. Day and Mark B. Tappan, “The Narrative Approach to Moral Development: From the Epistemic Subject to Dialogical Selves,” *Human Development* 39, no. 2 (1996): 74–75.

⁶⁵ Jacobsen, “Early Political Development in Mesopotamia,” 99–100.

⁶⁶ William W. Hallo, *The Book of the People* (Brown Judaica Studies 225; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 24–25.

that all narrative elements must be understood in their own context before any cross-cultural comparisons noting similarities and differences can be made, stresses that “it is not uncommon to find similarities at the surface but differences at the conceptual level and vice versa,” indicating the need to examine both form and content. This is especially significant in the current study, which seeks meaning from the subtleties that stem from the surface structure as well as from the variations in how the morphological functions are filled.⁶⁷ Therefore, each narrative will be examined in isolation before it is analyzed in the context of the greater corpus, and after gaining an understanding of that culture’s views on revenge.

0.6 *Social Semiotics*

The examination of how a text’s form is used in a cultural or religious context and how the authorial plan guides the reader’s perception of the content comprise part of the field of social semiotics. Following a structural analysis of the texts, this study will analyze the corpus of narratives. Despite the surface differences among the texts, the events they depict appear in typical sequences which can, taken as a group, help to describe the societal ideal regarding acts of vengeance. The narratives expand the legal sections of HB and ANE texts, revealing the real-life adherence and reactions to, or violations of, abstract laws. It will be seen that a narrative’s form aids in assessing the valuation of revenge in each culture, revealing an ideal of dignity-based revenge within the HB texts and an honor-based revenge in the ANE texts.

0.7 *Need for the Current Study*

Examining the Hebrew Bible’s attitude towards revenge only from its legal sections would yield partial and misleading results. The premise that HB narratives are meant “to provide both impetus for and elaboration of the laws” has been described at length.⁶⁸ McKeating argues that a sole reliance on the laws as a point of departure in any discussion of HB ethics leads to a biased view of Israelite behavior as it is reflected in the narratives. In addition, assessments from a variety of social vantage points can provide a more complete understanding of the legal desirability and normative tolerance of some behaviors.⁶⁹ Watts, for example, notes the importance of rhetorical strategy in influencing an audience’s behavior, based on how readers identify with or against a

⁶⁷ John H. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible* (Ada, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2006), 28.

⁶⁸ Calum M. Carmichael, *The Spirit of Biblical Law* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), 142–60; Calum Carmichael, *Illuminating Leviticus: A Study of Its Laws and Institutions in the Light of Biblical Narratives* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 7–10; Bernon Peng Yi Lee, “Reading Law and Narrative: The Method and Function of Abstraction” (Ph.D. diss., University of St. Michael’s College, 2003); Jacob Milgrom, “Law and Narrative and the Exegesis of Leviticus XIX 19,” *VT* 46, no. 4 (October 1, 1996): 544, calls law and narrative an “indissoluble tandem.”

⁶⁹ Henry McKeating, “Sanctions against Adultery in Ancient Israelite Society, with Some Reflections on Methodology in the Study of Old Testament Ethics,” *JSOT*, 11 (1979), 65–69.

protagonist.⁷⁰ It is the “totality of [both legal and narrative] texts,” according to Berman, that leads to an understanding of HB ethical and legal norms.⁷¹

The tale-type to which a narrative belongs infuses it with a perspective that enables the reader to understand not only the individual story, but also the overarching goals of a corpus’ rhetoric in a given arena.⁷² By isolating a set of narratives possessing a similar rhetorical effect, the reader gains a better understanding of the authors’ goals and the consciousness they wished to induce in their audience.⁷³ Furthermore, identifying the structures that a group of narratives holds in common enables readers to understand the group at a deeper level;⁷⁴ therefore, an examination of personal revenge narratives must include both an analysis of individual pericopes and of the group as a whole. Though doubting the usefulness of Propp on HB studies, Kirkpatrick concedes that Propp’s method might provide insights into “the structures of the society which composed [the narratives].”⁷⁵ It is these structures — the shared and unique features regarding vengeance in ancient Israel — which this study seeks to elucidate through the morphological analysis of HB and ANE accounts of personal revenge.

⁷⁰ James W. Watts, *Reading Law: The Rhetorical Shaping of the Pentateuch* (The Biblical Seminar 59; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 129; James W. Watts, “Story-List-Sanction: A Cross-Cultural Strategy of Ancient Persuasion,” in *Rhetoric before and beyond the Greeks* (eds. Carol Lipson and Roberta Binkley; Syracuse: State University of New York Press, 2004), 197–98.

⁷¹ Berman, “The History of Legal Theory and the Study of Biblical Law,” *CBQ* 76, no. 1 (2014), 27; Amsterdam and Bruner, *Minding the Law* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2000), 110–12 discuss the tangled nature of law and narrative and stress the fact that narrative is essential to law.

⁷² Simon, Uriel, *Reading Prophetic Narrative* (Biblical Encyclopedia Library 15; Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1997), 40.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 56–60.

⁷⁴ Roland Barthes, “An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative,” (trans. Lionel Duisit), *New Literary History* 6, no. 2 (1975): 238.

⁷⁵ Patricia G. Kirkpatrick, *The Old Testament and Folklore Study*, *JSOTSup* 62 (London: A&C Black, 1988), 80–81.

PART I – HEBREW BIBLE¹

Chapter 1

1.0 Introduction

1.1 *Final Form of the Text*

Rather than investigate the source history of the pericopes under discussion, the present study will utilize the Hebrew Bible's "final form" as transmitted through the Masoretic Text as reflected in the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. Such an approach will not, contrary to Barton's fears, result in an "atomistic" reading that disregards context (as Barton characterizes rabbinic exegesis) because it focuses on the context and form of narratives that share a common structure and theme.²

Israelite society as described in the HB spans millennia and thus cannot be ideologically homogeneous. This study, an examination of revenge as it is reflected in the corpus in its current form,³ rests on Barton's caveat that, "The Old Testament is evidence for, not coterminous with, the life and thought of ancient Israel."⁴ Hasel described this as a "canonical biblical theology" that is capable of "presenting the longitudinal themes, motifs, and concepts that emerge from the biblical materials."⁵

1.2 *Revenge Research in the HB*

The current scholarship on vengeance in the HB can be divided into three categories. The first focuses on the use and meaning of the root NQM. Early studies focused on the lexical value and potential cognates of NQM.⁶ Mendenhall concludes that the lemma is generally positive and is associated with God's actions and desires.⁷ Swartzback focuses on NQM as God's reaction to unrighteousness,⁸ indicating that vengeance as represented by NQM is not seen as an objectively deviant behavior but is, on the contrary, one that aims to restore ethical balance. Peels's study on the root NQM focuses on God's vengeance. When human vengeance does appear in his work, it is as a comparison for the vengeance of God and God's agents and, as the title of his work indicates,

¹ All HB translations are taken from NSRV unless otherwise indicated.

² John Barton, *The Old Testament: Canon, Literature and Theology: Collected Essays of John Barton* (Society For Old Testament Study Monographs; eprint, London: Routledge, 2016), 182–84.

³ John W. Rogerson, "Anthropology in the Old Testament," in *The World of Ancient Israel: Sociological, Anthropological and Political Perspectives* (ed. Ronald E. Clements; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 25–26.

⁴ John Barton, "Understanding Old Testament Ethics," *JSOT* 3, no. 9 (1978): 46.

⁵ Gerhard F. Hasel, "Proposals for a Canonical Biblical Theology," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 34, no. 1 (1996): 29.

⁶ George E. Mendenhall, "God of Vengeance, Shine Forth!," *Wittenberg Bulletin* 45 (1948): 37–42; George E. Mendenhall, "The 'Vengeance' of Yahweh," in *The Tenth Generation*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 69–104; Wayne T. Pitard, "Amarna Ekemu and Hebrew Naqam," *Maarav* 3 (1982): 5–25.

⁷ Mendenhall, "Yahweh"; So, too, Clines, *DCH*, 5:752–53; *HALOT* 2:721 refer to nqm as usually referring to the vengeance of YHWH.

⁸ Raymond H. Swartzback, "A Biblical Study of the Word 'Vengeance,'" *Interpretation* 6, no. 4 (1952): 453.

examines only those cases in which the root NQM appears. Peels notes that where there is “an individual or illegitimate act of vengeance, the use of NQM is either avoided or ... used pejoratively.”⁹ Thus the narratives of personal, human revenge examined in this study are not included in the earlier works that focus on NQM, as most do not contain this root. Other scholars have focused on the legitimacy of praying for divine vengeance, invoking a divine curse on one’s enemies, or rejoicing in their downfall, but these studies leave vengeance firmly in the hands of YHWH.¹⁰

A second area of study revolves around the legal injunction of Leviticus 19:18a: “You shall not take vengeance” and how it is reconciled with the spirit of the *Lex Taliones* as expressed in Exodus 21:22-25, Leviticus 24:19-20, and Deuteronomy 19:15-21. Peels concludes that the prohibition against NQM in Leviticus 19:18 proves its extreme negative character in a human context and uses this text to argue for the evil and vindictive nature of all human revenge acts and the condemnation they receive.¹¹ Noth’s attachment of the injunction to the need for impartiality in legal cases and Milgrom’s claim that it is directed against extralegal retribution except for those cases explicitly commanded by God indicate that the prohibition may apply to these specifically legal contexts.¹² In a reversal of earlier evaluations of the *taliones* as a barbaric and primitive form of punishment that encourages maiming and execution, current scholarship sees it in light of its ancient Near Eastern parallels and concludes that the intent is to prevent vengeance from spiraling out of control rather than to encourage vendettas.¹³ Thus the injunction does not contradict, but rather endorses, the spirit of Leviticus 19:18a.

The thrice repeated “life for life, eye for eye...” talionic formula (Exod 21:22-24; Lev 24:19-21; Deut 19:16-21) demonstrates the appropriation of civil offences by the State.¹⁴ It has been debated whether *Lex Taliones* was intended to be retributive or compensatory in nature. Greenstein places the law in a wide context and concludes that the text was intended to mandate compensation,

⁹ Hendrik George Laurens Peels, *The Vengeance of God: The Meaning of the Root Nqm and the Function of the Nqm-Texts in the Context of Divine Revelation in the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 275–76.

¹⁰ Spronk, Klaas, “Perverse Delight: Some Observations on an Unpleasant Theme in the Old Testament,” in *Exile and Suffering: A Selection of Papers Read at the 50th Anniversary Meeting of the Old Testament Society of South Africa OTWSA/OTSSA, Pretoria, August 2007*, vol. 50 (eds. Bob Becking and Dirk J. Human; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 147–59; Leonard P. Maré, “Psalm 58: A Prayer for Vengeance,” *OTE* 16, no. 2 (2003), 322; Pieter Middelkoop, “Curse-Retribution-Enmity. As data in natural religion, especially in Timor, confronted with the scripture” (Ph.D. diss., Utrecht University, 1960); Jeff S. Anderson, “The Social Function of Curses in the Hebrew Bible,” *ZAW* 110, no. 2 (1998), 223–37.

¹¹ Peels, *The Vengeance of God*, 43–51. Peels extends his claim to non-NQM texts despite the fact that this is not the focus of his study. No proof is given for this claim.

¹² Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus: A Book of Ritual and Ethics* (A Continental Commentary Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 233; Martin Noth, *Leviticus (OTL)* (London: SCM Press, 1965), 142.

¹³ Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy*, (WBC Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 430; Wayne T. Pitard, “Vengeance,” *ABD* 6:786.

¹⁴ Diamond, “An Eye for an Eye,” 154. Diamond cites the many parallels with other ANE codes such as the Middle Assyrian Laws, Laws of Eshunna, the Code of Hammurabi and the laws of Lipit-Ishtar, all of which contain physical mutilation corresponding to the offense.

while Shemesh views the debate against the background of both ANE legal documents and other HB legal texts and argues that the law was meant literally with a possible application for reparations.¹⁵ This debate relates to the question of whether or not the law was originally intended to be applied literally or if it had always been understood as referring to monetary compensation. The literal reading functions as a greater deterrent for the offender and may offer greater restoration of the honor of the victim; however, monetary compensation is clearly the more practical application, especially for the victim.¹⁶ Daube argues that while maiming the offender offers no repayment to the victim, it does restore the parity between victim and offender, thereby focusing on the honor and social standing of the victim.¹⁷ Frymer-Kensky extends the idea of retribution to the maintenance of symmetry between the parties, which indicates that preserving the status quo was the motivating factor behind both the biblical *talion* and comparable laws in the ANE in general.¹⁸

A third area of research is the study of blood vengeance in ancient Israel and its development through the history of the Hebrew Bible (Num 35:9-28, Deut 19:11-12). Tullock's definition of blood vengeance includes "any evening of the score," not only for murder, and not only against the perpetrator of the offense.¹⁹ While Tullock's study of HB narratives and legal sections provides a comprehensive view of blood vengeance, his broad definition includes all forms of vengeance, including those that would not grant the offender entry into a city of refuge. It is not clear what is gained by this wide definition other than the compilation of extant cases of retaliation for insults, rapes, and other wrongs not included in the traditional definition of a blood-avenger. Nevertheless, Tullock's study provides useful categories of various revenge narratives, despite the fact that the narratives are not examined in detail. Indeed, Tullock's study and its predecessors focus more on the historical development, and eventual phasing out, of blood vengeance than on revenge itself as it appears in the narratives.²⁰

Carmichael's examination of the three versions of *Lex Taliones* and Deuteronomy 25:11-12, the law of improper intervention in a fight, discusses the relationship among the versions. He notes that each case appears embedded in a narrative, and that the narratives provide "scope for

¹⁵ Edward L. Greenstein, "'An Eye for an Eye, A Tooth for a Tooth': Peshat, Derash, and the Question of Context," *Resling: A Multi-Disciplinary Stage for Culture* 5, 1998, 33-34; Yael Shemesh, "'Measure For Measure' In Biblical Law, Compared To The Laws Of The Ancient Near East And Bedouin Law," *Beit Mikra*, 45, no. 2 (2000), 155-62.

¹⁶ William H. Propp, *Exodus 19-40: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, (AB 2; New York: Doubleday, 2006), 229.

¹⁷ David Daube, *Studies in Biblical Law* (Jerusalem: Ktav, 1947), 127-28; Jacques Koppel Mikliszanski, "The Law of Retaliation and the Pentateuch," *JBL*, 66, no. 3, 1947, 295-303.

¹⁸ Frymer-Kensky, "Tit for Tat," 232.

¹⁹ John H. Tullock, "Blood-Vengeance among the Israelites in the Light of Its Near Eastern Background" (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 1966), 185-86. See also Shemesh, "Measure for Measure," 146-152 for the differences between the corresponding OT and ANE laws.

²⁰ Julian Morgenstern, *The Book of the Covenant* (Eugene, Ore. Wipf and Stock, 2007), 63-85, 138, 147; Johannes Pedersen, *Israel, Its Life and Culture*, vol. 1 (London: Oxford University Press, 1926), 388-92.

expressing the universal and ageless concern with retaliation...”²¹ Tullock’s comparisons with ANE law codes, while not necessarily correlating to accepted Israelite practice, inform HB narratives, shedding light on the practice of and reactions to HB codified laws of vengeance. However, a lacuna appears: There is not yet a full-length study that systematically investigates the HB revenge narratives qua revenge in an attempt to analyze the components, nature, nuances, and reception of vengeance. This study will try to address this need.

1.3 Selection of HB Narratives

The stories selected for inclusion in this study are narratives of personal revenge, which we will define as a narrative in which there exists an identifiable or perceived wrong followed by a conscious or attempted action carried out as recompense for harm done (whether physical, emotional, or as an affront to one’s honor/power). Narratives that address wrongs that are righted for some higher social or religious purpose have not been included, nor has material been taken from the legal codes, wisdom literature, or poetry sections of the HB.²² Revenge narratives from the HB include personal attacks that breach one’s person, property or honor, such as the rapes of Dinah (Genesis 34) and Tamar (II Samuel 13), the killing of Asahel (II Samuel 2-3), and the insult to Abner regarding Ritzpah (II Samuel 3), among others. This work will not include dynastic-political reprisals such as the fulfillment of David’s last requests of Solomon in I Kings 2, or international enterprises such as those found in Ezra 4 ff. and Nehemiah 6 concerning attempts to cease the construction of the walls/Temple and have the Judaites incur the ruler’s wrath. Likewise, religious-polemic attacks, such as Jezebel, Elijah and the prophets of Ba’al, (I Kings 18-19), or Ahab against Michayahu (I Kings 22) are not included. The narratives of Cain and Abel (Genesis 4) and of Potifar’s wife (Genesis 39) do not specify a motive and are therefore considered speculative revenge and will not be included in the present study.

Two narratives are not included in this study due to the complexity and lack of clarity in the respective pericopes. The Abimelech narrative presents numerous difficulties, such as the intertwining of divine revenge for the killing of Gideon’s children with Abimelech’s personal revenge against the affront of Ga’al. Ga’al’s shifting roles as opportunist and unwitting avenger impact the success or failure of the actions of the Shechemites and of Abimelech; simultaneously, the actantial positions assumed by the characters double and change. The Haman narrative in Esther is similarly complicated by the tangling of Haman’s personal revenge against Mordechai with the counter-avenging or self-defensive thwarting by Mordechai and Esther against the WRONG of Haman’s intended (but incomplete) revenge; again, the characters assume multiple roles and the

²¹ Calum Carmichael, “Biblical Laws of Talion,” *HAR* 9 (1985): 125.

²² John Barton, *The Hebrew Bible: A Critical Companion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 109–235. See chapters by Römer, Kratz, Bartor, Grillo and Gillingham on the genres of HB literature.

motives for revenge are presented within a political/religious framework.²³ The analyses required by these two narratives would be too voluminous for a study of this nature. Nevertheless, these pericopes are occasionally referenced as foils in the discussions of the narratives that are included. It is my hope to return to them to examine each in greater detail than is currently possible, and to do so against the background of the results of this work.

1.4 *Appropriation of Propp for HB Analysis*

The use of folkloric methods of research on the biblical canon is not without critics. Gunkel asserts that the nature of the development of biblical material is antithetical to that of folkloric materials; thus, he claims, the Bible contains no true folktales, only holy traditions that are the final form of a meticulous and exacting process. Gunkel does not doubt, however, that the Israelites preserved stories that have some of the characteristics of folktales and that folktale-like motifs are at least partially preserved in the Bible.²⁴ Niditch points out that biblical literature is traditional literature in that it is an integral part of a cultural context and value system in which one can demonstrate “repeated patterns of thought, content and language, traceable to no single originator...” While it cannot be proven that any particular piece of biblical literature underwent an oral stage, it has been demonstrated that biblical literature (especially narrative) has many points of similarity with folklore.²⁵ In a more recent work, Niditch surveys opinions regarding the nature of folklore and concludes that the definition of folklore as “lore in process,” that is, with a demonstrable oral stage, is too restrictive. Ultimately, the tradition of the form and the function of the work justify using a folklorist's tools in its analysis, regardless of whether or not the composition is classified as folklore. Patterned repetition of narratives and the recurrence of the themes that define folklore are the elements that determine whether a work is close enough to folklore to benefit from the methodological techniques of the discipline. Using Propp's model, with alterations, to analyze biblical narratives is justified in an effort to reveal the morphologies unique to the Israelite biblical tradition.²⁶

Although Propp's methodology was developed, applied, and tested on a corpus of Russian fairy tales, its usefulness in examining the biblical corpus (as well as other media and genres) is

²³ Stephanie Dalley, *Esther's Revenge at Susa: From Sennacherib to Ahasuerus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 196–97; Jonathan Grossman, *Esther: The Outer Narrative and the Hidden Reading* (Siphrut Literature and Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures 6; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 188–93.

²⁴ Hermann Gunkel, “The Folktale in the Old Testament.” (trans. MD Rutter), in *Historic Texts and Interpreters in Biblical Scholarship* (ed. J.W. Rogerson; Sheffield: Almond Press, 1987), 32–34. See Alan Dundes, *Holy writ as oral lit: the Bible as folklore* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), p.15-16, regarding Gunkel's assertion that the folktales included in the Bible are no longer in the realm of the folktale, a point which Dundes argues. .

²⁵ Susan Niditch, *Underdogs and Tricksters: A Prelude to Biblical Folklore* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 1-22.

²⁶ Susan Niditch, *Folklore and the Hebrew Bible* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock, 2004), 4–20.

well documented.²⁷ Biblical narratives, generated within disparate times and circumstances, now enter into a dialectic with other materials in the canon, forming a narrative group, or tale-type.²⁸ Folklorist Alan Dundes discusses what is needed to establish an oicotype, that is, a distinctive tale pattern developed in a culture that acquires a unique form based on the national, political, and/or geographical conditions from which it emerged.²⁹ Compared to the formidable challenges involved in a historic-geographic survey of tens or hundreds of tales of any tale-type, structural analysis can delineate a new type in a more efficient manner. Once structural analysis has identified a tale-type, undertaking a complete survey becomes possible. Cross-cultural analysis can then be employed to determine the degree to which the type is unique to that culture.³⁰ This will be undertaken in the final section of the present study through the comparison of the HB and ANE narratives.

* A note on order

The order of appearance of the HB narratives in the section below has been arranged according to the level of complexity of the pericopes, with the simpler narratives appearing first. This has been done in order to establish the morphology before utilizing it for the pericopes in which additional narrative devices are used.

²⁷ For explication and examples of syntagmatic structural analysis applied to biblical analysis, see: David Jobling, *The Sense of Biblical Narrative: Structural Analyses in the Hebrew Bible* (London: A&C Black, 1986); Daniel Patte, "Thinking in Signs: Semiotics and Biblical Studies," *Thirty Years After*, Semeia 81 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998); Wolfgang Roth, *Structural Interpretations of "Jacob at the Jabbok": Genesis 32: 22-32* (Chicago: Chicago Society of Biblical Research, 1977); Mieke Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); Jean Calloud, *Structural Analysis of Narrative*, (Semeia Supplements, 4; trans. Daniel Patte; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976); Roland Barthes, ed., *Structural Analysis and Biblical Exegesis, Interpretational Essays*, 3 (Pittsburg: Pickwick, 1974).

²⁸ Richard Jacobson, "The Structuralists and the Bible," *Interpretation* 28, no. 2 (1974): 153–54.

²⁹ Oicotype is a term borrowed from botany and first applied to folklore by von Sydow in 1927. It is based on the idea that just as a plant will develop adaptations to a new environment, so too, folktales. C. W. von. Sydow, "Geography and Folk-Tale Ecotypes." *Béaloideas* 4, no. 3 (1934): 344–55.

³⁰ Alan Dundes, *Meaning of Folklore: The Analytical Essays of Alan Dundes* (ed. Simon J. Bronner, Salt Lake City: Utah State University Press, 2007), 130–32.

Chapter 2

2.0 Simeon and Levi on the city of Shechem (Genesis 34)

Although this pericope is often referred to as “The Rape of Dinah,” it will be termed here “The Revenge of Simeon and Levi” because the violence executed upon Shechem and its aftermath are our primary interest. In addition, the morphological analysis of the narrative presented in this section will demonstrate that viewing this pericope as centered on revenge rather than rape is truer to its structure when viewed against the background of HB revenge narratives.

Table 1 Morphology - Simeon and Levi in Shechem

Initial Scene	34:1	Dinah goes out
WRONG	34:2a	Shechem kidnaps Dinah.
WRONG	34:2b-c	Shechem rapes Dinah.
REACTION TO THE WRONG	34:3-4	Shechem loves Dinah and demands to acquire her as his wife.
REACTION TO THE WRONG	34:5	Jacob is silent.
REACTION TO THE WRONG	34:7	Jacob’s sons are indignant and angered.
WRONG	34:6,8-10	Ḥamor approaches Jacob and sons, offering residency and trading rights in exchange for Dinah and general intermarriage/alliance.
WRONG	34:11-12	Shechem offers a large dowry.
PLAN	34:13-16	Jacob’s sons deceive Shechem and Ḥamor as they plot their revenge.
Threat	34:17	The brothers threaten to take Dinah.
COMPLICITY	34:18-19 34:20-23 34:24	Shechem and Ḥamor are persuaded to be circumcised. They convince all the men of the city as well. All of the men are circumcised.
PREPARATION FOR REVENGE	34:25a-b	Simeon & Levi wait, take weapons and ambush the city.
REVENGE ACT	34:25c-26b	Simeon & Levi kill all the men of the city. Simeon & Levi kill Shechem and Ḥamor.
DEPARTURE	34:26c	Simeon & Levi retrieve Dinah and exit the city.
REVENGE ACT	34:27-29	Jacob’s sons pillage the city.
REACTION TO THE REVENGE	34:30 34:31	Jacob reprimands Simeon & Levi for their recklessness. Simeon & Levi justify their action.

2.1 Establishing the Morphology

The narrative opens with an Initial Scene of a single verse:

1 Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the region.

Identifying a daughter with her mother's house as opposed to her father's is unique in the HB and sets the stage in the narrative for the significance of belonging to the house of Leah.¹ The verse suggests that Dinah is connected to her father only through her mother and not by her own right. The later reference to "Dinah, daughter of Jacob" appears in connection to the marriage negotiations that were under her father's purview, and do not indicate that she was identified within his household. That Dinah "went out" to see the daughters of the land will be the first of many "goings out" in this pericope and demonstrates that she has crossed a social boundary.²

Before the WRONG is depicted, we are introduced to Shechem, the perpetrator:

2 When Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the region, saw her, he took her and lay with her by force.³

Shechem is a prince who does as he pleases and takes what he wants. He perpetrates a WRONG against Dinah and her entire family. As the analysis will show, Dinah is not the only or even the primary Victim in the narrative.⁴ Contra Fewell and Gunn, the verse does not indicate that Shechem took Dinah with the honorable intention of making her his wife. Yamada points out that such a case requires a prepositional phrase after the verb and preposition ל לקח, and that the verb would precede, rather than follow, Shechem's stated desire to marry Dinah.⁵ Finally, the marriage arrangement, as well as Dinah's approval, would precede the "taking," as in the case of Rebecca (Gen 23:57-58). Scholz's suggestion that the three verbs ויקח...וישכב...ויענה form a hendiadys denoting rape is improbable because the verb לקח returns as part of the brothers' retribution (see below, v. 17).⁶ The "taking" of Dinah represents its own discrete WRONG, which would have merited a reprisal (albeit greatly modified) even without the rape, as did the taking of Sarah (Gen 12, 20) and the narrowly avoided taking of Rebecca (Gen 26). Hamilton connects the "taking" of Dinah to the "seeing," as it is seeing that leads to the desire to take (cf. Gen 3:6; 6:2). The latter two verbs may then be read together as a hendiadys indicating rape, thus establishing two WRONGS in verse 2.⁷ The argument of Bechtel and others that the Piel form of the verb ענה indicates an action other than rape has been refuted.⁸ The verb ענה indicates that the perpetrator has oppressed,

¹ Cynthia R. Chapman, *The House of the Mother: The Social Roles of Maternal Kin in Biblical Hebrew Narrative and Poetry* (ed. John J. Collins; The Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 64.

² Frank M. Yamada, *Configurations of Rape in the Hebrew Bible: A Literary Analysis of Three Rape Narratives* (SBL, 109; New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 32.

³ My translation, based on NRSV.

⁴ The focus of the narrative on the honor of the clan is not to say that Dinah isn't the one to have suffered physically and psychologically, but simply that this is not the point that the narrative is trying to accentuate. The modern definition of rape, as Yamada notes, is almost irrelevant in our narrative, as we are never privy to Dinah's thoughts (35-39).

⁵ Danna Nolan Fewell and David M. Gunn, "Tipping the Balance: Sternberg's Reader and the Rape of Dinah," *JBL*, 110, no. 12, (1991), 195; Yamada, *Configurations of Rape in the Hebrew Bible*, 37.

⁶ Susanne Scholz, "Rape Plots: A Feminist Cultural Study of Genesis 34" (Ph.D. diss., Union Theological Seminary, 1997), 157.

⁷ Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18-50* (NICOT, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 354.

⁸ Lyn M. Bechtel, "What If Dinah Is Not Raped?(Genesis 34)," *JSOT* 19, no. 62 (1994): 23ff. suggests that ענה be translated "humiliated." See Scholtz, "Rape Plots," p.157, nt. 29 for a summary of this argument.

silence for a given situation.¹⁵ We shall have to wait for a satisfying explanation for this REACTION, but in the meantime, it provides an opening for the sons' multifaceted response.

The REACTIONS of the sons reflect the multiple WRONGS perpetrated against their sister and by extension, against the family. Fleishman notes that Shechem did not transgress by having relations with Dinah because in his worldview, exogamous marriage was acceptable.¹⁶ He was, however, culpable for taking her by force and so the first REACTION, "the men were indignant" (v. 7), indicates "a state of mental or emotional distress" and denotes "serious inward agitation."¹⁷ This inward agitation was the result of the brothers' anguish at their sister's intimacy with an uncircumcised foreigner, an anguish which Shechem, the aggressor, could not have anticipated (or at least is not to be held accountable for in his own culture). The second REACTION on the part of the brothers, "and they were very angry," relates to an offense which Shechem certainly knew he was violating. The kidnapping of Dinah and the rape which followed were most certainly not an acceptable custom among the Hivites, just as it was abhorrent in the eyes of the Jacobites. At this point, the narrator seems to have differentiated between the actionable and unactionable crimes of Shechem.

In the next several verses, Hamor and Shechem attempt to reduce the incident to an opportunity for political alliances through intermarriage and economic advantage, with Shechem attempting to sweeten the deal by offering an inflated bride price (vv. 8-12). These two offers comprise a third WRONG, insulting the Jacobite's ethic of endogamy and their divinely given value system.¹⁸ These offers follow on the heels of the term נבלה (v. 7), which indicates "outrageous sexual offences" as well as deplorable actions that terminate an existing relationship along with its rules of order (Gen 33:18-20).¹⁹ The offers of material gain, even more than Shechem's initial WRONG, threaten to prostitute Dinah (v. 31). Furthermore, there are no words of contrition from Shechem or Hamor; the kidnapping and rape of Dinah is never mentioned, further infuriating Jacob's sons.

This last WRONG brings the brothers to develop their PLAN FOR REVENGE in lieu of an immediate REACTION.

13 The sons of Jacob answered Shechem and his father Hamor deceitfully because he had defiled their sister Dinah. 14 They said to them, "We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one who is uncircumcised, for that would be a disgrace to us. 15 Only on this condition will we consent to you: that you will become as we are and every male among you be circumcised. 16 Then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters for ourselves, and

¹⁵ See, for example: II Sam 19:11; II Kgs 18:36 and its parallel in Isa 36:21; Hab 1:13; Esth 4:14 and the command of Absalom that Tamar keep quiet against her natural instinct to cry out in II Sam 13:20.

¹⁶ Joseph Fleishman, "Why Did Simeon and Levi Rebuke Their Father in Genesis 34:31?," *JNES* 26, no. 2 (2000), 104.

¹⁷ C. Meyers, "'āṣāb" *TDOT*, 11:279.

¹⁸ Bill T. Arnold, *Genesis* (NCBC 1, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 297.

¹⁹ Anthony Phillips, "Nebalah: A Term for Serious Disorderly and Unruly Conduct," *VT*, 25, no. 2 (1975), 241.

we will live among you and become one people. 17 But if you will not listen to us and be circumcised, then we will take our daughter and be gone.”

The reader is forewarned of the development of the PLAN FOR REVENGE through the use of the term במרמה, and in case we have forgotten the crime or the relationship between the Victim and the Avengers, we are reminded that the soon-to-be Avengee is Shechem, who “had defiled Dinah, their sister.” The details of how the plan will be carried out are not stated, but a hint that the surface calm is about to be shattered is present in the word מרמה, which is usually used to “describe a deception where violence is involved.”²⁰

In addition to deceit, the PLAN includes a veiled THREAT, which the Avengees believe to be far more innocuous than what the Avengers have in mind. The language “we will take our daughter, and we will be gone” evokes the taking of Dinah by Shechem in verse 2 and foreshadows the taking of Dinah by the brothers after decimating the male population (v. 26) and the city (v. 28). These final words to Shechem comprise a message whose full meaning is known only to the brothers. As such, the message does not convey a THREAT TO AVENGE to the Avengee but is rather a statement of resolve among the brothers, whose ulterior plan is made known to the reader. The fact that the brothers formed a cohesive PLAN and did not act out of “blind fury” follows the morphology of the HB narrative of personal revenge and proves, rather than excludes, the presence of revenge, contra Sternberg.²¹

The interactions that follow demonstrate a trebling of the COMPLICITY function by different players (vv. 18-24). First, Hamor and Shechem agree to the brothers’ demand for circumcision. Next, they seek to convince the townspeople of the benefits of an alliance with the Avengers. In an echo of the deceit initiated by Jacob’s sons, Hamor and Shechem downplay the circumcision requirement and omit any mention of the personal benefit to Shechem. Finally, the townspeople themselves are COMPLICIT, and place themselves in a precarious position by having all the men undergo circumcision simultaneously. The imbalance in societal expectations between Hamor and Shechem, on the one hand, and the Jacobites on the other, leads to a complete, disastrous, and easily attained COMPLICITY.²²

Once the trap has been laid, the brothers wait for the most advantageous time to attack (vv. 25-26). The PREPARATION FOR REVENGE entails stealthy waiting, arming, and infiltrating. In verse 25, as in verse 13, the sibling bond, “two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers,” is given primacy over the parent-child bond and serves to remind us why the act is

²⁰ Matthew R. Newkirk, “Just Deceivers: An Investigation Into the Motif and Theology of Deception in the Books of Samuel” (Ph.D. diss., Wheaton College, 2013), 28, citing Gen 34:13; Jer 9:7; Zeph 1:9; Pss 5:7; 38:13; 52:6; 55:12, 24; Prov 14:25; 26:24; Dan 8:24–25.

²¹ Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 468.

²² Robert Alter, *Genesis: Translation and Commentary* (New York: WW Norton & Company, 1996), 191.

justified. The REVENGE ACT itself is swift and methodical, in accordance with the WRONGS committed. The נבלה, an act of exogamy that was seen as an offence against the entire clan, is avenged by the killing of every male in the city,²³ an act that also eliminates any possible resistance as the brothers approach the leaders' house. In verse 26, the perpetrator of the crime and his advocate are killed. The "taking" of Dinah in this verse is parallel to her initial "taking" by Shechem in verse 2 and effectuates the threat of verse 17. The DEPARTURE of Simeon and Levi with Dinah (ויצאו) closes the story that began with Dinah's initial going out (ארתצא).

Yet there remains one last WRONG to avenge. If killing all the males in the city by Simeon and Levi was justified by the need to reach Hamor and Shechem or as a preventative measure against retaliation, the pillaging of the city by the rest of Jacob's sons (vv. 27-29) seems beyond all reasonable proportions. The explanation that is given, "because they had defiled their sister," is unsatisfying. How can the entire town be responsible for the defilement of Dinah? For our answer we look to the final WRONG of the pericope: the offer of increased wealth that would result from trade and intermarriage between the two groups. This offer insults the honor of the Jacobites. The WRONGS of verses 8-12 include the implication that Dinah's purity and the sanctity of the family can be purchased for trading rights and a large dowry, and lead to the hyperbolic idea that the entire town was guilty of her defilement. The goal of trading rights that Hamor emphasizes in his negotiations also underscores the gap in sensibilities between the Shechemites and the Jacobites. Fittingly, the focus on materialism by the former is avenged by the material destruction of the city by the latter. Whether the Shechemites were unaware of the religious sensibilities of the Jacobites (though if they had been, they likely would have kept their guard raised) or were simply too greedy for their own good, the result is the same: the pillaging and utter destruction of their city. The Shechemites are referred to as guilty fellow Avengers, not as Allies who happened to be too close to objects of vengeance.

The destruction of the city is subordinate to the main REVENGE ACTS carried out by Simeon and Levi, who have already departed when the pillaging takes place. The morphological analysis emphasizes a secondary line of action with the third set of WRONGS and an attendant REVENGE ACT that differs from the previous REVENGE ACTS. The DEPARTURE of Simeon and Levi interrupts the string of REVENGE ACTS, effectively separating them from their brothers' excessive REVENGE ACT. While Simeon and Levi avenge the defilement of Dinah, the rest of the brothers pillage and destroy the material possessions of the city; Shechem and the townspeople had coveted the Jacobites' material possessions when they agreed to be circumcised, making them COMPLICIT in their own demise as a result of their greed.

²³ Yamada, Configurations of Rape in the Hebrew Bible, 41.

Jacob's angry words to his sons comprise the REACTION to the REVENGE ACTS and are met with an equally strong rebuttal from Simeon and Levi:

30 Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "You have brought trouble on me by making me odious to the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites and the Perizzites; my numbers are few, and if they gather themselves against me and attack me, I shall be destroyed, both I and my household." 31 But they said, "Should our sister be treated like a whore?"

Jacob does not denounce the breaking of the agreement with Shechem nor any injustice carried out against the prince or his city, but rather focuses on the family's safety and survival. His silence in verse 5 is finally explained not as indifference to Dinah's honor, but as a measured response in light of his perilous position among the inhabitants of the land. The brothers, however, do not accept this. Dinah, who is no longer called "daughter of Jacob," will be cared for by her brothers (vv. 13, 14, 25, 31). It is they who will ensure that their sister's honor is protected, even at the cost of the family's safety and their father's approval.

2.2 *Analysis & Context*

2.2.1 *Initial Scene*

The introduction of Dinah as "the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne unto Jacob," sets the scene for a pericope in which all of the actants are continually referred to vis-à-vis their relationships to others. Dinah's voice is never heard, nor is there any objective description of her. Throughout the pericope she remains the daughter of her mother (or her father, in business dealings regarding her person), the sister of her brothers, or the object of Shechem's desire. The opening descriptor of the narrative accentuates the fact that the coming functions — the WRONGS, the REACTIONS, and the REVENGE ACTS — are focused on how others are affected by Dinah's rape. She is seen as but one of many Victims, and not even the primary one. Such callousness to Dinah's plight might reflect the same textual nuance as the report that Dinah "went out" from her father's protective enclave and exposed herself to peril. The act of a woman going out by herself is seen as "imprudence, if not impropriety," and serves to shift the focus from her to her family.²⁴ This ends Dinah's brief existence as a subject. Henceforth, she has no agency and is treated as an object. She has crossed the threshold of Jacob's home, and in so doing, crossed a societal frontier and relinquished her father's protection.

2.2.2 *WRONGS*

As mentioned above, the narrative contains three discrete WRONGS. The first involves the kidnapping of Dinah. When Dinah goes out "to see the daughters of the land," she is immediately transformed from the seer to the seen, and is taken against her will.²⁵ In contrast to the other HB

²⁴ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 310; Ellen Van Wolde, "The Dinah Story: Rape or Worse?," *OTE* 15, no. 1 (2002), 235–36.

²⁵ Scholz, "Rape Plots," 154.

rape narratives, the concubine of Gibeah and Tamar and Absalom, both of which use the verb *קח*, the verb here is *לקח*. When the term seizing (*קח*) is used with respect to a living being, an act of violence is indicated; taking (*לקח*), in contrast, indicates obtaining as well as changing the location from one place to another, often by force (Jud 19:25; II Sam 13:11,14).²⁶ This lexical choice focuses attention on the transferring of Dinah to Shechem's domain, an act which is separate from the ensuing rape. Whereas Dinah had gone out merely to see, the prince sees, takes, and lies with her in rapid succession; the rape constitutes the second WRONG. The passivity of Dinah's role continues: The text uses the accusative pronoun *הָא* rather than the preposition *אִתָּהּ* to indicate that "he lay her" rather than "he lay with her," confirming again, that she is an object, both grammatically and thematically. The juxtaposition of the description of Dinah as her mother's daughter and thus lacking a father's protection, with Shechem, described as his father's son and a prince of the land, sets up an imbalance of power in which the voice of Dinah is never heard. Dinah's powerlessness is emphasized further through the fact that she is not only a mother's — and not a father's — daughter, but the daughter of the less favored wife, Leah. She can be wronged with impunity.

The third WRONG is actually a pair of actions committed by the father-son duo of Hamor and Shechem. Because both actions result from ignorance of the disparities between the Hivite and Jacobite ethical values, the two are grouped together. Shechem took Dinah by force and violated her, and Hamor's offers of trade and exogamy, coupled with Shechem's too-little-too-late offer to pay a large dowry, trample the values and rights of Jacob's family. Acceptance of these offers would make Dinah a whore, with her father and brothers playing the role of her pimps. The suggestion that they would agree to such a thing is an outrage against their honor.

2.2.3 REACTIONS TO THE WRONGS

The WRONGS and the REACTIONS they precipitate are entwined throughout the narrative. Morphologically isolating the REACTIONS indicates who functions as the Victim. The REACTIONS of Shechem, the perpetrator and eventual Avenger, demonstrate his desire to keep possession of Dinah but not remorse for his actions, such as the regret and rehabilitation shown by Joseph's brothers (Gen 42:21-22; 44:18-34). The REACTION of Jacob is a silence that is explained only at the close of the pericope. It is important to note, however, that while the brothers are infuriated by their father's silence, they are incorrect in assessing his reticence as an indicator of indifference to the suffering of family members. Torresan focuses on the stillness and shrouded nature of one who would *החריש*.²⁷ The importance of silence as a tool in communication and its

²⁶ Hesse, "Chāzaq," *TDOT* 4:304–5; Horst Seebass, "Lāqaḥ," *TDOT* 8:18–20.

²⁷ Paolo Torresan, "Silence in the Bible," *JBQ* 31, no. 3 (2003), 12.

ability to augment communal bonds has also been shown.²⁸ The REACTION of the brothers is grief and anger, though not due to the distressing situation that their sister is still trapped in. The Malbim (Rabbi Meir Leibush ben Yehiel Michel Wisser, 19th c., Ukraine) aligns the REACTIONS of verse 7 with their explanations and references to the WRONG that has elicited each:

Table 2 Reactions and wrongs – Simeon and Levi.

	1	2
REACTION	“The men were indignant”	“and they were very angry” ²⁹
Corresponding WRONG	“an outrage in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter” (defilement by a foreigner)	“for such a thing ought not to be done.” (forced nature of the act)

Dinah, a living, breathing victim, must have had a REACTION, but it is seen as irrelevant in the context of the narrative before us. The morphology of the pericope demonstrates that the immediate Victim may serve as a catalyst for another’s revenge, like Ahab in the story of the Vineyard of Naboth (I Sam 21). This stands in contrast to the rape perpetrated by Amnon on Tamar (II Sam 13), in which we see strong reactions from the Victim and her father (though he does not act). Tamar’s brother’s REACTION — “for Absalom hated Amnon, because he had raped his sister Tamar.” (v. 22) — is connected to the harm done to Tamar, not to the loss of family honor.

The REACTIONS here are also a stark contrast to Jacob’s reaction to the news of Joseph’s presumed death:

34 Then Jacob tore his garments and put sackcloth on his loins, and mourned for his son many days. 35 All his sons and all his daughters sought to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, and said, “No, I shall go down to Sheol to my son, mourning.” Thus his father bewailed him. (37:34-35)

The brothers’ indignation in the current chapter is exacerbated by the lack of overt REACTION on Jacob’s part. Jacob’s silence in verse 5, in addition to his silence following Hamor and Shechem’s offer (vv. 8-12) spurs the brothers to bypass their father in avenging the prince and his town for damaging the family’s honor. The text notes that, “Jacob held his peace until they came,” hinting that his silence did not stem from indifference but, as becomes clear later, from concern for the welfare of the clan, who were outnumbered by the Shechemites. Like Dinah, however, Jacob is denied Victim status by the structure of the pericope, which emphasizes the motivations, emotions and actions of the brothers over those of their father.

²⁸ Michal Ephratt, “The Functions of Silence,” *Journal of Pragmatics* 40, no. 11 (2008): 1191–92; J. Vernon Jensen, “Communicative Functions of Silence,” *ETC: A Review of General Semantics*, 30, no. 3 (1973), 250; John Kessler, *Between Hearing and Silence: A Study in Old Testament Theology* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2021), 8, labels Jacob’s silence as “reprehensible,” though this assessment is far from the only interpretation possible.

²⁹ My translation, based on NRSV.

2.2.4 PLAN

There is no immediate REACTION to the final WRONG, though the PLAN opens with a preamble whose unusual structure focuses attention on the multiple WRONGS. Sternberg comments on the “grammatical displacement” of the relative clause “because they had defiled Dinah, their sister” in verse 13. He notes the parallelism in the verse, which sets Shechem and Hamor against the misplaced clause as follows:

אֶת-שָׁכֶם וְאֶת-חַמּוֹר אָבִיו בְּמַרְמָה	וַיַּעֲנוּ בְנֵי-יִצְחָק
אֲשֶׁר טָמְא אֶת דִּינָה אָחֹתָם	וַיַּדְבְּרוּ

The structure implicitly justifies the deceit used against Shechem and Hamor by syntactically equating them with “the one who defiled Dinah, their sister.”³⁰ Including the father in the son’s crime is the logical result of Hamor’s attempt to negotiate on his son’s behalf. The grammatical anomaly and the morphology of multiple WRONGS reinforce each other in the preamble to the PLAN, as does the claim in verse 27 that the entire city was involved. If Hamor can be counted as a perpetrator, then he can also be included as an Avenger.

That the PLAN targets the offending organ is an irony that contributes to the impression that the brothers’ deception is justified.³¹ From the brothers’ perspective, Dinah’s marriage to an uncircumcised male would shame *them*, הָיָא לָנוּ רַפְתָּי-הָ, a stance in which they identify themselves as the Victims, rather than Dinah, who suffered the physical attack. While Sternberg connects Simeon and Levi’s actions to the rape of Dinah, focusing on the trauma of the rape, the morphological analysis reveals that any attention to Dinah and her suffering quickly falls by the wayside.³² This stands in contrast to Tamar, who was given a voice of her own to express her injury at the hands of Amnon: “As for me, where could I carry my shame? (הֲרִפְתִּי)” (II Sam 13:13). While Absalom’s vengeance served his own sense of being the Victim of a WRONG against his family honor, Tamar is not forgotten; her voice is heard in REACTION to the WRONG perpetrated against her, and Absalom takes her into his home so that she will not remain abandoned and desolate (II Sam 13:20). Though these efforts cannot restore to Tamar her lost status as a virgin, Dinah is afforded neither of these humanizing supports. Her rightful claim to the status of Victim is appropriated by her brothers, whereas Tamar is not only cared for by Absalom but receives a namesake in his daughter (II Sam 14:27).

2.2.5 COMPLICITY

The PLAN is steeped in a web of deceit that is readily believed by the Avengers. The three-fold nature of the COMPLICITY indicates how blinded Shechem is by his desire and how unaware

³⁰ Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 459–63.

³¹ Yael Shemesh, “Punishment of the Offending Organ in Biblical Literature,” *VT* 55, no. 3 (2005), 350.

³² Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 469–70.

the Hivites are of the chasm between their own *Weltanschauung* and that of the Jacob clan. Propp established that trebling a function has the strengthening effect of justifying the result.³³ Here, the function is not three-fold, but rather, the same words are repeated three times in the pericope as *different* functions. The business offer is reiterated twice by Shechem and Hamor and once by the brothers; it appears first as a WRONG (vv. 9-10), then as the PLAN (v. 16), and finally as COMPLICITY (vv. 21-23). The subtle variations in the versions demonstrate the justice of their being used to lure Shechem and his city to their downfall.³⁴ The Avengees will suffer because of Shechem's avarice and his duplicity towards his own people.

2.2.6 REVENGE ACTS

Moments before the REVENGE ACT, in verse 25, we hear that the Avengers are not "the sons of Jacob" but rather "two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers." Much is clarified with this statement. Dinah's maternal brothers, sons of Leah, will act for their sister and for the loss of their honor due to her violation even if their father will not. As children of the unfavored wife, they can ill-afford any additional casualty to their status within Jacob's family. This is also the first time that the reader is made aware that Dinah has been languishing in the house of Shechem throughout the negotiations. The narrator has preserved these details until just before the REVENGE ACT to contribute to the sense that the revenge, as well as Simeon and Levi's final retort to their father, are justified. After the slaughter, the text relates that Simeon and Levi finally retrieve Dinah, through the use of the same verbs that began her ordeal (לָקַח, יָצָא). Dinah continues to be treated as an object with no independent existence.

The final REVENGE ACT, carried out by the other brothers, is the pillaging of the city. Just as the ruse of circumcision provides for a punishment involving the offending organ, so too does the spoiling of the city serve as an appropriate restitution for the deceitful intentions of Shechem. He gained the confidence of his people by promising them the women, animals, and possessions of Jacob's family (vv. 21, 23), and it is fitting that now their possessions are appropriated in return (v. 28-29).

2.2.7 DEPARTURE

After they complete their REVENGE, Simeon and Levi take Dinah and leave the city. Their liminal Avenger status is ended, and they return home having finished the task they set out to accomplish. Passing through the city gates is the archetypal liminal act, indicating that the duties of the Avenger have been discharged. Given the discord of verses 30-31 and the epilogue (Gen 49:5-

³³ Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, 74–75.

³⁴ Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 466; Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 365.

7), however, it appears that Simeon and Levi do not succeed in fully reintegrating into Jacob's home, nor can Dinah ever regain the status that was taken from her.

2.2.8 REACTION TO THE REVENGE

The exchange between Jacob and his sons which closes the pericope serves to clarify certain elements that appeared earlier in the structure. First is Jacob's REACTION of silence in verse 5. He is not silent out of indifference and his silence does not indicate the relinquishing of his role as the head of the family. The restraint indicated by *הִחָרֵשׁ* suggests that he was not pleased with his choices. On a practical level, Jacob waits for the return of his sons before responding. Hamor has come with his son, possibly an entire entourage, and Jacob would be at a disadvantage were he to meet him alone. His practicality cannot necessarily be taken as callousness.³⁵ Indeed, it may be argued that Jacob, following local customs regarding unmarried women, was willing to strike a deal with the Hivites, if doing so would grant his daughter some measure of protection (cf. Exod 22:15-16), in which case his actions stemmed from a desire to minimize further harm to Dinah. He was apparently not included in his sons' deceitful PLAN, and once they spoke, Jacob was evidently under the impression that they spoke in good faith.

The REACTION shows that both Jacob and the brothers acted out of concern for the family's well-being. Although these verses expose the gulf between the respective priorities of the brothers and Jacob with regard to this goal, they do not, as Alter suggests, indicate Jacob's "impotence in the face of his violent sons."³⁶ The brothers focus on what they believe to be the spiritual ideals of the family. They are less worried about exposure to the wrath of the Canaanite and Perizzite armies and more concerned that the chastity of their women and the purity of the clan be respected. If Jacob's inaction can be criticized for its apparent lack of concern for his daughter, the actions of the brothers are dubious as well. Their focus throughout is not on Dinah, but on the family honor, sullied through her defilement, and specifically on the children of Leah, who must protect their place in the family. The other brothers are upset upon hearing the news (v. 7) and plunder the city (v. 27), but only Simeon and Levi, Avengers of the honor of Leah's children, are referred to as the "Dinah's brothers" (v. 25). The focus on the maternal sibling relationship drives their vengeance, as it does Gideon's in avenging his maternal brothers (Jud 8:19) and Absalom's in avenging Tamar's rape (II Sam 13:4).³⁷

Dinah is referred to as the sister of Simeon and Levi four times (vv. 13, 14, 27, 31) in addition to Simeon and Levi being referred to as her brothers (v. 25). She is even called their daughter twice (vv. 8,17); yet, when she is finally rescued from the house of Shechem, she is

³⁵ Fewell and Gunn, "Tipping the Balance," 197-98.

³⁶ Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 161.

³⁷ Chapman, *The House of the Mother*, 64-67; 96-97.

merely called Dinah, with no relational modifier (v. 26). One may ask where the brothers' deep concern for their "sister" has gone. Only when Simeon and Levi are again faced with an outside challenge in the form of Jacob's condemnation at the end of the chapter do they revert to the relational modifier "our sister." The brothers' protestations regarding her defilement may have been the result of Dina's being a representative of the family, and more specifically, a child of Leah. The brothers' actions, like Jacob's, are motivated by multiple factors. If Simeon and Levi's prioritization of family values is understandable, so too is Jacob's fear of reprisal, as divine protection is subsequently deemed necessary and provided (35:5).

In verse 17, the brothers call Dinah "our daughter," indicating that Dinah is now associated with her brothers rather than with her father. By informally adopting her, the brothers have usurped the role of Dinah's father, which they evidently felt Jacob had abdicated.³⁸ Whereas Chapman notes that an older sibling often exercised such responsibility over a younger sibling (cf. Gen 43:29),³⁹ Ibn Ezra explains "our daughter" as highlighting the brothers' authority over Dinah and her affairs. The challenge, "Should one deal with our sister as with a whore?" lacks a subject and may be both a veiled accusation by the brothers that Jacob had put a price on the honor of Dinah (and the children of Leah) and a reference to the actions of Shechem.⁴⁰ Although the REVENGE ACTS are successful in restoring the honor of Jacob's family among the inhabitants of the land, they leave in their wake a turbulence that only divine action can quell and fault lines that will prove difficult to mend. Whether the brothers have succeeded in raising the standing of Leah's children is uncertain.

2.3 Conclusions

2.3.1 Character Descriptions & Relations

The excessive use of relational modifiers in this pericope, often to the exclusion of the actant's proper name, reveals the focal point of the narrative: It is not the rape of Dinah, but the revenge of Dinah's brothers. After the rape, even Shechem shifts his language from a pronominal reference in verse 2 to "Dinah, the daughter of Jacob" in verse 3. Not so the brothers, who declare to Shechem and to Jacob that she is their sister or their daughter only until she is rescued, after which they do not associate their names with hers until their father's challenge. Unlike Absalom, who shows concern for Tamar, they do not worry for their sister's future.⁴¹

³⁸ Yamada, *Configurations of Rape in the Hebrew Bible*, 50, nt. 45.

³⁹ Chapman, *The House of the Mother*, 65, nt. 57.

⁴⁰ Ilona N. Rashkow, "The Rape (s) of Dinah (Gen 34): False Religion and Excess in Revenge," in *The Destructive Power of Religion: Violence in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Models and Cases of Violence in Religion 3* (ed. J Harold Evans; Westport, Conn: Praeger Publishers, 2004), 55.

⁴¹ Note the heavy use of relational pronouns in the intimate scene between Absalom and Tamar. "And Absalom her brother said unto her: 'Hath Amnon thy brother been with thee? but now hold thy peace, my sister: he is thy brother; take not this thing to heart.' So Tamar remained desolate in her brother Absalom's house." (II Sam 13:20). It is noteworthy specifically because this is not said in response to a third party.

Similarly, Shechem is referred to as the son of Ḥamor throughout the narrative, and he demonstrates that he has internalized the ethics of his father's house. Only once is he referred to without the relational modifier, when he personally offers an exorbitant bride price for Dinah to Jacob and the brothers (v. 11). His introduction as "Shechem, son of Ḥamor the Ḥivite, the prince of the region," (v. 2) and the description that he is "honored above all his family" (v.19) raise his status in the eyes of the reader and sharpen the fall from honor that results from his actions. Shechem's more infamous modifier is "who had defiled Dinah their sister" (v. 13), and this is primarily how he is remembered.

2.3.2 *Liminality*

A "nubile young woman," Dinah is a "liminal figure betwixt and between social roles in a patrilocal society." As such, she is a "cherished, sheltered, and vulnerable figure in the biblical household."⁴² She is an unmarried woman of marriageable age, a נערה, meaning that her very essence is liminal. The precariousness of her state is exacerbated by her decision to cross the threshold of her father's home, itself a liminal space, and enter a place where her role is even more undefined and insecure. Jacob, as an ethnic minority among the Canaanites and the Perizzites, also occupies a marginal space in this society. His liminality guides his caution in determining a course of action. The brothers, led by Simeon and Levi's example, embrace their liminal status, not only as a minority in the land, but as sons of the less favored wife in their father's house, and strengthen it by assuming the identity of Avengers. Despite Jacob's opposition to the brothers' violent tactics, these appear to have had the desirable effect of reducing the overall liminality of the clan, as Dinah is returned home and the brothers return unharmed. Back under Jacob's roof, the family members resume their pre-revenge status, though the power struggle has not left them unscathed. Viewing the pericope as a revenge narrative lends appropriate focus and understanding to the elements of liminality present in the text.

2.3.3 *Morphological Conclusions*

The narrative before us encompasses a morphological structure that is typical of HB narratives of personal revenge. The particular combination of functions and the manner in which they are filled determines the nature of the theme. In the story of Simeon and Levi's revenge, the function WRONG is trebled and alternates with the REACTION TO THE WRONG to effect a complex narrative in which the actants insult and are insulted in diverse combinations. Utilizing the surface structure helps to untangle the individual WRONGS, their attendant REACTIONS, and the consequences that follow. Delineating the REACTIONS centers attention on who reacts to which

⁴² Rachel Adelman, "The Rape of Tamar as a Prefiguration for the Fate of Fair Zion," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 37, no. 1 (2021): 88–89.

WRONG and why. The REACTION of the brothers, which precedes their PLAN and REVENGE, for example, sheds light on their motivation, namely, the preservation of the honor of the clan among the land's inhabitants, and specifically, the preservation of the honor of Leah's children within the clan. Dinah is a tragic figure, violated by Shechem and exploited by her own brothers, who appropriate her Victim status and use it as a pretext for their own purposes.⁴³

The brothers' focus on honor, as opposed to dignity, curtails their father's ability to act. Jacob's assumption that the brothers were dealing in good faith with Shechem leads him to believe that the family is secure and that Dinah, whose status cannot in any case revert to its pre-rape state, would at least be properly cared for as a wife. It is Jacob's reliance on this dignity, rather than honor, which allows him to stifle his own REACTION in favor of the family's safety and Dinah's well-being among the powerful inhabitants of the land, a reaction that Simeon and Levi, identifying as angry Victims and focusing on honor, find intolerable.

The absence of a COUNCIL between the brothers and Jacob follows the expected morphology for HB revenge narratives. Jacob does not approve of the brothers' actions and would have compromised the plan, which relied on deceit. Moreover, the brothers' revenge succeeds because they acted on their own authority. However, the sons' appropriation of the decision-making constitutes an additional offence against Dinah, and perhaps against Jacob as well.

2.3.4 *Epilogue*

The dispute over the proper response to Shechem's actions and the use of violence in general were not settled in the REACTION TO THE REVENGE ACTS. Jacob's final words to Simeon and Levi, partners in crime, are uttered on his deathbed as he is surrounded by his children, having retained his position as the head of the clan and having kept the family safe and unified:

5 Simeon and Levi are brothers; weapons of violence are their swords. 6 May I never come into their council; may I not be joined to their company, for in their anger they killed men, and at their whim they hamstringed oxen. 7 Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce, and their wrath, for it is cruel! I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel. (Gen 49:5-7)

Jacob has the last word, reiterating his condemnation of his sons' action. Just as Simeon and Levi spoke without seeking his counsel when they focused solely on the WRONG inflicted on them and disregarded his measured response, Jacob pronounces that he will eternally decline to join their council.

⁴³ Rashkow, "The Rape (s) of Dinah (Genesis 34)," 76–77. Argues that the brothers are guilty of "raping" Dinah a second time, though that may be overstating the case.

Chapter 3

3.0 Sons of Jacob on Joseph (Genesis 37)

Despite considerable debate on the literary unity of this chapter, we will follow White, Niditch, Greenstein, and others in viewing it as a unified literary work.¹ The use of morphological analysis will add to the evidence that the pericope's final form reflects a deliberately artistic composition rather than a sloppy redaction or an effort to highlight multiple sources.²

The revenge story in Genesis 37 has traditionally been seen as the opening of the "Joseph Cycle," with the failed attempt on Joseph's life setting the favorite son on his way to greatness.³ Recent scholarship has cast aspersions on the long-established practice of regarding these chapters as a novella with Joseph at its center. Instead, scholars have widened the focus to include the other characters. Rather than follow Gunkel, whose gaze was fixated on Joseph to the extent that he wished to eliminate chapters 38 and 49 because they do not "belong here," modern researchers show openness to analytical approaches that utilize all chapters and share the spotlight with Jacob and at least some of the brothers.⁴ Even these studies, however, tend to reduce chapter 37 to a power struggle between Reuben and Judah rather than employing a wider lens that includes an examination of the multiple relationships joined to larger complexes of action within the family.⁵

The following morphological analysis views the pericope as a narrative unit whose tale-type is that of personal revenge narrative. This analysis will be particularly beneficial in revealing streams of affiliations. The story of the brothers' revenge on Joseph, like many of those Russian fairy tales with which Propp contended, contains morphological deviations, including multiple moves (sequences of functions), some of which overlap and are interwoven. These complexities form imbricated storylines in which one character often appears in different capacities.⁶ The structural analysis below thus contributes to the growing body of work that recognizes this chapter's intricacy as a reflection of the elaborate family dynamic of Jacob. Berlin has noted the

¹ Hugh C. White, "Reuben and Judah: Duplicates or Complements?," in *Understanding the word: Essays in honor of Bernhard Word Anderson* (eds. James T. Butler, Edgar W. Conrad, & Ben C. Ollenburger; JSOTSup, 37; Sheffield: University of Sheffield Press, 1985), 73–83; Niditch, *Underdogs and Tricksters*, 77; George W. Coats, *From Canaan to Egypt: Structural and Theological Context for the Joseph Story* (CBQ Monograph Series, 4; Washington D.C.: Cath. Biblical Assoc. of America, 1976), 17–18; Edward L. Greenstein, "An Equivocal Reading of the Sale of Joseph," in *Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives*, vol. 2, (eds. R.R. Kenneth and Louis Gros; Nashville: Abingdon, 1981), 115.

² Westermann, *Genesis 37-50* (A Continental Commentary; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1986), 40; Redford, *A Study of the Biblical Story of Joseph* (VTSup, vol. 20; Leiden: Brill, 1970), 106-177.

³ Dohyung Kim, "Genesis 37-50: The Story of Jacob and His Sons in Light of the Primary Narrative (Genesis~ 2 Kings)," *The Expository Times* 123, no.10 (2012), 487, nt. 3.

⁴ Some examples of these works are: Friedemann W. Golka, "Genesis 37-50: Joseph Story or Israel-Joseph Story?," *Currents in Biblical Research* 2, no. 2 (2004): 153–77; Bryan Smith, "The Central Role of Judah in Genesis 37-50," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 162, iss. 646 (2005): 158–74; Kim, "Genesis 37-50"; Hyun Chul Paul Kim, "Reading the Joseph Story (Genesis 37-50) as a Diaspora Narrative," *CBQ* 75, no. 2 (2013): 219–38.

⁵ Richard J. Clifford, "Genesis 37–50: Joseph Story or Jacob Story?," in *The Book of Genesis* (VTSup, 152, Leiden: Brill, 2012), 231, nt. 3; Kim, "Genesis 37-50," 492.

⁶ Propp, *Morphology of the Folktales*, 92. See above, General Introduction.

relative paucity of direct characterization in the HB compared to other corpora.⁷ This chapter demonstrates the HB tendency towards indirect characterization through the outer dialogue, inner speech, narrator's discourse, and fate of the characters.⁸ The opening scene's salient feature is a chasm between the perspectives of the characters crucial to understanding the revenge episode in this chapter as well as the drama within Jacob's family that develops throughout the next several chapters.

Table 3 Morphology - Sons of Jacob on Joseph

Initial Scene	37:1-2	Joseph conveys a bad report to Jacob regarding the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah.
WRONG	37:3a	Jacob loves Joseph more than he loves his other sons.
WRONG	37:3b	Jacob gives Joseph a unique tunic.
REACTION TO THE WRONG	37:4a	The brothers hate Joseph.
REACTION TO THE WRONG	37:4b	The brothers cannot speak peaceably to him.
WRONG	37:5a	Joseph tells his brothers he had a dream.
REACTION TO THE WRONG	37:5b	The brothers hate Joseph more.
WRONG	37:6-7	Joseph relates the content of his dream to the brothers.
REACTION TO THE WRONG	37:8	The brothers are indignant at the content of the dream. They hate Joseph more.
WRONG	37:9-10a	Joseph has another dream and relates it to the brothers and to his father.
REACTION TO THE WRONG	37:10	Jacob rebukes Joseph.
REACTION TO THE WRONG	37:11a	The brothers are jealous of Joseph.
REACTION TO THE WRONG	37:11b	Jacob takes note of the matter.
Informative Connective	37:12	The brothers take the sheep to graze in Shechem.
COMPLICITY	37:13a,14	Jacob sends Joseph to Shechem to check on his brothers.
COMPLICITY	37:13b	Joseph sets out for Shechem.
COMPLICITY	37:15-17	Joseph is aided in locating his brothers by the unnamed man. He unsuspectingly approaches his brothers.
INTENT TO AVENGE	37:18	The brothers conspire to kill Joseph.
PLAN FOR REVENGE	37:19-20	The brothers develop a plan, including a cover story, for the murder.
PLAN FOR REVENGE –	37:21-22	Reuben dissuades the brothers from active murder.

⁷ Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Bible and Literature Series 9; Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1983), 33-37.

⁸ Shimon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 47; Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 116-117.

MODIFICATION/ COMPLICITY		
REVENGE ACT	37:23	The brothers take the coat.
REVENGE ACT	37:24	The brothers throw Joseph into an empty pit.
REACTION TO THE REVENGE	37:25a	The brothers sit down to eat a meal.
Informative Connective	37:25b	An Ishmaelite caravan appears.
PLAN FOR REVENGE – MODIFICATION	37:26-27	Judah suggests selling Joseph instead of murdering him. The brothers accept the new plan.
REVENGE ACT	37:28a-c	The brothers sell Joseph to the traders.
DEPARTURE	37:28d	Joseph departs to Egypt.
REACTION TO THE REVENGE	37:29-30	Reuben discovers Joseph is missing. He is distressed and exhibits mourning rituals.
REVENGE ACT (continued)	37:31-32	The brothers dip the coat in goat blood and send it to Jacob.
REACTION TO THE REVENGE	37:33-35	Jacob recognizes the coat and enters a state of perpetual mourning for Joseph.
AFTERMATH	37:36	Joseph is sold to Potiphar.

3.1 *Establishing the Morphology*

The length of the morphological structure of the chapter is not indicative of the length of the pericope but rather of the number of actants involved in the revenge narrative. There are two Avengees, Joseph and Jacob, and thus two parallel, though interdependent, revenge acts are depicted.

The Initial Scene opens with a report of locale, a focus on Joseph, and the evil report Joseph relays to his father regarding the children of the handmaid-wives, Bilhah and Zilpah (vv. 1-2). The Initial Scene underscores three important aspects of the narrative. First, the reader is reminded of Jacob's location, expressed as an expansion of the place of his father, Isaac. Jacob lives in the land where Isaac merely sojourned, indicating permanence as well as a historical claim.⁹ The second important aspect of the Initial Scene is that Joseph alone is introduced as the product of the "generations" (v. 2). Third, there is Joseph's tattling on his half-brothers Gad, Asher, Dan, and Naphtali, born to Jacob by Bilhah and Zilpah. The substance of the report brought to the father is not mentioned, only the fact that it is an evil report. This action on Joseph's part is morphologically a component of the Initial Scene and does not comprise part of the WRONG, as there is no REACTION to it, nor is revenge ever sought for it.

⁹ Hamilton, "The Book of Genesis," 405; Jan P. Fokkelman, "Genesis 37 and 38 at the Interface of Structural Analysis and Hermeneutics," in *Literary Structure and Rhetorical Strategies in the Hebrew Bible* (eds. L.J. de Regt and J.P. Fokkelman; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1996), 152–53.

With this background we face the first set of WRONGS of the narrative. They are committed, albeit unintentionally, by Jacob against his sons. There are two separate WRONGS, matched by the brothers' dual REACTION in an alternating a-b-a'-b' pattern:

3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his children, because he was the son of his old age; and he had made him a long robe with sleeves. 4 But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him.

The emotion of Jacob's love for Joseph has a counterpart in the brothers' hatred of Joseph, and the action of giving a tangible, visible token of that love has its counterpart in the action of not speaking. The narrative's use of pronouns introduces ambiguity regarding the object of these REACTIONS TO THE WRONGS: Were the hatred and inability to speak peaceably directed at Jacob, at Joseph, or at each of them individually?

The WRONGS committed by Joseph are interspersed with the corresponding REACTION TO THE WRONG. Also, they appear as a set of three, and the tension between family members is increasingly heightened in each interaction:

Cycle I 5 Once Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more.

Cycle II 6 He said to them, "Listen to this dream that I dreamed. 7 There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright; then your sheaves gathered around it and bowed down to my sheaf." 8 His brothers said to him, "Are you indeed to reign over us? Are you indeed to have dominion over us?" So they hated him even more because of his dreams and his words.

Cycle III 9 He had another dream and told it to his brothers, saying, "Look, I have had another dream: the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me." 10 But when he told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him and said to him, "What kind of dream is this that you have had? Shall we indeed come, I and your mother and your brothers, and bow to the ground before you?" 11 So his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.

In the first of these WRONG/REACTION cycles, Joseph informs his brothers that he has had a dream, though he does not yet relate its contents. The brothers react with more hatred. Upon hearing the first dream, the brothers admonish Joseph by asking rhetorical questions formed with infinitive absolutes and imperfect finite verbs: *הֲמִלְךָ תִּמְלֹךְ עָלֵינוּ אִם-מְשׁוּל תִּמְשָׁל בָּנוּ* (v. 8). The use of absolute infinitives in rhetorical questions are actually "assertions in the guise of queries."¹⁰ The content of the dream is now an additional reason for their increased hatred. Despite his brothers' open disdain for Joseph, his dreams, and what the dreams represent, Joseph returns to tell them another dream. This third cycle includes a REACTION TO THE WRONG not from the brothers, but from Jacob. The narrative does not relate whether Jacob's reproof, which has the same pattern as verse 8, infinitive absolute + imperfect finite verb, was said in front of the brothers or privately to Joseph. If

¹⁰ Scott N. Callaham, *Modality and the Biblical Hebrew Infinitive Absolute* (Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes 71; Weisbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 2010), 68–70.

the reproof was given publicly, it did nothing to assuage the brothers' jealousy, which comes at the end of the third cycle.¹¹ The second dream causes a final REACTION of jealousy from the brothers, while Jacob guards (שמר) what has been shared.

The next scenes involve the COMPLICITY of both Jacob and Joseph as the Avengees in the brothers' revenge. Jacob sends the eager Joseph to check on his brothers who are out shepherding (vv. 12-14). As Jacob and Joseph committed WRONGS against the brothers, it is fitting that both are involved in the function of COMPLICITY that facilitates the vengeance. The brothers have departed to tend the flocks in Shechem, a distance of more than 80 kilometers. Jacob commands his favorite son to go check on them, making him COMPLICIT in the coming events. Joseph readily obeys, walking unknowingly into danger. The final act of COMPLICITY takes place in an unnamed field with an unnamed man who continues to direct Joseph toward his brothers (vv. 15-17). Pronominal usage again blurs the question of exactly who was "wandering in the fields." The man approaches Joseph, from which it may be inferred that Joseph appeared to have no clear destination. He had not lost way, thus he does not ask where he is; instead, he asks where his brothers might be found.¹² Having overheard the brothers, the man in the field directs Joseph, who continues on his quest to find his brothers and report on their welfare to his father. We again see a function with three actants: Jacob, Joseph, and the unnamed man in the field are all COMPLICIT in the eventual revenge. We do not know who the mysterious third man is, but clearly he has been strategically placed in the narrative to conduct Joseph towards his fate.

The brothers see their dreamer brother from afar. Hamilton suggests that Joseph was easily recognized from a distance because of his special garment.¹³ This suggestion spurs the immediate and visceral statement of INTENT as the brothers collude to eliminate the continual reminder of their second-class status within the family. A PLAN is quickly devised along with a cover story (vv. 18-20). The PLAN itself will undergo modifications as the narrative progresses, a triple appearance of the function that demonstrates the lack of unified opinion regarding the best way to deal with the problematic brother. Verses 21-22 present the first of these modifications when, in a surprising turnaround, Reuben issues a MODIFIED PLAN FOR REVENGE. After issuing a double injunction against murder — אֶל־הַתְּשָׁכְחֵם... / לֹא תִּבְנֶנּוּ נֶפֶשׁ — Reuben suggests as an alternative PLAN that they throw Joseph into the pit. Indirectly causing his death would be preferable to outright murder, accomplishing the same goal with less liability.

¹¹ Abioye, "Typology of Rhetorical Questions as a Stylistic Device in Writing," *The International Journal of Language Society and Culture*, 29 (2009), 3–4 discusses the use of rhetorical questions as an angry reaction.

¹² Dahmen, "Tā'â," *TDOT* 15:734.

¹³ Hamilton, "The Book of Genesis," 417.

Reuben keeps his true intent hidden from the others. His COUNTERPLAN is to restore Joseph to his father; for now, he is merely buying time. This COUNTERPLAN explains why the pit is described as dry in verse 24: Reuben specifically chose it from all the pits in the vicinity (cf. v. 20 - וַיִּשְׁלַחֵהוּ בְּאֵקֶד הַבְּרוֹת -) so that he could later rescue Joseph. Propp notes that a function is defined “according to its consequences”; thus Reuben’s desire to turn his idea into a COUNTERPLAN that would foil the revenge has failed. Instead, Reuben’s suggestion becomes a modification of the PLAN FOR REVENGE because it actually furthers that goal, though not in the way Reuben had envisioned. Furthermore, Reuben becomes COMPLICIT in the ultimate REVENGE ACT of selling Joseph, having left his younger brother unattended in the pit long enough for him to be sold into slavery.¹⁴

Reuben’s advice is heeded, and Joseph is kept alive, at least as an interim measure while the brothers weigh their options. The REVENGE ACT commences with the addition of the taking of Joseph’s coat (vv. 23-24). Thus there are two REVENGE ACTS, the first of which is directed at the garment and, by extension, at its giver, as one cannot take vengeance on an inanimate object. Indeed, the coat represents its giver as well as its owner, and the phrase כְּתוּנַת פְּסִים appears in both verses 23 and 32: “This unexpected expansiveness slows down the narrative for a moment and focuses on the piece of clothing that was the mark of his father’s affection and the occasion of his brothers’ hatred.”¹⁵ Because Joseph is present and the brothers can take vengeance on his person, the coat will be saved for a cruel demonstration to Jacob that his attempts at favoritism have failed. The second REVENGE ACT is against the dreamer himself, who is cast into the pit. The brothers’ REACTION TO THE REVENGE is startling: They callously sit down to a meal. There is no REACTION TO THE REVENGE from the Avenger, and Joseph is not heard from again in this pericope.

The third PLAN is suggested by Judah, who capitalizes on the appearance of the Ishmaelite traders (vv. 25-28). Judah, clearly skilled in the art of persuasion, recommends a modified PLAN to his brothers, rather than insisting and expecting his brothers to obey, as did Reuben. The brothers are, after all, trying to rid themselves of a brother who views himself as superior, and they may not be willing to exchange one power-hungry brother for another. The sale is finalized, the REVENGE ACT against Joseph is complete, and the DEPARTURE of Joseph for Egypt finally rids the brothers of their infuriating rival.

Only Reuben, who was apparently not made privy to the change in the PLAN, has a REACTION TO THE REVENGE:

¹⁴ Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, 67, 69 for Propp's discussion of function definition and double morphological meaning of a single function.

¹⁵ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 353.

29 When Reuben returned to the pit and saw that Joseph was not in the pit, he tore his clothes.
30 He returned to his brothers and said, “The boy is gone, and I, where can I turn?”

Thinking he had succeeded in thwarting the nefarious act of revenge that his brothers had plotted, Reuben is shocked to find an empty pit when he returns to set Joseph free. He tears his garment as a sign of mourning and concludes that Joseph has not survived long enough for his PLAN to work.

The final REVENGE ACT occurs through the medium of the coat, which represents the favoritism that led to the rivalry. The act of taking the torn coat and dipping it in a goat’s blood before sending it to Jacob for identification is a REVENGE ACT for the favoritism shown by Jacob to Joseph. The garment becomes a source of pain for Jacob, just as its giving caused pain to the brothers. This final REVENGE ACT avenges the WRONGS of Jacob’s favoritism including the giving of the coat which elevated Joseph and exacerbated the discord in Jacob’s house (vv. 31-32). Jacob identifies his son’s coat and descends into mourning, refusing to be comforted (vv. 33-35). This perpetual grief, Jacob’s REACTION TO THE REVENGE, is a state that the brothers, who had thought their vengeance was successfully completed, will now share. Jacob’s love for Joseph will not be equitably redistributed among the remaining brothers as a physical inheritance might have been. Instead, the brothers are left to deal with a father who has removed himself from the family in order to mourn for his favorite son. He rebuffs the attempts at consolation offered by his children, continuing the emotional estrangement which began in verse 4. Although the REVENGE ACTS have been technically successful, the revenge has not accomplished its purpose.

Finally, the reader’s attention is diverted again to Joseph as the AFTERMATH informs of his sale to Potiphar (v. 36). This AFTERMATH also serves as a glimmer of hope in the wake of the family tragedy, a rejoinder to the reference to Canaan in the Initial Scene (v. 1), and a redirecting of the reader to a new theater of action.

3.2 *Analysis & Context*

3.2.1 *Initial Scene*

Having previously expressed feelings of vulnerability regarding the inhabitants of the land (34:30), Jacob is now described as belonging in that land, even connecting back to his father, Isaac. The *toledoth* of Jacob are introduced, only to be immediately truncated with a focus on the life of seventeen-year-old Joseph. HB genealogies often focus on a certain branch of the clan in question (Gen 11:10ff.) or are interrupted by a narrative that halts the genealogy when it reaches the focus of the narrative (Exod 6:16ff.). The opening of verse 2, however, announces “the generations of Jacob” and immediately stops with Joseph, without any pretense of listing the rest of Jacob’s offspring. The lone focal point of the generations is Joseph, specifically, his age and occupation. Von Rad asserts that the word *toledoth* has “burst asunder” from its original meaning of a

“succession of generations” to a more general meaning of “family history.”¹⁶ According to this definition, the fact that the term is followed by a narrative that stars Joseph is an indication by the narrator that Jacob saw his family destiny as being borne through the line of Joseph. The structural analysis focuses on the Initial Scene, particularly verse 1, as an “important morphological feature” rather than as mere background information.¹⁷ Contra claims that the pericope begins with verse 2 or 2b, which implies that the story about to be told centers on Joseph, a morphology that incorporates verse 1 into the Initial Scene demonstrates that the narrative is Jacob’s as much, if not more than, Joseph’s.¹⁸

Against this background, the narrative shifts to the interactions between the seventeen-year-old Joseph and his brothers. The family connections established in the first part of the Initial Scene are crucial to understanding the rest of the pericope. Joseph is serving as a נער, a lad, to his brothers in the shepherding of their father’s flocks. At this juncture, Joseph is depicted as one who has not learned to be tactful, and whatever the contents of the report to his father, it was received as *dibbāh*. Fuller suggests the translation of “malicious report,” arguing that the word is “consistently used for intentionally harmful talk, in most cases false,” though conceding that the truth value must be determined on a case-by-case basis.¹⁹ The descriptive can apply to the nature of the report, the reason for its transmission, or both. Although Joseph’s report involved only four of the brothers, it sets the tone for sibling relationships fraught with tension and characterized by a lack of trust.²⁰ While the tale-bearing is not mentioned by the brothers as a cause for their vengeance, it constitutes an essential part of the background against which the story is set and establishes that Joseph was far from innocent in the sibling rivalry that spiraled out of control.

The Initial Scene in this narrative also establishes the scene beyond the physical sense. In the current narrative, the morphology is utilized in a view toward the past and toward the future. The Initial Scene suggests that Jacob is secure in the land because of his family’s history there, and that Joseph will be the future leader of the clan. But Joseph’s negative interactions with his brothers foreshadow that both of these assumptions may be faulty.

3.2.2 *WRONGS & REACTIONS TO THE WRONGS*

In contrast to a simple narrative of personal revenge such as Absalom on Amnon (II Sam 13), the current narrative requires morphological analysis in order to clarify that two perpetrators commit multiple WRONGS. Though neither Jacob nor Joseph worked in tandem nor intended

¹⁶ Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), 350.

¹⁷ Propp, *Morphology of the Folktales*, 25.

¹⁸ Hamilton, “The Book of Genesis,” 405–6; Fokkelman, “Genesis 37 and 38 at the Interface of Structural Analysis and Hermeneutics,” 152–54 begins the pericope at vs.2; Speiser, *Genesis*, 287ff. begins at vs. 2b.

¹⁹ David J. Fuller, “Towards a New Translation of Dbh in Genesis 37, 2,” *Biblica* 97, no. 4 (2016), 490.

²⁰ Coats, *From Canaan to Egypt*, 12.

harm, they inflicted their own WRONGS on the same set of Victims. The Victims, who will become the Avengers, are insulted as a group, yet they do not operate as a seamless unit in the avenging of the WRONGS. Following the morphological breakdown, a three-fold oscillation of functions between WRONGS and REACTIONS TO THE WRONGS is revealed.

The first WRONG is perpetrated by Jacob, whose alternate name Israel is used, hinting toward the national significance attached to Jacob's favoring Joseph.²¹ Furthermore, the suggestion carried by this name that the coat symbolizes royalty, with the concomitant national ramifications, may contribute to the brothers' hatred.²² In verse 3, we see Jacob's feelings becoming manifest in concrete action. The transition from loving Joseph more than all his brothers to making a special garment for him constitutes physical evidence of the favoritism that the brothers can see, and their REACTIONS in verse 4 reflect this. While most exegetes focus on the physical WRONG of the gift, the morphological technique of separating individual WRONGS — emotional and physical— demonstrates that there are two distinct offenses, each addressed by a separate REACTION TO THE WRONG.²³ In other words, the love reported in verse 3a results in the brothers' hate that is reported in verse 4a. The physical object bestowed on Joseph in verse 3b results in the brothers' losing the physical ability to speak civilly to Joseph (v. 4b).²⁴ This structural analysis focuses the reader's attention on the love rather than on its physical expression, the coat. It is the inequitable distribution of affection, not clothing, that impels the brothers to physically harm Joseph, as will be seen in the continuation of the narrative.²⁵

The two REACTIONS — “they hated *him*, and could not speak peaceably to *him*” — seem to cloud the object of the brothers' ire, perhaps deliberately. Does the pronoun “him” refer to Jacob or to Joseph? Syntactically, the term can refer to Jacob, but the use of identical language in verses 5 and 8, where the referent is clearly Joseph, weighs against this in a cursory reading.²⁶ The REACTIONS, however, follow the WRONGS of Jacob, so there may well be a conflation in the brothers' minds of their doting father's guilt with the guilt of the son who receives those attentions. The brothers' aim is to rectify the situation by eliminating Joseph, simultaneously punishing Jacob

²¹ Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis: From Noah to Abraham*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1964).

²² See II Sam 13:18 and Speiser, *Genesis*, 290. Citing Cuneiform inventories which list *kitû pišannu*, an ornamented garment used to clothe statues of goddesses.

²³ Von Rad, *Genesis*, 350; Hamilton lists only two wrongs: the “preferential treatment and the dreams,” focusing on the love of Jacob as a “doting love.” *The Book of Genesis*, 407; Westermann, *Genesis 37-50 A Continental Commentary*, 37, claims it is not Jacob's “predilection for Joseph that arouses the brothers' hatred . . . [but rather the] distinctive garment.”

²⁴ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 350; See also Claus Westermann, *Joseph: Studies of the Joseph Stories in Genesis* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1996), 8, who claims that *וְלֹא יָכֹל*... indicates an inability to extend a peaceful greeting.

²⁵ James S. Ackerman, *Joseph, Judah, and Jacob*, in *Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives*, vol. 2, (eds. Louis Gros Louis and R. R. Kenneth; Nashville: Abingdon, 1982), 98.

²⁶ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 409.

for his favoritism and gaining a larger share of his affections. The brothers do not want to physically harm their father; they want more of his love. The multiple points of view in the narrative encourage such ambiguity and reveal the complexity of the situation.²⁷ The cycle of WRONGS with their attendant REACTIONS in verses 5-11 continues an upward, widening spiral like a vortex that is narrow at its base and widens as it climbs, increasing the emotional distance between Joseph and his brothers. The estrangement between Joseph and his brothers that resulted from Jacob's favoritism is exacerbated by the dreams and his reports of them. Dreams in the ancient world were seen as divine prophecies; thus, a dreamer was understood to carry a level of chosenness. Joseph, already “chosen” as his father’s favorite, now is seen to have been chosen by God. Before they have even heard the content of Joseph’s dreams, the brothers are primed to hate Joseph simply for having dreamed.²⁸ The hatred with which the brothers react to Joseph’s dreaming is added to the preexisting hatred caused by Jacob’s WRONGS. The favoritism that Jacob displays for Joseph is felt by the brothers as disdain for them, so their hatred for Joseph mingles with the WRONGS of Jacob and evokes further REACTIONS against Joseph. Once again, the morphological analysis highlights the narrative intent, helping to untangle the web of WRONGS and REACTIONS TO THE WRONGS that reflect the escalating interpersonal conflict in the family.

In addition, Jacob’s WRONGS provide Joseph with the assurance — or brashness — he needs to broadcast his dreams, thus contributing more WRONGS to the cycle. Joseph’s WRONG is magnified when he reveals the contents of the dream. Although sharing visions and dreams was customary then, Joseph’s confidence makes him oblivious to how the content of his dream might be perceived by others and oblivious to his brothers’ growing hatred, and practically ensures that the situation will spin out of control.²⁹ The REACTION in verse 8 reiterates the hatred, but this time mentions two causes: the fact that Joseph received the dream and the fact that he shared it. In fact, the argument is made that it is Joseph’s excited “speech event” coupled with the dream’s cosmic force “which has profound effects upon the network of personal relations in the family.”³⁰ Both the content and the form of the brothers’ rhetorical response add to the estrangement between the parties. The brothers scold Joseph in order to challenge and change his superior attitude and

²⁷ Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*, 47–52.

²⁸ Von Rad, *Genesis*, 351; Andrew Miles Byrd, “Deriving Dreams from the Divine: Hittite *Tesḫa-/Zaḫ* (a) i,” *Historische Sprachforschung/Historical Linguistics*, 124 (2011), 103; A. Leo Oppenheim, *The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East* (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2008), 185–240.

²⁹ Von Rad, *Genesis*, 351–52; Westermann, *Genesis 37-50*, 38. Westermann notes the use of *הרה* which indicated the vividness and immediacy of the dreams which compelled Joseph to share them, however the precedent for not sharing a dream/prophecy due to social expediency (even by a young, inexperienced dreamer) does exist, as demonstrated by Samuel (1 Samuel 3).

³⁰ Hugh C. White, “The Joseph Story: A Narrative That ‘Consumes’ Its Content,” *Semeia* 31 (1985), 60.

behavior,³¹ but the effort is unsuccessful: Joseph returns with another dream report (v. 9). The emotional REACTION (שנא) appearing for the third time, reveals not only an “emotional condition of aversion,” but an impending action.³² To hate in Biblical Hebrew connotes

a deed or the inception of a deed. To practice this kind of hate is like pulling a bowstring taut – it has no purpose unless an arrow is then unleashed...hate makes no sense unless one follows through with a corresponding deed...The tension resides within the person before the act, which then resolves it. For it is in the deed that hatred comes to fruition and is dissolved.³³

The threefold use of the verb שנא (vss. 4, 5 and 8) has increased the narrative’s tension nearly to the breaking point. Now Joseph’s report of the second dream adds jealousy to the hatred (v. 11).

The rising tension in the narrative is in part the result of an important technique applied in structural analysis. Concentrating on the morphology of the trebled WRONG/REACTION TO THE WRONG sequence requires that the dreams be considered separately and allows for a REACTION between them (unlike the uninterrupted telling of Pharaoh’s dreams in Genesis 41). Furthermore, separating the dreams necessitates repeating the functions in order to report on the multiple WRONGS, and intertwines identical functions carried out by different actants. The interspersed REACTIONS thus allow the tension to build gradually. The actions and emotions reflect the form of the text: The brothers must feel like they are being pummeled from every direction, Avengers swatting furiously at a swarm of elusive flies.

Jacob rebukes the dreamer for his hubris in a REACTION that momentarily aligns the father with his other sons. Nonetheless, the second REACTION, וַאֲבִיו שָׁמַר אֶת-הַדְּבָר, demonstrates that the angry protest of גַּעַר is mitigated by Jacob’s taking note that there may be more to Joseph’s dreams than meets the eye.³⁴ Applying the morphological structure demonstrates that this is not a psychological aside, but a direct REACTION TO THE WRONG, so although Jacob recognizes that Joseph has crossed a line (shown by the strong rebuke), the momentum of the series is disrupted when the father pulls back in contemplation (taking note of the event).³⁵ Jacob’s second REACTION not only interrupts the structure of WRONG followed by a REACTION of anger, hate, and jealousy, but it also evokes Jacob’s myopia in the Initial Scene, which treats Joseph as the sole leader of the clan. At the same time, the second REACTION reaches forward toward Jacob’s COMPLICITY when he sends Joseph into the clutches of those who wish to harm him.

³¹ Robert E. Longacre, *Joseph: A Story of Divine Providence: A Text Theoretical and Textlinguistic Analysis of Genesis 37 and 39-48* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 188.

³² Lipinski, “Šānē,” *TDOT*, 14:167.

³³ Westermann, *Joseph*, 7.

³⁴ Andrew Alexander Macintosh, “A Consideration of Hebrew גַּעַר,” *VT* 19, no. 4 (1969): 471–79.

³⁵ White, “The Joseph Story,” 61.

3.2.3 COMPLICITY

As the second third of the pericope opens, Joseph is separated from his brothers, and the focus shifts from the dreams and their meanings to the increasing distance between Joseph and his brothers. The geographic separation — the brothers are with their father’s flocks near Shechem while Joseph is with his father — is a reflection of Joseph’s metaphorical alienation from his brothers.³⁶ The brothers are shepherds, recognized as liminal figures as they oscillate between civilized society and the wilderness.³⁷ The field, in contrast to the house, is a transitional zone, “occasionally an adjunct to human settlement in the city but often its opposite.”³⁸ Many things occur in this liminal space, including criminal offenses.³⁹ When the brothers depart from Jacob’s house, adding physical distance to metaphysical separation, they enter the marginal space in which they are not psychologically bound by the rules of their father’s home.

Sent by Jacob, Joseph soon follows the brothers. Both father and son are eager to close the gap between Joseph and his brothers, but this cannot be done through aimless wandering, and Joseph is not sure where his brothers are, geographically or emotionally. Inadvertently, Jacob and Joseph contribute to the success of the brothers’ revenge when Jacob commands Joseph to find his brothers (ironically, he tells Joseph to check on the שלום of his brothers) and Joseph readily accepts the mission, as his exclamation “I am ready!” attests.⁴⁰ Jacob’s COMPLICITY results from his being unaware of the brothers’ inability to extend peace to Joseph (and possibly Jacob) (v. 4).

The next act of COMPLICITY takes place in the field. Isolated from his father as well as his brothers, Joseph is transformed from subject to object when he is found by the mysterious man.⁴¹ Through his COMPLICITY, Joseph undergoes a transition from active speaker when he publicizes his dreams, to one who seeks help in the field, and finally, to a passive object with no voice at all. Joseph’s dialogue with the man in the field is the last time his voice is heard in this pericope. Joseph’s departure from his father’s home places him in a liminal position, mirroring how the brothers perceive their position *in* Jacob’s house. Like Dinah, who becomes an object when she leaves her father’s house, Joseph’s transition is similar, though unlike his half-sister, he will eventually regain his agency when he exits the liminal space.

³⁶ Bob Becking, “They Hated Him Even More: Literary Technique in Genesis 37, 1-11,” *BN*, no. 60 (1991): 46–47.

³⁷ John D. Turner, “History of Religions Background of John 10,” in *The Shepherd Discourse of John 10 and Its Context* (Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 67; eds. Johannes Beutler and Robert T. Fortna; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 40.

³⁸ Gregory Mobley, *Samson and the Liminal Hero in the Ancient Near East* (The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 453; London: A&C Black, 2006), 38.

³⁹ Gerhard Wallis, “Šādeh,” *TDOT*, 13:44.

⁴⁰ Speiser, *Genesis*, 290, nt. 14.

⁴¹ Jan P. Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Narrative: An Introductory Guide* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 79.

The function of COMPLICITY is generally preceded by the PLAN; here, however, it occurs before the brothers begin to PLAN because Joseph must be transferred to the scene of the REVENGE before it can be carried out. Like Absalom's revenge on Amnon (II Samuel 13), the target must be removed from his safe haven before the REVENGE ACT can occur, but unlike Absalom's revenge plan, which obtained Amnon's COMPLICITY by removing him from the palace, here it occurs prior to the PLAN and without the brothers' knowledge. Comparing the pericope's morphological structure to others of its type highlights the fact that the success of the REVENGE ACT was dependent on the COMPLICITY of both Jacob and Joseph. (A similar situation is found in Judges 16, in which Samson develops his PLAN *after* he is positioned by the Philistine lad.) The function of COMPLICITY causes the Victim or his Ally to aid in his own downfall. Neither Jacob nor Joseph grasped the severity of the situation in the WRONG/REACTION TO THE WRONG sequence, but multiple acts of COMPLICITY (with another, by Reuben, still to come) ensure that eventually they will understand, albeit too late to change the outcome. Jacob's "keeping the matter in mind" even after he rebukes his favorite son reveals his calculation in sending Joseph to his brothers. This indirect characterization of Jacob demonstrates his blindness to the tear in the fabric of his family, as Jacob refuses to believe that Joseph's rise will not continue unimpeded.

3.2.4 *INTENT TO AVENGE*

The brothers see Joseph from afar as he approaches them in Dothan. Verse 18 underscores the irony of Joseph's desire to come closer to them just as the brothers are conspiring against him. The brothers' INTENT to avenge was discussed openly; despite Reuben's and Judah's reservations, the conversation amongst the brothers is treated as reasonable and acceptable. One statement of INTENT is followed by three proposals for a PLAN, demonstrating how a three-fold morphological appearance of a function sheds light on certain undercurrents in the narrative, in this case, that the family discord has extended to the once unified brothers.

3.2.5 *PLANS/REVENGE ACTS*

Due to the differences of opinion regarding how to accomplish the revenge, the functions of PLAN and REVENGE oscillate three times, resulting in the revenge being carried out in fits and starts rather than in an elegant arc. First, the brothers PLAN their revenge against Joseph, calling him "this master of the dreams." While Joseph is still at some distance, as indicated by הללזה, they continue to dehumanize him.⁴² No longer their brother, a relationship mentioned 13 times thus far in

⁴² Rashbam, 37:19. This can be contrasted with the use of הוזה/הזאת which indicates something that is near. This is the case in Gen 34:4, referring to Dinah, whom, we later learn, is in the house of Shechem. W. Randall Garr, "The Medial Demonstratives וזלה, הזלה, And זלה," *JSOT* 32, no. 3 (2008): 387; Scott B. Noegel, "The 'Other' Demonstrative

the chapter, Joseph is now בעל החלומות and deserving of death. The term “brother” connotes a relationship of responsibility on a physical and spiritual level, as Cain’s rhetorical question, הַשֹּׁמֵר אֶת־אָנֹכִי, indicates. A “master of the dreams,” however, may be attacked with impunity. Reuben, in his MODIFIED PLAN, admonishes his brothers, “Let us not take his life.” There is a soul here, Reuben reminds them; killing Joseph involves “spilling blood.” Reuben selects a specific pit from which he will later be able to save Joseph, but his attempt to reverse course fails to account for the fact that the family dynamics have passed the point of no return. His PLAN is ironic, as its confused morphology attests. Reuben intended that the COUNTERPLAN would thwart the revenge of the brothers. When it failed, his idea served as an actual PLAN FOR REVENGE. The brothers might have been content to let Joseph remain in the pit were it not for Judah’s suggestion with its prospect of financial gain. As a result, Reuben’s PLAN serves as COMPLICITY by advancing the action against Joseph. Propp explains that a single function can have a double morphological meaning: If a single action achieves two outcomes simultaneously, it is counted as both functions. This point gives weight to the fact that Reuben, like Jacob and Joseph, does not fully grasp the extent to which the family bonds are broken.

The narrative mentions Joseph’s dreams through the words of the brothers in two consecutive verses (vv. 19-20), demonstrating the use of narrative structuring to reinforce characterization:

[flashbacks] do not recount the facts as they actually occurred but rather as the speaker sees them or wishes them to be seen by the interlocutor, thereby making a marked contribution to the characterization of the persons in the narrative. Glimpses into the past within the speech of the characters combine the actual facts with their interpretation, often showing how an individual's present actions are determined by past experiences.⁴³

Although Jacob may have envisioned a reconciliation when he sent Joseph to his brothers, the brothers themselves have not progressed beyond the insult of the dreams and the giving of the coat.

Joseph finally gets within range, and instead of casting him into the pit immediately, the brothers hold back just long enough to strip him of his coat, reminding us that the REVENGE ACT is not to avenge the dreams, despite the focus on them in verses 19-20. Rather, by stripping Joseph of his special garment, the brother begin to avenge the WRONG of Jacob’s favoritism through removing its physical manifestation. Verse 24, which relates that Joseph is taken and cast into the pit, presents the first part of the REVENGE ACT that avenges the WRONGS of the dreamer and his retelling of his dreams. To be thrown *down* into a cistern (like being taken “*down* to Egypt” in 39:1) represents the apparent nullification of the dreams: קָמָה אֶל־מַתְּי וְגַם־נִצְבָּה. The dreams indicated

Pronouns: Pejorative Colloquialisms in Biblical Hebrew,” *JBQ* 33, no. 1 (2005): 25–29. Garr argues that medial demonstratives are not necessarily pejorative, though Noegel notes that it is, “perfect for insulting or pejorative speech,” and it is thus paired well with their epithet “master of dreams.”

⁴³ Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, 180.

that Joseph would rise high while those around him would be lowered before him. Although Joseph's stay in the pit was intended to allow Reuben or the brothers time to ponder their next move, it also serves as an attempt to eradicate Joseph's dreams.

Demonstrating no contrition for their violent act, the brothers sit down to eat. The narrative provides no report of a REACTION TO THE REVENGE from Joseph, despite later evidence that he did cry out for help (Gen 42:21). The narrative focuses on the brothers' confederation, symbolized by their communal meal, rather than on the desolation of Joseph.⁴⁴ The REACTION of Joseph will be heard only when the family reunites decades later.

The brothers' unified front begins to show signs of dissent as Reuben, and then Judah, has second thoughts about killing Joseph. Judah's argument begins not with a command, as did Reuben's, but with an appeal to a competing motivation: greed (vv. 26-27). There is no profit in the murder of Joseph, Judah points out, referring to Joseph as their brother and their flesh three times in two verses. In contrast to Reuben, who begins with a statement of fact in the first-person plural and then switches to the second-person plural, Judah includes himself in all of the potential outcomes. Unlike Reuben's commands (v. 22), Judah presents two options, both of which would be accomplished by all the brothers as a unit: Either they can spill and then cover their brother's blood, or they can sell him. Judah's וַיִּדְבֹר אֶל-תְּשֻׁלְחַיִּיבֹו has none of the force of Reuben's וַיִּבֶן אֶל-תְּשֻׁלְחַיִּיבֹו despite its striking semantic similarity. Judah's stated reasons are decidedly less noble than Reuben's but are more persuasive due to his appeal to the brothers' moral, familial, and materialistic inclinations.⁴⁵

The Judah/Reuben and Judah/Joseph power struggles are manifested through discussions of their divergent PLANS in this narrative, as well as through their actions elsewhere.⁴⁶ Morphological analysis reveals an additional dynamic to be considered. The Reuben/Jacob axis is often addressed in terms of Reuben's failure to fill the role of firstborn and Jacob's subsequent rejection of Reuben. Kraut notes, however, that Jacob missed Reuben's finest moment: Reuben's efforts to save Joseph.⁴⁷ Having identified Reuben's MODIFIED PLAN FOR REVENGE as COMPLICITY, acting as a double function, we can compare it to the other instances of COMPLICITY in the narrative. Like Jacob, the other Ally of the Avenger, Reuben misreads the family dynamic and assumes the brothers can be trusted, just as Jacob did when he sent Joseph to check on them. And just as Jacob instructed וְהַשְׁבִּינִי דָבָר, Reuben seeks אֶל-אָבִיו לְהַשְׁבִּיבֹו. Finally, both Reuben and Jacob

⁴⁴ Ackerman, Joseph, Judah, and Jacob, 95; Berlin, Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative, 52.

⁴⁵ Ron Pirson, *The Lord of the Dreams: A Semantic and Literary Analysis of Genesis 37-50* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2003), 65–66.

⁴⁶ Berlin, Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative, 121; Redford, *A Study of the Biblical Story of Joseph*, 132–35; Clifford, "Genesis 37–50," 226–28.

⁴⁷ Kraut, "The Literary Roles of Reuben and Judah in Genesis Narratives, A 'Reflection Complex,'" *JSOT* 43, no. 2 (2018), 216–17.

expected Joseph's imminent return to his father's house because of their failure to understand the entrenchment of the brothers' animosity.

Verse 28 indicates that Judah's suggestion of selling Joseph to traders as the REVENGE ACT has been accomplished, and it is followed by Joseph's immediate DEPARTURE.⁴⁸ The verse also hints that from the moment of Joseph's sale, the brothers' control over the situation begins to slip: Despite their attempt to lower Joseph's lofty status by casting him to the depths of a pit, he is raised up out of the pit by the traders.

It remains now for the brothers to complete the REVENGE ACT initiated in verse 23. The goal of stripping off Joseph's coat was not to appropriate it, but to use it in the REVENGE against Jacob for his blatant partiality. What better medium to utilize than the garment that was the expression of his preference? The command הִכָּרֵתָאָה, addressed to Jacob, refers not only to the coat but to the results of his bias. At this point, it appears that the REVENGE ACTS have succeeded. Joseph the favorite, Joseph the dreamer, no longer troubles the other brothers. Nonetheless, the REACTIONS TO THE REVENGE will be combined to expose the true state of affairs.

3.2.6 REACTIONS TO THE REVENGE

Reuben's rending of his clothing and the question וְאֵיךְ אֶנְהָ אֶיִי־בָא are echoed in the mourning rituals of Jacob as he, too, tears his clothing and finds no place to go, unable to continue without Joseph.⁴⁹ A systematic examination of the morphology reveals a correlation between the two mourners' roles as Allies and Avengees, their acts of COMPLICITY, and their REACTIONS TO THE REVENGE. The functional doubling links the two REACTIONS. Reuben's REACTION or distress foreshadows Jacob's, just as his act of COMPLICITY mirrors his father's. Both father and son display the lack of stability that affects everyone in Jacob's household. Reuben is the only brother to realize that Joseph's absence will *increase* rather than decrease the liminal state of the other brothers. Jacob recognizes the same fact when he himself enters a liminal state of perpetual mourning.

The REACTION described in verses 33-34 is the expected reaction of a father who loses his son. The brothers, however, did not expect the perpetual state of mourning which then ensued (v. 35). The narrator's comment in verses 34-35 is a literary device that provides a close view of Jacob that reinforces the content of the narrative. Its effect is to detach the reader from the violent conflict

⁴⁸ See White, "Reuben and Judah," 92-93; Hermann Gunkel, *The Stories of Genesis: A Translation of the Third Edition of the Introduction to Hermann Gunkel's Commentary on the Book of Genesis* (North Richland Hills, Tex.: Bibal Press, 1994), 393; Hamilton, "The Book of Genesis," 423; W. Lee Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family: A Literary Study* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), 36. If there are, in fact, two groups of traders indicated, it is possible that the second was introduced in order to deflect guilt from the brothers for a crime which was less serious than murder, but still punishable by death in the ancient world. See Exod 21:16; Deut 24:7 as well as Hammurapi's code, section 14 (ANET, p.166).

⁴⁹ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 356.

in order to examine the consequences. Jacob's REACTION inverts the Initial Scene. The pericope opened with a focus on Joseph as the significant descendent of Jacob. Now, despite the tragic events, the pericope closes with Jacob surrounded by all of his children yet feeling bereft because Joseph is absent. As many of the revenge narratives in this study demonstrate, the Allies of the Avenger (as well as Allies of the Avenger) are pulled in and suffer as a result of their proximity to the revenge. Here, both Reuben and Jacob suffer, Reuben as an Ally and Jacob as an Avenger who was targeted through a loved one.

3.2.7 *AFTERMATH*

Finally, our attention is diverted once again to Joseph, whose DEPARTURE from the family is finalized by his sale to Potiphar. This AFTERMATH also serves as a reminder that despite all appearances, the story is not yet finished even though the revenge narrative has ended.

3.3 *Conclusions*

3.3.1 *Liminality*

The narrative began with descriptions of Jacob's and Joseph's closeness and with Joseph occupying a secure, central place in the family. Joseph is the opposite of a liminal figure, thriving in the house of Jacob, of Potiphar, and of Pharaoh. He even rises to prominence in the Egyptian prison. The field, however, is a liminal space in which Joseph is completely out of his depth. In such a space, he is תעה. He loses his voice in the anarchic, chaotic, no man's land. This experience gives him a glimpse of his marginalized brothers' reality.

Jacob, the one actant who does not depart from his home, transforms what should be a temporary liminal state of mourning into a permanent one.⁵⁰ By refusing to be comforted, he shocks the brothers, who thought that after the mourning period, they would inhabit a more central space within the family. The AFTERMATH, however, underscores the fact that no such stability awaits the brothers. They will continue to occupy the liminal state that their vengeance has placed them in as they trek between Canaan and Egypt until a final family reconciliation can occur.

An act of vengeance assigns a liminal status to the Avenger and often to the Avenger. Once the act is completed, however, it is expected that there will be a successful reintegration into society.⁵¹ In the current narrative, the presence of liminal spaces, events, and individuals increases as the action progresses. The multiplicity of identical functions adds to the pressure being exerted beyond reasonable boundaries. As a result, resolution is not found in the current revenge sequence; the end of the pericope finds more liminality than the beginning.

⁵⁰ Olyan, "Honor, Shame, and Covenant Relations in Ancient Israel and Its Environment," 1996, 57; Turner, "Betwixt and Between," 95–97.

⁵¹ Atherton, "Valences of Vengeance," 78–134.

3.3.2 *Morphological Conclusions*

Genesis 37 depicts a revenge that is a technical success: The brothers succeed in eliminating their rival (permanently, to the best of their knowledge). Nonetheless, the satisfaction and restoration of honor expected after a revenge act is absent as is the edificatory role of vengeance vis-à-vis the Avengers. Furthermore, the transitional state of Jacob's family as the younger generation is groomed to take over the leadership of the clan is exacerbated, increasing the liminality that a revenge act usually reduces. The structural evaluation of the narrative serves to highlight these anomalies. Instead of all the WRONGS being grouped together and then followed by a group of REACTIONS, a cycle of WRONG/REACTION pairs presented in turn creates slowly increasing tension that will reach a breaking point, destroying the peace and unity of Jacob's family. Each WRONG provokes a REACTION, and we note the progression from hatred and not speaking to more hatred, to a rebuke by the brothers, to a rebuke by Jacob, and finally, to the dangerous transformation of the brothers' hatred to jealousy. The morphology emphasizes the escalation as form follows content to the decisive moment when the brothers and Jacob attempt to stifle the dreamer so that the family will remain intact. The morphological analysis exposes the nature of the characters as they develop in this opening chapter of the "Joseph Cycle."

Multiple REVENGE ACTS reflect multiple goals. Morphologically, each WRONG has a corresponding REVENGE ACT, leading to the expectation that all will fit together in a logical series. However, the WRONGS are intertwined, and so despite the fact that Joseph has been eliminated and Jacob has been made to suffer, the overarching goal of the revenge has not been achieved: The brothers have not acquired the honor once conferred on Joseph. Thus, the structure of the pericope shows that the objectives of the Avengers have been thwarted. Like their difficult brother and their father, the Avengers, too, must learn to navigate familial ties.

The brothers' final REACTION TO THE WRONG of the dreams is jealousy, but not because they want to be dreamers. The oscillation between WRONGS and REACTIONS connects this REACTION, jealousy, to the initial WRONG to demonstrate that the brothers are jealous of Jacob's excessive love for Joseph and resentful of their exclusion from this unit. They fear losing their position in the family and having to be subservient to Joseph. Both father and son need to be taught a lesson because both are COMPLICIT, and their acts of COMPLICITY are combined. This has the effect of magnifying the insensitivity with which Jacob and Joseph operate. Their mishandling and misreading of the intrafamilial communication results in Joseph's departure from the protection of Jacob's house and his journey to an isolated location toward those who wish to harm him. With the same lack of consensus, the brothers' three-fold PLAN highlights the lack of agreement despite the brothers' agreement regarding the action that must be taken. Reuben's failed attempt to foil the revenge and his COMPLICITY identify him as a kindred spirit with Jacob with

regard to his ineptitude at reading his erstwhile allies. A focus on the morphological structure hints that Reuben cannot lead the family because he is too much like Jacob: caring too much, but understanding and effectuating too little.

Chapter 4

4.0 Absalom on Amnon (II Samuel 13:1-39)

Though the pericope under discussion is often referred to as “the rape of Tamar,” it will be called here “the revenge of Absalom.” Most exegetes divide the pericope into two main sections, with verses 1-22 labeled “Amnon Rapes Tamar,” and verses 23-37 (or 38 or 39, depending on the interpretation, as will be discussed below) labeled “Absalom’s Revenge and Escape,” or some variation thereof.¹ Despite the fact that Absalom does not take part in the action until verse 20, he is the first character to be mentioned, which some take as evidence of the pericope’s larger purpose.² The pericope is not primarily a story about rape but rather about family relationships. As will be seen, the sister/brother interactions at the beginning of the narrative are replaced with brother/brother interactions, and then the son/father interactions take center stage. The current analysis will be based on the morphological structure of HB narratives of personal revenge and will treat the pericope as a single unit with connections between parallel functions that become apparent only when the unit is taken as a whole (that is, verses 1-39). Furthermore, when the pericope is treated as a single unit, points of comparison to other HB personal revenge narratives are revealed, as are the unique components that distinguish Absalom’s revenge.

Table 4 Morphology - Absalom on Amnon

Initial Scene	13:1-2	Amnon is lovesick for Tamar.
ACQUISITION OF AN ALLY	13:3-5	Amnon receives advice from Jonadab.
Initial Scene (cont.)	13:6-7	Amnon requests that David send Tamar to aid in his recovery. David acquiesces.
WRONG intercession WRONG	13:8-11 13:12-13 13:14	Amnon prepares to rape Tamar. Tamar attempts to intercede on her own behalf. Amnon rapes Tamar.
REACTION TO THE WRONG	13:15a-b	Amnon hates Tamar.
WRONG intercession WRONG	13:15c 13:16 13:17	Amnon commands Tamar to leave his home. Tamar attempts to intercede on her own behalf. Amnon commands his lad to expel Tamar and lock the door.
REACTION TO THE WRONG	13:18-19	Tamar exhibits mourning practices.

¹ Arnold Albert Anderson, *2 Samuel* (WBC 11; Waco: Word Books, 1989), 169; David Toshio Tsumura, *The Second Book of Samuel* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019), 203 ff.; Robert D. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, (NAC 7; Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 1996), 378 ff.; Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg, *I and II Samuel: A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1965), 320 ff.

² Shimon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, 241.

REACTION TO THE WRONG	13:20	Absalom advises Tamar to remain quiet about the matter.
REACTION TO THE WRONG	13:21	David is exceedingly angry.
REACTION TO THE WRONG	13:22	Absalom hates Amnon and is unable to speak to him.
PLAN	13:23-24	Absalom invites David and all of the princes to his sheep-shearing.
Resistance to COMPLICITY	13:25a	David declines the invitation.
PLAN	13:25b	Absalom presses the king.
Resistance to COMPLICITY	13:25c	David refuses. He blesses Absalom.
PLAN	13:26a	Absalom requests that at least Amnon attend.
Resistance to COMPLICITY	13:26b	David protests, questioning Absalom.
PLAN	13:27a	Absalom entreats the king once more.
COMPLICITY	13:27b	David agrees to send Amnon and the rest of the princes.
COMMAND FOR REVENGE ACT	13:28a-b	Absalom commands his lads to kill Amnon.
ACQUISITION OF AN ALLY	13:28c	Absalom encourages his lads, ensuring that they will heed his command.
REVENGE ACT	13:29a	Amnon is killed.
REACTION TO REVENGE ACT	13:29b	The princes hasten to leave the scene.
Incorrect Report of REVENGE	13:30	David receives an incorrect report that all of the princes have been killed.
REACTION TO REVENGE ACT	13:31	David commences mourning practices.
Correct Report of REVENGE	13:32-33	Jonadab corrects the erroneous report.
DEPARTURE	13:34a	Absalom flees.
Correct Report of REVENGE	13:34b-35	Jonadab confirms his correct report as the princes return to the palace.
REACTION TO THE REVENGE	13:36	David, the princes, and the servants wail.
DEPARTURE	13:37a	Absalom flees to Geshur.
REACTION TO THE REVENGE	13:37b	David enters a state of perpetual mourning.
DEPARTURE	13:38a-b	Absalom flees to Geshur.
AFTERMATH	13:38c	Absalom remains in Geshur for three years.
AFTERMATH	13:39	David longs for Absalom.

4.1 *Establishing the Morphology*

The actants in the pericope are all related to each other; the emphasis on these relationships underlines the alliances and betrayals in this tale of revenge. The Initial Scene

opens with Amnon, lovesick for his half-sister, Tamar, acting on the advice of his wise cousin, the ALLY he has ACQUIRED, Jonadab. Amnon begins to set the plan into action, asking that his father, King David, send Tamar to nurse him back to health through the preparation and serving of a certain food. Unable to deny his children, David acquiesces, and in short order, Tamar is in Amnon's house, dutifully fulfilling her father's directive.

The WRONG begins not with the rape, but with the voyeurism as Tamar prepares the meal (v. 8). Amnon is feigning illness when Tamar arrives at his house, and the details of Tamar's activities are viewed against the background of Amnon reclining and watching each step of her preparation:

8 So Tamar went to her brother Amnon's house, where he was lying down. She took dough, kneaded it, made cakes in his sight, and baked the cakes.

Amnon's lust for his half-sister prompted his plan and now, in his house, it crosses from feeling to behavior. Unbeknownst to Tamar, her activities spur on the thoughts and actions of her soon-to-be assailant.

The scene in Amnon's house consists of two WRONGS, the rape and the expulsion from the house, each of which is interrupted by words of protest from Tamar. An intercession by the Victim on her own behalf constitutes a highly unusual break in the function, unique in HB revenge narrative. Tamar's first protest is against the illegal physical union. She presents a three-pronged argument composed of a protest and a reminder of the prohibition (v. 12), a description of the consequences that they would face (v. 13a), and an alternate proposal (v. 13b).³

Tamar's coherent, rational challenge falls on deaf ears. She is held by force, ויהזק בה (v. 11), which increases to ויהזק ממנה (v. 14). When Amnon's wish for a consensual encounter is dashed, he initiates a forced attack. Ironically, after the long build-up and preparation, the rape itself is described in a verbal hendiadys of three words, ויענה וישכב אתה, a brief statement that accentuates Amnon's brutality.⁴ Although Tamar's protests are subsumed in this function, they have the effect of making the WRONG appear even more severe to the reader.

The WRONG of the rape is followed by a REACTION from Amnon: His love turns to hate. This provides him with a motivation for the next WRONG, the expulsion of Tamar. Amnon wastes no more time in tossing aside his victim than one spends on getting rid of a

³ Richard Gene Bowman, "The Crises of King David: Narrative Structure, Compositional Technique and the Interpretation of II Samuel 8: 15-20: 26" (Ph.D. diss., Union Theological Seminary, 1981), 223.

⁴ Erin Fleming, "The Politics of Sexuality in the Story of King David" (Ph.D. diss., Johns Hopkins University, 2013), 250; Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (Overtures to Biblical Theology, 13; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1984), 46.

repulsive insect. Bar-Efrat describes the chiasmic parallel between the invitation and the expulsion, *בָּוֹאֵי שְׂכָרִי* ... *קְוִמֵי לְכִי* but points out that the appellation *אֶחָוִיתִי* is gone, as are all other familial pronouns with which the pericope began.⁵ Tamar's protest about being banished is, like her earlier protest about being raped, ignored, swallowed, and overpowered by the second WRONG. Familial bonds are severed, the rape having served as the catalyst, and henceforth the only man Tamar will be associated with is Absalom.

After Tamar is expelled from Amnon's house, the door bolted after her, the narrative reports her REACTIONS to the rape. No longer eligible to don the special clothing that symbolized her royal virgin status, Tamar rents the garment, puts ashes on her head, and cries. As evidenced by her plea, "No, my brother, for this wrong in sending me away is greater than the other that you did to me" (v. 16), Tamar's devastation over the prospect of being *שִׁמְמָה*, a "widow who has never been a wife," outweighs even her distress of the rape itself.⁶ Her *זַעֲקָה* is a call for due process⁷ and a cry for justice,⁸ both of which reflect realistic expectations. Her father, after all, is the king, and it was he who placed her in a precarious situation. However, Tamar's brother, not her father, comes to her aid. Unlike Tamar's REACTION, Absalom's focuses on the physical violation, as both parts of his REACTION indicate. He first addresses Tamar: "Has Amnon your brother been with you?" (v. 20); later the text states explicitly that Absalom hates Amnon, "because he had raped his sister Tamar" (v. 22).

Both Tamar and Absalom seem to be waiting for the king to respond. The narrative interrupts Absalom's REACTIONS in verses 20 and 22 in order to report David's REACTION,⁹ but although David is "exceedingly angry" (v. 21), he does not seek to punish the assailant.¹⁰ In the wake of their father's inaction, Absalom's hatred for Amnon grows and he begins to PLAN FOR REVENGE. What follows is a cat-and-mouse game in which the PLAN FOR REVENGE and COMPLICITY alternate in a three-part pattern. Absalom

⁵ Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, 260; William H. Propp, "Kinship in 2 Samuel 13," *CBQ* 55, no. 1 (1993): 48, nt. 3.

⁶ Hertzberg, *I and II Samuel*, 324.

⁷ Clines, *DCH*, *עֵצָה* III:127; Tribble, *Texts of Terror*, 52–53; David Daube, "Absalom and the Ideal King," *VT* 48 (1998): 316.

⁸ Hasel, *TDOT*, "זַעֲקָה," 4:117. The cry can serve as an "accusation or appeal" by the victim for the legal authorities to intervene.

⁹ Virginia Miller, *A King and a Fool?: The Succession Narrative as a Satire* (Biblical Interpretation Series 179; Leiden: Brill, 2019), 101.

¹⁰ David's lack of action is explained in the LXX and 4QSam^a, which read "but he did nothing to chasten his son Aminon, because he loved him since he was his first born." (trans. AB, p.315), but this explanation does nothing to mitigate the king's lack of action in executing justice. If anything, it is even more damning, as it demonstrates yet again a tendency to overlook the wrongs of the royal family.

entreats David three times to come with his sons to Absalom's sheep-shearing festival; three times, the king refuses. Propp notes that "trebling may occur...among individual functions, pairs of functions, [and] groups of functions..."¹¹ which we see in this exchange. After being denied three times, Absalom enjoins the king once more. David, who cannot deny a son's request, finally yields in spite of any misgivings he may have. The tripling of the function shows the weakening of the king's resolve: Each successive refusal is feebler than its predecessor.¹² Absalom's plan may well have counted on David's refusal to make his revenge and escape easier, or Absalom may have wanted the king to witness Amnon's murder as a punishment for failing to bring him to justice.¹³ In either case, the three-fold alternating structure of the PLAN and the COMPLICITY results in a verbal struggle from which Absalom emerges the victor.

Absalom's intent to avenge his sister's rape and restore the family honor does not surprise the reader, who is privy to the feelings behind Absalom's silence (v. 22). However, the pericope contains no INTENT TO AVENGE because the target, Amnon, is too closely guarded; the revenge can only be accomplished through deception. The absence of this function is heightened by the notification of the time lapse: "And it came to pass after two full years." This statement connects the rape with the revenge plan by focusing on the passage of time as an essential element of Absalom's ploy. By waiting two years, Absalom gives Amnon the impression that all has been forgiven, or at least forgotten. Presumably Amnon would not have attended the sheep-shearing had not two years passed without incident.

Having secured Amnon's presence at the sheep-shearing, Absalom gives the COMMAND FOR THE REVENGE ACT to his young men. After specifying when and how the COMMAND should be obeyed, Absalom begins his ACQUISITION OF ALLIES, encouraging his lads to be strong and brave as they slay the crown prince, an act that requires a high level of loyalty even among Absalom's own followers. Long notes the "royal prerogative" implicit in Absalom's COMMAND, הַזְקִי וְהִי לְבְנֵי-הָהֵל, which is similar to other

¹¹ Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, 74.

¹² Jan P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel: A Full Interpretation Based on Stylistic and Structural Analyses*, vol. I (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1993), 115–16.

¹³ See Ibid.; Newkirk, "Just Deceivers," 170, that Absalom deliberately made a request that he knew would be denied in order to deceive David regarding his true intentions. Daube, "Absalom and the Ideal King," 317; Yamada, *Configurations of Rape in the Hebrew Bible*, 128, on the other hand, claim that David, not Amnon, was Absalom's foremost enemy and that he intended to murder David as part of his rebellion, as the coming chapters attest. Both of these theories are speculation, but both address the repetitive exchange between David and Absalom.

of David, and Amnon is the son of David. Absalom and Tamar, full siblings, are allies, while Amnon is allied with Jonadab, his wise cousin and friend.¹⁷ That Tamar is never referred to as David's daughter contrasts sharply with references to her brother and half-brother, both of whom are called "son of David."

4.2.2 ACQUISITION OF AN ALLY

Jonadab is described as Amnon's ער, or friend. The "friend of the king" was an official position held by a court sage.¹⁸ As heir to the throne, Amnon would naturally have such a functionary whose role was filled by a relative like Jonadab. The presence of Jonadab serves to mock certain central characters in the narrative. He is continually called upon to help the actants frame a plan or understand a situation that they were seemingly incapable of doing without him. Because of Jonadab's role, Amnon is held up to ridicule in the Initial Scene for not being able to achieve his desires and later, David is implicitly scorned for not questioning the (incorrect) report about death of his sons (v. 30).¹⁹ Jonadab is the son of Shimeah, "the one who hears," and his very name derides the lack of true listening that occurs in the royal circle.

The ACQUISITION OF AN ALLY by the Avenger before the WRONG is committed is nearly unique in HB personal revenge narratives, with the exception of the Philistines employing Delilah in order to bind and blind Samson. Familiarity with this function and its place in revenge narratives sheds light on the significance connoted by its unusual placement in the Absalom/Amnon narrative. Jonadab's role in facilitating the WRONG establishes that Jonadab is not a true Ally. Although he initially appears to support Amnon, he switches sides later, encouraging and comforting David by denouncing Amnon and recalling his actions against Tamar (vv. 32-33, 35). The next appearance of this function is when the loyal lads of Absalom are ACQUIRED AS ALLIES to avenge Tamar's rape (v. 29). Unlike Jonadab, the lads do not waver in their dedication to Absalom despite the gravity of the mission they are tasked with. They stand in sharp contrast to the servants of Saul at Nob, whose loyalty to the king did not extend to obeying his command to murder the Lord's priests (I Sam 22:17).

4.2.3 WRONG

The WRONG begins with Amnon objectifying Tamar, first as a distant target for his lust and then, in his house, watching her lasciviously while she prepares the food intended to

¹⁷ חכם has been variously translated as "wise," "shrewd," and "crafty" among others. See BDB, 314-315.

¹⁸ Diether Kellerman, "Rēa'," *TDOT* 13:529-30.

¹⁹ Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, 245-52.

cure his feigned illness. Following the rape, the physical manifestation of his degenerate longings, Amnon transforms Tamar into an object even more, hating her far more than he ever loved her (v. 15). A mere servant boy is instructed to send away “זאת.” Lacking basic humanity in Amnon’s eyes, Tamar is merely “this.”²⁰ No longer the virgin princess and certainly not treated as a sister, she is locked out of Amnon’s house and left to wail for her lost life. The justice of Tamar’s protests rings true: The WRONG of not marrying her is a greater evil than the rape because it will affect the rest of her life. Her earlier prediction of damaged reputations and damaged lives have come to fruition, at least for her. Years will pass before her assailant suffers the consequences of his deeds.

As mentioned previously, the comparison of morphologies of other HB revenge narratives illustrates how rare Tamar’s efforts on her own behalf are. Unlike Dinah, Tamar has a voice that is heard as the WRONGS are being committed. This element contributes to the perception that an autonomous, sentient human being, not a stock character or object, is at the center of the narrative. Dinah is not heard before, during, or after the WRONG (Genesis 34), whereas the descriptions of Tamar — her familial connections, her words of protest — show vividly that the WRONG is perpetrated against a real person whose life is devastated as a result.

Like Dinah, Tamar is the victim of a WRONG committed against a woman’s body, while the ensuing power struggle and revenge are between men. Bar-Efrat notes that the sibling markers of verse 20 form a chiasmic structure with Tamar at the center:

Her brother	your brother	my sister	your brother	her brother
(Absalom)	(Amnon)	(Tamar)	(Amnon)	(Absalom)

A similar structure is found in verse 1.²¹ At this juncture, Tamar may be the central point (as claimed by Bar-Efrat) but has been reduced to a geometric point which has no dimension. She is linguistically at the center but her voice is not heard again. In a deliberate highlighting of the pericope’s true focal point, Hertzberg entitles verses 1-22 “Amnon’s and Absalom’s Sister.”²² Her pain and humiliation have been appropriated by Absalom, who will avenge the WRONGS that offended the house of Absalom as well as Tamar. As the Avenger, Absalom replaces Tamar as the protagonist of the narrative.

²⁰ Dominic Rudman, “Reliving the Rape of Tamar: Absalom’s Revenge in 2 Samuel 13,” *OTE* 11, no. 2 (1998): 329.

²¹ Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, 272.

²² Hertzberg, *I and II Samuel*, 320.

4.2.4 REACTION TO THE WRONG

Within morphological analysis, the repetition of a single function by multiple actants is useful in revealing varied points of view in a narrative. The REACTIONS of Tamar, Absalom, and David illustrate the personalities and their respective interests with regard to the WRONG. David's REACTION is merely emotional; it does not lead to action, and this induces Absalom to sidestep him. Tamar, who would have overlooked the attack had Amnon married her, is left humiliated and desolate, as she predicted (v. 13). Absalom, however, is offended by the rape itself (v. 22); it is an offence against his honor and a challenge to his house.²³ In light of their varying REACTIONS, it becomes clear that brother and sister are reacting to a different WRONG.²⁴ Viewed through this lens, Simeon and Levi may not have had their raped sister's interests in mind when they avenged the WRONG of Shechem. Their violence and bloodshed did nothing to improve her "desolate" status.

4.2.5 PLAN & COMPLICITY

Unlike Joab, who impulsively takes his revenge on Abner (II Sam 3:27), Absalom plans his revenge for two years. The success of Absalom's PLAN depends on his ability to deceive his father, establish the loyalty of his men, and make his escape to his maternal grandfather. When no help is forthcoming from the proper channels, the Avenger in HB revenge narratives, like Simeon & Levi (Genesis 34), Joseph's brothers (Genesis 37), or Joab (II Samuel 3), circumvents the authority to gain access to his target. This is in contradistinction to the ANE narratives in which COUNCIL must be sought before avenging a WRONG, as will be seen in the next section.

Absalom waits for two years, during which time his hatred presumably grows as each day passes without justice from the proper channels.²⁵ In all probability there had been a sheep-shearing festival the previous year, but Absalom does not implement his PLAN until David and Amnon grow complacent. Fokkelman suggests that in his meeting with the king, Absalom deliberately requests more than he hoped for in order to attain his true goal of getting Amnon away from the protection of the palace.²⁶ McCarter labels David's

²³ Victor H. Matthews and Don C. Benjamin, "Amnon and Tamar: A Matter of Honor (2 Sam 13.1–38)," in *Crossing Boundaries and Linking Horizons, Interconnections: A Festschrift in Honor of Michael Astour* (eds. Gordon Young, Mark Chavalas, and Richard Averbeck; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 340–48.

²⁴ Miller, *A King and a Fool? : The Succession Narrative as a Satire*, 94–96. reviews the permissibility of Amnon actually marrying Tamar in light of biblical injunctions to the contrary. This entire discussion is entirely beside the point for Absalom, as even if it were considered legal, his desire for vengeance would not have been reduced.

²⁵ Rev. Dr. Gary Staats, "Aspects of Negative Role Modeling in the David/Bathsheba Story and Its Sequel" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1988), 108.

²⁶ Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel*, 115–16.

COMPLICITY “carelessly compliant,” especially in light of the king’s intense anger after his daughter’s rape.²⁷ Is it possible David has forgotten it so completely? The morphology points to a more complex interpretation of events. The dispute between David and Absalom lies in their fundamentally incompatible REACTIONS to the rape. Where Absalom wants to see action, David provides none, resulting in a highlighting of David’s COMPLICITY in an act that will again bring harm to one of his children.²⁸ The oscillation of functions reflects David’s vacillation between competing desires. His inclination to please and protect all of his children creates continual movement between two poles. David first placed Tamar in a perilous situation and then, after the rape, failed to punish her attacker; in both cases, he failed as her Ally. Now he is forced to be COMPLICIT in Amnon’s downfall at the hands of Absalom. Based on the strained conversation between father and son, the COMPLICITY here is worse than that of Jacob, who was unwittingly COMPLICIT in sending Joseph to his brothers’ REVENGE. In addition, Absalom’s motives may be suspect in the eyes of his father. The pressure repeatedly applied by Absalom and repeatedly resisted by David (vv. 24-27) indicates at least some uneasiness, if not actual suspicion, on the part of the father. The parley between Absalom and David is unique among HB revenge narratives in that it indicates that David has some awareness of his own COMPLICITY but feels powerless to act otherwise. The situation evokes David’s comments of 3:39: “these men ... are too hard for me.”

Finally, Amnon’s part in his own demise, the possibility of “hidden” COMPLICITY, must be examined. While Amnon may have been unwilling to rebuff the king’s command that he join his brothers at the sheep-shearing, he was certainly not required to drink and let down his guard with a known adversary. Absalom expected this behavior; the directives to his men were based on it (13:28). This predictable COMPLICITY is also seen in the Hittite tale *Illuyanka*, discussed below. As a result of this behavior, Amnon’s esteem in the eyes of the reader falls further and reinforces Tamar’s prediction that he will be regarded as one of the נבלים in Israel. Roth explains that a נבלה is a “breach of a social covenant relationship” and the one committing the act, the נבל, is cast out of society.²⁹ The נבלה act results in a breakdown of existing societal structures due to the flouting of the rules by which that structure is maintained.³⁰ Tamar’s prediction that she would become desolate was fulfilled

²⁷ McCarter, *II Samuel*, 327.

²⁸ Bowman, “The Crises of King David,” 244.

²⁹ Wolfgang Roth, “NBL,” *VT*, 1960, 403–7.

³⁰ Phillips, “Nebalah,” 241.

immediately after the WRONG. Her prediction for Amnon was also fulfilled, gradually but with full and unsparing vengeance.

4.2.6 *REVENGE ACT*

The REVENGE ACT (v. 29a) is reported without description or passion, merely through confirmation that the young men did as Absalom commanded. Compared with the detailed account of the Initial Scene, the WRONGS, the extensive REACTIONS from each actant, the drawn out negotiations of alternating PLAN and COMPLICITY and, as we will soon see, the elaborate description of the REACTIONS TO THE REVENGE and the alternating of DEPARTURE and AFTERMATH functions, the REVENGE ACT report is startling in its brevity. The scenes that lead up to the REVENGE ACT are emphasized in the narrative, not the act itself. The focus remains fixed on the power struggle between David, Amnon, and Absalom and on the responsibility they take for those in their care. Notably, Absalom chooses to recruit his lads (נערים) to strike Amnon. In the killing of Zebaḥ and Zalmunna, assigning the slaying to a “lad” was deemed an insult to the honor of captured kings (Jud 8:20-21). Here, too, the term נערים is also used to besmirch. Amnon’s second WRONG, ejecting Tamar from his house, was carried out by a “lad,” so there is a measure of reciprocity in Absalom’s assigning Amnon’s execution to his lads rather than doing it himself.³¹ The WRONG and the REVENGE ACT trade insult for insult, a correlation that cuts the other way in the Gideon narrative. Zebaḥ and Zalmunna themselves killed Gideon’s brothers, and thus it was not fitting that the REVENGE ACT should be carried out by a mere lad. Thus the morphology demonstrates how fittingly Absalom’s choice of Allies avenges Tamar’s disgrace and his own honor.

4.2.7 *Reports and REACTIONS TO THE REVENGE*

Unlike the intentionally false report received by Jacob in Genesis 37, David receives an accidentally false report. Although the king knows how to question the bearer of bad news in order to corroborate a report from the field (cf. 1:5), the uneasiness with which he sent his sons to the sheep-shearing has apparently left David on edge. Expecting the worst, he accepts the devastating report as true. David’s mourning shifts from physical actions (rending of garments, sitting on the floor in verse 31) to emotions (crying a great cry together with the recently returned princes in verse 36) to adopting a permanent state of mourning (i.e., mourning for his son “all of the days”³² in verse 37b). The scene recalls the perpetual

³¹ Rudman, “Reliving the Rape of Tamar,” 333–34.

³² My translation.

mourning of Jacob (Gen 37:34-35) or of Dan'el for his son Aqhat in the Ugaritic narrative. David's acceptance of the incorrect report and Jonadab's prediction of the actual events are not intended to highlight Jonadab's savvy versus David's foolishness, as Miller claims, but rather David's blindness where his children are involved.³³

4.2.8 DEPARTURE & AFTERMATH

The last two functions continue the shift between the two arenas of action³⁴ portraying synchronicity and, even more importantly, the enormous chasm between David and Absalom. The entwined DEPARTURES result in a thrice-repeated statement of Absalom's exile in Geshur. The imminent exile of an Avenger is not repeated in any other HB narrative of personal revenge. Rather, the Avenger takes revenge with the knowledge that failure may lead to death, but success will lead to honor and an end to the liminal status. Absalom's escape to Geshur and its repetition at the close of the pericope indicate his awareness that perpetual exile was the best possible outcome. Only after three years and Joab's intervention is Absalom able to return to David's court (II Samuel 14). This is not an outcome he could have foreseen as likely. Unlike Samson, who faced a choice of death or life in the Philistine prison, Absalom could have lived out his days in the comfort of the palace. Instead, he chose an indeterminate exile, testifying to his dedication to the restoration of his honor.

The pericope closes with parallel AFTERMATHS: Absalom is in exile and David pines for Absalom. Verse 39 conveys Absalom's commitment to familial honor on the one hand, and David's longing for his son, on the other, closing the pericope.

4.3 Conclusions

4.3.1 Morphological Conclusions

The current pericope is a straightforward narrative of personal revenge, yet it presents a dialectic with other HB narratives due to its morphological elements. Natural comparisons made between the current narrative and the rape of Dinah in Shechem (Genesis 34) shed light on both stories. Despite the fact that the illicit relationship was exogamous in the former and endogamous in the latter, both narratives reject simple resolutions because of the brothers' response to the violation of their sister. The most significant difference in the narratives, presenting as a morphological anomaly, is the voice given to Tamar. She interrupts the narrative not once, but twice, as she attempts to defend herself. This stands in

³³ Miller, *A King and a Fool?: The Succession Narrative as a Satire*, 107.

³⁴ Shemaryahu Talmon, "The Presentation of Synchronicity and Simultaneity in Biblical Narrative," in *Studies in Hebrew Narrative Art Throughout the Ages (Scripta Hierosolymitana, 27)*; eds. Joseph Heinemann and Shmuel Werses; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1978), 20–21.

stark contrast to the silence of Dinah as well as every other HB Victim for whom revenge is taken. The Victims of the WRONGS in such narratives are not afforded opportunities to plead their case in an attempt to avert the WRONG. Tamar's two intercessions differ from Abigail's in I Samuel 25: Abigail is seeking to prevent a REVENGE ACT, not a WRONG. Although Tamar is not successful in stopping the attack, she does not submit quietly.

Tamar's words during these functional disruptions recall other HB revenge narratives. She declares: "As for me, where could I carry my shame (חרפתי)? And as for you, you would be as one of the scoundrels (נבלים) in Israel" (v. 13). The root פ.ה.ר. is connected with revenge narratives. In the Gideon narrative, it appears in connection to the shame heaped upon Gideon by the town of Succoth (Jud 8:15), and he returns to avenge the insult. Similarly, the verb is used by Dinah's brothers to inform the Shechemites that exogamy with the uncircumcised would bring shame (Gen 34:14), a ruse they employ to avenge the shame that the Shechemites have already inflicted on Jacob's clan. Tamar's use of ל.ג.ב.ל. recalls the vile deed (גבלה) performed by Shechem (Gen 34:7). It also appears in Abigail's successful attempt to avert a revenge act by David against Nabal (I Sam 25:25-26). After hearing the sage advice of Abigail and hearing of Nabal's demise, David declares that the Lord has "fought the battle of my shame (חרפתי)" (I Sam 25:39).³⁵ Although Tamar fails to avert Amnon's WRONG, her words reference the shame brought about by vile acts and the subsequent vengeance that results. Far from constituting a morphologically meaningless interruption, Tamar's words attract special notice because of their unexpectedness. They are granted the platform of an interrupted function to evoke comparable situations and imbue them with additional meaning.

In the wake of the REVENGE ACT against Amnon, those present are justified in scattering, not knowing how far Absalom's wrath will extend. The last quarter of the pericope thus descends into a chaotic series of incorrect reports, corrections to the reports, and confirmation of the corrections, all of which are mixed with alternating REACTIONS, DEPARTURES, and the AFTERMATH, representing a monarchy in mayhem. A chapter that began with David securely at the helm of his household has degenerated into a situation in which one child has been violated, remaining desolate and without a future; another lies dead; and a third languishes in exile. The impression of chaos is heightened by a morphology that requires the reader to jump from one event to the next, imparting an almost vertiginous sensation.

³⁵ My translation.

Viewing the entire pericope as a single unit establishes its place among the tale-type of HB personal revenge narratives. In addition, the single unit view connects the actions of the first half (the rape) of the pericope with those of the second (the revenge) because the functions of both halves are multiplied to display multiple points of view. Within this framework, it is instructive to follow each actant's behavior, noting the progression of their deeds (or the lack thereof). David acquiesces to Amnon's request to send Tamar to his home, enabling the WRONG, but then fails to perform a REACTION after the rape. He acquiesces to repeated requests by Absalom to send Amnon to his sheep-shearing in COMPLICITY, but then fails to act in response to the murder of Amnon other than to mourn. Amnon, in turn, uses the preparation of food to heal as a means to commit the first WRONG and a lad as a means to commit the second WRONG, whereupon Absalom uses a feast and his lads as means to commit the REVENGE ACT. Finally, we have noted that Absalom is enraged by the first WRONG, the rape, while Tamar is more devastated by the second WRONG, Amnon's refusal to marry her. Absalom, unlike David, redresses his own offence and Tamar's by combining both elements, the food and the lads, to demonstrate that he has not forgotten that Tamar is also a Victim.

Hearing the voice of Tamar, especially when it breaks into a function that is rarely interrupted, sets the tone for the entire pericope. Her protest is mirrored, albeit weakly, in the protest of David to Absalom's attempts to invite his COMPLICITY. Here, too, despite David's initial objections, his son eventually overpowers him, just as his daughter was overpowered previously. Throughout the narrative, David fails to apply Abigail's lesson against increasing shame and vile deeds as a general injunction against vengeance. While he merely emotes (13:21, 31, 36, 39), his sons act.

Chapter 5

5.0 Saul on Nob (I Samuel 22:6-23)

Following David’s brief visit to Nob (I Samuel 21), Doeg the Edomite reports to Saul that David was given food, a weapon, and an oracle by Ahimelech, a priest of Nob. Saul summons the priests of Nob to Gibeah, a scene that Mabee argues should be viewed as a trial with Saul as prosecutor and the priests as defendants.¹ The subsequent slaughter of the priests is presented as the just punishment of conspirators against the king, but the narrative of the wholesale destruction of the priestly city of Nob is a narrative of personal revenge by Saul on the priests and other inhabitants of the city. The following morphological analysis demonstrates how the narrator utilizes subtle changes or omissions to the morphology that is standard among HB narratives of personal revenge in order to shed light on the actions of the Avenger and Avenger. The use of a trial structure, for example, is intended to disguise the fact that Saul is still on his rampage against David and anyone who allies with him. The relative absence of REACTIONS TO THE WRONG as well as REACTIONS TO THE REVENGE ACT, both of which are normally present in such narrative, underscores the role Saul as an Avenger. The repeated COMPLICITY of the priest Ahimelech hints that legitimate guilt may lie beneath the surface. Finally, the analysis demonstrates how the narrator’s textual choices promote David despite his absence from the scene.

Table 5 Morphology - Saul on Nob

Initial Scene	22:6-8	Saul accuses his courtiers of withholding information regarding the alliance between Jonathan and David.
WRONG (report)	22:9-10	Doeg offers information regarding David’s receipt of aid from the priest Ahimelech in Nob.
PLAN	22:11a-b	Saul summons all of the priests of Nob to appear before him at Gibeah.
COMPLICITY	22:11c	The priests comply with the king’s command.
PLAN	22:12a	Saul calls ben-Ahitub forward.
COMPLICITY	22:12b	Ahimelech steps forward and is deferential to the king.
PLAN	22:13	Saul formally accuses Ahimelech of treason.
COMPLICITY	22:14-15	Ahimelech presents his defense, which is taken as an admission of guilt.
INTENT TO AVENGE	22:16	Saul pronounces a “verdict” on Ahimelech and all of the priests of the Elide dynasty.
COMMAND TO AVENGE	22:17a-e	Saul commands his guards to kill the priests.
ACQUISITION OF ALLY (Failed)	22:17f-g	The guards do not comply.

¹ Charles Mabee, “Judicial Instrumentality in the Ahimelech Story,” in *Studies in Memory of William H. Brownlee* (eds. Craig A. Evans and William F. Stinespring; Early Jewish and Christian Exegesis 10; Atlanta: Scholars, 1987), 27–32.

COMMAND TO AVENGE	22:18a-c	Saul commands Doeg to kill the priests.
REVENGE ACT	22:18d-f	Doeg kills 85 priests.
REVENGE ACT	22:19	Entire city of Nob is destroyed.
DEPARTURE	22:20	Abiathar flees to David.
REACTION TO REVENGE ACT	22:21-22	David accepts blame for allowing Doeg the opportunity to inform.
AFTERMATH	22:23	David pledges to protect Abiathar.

5.1 Establishing the Morphology

The pericope opens with Saul brooding, spear in hand, under the tamarisk tree in Gibeah, having learned that David and his men have been sighted. Saul berates the loyal tribesmen who comprise his inner circle of trusted servants for concealing both David’s covenant with Jonathan and his whereabouts. Although he lacks proof, Saul slings accusations of collusion at his men (vv. 6-8), who respond with silence. Saul interprets the officers’ silence as admission of a conspiracy to aid David. The king also accuses his men of lacking fidelity and sympathy, which he blames on the men’s avarice, and demands to know about his son Jonathan’s alliance with David. Doeg responds to Saul’s furious demands by providing information about a different incident, i.e., David’s being given food and Goliath’s sword by Ahimelech, priest of Nob (vv. 9-10). Doeg’s report of the WRONG deflects the king’s wrath from those present and spurs Saul, who already suspects the loyalty of his servants, to a bloody vengeance. He immediately launches a PLAN FOR REVENGE that requires the priests of Nob to appear at the royal court in Gibeah. In the round of fierce questioning by Saul, Ahimelech’s responses only implicate the priest and his clan further:

11 The king sent for the priest Ahimelech son of Ahitub and for all his father’s house, the priests who were at Nob, and all of them came to the king. 12 Saul said, “Listen now, son of Ahitub.” He answered, “Here I am, my lord.” 13 Saul said to him, “Why have you conspired against me, you and the son of Jesse, by giving him bread and a sword and by inquiring of God for him, so that he has risen against me to lie in wait, as he is doing today?” 14 Then Ahimelech answered the king, “Who among all your servants is so faithful as David? He is the king’s son-in-law and is quick to do your bidding and is honored in your house. 15 Is today the first time that I have inquired of God for him? By no means! Do not let the king impute anything to his servant or to any member of my father’s house, for your servant has known nothing of all this, much or little.”

In the Initial Scene, Saul stressed that *all* of the Benjaminites were confederate with David; here, Saul commands that *all* of the Elide clan appear (בְּיַת אֶרְיֹו־וְזָאָה כָּל). That command is fulfilled (וַיָּבֹאוּ אֵל-הַמֶּלֶךְ כָּל־הַכֹּהֲנִים), and thus all of the priests are COMPLICIT in appearing before the king in Gibeah, which advances Saul’s PLAN for revenge. As the next functions oscillate between the development of the PLAN and the continued COMPLICITY of Ahimelech, the priests fail to realize the gravity of their situation, resulting in an increase of their COMPLICITY in Saul’s PLAN. Ahimelech is called to stand trial and approaches willingly and deferentially — “Here I am, my lord” —

demonstrating a loyalty to Saul that is ironic in light of what is about to unfold.² Despite the scene's resemblance to a trial, the text gives no indication that charges have been brought against the defendants. Saul's accusations in verse 13 expose his feelings of betrayal. The menace in his words should be clear to all, and yet Aḥimelech is not sensitive enough to the king's tone to avoid further COMPLICITY.

Aḥimelech's attempts to exonerate himself are in Saul's eyes an admission of guilt. His unbridled praise of David, far from being a defense, merely adds to Saul's rage and demonstrates the extent to which Aḥimelech has misread the king's true feelings toward the "son of Jesse" and the "son of Ahitub." The priest is COMPLICIT for the last time in verses 14-15, giving Saul the opportunity to declare his INTENT TO AVENGE, which is followed immediately by a COMMAND TO AVENGE (vv. 16-17).³ The refusal of Saul's men to obey the order is due to the illegitimacy of the COMMAND in general and its targeting the priests of YHWH in particular. The Failure to ACQUIRE AN ALLY (or allies) from among his servants does not halt Saul's PLAN. He correctly intuits that Doeg the Edomite will not be hampered by the same sensibilities as the king's servants. Saul reissues his COMMAND, this time speaking in the singular and directing the COMMAND solely to Doeg, who obeys without question, decimating the priests in Gibeah and destroying the entire city of Nob (vv. 18-19).

The people of Nob have been slaughtered, but no REACTION or DEPARTURE on the part of Doeg, Saul, or Saul's men is recorded. The DEPARTURE is comprised of only one person, Abiathar, grandson of Aḥimelech, who escapes the carnage and joins David (v. 20). Jotham, the sole survivor from a narrative in which he escapes his half-brother Abimelech's massacre, flees to Be'er and is never heard from again (Jud 9:7-21). In contrast, Abiathar's flight and destination will prove significant in later chapters of the David cycle. In the meantime, David promises to protect him:

21 Abiathar told David that Saul had killed the priests of the Lord. 22 David said to Abiathar, "I knew on that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul. I am responsible for the lives of all your father's house. 23 Stay with me, and do not be afraid, for the one who seeks my life seeks your life; you will be safe with me."

On the surface, David's REACTION TO THE REVENGE ACT is calm and pragmatic. He betrays no emotions, but accepts responsibility, and in the AFTERMATH becomes the guardian and sponsor of Abiathar.

² Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel*, 1, 394.

³ Robert L. Hubbard, "The Hebrew Root *Pg'* as a Legal Term," *JETS* 27 (1984): 129–33.

5.2 *Analysis & Context*

5.2.1 *Initial Scene*

The Initial Scene contained in verses 6-8 is crucial to understanding the events that follow with regard to the information it contributes and in establishing Saul's frame of mind when he interacts with Ahimelech. Saul holds his spear, a sure indication of a suspicious king (cf. 18:10-11; 19:9-10; 20:33) especially one surrounded by "constant attendants" ready to do his bidding.⁴ He accuses his tribesmen not only of failing to divulge the liaison between David and Jonathan, but also of forming their own alliances with the renegade David. Hurling accusations, however, is less dangerous to the courtiers than Saul hurling his spear, a familiar expression of his anger and frustration, so the servants' silence constitutes a wise response to the royal tirade.

Edelman points out that the threefold use of כלל in these verses highlights how Saul has separated himself from his men,⁵ unlike David, who feels responsible for all those who attach themselves to him. For example, David's men are "with him" (v. 2), David attempts to obtain protection for his family (v. 3), and David promises to safeguard Abiathar (v. 23). Whereas David speaks openly of Saul, using his name (v. 22), Saul distances himself even in speech, referring to David as the "son of Jesse" and then to Ahimelech as "son of Ahitub." In this manner, the narrator demonstrates how Saul both generalizes (through the use of כל) and denigrates (through the refusal to use proper names). Saul's waxing instability is evident as he claims that *everyone* is conspiring against him and that *no one* sympathizes with his plight. The king is powerless to halt the inevitable transfer of the monarchy to David. Facing the loss of this power can cause a person to develop an unfounded ". . .mistrust, and paranoia [which] form a stairway of deepening alienation. The individual descends from a sense of powerlessness or lack of control, to one of being used and abused and, finally, to one of being attacked."⁶ Saul's suspicion is not based in reality and might be short-circuited if Saul could only accept Ahimelech's depiction of his son-in-law (v. 14).

5.2.2 *WRONG (reported)*

The Initial Scene (vv. 6-8) introduces the pericope and serves as a referent for several of the functions that follow. Saul's rant is met with stunned silence by everyone except Doeg, who recognizes an opportunity and chooses this moment to recall his encounter with David at Nob.⁷ By reporting on the alleged WRONG committed at Nob, Doeg is offering a response to Saul's accusations that his men do not care about his suffering and are hiding the alliance between

⁴ J.E. Reindl, "Nšb/Yšb," *TDOT*, 9:522.

⁵ Diana Vikander Edelman, *King Saul in the Historiography of Judah* (JSOTSup 12; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 173.

⁶ John Mirowsky and Catherine E. Ross, "Paranoia and the Structure of Powerlessness," *American Sociological Review*, 48, no. 2, (1983): 238.

⁷ Joseph Lozovyy, *Saul, Doeg, Nabal, and the "Son of Jesse": Readings in 1 Samuel 16-25* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009), 127.

Jonathan and David. Doeg cannot offer information on the alliance, so he offers information about another event instead. Scholars have pointed out that Doeg’s motives are not detailed in the text; his only speech is the report of the WRONG, and his only action is the slaughter of the priests and the city.⁸ However, the text hints at what may have induced Doeg to speak and act as he did. First, Doeg is an Edomite, and therefore may not have shared the Israelite reverence for the priesthood, an assumption borne out by his beliefs regarding the priests’ character and later, in his willingness to slaughter them. Second, Doeg may have heard in Saul’s speech in the Initial Scene the suggestion that a loyal servant will receive a fief, an enticing prospect for a non-native. Certainly there is no textual evidence that Doeg was motivated by love for Saul or hatred of David. Though Doeg is savvy enough to mimic Saul’s denigration for David as the “son of Jesse” (v. 9), he does not anticipate the consequent fall from grace of the “son of Ahitub.” Regardless of the validity of any of these speculations, the morphological analysis will demonstrate that Doeg’s indifference and near anonymity are in fact intentional, contributing to a structure whose focus is almost exclusively on Saul and his actions, despite the fact that Doeg, and not Saul, is the catalyst and the executor of the revenge.

5.2.3 *PLAN & COMPLICITY*

Because they form a thrice-repeated alternating pair that are closely intertwined, the two functions PLAN and COMPLICITY will be analyzed together. The morphological analysis shows how Aḥimelech’s responses, contained within alternate segments of the PLAN, plunge him into a downward spiral of COMPLICITY. That the structure of this section (vv. 11-15) resembles a judicial trial has been widely noted,⁹ but the “trial” is not merely unfair, it is false. As the morphology makes evident, Saul utilizes the trial format to camouflage what is actually a revenge narrative. Prior to the “trial,” Doeg’s report of verses 9-10 redirects Saul’s wrath, which was formerly directed at the covenant between David and Jonathan. Now Saul’s attention jumps to the target that Doeg has provided.

In the past, David, Jonathan, Michal, and the Benjaminites were targeted by Saul in his attempts to eradicate any hint of disloyalty. Now Aḥimelech and his entire clan are threatened as well. The king’s boundless paranoia impels him to utilize a PLAN disguised as a legal case in which insurgents against the crown are prosecuted. This provides the façade of legitimacy for Saul to appear justified in what is actually a personal vendetta (like the “trial” of Naboth in the Valley of Jezreel [I Kgs 21], though there we do not hear Naboth’s defense). The trial, in which Saul is the plaintiff, prosecutor, and judge begins in verse 12, and as it develops, the prosecution and the

⁸ Ibid. 136-138. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel*, 386–88.

⁹ Peter D. Quinn-Miscall, *I Samuel: A Literary Reading* (Bloomsbury: Indiana University Press, 1986), 134–35; Robert R. Wilson, “Israel’s Judicial System in the Preexilic Period,” *JQR* 74, no. 2 (1983): 240–41.

defense formulate their arguments. Saul's PLAN betrays his biases as his increasingly emotional tone demonstrates that he cannot set aside his hatred to perform his duty as the highest judge in the land.

Saul's PLAN opens with a summons to the priests to appear in Gibeah. Although it was highly unusual to convoke all of the priests, they dutifully comply in a show of loyalty to the king. If the priests harbored any suspicion about the subpoena, it is not indicated by their ready COMPLICITY (v. 11). Ahimelech is called forward and cooperates with Saul's PLAN, answering deferentially, "Here I am, my lord," and thus continuing his COMPLICITY through his participation and his submissive tone (v. 12). In the third segment, Saul accuses the priest of treason by aiding David. Ahimelech's response, detailed below, deepens his COMPLICITY in Saul's PLAN: Every word he utters incriminates him further in the eyes of his judge. The three-part oscillation of the PLAN/COMPLICITY move carries significant morphological weight and is not a requisite feature of judicial proceedings, leading Bartor to label it a "juridical dialogue."¹⁰ This dialogue, a feature not usually found in revenge narratives, draws attention to Saul's desire for legitimacy in that it contains the priest's admission of his "crime," much as Gideon's dialogue with Zebah and Zalmunna did (Jud 8:18).

Saul does not reveal to the priests why they have been summoned, nor does he level all the charges at once, nor does he clarify his ultimate intention. The alternating sequence of Saul's PLAN is crucial because it traps Ahimelech into "admitting" more and more with every statement he makes. The actions of Saul are understood against the backdrop of his emotions as depicted in the Initial Scene. When Saul accuses all of the priests, "Why have you conspired against me, you and the son of Jesse" (v. 13), we hear the echo of his accusation against his personal guard, the elite of the Benjaminites, "Is that why all of you have conspired against me? No one discloses to me when my son makes a league with the son of Jesse" (v. 8).¹¹ The correlation in the narrative between verse 8 of the Initial Scene and verse 13 of the PLAN shows how Saul presents himself as an impartial dispenser of justice while simultaneously revealing the inordinate level of emotion he brings to the scene. Saul has an explanation for both cases of suspected conspiracy. Whether "my son has stirred up my servant against me to lie in wait, as he is doing today." (v. 8) or "so that he has risen against me to lie in wait, as he is doing today" (v. 13), Saul is convinced that Ahimelech is continually plotting against him.¹² Either way, the trial is stacked against the priests before it begins. In addition, Saul's feelings of betrayal run deep: None of his servants, priests, or children is

¹⁰ Asnat Bartor, "The Juridical Dialogue": A Literary-Judicial Pattern," *VT* 53, no. 4 (2003): 445–51.

¹¹ Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, 159.

¹² Barbara Green, *How Are the Mighty Fallen?: A Dialogical Study of King Saul in 1 Samuel* (London: A&C Black, 2003), 356–57.

pained by his situation.¹³ The Initial Scene thus extends into the PLAN, demonstrating how the accusations against the priests are based on facts twisted by Saul's emotional state.

As noted above, the bitterness Saul feels toward David is reflected in the manner of his address. Saul will not afford his rival the legitimacy of a proper name, but repeatedly terms him "son of Jesse" (cf. I Sam 20:27, 30, 31; 22:7, 8), a disdainful formula that suggests David has no significance as an individual. Clines points out that the "*ben X*" formula is not derogatory in itself but according to the context in which it is used. Here, for example, using only the father's name shows contempt because the people termed thus — both David and Ahimelech — are established in their own right.¹⁴ Saul's call to ben Ahitub is thus an expression of royal insult, but Ahimelech, deference personified, displays no hesitation in submitting to his king's request, thereby continuing the COMPLICITY that started when the entire clan obeyed the summons to appear before the king in Gibeah. Despite the difficulty of refusing a royal command, the priests may well have chosen a different path had they realized that they were participating in a trial in which Saul, as prosecutor and judge, would seek their destruction for trumped-up charges (unlike, for example, the prophets of God who went into hiding to evade Jezebel's murderous rampage in I Kings 18:4).

His prejudices plain to see, Saul persists with the PLAN to effect his revenge. The formal accusation deviates from Doeg's report (v. 9) in the order of the charges. Doeg enumerates the priest's offenses as asking of the Lord, giving food, and finally giving Goliath's sword to David. Saul, in contrast, begins with the crime of giving food, then giving the sword, and then asking of the Lord. Unlike Doeg, a foreigner who sees the military threat of arming an enemy as the most significant crime against the kingdom, Saul focuses on both priest and God allying with David, and organizes the charges against Ahimelech in "an ascending order of treason."¹⁵ Ahimelech, defending himself, focuses solely on the divine inquiry, providing several reasons why it was not a crime. He errs with a naiveté reminiscent of Jonathan in chapter 20,¹⁶ assuming, as did Jonathan, that he was dealing with a fair, rational monarch; like Jonathan, Ahimelech presents arguments that further implicate the priests. Ahimelech does not deny the facts; he only claims that his actions do not amount to treachery.¹⁷ Like Jonathan, who ignored all evidence of his father's hostility towards David, Ahimelech, in his COMPLICITY, shows a blindness that is reminiscent of the physical and

¹³ Metzudat David, ad. loc.

¹⁴ David JA Clines, "X, X Ben Y, Ben Y: Personal Names in Hebrew Narrative Style," *VT* 22, no. 3 (1972): 284–85.

¹⁵ Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 420–21.

¹⁶ Robert Polzin, *Samuel and the Deuteronomist: A Literary Study of the Deuteronomistic History Part Two: 1 Samuel* (Bloomsbury: Indiana University Press, 1993), 198–200 notes that in both chapter 20 and chapter 22 there is a transgression with a banned food, there are similarities in language (cf. 20:2 and 22:15), and both include the refusal of those present to inflict unjust harm; G. B. Caird, *The First and Second Books of Samuel* (The Interpreter's Bible 2; New York: Abingdon Press, 1953), 1001; Ada Taggar-Cohen, "Political Loyalty in the Biblical Account of 1 Samuel Xx–Xxii in the Light of Hittite Texts," *VT* 55, no. 2 (2005): 262, focuses on the seriousness of the priest's oath as well as asking the Urim v'Thummim.

¹⁷ Mabee, "Judicial Instrumentality in the Ahimelech Story," 30.

metaphorical blindness of his ancestor, Eli (I Samuel 1-4). His willingness to stand trial and his confidence that his innocence will carry the day recall the credulity of Naboth at the sham trial produced by Jezebel.

Establishing a morphology for a tale-type and comparing the way its functions are filled across the pericopes in a group is a powerful technique of surface structure analysis. One function, COMPLICITY, is fulfilled through the defense in the “trial” and enhanced when that defense only serves to goad the prosecutor, who is also the Avenger. In addition, COMPLICITY takes the form of increasing the fury of the Avenger, Saul, by increasing the honor of the primary target, David. The praise of David included in the defense seals Saul’s case against Aĥimelech and the priests and, at the same time, helps David by increasing his legitimacy and honor. Ironically, while COMPLICITY functionally lowers the standing of the Avenger who was duped (Aĥimelech), its use here also lowers the standing of Saul in the eyes of the reader. This pattern, which helps identify the Avenger’s motive, will be compared to other HB revenge narratives in the functions below.

5.2.4 *INTENT TO AVENGE*

Saul, acting as sole arbitrator in this show trial, disguises his INTENT TO AVENGE as a legal indictment and sentences the priests to death as collective punishment for Aĥimelech’s assistance to David. The pronouncement against the “father’s house” may be seen as the fulfillment of the curse on the house of Eli (I Sam 2:27-36);¹⁸ however, Saul was never formally empowered to carry out the curse. Another parallel exists in relation to the vengeance of Samson on the Philistines (Jud 14-16), but here, too, an essential difference separates the stories, for although there was a divine desire that the Philistines should receive retribution (Jud 14:4), this was not a stated INTENT of Samson. In this narrative, killing Aĥimelech is unwarranted because Saul had not proven David’s criminality;¹⁹ furthermore, enacting collective punishment is the sole dominion of God. For Saul, it is an illegitimate use of his power.²⁰

5.2.5 *COMMAND & Failure to ACQUIRE AN ALLY*

The COMMAND TO AVENGE takes form when Saul commands his guard, “Turn and kill the priests of the Lord, because their hand also is with David; they knew that he fled, and did not disclose it to me” (v. 17). It is a relatively uncommon function in HB narratives for two reasons.

¹⁸ Jürg Hutzli, “Elaborated Literary Violence: Genre and Ideology of the Two Stories I Sam 22, 6-23 and II Sam 21, 1-14,” in *Rereading the Relecture?: The Question of (Post) Chronistic Influence in the Latest Redactions of the Books of Samuel* (eds. Uwe Becker and Hannes Bezzel; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 151–55, notes the unique term “ephod bearers” of 2:28, 14:3, and 22:18 as well as other linguistic connections.

¹⁹ Mabee, “Judicial Instrumentality in the Aĥimelech Story,” 31.

²⁰ Jacob Milgrom, “The Concept of Ma’al in the Bible and the Ancient Near East,” *JAOS*, 96, no. 2 (1976): 246; Jože Krašovec, “Is There a Doctrine of ‘Collective Retribution’ in the Hebrew Bible?,” *HUCA*, 65 (1994): 63, 69. Note that there is no argument of preventing retaliation, as in the case of Shechem, because the city of Nob was not populated by foreign combatants. More on this point below.

First, because vengeance is generally not a socially or legally approved activity, it is usually accomplished with as little involvement from others as possible. Second, the rage that consumes the Avenger inspires a desire to perform the act personally. An examination of the COMMAND function in other personal revenge narratives sheds light on its use in the current pericope and its effect on Saul's reputation. The COMMAND TO AVENGE given by Saul to his servants (v. 17) is diminished by Saul's justification. In contrast, Gideon's COMMAND to his son Jether, "Go kill them!" (Jud 8:20) is simple, clear, and powerful. Saul buttresses his command with a rationale, a tactic that weakens his position through its implied need to substantiate. Like Gideon's son Jether, the king's servants refuse the order, not because of their tender age, but because of their moral response to an abhorrent COMMAND. Jether's refusal reflected his own lack of confidence, not disapproval of his father's actions. Gideon's COMMAND failed because he overreached, and though he is mocked by his enemy for this, his reputation is unsullied because the revenge was justified.

The structural correspondence of functions in disparate narratives of the same type reveals some telling points, and here, a comparison with Absalom's COMMAND TO AVENGE is instructive. In advance of the sheep-shearing festival, Absalom instructs his lads (נערים) to kill Amnon when he gives the signal (II Sam 13:28-29). In a parallel situation (v. 17), Saul's COMMAND to his servants (עבדים) utilizes the same phraseology of his chastisement from the Initial Scene (vv. 6-8). The king's servants, notes Lipschits, were men of stature within the kingdom, yet Saul speaks to them like wayward children about to be punished.²¹ Absalom, however, makes use of the identical function to prepare his "lads" beforehand. Though נער does indicate a youthful servant, these young men had more standing than the עבדים.²² When Absalom prepares them to perform the act of vengeance, he also induces loyalty with inspirational words. Killing the king's son and heir was likely as daunting a prospect as killing the priests of Nob, but Absalom's words, no less than the justice of his cause, helped his lads accomplish the act. In contrast, Saul's failure to ACQUIRE AN ALLY among his personal guard can be understood as the narrator's casting a critical eye on him for attempting to carry out an unjustified private vendetta.

Saul's servants stand speechless for the second time in the pericope in response to Saul's failed effort to ACQUIRE AN ALLY, and a terrifying scene follows when the enraged Saul faces forces that will not bend to his will (v. 17). The servants' silent refusal diverges sharply from the behavior of the scoundrels of Jezreel who did not hesitate to carry out Jezebel's instructions to the letter (I Kings 21). Like David, Saul's servants will not harm the Lord's anointed, whether priest (v.

²¹ Oded Lipschits, "On the Titles 'bd Hmlk and 'bd Yhwh," *Shnaton: An Annual for Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies* 13 (2002): 161–64.

²² Lipschits, "On the Titles 'bd Hmlk and 'bd Yhwh," 167–68; Fuhs, "Na'ar," *TDOT* 9:480.

17) or in David's case, king, despite the personal risk involved (I Sam 26:23).²³ The servants' ethical integrity is heightened by comparison with the ruthlessness of Saul, who becomes morally identified with Doeg the mercenary.²⁴

Another aspect of the narrative that morphological analysis brings to light through functional comparison is the significance of Saul's failure to attain his men's allegiance. Again, compared to Absalom, Saul's servants' refusal to comply with his COMMAND is indicative of the odious nature of that command and of Saul's lack of interpersonal skills. Compared with the blindly obedient servants of Jezebel, who try and then execute an innocent man (I Kings 21), Saul's servants are shown to be men of moral rectitude. Neither are they so timid as Jether, who could not avenge his uncles' deaths due to his tender age (Jud 8:20); they are experienced warriors who could have easily slain guilty men. Rather, their refusal stems from Saul's immoral abuse of power.

5.2.6 *COMMAND & REVENGE ACT*

Saul could neither cut down his elite guard nor force them to obey. Doeg's presence provides him with another option, and ignoring the insubordination of his men, Saul reissues his COMMAND TO AVENGE directly to his Ally, Doeg. Without hesitation, Doeg cuts down eighty-five priests before annihilating the entire city of Nob. Like Haman (Esth 3:6), Saul enacted a policy of collective punishment on an entity he viewed as a corporate personality of the offender. The breach to his honor would not be restored by merely killing the offender. But although the collective punishment was technically a success, it failed to mollify the king.

The destruction of a city as the REVENGE ACT is seen in other HB personal revenge narratives. Examining analogous presentations of this same morphological function is instructive: the differences in the narratives shed light on their meanings. For example, Simeon and Levi's vengeance on the entire city of Shechem in the wake of their sister's rape was seen as excessive by Jacob. The brothers, however, defended their action as being necessary, probably for fear of reprisal from the townsmen had they only killed the prince. Nob, however, was a city in which the only weapon was Goliath's sword, preserved more as a museum piece than as a secret arsenal (21:10). The destruction of Succoth and Peniel by Gideon also lacks a real correspondence, as it was the inhabitants of the cities themselves who were guilty (Judges 8). The comparisons demonstrate that the collective punishment as revenge on Nob is unique, even if Ahimelech's action was a punishable offense.

An examination of the two distinct REVENGE ACTS of this pericope supports the idea that Saul is attempting to justify his actions by conflating a legal setting with a *herem*, borrowed from

²³ Similarly I Sam 24:11; 26:9,11; II Sam 1:14.

²⁴ Simon, Reading Prophetic Narrative, 323.

the imperative for holy war. The first REVENGE ACT, the murder of the 85 priests, is described thus: וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְדוֹיָג [ל] [דוֹאֵג] סָב אֶתָּה וּפָגַע בַּכֹּהֲנִים וַיִּסָּב דּוֹיָג [דוֹאֵג] הָאֵלֹמִי וַיִּפְגַּע-הוּא בַּכֹּהֲנִים וַיָּמָת אִ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא וַיִּשְׁמְרֵם וַחֲמִשָּׁה אִישׁ נִשָּׂא אֶפֶוד בָּד . The order is carried out with the use of ס.ב.ב., מ.ו.ת., and ע.פ.ג.ע.. This is consistent with Saul’s attempt to simulate legitimate legal proceedings and their attendant punishments. The combination of ס.ב.ב. and מ.ו.ת. is used elsewhere in the context of personal attacks or situations of danger, for example, in the defense of the Levite in the case of the concubine at Gibeah (Jud 20:5): וְאֶת-פִּילְגֶשֶׁי עֲנּוּ וַתִּמָּת עָלַי אֶת-הַבַּיִת לְגִלְהָ אוֹתִי דָמּוּ לְהַרְגֵנִי וַיִּקְמּוּ עָלַי בְּעַלְמִי הַגִּבְעָה וַיִּסָּבּוּ or when Joab’s men execute Absalom (II Sam 18:15) וַיִּסָּבּוּ אֶת-אֲבִישׁלֹום וַיִּכּוּ יוֹאָב וַיִּכּוּ אֶת-אֲבִישׁלֹום. Similarly, ע.פ.ג.ע. is a “constitutive element of an execution command,” and in combination with מ.ו.ת. has been demonstrated to be a “legal formulation” as reflected in Solomon’s command to execute Adonijah (I Kgs 2:25): בּוֹ וַיָּמָת-וַיִּשְׁלַח הַמֶּלֶךְ שְׁלֹמֹה בֶנֶד בְּנֵיהוּ בֶן-יְהוֹיָדָע וַיִּפְגַּע. These usages indicate execution stemming from due process (or some version thereof).²⁵ In this COMMAND and REVENGE ACT, we see an attempt to legitimize the slaughter of the priests through the use of official legal language.

Many have noted that Saul had previously failed to destroy a foreign enemy for the Lord’s honor, but now is ready to destroy Israelite priests for his own. Moreover, the description of the second REVENGE ACT, the destruction of the city of Nob (v. 19) and Saul’s failure to completely destroy Amalek (I Sam 15:3) are described similarly.²⁷ The details listed in verse 19 resemble those in the command to Saul to destroy Amalek: “Now go and attack Amalek and utterly destroy all that they have; do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey” (15:3). The destruction of Nob is thus directly linked to the ḥerem rather than to a legal status based on the actions of Ahimelech. As seen in Deut 13:16-17 and 20:13-18, the ḥerem is applied to destroy aberrant behavior so as to prevent its spread among the Israelites. The intention, as well as the language (הכּה לפי חרב), informs the destruction of Nob as well.²⁸ Therefore, the change in language indicates a change from legal proceedings to a declaration of ḥerem, underlining the failure to elevate the REVENGE and cleanse it from personal interest, which would justify the city’s destruction. Saul’s overly generous treatment of Amalek, however, nullifies any

²⁵ See also I Sam 5:10 when the Ark of the Covenant is in Ekron, and II Sam 18:15 .

²⁶ Hubbard, “The Hebrew Root Pg’ as a Legal Term,” 131; Illman, “Mut,” *TDOT* 8:204. See also I Kgs 2:34,46. In an ironic usage, see I Chr 10:14, as the verbs are used to transfer the monarchy from Saul to David, וְלֹא-דָרַשׁ בְּהַ' וַיָּמִיתָהוּ וַיִּסָּב אֶת-הַמְּלוּכָה לְדָוִד בֶּן-יִשָּׁי

²⁷ Michael Avioz, “Saul as a Just Judge in Josephus’ Antiquities of the Jews,” in *Perspectives on Hebrew Scriptures V* (ed. Ehud Ben Zvi; Piscataway: Gorgias, 2009), 371.

²⁸ See Deut, 13:16-17; 20:16-17; Josh 10:28ff.; Judg 1:8,25 for instances of הכּה לפי חרב in the context of the ban related to holy war. At Nob, there is no mention of siege or war (ל.כ.ד., ל.ה.מ.) as the city has been left defenseless by the massacre of the men in verse 18 (though it is uncertain how much of a deterrent 85 priests, untrained in warfare, would have been in any case).

claim to zealotry he might have made with regard to enforcing the *herem* in the face of a national danger.

The obliteration of the priests and the city of Nob resulted not only from the priests' help to David but because of Saul's initial failure to ACQUIRE AN ALLY. Saul lacked the power base necessary to do more than chastise the Benjamites (vv. 7-8) or to punish his guards for their refusal to obey (v. 17). By transferring his fury to Nob in the wake of the actions of Ahimelech and the inaction of the Benjaminites, Saul establishes a powerful deterrent to future rebellions that does not cause him any loss of his best men. The success of his rampage becomes evident in the next chapter when the people of Keilah and the Ziphites are terrified into demonstrating their loyalty to Saul by attempting to hand over David.²⁹ While this deterrent factor is often cited as the motivation for Saul's actions at Nob, it was clearly not part of a deliberate plan nor even Saul's primary goal for the massacre, which was propelled by the king's paranoia and rage.³⁰ Indeed, when compared to other REVENGE ACTS, the two-pronged attack on the priests and on the city is condemned as an abuse of royal power.

5.2.7 DEPARTURE

We have seen how the function of DEPARTURE restores the Avenger to his non-Avenger role once balance has been restored. Alternatively, the burial of the Avenger often fills this function. In this narrative, we note the absence of Saul's DEPARTURE. He does not return home to accolades after quelling a rebellion; in fact, nothing more is heard from Saul or Doeg. Instead, the action shifts to Abiathar, grandson of Ahimelech, who has escaped the carnage to join forces with David. His escape defies Saul's pronouncement of INTENT that the entire house of Ahimelech's father will be destroyed.³¹ McCarter and others have remarked on the unintentional transference of the loyalty of the priesthood, along with the Urim v'Thummim, from Saul to David.³² We have seen how Ahimelech's COMPLICITY inadvertently increased David's honor and chances of future success while further infuriating Saul. Here, the DEPARTURE of Abiathar represents two more failures for Saul: He does not complete his express desire to entirely annihilate Nob, and he does not diminish David's honor and authority.

²⁹ Quinn-Miscall, *1 Samuel*, 136. notes the use of *חמל* in I Sam 15:3, 9 and in 23:21. Saul's misplaced compassion for Agag in chapter 15 and his misplaced cruelty to Nob in the present chapter testify to the confusion which ensues from violating the ban as set forth in Deut 13:9, וְלֹא-תִחַמֵּל וְלֹא-תִכַּסֶּה עָלָיו. Following the king's lead, the Ziphites are praised for their misplaced compassion כִּי תִחַמְלֶתֶם, עָלָי which results from witnessing Saul's ruthless revenge.

³⁰ Moshe Garsiel, *The First Book of Samuel: A Literary Study of Comparative Structures, Analogies and Parallels* (Ramat-Gan: Revivim, 1985), 122; Quinn-Miscall, *1 Samuel*, 136.

³¹ Gamberoni, "Bārach," *TDOT* 2:251; Garcia-Lopez, "Sbb," *TDOT*, 10:559.

³² McCarter, *II Samuel*, 366.

5.2.8 REACTION TO THE REVENGE

With the DEPARTURE of Abiathar and the ephod (cf. 23:6), Saul's vengeance fails to garner true loyalty or secure his kingship. The narrative focus veers from Saul to David and his REACTION to Nob's destruction. David does not blame Saul or even Doeg, but himself: Had he not appeared in Nob, the city would have been untouched. David's use of כ.ב.ט. to describe his responsibility (v. 22) is an ironic contrast to its use by Saul when he commands that the priests be surrounded and struck down (vv. 17-18).

5.2.9 AFTERMATH

Saul accuses and blames the innocent. David, in spite of having no legal culpability,³³ accepts moral responsibility for the deaths of the priests and provides protection for Abiathar in the wake of the destruction. David and Abiathar are now kindred spirits, their fates are tied. David will care for Abiathar and his family, and Abiathar will serve as David's priest. The AFTERMATH highlights the contrast between Saul and David: While the king suspects and persecutes his loyal subjects, the king-elect protects and takes responsibility.³⁴

5.3 Conclusions

5.3.1 Liminality

Saul's obsession with David leads him far afield, away from affairs of state. He is consumed not only with destroying David, but also with punishing any possible collaborator and abusing the legal and monarchical structures along the way. He has assumed his status as Avenger, which informs every decision even as it forces him out of the security of the kingship and marginalizes him. Removed from society, he erects metaphorical walls to protect himself not against foreign enemies but against "the inner essence of his nation."³⁵ Like Haman, Saul has failed to identify who his true Allies are. David, forced into the liminal space of the wilderness, begins fulfilling the king's role by taking care of society's peripheral members.

5.3.2 Allies

The use of Allies in this narrative sheds light on the Avenger's actions. Doeg, an Ally, fulfills his role and is not heard from again. His appalling act is never critiqued, nor does he suffer any consequences. This essential Ally to the Avenger escapes unscathed. In 21:8 he is called אביר הרעים, an unclear term for which both Aster and Sasson have found ANE parallels indicating that

³³ Pamela Barmash, "The Narrative Quandary: Cases of Law in Literature," *VT* 54, no. 1 (2004): 10–11.

³⁴ Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, 161.

³⁵ Kalman J. Kaplan and Matthew B. Schwartz, "Walls and Boundaries in Rabbinic-Biblical Foreign Policy: A Psychological Analysis," *Jewish Political Studies Review*, 10, no. 1/2 (1998): 128.

Doeg held a position of responsibility in Saul's military.³⁶ It is possible that while this is a title related to ANE cognates, it was chosen here to contrast the Ally of the king with the object of his ire. David is first introduced as a shepherd (I Sam 16:11) who, in contrast to the "chief herdsman," is known to protect his charges (I Sam 17:34-37) and continues to do so despite his refugee status (22:2-4, 23).

The Benjaminite Allies of the Avenger, the servants who accompany Saul, refused his order, but questions regarding their guilt still linger in light of their passivity when Doeg carries out the command. Nevertheless, the Allies' main role is to focus attention on the Avenger, who issues the commands for his personal vendetta. Thus the warriors who comprised Saul's personal guard and outnumbered Doeg, are neither praised for their refusal nor censured for standing by.

The priests, led by Ahimelech, are butchered and their city destroyed as though it had been placed under a ban. Punished for being Allies of David, Saul's primary focus, the priests are targeted in David's, and perhaps Jonathan's, stead. Although the curse on the house of Eli has been offered as an apologia for the extermination of the priests, the narrative does not make this explicit, nor would it have exonerated Saul for his actions.³⁷ Despite this, these Allies, the priests, are not mourned even by Abiathar, nor are the deaths of these eighty-five holy men of Israel or the sacking of the city ever mentioned among Saul's offenses,

The morphology of HB personal revenge stories demonstrates that such narratives do not generally rely on the presence of Allies. ANE narratives, on the other hand, give Allies a more prominent role in revenge tales, and the Allies generally do not escape unscathed. Being in the vicinity of the revenge, they are often destroyed as an extension of the Avenger or Avengee. In the current pericope, the Allies, as characters, are *dei ex machina*. They function as foils for Saul and, to a lesser extent, David, resulting in heightened attention to Saul and his obsession with David instead of the secondary characters.

5.3.3 *Morphological Conclusions*

The narrative of Saul and his revenge on Nob is notable for what is missing. The dearth of REACTIONS, both the REACTION TO THE WRONG as well as the REACTION TO THE REVENGE ACT, stands out when compared to other HB narratives of personal revenge. Also absent is an emotional reaction on the part of the Avenger. In the case of Dinah's rape, for example, the brothers respond with emotion — "When they heard of it, the men were indignant and very angry," (Gen 34:7) — as does Absalom following Tamar's rape: "But Absalom spoke to Amnon

³⁶ Shawn Zelig Aster, "What Was Doeg the Edomite's Title? Textual Emendation versus a Comparative Approach to 1 Samuel 21: 8," *JBL* 122, no. 2 (2003): 356–60; Jack M. Sasson, "Doeg's Job," *Scriptura: Journal for Contextual Hermeneutics in Southern Africa* 87, no. 1 (2004): 319–22.

³⁷ David Toshio Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel* (NICOT; Grand Rapids:Eerdmans, 2007), 457.

neither good nor bad, for Absalom hated Amnon because he had raped his sister Tamar,” (II Sam 13:22). In this pericope, Saul demonstrates no emotional response to Doeg’s report of the WRONG, but initiates his PLAN, summoning the priests to Gibeah where the revenge will take place. Nor is there any REACTION TO THE REVENGE ACT other than David’s taking responsibility. There is no first-person account or narratorial comment regarding the reaction of Saul, his men, Abiathar, or the nation. Instead, Doeg’s actions and Saul’s command are conspicuously ignored. Indeed, the only reference offered regarding Saul’s state of mind is in the Initial Scene, when Saul castigates his guards for siding with David (vv. 7-8). The accusation in verse 13 recalls that mood, suggesting that Saul’s current emotions stem from his enmity for David.

The absence of REACTIONS, combined with Saul’s interpreting Aḥimelech’s defense as COMPLICITY and the justification with which Saul accompanies the COMMAND TO AVENGE, indicate that the narrative has utilized and manipulated the typical morphology of a revenge narrative to underscore Saul’s efforts to justify his actions. Repetition appears in the language of the Initial Scene, in the trial of Aḥimelech (cf. vv. 8 & 13), and in the oscillation of functions. Saul disguises his PLAN FOR REVENGE as a trial in order to eliminate the alleged conspiracy. The PLAN alternates with the COMPLICITY of Aḥimelech, and Aḥimelech becomes more ensnared with each set of alternating functions. The COMPLICITY also brings closure when the descendants of Eli take an active part in the fulfillment of the divine curse against themselves. However, this is a peripheral aspect of the revenge narrative and is not the WRONG that inspired Saul to action (I Sam 2:27-36; 3:11-14). The COMPLICITY has an ironic element in that the keepers of the Urim v’Thummim are ignorant of their immediate future. Despite the injustice committed against them, the priests’ COMPLICITY makes them less sympathetic figures, a point reflected by the absence of any REACTIONS, emotive or otherwise, to their murders. This results in our attention being focused on the fulfillment of the Elide curse.

The revenge narrative of Jezebel on Naboth (I Kgs 21) demonstrates an alternate option of setting up a fraudulent trial without a retelling of the proceedings. In that case, we have a morphologically parallel case in which Naboth’s defense is silenced. Here, use of the plural (קשרתם), echoing key words (כל, סב, קשר), and trebling alternating functions contribute to the sense of Saul’s pathology. His repetitive accusations and illogical verdicts resemble an INTENT TO AVENGE more than a judicial verdict. The conflation of all the WRONGS of Saul’s imaginings, combined with the fact that both the PLAN and the COMMAND FOR REVENGE include justifications for the revenge, demonstrate an effective use of the revenge morphology by emphasizing the failure of Saul’s quest for vengeance.

The attitudes, real or imagined, that prompted Saul’s accusations in the Initial Scene (vv. 7-8) and the disobedience of Saul’s servants (v. 17) were mirrored in the alleged betrayal of the

priests. These attitudes have not been eliminated with the destruction of the clan of Eli. The fact that Saul has no REACTION TO THE REVENGE and no DEPARTURE implies a lack of closure. Saul will soon realize that the heinous REVENGE ACT has not solved the problem of his “disloyal” servants. Even though David is almost wholly absent from the pericope (except for the last three verses), the structure of the pericope and the nature of its functions demonstrate that the REVENGE ACT has failed and Saul will be supplanted by David long before the latter takes the throne.

Chapter 6

6.0 Jezebel & the Vineyard of Naboth (I Kings 21:1-29; II Kings 9:30-37)

The well-known pericope of the Vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite will be examined here as a narrative of personal revenge on the part of Jezebel taken against Naboth the Jezreelite for refusing to sell his land to Ahab. In terms of Nozick's five requirements for categorizing an act as revenge (outlined in the General Introduction), this narrative may be lacking in one or more of them.¹ Specifically, the personal and emotional elements of revenge (Nozick's third and fourth criteria, respectively) are not obviously apparent.² I will argue that these elements do exist in the narrative, though less explicitly than in other narratives included in the current study. The morphological analysis will lend credence to this argument by showing that the structure of the pericope reflects its source as an HB narrative against an ANE antagonist. Against the backdrop of these issues regarding the tale-type, the structure of the narrative, seen below, combines elements of the morphology and themes of both HB and ANE revenge narratives, further establishing it as a narrative of revenge.

Table 6 Morphology - Jezebel on Naboth

Initial Scene	I Kgs 21:1-2	Ahab requests that Naboth sell him the vineyard.
WRONG	21:3	Naboth refuses the request and includes an oath in his refusal.
REACTION TO THE WRONG	21:4	Ahab is distressed and refuses to eat.
COUNCIL	21:5-7	Jezebel approaches Ahab and offers her aid.
INTENT TO AVENGE	21:7c	Jezebel announces she will acquire the vineyard.
PLAN/ACQUISITION OF ALLIES	21:8-10	Jezebel frames Naboth, abusing the justice system and its representatives, and bringing false witnesses.
COMPLICITY	21:12	Naboth is seated at the head of the people.
REVENGE ACT (through COUNCIL)	21:11-13	Naboth is accused, tried, convicted, and stoned.
Report of REVENGE ACT	21:14	Jezebel is informed.
AFTERMATH	21:15-16	Jezebel informs Ahab and instructs him to possess the vineyard. He obeys.
REACTION TO THE REVENGE ACT	21:17-24	God sends Elijah the prophet to rebuke Ahab and Jezebel. He announces their crimes and foretells of their punishments.
AFTERMATH	21:25-26 21:27-29	The evil is confirmed in the narrative. Ahab repents and the decree is mitigated.

¹ See General Introduction, p. 4 – Section 0.1.2.

² Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations*, 366–70.

6.1 *Establishing the Morphology*

Ahab, Israelite king of the Northern Kingdom and son of the wicked Omri, surpassed his father's evil deeds, by marrying Jezebel, the Phoenician princess of Tyre, establishing Ba'al worship, allying with foreign kings, and persecuting those loyal to YHWH. The Initial Scene describes the real estate holdings of Naboth, a Jezreelite, who has a vineyard in Jezreel, which is described as being in close proximity to the palace of Ahab. The redundancy in verse 1, "Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which was in Jezreel," has been noted by Zakovitch and underscores the connection Naboth has to the land.³ Ahab approaches Naboth and proposes to purchase the vineyard, offering Naboth his choice of a superior vineyard in another unspecified locale at a price to be named by Naboth (vv. 1-2). The king states that his desire for this particular parcel of land lies in its proximity to his palace and his desire to convert the vineyard into a vegetable garden. There is a great deal behind this seemingly reasonable proposal that leads Naboth to not only refuse, but to take umbrage at the offer, as will be discussed below.

Naboth's response to Ahab's request, "The Lord forbid that I should give you my ancestral inheritance" (v. 3), which includes the oath formulation, ה'חלילה לי מה, indicates the impropriety of the request. The oath formula suggests that Naboth believes selling the vineyard would constitute a ritual transgression, unthinkable for a morally responsible individual.⁴ Ahab, however, sees the refusal as an impertinent WRONG against which he has no recourse because it is Naboth's legal right to refuse. The monarch's REACTION is to return home, dejected (v. 4). Ahab's emotional REACTION, sullenness and displeasure, סר וְנָעַר, is the same as that seen in the previous chapter when he was rebuked by a prophet for dealing too leniently with Ben-Hadad, king of Aram (20:43). Ahab's unhappiness is due to the divide between his desires and the laws he must uphold as an Israelite king. At this point, Jezebel enters the scene, offering herself in the function of COUNCIL, though her aid had not been sought.

5 His wife Jezebel came to him and said, "Why are you so depressed that you will not eat?" 6 He said to her, "Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite and said to him, "Give me your vineyard for money; or else, if you prefer, I will give you another vineyard for it'; but he answered, "I will not give you my vineyard.'" 7 His wife Jezebel said to him, "Do you now govern Israel? Get up, eat some food, and be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite."

The presence of the COUNCIL function, regularly seen in ANE narratives of revenge, is unusual in the HB narratives. Here, the COUNCIL is not sought by the Victim, but is rather offered by his

³ Yair Zakovitch, "The Tale of Naboth's Vineyard (1 Kings 21)," in *The Bible from Within: The Method of Total Interpretation* (ed. Meir Weiss; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1984), 383.

⁴ Yael Ziegler, *Promises to Keep: The Oath in Biblical Narrative* (VTSupp 120; Leiden: Brill, 2008), 137.

Ally. The words אָתָּה עֲתָה תַעֲשֶׂה מְלוּכָה עַל-יִשְׂרָאֵל (v. 7) have a clear goal but an uncertain tone. Jezebel urges the king to literally “do kingship,” but the text does not indicate whether she is speaking with sarcasm, disgust, or encouragement (though words of reassurance would be out of character for a queen who threatened the lives of YHWH’s prophets). Jezebel’s message, however, unmistakably indicates disapproval with how Ahab interacted with Naboth; in her eyes, Ahab has not exhibited appropriate monarchical behavior. Jezebel’s indignation over Naboth’s denying a kingly wish marks her actions as a correction of a WRONG. Having reproached Ahab for his failure to rule properly and demanded that he improve, she now promises to acquire the vineyard on his behalf. Her promise to Ahab constitutes a thinly veiled declaration of INTENT that she will put an end to Naboth’s defiance.

Jezebel, both the Ally to the Victim and the Avenger, develops her PLAN, recruiting Allies of her own, the city elders and nobles, plus the scoundrels she instructs them to hire (vv. 8-10). Jezebel has schemed carefully: The PLAN makes use of Israelite laws and customs regarding cases involving blasphemy and rebellion.⁵ Its implementation requires Allies who are not merely helpers to the queen but judiciary officials who will lend legitimacy to the process.

Jezebel may have had an interest in harming Naboth personally, or Naboth might simply have been an obstacle to her acquiring the vineyard.⁶ Although she has no emotive reaction to his refusal and never even meets her adversary, Jezebel and the text itself seem obsessed with Naboth, mentioning his name frequently in just sixteen verses. In fact, the name “Naboth” appears nineteen times in the chapter, with the identifier “Jezreelite” added to six of them,⁷ suggesting that “Naboth” is not just an identifier. Berlin notes that one of the purposes of repetition is to “convey the point of view of the narrator and/or characters.”⁸ Here, the repeated name implies that Naboth is the true focal point of the scene, not the vineyard, which is mentioned “only” seven times.

The REVENGE is implemented through a gross miscarriage of justice carried out primarily by the elders and nobles whose proper role is to ensure due process (vv. 11-13). The scene resembles Propp’s “doubled function” in that the REVENGE ACT occurs at an official COUNCIL. However, it is not true doubling because the only desired outcome is revenge (not revenge and counsel). The irony of carrying out the revenge at the council with the trappings of a court of law emphasizes the perversion of justice being committed. However, no punishment awaits the elders of

⁵ Francis I. Andersen, “The Socio-Juridical Background of the Naboth Incident,” *JBL* 85, no. 1 (1966): 47–53; Stephen C. Russell, “The Hierarchy of Estates in Land and Naboth’s Vineyard,” *JSOT* 38, no. 4 (2014): 460–68. discuss possible precedents in both Israelite and Mesopotamian law which would allow the vineyard to pass to Ahab should Naboth be convicted of blasphemy.

⁶ This distinction refers to Nozick’s third distinction between retribution and revenge.

⁷ Carey Ellen Walsh, *The Fruit of the Vine: Viticulture in Ancient Israel* (Harvard Semitic Monographs 60; ed. Peter Machinist; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 68.

⁸ Adele Berlin, “Narrative Poetics in the Bible” *Prooftexts* 6, no. 3 (1986), 279.

Jezreel or the “base fellows” who perpetrate the injustice. Such indifference to lawfulness is targeted by numerous prophets (see, for example, Mic 3:1-3; Jer 5:26–29), such as Hosea:

4 And the Lord said to him, “Name him Jezreel, for in a little while I will punish the house of Jehu for the blood of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel. 5 On that day I will break the bow of Israel in the Valley of Jezreel” (Hos 1:4-5).

Hosea’s immediate reference is to the actions of Jehu, but some scholars argue that Hosea’s message is directed at the nobles, elders, and base fellows who served as an extension of Jezebel.⁹ The purpose served by Naboth’s COMPLICITY is not obvious in this narrative, though much has been made of the directive in verses 9 and 12 that Naboth should sit “at the head of the assembly.” By custom, court officials and judges sat while litigants stood. It is possible that Naboth, a landowner who was deeply attached to his ancestry and community, was a judicial functionary and presumed that he would be acting as a judge. That both he and the scoundrels are seated suggests that he walked willingly and unwittingly to his own ruin, his presence in the courtroom having been achieved on false pretenses.¹⁰ Having committed no crime, Naboth would not have been suspicious of Ahab; thus his COMPLICITY was easily secured. Moreover, Jezebel’s instruction to seat him in an honored position allows for witnesses and for a greater fall from grace. These goals were not necessary for the success of the action, but would result in more damage to the Victim, Naboth.¹¹

After the court proceedings are completed and the REVENGE accomplished, a brief account is sent to Jezebel, stating only that Naboth has been stoned and is dead. In fact, much of the AFTERMATH consists of reports from one party to another that Naboth is dead:

14 Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, “Naboth has been stoned; he is dead.” 15 As soon as Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and was dead, Jezebel said to Ahab, “Go, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give you for money, for Naboth is not alive but dead.” 16 As soon as Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, Ahab set out to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.

The legal travesty that led to the stoning is not mentioned in the reports; the queen only hears that “Naboth is has been stoned; he is dead.” The text then repeats what Jezebel heard, but when Jezebel repeats it to Ahab, she softens the report, merely stating that Naboth is not alive, but dead, as though he died from natural causes. Ahab, for his part, acts immediately on the information without questioning how Naboth’s life ended.¹²

The next scene is an additional AFTERMATH. More actants are introduced to the scene, all of whom respond to the REVENGE ACT (vv. 17-29). The REVENGE taken by Jezebel against

⁹ Shawn Zelig Aster, “The Function of the City of Jezreel and the Symbolism of Jezreel in Hosea 1–2,” *JNES* 71, no. 1 (2012): 34.

¹⁰ Andersen, “The Socio-Juridical Background of the Naboth Incident,” 56.

¹¹ This allows for Nozick’s fourth criterion, that the Avenger have an interest in the suffering of the Avenged.

¹² Meir Sternberg, “The World from the Addressee’s Viewpoint: Reception as Representation, Dialogue as Monologue,” *Style*, 20 no. 3 (1986), 309.

Naboth was so offensive to both man and God, that the prophet Elijah is sent to declare that this act would result in the downfall of both Jezebel, who committed the act, and Ahab, who benefited from it. Because the punishment was divinely decreed through God's prophet, it is understood to be a direct and severe consequence of the action. Ahab repents and his punishment is stayed, but Jezebel receives her punishment in the Epilogue in II Kings 9:30-37.

6.2 *Analysis & Context*

6.2.1 *Initial Scene*

The pericope opens with the locale of the vineyard, כָּרְם הַיְהוּדָה לְנָבוֹת הַיִּזְרְעֵאלִי אֲשֶׁר בְּיִזְרְעֵאל, using language that resembles Canticles 8:11, כָּרְם הַיְהוּדָה לְשִׁלְמָה בְּבַעַל הַמּוֹן, and Isaiah 5:1, כָּרְם הַיְהוּדָה לְיִדְיָ בְּקֶרֶן. The form of the verse highlights the vineyard's connection to its owner and its locale.¹³ The phrase also emphasizes the owner's connection to the locale as well, repeating its name: Naboth is a *Jezreelite* who lives in *Jezreel*.

Land distribution in ancient Israel was directly related to the nation's belief in God's ownership of the land and to Israel's covenant with God.¹⁴ The suggestion that Naboth sell his portion when he was not in economic distress amounts to a suggestion that he reject the divine covenant and violate the directive to keep the land within his clan (Lev 25:23ff.). Furthermore, selling his portion would effectively reduce Naboth from a landowner to a royal pensioner.¹⁵ Russel emphasizes the particular significance and attachment to one's ancestral land, explaining that relinquishing such land voluntarily would constitute a betrayal of the ancestral obligations and demonstrate apathy towards familial affiliations.¹⁶ Because the land was located among Naboth's tribesmen, Ahab's offer to exchange the vineyard for another one elsewhere fails to account for any such attachments, demonstrating the king's lack of respect for these relationships. Additionally, the fact that Ahab informs Naboth of his wish to repurpose the vineyard into a vegetable garden disregards the labor invested by Naboth as the vintner, as well as the significance of the vineyard in the ancient Near East at this time: A mature vineyard represented a substantial investment of time, money, and effort on the part of its owner, and wine was an important commodity and perhaps an

¹³ Yairah Amit, "Shaping and Meaning in the Story of Naboth's Vineyard (1 Kgs 21)," *Beit Mikra* 60, 2015, 26–27; Zakovitch, "The Tale of Naboth's Vineyard (1 Kings 21)," 358.

¹⁴ J. Gordon McConville, *God and Earthly Power: An Old Testament Political Theology, Genesis-Kings* (The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 454; London: A&C Black, 2006), 89–91.

¹⁵ Simon DeVries, *1 Kings*, (WBC 12; Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2018), 256.

¹⁶ Stephen C. Russell, "Ideologies of Attachment in the Story of Naboth's Vineyard," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 44, no. 1 (2014): 35–36.

integral part of Israelite ritual and cultic life.¹⁷ The vegetable garden, in contrast, was the embodiment of a royal status symbol, recalling the gardens of Egypt and Babylonia.¹⁸

Finally, the imagery of the vineyard and its use as a metaphor to describe God’s relationship with Israel (cf. Isa 5:1-7) add another layer of meaning to the narrative. Israel is often likened to a vineyard, raising the suggestion that Ahab aspires to uproot the worship of God and replace it with the worship of Ba’al.¹⁹ Consequently, Ahab’s determination to separate a landowner from his vineyard must be accorded symbolic weight.

The brief Initial Scene establishes Ahab’s separation from core Israelite values. What appears at first glance to be a reasonable business proposition is actually evidence of the king’s lack of regard for familial or tribal ties, individual rights, the national economy, and loyalty to God. And because the offer comes directly from the king, it is not only contrary to societal values but also as menacing, for one does not lightly refuse the monarch.

6.2.2 *WRONG & REACTION*

The prophets condemn the practice of “latifundialization,” the concentration of land in the hands of the wealthy, which resulted in a wealthier nobility and a larger, poorer peasantry (Isa 5:8-10; Mic 2:2). Jezebel, the Tyreian princess, came to the throne of Israel with a monarch’s right to eminent domain firmly ingrained in her worldview, though this idea was anathema to the ideals of Israel and Judah.²⁰ Naboth was not financially pressed to sell his land, but even if he were, his response to Ahab’s offer makes it likely that Naboth would have pursued every means possible to avoid selling his familial estate. The disparity between the worldviews of Naboth and Jezebel led to their viewing the same action — Naboth’s refusal — as legitimate by one and treasonous by the other. Ahab’s REACTION, depressed acceptance, was borne of the conflict between his desires and his understanding of the rule of God’s law.

6.2.3 *COUNCIL*

Ahab speaks more during his interaction with Naboth than his report to Jezebel indicates:

Table 7 Naboth's repetition

	The Exchange with Naboth	The Report to Jezebel
The request	Give me your vineyard, so that I may have it for a vegetable	Give me your vineyard

¹⁷ Walsh, *The Fruit of the Vine*, 6, 52; Nahum M. Sarna, “Naboth’s Vineyard Revisited (1 Kings 21),” in *Tehillah Le-Moshe: Biblical and Judaic Studies in Honor of Moshe Greenberg* (eds. Mordechai Cogan, Barry L. Eichler, and Jeffrey H. Tigay; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2021), 119, nt. 1. Olive groves took even longer to reach maturity and bear fruit, and oil was also an important commodity and was used in sacrificial offerings as well.

¹⁸ Deborah Appler, “A Queen Fit For A Feast: Digesting the Jezebel Story (1 Kings 15: 29-2 Kings 9: 37)” (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 2004), 93–96.

¹⁹ Appler, “A Queen Fit For A Feast,” 60–62.

²⁰ Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible* (New York: Schocken Books, 2002), 210–11; Devadasan N. Premnath, “Latifundialization and Isaiah 5.8-10,” *JSOT* 13, no. 40 (1988): 53.

	garden, because it is near my house	
The offer	I will give you a better vineyard for it; or, if it seems good to you, I will give you its value in money.	for money; or else, if you prefer, I will give you another vineyard for it
The reply	The Lord forbid that I should give you my ancestral inheritance.	I will not give you my vineyard

Ahab shows more respect to Naboth, using deferential phrases and adding an explanation as to why he wants the land, than his report to Jezebel suggests. He may have omitted those points that the queen might view as weakness or submission. Similarly, Ahab's failure to mention Naboth's oath, along with emotional and religious reasons for his refusal, may have been an effort to portray Naboth as a stubborn insubordinate rather than an Israelite loyal to God and family.²¹

Because the rejection of Ahab's offer is stated as the reason for his displeasure (v. 4), we know that Ahab has accepted the legitimacy of the refusal. Andersen suggests that Ahab's edited retelling of the exchange was an attempt to hide his regard for God's laws from his Tyreian wife, a regard indicated by his subsequent repentance.²² While Ahab accepted that Naboth's refusal was immutable because the land was his familial inheritance, Jezebel, a foreigner, is not offered this information. Instead, she is merely told of Naboth's refusal. Ahab may have suspected that Naboth's reasons, which were based on God-given Israelite law, would neither interest nor deter Jezebel. Certainly the narrative presents no evidence to imply that had the queen been informed of the reason for the rejection of the offer she would have ceased her efforts to take the land. Ahab sulks when his desire is refused, but he does not seek help to attain it. Jezebel investigates her husband's unusual behavior and, unsolicited, offers her services.

Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, king of Tyre, desired the power that she had been accustomed to as chief priestess of the Ba'al cult in Tyre.²³ As queen and queen mother, she would stop at nothing in order to secure her influence through the authority of her husband and her son.²⁴ As will be seen in the analysis of ANE narratives, the COUNCIL function was essential in those narratives to attain the authority to act; thus, Jezebel's reliance on COUNCIL to achieve her goals is not surprising.

²¹ Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, 76–77.

²² Andersen, "The Socio-Juridical Background of the Naboth Incident," 50.

²³ Athalya Brenner-Idan, *The Israelite Woman: Social Role and Literary Type in Biblical Narrative* (2d ed., London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), 24–26.

²⁴ Zafirra Ben-Barak, "The Status and Right of the Gēbîrâ," *JBL* 110, no.1 (1991), 31–34; Andreasen, "The Role of the Queen Mother in Israelite Society," 186 discusses Jezebel's continued authority in the palace in Joram's absence.

6.2.4 PLAN

Jezebel's PLAN to acquire the vineyard for Ahab aims at more than acquiring a mere parcel of land, as the killing of Naboth demonstrates. Clearly, there were less violent ways to procure the land. Although Russel claims that Ahab's sullen REACTION shows that the king was not able to legally confiscate Naboth's land by royal prerogative alone, he cites other cases of ANE monarchs abusing their power to achieve their desires through legal ruses that did not include murder. The argument that had there been a way for Ahab to seize the land without murder, he would have used it, may underestimate Ahab's depression and passivity. It also disregards the level of Jezebel's fury at what she perceived to be Naboth's insubordination²⁵ especially when we consider the warning of kingly behavior in I Samuel 8:14 and the ANE customs regarding the royal rights to land to which Jezebel was accustomed. If there was no legal way to transfer the land, Ahab need not have even approached Naboth when a legal fiction could have been devised.²⁶

Assuming that the judicial ruse was the only way to legitimize Ahab's acquisition of the land raises the additional problem as to why ownership of the vineyard would be transferred to the king upon Naboth's death. The solutions that have been suggested for this problem are based on shaky assumptions regarding the diverse cultural practices that may (or may not) have been in effect in Israel at the time, many of which are not even related to the HB milieu.²⁷ Considering the ease with which Jezebel recruited elders, judges, and witnesses to collude with her, we can dismiss the possibility that the land could not have been seized by falsifying debt records without resorting to murder.²⁸ In addition, it appears that the royal couple were known to be corrupt; thus, the idea that they wanted to appear legitimate in the eyes of the law seems implausible. Thus we must conclude that the idea that Jezebel's corruption of the justice system and the fabrication of a capital case against Naboth were aimed at acquiring more than a vineyard: She wanted to avenge the affront to the monarchy by murdering Naboth.

The letter is sent to the elders of Jezreel in Ahab's name and sealed with his signet ring. Nevertheless, the elders of Naboth report back to Jezebel, not Ahab, once the command has been completed. Apparently it was known that she had issued the directive, indicating that she wielded at

²⁵ Sarna, "Naboth's Vineyard Revisited (1 Kings 21)," 122–24.

²⁶ Richard D. Nelson, *First and Second Kings*, (Interpretation; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 139.

²⁷ Russell, "The Hierarchy of Estates in Land and Naboth's Vineyard," 460–67.

²⁸ Devadasan N. Premnath, "Loan Practices in the Hebrew Bible," in *To Break Every Yoke: Essays in Honor of Marvin L. Chaney*, vol. 3 (eds. Robert B. Coote and Norman K. Gottwald; Social World of Biblical Antiquity 2; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2007), 178–80.

least as much power as he.²⁹ Garsiel points to the nearly letter-by-letter adherence of the elders to the instructions of Jezebel as evidence of the terror she inspired in the Israelites.³⁰

An important ANE parallel use of bearing false witness to achieve a desired end is found in ARM 10.7.3, a letter written by Inib-Šarri to her father Zimri-Lim, king of Mari.³¹ The letter testifies that Ibal-Addu, Inib-Šarri's husband, used this strategy to incriminate the regional Mari delegate, Itur-Asdu, in seditious activities in order to seize the property of Yaphur-Lim, a tribal leader. Ibal-Addu brazenly confiscates the house and kills Yaphur-Lim. To justify his crime, he gathers *sarāri*, dishonest men, composes a letter laying blame on Itur-Asdu, and sends the letter with the *sarāri* to Zimri-Lin. Inib-Šarri's letter to her father quotes Ibal-Addu's instructions to his dishonest men: "Go and take his house. But you will say the following, 'Itur-Asdu made us seize (the house) and so we killed that man.'" ³² The similarity to Jezebel's strategy regarding the vineyard of Naboth does not necessarily indicate literary borrowing, but does demonstrate the foreign influence manifested in Jezebel's approach to land ownership. The idea that monarchs had absolute rights over all land under their jurisdiction reflects the mores common among ANE rulers and foreign to HB ideals. Jezebel's alien values are also evident when she accuses Naboth of blasphemy against the king and against YHWH. The half-truths and false accusations necessary for Jezebel's PLAN appear in other HB narratives involving foreigners, such as those leveled by Haman against the entire Jewish people (Esth 3:8-9) and by Potifar's wife against Joseph (Gen 39:13-19). Similarly, the letter writing seen both in the intrigue of Ibal-Addu and Esther (Esth 3:12-13) provides an ANE context for attempting to thwart revenge by proclamation or proxy.

Another element more characteristic of ANE revenge narratives than HB revenge narratives is the dependency on Allies. Jezebel's PLAN depends on several Allies; initially, it appears that the queen herself is an Ally of Ahab. However, Ahab is quickly seen to be the alleged and incapacitated Victim. Jezebel seizes the initiative as an Ally, functioning as COUNCIL despite the fact that Ahab did not seek it and does not request details regarding the PLAN. First an Ally of the Victim, Jezebel becomes the Avenger and in that role employs the elders and nobles as her Allies. Duchter-Walls attempts to excuse the collusion of these Allies, claiming that in that hierarchal society they had little choice but to obey the ruthless rulers. However, the argument that the local elites had "nothing to gain and everything to lose" by not complying does not exonerate their cooperation with the

²⁹ Helen Paynter, "Ahab—Heedless Father, Sullen Son: Humour and Intertextuality in 1 Kings 21," *JSOT* 41, no. 4 (2017): 458–59.

³⁰ Moshe Garsiel, "The Significance of Repetitions and Comparisons for Understanding Characters, Points of View and Messages in the Story of Naboth's Vineyard," *Beit Mikra*, 60 (2015): 40–41.

³¹ Georges Dossin and André Finet, "Archives Royales de Mari, Tome X, Correspondance Féminine, Paris, Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner" *Bulletins de l'Académie Royale de Belgique* 64, no. 1 (1978): 306–9. I have used the translation of Kitz, "Naboth's Vineyard after Mari and Amarna."

³² Anne Marie Kitz, "Naboth's Vineyard after Mari and Amarna," *JBL* 134, no. 3 (2015): 532–35.

corrupt queen.³³ The mass rejection of Saul's condemnation of Jonathan (I Sam 14:45) and the refusal of Saul's men to murder the priests of Nob despite a royal command (I Sam 22:17) demonstrate that refusing a royal directive was, on occasion, a viable tactic when moral principles were at stake.

The Allies of Jezebel are instructed to hire additional Allies. A legitimate court case requires witnesses, and so the "scoundrels," the בְּנֵי בַלְיַעַל, are hired to testify against Naboth. The term בַּלְיַעַל is not a general term.³⁴ It appears twice in legal sections of the Pentateuch, first in the context of the laws of the Subverted City that has turned to idolatry by the בְּנֵי בַלְיַעַל (Deut 13:14), and second, where the term בַּלְיַעַל is used as an adjective to describe an inclination to refuse a loan for fear it will be expunged in the Sabbatical year (Deut 15:9). Such loans were generally taken to prevent the borrower from being forced to sell himself or his children into servitude, a desperate move made only after the family's land holdings had been sold; refusing a loan under such circumstances was considered especially cruel. The use of the term by a foreign, idol-worshipping queen who had no qualms about divesting an honest man of his landholdings has a special irony. Its use by the prophets appears in the Gibeah concubine narrative (Jud 19:22; 20:13), with reference to the corrupt sons of Eli (I Sam 2:12), and Nabal who refused to pay David for services rendered (I Sam 25:17, 25), and by the soldiers who fought at Ziklag and did not want to share the booty with those who did not actively fight (I Sam 30:22). All of these scenes depict individuals who attempt to appropriate what is not rightfully theirs, so Jezebel's employing such men to achieve her goal is appropriate. The term בַּלְיַעַל is also used in connection with attempting to discredit a ruler. The term is applied to people who mocked Saul (I Sam 10:27) and to Sheva, who denounced David (II Sam 20:1). Shimi uses this term when he attempts to discredit David during Absalom's rebellion (II Sam 16:7). בַּלְיַעַל can also indicate an attempt to usurp power. Jezebel's demand that בְּנֵי בַלְיַעַל be used in the trial against Naboth combines all of these aspects and, moreover, reflects her indignation at Naboth's refusal. She abuses power in an attempt to take what belongs to another, disregarding local laws of land ownership and brotherhood.

The story of Naboth's vineyard is not the only HB revenge narrative that uses the judicial system to justify an act of personal revenge. Saul's juridical dialogue with Ahimelech at Nob and the subsequent slaughter of the 85 priests similarly misuses the justice system (I Sam 22).³⁵ At Nob, however, Ahimelech affirmed the truth of the allegations while denying their criminality. The Naboth narrative does not include any attempt by Naboth to defend himself, and indeed, Naboth

³³ Patricia Dutcher-Walls, *Jezebel: Portraits of a Queen* (Collegeville:Liturgical Press, 2004), 120.

³⁴ Ruth Rosenberg, "The Concept of Biblical 'Belial,'" in *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1981), 35–38.

³⁵ Mabee, "Judicial Instrumentality in the Ahimelech Story," 22ff.; Bartor, "The Juridical Dialogue," 447.

would have had no defense against the false testimony of the base fellows who were witnesses. He made his stand against Ahab's initial request, and his voice is not heard again.

6.2.5 *COMPLICITY*

As stated above, the *COMPLICITY* function is not mentioned overtly in this narrative. Identifying *COMPLICITY* in this pericope requires some knowledge of basic court protocol — such as knowing that seating Naboth “at the head of the assembly” (vv. 9, 12) may have been an attempt to raise Naboth's expectations by assigning him an honorable role. This act ultimately makes Naboth's *COMPLICITY* even more devastating with regard to his fate. Seating Naboth “at the head of the assembly” furthers Jezebel's goals of accusing, trying, convicting, and punishing him, and gives Naboth a higher place from which to fall. Additionally, calling Naboth to the court proceedings unawares ensures that he does not have the opportunity to gather witnesses in his defense and that there are no dissenting voices at the trial.

6.2.6 *REVENGE ACT*

The description of the *REVENGE ACT* is nearly identical to the command sent to the elders in the verses that precede it. However, aside from the changes of person, four discrepancies in the two accounts appear that do not change the meaning but nonetheless bear significance. First, the men are commanded to bear witness against him. In the description of that command, however, a phrase is added: “against Naboth, in the presence of the people” (vs. 13). Second, the scoundrels are commanded to accuse Naboth directly: “You have cursed God and the king” (vs. 10). Once in court, however, the false witnesses make the statement in the third person: “Naboth cursed God and the king” (vs. 13). Third, the killing takes place outside of the city (vs. 13), which Jezebel did not specify. Finally, the command to “stone him” (vs. 10) is reported with extra words: “and stoned him with stones” (vs. 13).³⁶ The cumulative effect of these changes is to hint to the disquiet the elders and even the false witnesses begin to feel as they carry out Jezebel's commands. Also, these changes highlight Jezebel's desire to discredit and dishonor Naboth, a desire the elders and scoundrels did not share. Rofé argues that the change from second to third person, as well as the inclusion of the nation as the addressee, demonstrate that the “witnesses” could not bring themselves to directly address an innocent man and accuse him of a capital crime. Instead, they focused their address to the nation.³⁷ Conducting the stoning outside of the town meant that the miscarriage of justice was less public.³⁸ The addition of the superfluous “stoned him *with stones*,” follows the legal directive regarding one who curses in Leviticus 24:23. Bringing the stoning

³⁶ My translation

³⁷ Alexander Rofé, “The Vineyard of Naboth: The Origin and Message of the Story,” *VT* 38, no. 1 (1988): 92–93; Zakovitch, “The Tale of Naboth's Vineyard (1 Kings 21),” 394.

³⁸ Garsiel, “The Significance of Repetitions and Comparisons for Understanding Characters, Points of View and Messages in the Story of Naboth's Vineyard,” 40–41.

outside and adding the redundant phrase make the event “more tangible... and thus more horrifying,”³⁹ also indicating that the Allies doing the queen’s bidding may have found their work morally objectionable. The Allies may not have considered rebelling against the queen, but their actions betray their lack of identification with their queen’s edicts. These small actions hardly mitigate the Allies’ culpability, and clearly, their relative guilt is not the primary interest of the narrator. Rather, the focus remains on the consequences to the instigators of the crime. That the Allies of an Avenger are not harmed distinguishes the HB narrative from most ANE revenge narratives, as will be seen in the ANE section of this work.

6.2.7 *AFTERMATH*

Naboth’s death is repeated in various forms six times in the narrative beginning with Jezebel’s order in her letter to the elders of Jezreel, “And then carry him out, and stone him, that he die” (vs. 10). The next appearance is in the implementation of the command, “So they took him outside the city, and stoned him with stones, that he died” (vs. 13), which is followed by the report of the relay of information and its reception: The elders send word to Jezebel, “Naboth has been stoned; he is dead,” then the text relates that Jezebel receives the information, “As soon as Jezebel heard that Naboth was stoned, and was dead,” and then she relays it to Ahab, “for Naboth is not alive, but dead,” who in his turn receives it, “As soon as Ahab heard that Naboth was dead.” Only after Ahab receives word that Naboth is dead does he possess the vineyard. Indeed, after so much focus on Naboth’s death, the transfer of land seems like an afterthought. Repeating the same information across multiple functions draws attention to how the actants are fixated on Naboth’s murder rather than on the acquisition of the vineyard. A similar focus was seen earlier regarding the repetition of Naboth’s name.

The report of Naboth’s demise undergoes cleansing as it passes from the officials to Jezebel to Ahab and finally to Ahab’s internalization of the message. The differences between Jezebel and Ahab with regard to the reporting and absorbing of Naboth’s murder demonstrate the difference in their individual goals. Ahab was depressed because he could not acquire the vineyard; he remains focused on this goal, not on the death of Naboth. Jezebel, on the other hand, was not interested in the vineyard, but rather in its owner, who dared to refuse the king. Jezebel’s “sanitizing” of the murder in her report to Ahab indicates that she is aware of this difference. Thus, Elijah’s charge “Have you killed and also taken possession?” (vs. 19) is startling. God’s prophet will not suffer a whitewashing of the heinous crime. Naboth has not simply died, he has been murdered by a corrupt monarch. Elijah’s declaration is enough to shock Ahab into repentance. Not so Jezebel, who will meet her ignominious end according to Elijah’s prediction, defenestrated at the hands of her own

³⁹ Zakovitch, “The Tale of Naboth’s Vineyard (1 Kings 21),” 395.

servants. Afterwards, dogs devour her: “The corpse of Jezebel shall be like dung on the field in the territory of Jezreel, so that no one can say, ‘This is Jezebel’” (II Kgs 9:37). She will be unrecognizable, a devastating blow to ancient monarchs, who made great efforts to ensure the lasting memory of the deceased’s name and deeds.⁴⁰ Punishment by wiping out a name occurs frequently in ANE narratives and would have been difficult for the Tyreian princess to bear.⁴¹ Ahab’s repentance buys his escape, but his line is obliterated and his reign is remembered as a time of great evil (21:21, 24-26).

Lewis, in his discussion of the ancestral estate and its importance in ancient Israel, claims that one of the reasons for the attachment to ancestral land had to do with burial rites, as ancestral land was the location of the family tomb.⁴² Thus there is irony in the fact that Jezreel, the land which caused Jezebel’s downfall, was the site of the ancestral tomb of Naboth’s family (though he himself was denied a proper burial there), as well as the final resting place of Jezebel, whatever remained of her.

6.3 Conclusions

6.3.1 Liminality

Vengeance is a liminal act, and for as long as they hold that role, Avengers are liminal. Jezebel thus represents the archetype of the liminal personality. Being a product of both the Phoenician milieu from which she came and the Israelite environment in which she resides, she drifts between the two, not fully belonging to either. Clinging to the values of her father’s palace, she brings the deities of her homeland to be worshipped by the king (I Kgs 16:30-33; 21:25-26). She also brings alien ideas and values regarding monarchical prerogative and absolute power.⁴³ On the other hand, Jezebel values her status as an Israelite queen and shows familiarity with its laws and customs. She uses Ahab’s signet ring rather than her own, calls a public fast to indicate the severity of the accusation against Naboth, summons two witnesses to testify against Naboth, and chooses blasphemy as the false charge in the sham trial.⁴⁴ But despite Jezebel’s ability to use Israelite laws to her advantage, she has not truly internalized Israelite values as her wrath at

⁴⁰ Esther Brownsmith, “To Serve Woman Jezebel, Anat, and the Metaphor of Women as Food,” in *Researching Metaphor in the Ancient Near East* (Altertumswissenschaftliche Abhandlungen Contributions to the Study of Ancient World Cultures 141; eds. Marta Pallavidini and Ludovico Portuese; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2020), 40.

⁴¹ D. Levene, “You Shall Blot Out the Memory of Amalek’: Roman Historians on Remembering to Forget,” in *Historical and Religious Memory in the Ancient World*, (eds. Beate Dignas and R.R.R Smith; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 217–39; Timothy P. Seymour, “Personal Names and Name Giving in the Ancient Near East,” *UCLA Historical Journal* 4 (1983): 110–11. See further the discussion of name erasure in the ANE, pp. 283-284, Section 17.3.3.

⁴² Theodore J. Lewis, “The Ancestral Estate in 2 Samuel 14: 16,” *JBL*, 110, no. 4 (1991): 608.

⁴³ Don Seeman, “The Watcher at the Window: Cultural Poetics of a Biblical Motif,” *Prooftexts* 24, no. 1 (2004): 27–28; Andersen, “The Socio-Juridical Background of the Naboth Incident,” 46–47.

⁴⁴ Andersen, “The Socio-Juridical Background of the Naboth Incident,” 51; Kendall Reilly, “Jezebel: The Middle Road Less Taken” (Ph.D. diss., University of Melbourne, 2015), 78.

Naboth's refusal of the king's offer testifies. The liminal space she inhabits is amplified by her role as an Avenger, a status meant to be temporary and enacted outside the confines and strictures of society. Such a role is a natural one for Jezebel, who is never described as living *within* society's rules. Her vengeful nature is revealed prior to the Naboth episode when she seeks to avenge the slaughter of the prophets of Ba'al by Elijah (19:1-3), and it continues to be evident through the present narrative.

The defenestration of Jezebel (II Kgs 9:30-37) calls attention to the fact that her liminality is essential to her nature rather than a temporary state due to her Avenger status. Thresholds such as gateways, doors, and windows are physical manifestations of the liminal state. Passing from one domain into another through a threshold demonstrates the symbolic acquisition of a new status.⁴⁵ Just prior to her death, Jezebel is seen in the window, framed in her perpetually liminal state in the mind of the reader. The window, seen as an improper threshold, an opening that is present but not generally used as a passage, serves as a metaphor for the liminality of Jezebel. The liminal state is not sustainable and therefore she is thrown out of the window as a statement that all must either choose a side or have one chosen for them. In the AFTERMATH of the narrative, Jehu arrives at the palace and calls to the queen, who is attended by royal eunuchs, those liminal beings who are not fully male and are thus entrusted to wait on the queen.⁴⁶ The eunuchs answer Jehu's call and fulfill his command to end her reign "at the window." This paragon of liminality is pushed through the window by the eunuchs whose essence is liminal.

6.3.2 *Morphological Conclusions*

Rofé states that the goal of the Naboth narrative is to stigmatize the evil inherent in foreign women and thereby polemicize against intermarriage.⁴⁷ Amit casts doubt on this argument, pointing out that Jezebel's foreignness is not mentioned in this pericope nor included in the admonition to Ahab or in the declaration of her punishment.⁴⁸ While the pericope may not function as an overt polemic against foreign wives, the morphology and narratological choices of the narrative do contain elements that are native to ANE narratives of revenge rather than to the HB model and, moreover, "project in detail the hostility...to alien practice."⁴⁹

Most significant is the appearance of the COUNCIL function, nonexistent in HB narratives but indispensable to ANE narratives as will be discussed in the ANE analysis. Although this narrative includes Allies, these people are not swept up in the revenge they implement but escape

⁴⁵ Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, 19–25.

⁴⁶ Janet S. Everhart, "Jezebel: Framed by Eunuchs?," *CBQ* 72, no. 4 (2010): 692–95.

⁴⁷ Rofé, "The Vineyard of Naboth," 102.

⁴⁸ Yairah Amit, *Reading Biblical Narratives: Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 133–34.

⁴⁹ Peter R. Ackroyd, "Goddesses, Women and Jezebel," in *Images of Women in Antiquity* (eds. Averil Cameron and Amélie Kuhrt; London: Routledge, 2013), 256.

unscathed, which is unusual for Allies in the ANE revenge narratives. These divergences from the morphology of HB revenge narratives denote the presence of a foreign element.

Examining contrasting functions and divergences in the morphology of the text, such as Ahab's omissions in his report of Naboth's refusal, Jezebel's and Ahab's respective REACTIONS to the refusal, the omissions in Jezebel's report to the king of Naboth's murder, or the subtle alterations introduced by the elders in carrying out Jezebel's instructions, we are left with a narratological disparity that accentuates the alien practices of the Phoenician princess without ever directly mentioning her foreignness.

Chapter 7

7.0 Gideon on Succoth & Penuel, Gideon on Zebaḥ & Zalmunna (Judges 8:4-32)

Gideon's rise to prominence after his divine appointment in Judges 6 is followed by the war to end Midianite oppression in Judges 7; and the conflicts with Succoth and Penuel, the capture of the Midianite kings, and the creation of the ephod in Judges 8. The structure of the Gideon cycle in general (Judges 6-8), and of chapter 8 in particular, have been the subject of much scholarly debate. This study will focus on 8:4-35, a section containing two revenge narratives. Webb and Amit group 8:4-21 together, with Webb labeling the entire section "Gideon's Pursuit, Capture and Execution of Zebaḥ and Zalmunna," and relegating the incidents at Succoth and Penuel to a secondary status in the narrative.¹ Soggin divides the chapter into two parts — Gideon's activity in Transjordan (vv. 4-12) and his feud and vendetta (vv. 13-21) — differentiating between national and personal motivations.² Rather than focusing upon Gideon's location in chapter 8, this analysis will focus on the two revenge narratives that are intertwined in Judges 8:4-35. Assis focuses on the contrast between Gideon's quest for personal honor in the narratives of Jud 8 and his earlier altruistic years.³ After reviewing the INITIAL SCENE in Judges 8:4-5, the morphological analysis will divide Gideon's revenge on the towns of Succoth and Penuel (8:6-9, 8:13-17), from his revenge on the Midianite kings, Zebaḥ and Zalmunna (8:10-12, 8:18-21). The two revenge narratives unite for a shared REACTION, DEPARTURE and AFTERMATH in 8:22-35 and thus will be analyzed together. The analysis of the unusual structure of these two intertwined stories reveals several morphological anomalies that blur the distinctions between the earlier and later parts of Gideon's career to a greater degree than Assis asserts.

Table 8 Gideon on Zebaḥ & Zalmunna (Jud 8:4-5b, 10-12, 18-21)

Initial Scene	8:4, 5b	Gideon and his tired 300-man army are chasing Zebaḥ & Zalmunna.
Initial Scene	8:10	Zebaḥ & Zalmunna are in Karkor with their remaining 15,000 men.
PLAN	8:11-12	Gideon stealthily enters the camp, killing the enemy. He chases and captures the kings.
PLAN	8:18a	Gideon asks the kings for the location of the men they killed at Tabor.
COMPLICITY	8:18b	Under Gideon's questioning, the kings admit to killing men at Tabor.
WRONG	8:19a	Gideon reveals that the men were his brothers.
INTENT (OATH) TO AVENGE	8:19b	Gideon takes an oath to avenge his brothers' murders.

¹ Barry G. Webb, *The Book of Judges*, (NICOT; Grand Rapids:Eerdmans, 2012), 252–60; Yairah Amit, *The Book of the Judges: The Art of Editing* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 228–29.

² J. Alberto Soggin, *Judges (1981): A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1981), 148–57.

³ Elie Assis, *Self-Interest or Communal Interest: An Ideology of Leadership in the Gideon, Abimelech and Jephthah Narratives* (VTSupp 106; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 89ff.

COMMAND TO AVENGE	8:20a	Gideon commands his firstborn, Jether, to kill the kings.
ACQUISITION OF ALLY (Failed)	8:20b	Jether does not kill the kings.
REVENGE ACT	8:21a-b	Gideon kills Zebaḥ & Zalmunna.
AFTERMATH	8:21c	Gideon takes spoils.

Table 9 Gideon on Succoth & Penuel (Jud 8:4-9,13-17)

Initial Scene	8:4-5	Gideon and his tired 300-man army are chasing Zebaḥ & Zalmunna. Gideon asks the men of Succoth for support.
WRONG	8:6	The princes of Succoth refuse to help; they taunt Gideon.
REACTION TO THE WRONG/INTENT	8:7	Gideon threatens to “trample” the flesh of the refusers upon successfully capturing the kings.
WRONG	8:8	The men of Penuel likewise refuse.
REACTION TO THE WRONG/INTENT	8:9	Gideon declares he will break down the tower of Penuel upon his safe return.
PLAN	8:13	Gideon returns via a different route.
(Forced) COMPLICITY BY ALLY	8:14	Gideon forces a lad of Succoth to list the names of Gideon’s Avengees.
REACTION TO THE WRONG	8:15	Gideon displays the kings, recalling the humiliation of the earlier WRONGS.
REVENGE ACT	8:16	Gideon “teaches” the men of Succoth.
REVENGE ACT	8:17	Gideon destroys the tower of Penuel and kills its inhabitants.

Table 10 Closure of both Narratives (Jud 8:22-35)

AFTERMATH	8:22-23	Israel asks Gideon to rule as king. He refuses
REACTION TO THE REVENGE	8:24-27a	Gideon rallies the nation to donate gold; he makes the ephod.
AFTERMATH	8:27b	The ephod becomes a “snare.”
AFTERMATH	8:28	The Midianites are subdued. The land is quiet.
DEPARTURE	8:29-30	Gideon goes to live in his home. He has many children from many wives.
AFTERMATH	8:31	Abimelech is born to his concubine.
DEPARTURE	8:32	Gideon dies and is buried in the family tomb.
AFTERMATH	8:33-35	Israel strays from both God and Gideon in the wake of Gideon’s death.

In a classic morphological analysis, the order in which the functions appear is an important aspect of the tale-type. In most of the HB revenge narratives in this study, the reader is made aware of the WRONG before the REVENGE ACT is underway. In an unusual departure from the usual morphological sequence, this story depicts efforts toward the REVENGE ACT before the reader is

informed of the WRONG. Only after verse 19 does the text reveal that the entire chapter has been a plot to capture the kings and avenge the murder of Gideon's brothers.

As is true of any structural analysis, inversions, trebling, variations, and fluctuations of the functional sequence occur, indicating by their presence some underlying need or significance in the narrative. A full evaluation of how the deviations in this pericope contribute to our understanding of the story and to its effect on the reader will follow the morphological analysis of both revenge narratives. At this point, we should note that the intertwining of two stories in which one protagonist avenges himself twice (if the two cities count as one incident) symbolizes the inner conflict of this servant of God turned Avenger.

7.1 *Establishing the Morphology*

7.1.1 *Gideon on Zebah & Zalmunna (Jud 8:4-5b, 10-12, 18-21)*

The Initial Scene for both revenge episodes (Jud 8:4-5b) indicates that Gideon's defeat of the Midianite army and the demise of their princes, Orev and Ze'ev, at the hands of the Ephraimites (7:16-25), has not yet ended the conflict:

4 Then Gideon came to the Jordan and crossed over, he and the three hundred who were with him, exhausted but still pursuing. 5 So he said to the men of Succoth, "Please give some loaves of bread to my followers, for they are exhausted, and I am pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian."

After his encounter with the people of Succoth and Penuel, Gideon enacts his PLAN, quietly entering the camp and slaughtering the remainder of the army. The kings, Zebah & Zalmunna, are captured:

10 Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor with their army, about fifteen thousand men, all who were left of all the army of the people of the east, for one hundred twenty thousand men bearing arms had fallen. 11 So Gideon went up by the caravan route east of Nobah and Jogbehah and attacked the army, for the army was off its guard. 12 Zebah and Zalmunna fled, and he pursued them and took the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and threw all the army into a panic.

Only in retrospect is this episode understood to be part of Gideon's PLAN FOR REVENGE. At this point, the text does not reveal that this is a revenge narrative. Rather, Gideon's actions appear to be a continuation of the war that began in Judges 7, and Gideon is eliminating any possibility that the enemy will regroup.

After dealing with the rebellious cities, he turns his focus to the Midianite kings:

18 Then he said to Zebah and Zalmunna, "What about the men whom you killed at Tabor?" They answered, "As you are, so were they, every one of them; they resembled the sons of a king." 19 And he replied, "They were my brothers, the sons of my mother; as the Lord lives, had you saved them alive, I would not kill you."

Gideon's question to the captives evokes their circuitous reply, which comprises their COMPLICITY — an admission to having killed his brothers. When Gideon declares the WRONG in verse 19a, the reader understands that Gideon is about to avenge it. Taking the OATH ה' יהי' makes

his INTENT TO AVENGE clear to Avengee and reader, revealing that pursuing the kings was not to gain military advantage, nor was it a divine directive as in 7:20. Rather, this time his actions are personal. The revelation of the WRONG conveys the fact that the Victims were not merely Gideon's brethren, but his maternal brothers, murdered by the men who now stand before him. Gideon's goal since the war's end at the close of chapter 7 has been to avenge his brothers' deaths at the hands of the Midianite leaders. Now his OATH confirms that he is no longer fighting a battle on behalf of the nation. Despite Gideon's strong personal motivation for revenge, he displays no REACTION TO THE WRONG either at the time of his brothers' deaths or in this report.

Immediately after his OATH TO AVENGE, Gideon attempts to ACQUIRE AN ALLY in Jether, his firstborn: "So he said to Jether his firstborn, 'Go kill them!' But the boy did not draw his sword, for he was afraid, because he was still a boy" (v. 20). Pedersen claims that Gideon was attempting a "double restoration" in avenging his brothers' deaths by taking the kings' honor while also bestowing a "man's honor" upon his young son.⁴ Jether's refusal of the command demonstrates that Gideon has overstepped, and Jether will have to become a man another day. The slaying of the kings therefore serves one purpose: to restore the breach created by the killing of the brothers. When Jether is unable to avenge his uncles, the kings demand an honorable death and Gideon obliges:

21 Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, "You come and kill us, for as the man is, so is his strength." So Gideon went and killed Zebah and Zalmunna, and he took the crescents that were on the necks of their camels.

The REVENGE ACT is reported in a concise fashion that reflects a lack of emotion on Gideon's part. Though Gideon's oath demonstrates that he was prepared to spare the lives of the conquered rulers, his obligation of blood vengeance dictates that he choose to restore the family honor.⁵ In the AFTERMATH of the vengeance, Gideon takes crescent ornaments, symbols of foreign royal power and possibly invested with cultic significance, an act that draws into question the purity of his motives for the REVENGE ACT.⁶

⁴ Pedersen, *Israel, Its Life and Culture*, 1:378–80.

⁵ Linda A. Dietch, "Authority and Violence in the Gideon and Abimelech Narratives: A Sociological and Literary Exploration of Power, Violence, and Ethics in Judges 6–9" (Ph.D. diss., Drew University, 2012), 89; Soggin, *Judges*, 369.

⁶ David Ilan, "The Crescent-Lunate Motif in the Jewelry of the Bronze and Iron Ages in the Ancient Near East," *Proceedings, 9th ICAANE 1* (2014): 143–46; Renate Rosenthal-Heginbottom, "Artists and Artisans: Reflections on Nabatean Minor Art—Clay, Metal, and Stone," in *The Nabatean in the Negev* (ed. Renate Rosenthal-Heginbottom; Haifa: Reuben & Edith Hecht Museum, 2003), 26. These items were not merely regal but were representative of the deities worshiped by their bearers. If so, their eventual inclusion in the ephod which brought the Israelites to idol worship is all the more poignant.

7.1.2 *Gideon on Succoth & Penuel (Jud 8:4-9,13-17)*

The verses that introduce the revenge against the Midianite kings also serve as an Initial Scene for the revenge against Succoth and Penuel. This time, however, Gideon's request for provisions for the army has more significance:

4 Then Gideon came to the Jordan and crossed over, he and the three hundred who were with him, exhausted but still pursuing. 5 **So he said to the men of Succoth, "Please give some loaves of bread to my followers, for they are exhausted,** and I am pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian."⁷

Gideon's concern for his soldiers and their sustenance is a practical matter: They cannot continue the chase without food. Nonetheless, Gideon distances himself from them through his use of the singular in phrasing his request, implying that his action — his pursuit of the kings — is the underlying reason why the "people following him" need bread, i.e., because he is chasing the Midianite kings. This contrasts with the prior use of plural and compound subjects in the national war with Midian in chapter 7. The leaders of Succoth respond in kind, using **ָ**, the singular, to reply: "But the officials of Succoth said, 'Do you already have in your possession the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna, that we should give bread to your army?'" (v. 6).

Following this blunt refusal, Gideon's REACTION TO THE WRONG reveals his confidence in victory and his conviction that his mission has divine support. It is both a REACTION as well as a statement of INTENT: "Gideon replied, 'Well then, when the Lord has given Zebah and Zalmunna into my hand, I will trample your flesh on the thorns of the wilderness and on briars'" (v. 7). Gideon separates himself from his army; yet when he utters his threat, he does not merely boast of imminent victory, he does so with assurance as to the rightness of his mission, crediting God with the future capture of the kings. However, Gideon also appears to conflate his personal motive for revenge with the national cause, and attributing his forthcoming success to God does not alter this perception.

The refusal of assistance at Succoth is repeated at Penuel, and Gideon again follows the WRONG with a threatening REACTION that announces his INTENT TO AVENGE:

8 From there he went up to Penuel and made the same request of them, and the men of Penuel answered him as the people of Succoth had answered. 9 So he said to the men of Penuel, "When I come back victorious, I will break down this tower."⁸

One difference between the two incidents is that Gideon's REACTION TO THE WRONG in Succoth is directed against the officers of the city while at Penuel it is directed against the populace. Reviv claims the "men" of Succoth and Penuel indicate the presence of an oligarchical form of governance in which "men" meant a council of town representatives. The **ָ** in Succoth may have

⁷ Following JPS translation.

⁸ My translation

been chosen members of this group.⁹ Penuel, apparently did not have this select class to answer Gideon and therefore all the people are held accountable. The threatened punishments differ, perhaps, because Penuel had a tower and Succoth did not. Ironically, Gideon's "return in peace" (v. 9) leads to the end of a peaceful existence for these towns. The residents may have scoffed at his announcement, but upon his return, Gideon's words are recalled.

Following the capture of Zebaḥ and Zalmunna, the text returns to the Penuel and Succoth narrative. Gideon and his men make their way back to the cities through an unexpected route, bypassing Penuel to arrive at Succoth first and incorporating the element of surprise into his PLAN for revenge.¹⁰ Gideon captures an Ally of the Avengees, and through forced COMPLICITY, acquires a list of the officers and elders of Succoth so that he can punish all responsible parties:

13 When Gideon son of Joash returned from the battle by the ascent of Heres, 14 he caught a young man, one of the men of Succoth, and questioned him, and he listed for him the officials and elders of Succoth, seventy-seven people.¹¹

The forced COMPLICITY further humiliates the Avengees by using their own Ally to aid the Avenger. Earlier, the men had mocked Gideon, implying that he did not have the military capacity to capture the kings. Now Gideon approaches, kings held captive, and captures a young man who is literate and has information crucial to Gideon's revenge. That the young man had been allowed to leave the city unprotected demonstrates the extent to which Succoth's citizens had let their guard down. Upon achieving his goal, Gideon holds his prisoners rather than disposing of them immediately:

15 Then he came to the people of Succoth and said, "Here are Zebah and Zalmunna, about whom you taunted me, saying, 'Do you already have in your possession the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna, that we should give bread to your troops who are exhausted?'" 16 So he took the elders of the city, and he took thorns of the wilderness and briers, and with them he trampled the men of Succoth.¹²

Gideon is not interested in tormenting the captives as was often the practice in the wake of ANE battles. Rather, his REACTION TO THE WRONG of the towns is to teach the towns a lesson regarding his power and the extent of his rule.¹³ The towns had denied the army the provisions it sorely needed; furthermore, the people had mocked Gideon, אָשַׁר הִרְפְּתֶם אוֹתִי, scoffing at his ability to capture the kings. The REVENGE ACTS are, in the Avenger's own words, personal acts intended to defend his own honor. While the threat in verse 7 was a technical term, Gideon

⁹ Hanoch Reviv, "Two Notes to Judges VIII, 4—17," *Tarbiz*, 1969, 313.

¹⁰ Wolfgang Bluedorn, *Yahweh versus Baalism: A Theological Reading of the Gideon-Abimelech Narrative* (JSOTSupp 329; London: A&C Black, 2001), 158; Daniel I. Block, *Judges, Ruth: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture* (NAC 6; Nashville: B&H, 1999), 292. Bluedorn renders "ascent of Heres," in contrast to the "caravan trail" which he took on the way to Karkor. The rabbinic commentators (Radak, Metzudat David, Ralbag,) following Targum Jonathan, claim it as an indication of the time of day of the attack.

¹¹ My translation

¹² My translation

¹³ J. Clinton McCann, *Judges (Interpretation)*: Louisville: John Knox, 2002), 69.

promised to trample the flesh of the offenders (וַיִּדְעַ פְּהָם) in verse 16. The REVENGE ACTS thus fulfill the INTENT Gideon declared and demonstrate that Gideon is true to his word: He captured the kings and exacted the stated revenge.

In Succoth, Gideon's request for bread from the "men of town" is summarily refused. In response, he publicly declares his victorious return (v. 15) but retaliates only against the elders who committed the offense.¹⁴ While some have noted that Gideon's actions exceeded his words in Peniel by killing the men of the city, Sasson claims that the מגדל is not a tower but a citadel, and only those who fled to it for protection that suffered the fate of those who misplace their trust.¹⁵

7.1.3 Closure of Both Narratives (Jud 8:22-35)

The summation of both acts of revenge is reported with the closure of the Gideon cycle. Like the rest of the pericope, the closing includes multiple oscillating functions. The first action in the AFTERMATH is from the people, who speak decisively in response to the revenge in which Gideon demands honor and even more so in response to the earlier revenge in which Gideon subordinated his personal goals to the power of God:

22 Then the Israelites said to Gideon, "Rule over us, you and your son and your grandson also, for you have delivered us out of the hand of Midian." 23 Gideon said to them, "I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you; the Lord will rule over you."

Reverting to his pre-Avenger state, Gideon eschews any personal honor. He counters the nation's claim that "you have delivered us out of the hand of Midian," with "the Lord will rule over you," recognizing the source of the nation's salvation and his own. The people's subsequent REACTION TO THE REVENGE is more specifically tied to the revenge narratives:

24 Then Gideon said to them, "Let me make a request of you: each of you give me an earring he has taken as booty." (For the enemy had golden earrings because they were Ishmaelites.) 25 "We will willingly give them," they answered. So they spread a garment, and each threw into it an earring he had taken as booty. 26 The weight of the golden earrings that he requested was one thousand seven hundred shekels of gold (apart from the crescents and the pendants and the purple garments worn by the kings of Midian and the collars that were on the necks of their camels). 27 Gideon made an ephod of it and put it in his town, in Ofrah, and all Israel prostituted themselves to it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and to his family.

Gideon's request that the people donate gold to make an ephod utilizes the same word, נתן, that appeared in his appeal for bread (vv. 4-6). This time, the request is met eagerly (to his and the people's subsequent downfall).

The alternating functions of AFTERMATH and DEPARTURES reflect the two distinct legacies of Gideon. The positive legacy, expressed in the AFTERMATH (v. 28), shows how

¹⁴ Webb, *The Book of Judges*, 257. discusses the possible distinction between שרים and זקנים, concluding that there was likely some overlap between the two groups, which together numbered seventy-seven.

¹⁵ Webb, *The Book of Judges*, 257; Jack M. Sasson, *Judges 1–12*, (AYB 6D; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 363.

Gideon's DEPARTURE from the public sphere is marked by the calm enjoyed by the righteous. The typological numbers forty and seventy symbolize a life well lived.¹⁶ Yet this legacy is followed by a darker detail: The son of Gideon's concubine is singled out, not his firstborn, Jether, who Gideon had hoped would walk in his footsteps (v. 31). Nevertheless, his final DEPARTURE is peaceful and indicative of those received by God's faithful:

28 So Midian was subdued before the Israelites, and they lifted up their heads no more. So the land had rest forty years in the days of Gideon. 29 Jerubbaal son of Joash went to live in his own house. 30 Now Gideon had seventy sons, his own offspring, for he had many wives. 31 His concubine who was in Shechem also bore him a son, and he named him Abimelech. 32 Then Gideon son of Joash died at a good old age and was buried in the tomb of his father Joash at Ofrah of the Abiezrites.

The vacillations of the narrative conclude the Gideon cycle on a cruel note, however, both for the nation and for the legacy of Gideon:

33 As soon as Gideon died, the Israelites relapsed and prostituted themselves with the Baals, making Baal-berith their god. 34 The Israelites did not remember the Lord their God, who had rescued them from the hand of all their enemies on every side, 35 and they did not exhibit loyalty to the house of Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) in return for all the good that he had done to Israel.

7.2 *Analysis & Context*

The functions of both revenge narratives will be analyzed together in order to compare and contrast them. Due to the unusual sequence in each narrative, the order of functions in the discussion below will often deviate from the order of their appearance in the pericope.

7.2.1 *Initial Scene*

The preamble to the kings' pursuit and capture lies not in the Midianite oppression of the Israelites (6:1-6) nor in the large-scale war with Midian in chapter 7, but in the attempt by the Ephraimites to capture the Midianite commanders, Orev and Ze'ev (7:25; 8:3). This is the first time we hear of an attempt to capture the leaders of the Midianites, and the next 18 verses revolve around this theme. As Boling notes, the wrong leaders were captured, and a continuous chase by Gideon ensued.¹⁷ We need not accept Boling's mistaken-identity theory to appreciate the image of captured leaders and of Gideon's bone-weary, famished band of men in need of bread, which led to Gideon's appeal to the men of Succoth.

7.2.2 *INTENT TO AVENGE*

The incident of the request for bread and the audacious refusal could have remained a parenthetical incident on Gideon's path to avenge his brothers. Gideon is focused on revenge, and he declares in his INTENT that these offenses will not go unpunished even as he leaves to pursue

¹⁶ F. Charles Fensham, "The Numeral Seventy in the Old Testament and The Family of Jerubbaal, Arab, Panammuwa and Athirat," *PEQ* 109, no. 2 (1977): 113–15.

¹⁷ Robert G. Boling, *Judges* (AB 17; New York: Doubleday, 1975), 152.

the kings. The appearance of the same scene in two different towns indicates that neither the WRONG nor Gideon's response were anomalous. Gideon departs from the towns, captures the kings, and then states his INTENT TO AVENGE his brothers' murders by way of an OATH. This Avenger wants to set the record straight. Although exacting immediate revenge on the towns was within Gideon's reach, he merely declares his INTENT TO AVENGE. His deliberate delay in carrying out his stated intention until he has the captives in hand challenges the suggestion that he will be unable to capture the kings.

Similarly, Gideon invokes the name of YHWH in an inverted OATH TO AVENGE his brothers' murder before he sets out to accomplish this task. His use of a negative conditional oath results in an ironic paronomasia that emphasizes life and its absence — *אֹתָם לֹא הִרְגֵתִי ה' לֹו הַחַיִּיתֶם חַי* — *אֶתְכֶם* — as the cause of the kings' imminent deaths.¹⁸ Because Gideon has stated that this offense is the reason for his vengeance, his declaration that he would have forgiven the kings for seven years of Midianite oppression and humiliation (6:1-6) is surprising and removes any doubt that his quarrel is individual rather than communal. However, the personal nature of the act does not preclude the possibility of its necessity under the law, as will be discussed.

7.2.3 *COMPLICITY*

Gideon conducts a show trial with the Midianite kings in order to gain an admission, presumably for the public record or his own posterity. The kings' COMPLICITY in the form of an admission (v. 18) is needed to justify the blood vengeance.¹⁹ Establishing publicly that Zebaḥ and Zalmunna slayed Gideon's brothers is essential to the vengeance if Gideon is operating within the blood-avenger laws. Because Zebaḥ and Zalmunna are intentional murderers, their self-incrimination constitutes COMPLICITY in the narrative's presentation of Gideon as seeking legitimate blood vengeance. Gideon's display of "an awareness of the rights to justice of his enemy"²⁰ demonstrates that he values the appearance of legality. Whether this appearance reflects reality is a matter of debate.

7.2.4 *REACTION TO THE WRONG*

No REACTION of Gideon to the murders of his brothers is reported, in stark contrast to his indignant REACTIONS regarding Succoth and Penuel. Gideon repeats the singular second person phrasing used by the men in their refusal (v. 6) upon his return (v. 15), adding *וְאָשַׁר הִרְפָּתֶם אוֹתִי* to indicate the wounding effect of their words. He feels their insults as a personal WRONG, and by

¹⁸See Ziegler, *Promises to Keep*, 94, nt. 37 regarding the oath formula *ה' חי* as generally more positive (as compared with *כה יעשה*) and containing references to life rather than death.

¹⁹Tulloch, "Blood-Vengeance among the Israelites in the Light of Its Near Eastern Background," 190, nt. 2 defends the categorization of this episode as true blood vengeance despite its wartime background and foreign perpetrators. What is more significant for the present study, is that the text takes for granted that blood-vengeance was warranted.

²⁰John M. Salmon, *Judicial Authority in Early Israel: An Historical Investigation of Old Testament Institutions* (Ph.D. diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1968), 71.

uttering words that make the personal nature of his REVENGE ACT clear, he relinquishes the advantages he would have gained in garnering support from Israelite towns if his cause had been seen to be a national one.²¹ His delay in eliminating the Midianite kings, long-time oppressors of Israel, in order to prove a point to cities that doubted his prowess further accentuates the personal nature of Gideon's actions.

7.2.5 *WRONG*

The WRONGS of Succoth and Penuel are immediately apparent; the WRONG of the kings becomes clear only after their admission (v. 18) and Gideon's subsequent revelation (v. 19). In the wake of this new information, the underlying purpose of Gideon's pursuit and the conflict with the two cities that resulted becomes clear. The exact nature of the cities' WRONG depends on whether they were Israelite or foreign cities. Dietch blames their refusal on Gideon's offensive demeanor. Nonetheless, a refusal to aid the army constitutes a WRONG that is a punishable offence regardless of bruised sensibilities.²² Malamat cites Hittite vassal-treaties in which stipulations to provide an advance base of operations were a condition, with a consequence attached for noncompliance.²³ Although we cannot deduce from this that Succoth and Penuel were non-Israelite cities, we can suppose that denying aid was in breach of the expected duties of the cities.²⁴ An implied expectation for aid in combination with the volatile REACTION the denial provokes suggests that the cities were Israelite cities shirking their responsibilities to their countrymen.²⁵ Because Gideon was set on vengeance when the cities refused his request, he may have been too preoccupied to employ the degree of diplomatic finesse evident in his dealings with the Ephraimites in verses 1-3.²⁶ Unlike Saul (I Sam 11:12-13) and David (II Sam 16:10-13), Gideon lacks the ability to ignore an insult. The WRONG is thus not only the refusal of material aid, but the humiliation of the proud leader.

The anger and threats to the men of Succoth and Penuel for their refusal to provide sustenance, the fact that the Midianites did not believe they were being pursued (as evidenced by the use of בטה in v.11), and the change to the singular to describe the pursuit in vv. 4-7, 11-12, all

²¹ Dietch, "Authority and Violence in the Gideon and Abimelech Narratives," 96 claims that Gideon was not seeking honor, but offering it to the men of Succoth and Penuel. They would gain glory in exchange for aid in the kings' capture as reflected in his exchange with the Ephraimites in 8:1-3; Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 290, discusses a possible need to align the Transjordanian tribes with their supportive Cisjordanian brethren. These explanations are difficult given Gideon's reaction which addresses the effect of their refusal on him.

²² Dietch, "Authority and Violence in the Gideon and Abimelech Narratives," 85-87; Y. Dishon, "Gideon and the Beginning of the Monarchy," *Tarbiz*, 41 (1972), 259.

²³ Abraham Malamat, "The Punishment of Succoth and Penuel by Gideon in the Light of Ancient Near Eastern Treaties," in *The Moshe Weinfeld Jubilee Volume: Studies in the Bible and the Ancient Near East, Qumran, and Post-Biblical Judaism* (eds. Chaim Cohen, Avi Hurvitz, and Shalom M. Paul; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 70-71.

²⁴ Reviv, "Two Notes to Judges VIII, 4-17," 311-12.

²⁵ Assis, *Self-Interest or Communal Interest: An Ideology of Leadership in the Gideon, Abimelech and Jephthah Narratives*, 95. Malamat does note the rarity of the aforementioned vassal-treaties.

²⁶ As to the suggestion that the cities were aware that this was not a national, but rather a personal mission and thus did not feel obligated to provide aid, see Yezekiel Kaufmann, "The Gideon Stories." *Tarbiz* 30 (1960): 142. This is speculation, as there is no indication that they were privy to this information.

indicate that at Karkor (v. 10) a new stage to the battle has commenced, one that is personal rather than national.²⁷ At this point, one violent revenge story with Gideon as Avenger becomes a second revenge narrative. However, the WRONG of the kings against Gideon differs from the WRONG of the cities against him. The latter questioned Gideon's abilities as a leader, a personal insult. The former comprises a challenge to family honor; the murder of Gideon's brothers requires blood vengeance. Nozick explains the divergent narratives by differentiating between revenge, which is personal and involves an emotional facet, and retribution, which limits the emotion to "pleasure that justice is being done."²⁸ Peels discusses the institution of blood vengeance and its motives, citing psychological considerations such as pride, honor, and wrath alongside influences that are moral, superstitious, material, or religious. He explains that blood vengeance not only brings the wrongdoer to justice, it restores a sense of balance and wholeness to a family that has been damaged. In addition, blood vengeance addresses the insult to God, whose commandment has been flouted.²⁹ Blood vengeance can be seen to mix personal interest with retribution for the greater good of the clan and society. It involves a *gō'ēl*, the redeemer, who acts in the interest of the family and as the agent of the State. Phillips even claims that the *gō'ēl* in later times was a court-appointed officer.³⁰

Blood vengeance may or may not entail rage on the part of the Avenger. In general, the more closely an act of blood vengeance resembles the legal blood vengeance depicted in Numbers 35, the less emotion its Avenger displays.³¹ Ziegler notes that usage of the oath formula *ה'י ה* (as opposed to *כה יעשה*) indicates an oath "spoken in a more measured and composed fashion" and not a "spontaneous burst of emotion." Thus, "...a speaker who takes an oath using the formula *ה'י ה* appears to be more restrained."³² By this reasoning, Gideon's selection of this oath formula reflects a calm and deliberate state of mind and emotion. Salmon, tracing the development of blood vengeance in the HB, observes Gideon's "strikingly formal" tone in the killing of the kings, which leaves the impression of an orderly, even "juridical" approach to the revenge.³³ Gideon approaches the ideal Avenger in a blood vengeance that is conducted for the honor of those who were slain rather than for assuaging his own outrage. Pedersen comments,

²⁷ Bluedorn, *Yahweh versus Baalism*, 152. Bluedorn also claims that there appears to be a deliberate attempt to conceal the target as v. 4 has the only HB usage of *ה'י ה* in the qal without a direct object. The pursuit is not for a military victory, as that has already been achieved.

²⁸ Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations*, 366.

²⁹ Peels, *The Vengeance of God*, 79–81.

³⁰ Anthony Phillips, *Ancient Israel's Criminal Law: A New Approach to the Decalogue* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1970.), 104–5.

³¹ See Deut. 19:6 where Targum Onklos renders: *וְיָדוּף גְּאֵי לְדָמָא בְּתַר קְטוּלָא, אֲרִי יִיחַם לְבִיָּה דְלִמָּא*. P. Craigie, "The Book of Deuteronomy (NICOT; Grand Rapids, 1976), 267. "The problem envisaged...is that the avenger of blood might be consumed with rage." [emphasis added], though this is not the ideal.

³² Ziegler, *Promises to Keep*, 92–93.

³³ Salmon, *Judicial Authority in Early Israel*, 71–74.

The impressiveness of this scene is due to the calm and precision with which question, answer and action follow upon each other. There is neither sentimentality, fear nor malignant satisfaction; both parties are agreed that whatever happens *must* happen, and no one tries to shirk.³⁴

With the kings under his control, Gideon needs only to establish himself as a legitimate blood-avenger to achieve justice for his brothers.³⁵ The repeated use of familial pronouns in verses 18-21 (בני המלך, אחי בני אמי, יתר בכורו) stresses the ancestral bond and responsibility weighing on Gideon. He acts as the *gō'ēl*, displaying none of the rage that the personal affronts by the men of Succoth and Penuel provoke.³⁶ Nevertheless, this REVENGE ACT is not national in nature, despite the fact that foreign kings were often sought out in battle because their capture or killing resulted in their army's dispersal and ended the battle.³⁷ Furthermore, Gideon's declaration that he would have spared the kings' lives had they not killed his brothers shows that he had other acceptable options on the national level, such as maiming or imprisoning the kings.³⁸ Even though it is not to rectify a personal insult like the offenses of the cities, the REVENGE ACT against the kings is personal in the sense that it stems from what Gideon sees as his obligation as blood-avenger.

The ideal act of blood vengeance requires not only an absence of emotion but also a purity of purpose, and in this aspect, Gideon's blood vengeance falls short because of two details. First is Gideon's attempt to ACQUIRE AN ALLY in the young and inexperienced Jether. Gideon's desire to dishonor the kings by having a young man of low rank kill them and his concomitant wish to raise Jether's standing clouds his singularity of purpose. Second, taking royal spoils, the crescent-shaped pendants, also draws into question Gideon's motives. These aspects do not invalidate the nature of Gideon's action, as Assis suggests by asserting that in this episode Gideon is concerned only with his personal good, but they do reflect Gideon's difficulty to maintain purity of action in his REVENGE ACT against the kings.³⁹

³⁴ Pedersen, *Israel, Its Life and Culture*, 1:379.

³⁵ The validity of self-incriminating testimony, as well as blood vengeance for war time killings (see I Kgs. 2:32), is questionable. Gideon is clearly attempting to justify his actions according to the accepted Israelite customs. Webb, *Judges*, 261, argues that the killings occurred in the course of warfare, though we actually have no information regarding the specifics surrounding the deaths of the brothers. Furthermore, if, as was reported, they were *בְּנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ*; perhaps they should have been shown the deference for royalty which Gideon claims he would have shown to Zebah and Zalmunna.

³⁶ See Tullock, "Blood-Vengeance among the Israelites in the Light of Its Near Eastern Background," 190; Pedersen, *Israel, Its Life and Culture*, 1:251. for differing views on the status of Gideon's act vis-à-vis blood vengeance. What is clear is that Gideon himself believed his act was justified as a legitimate *gō'ēl*.

³⁷ See I Kgs 22:29-36.

³⁸ Carly Lorraine Crouch, *War and Ethics in the Ancient Near East: Military Violence in Light of Cosmology and History* (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 407; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 42, nt. 22.

³⁹ Assis, *Self-Interest or Communal Interest: An Ideology of Leadership in the Gideon, Abimelech and Jephthah Narratives*, 97.

7.2.6 *AFTERMATH, REACTION TO THE REVENGE & DEPARTURE*

As has been discussed, the state of Avenger is intended to be liminal, not permanent, and in the wake of the REVENGE ACTS we see the extent to which Gideon has succeeded in exiting his Avenger statue and rejoining the community. The people invite him to rule, using language that shows that they now find value in the family whose honor Gideon defended: The repetition of “son” in verses 22-23 mirrors the emphasis on Gideon’s family in his blood vengeance against the kings. However, Gideon refuses the offer to rule, asserting God’s authority and maintaining the ideal that blood vengeance is not for personal honor but for the restoration of justice as described in Biblical law:

11 But if someone at enmity with another lies in wait and attacks and takes the life of that person and flees into one of these cities, 12 then the elders of the killer’s city shall send to have the culprit taken from there and handed over to the avenger of blood to be put to death. 13 Show no pity; you shall purge the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, so that it may go well with you. (Deut 19:11-13)

There is no absolution from murder. Gideon’s demand for revenge from the kings is in accordance with the accepted rules of blood vengeance and shows no indication that he seeks power. Upon its completion, he steps out of the role of Avenger and rejects the honor offered by the populace, redirecting it to God, to whom he attributes full credit for the salvation. At the same time, it is important to note that the people ask Gideon to rule over them only after he has killed the kings. Although his actions are motivated by familial responsibilities, Gideon’s treatment of the kings brings him a regal status — he is their equal — which prompts the people’s request for his leadership.

The creation of the ephod and its placement in Ofrah are a direct REACTION TO THE REVENGE on Zebaḥ and Zalmunna and the victory over Midian. Gideon asks for donations of gold from the war spoils, revealing that the people, like Gideon himself, benefited materially from the war with Midian. But by dedicating part of their newfound wealth to God, the people acknowledge the source of their victory. Gideon contributes the crescent pendants, perhaps in an attempt to consecrate the spoils and purify his vengeance. The use of the nation’s and of Gideon’s spoils, collected after his personal revenge, connect the ephod to Gideon the Avenger, not Gideon the Savior.

Many have argued that the ephod’s installation at Ofrah resembles Gideon’s bid for personal honor at Succoth and Penuel.⁴⁰ Differences abound, however: With regard to Succoth and Penuel, Gideon attributes his future victory to God (8:7). God is not mentioned in the construction of the ephod. On the other hand, Gideon links God’s assistance in war with his right to avenge his honor

⁴⁰ See, for example, Lillian R. Klein, *The triumph of irony in the Book of Judges* (BLS 14; Sheffield: Almond Press, 1988), p. 121

on the cities (vv. 7, 9), implying that he equates his honor with God's will. The ephod, whose purpose is not stated, can be seen as a REACTION TO THE REVENGE ACT in that Gideon's REVENGE ACT on the cities left him with a taste for recognition despite his knowledge that true glory is reserved for God. It becomes a "snare to Gideon and his family," representing a failed attempt to balance his passion for prestige with his desire to honor God.

Gideon, as a servant of God, is remembered well and his DEPARTURE is described in terms similar to those of the righteous judges and kings of Israel. He returns to private life, sires numerous offspring, and is buried in the family grave. The land is quiet for a period of forty years, forty being the typological number signifying a successful tenure as judge (Jud 3:11; 3:30; 5:31). His peaceful DEPARTURE will be marred by two items in the AFTERMATH. First, the people stray after the ephod during Gideon's lifetime; thus Israel's return to Ba'al worship is linked to Gideon's death (v. 33), as is the nation's poor treatment of Gideon's household (v. 35). Second, the report of the birth of Abimelech is a personal note that becomes tied to the national fate, representing the difficulty Gideon had in separating the two during his lifetime.

7.3 *Conclusions*

7.3.1 *Liminality*

Gideon's ostensibly legitimate blood vengeance against the kings places him in the liminal category of Avenger, one in which the normative laws against killing are suspended. He approaches the cities of Succoth and Peniel in this state, which makes him more inclined to acts of vengeance. While his DEPARTURES demonstrate that he exits the role of Avenger after his vengeance was complete, Gideon's personal vendetta against the cities leaves its mark on his legacy.

7.3.2 *Morphological Conclusions*

Compared to other HB revenge narratives, the Gideon stories are characterized by many unusual structural features that advance the plot and inform the assessment of the acts of vengeance. The text portrays two acts of revenge by the same Avenger on different Avengees for different offenses. The Succoth and Peniel incident is presented in the usual order: WRONG, INTENT TO AVENGE, and REVENGE ACTS. Other functions appear in a different order or are missing altogether, such as the REACTION TO THE REVENGE on the part of the towns, the nation, or the text itself, the absence of which highlights the idea that the REVENGE ACTS primarily concerned Gideon and his honor. The need to support the army with provisions comes a distant second. The Zebaḥ and Zalmunna narrative, in contrast, is presented in a highly unusual sequence: The WRONG is revealed only moments before the REVENGE ACT is executed.

The Gideon revenge narratives' structure serves the author's narratological goals.⁴¹ Reader entrapment, also known as reader victimization, is a literary strategy employed here to cause readers to correct initial misjudgments and keep them intensely involved with the narrative. Manipulating the readers aligns or separates their sympathies with the characters and facilitates the internalization of difficult messages.⁴² By entwining the narratives rather than reporting one on the background of the other, and by withholding key information, the text exploits the readers' reactions to one narrative in order to shape their reactions to the other. These narratological choices become apparent when the narrative is analyzed morphologically as one of personal revenge.

The difference in the Avenger's attitudes toward the cities and the kings has been discussed. Although both situations constitute acts of personal revenge, both had the potential to also be acts of national vengeance — the cities because they denied aid to the army, and the kings as leaders of oppressors of Israel. The interpolation of the narratives, as well as the morphological anomalies, demonstrates that the status of Gideon's vengeance is more complicated than is often claimed. Assis, for example, views Gideon's actions in chapter 8 as personally motivated and his actions in chapter 7 as nationally motivated.⁴³ While this is generally accurate, a closer look at the morphological structure with regard to the placement of the WRONG yields a more nuanced assessment.

Gideon kills the kings to address a personal WRONG, but that WRONG was not presented until very late in the narrative. This morphological shift, conspicuous in the corpus of HB narratives of personal revenge, signifies that Gideon did not exact blood vengeance at the expense of national security. Although he needed to capture the enemy kings to ensure that they did not regroup, he could have held them prisoner and/or maimed them as is seen in other HB and ANE narratives. As a blood-avenger, Gideon could not avail himself of those options; yet, he does not behave rashly. His pain over the loss of his brothers is already evident in 6:13, but he waits until after the national war is over and the Ephraimites have captured the Midianite princes. Only then does Gideon embark on a campaign with his elite guard to remove the threat of the kings. In doing so, he simultaneously achieves blood vengeance, albeit one tainted with a desire for Jether's glory and for spoils of war.

⁴¹ Phillip Eugene McMillion, "Judges 6-8 and the Study of Premonarchical Israel" (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 1985), 238–39.

⁴² J. E. Botha, "Reader 'Entrapment' as Literary Device in John 4: 1-42," *Neotestamentica*, 21, no. 4 (1990), 38; 45, *Ibid.*, 45. While Botha demonstrates the strong alliance formed between the reader and Jesus as a result of the entrapment in John 4, Judges 8 can be said to have the opposite effect between the reader and Gideon, as will be demonstrated.

⁴³ Assis, *Self-Interest or Communal Interest: An Ideology of Leadership in the Gideon, Abimelech and Jephthah Narratives*, 95–97.

As has been shown, blood vengeance is not merely to requite personal honor and therefore cannot be grouped with vengeance that is motivated by the baser instincts. Nor can acts committed to avenge a loss of personal honor be likened to the duty of blood vengeance. While both have personal elements, the former stems entirely from the avoidance of shame, as is seen in Gideon's conflict with the cities Succoth and Peniel. When Gideon set out to perform blood vengeance, he could have framed his request for provisions for his men as a national need. His use of the first person singular makes known to the men of Succoth and Peniel the personal, not national, nature of his mission. Hence their refusal is a personal insult, which so incenses Gideon that he declares his INTENT TO AVENGE, alerting his Avengees to his plan and possibly ruining his chances of its success. This morphological anomaly demonstrates Gideon's inability to bear humiliation. The delayed REACTION TO THE WRONG takes the form of reminding the men of the city that they had mocked him (v. 15) and leaves no doubt that he is avenging his honor. For Gideon, the insult has retained its full force.

The description of the INTENT TO AVENGE, וְדַשְׁתִּי (v. 7), contrasts with the stated purpose וַיִּדַע (v. 16). Gideon desires revenge on the cities, and regardless of any purposes this may have served on the national level, the narrative highlights the personal aspect. Gideon's furious response to the men of the cities stands in stark contrast to the restraint he exhibits with his revenge on the kings. Similarly, his violent treatment of the cities upon his return is a dramatic departure from the formality with which he executes the kings. The interweaving of the two narratives and the divergent behavior they portray does not indicate the linear progression of Gideon's character Assis describes in which, "ultimately, his main consideration was his own personal benefit."⁴⁴ Nor does the oscillation of the narratives result in a dichotomy between national and egocentric motivations, but rather in a trichotomy of national, familial, and personal motivations. These three pressure points exert force on each other and on Gideon, but none is abandoned.

Auld notes the predilection of the Gideon cycle to doublets.⁴⁵ The morphological findings emphasize three doublets in particular, each of which represents one member of the triad of Gideon's motivations. First, the national goal is represented by the conclusion of the divinely ordained war through the capture of the two princes, Ze'ev and Orev. The Ephraimites are distressed at not having been part of the national effort, and Gideon appeases them, his focus on national unity and victory against the foreign enemy.⁴⁶ Next, familial motivation is represented by Gideon's action against the two kings, the primary catalyst for which was family honor and the

⁴⁴ Assis, *Self-Interest or Communal Interest: An Ideology of Leadership in the Gideon, Abimelech and Jephthah Narratives*, 124.

⁴⁵ A. Graeme Auld, "Gideon: Hacking at the Heart of the Old Testament," *VT*, 39, no. 3 (1989), 257.

⁴⁶ This is not personal revenge and thus outside the purview of the current study.

concept of blood vengeance. Finally, the cities Succoth and Peniel represent the personal motivations of ego and honor. Gideon's legacy, like the narratives in his cycle, is complex because he responds to and succeeds in all three areas in spite of circumstances that favor one over the others. The national motivations of chapter 7 still witness the battle cry, "The sword for the Lord and for Gideon!" indicating that Gideon's ego has entered this holy war. On the other hand, his actions against the cities reflect an awareness of God's involvement and his own divine selection as judge, in addition to a leader's certainty that a situation where cities do not support the war effort cannot be tolerated. Personal ego mixed with Gideon's familial obligations against the kings when he takes the royal ornaments, and the mingling of pure and impure motives continues in the AFTERMATH with the creation of the ephod, ending the narrative on an uneasy note.⁴⁷ Gideon finally rests in royal fashion and upon his death receives the credit for his military accomplishments and for bringing quiet to the land. Gideon, however, is not fully at peace. His story portrays an unending attempt to balance his personal quest for honor, the honor of his family, and the honor due to God.

⁴⁷ Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 348.

Chapter 8

8.0 Samson on the Philistines (Judges 14-16)

The Samson cycle will be examined here as an HB narrative of personal revenge, but other scholars have examined it through a variety of lenses. Niditch, for example, views the Samson cycle within the morphology of trickster tales, that category of literature featuring a conflicted protagonist with special powers.¹ Greenstein sees Samson as a symbol of wayward Israel, while Mascrenge labels Samson “God’s Adulterous Wife.”² Both of these analyses focus on the deeper level of the text without addressing the surface structure. Exum and Bledstein examine the chapters from a feminist perspective, employing Samson’s interactions with women as the central structural measure.³ The unusual character of this judge of Israel lends itself to diverse modes of inquiry; indeed, Samson often seems more a renegade motivated by his personal (even base) desires than a servant of God.

The Samson cycle contains episodes of violence and counter-violence between the Israelite hero and the Philistine enemy that in this study will be examined morphologically to determine whether and how they relate to personal revenge. Separating those of Samson’s actions that were ordained by God and those that were solely to achieve his own desires is no easy task. The morphological analysis of each scene is essential to determining which acts were personally motivated acts of revenge and thus pertinent to the current study.⁴

A brief review of definitions and classifications of revenge acts, as outlined in the Introduction, will aid in the analysis. First, a REVENGE ACT is carried out by the Victim or their Ally in response to a WRONG that has been inflicted. The REVENGE ACT targets an Avenger who is the perpetrator of the WRONG or someone or something that will diminish the perpetrator; an attack on a family member, close friend, or valued property can constitute a REVENGE ACT.⁵ The narrative of Simeon and Levi in Shechem (Genesis 34) or of Gideon with Zebaḥ and Zalmunna (Judges 8) demonstrate the diminution of family honor and its restoration through an act of revenge by the next-of-kin on the perpetrator of the WRONG. If the Victim of a WRONG attacks an unrelated third party — perhaps because of the anguish the Victim is suffering as a result of the WRONG — this is unwarranted violence, not revenge. For example, Samson’s murder of 30 men in Ashkelon (14:19) does not effect a restoration and is therefore not revenge.

¹ Susan Niditch, “Samson as Culture Hero, Trickster, and Bandit: The Empowerment of the Weak,” *CBQ* 52, no. 4 (1990): 608–9.

² Edward L. Greenstein, “The Riddle of Samson,” *Prooftexts*, 1 no. 3 (1981): 237–60; M. Alroy Mascrenge, *Samson as God’s Adulterous Wife* (New York: Peter Lang, 2019).

³ J. Cheryl Exum, *Fragmented Women: Feminist (Sub) Versions of Biblical Narratives* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015); Adrien Janis Bledstein, “Is Judges a Woman’s Satire on Men Who Play God?,” in *Feminist Companion to Judges* (ed. Athalya Brenner-Idan; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 34–54.

⁴ Trent C. Butler, *Judges* (WBC 8; Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2009), 334.

⁵ Zaibert, “Punishment and Revenge,” 83.

Second, personal revenge is provoked by a reduction in the wronged party's honor, which can occur through an attack on their person, property, or self-image.⁶ Furthermore, damage to a person's relative or tribe member may generate a blood vengeance response because tribal structure dictates that an attack on one member is tantamount to an attack on the entire group.⁷ This scenario underlies Samson's response to the murder of his wife and her father at the hands of the Philistines (15:7-8). In ancient societies, an attack on the deity is similarly viewed.⁸

Finally, for an act of violence to be classified as collective vengeance or to avenge an act perpetrated upon a clan member, the Avenger's identification with the group or their distress at the attack must be made known.⁹ The disproportionate vengeance seen in Haman's attempt to exterminate all Jews in revenge for the insubordination of Mordechai (Esth 3:6) qualifies as collective vengeance. If connections between the would-be Avenger and Avenged cannot be demonstrated, then the violence is not counted as personal vengeance, as will be demonstrated in Samson's slaughter of Philistines at Ramath-Lehi (15:9-20).

Given that an angel (or "man of God") reveals Samson's role in the beginning of Israel's salvation from the Philistines (13:5), it is vital to determine the nature of Samson's motives: Is a particular act of revenge personal? Does it stem from a national concern or a divine imperative or from some combination? God will act through this Nazirite, but this does not preclude Samson from having his own motives; at times he (perhaps unwittingly) acts for God and for himself simultaneously. The phrase *וּתְצַלָּה עֲלֵינוּ יְיָ* appears three times in the narrative (14:6, 14:19 and 15:14), indicating that the divine will must be distinguished from Samson's human motives in order to identify the forces underlying each episode, to ascertain Samson's role, and to determine whether the action connotes human vengeance.

Peels, as has been mentioned, established that the use of NQM (נ.ק.מ.) by God is legitimate, while its use in reference to people bears a negative connotation. The use of NQM in the Samson narratives will be examined in light of this claim.¹⁰ Scholars have displayed a tendency to label all of Samson's actions as "revenge" without even defining the term, but this study will follow a more rigorous approach, utilizing a formal definition of revenge as well as a structural analysis of each episode to determine if a particular action of Samson constitutes personal vengeance, based on its adherence to the morphological structure of the scene.¹¹ Because each WRONG begins a new move

⁶ Whitley RP Kaufman, *Honor and Revenge: A Theory of Punishment* (Law and Philosophy Library 104; Dordrecht: Springer, 2012), 120–30.

⁷ Barton, *Getting Even*, 37–39.

⁸ Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*, 87–88. For economy, I use the word "religious" in the modern sense, though this is not a precise description of how ancient societies saw themselves.

⁹ Donald A. Leggett, *Levirate and Goel Institution in the Old Testament* (London: Mack, 1974), 107–38.

¹⁰ Peels, *The Vengeance of God*, 275.

¹¹ The claims of personal revenge will be examined as each episode is analyzed.

within the morphological structure,¹² each potential WRONG will be investigated with regard to the response it provokes. Establishing the morphology of each episode will shed light on the extent to which Samson’s actions constitute personal revenge and on how his motives interact with his divine selection as Israel’s savior. The analysis will demonstrate that his actions reflect more order and self-control than is generally recognized.

8.1 Establishing the Morphology

8.1.1 Episode 1: The Wedding Feast (14:1-20)

Table 11 Episode 1

Initial Scene	14:1-14	Samson’s wedding preparations and feast. Samson poses the riddle and the wager is placed.
WRONG	14:15-18a	Philistine groomsmen threaten Samson’s wife to get them the answer to the riddle. She complies and they answer.
REACTION TO THE WRONG	14:18b	Samson responds to their ill-gotten answer with another rhyme.
REACTION TO THE WRONG	14:19a-b	The spirit of God comes upon Samson.
“Revenge Act”	14:19c	He kills thirty men of Ashkelon to pay the wager.
REACTION TO THE Response	14:19d	Samson is angry
DEPARTURE	14:19e	Samson goes to his father’s house.
AFTERMATH	14:20	Samson’s wife is given to another.

Exum claims that the wedding feast episode is among “Samson’s self-appointed acts of revenge”; similarly, Van der Zee claims that when Samson kills Philistines here, “he does so as a form of personal revenge.”¹³ However, as explained above, a fundamental requirement for an act to be classified as vengeance is that it be perpetrated against the party who has caused harm to the Victim or their representative. The killing of the thirty men from Ashkelon — none of whom had committed an offense against Samson — is “murder and larceny,” but not revenge. Evidently, Samson did not want to bring the groomsmen or his wife, the perpetrators of the harm, to justice. He deliberately leaves them untouched and kills others. The killings in Ashkelon provide Samson with the garments he needs to pay off his wager,¹⁴ but otherwise bring him no satisfaction. The text, in fact, reports that he is angry *after* his act of violence, indicating that it has not assuaged his loss

¹² Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, 92ff.

¹³ J. Cheryl Exum, “The Many Faces of Samson,” in *Samson: Hero or Fool? The Many Faces of Samson* (eds. Erik Eynikel and Tobias Niklas; Themes in Biblical Narrative 17; Leiden: Brill, 2014), 19; Lara van der Zee, “Samson and Samuel: Two Examples of Leadership,” in *Samson: Hero Or Fool?: The Many Faces of Samson* (eds. Erik M.M. Eynikel and Tobias Nicklas; Themes in Biblical Narrative 17; Leiden: Brill, 2014), 64.

¹⁴ Younger, *Judges, Ruth*, 304.

of honor. Furthermore, Samson is not focused on the Philistines as the enemy; his victims in Ashkelon are referred to as “men” rather than Philistines (14:19). Samson is being used for the Lord’s purposes (cf. 14:4,19), even though this fact plays no part in motivating Samson, and thus this pericope is not to be counted among Samson’s acts of personal vengeance. This episode is important, however, in establishing Samson as an individual with a propensity for using violence to resolve personal conflict.

8.1.2 Episode 2: Foxes & Torches (15:1-5)

Table 12 Episode 2

Initial Scene	15:1a-c	Samson goes to visit his wife.
WRONG	15:1d-2	He is not allowed entry because she has been given to another. His father-in-law offers him her sister.
REACTION TO THE WRONG	15:3a	Samson declares that he will bear no blame for his actions.
INTENT TO AVENGE	15:3b	Samson declares that he intends to do evil to the Philistines.
PLAN	15:4	Samson catches the foxes and ties their tails together along with the torches.
“Revenge Act”	15:5	The Philistine’s recently harvested produce, as well as that which has not yet been harvested, goes up in flames.

In this scene, Samson attacks the general Philistine populace in response to his father-in-law’s actions.¹⁵ Is Samson’s fox-attack an act of personal vengeance or is it gratuitous violence? The use of נקייתי (v. 3) reflects Samson’s belief that his retaliation against the Philistines is justified. Moore translates נקייתי as “I am without fault,” while Boling renders it “I am innocent.” In both cases, the implication is that Samson cannot be held accountable for his retaliation.¹⁶ Niditch declares that “he prepares counter-vengeance” and Matthews affirms that Samson’s violence “satisfies his personal feelings.”¹⁷ However, these claims that Samson’s action constitutes personal revenge do not define the term “revenge,” nor do they provide criteria by which Samson’s satisfaction can be measured. In differentiating between retribution and vengeance, Nozick stresses the personal nature of the latter. For an action to qualify as revenge, he explains, it must be inflicted on someone who caused harm to the person who is now retaliating for that harm. More specifically,

¹⁵ Pnina Galpaz-Feller, *Samson: The Hero and the Man: The Story of Samson (Judges 13-16)* (Bible in History 7; Bern: Peter Lang, 2006), 127–28. discusses whether the father-in-law was actually in the wrong in the light of local Israelite and ANE custom. For the purposes of this argument, I have assumed that there was a legitimate WRONG, though this, too, is debatable.

¹⁶ George Foot Moore, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Judges* (ICC; London: T&T Clark, 1898), 340; Boling, *Judges*, 234–35.

¹⁷ Susan Niditch, *Judges: A Commentary* (OTL Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 158; Victor H. Matthews, “Freedom and Entrapment in the Samson Narrative: A Literary Analysis,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 16, no. 2/4 (1989): 250.

the object of revenge may be anything or anyone whose harm would cause distress to the initial perpetrator of the WRONG that the revenge is intended to address.¹⁸

Another fundamental component of revenge is that the damage inflicted against the wrongdoer exerts “maximum harm” in order to deter the Avengee from further WRONGS against the Avenger.¹⁹ Thus any claims that an action constitutes revenge in which a greater, more direct harm could have been, but was not, inflicted upon the Avengee must be examined with regard to the nature of the action. In the current episode, Samson appears to avenge the WRONG of his wife being given to another man, yet he fails to wreak harm upon his father-in-law, his wife, the comrade who became her new husband, or the thirty men who intimidated his wife into revealing the answer to the riddle. Instead, he directs his wrath on the anonymous “Philistines,” whose connection to the alleged perpetrator is uncertain, as will be discussed below.

A number of factors clarify the nature of Samson’s attack on the Philistines and its connection to the actions of his father-in-law. First, the target of Samson’s wrath indicates that this is not an act of personal revenge: Samson did not attack his father-in-law, the perpetrator of the WRONG. Moreover, no evidence suggests that Samson tried but was unable to harm his father-in-law and therefore chose an alternate target. Nor was the father-in-law targeted indirectly because there is no reason to believe that Samson’s father-in-law would suffer more than the general populace from the fox attack. The suggestion that Samson intended to stir up the local populace against his father-in-law and wife is countered by the absence of any such expression on Samson’s part and by his fury when that actually happens (v. 6).

More evidence against the fox incident being a revenge narrative is the failure of the incident to mitigate Samson’s lost honor. Although he lashes out in anger, his actions do nothing to return his wife or bring him any gain; furthermore, he has no personal reason to attack the Philistines or injure their property. The suggestion that the action was motivated by nationalistic reasons is also implausible. Nothing in the text testifies to Samson’s feeling the weight of his nation’s suffering or wanting to avenge his people’s oppression. Even if Samson did want to wage war for his nation’s or his God’s honor, revenge for the WRONG of his wife being given to another man would not answer either of those causes. Furthermore, the men of Judah must inform Samson of their suffering (15:11), suggesting that he was both ignorant of and indifferent to it, and the text contains no suggestion here or elsewhere in the narrative that Israel benefited from Samson’s action.

¹⁸ Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations*, 366–68.

¹⁹ Rose McDermott, Anthony C. Lopez, and Peter K. Hatemi, “Blunt Not the Heart, Enrage It’: The Psychology of Revenge and Deterrence,” *Texas National Security Review*, 1, no. 1 (November 2017), 79.

We may now ask: Is this a case of collective punishment on the clan of the wrongdoer as a corporate personality?²⁰ If Samson depersonalized and generalized his attacker to the extent that *any* Philistine could be blamed for the attack of another, then Samson’s counter-attack would be considered collective vengeance, albeit still in the personal, not national, realm. The details of this case, however, cast some doubt on this possibility. First, the person who committed the WRONG is Samson’s father-in-law, a family figure unlikely to be generalized to “any Philistine” in Samson’s mind. Furthermore, the connection of Samson’s wife and her father to Philistine society is tenuous. The reaction of the Philistines in verse 6 indicates that the Timnites were not considered fully Philistine. Scholars explain that some fluidity existed in that area between groups with strong tribal affiliations while the powerful Philistine presence loomed in the background.²¹ Samson’s wife is referred to as “a woman from Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines” (14:1-2). When the incident is investigated, Samson’s father-in-law is referred to as “a Timnite” (v. 6), that is, an outsider.

On the other hand, Samson’s wife had sufficient connections to the Philistines to help Samson infiltrate the society, leaving open some possibility that this is an episode of collective revenge. When Samson, incensed at his father-in-law’s behavior, lashes out and allows the foxes to “decide” whom to punish, many who suffer, it turns out, are Philistine. Furthermore, he mentions the Philistines by name as a target: “This time, when I do mischief to the Philistines, I will be without blame.” (15:3). His implication that his act is justified by revenge is subjective; he may be mistaken.²² As Uniacke explains, “Revenge is a type of retaliation which involves generally deliberate infliction of injury on another person. The infliction of injury on another person requires moral justification: it is wrong in the absence of some justifying rationale.”²³ Samson maintains that his actions are a response to the ill-treatment he received by his wife’s family, but his tactics lack an internal logic.²⁴ Both here and after the wedding party (Episode 1), his actions do nothing to

²⁰ H. Wheeler Robinson, “The Hebrew Conception of Corporate Personality,” in *Werden Und Wesen Des Alten Testaments: Vorträge, gehalten auf der internationalen Tagung alttestamentlicher Forscher zu Göttingen vom 4.–10. September 1935* (eds. Paul Volz, Friedrich Stummer and Johannes Hempel; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 49–62 introduced the concept of a group functioning as a single body, particularly in HB legal contexts; John Roskoski, “The Importance of Judges 15: 3-5 in the Samson Narratives,” *American Journal of Biblical Theology* 16, no. 6 (February 8, 2015): 11–12, has argued for this concept’s presence in Judg 15:3, though there is no indication of such an affiliation as there is among the inhabitants of Shechem (Gen 34) or in Shushan (Es. 3-7); P. Zerafa, “Retribution in the Old Testament,” *Angelicum* 50, no. 3/4 (1973): 491; John W. Rogerson, “The Hebrew Conception of Corporate Personality: A Re-Examination,” *The Journal of Theological Studies*, 1970, 1–16, acknowledges the limits of this concept in HB narratives; Joshua Roy Porter, “The Legal Aspects of the Concept of “Corporate Personality” in the Old Testament,” *VT* 15, no. 3 (1965): 375–76.

²¹ Bruno J. Clifton, “Samson and the Timnites,” in *Family and Identity in the Book of Judges* (ed. Sandra Huebenthal et al.; Studies in Cultural Contexts of the Bible 7; Paderborn: Brill Schöningh, 2021), 115–16; Roskoski, “The Importance of Judges 15,” 5–6.

²² Webb, *The Book of Judges*, 377, “Samson believes he is fully justified...” emphasis added.

²³ Uniacke, “Why Is Revenge Wrong?,” 64.

²⁴ Soggin, *Judges*, 248–49.

“satisfy his personal feelings,” as Matthews suggests. Thus his claims may simply constitute an attempt to justify violence that cannot be legitimized on a personal level.²⁵ In addition, burning fields is not a particularly effective means of avenging himself on his father-in-law, the primary guilty party.

Unbeknownst to Samson is that he is playing a part in God’s plan. His relationship with the woman from Timna is a pretext to seek an opportunity against the Philistines (14:4). In that context, burning the fields can be seen as divine vengeance through a human conduit. On a personal level, Samson’s violence flows from a desire to see the Philistines at the receiving end of violence.²⁶ Though his actions are undiplomatic, they do not constitute personal revenge because, as has been mentioned, his target is not responsible for the WRONG. Use of the morphological structure in this episode helps to differentiate between a case that has some elements of revenge — that instinctively “feels” like revenge — but is actually wanton violence. The lack of DEPARTURE at the conclusion of this episode underscores the fact that this act does not bring Samson to a more stable state. Though unaware of God’s intent in 14:4, Samson has started to fulfill the prophecy that he will begin to save Israel from the Philistines (13:5).

8.1.3 Episode 3: Philistines kill Samson’s Wife & Father-in-law (15:6-8)

Table 13 Episode 3

Initial Scene	15:6a-b	Philistines investigate the cause of the destruction.
WRONG	15:6c	Philistines burn Samson’s wife and father-in-law.
INTENT TO AVENGE	15:7	Samson threatens to take revenge on them.
REVENGE ACT	15:8a	He kills many Philistines.
DEPARTURE	15:8b	Samson descends to the cleft of the rock of Eitam.

In this short scene we see the first instance of personal revenge taken by Samson. The Philistines who investigate the fox attack determine that Samson was indeed wronged. They then take matters into their own hands, killing Samson’s wife and her father, an outcome Samson did not seek.²⁷ The judicial authority of the Philistines to act against Samson’s wife and father-in-law may be disputed, but Samson clearly does not recognize their jurisdiction in what he considers to be a private family matter, and he becomes a blood-avenger. He declares his INTENT to avenge and then kills many more people than were responsible for the deaths of his family members. Although

²⁵ Matthews, “Freedom and Entrapment in the Samson Narrative,” 250.

²⁶ Serge Frolov, *Judges* (Forms of the Old Testament Literature 6; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 265; Thomas C. Schelling, “The Diplomacy of Violence,” in *Theories of Peace and Security* (ed. John Garnett; London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1970), 65.

²⁷ Adrian van Selms, “The Best Man and Bride-From Sumer to St. John with a New Interpretation of Judges, Chapters 14 and 15,” *JNES* 9, no. 2 (1950): 74, brings evidence that this was an illegal union. While this is disputed, it is clear that Samson did not desire his wife’s family to be burnt alive.

the boundary of justified revenge is breached, Samson’s killings constitute a REVENGE ACT, as he states (v. 7). Because Samson is avenging a WRONG perpetrated on him as an individual, not an Israelite, the revenge is counted as personal even though it is exacted on a group of Philistines. In keeping with the morphological structure of personal revenge narratives, the episode ends with a DEPARTURE as Samson the Avenger seeks solitude in the cleft of Eitam.

8.1.4 Episode 4: Slaughter at Ramath Lehi (15:9-20)

Table 14 Episode 4

Initial Scene	15:9	The Philistines attack Judah in order to get to Samson.
WRONG	15:10-13	Forced by the Philistines, Judah convinces Samson to be turned over to the Philistines. They take an oath that they will not harm him, then bind him and turn him over to the enemy.
REACTION TO THE WRONG	15:14	The spirit of God overtakes him. He breaks free of the ropes.
“Revenge Act”	15:15	Samson kills 1,000 Philistines with the jawbone.
REACTION TO THE REVENGE ACT	15:16-17	Samson memorializes his accomplishment in song, discards the jawbone, and names the place.
AFTERMATH	15:18-19	Samson is miraculously saved from his thirst after calling out to God.
AFTERMATH	15:20	Epilogue. Samson judges Israel for 20 years.

The story of Samson’s slaughter of a thousand Philistines at Ramath-Lehi is dramatic and violent, but is it a case of personal revenge? Galpaz-Feller, among others, claims that it is, though without providing evidence for her assertion.²⁸ Surrounded by three thousand men of Judah, Samson is forthright regarding his behavior vis-à-vis the Philistines, confirming that his actions were revenge: “As they did to me, so I have done to them” (Jud 15:11).

When the people of Judah protest that his revenge has caused them harm, Samson neither expresses concern or remorse, but he does agree to be handed over to the Philistines.²⁹ Among the enemy, Samson fights and slays a thousand men (v. 15) but this act does not necessarily qualify as personal revenge. Surrounded by combatants of an enemy nation, self-preservation, rather than vengeance, might have been Samson’s primary motivation. Moreover, Samson did not seek out the Philistines but was rather delivered to them by his own people. Nor does he appear to be continuing the revenge of the previous episode because he declared his intention to cease the violence (v. 7) before his DEPARTURE to the cleft of Eitam. We can therefore conclude that this episode involves a situation from which Samson must escape at the same time that the spirit of God comes upon him.

²⁸ Galpaz-Feller, *Samson*, 265.

²⁹ Assis, *Self-Interest or Communal Interest: An Ideology of Leadership in the Gideon, Abimelech and Jephthah Narratives*, 128.

The slaughter of Philistines takes place under that spirit, multiplying the number of casualties. Regardless of whether this particular action is part of God’s plan, Samson seems to act for himself. Because his actions are for self-defense, they are not personal human revenge, although in this case they may well embody divine revenge.

This episode presents some development in Samson with regard to his status as savior of Israel. In the AFTERMATH, Samson refers to his enemy as “uncircumcised” (15:18), a derisive epithet for the Philistines highlighting their status as members of the out-group, which had previously been used only by his parents (14:3).³⁰ And although the divine spirit comes upon Samson in the wedding party episode, he draws no connection between it and the force driving the slaughter. This episode, however, presents the first occasion in the pericope of Samson’s awareness of YHWH as a presence and source of salvation. His prayer for water foreshadows his prayer for strength and revenge in Episode 6, while his acknowledgement that the previous feat was due to God’s intervention mitigates his hubris.

8.1.5 Episode 5: The harlot in Gaza (16:1-3)

Table 15 Episode 5

Initial Scene	16:1	Samson goes to a harlot in Gaza.
WRONG	16:2	The Philistines lie in wait outside of the house, planning to attack and capture Samson in the morning.
“Revenge Act”	16:3	Samson preempts their ambush, escaping in the middle of the night, taking the city gate with him.

Samson’s dramatic action in this episode damages the physical integrity of the city rather than its inhabitants. While Samson’s visit to the harlot reflects his reluctance to form social bonds in the wake of the previous episodes, his taking of the city gates is a defensive evasion and an offensive provocation rather than personal revenge,³¹ despite Niditch’s claim that the deed was done by Samson, “the loner and the avenger.”³² Unlike David’s escape from surrounding enemy forces, which depended on cunning rather than strength (I Sam 19:11-12), Samson escapes while simultaneously stripping the city of its physical protection and exposing its inhabitants. The reminder of Samson’s power fuels the Philistines’ efforts to capture him, which again plays into God’s plan for national salvation (14:4).

8.1.6 Episode 6: Samson in the House of Dagon (16:4-31)

Table 16 Episode 6

Initial Scene	16:4-18	Delilah, working for the Philistine governors, discovers the secret to Samson’s strength.
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³⁰ Walter Kim, “The Language of Verbal Insults in the Hebrew Bible” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2007), 116–19.

³¹ Soggin, *Judges*, 236; Webb, *The Book of Judges*, 395.

³² Niditch, *Judges*, 168.

WRONG	16:19-21	Samson's hair is cut. The Lord leaves Samson. The Philistines blind him, bind him, and imprison him in Gaza.
REACTION TO THE WRONG	16:22	Samson's hair begins to grow back.
REACTION TO THE WRONG	16:23-24	The Philistines praise Dagon for delivering Samson.
COMPLICITY	16:25	The Philistines bring Samson to the festivities.
ACQUIRING AN ALLY	16:26	Samson has the lad position him so that he can achieve maximum damage.
Informative Connective	16:27	The temple is overflowing with Philistines.
Prayer (COUNCIL)	16:28	Samson appeals to God for the ability to avenge.
PLAN	16:29	Samson takes hold of the pillars.
INTENT	16:30a	Samson announces his intention to avenge at the cost of his own life.
REVENGE	16:30b	Samson collapses the temple and kills 3,000 Philistines.
AFTERMATH	16:30c	Analysis of Samson's casualties.
DEPARTURE	16:31a	Samson is buried by his brothers in the ancestral grave.
AFTERMATH	16:31b	Samson judged for 20 years.

The introduction of Delilah and the report of her efforts to extract Samson's secret serves as a subordinate Initial Scene for the final actions of Samson against the Philistines. After failing three times to elicit the secret of Samson's strength, Delilah succeeds on the fourth try. The morphological function of Delilah's actions is unclear. Her deceit is ethically problematic; she receives payment to betray Samson, enabling the Philistines to maim and bind him. Her betrayal, however, is not avenged by Samson, and his subsequent actions suggest that he regarded Delilah's betrayal merely as a means by which the Philistines finally overpowered him.

Neither Delilah nor her treachery is mentioned again, giving weight to the argument that her role in the narrative is to provide background material for the vengeance Samson will take against the Philistines. Delilah's acts may comprise a potential WRONG, but no REVENGE ACT ensues. Morphologically speaking, a function is defined "according to its consequences"; therefore, Delilah's actions are not a WRONG. Her romantic entanglement with Samson and her role in discovering how to overcome his strength are instructive regarding Samson's personal development, but in terms of Samson's revenge, these acts are a prelude to the WRONG. The Philistines' blinding of their captive, while having precedent in HB, ANE, and other ancient literatures, perpetrates a WRONG against Samson in an unintended (at least by the Philistines) quid pro quo exchange.³³ He has been following his eyes rather than God's plan (14:1, 3; 16:1), and so

³³ For other instances of blinding, see II Kgs 25:7, the blinding of King Zedekiah by Nebuchadrezzar; Tale of Illuyankas, as Teshub's eyes are stolen in order to incapacitate him.

now it is Delilah who sees (16:18) the path to his destruction. Blinded, Samson will be the seen, rather than seer (16:24, 27).³⁴

Samson appears surprised by his weakened state, his blinding, and his capture, though it has been suggested that he harbored a desire to be “like any/every other man” (vv. 7, 11, 17) and on some level wanted to leave his great strength behind.³⁵ In fact, Samson’s enemies were not interested in killing him, but were rather bent on weakening, subduing, and humiliating him.³⁶ The verbs “constrain” (אָסַר) and “afflict” (עָנָה) appear when the Philistines commission Delilah, when Delilah persuades Samson to reveal his secret, and when Samson himself repeats Delilah’s words, including the refrain, “I would become weak and be like any other man” (vv. 5-17). This is precisely the WRONG that the Philistines commit. Formerly Nazirite and Avenger, Samson is forced to descend to the bowels of a Philistine prison. He is (again) separated from other people — this time lowered rather than raised — and forced to grind grain. Disgraced, he remains alone in a liminal state of an entirely different nature, one forced upon him by the enemy instead of granted to him by God.

Samson is figuratively as well as physically blinded, and fails to recognize that his hair, the source of his strength, has begun to regrow. No REACTION TO THE WRONG on the part of Samson appears in the text, and the mention of the regrowth of Samson’s hair is a narratorial REACTION indicating that the pact between Samson and God is still in effect despite Samson’s reckless actions. In contrast to his recognition of the importance of his hair in his confession to Delilah (v. 17), he has no reaction to its regrowth here, and his PLAN for vengeance makes no mention of it, demonstrating again that he and God are working on two non-intersecting planes.

The Philistines turn with joy to their god Dagon as a REACTION TO THE WRONG. They express gratitude to Dagon, likely a grain god, while Samson languishes, forced to grind the grain their god has ostensibly provided.³⁷ According to the Philistine view, Dagon has preserved the Philistines’ food supply by handing over the criminal who torched their produce (15:4-5). The Philistines’ REACTION TO THE WRONG becomes irresponsible when they invite their captive to entertain them, disregarding the danger he poses. The humiliation they want to impose could be counted as an additional WRONG to be avenged were it not for the words in Samson’s prayer that stipulate what he wants to avenge. Bringing Samson to the temple of Dagon is an act of COMPLICITY; the Philistines’ fatal miscalculation of their enemy’s strength leads them to inadvertently orchestrate the conditions necessary for his REVENGE ACT. Acting on their desire

³⁴ Shemesh, “Punishment of the Offending Organ in Biblical Literature,” 345–46.

³⁵ Webb, *The Book of Judges*, 405.

³⁶ Amit, *The Book of the Judges*, 287.

³⁷ John F. Healey, “Dagon,” in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (eds. Karel Van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter Willem Van Der Horst; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1999), 217.

to afflict, violate, and humiliate (ענה) Samson with all of the brutality they can muster, making a mockery of the erstwhile hero,³⁸ the Philistines have brought about their own greatest suffering.

Once in the central hall, Samson gains his bearings and recognizes an opportunity for action. He ACQUIRES AN ALLY, the unwitting lad who has led him from the prison, and formulates his PLAN. Samson's oddly specific instructions regarding which pillar to place him near do not raise suspicions. Samson has not yet appealed to God for the strength he needs to pull down the building, but in PREPARATION for the revenge act, hopeful of receiving divine aid, he ensures that he is in position to act. He then calls out to God requesting "only this once" (v. 28) to be imbued with the extraordinary strength that he had previously taken for granted.

Although it is not directly answered, Samson's request to YHWH for help is unique among HB Avengers. His plea makes two points clear: that his desire to take revenge is for purely personal reasons (he makes no mention of national interests),³⁹ and that he is cognizant of the source of his strength. Unlike past events in which ותצלה עליו רוח ה' demonstrates that Samson's strength could be attributed to God and his actions classified as divine retribution effected by a human emissary, here Samson is acting for himself and his own honor (14:6, 19; 15:14). This prayer differs from his prayer for water (15:18) in that the latter fills the function of AFTERMATH, while the former resembles the councils of ANE Avengers to be discussed in the next section of this work. Thus while Samson's prayer for water foreshadows his faith in deliverance, it plays a different role with regard to the REVENGE ACT.

Samson positions himself in PREPARATION for the revenge with the expectation that his entreaty will be answered. It is not clear to whom Samson's declaration of INTENT (vv. 29-30a) is directed. Like verse 7, verse 30 is ambiguous in meaning and tone. Even though the word בלבו is absent from ויאמר שמעון it is possible that עם-פּלִשְׁתִּים represents Samson's inner thoughts, rather than actual speech.⁴⁰ It is unlikely that this statement was intended for the Philistines; rather, Samson may have said or thought this to himself in order to be reconciled to this fate. The statement reveals only his readiness to die, to sacrifice his life to kill his enemies, not how he feels about it.⁴¹

Finally, the REVENGE ACT is accomplished (v. 30b). Unlike Episodes 1, 2, 4, and 5, the vengeful nature of Samson's final act is clear: Those who were killed are the Philistine lords who commissioned Delilah and maimed him (16:5, 23). Samson, a judge who does not appear to have judged nor led the nation in war, took fierce vengeance, violence being his primary "leadership

³⁸ Erhard Gerstenberger, "ānā," *TDOT*, 11:237–39.

³⁹ Amit, *The Book of the Judges*, 275.

⁴⁰ Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, 63–64. See I Sam 18:17; 25:21–22; II Sam 18:18 for examples.

⁴¹ Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 114, notes that "detailed rendering of mental processes" is not provided in biblical narrative.

skill.”⁴² Having killed thousands of the most important Philistines, the Avenger can finally rest, indicating his DEPARTURE (vv. 30c-31). The AFTERMATH lists his accomplishments: how many he avenged, how long he judged, and his singular personal accomplishment of reintegration into his family.

8.1.7 Summary of Analysis & Context

Many have examined the structure of the Samson narratives in an effort to derive its meaning. Freeman suggests an ABCD repeating pattern in which lessons are learned from Samson’s repetition of Destruction, Act of personal pleasure, Question, and Act of betrayal.⁴³ Exum aligns chapters 14-15 with chapter 16, presenting a structure that revolves around his Timnite wife, on the one hand, and Delilah, on the other. Samson, Exum suggests, is led by the women in his life and must be rescued by God.⁴⁴ Assis proposes a four-part structure, dividing the narrative between chapters 14, 15:1-8, 16:1-3, and 16:4-21 to show that Samson is weak and foolish once stripped of his God-given powers.⁴⁵ Galpaz-Feller adopts the view that the narrative is structured as an Aristotelian tragedy with a “fatal error, dreadful deed, reversal of fortune, catharsis, and suffering,” and Samson realizes his tragic mistakes only on his dying day.⁴⁶ None of these analyses assess the story of Samson through the lens of his violent acts, which is the analysis the current study undertakes, utilizing the morphological structure of personal revenge narratives. The following chart represents the presence of key indicators of personal human revenge in the episodes of the Samson narratives:

Table 17 Charting Samson's Revenge

Episode	1	2	3	4	5	6
ותצלה	√			√		
ג.ק.ג.			√			√
Passing over of the antagonist	√	√		√-	√	
Morphology of revenge			√			√

While Samson is known as the great Avenger of the HB, the morphological analysis of each episode casts this “liminal hero” in a different light.⁴⁷ Many of Samson’s acts, while violent and executed in response to a provocation by the Philistines or by Samson’s father-in-law, do not qualify as acts of personal vengeance despite assertions by numerous scholars that every act of

⁴² Greenstein, “The Riddle of Samson,” 239–40.

⁴³ J. A. Freeman, “Samson’s Dry Bones: A Structural Reading of Judges 13–16,” in *Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives. The Bible in Literature Courses Series 2* (eds. Gros Louis and R. R. Kenneth; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1982), 145–60.

⁴⁴ J. Cheryl Exum, “Aspects of Symmetry and Balance in the Samson Saga,” *JSOT* 19 (1981): 3–29.

⁴⁵ Elie Assis, “The Structure and Meaning of the Samson Narratives (Jud 13–16),” in *Samson: Hero or Fool?* (eds. Erik Eynikel and Tobias Nicklas; Leiden: Brill, 2014), 4–10.

⁴⁶ Galpaz-Feller, *Samson*, 280–81.

⁴⁷ So described by Mobley throughout *Samson and the Liminal Hero in the Ancient Near East*.

violence committed by Samson is revenge.⁴⁸ Of the first five episodes, only the third, in which Samson kills those who killed his wife and father-in-law, can unequivocally be termed personal revenge. Episode two may qualify as personally motivated revenge exacted on a corporate personality despite the fact that the Victims of Samson's rampage were Philistines, not Timnites. Had Samson been taking vengeance for his father-in-law's giving his wife to another man, he would have attacked the Timnites, beginning with his wife's family. As a result, the act does not bring peace to Samson, as indicated by the absence of the DEPARTURE function. It does, however, serve to further the divine plan by exacerbating the animosity between Samson and the Philistines.

The personal revenge of Episode 3 is in direct response to the Philistines' killings of Samson's wife and father-in-law and counts as true vengeance. Because it is a response to the murders of Samson's family members, the act is justified. Moreover, the murders were a private matter that were not, in Samson's view, within the purview of the Philistines.⁴⁹ Consequently, the verb NQM is used for the first time in the pericope, and upon the act's completion, there is a DEPARTURE, indicating that Samson has achieved closure and can take his leave. Whether Samson's vengeance is excessive is unclear, as the numbers involved in the WRONG and those killed by Samson are not provided. The use of אורתם (v. 8) hints that he specifically slew the guilty parties. Despite the existence of a divine plan to use Samson as an instrument to save Israel from the Philistines, the dominant role of personal, human vengeance in this episode becomes clear after the structure is analyzed. The morphology shows how Samson's violence erupts and brings about vengeance on a personal level, whereas any additional national benefits are unintended. The term NQM appears only here and in Episode 6; it, too, reflects the personal nature of Samson's vengeance.

In Episode 4, Samson is handed over to the Philistines by the threatened men of Judah. With no Ally and no weapon other than his divinely-inspired strength, he escapes, slaying "a thousand men" in the process (15:15). Here, again, the violence on Samson's part advances God's plan but is not an act of personal revenge because he acts in self-preservation. Episode 5 sees Samson's dramatic exit from the harlot's home, the gates of Gaza on his shoulders. His humiliation of the Philistines of Gaza may constitute collective, but not personal, revenge, and prompts Episode 6, which culminates with Samson's personal revenge on the Philistine nobility.

⁴⁸ See above, notes 13, 17, 29, 31 for the tendency to label Samson and all of his acts as motivated by personal vengeance.

⁴⁹ Matthews, "Freedom and Entrapment in the Samson Narrative," 250. Though the father "had violated custom and [his] wife [was] caught in adultery," and the authorities likely had jurisdiction to punish the offenders, to do so without consulting Samson was at the very least an insult.

An examination of the use of the phrase 'ותצלה עליו רוה ה', indicating that the divine spirit flows into Samson, taking him unaware and unprepared,⁵⁰ sheds light on the degree to which God directly influences Samson's actions. Samson does not request the divine presence, nor does he fortify himself to receive it. Conway comments that because neither Samson nor the nation is seeking God; the spirit of God had to rush with force upon Samson.⁵¹ The appearance of the "spirit of the Lord" when Samson destroys the lion with his bare hands (14:6) shows that it is not related to revenge but to the intervention of God. It can be seen as an intensification of the spirit of the Lord that had begun to move Samson in 13:25. The phrase 'ותצלה עליו רוה ה' is used again in Episodes 1 and 4, neither of which is, according to the morphological analysis, personal revenge. The fact that the phrase precedes Samson's violence in Episodes 1 and 4, in addition to the absence of morphological revenge elements, indicates that the slaughters in Ashkelon and Lehi do not represent personal revenge.

As seen in the table above, Samson's behavior shows a pattern of inflicting the greatest damage possible without necessarily targeting the actual perpetrators and their allies. For example, the thirty wedding companions, his wife, his father-in-law, the men of Judah, the men who wait in ambush outside the gates of Gaza, and even Delilah all escape unpunished by this Avenger. All of these people caused Samson direct harm; yet, he is unconcerned with wreaking vengeance on them. Were he, in fact, driven solely by a desire for personal revenge, we would be forced to conclude that this Avenger has a very low success rate. Further examination reveals a double pattern in which Episodes 1-3 are mirrored and intensified by Episodes 4-6, with the last episode in each triplet containing an act of personal revenge. In each set of episodes, the first, middle and final episodes bear similarities whose significance is brought into sharp relief through morphological analysis.

8.1.7.1 *Episodes 1 & 4*

As noted, Episodes 1 and 4 do not fit the morphological structure of a personal revenge narrative. However, these episodes do share common elements, including the ways in which they deviate from the personal revenge morphology. Both contain a WRONG in which the Philistines (or Timnites) intimidate a presumed Ally of Samson (his wife, the men of Judah) into revealing something that will weaken Samson (the answer to his riddle, his whereabouts). Both provoke a violent REACTION (that does not constitute revenge) when the spirit of the Lord enters Samson (14:19; 15:14). In both episodes, Samson composes poetic verses, one prior to the spirit overtaking him in which he derides the unfair means employed by his companions (14:18), and one after the

⁵⁰ For parallel usages, see I Sam 10:6,10; 11:6, with Saul as the object, 16:13 with David as the object, and 18:10 as the spirit is removed from Saul.

⁵¹ Mary L. Conway, *Judging the Judges: A Narrative Appraisal Analysis* (Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic 15; University Park: Eisenbrauns, 2020), 181–82.

spirit comes upon him in which he celebrates his achievement against the enemy (15:16). In both episodes Samson smites (טָרַף) a specified number of Philistines (30 and 1000, respectively) who had not directly wronged him, in the first case to take their garments and in the second to escape capture. In Episode 1, Samson's victims are referred to simply as "men" (14:19), but in Episode 4, he uses the epithet "uncircumcised" (15:18) in recognition of the national aspect of his conflict. The violence of each episode is described in few words, reflecting the intensity and alacrity of a judge driven by the divine spirit. The first episode in each set accustoms the reader to God's presence in Samson's actions as well as to the violence he executes exclusively on the Philistines whether or not they were the perpetrators of the WRONG. These actions portray neither a self-absorbed Avenger nor any vengeance.

8.1.7.2 *Episodes 2 & 5*

Like Episodes 1 and 4, Episodes 2 and 5, the second in each set, do not conform to personal revenge narrative morphology. However, they also share similarities in the ways they depart from the typical revenge structure. In both episodes, Samson commits violence on inanimate objects to harm the Philistines (the fields, the gates of Gaza). The barrage of waw-consecutive verbs (eight verbs 15:4-5; six verbs 16:3) gives the impression that Samson is indefatigable. Samson's tendency to be solitary, perhaps an expression of his Nazirite nature, is magnified: In Episode 2, he enters the world of nature, using foxes to damage fields, and in Episode 5 he attaches himself not to a wife but to a harlot, a woman on the fringes of society, after which he violates the stone and wood gates of the city. Notably, in Episode 5 he does not speak, preferring solitude to human interaction.

The violence seen in the first round of each set now expands, targeting not only the Philistines but their possessions as well. Samson even imbues the Philistines with a sense of their own vulnerability, threatening both their food supply (15:5) and their physical security (16:3). Indeed, Samson is fulfilling the prophecy that he will begin to save Israel from the Philistines (13:5) in spite of his continuing tendency to take collective revenge for attacks against himself rather than against other Israelite individuals or the Israelite nation. Up to this point, Samson has not perpetrated a personal REVENGE ACT, but the next episodes present the true REVENGE ACTS of the Samson narratives, the first avenging the murder of his wife and her family, and the second for his maiming and imprisonment.

8.1.7.3 *Episodes 3 & 6*

Like the preceding episodes, the final ones of each set share similarities, most obviously their conformity to the morphology of a personal revenge narrative. Both episodes begin with an inquiry: In Episode 3, the Philistines investigate the burning of the fields, while in Episode 6, they dispatch Delilah to discover the source of Samson's strength. Both episodes include a WRONG perpetrated by the Philistines on Samson (killing his wife's family, blinding and imprisoning him)

and a REVENGE ACT executed by Samson on those who committed the WRONG, unlike previous episodes in which Samson acted against someone or something other than the perpetrator. The REVENGE ACT restores Samson's dignity in the wake of his final attack. In addition, both episodes include an INTENT to avenge, using NQM, with Samson calling to YHWH in Episode 6 for the strength to wreak vengeance. In both cases, Samson states his intention to cease acting upon completion of this act, stating, "and after that I will cease" (15:7) and "let me die with the Philistines" (16:30); both report that the REVENGE ACT resulted in a large number of casualties (15:8, 16:30), and both cases describe a DEPARTURE. In Episode 3, Samson descends to the cleft of the rock of Eitam, while in Episode 6, Samson's brethren descend to Gaza, retrieve his body, and bury him in the family sepulcher.

8.2 *Analysis & Context of the Revenge Episodes*

Having clarified the pericope's structure through the use of morphological analysis, we will examine the episodes that contain personal REVENGE ACTS before returning to investigate the significance of the entire pericope. This will involve differentiating between Samson's personal motivations and those that result from the spirit of the Lord.

8.2.1 *Initial Scene*

The final episodes in each cycle, 3 and 6, represent the only examples of personal revenge in the Samson cycle. These will be examined here with regard to their use of the morphological structure to develop the idea of Samson as Avenger. Episode 3, comprising just three verses, begins with a brief Initial Scene in which the Philistines investigate the burning of their fields. This act was done at the time of the wheat harvest (v. 1), thus inflicting maximal damage to the food supply of the people. The straightforward question, "Who has done this?" asked by an anonymous group of Philistines, is met with an equally straightforward answer by another anonymous group. Such details in this Initial Scene differ sharply from those in the lengthy opening of Episode 6, which details an intimate human relationship between two individuals. Episode 3, in contrast, presents a brief interaction before the WRONG is committed.

Episode 6 introduces Delilah. She has been called a "seductress," though "mercenary" might be a more accurate description. We are not told her nationality; her only allegiance seems to be to the enrichment of her own coffers.⁵² Like Samson, she is marginal, occupying a space between whore and wife, and living in Naḥal Sorek, on the border between Israelite and Philistine territories where Samson was continually in motion.⁵³ It has been suggested that Samson, tiring of his liminal

⁵² Mark Lackowski, "Victim, Victor, or Villain? The Unfinalizability of Delilah," *Journal of the Bible and Its Reception* 6, no. 2 (2019): 198–99; Butler, *Judges*, 348; Susan Ackerman, "Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen," *Women in Judges and Biblical Israel* (AB Reference Library, New York: Doubleday, 1998), 231–32.

⁵³ Tammi J. Schneider, *Judges* (Berit Olam: Studies in Hebrew Narrative and Poetry; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2000), 221.

status as an Avenger, revealed his secret in an effort to hasten his death, which suggests that he was using Delilah just as she was deceiving him.⁵⁴ In this scenario, he tragically miscalculated: The Philistines did not desire his death, but wanted to prolong his life in order to torture him. Though Delilah was responsible for bringing on the weakened state that facilitated capture and humiliation, she is never singled out for punishment for her actions. In the morphological sense, nothing she does is regarded as a *WRONG*, i.e., behavior that evokes vengeance on the part of the Victim or his Ally. This point, ignored by many exegetes, is brought into focus by defining functions according to their consequences and is a unique benefit of structural analysis. Like Doeg in the narrative of Saul and the priests of Nob (I Samuel 22), Delilah is merely a catalyst who vanishes after playing her part. If Samson was defined by his need for personal vengeance, the absence of any response to Delilah's betrayal (as well as to the groomsmen and to his father-in-law in the earlier episodes) would be completely out of character.

8.2.2 *WRONG*

In Episode 3, Samson avenges the killings of his wife and father-in-law at the hands of the Philistines. Because the family was often seen as an extension of the individual, an attack on Samson's family members, regardless of whether or not the attack was justified, was perceived to be an attack on Samson himself. In Episode 6, the *WRONG* is committed directly against Samson, and the narrative focuses on Samson's individual suffering. In keeping with his behavior in previous episodes, Samson does not effect vengeance on the perpetrators of the *WRONG*. The startling absence of vengeance on Delilah indicates that Samson's perception of personal affronts is more aligned with God's plan than is commonly assumed. The functions *REACTION TO THE WRONG*, *COMPLICITY*, *ACQUIRING AN ALLY*, and *COUNCIL* do not appear in Episode 3, leaving the final Episode as the means to further develop the idea of Samson's personal vengeance, which is connected with Samson's progress as the savior of Israel.

8.2.3 *REACTION TO THE WRONG*

Surprisingly, Samson has no *REACTION* in response to the *WRONG* of having his hair cut. He expects to throw off the restraints as he has done in the past, but when he fails, there is no mention of dismay or any other emotion; he displays neither anger nor grief. Indeed, it is only when he is tormented in his weak state that he desires revenge — for his eyes, not his strength. Morphological analysis, which highlights those functions that do not appear in addition to those that do, underscores the significance of the Victim's lack of any *REACTION TO THE WRONG*. Similarly, the *REACTIONS TO THE WRONG* that do appear complement and clarify each other, revealing the conflicts underlying the narrative.

⁵⁴ Jeremy Schipper, "What Was Samson Thinking in Judges 16, 17 and 16, 20?," *Biblica*, 92 no. 1 (2011): 61–63.

In this episode, this missing function focuses the reader on Samson's ambivalence regarding his status. Consecrated from before his birth as a Nazirite and a savior of Israel, Samson became accustomed to his strength and employed it to his own advantage. Nevertheless, his relationship with the liminal status that his unique abilities impose on him is fraught, and therefore, the absence of any REACTION TO THE WRONG is not surprising.

Although Samson fails to react to the WRONG inflicted on him, two other parties do react, in unforeseen ways. One unexpected REACTION TO THE WRONG is that Samson's hair begins to grow. The hair serves as an embodiment of God's will, as Samson follows the command initially given to his mother (Jud 13:5). After his imprisonment, the hair grows back though Samson fails to notice. Throughout the pericope, his hair has taken on an identity of its own, separate from and often at odds with Samson's. Before the WRONG, Samson's acceptance of his divinely ordained Nazirite status is symbolized through his hair. If Samson's liaisons with various women were attempts to escape the Nazirite status that separated him from society, they have been to no avail: His hair continues to grow. The second REACTION is that of the Philistine revelers, whose lingering trauma from the damage Samson inflicted is expressed in how they praise their god, first as having delivered to them "our enemy" and then as having saved them from "the ravager of our country, who has killed many of us." However, their trauma does not keep them from becoming overconfident in Samson's presence.

8.2.4 *COMPLICITY*

The sacrifice and invocation to the god Dagon complete, the Philistines turn to revelry to celebrate the vanquishing of their enemy. Whether כטוב לבם (v. 25) indicates that they were eating and drinking too much (Metzudat David ad. loc, cf. Esth 1:10), or that they had simply cast aside all worries during the festivities, the text cites the carefree atmosphere as the prelude to the summoning of Samson (v. 25).⁵⁵ Forcing their prisoner to serve as entertainment is the actualization of the affliction they sought previously (v. 5), and the extra measure of cruelty will lead to their downfall.

8.2.5 *ACQUIRING AN ALLY*

Samson is led by a lad (נער) to the main hall. The paronomasia between נער and Samson's stated desire to "shake off" (וְאֶפְעֵר) his shackles after his hair was cut (v. 20) suggests that Samson now wishes to "shake off" his imprisonment. Here, the נער leads him to a final shaking off (וְנִעַר) of not only the Philistine constraints, but all constraints. The unsuspecting lad helps Samson, who exploits his supposed weakness, find the supporting pillars. Though not singled out, the lad will presumably die along with everyone else in the temple, Samson included. The building is full; all

⁵⁵ This type of careless COMPLICITY through celebration recalls the drunken COMPLICITY of the serpent in Illuyankas, or the capture of Bilulu and Ġirġire in the tavern, among others, to be discussed below in the analysis of ANE narratives.

the Philistine nobility, along with many other citizens, have gathered to mock the fallen Israelite hero.

8.2.6 *Prayer (COUNCIL)*

Samson has prayed earlier (15:18), but now, leaning against the pillars, he relies on the power of prayer rather than the power of hair to exact his personal vengeance (v. 28). Unlike his previous prayer in which Samson seeks God's help to survive after his act of personal revenge, he now prays for God's assistance to end his life while executing his final act of personal vengeance. Samson's final prayer differs in its morphological function from his previous prayer, which was included in an AFTERMATH. Here, Samson is not an Avenger for God; he asks to regain his strength for his own purposes. Although he recognizes that his strength comes from God, his prayer is self-serving and resembles the demands of ANE Avengers at formal Councils, as the morphological analysis of ANE narratives will demonstrate. At the same time, the prayer is a unique instance of an HB Avenger requesting divine aid in order to fulfil a personal revenge act. The structural analysis of the personal revenge tale-type reveals just how unusual this is. Contra Crenshaw who sees in Samson a man "armed with faith alone," the unusual presence of this morphological function portrays instead a man whose real weapon is his own desire for personal vengeance.⁵⁶ This is reflected in the language of the request, which uses the first person singular pronoun five times in a single verse.⁵⁷ Though blinded, Samson depends on his own vision, rather than his divine mission, to inform his decision-making process. He asks that the Lord strengthen him "just this once" so that he may be avenged, consciously making the connection between his strength and its source: not his hair, but the Lord.

When Samson asks to be avenged, he makes a personal request and uses the word NQM. As noted, Peels explains that where there is "an individual or illegitimate act of vengeance, the use of NQM is either avoided or ... used pejoratively," and is otherwise indicative of divine vengeance.⁵⁸ Samson's personal desire for revenge aligns with God's desire to avenge the same group for oppressing God's people. Samson was consecrated to be God's Avenger, but he took personal offense at the enemy's WRONGS — not because they offended the honor of the Lord, but because they offended his own. Thus, NQM is used in both of its senses simultaneously: in a derogatory sense in the human context and in a positive sense in the divine context.

8.2.7 *INTENT & REVENGE ACT*

Samson's declaration of INTENT in Episode 3 includes a clear statement of vengeance. The use of the word NQM expresses his desire to repay the deeds of the Philistines. As mentioned, this

⁵⁶ Crenshaw, *Samson*, 97.

⁵⁷ Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 467–68.

⁵⁸ Peels, *The Vengeance of God*, 275–76.

is the first time that he retaliates against the perpetrator of a WRONG, and his use of NQM indicates that he is aware of this. Whereas he takes his abilities for granted in Episode 3, his speech in Episode 6 relates his vengeance to God. He is fixed on the WRONG inflicted upon his honor, not on the national aspect of the interaction. His INTENT includes the cessation of the REVENGE ACT, although he omits objective parameters for such a determination. As he does in Episode 3, Samson declares in Episode 6 that he will take revenge. However, this Episode is unique in the HB corpus in that it is a suicide mission.⁵⁹ This INTENT, though it was likely spoken only for his own ears, leaves no doubt that Samson believes he cannot escape alive — nor even that he wanted to. Samson’s statement of INTENT is conspicuous among HB revenge narratives in expressing inner resolve. Unlike his INTENT to cease avenging himself on the Philistines in Episode 3, his statement “let me die with the Philistines” emphasizes that his REVENGE ACT is meant to end his pain and humiliation in the only way possible.⁶⁰

Although Samson invokes the Lord to grant him strength, and he does muster the force to bring down the temple and kill all who are present, the text does not confirm that Samson’s strength was divinely bestowed, i.e., that his final prayer was answered. By omitting mention of this fact, the narrative may be distancing God’s vengeance from Samson’s personal vengeance, intimating that it was a convenient confluence of events that Samson’s revenge coincide with God’s plan.

8.2.8 DEPARTURE & AFTERMATH

In the wake of the killings in Episode 3, Samson dwells in the cleft of the rock of Eitam, plainly desiring solitude. The cleft he inhabits is not merely geographic, as it explains why the Philistines needed the men of Judah to reveal the whereabouts of Samson. The cleft rendered him invisible to all who were not familiar with the territory. A parallel can be drawn between his DEPARTURE to the enveloping cleft to his DEPARTURE to the grave, which envelops him permanently.

The AFTERMATH of Episode 6 continues to draw attention to Samson’s unusual life. Accomplishing more in death than in life, and rejoining his family not in life, but only in death, he is posthumously integrated into the society he was appointed to defend.⁶¹ His burial may be contrasted with that of Jephthah, buried by anonymous individuals in an unnamed location (Jud 12:7).⁶² Both judges worked outside of the society they protected, but Samson’s liminal state, unlike Jephthah’s, ended with his burial in the family sepulcher, a DEPARTURE that now seems almost

⁵⁹ Yael Shemesh, “Suicide in the Bible,” *JBQ* 37, no. 3 (2009): 165–66. cites Zimri as a possible second (I Kgs. 16:18), though he is not an Avenger, as he takes only his own life.

⁶⁰ Pnina Galpaz-Feller, “‘Let My Soul Die with the Philistines’ (Judges 16.30),” *JSOT* 30, no. 3 (2006): 317.

⁶¹ Exum, “The Many Faces of Samson,” 21; Greenstein, “The Riddle of Samson,” 246.

⁶² Assis, *Self-Interest or Communal Interest: An Ideology of Leadership in the Gideon, Abimelech and Jephthah Narratives*, 234.

merciful in its finality. Ultimately, Samson's legacy lies in his ability to destroy the enemy while destroying himself; the coda of the pericope simply counts the years he was active without adding, as is done with other judges, that there was quiet in the land (cf. 3:11, 5:31, 8:28).

Samson's DEPARTURE, his burial by his family in the family grave, divides the two elements of the AFTERMATH, the number of people he killed and the length of his tenure. This final structure is essential to understanding the duality of his actions. Following his INTENT and REVENGE ACT, Samson's accomplishments are reported: He has killed thousands of Philistines, even more in his death than during his lifetime (v. 30). This is both a personal and a national achievement. Moreover, Samson achieves a measure of personal peace through his burial in the family tomb. Finally, the narrative mentions the national aspect to Samson's life, which is structurally separate from the first goal. Samson was, after all, a divinely appointed judge who judged the nation for twenty years. In this time, he achieved God's objective as well as his own. The ending invites the question as to whether or not this convergence was purely coincidental, or if the assessment of Samson as a selfish Avenger is an undeserved caricature.⁶³ To answer this, we will examine the combined effect of the morphologies of all of the episodes.

8.3 *Conclusions*

8.3.1 *Morphological Conclusions*

The morphological analysis of Samson's acts can help illuminate our understanding of his character. While it is true that on a conscious level Samson does not act for the national cause, he is unique among leaders of Israel in that he does not receive conscious, direct communication from God. However, we can differentiate between a hero who acts unconsciously and one who acts subconsciously. Unconscious acts imply a "total lack of awareness" on the part of the subject, whereas subconscious acts indicate, "one level below conscious awareness."⁶⁴ Subconscious motivations include "feelings, desires, and thoughts that are hidden in one's mind and affect his behavior, but the person does not know that he has them."⁶⁵ The morphological analysis demonstrates that more motivates Samson than his apparently selfish, conscious goals.

A structural analysis based on the form of the personal revenge narrative is essential in the current division of the Samson cycle. Demarcating six episodes according to the WRONGS inflicted on Samson allows his use of revenge to be assessed in each case. As has been shown, only the last episode of each set fulfills the requirements of personal revenge. Tracing the development of these episodes reveals how Samson and his actions evolve.

⁶³ Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 468–69.

⁶⁴ Tony Malim and Ann Birch, *Introduction Psychology* (London: MacMillan Press, 1998), 204–5.

⁶⁵ Michael Mayor, *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (<https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/subconscious>; Pearson Education, 2009).

The similarities between Episodes 1 and 4, as noted above, include Samson being pushed by God to act against the Philistines. From the first episode of the first set of narratives to the first of the second set, the number of Samson's victims increases from thirty to a thousand, pointing to an escalation in intensity. Living in a deserted rock cleft, increasingly at the margins of society, his liminality increases. In these episodes he perpetrates violence against random Philistines rather than those who wronged him. In Episode 1, Samson identifies the Philistines as "men" who will pay his wager or threaten his freedom, but in Episode 4 he uses the term "uncircumcised," signifying his growing perception of the Philistines as a collective adversary.

Although the effect of these episodes is to broaden the area of friction with the Philistines and draw them into open conflict, this does not appear to be Samson's conscious intention. The second episode of each set reflects a more sophisticated strategy in which Samson attacks the Philistines collectively without touching a single person. From burning their food supply to endangering their security, his actions again target and punish the Philistines, though not for any direct attack on Samson. The public nature of his violence ensures that the Israelites are aware of his deeds, but they do not react even when he leaves the gates of Gaza in full view of the Judaite city of Hebron⁶⁶ nor is there any indication that Samson acts with his nation in mind.

Of the six episodes of violence in the Samson Cycle, only the last is a well-developed narrative of personal revenge. From the structural analysis emerges a portrait of a judge who has been labeled as the quintessential Avenger, but who, in reality, uses violence that generally *cannot* be defined as personal revenge. Episodes 3 and 6, the revenge episodes, are unique among HB personal revenge narratives in that the Avenger-Victim does not have any recorded REACTION to the WRONG perpetrated against him. In Episode 3, Samson's family is slain; in Episode 6, he is blinded, bound and taken captive. Neither episode mentions a REACTION, emotional or otherwise, on Samson's part. Samson's responses in other episodes (the sarcastic ditties of 14:18 and 15:16, the anger of 14:19, the exasperation of 16:16) show that he is capable of responding to an offense. The absence of any REACTION TO THE WRONG on the part of Samson in the two episodes identified as personal revenge is significant. On a national level, acting as the Lord's emissary, Samson responds decisively against the enemy. Contra Paytner, who claims for Samson a Girardian mimesis, Samson's responses on a personal level are actually less resolute, calling into question the assumption that he cannot tolerate personal insult.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Webb, *The Book of Judges*, 395.

⁶⁷ Gerhard Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology: The Theology of Israel's Historical Traditions*, vol. 1 (Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 333–34; Helen Paynter, "'Revenge for My Two Eyes': Talion and Mimesis in the Samson Narrative," *Biblical Interpretation* 26, no. 2 (2018): 133–57..

Due to the fact that Samson is the only example of an Avenger who appeals to God for assistance in avenging, many view his final act as divine revenge.⁶⁸ However, the morphology and the content of the text show this to be implausible. The WRONG, the REACTION of the Philistines, and Samson's own words all reflect the personal nature of the encounter. This can be seen more clearly when the episode is viewed against the background of the morphology of ANE revenge narratives, which feature COUNCIL as a consistent function, or in comparison to HB revenge narratives with significant foreign influence, such as Jezebel against Naboth or Haman against Mordechai and the Jews, in which royal COUNCIL, rather than divine COUNCIL, is sought. The appearance in an HB narrative of a function that is prominent mainly in ANE narratives (i.e., COUNCIL) testifies to the foreign influences in Samson's life, which the structure of the pericope reflects. The faith implicit in Samson's prayer and his assumption that it will be answered despite not receiving any such revelation give this customarily foreign function an HB quality. Moreover, Samson's desire to avenge and the national needs that are propelled by God, commonly assumed to be joined coincidentally by overlapping motives, are joined together by the prayer.⁶⁹ In addition, the Samson cycle rejects the ANE tendency to engulf in suffering all those in the vicinity of vengeance. Samson, in contrast, forgoes vengeance on those who have personally wronged him; only when he is wronged by the Philistines does he avenge the WRONG on the appropriate target.

Samson has been characterized as a violent, liminal figure who adapted to a variety of situations. His proclivity for violence and for foreign women, the use of the word NQM, and the fact that he fought alone have led to the assessment that he was a vengeful, anti-social, sex-starved lunatic who spent his time pursuing personal vendettas.⁷⁰ Others have seen in him a combination of divine mission and vigilantism. By contributing to an understanding of personal revenge, morphological analysis provides a counterbalance to these harsh assessments and demonstrates that not every act of violence is tantamount to vengeance, even when committed against the enemy.

Significantly, the morphological analysis of the six episodes reveals Samson's startling absence of personal vengeance where it would be most expected, namely, on the women who betrayed him. This fact constitutes powerful evidence against the assumption that Samson is an undisciplined insurgent concerned only with preserving his honor. As discussed above, the use of NQM suggests that vengeance can be divinely sanctioned as well as negatively valenced.⁷¹ Though Samson shows no concern for Israel's national goals (with the possible exception of allowing the men of Judah to hand him over to the Philistines), the current analysis indicates that his latent

⁶⁸ Peels, *The Vengeance of God*, 100–102, for example.

⁶⁹ Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 468; Barry G. Webb, *The Book of the Judges: An Integrated Reading* (JSOTSupp 46; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987), 171–72.

⁷⁰ Amit, *The Book of the Judges*, 275–76; Niditch, "Samson as Culture Hero, Trickster, and Bandit," 620–21.

⁷¹ See above, Sections 8.2.6 – 8.2.7 and General Introduction, p. 15 – Section 1.2, regarding the implication of NQM.

awareness of a divine mission was reflected in his acts, though this need not indicate a pietistic reading.⁷²

8.3.2 *Liminality*

Turner distinguishes between the liminality of individuals in a society and a category he calls “outsiderhood,” defined by “inhabiting a state permanently outside the social structure.”⁷³ Samson is defined by his liminality. He is attracted to a society he despises and to which he can never belong. He was appointed to a divine role even before birth, implying a special relationship with God, yet his efforts against his liminality weaken his connection with God because his Nazirite status is predicated on his remaining separate from society.⁷⁴ The first triad of episodes revolves around his taking a wife; a failed attempt at joining society. The second triad of episodes, in contrast, demonstrates his refusal to be contained. In Episodes 4 and 5, Samson uses force to escape his bonds, while in Episode 6 he prefers death to life as a prisoner.

Samson lives on the periphery; his removal of the gates - the physical *limen* – of Gaza (16:3), symbolizes the extreme degree of his liminality, a fact proven even more in his final revenge against the Philistines at Dagon’s temple. Samson, a prisoner, is again forced to live outside society and, as Mobley argues, will never finish with “happily ever after” like the protagonists in Propp’s Russian fairy tales.⁷⁵ When Samson, the quintessential liminal protector and oftentimes Avenger, takes vengeance for the final WRONG, he is able to exit his liminal state. However, this is possible only because his act coincides with God’s desire to avenge his antagonists for their crimes against God’s nation. Both ends require Samson to exist on the margins from his conception until his death.

The mark of a successful act of vengeance is generally considered to be the Avenger’s completion of the REVENGE ACT combined with a safe return to a post-Avenger status. Accordingly, though Samson’s acts of vengeance may have been successful, he was unsuccessful as an Avenger. Despite his death, however, he fulfilled the prophecy: He began to save the Israelites from their oppressors. Additionally, with his last breath he escaped the liminal state that had marked him from before his birth. The double AFTERMATH of Episode 6 and his DEPARTURE make clear that his goals, as well as the Lord’s, were accomplished. Not privileged to live out his days in quiet, he found peace through burial by his brethren in the family grave and in his legacy as a stabilizing leader.

⁷² Webb, *The Book of Judges*, 391, as one example.

⁷³ Barbara Babcock-Abrahams, “‘A Tolerated Margin of Mess’: The Trickster and His Tales Reconsidered,” *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 11, no. 3 (1975): 151; Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (ed. Roger D. Abrahams; London: Routledge, 2017), 145ff. on the permanently liminal state.

⁷⁴ Amit, *The Book of the Judges*, 280; Gregory Mobley, “The Wild Man in the Bible and the Ancient Near East,” *JBL* 116, no. 2 (1997): 230.

⁷⁵ Mobley, Samson and the Liminal Hero in the Ancient Near East, 111.

Examining the three sets of episodes reveals movement in which Samson progresses from non-revenge violence (Episodes 1 and 4), to collective revenge against the Philistines (Episodes 2 and 5), and to acts of personal vengeance against those who wronged him (Episodes 3 and 6). Perhaps the greatest failure of Samson's career is that he declined the opportunity to realize his divinely bestowed potential as a true leader and savior of his people. Advancing from misdirected violence inspired by YHWH to a recognition of the Philistines as his personal oppressors, he turns inward to personal vengeance against the enemy for personal WRONGS rather than outward to nationalistic vengeance as liberator of his nation.

Chapter 9

9.0 Joab on Abner, Abner on IshBoshet¹ (II Samuel 2:12-3:39)

The narratives analyzed below involve the power plays and intrigues of two generals, Joab and Abner. Because many scholars focus on the pericope's goal of demonstrating the innocence of David in the assassinations of Abner and Ishbaal,² the section is frequently divided between 3:1-4:12 and 2:12-32, which is labeled "A typical day of warfare."³ This division fails to recognize the text as dual revenge narratives, even when its proponents acknowledge the connections between Abner's abandonment of IshBoshet and the episode that follows. Other readings have centered attention on David's motives or his role in establishing conditions for revenge, or have explained how the episode can be seen as an apologetic whose goal is to strengthen the kingdom of David.⁴ This study, however, will focus on the act of revenge each general commits and the narrative interactions between them.

The opening chapters of II Samuel follow the rivalry between the house of Saul and the house of David in the wake of Saul's death. IshBoshet heads Saul's house, supported by his general, Abner, while David rules from Hebron with the support of his general, Joab son of Zeruiah. The pericope contains two narratives of revenge: Joab's revenge on Abner for the wartime killing of his brother Asahel, and Abner's revenge on IshBoshet after the latter's insult regarding Abner's behavior with Saul's concubine, Ritzpah. Scholars differ widely on the primary motivations underlying these actions. Abner is viewed as a power broker, an altruist, or a self-serving megalomaniac.⁵ Joab has been described as a blood-avenger, a pompous careerist, a loyal nationalist, and a potential usurper.⁶ In this discussion, morphological analyses of these HB personal revenge narratives will shed light on the generals' intentions regarding their acts of vengeance.

¹ IshBoshet is used here, as per the transliteration of the MT.

² McCarter, *II Samuel*, 120.

³ Jan P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel/3 Throne and City (II Sam 2-8 & 21-24)* (Assen/Maastricht: Van Gorcum, 1990), 40–65; Peter R. Ackroyd, *The Second Book of Samuel* (CBC 10; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 33–39.

⁴ James C. Vanderkam, "Davidic Complicity in the Deaths of Abner and Eshbaal: A Historical and Redactional Study," *JBL*, 99 no. 4 (1980), 521–39.

⁵ See John Mauchline, *1 and 2 Samuel*, (NCBC; London: Eerdmans, 1971), 210, for a decidedly positive view of Abner, versus David Shepherd, "Knowing Abner," in *Characters and Characterization in the Book of Samuel*, (eds. Keith Bodner and Benjamin J.M. Johnson; London: T. & T. Clark, 2020), 216; Robert Alter, *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel* (New York: WW Norton & Company, 1999), 210; F. Charles Fensham, "The Battle Between the Men of Joab and Abner as a Possible Ordeal by Battle?," *VT* 20, no. 3 (1970): 357, for a more critical analysis of his motives.

⁶ Alter, *The David Story*, 213; Shepherd, "Knowing Abner," 218; Ackroyd, *The Second Book of Samuel*, 38; Michael A. Eschelbach, *Has Joab Foiled David?: A Literary Study of the Importance of Joab's Character in Relation to David* (SBL 76; New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 58.

The pericope in question contains two narratives containing national and personal facets. Utilizing the morphology of personal revenge narratives will show that the pericope is comprised of a primary revenge narrative in which a secondary revenge narrative is embedded. An embedded narrative, or *mise-en-abyme*, is a structure in which a character in one narrative becomes the narrator of a second narrative that is framed by the first.⁷ In this pericope, however, the omniscient biblical narrator serves as the narrator for both narratives, despite the fact that one story is embedded in the other. This analysis also diverges from readings in which the two chapters are divided into several subunits, each of which is treated individually.⁸ In contrast, the morphological analysis reveals a Main Narrative about Joab’s revenge on Abner for killing his brother and an Embedded Narrative describing Abner’s change of loyalties from IshBoshet to David. The morphological analysis of each narrative allows for corresponding functions to be contrasted: The inner narrative clarifies the outer narrative, as is often the case in texts containing a “play within a play.”⁹

Table 18 Episode 1 –Main Narrative, Part A

Initial Scene	2:12-22	As a result of the battle, Asahel chases Abner. Abner warns him to desist and choose a different target in order to avoid killing him.
WRONG	2:23a-e	Abner kills Asahel.
REACTION TO THE WRONG	2:23f	All who come to that place stand still.
REVENGE ATTEMPT	2:24-25	Joab and Abishai pursue Abner.
OATH TO NOT AVENGE	2:26-32	Abner convinces Joab to desist. He agrees. Asahel is buried.

Table 19 Episode 2 – Embedded Narrative

Initial Scene	3:6	In the ongoing war between the House of Saul and the House of David, Abner strengthens his position in the House of Saul.
WRONG	3:7	IshBoshet accuses Abner of having relations with Ritzpah.

⁷ William Nelles, “Embedding,” in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* (eds. David Herman, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan; New York: Routledge, 2010), 134.

⁸ For example, Anderson, *Samuel 2*, 36–64; Hertzberg, *I and II Samuel*, 250–62 both treat 3:6-39 as one unit, leaving 2:12-3:1 as a discrete scene; Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel/3 Throne and City (II Sam 2-8 & 21-24)*, 25–229 divides 2:1-3:5 and 3:6-39 with a further subdivision of 3:6-21 and 3:22-39. Others, such as; Shepherd, “Knowing Abner”; Green, *How Are the Mighty Fallen?*; William Buracker, “Abner Son of Ner: Characterization and Contribution of Saul’s Chief General” (Ph.D. Thesis, Washington DC, Catholic University of America, 2017), combine only those scenes in which the character appears with other scenes involving the same character in order to view a larger picture of the character.

⁹ Viveca Fűredy, “A Structural Model of Phenomena with Embedding in Literature and Other Arts,” *Poetics Today* 10, no. 4 (1989): 746–47. The concept of embedding will be more fully explained below.

REACTION TO THE WRONG	3:8	Abner is very angry at IshBoshet's treatment of him.
OATH TO AVENGE	3:9-10	Abner takes an oath to transfer power to David.
REACTION TO THE REVENGE (threat)	3:11	IshBoshet is paralyzed with fear as a result of Abner's threat.
PLAN	3:12-13	Abner contacts David, offering his services. Abner agrees to David's condition for an alliance.
REVENGE ACT	3:14-16	Michal is returned to David.
REVENGE ACT	3:17-19	Abner convinces the people to follow David.
REVENGE ACT	3:20-21	Abner enters into a peaceful arrangement with David in Hebron.
DEPARTURE	3:21c	Abner departs in peace.
AFTERMATH	3:22-23	Joab returns and is told what transpired.

Table 20 Episode 1 – Main Narrative, Part B

REACTION TO THE WRONG	3:24-25	Joab is shocked that David has allied with Abner and let him go.
COMPLICITY	3:26a	David allows Joab to leave unescorted after he berates the king.
PLAN	3:26b-d	Joab secretly sends for Abner to return to Hebron.
COMPLICITY	3:27a-c	Abner returns and is lured to a private place by Joab.
REVENGE ACT	3:27d-e	Joab kills Abner as blood vengeance.
REACTION TO THE REVENGE	3:28	David declares his innocence.
REACTION TO THE REVENGE	3:29	David curses Joab and his descendants.
REVENGE ACT (recalled)	3:30	Recall that Joab and Abishai killed Abner as blood vengeance for their brother.
REACTION TO THE REVENGE	3:31	David mourns Abner, and commands Joab and the nation to do likewise.
DEPARTURE	3:32	Abner is buried.
REACTION TO THE REVENGE	3:33-34	David laments the death of Abner.
REACTION TO THE REVENGE	3:35	David fasts, taking an oath not to eat.
AFTERMATH	3:36-37	The nation recognizes that David is not to blame.
REACTION TO THE REVENGE	3:38	David addresses his servants, eulogizing Abner.

REACTION TO THE REVENGE	3:39	David explains why he is not punishing Joab, expressing his desire for divine retribution.
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9.1 *Establishing the Morphology*

9.1.1 *Main Narrative*

The Main Narrative (henceforth MN) opens after the failure of the twelve-on-twelve contest at the pool in Gibeon.¹⁰ Presumably to limit bloodshed, Abner has suggested a contest between twelve warriors from each side. Joab agrees, and when the contest ends with the deaths of all twenty-four soldiers, a full-fledged battle breaks out. The swift Asahel chases Abner and, when he refuses to heed Abner's repeated warnings to desist, is killed by Abner (2:12-23). Despite Abner's stated unwillingness to kill Asahel and despite the fact that the killing occurred in a battle setting in self-defense, Joab, brother of Asahel, regards the act as a WRONG that must be avenged.¹¹

Those who saw Asahel's corpse are silenced in REACTION TO THE WRONG as the shock of losing a warrior, brother of the general, is absorbed, but Joab and Abishai pursue Abner in an ATTEMPT TO REVENGE. Like Gideon (Jud 8:4 ff.), Joab and Abishai do not attempt this alone, but commission the army for their needs (vv. 27-28). As he did earlier at the pool of Gibeon (2:14-15), Abner calls on Joab to halt the fighting. Taking an unusual OATH, Joab agrees, and both generals cease hostilities and return from the battlefield. The text devotes special attention to the burial of Asahel, emphasizing his status as a member of Joab's family; he is interred in the family sepulcher (2:32). Abner's success in persuading Joab to halt the fighting may have been due to his oratory skills or to Joab's desire to avoid further casualties or some combination thereof. In any case, it seems clear that Joab's men had the upper hand.¹² The ceasefire might have lasted had it not been for Abner's actions, to which this analysis will return after further examination of the MN.

Following Abner's heated argument with IshBoshet, the general shifts his allegiance from Saul's son to David. Joab, the commander of David's army, returns from military activities to discover that his brother's killer has become an honored member of David's court. Joab confronts the king: "What have you done?" (3:24). Although Joab claims to be REACTING to this development because he doubts Abner's allegiance to David, in reality he harbors resentment for Abner's killing of Asahel, as will be seen after his revenge. David's acceptance of Abner evokes in Joab's mind the WRONG of Asahel's killing, and Joab's outburst (vv. 24-25) constitutes part of his

¹⁰ Fensham, "The Battle Between the Men of Joab and Abner as a Possible Ordeal by Battle?," 356–57.

¹¹ Gregory TK Wong, "Ehud and Joab Separated at Birth?," *VT* 56, no. 3 (2006): 9–11; David A. Bosworth, "You Have Shed Much Blood, and Waged Great Wars": Killing, Bloodguilt, and Combat Stress," *Journal of Religion, Disability and Health*, 12 no. 3 (2008), 241–42.

¹² David G. Firth, *1 & 2 Samuel* (Apollos Old Testament Commentary; Nottingham: Apollos, 2009), 338.

REACTION TO THE WRONG even though he does not mention Asahel's death. Joab's initial question receives no answer, nor do any of the rhetorical questions and accusations that follow (vv. 24-25). The use of such questions and accusations has been well documented as means to express the outrage and indignation that often accompany revenge.¹³

In the events leading up to the killing of Asahel, Abner is seen in a positive light, as a man of honor even with respect to his enemies. He proposes the contest at Gibeon apparently to avoid large-scale bloodshed (2:14), he attempts to dissuade Asahel from pursuing him (2:20-22), and he urges Joab to end the battle to save the nation (2:26). While some have seen in these efforts Abner's practical desire to mitigate his military weaknesses, he speaks with poise and control, even under pressure.¹⁴ Seen in this light, Joab's desire to avenge his brother's death has shaped his impression that Abner is untrustworthy.

Joab does not reveal his feelings regarding Abner to David. Despite Joab's outward exasperation at David's actions, he expresses concern only for the damage this alliance could wreak on David's kingdom: How can a general who has just betrayed his king be seen as trustworthy?¹⁵ Joab's claim is credible, as it must be if it will convince David. However, the omniscient narrator reveals after Joab's revenge that his REACTION is to the WRONG of his brother's murder (3:27), fortified, perhaps, with the WRONG of his king choosing political expediency over his general's pain. For Joab, national security is the stated concern that he regards as an additional benefit of his personal vengeance.

Joab may have been hoping for some word from David indicating that he could act against Abner, much as Jacob's sons acted on their own after the rape of Dinah only when their father failed to act (Genesis 34). David, however, cannot authorize, endorse, or even be aware of any move against Abner without risking the loss of a covenant partner and Abner's contingent of supporters, as will be explained below in the discussion of the Embedded Narrative.¹⁶ Nevertheless, David's failure to perceive that Joab is outraged because his brother's murderer has received glory instead of a death sentence makes David COMPLICIT in Joab's plan to murder Abner.

Joab's true motivation for slaying Abner has been widely studied. Opinions range from identifying David as the instigator to citing various reasons on Joab's part.¹⁷ Lemche, following the Roman judicial principle of *cui bono*, "who benefits from the crime?" points out that David is aware

¹³ Zaibert, "Punishment and Revenge," 113; Abioye, "Typology of Rhetorical Questions as a Stylistic Device in Writing," 3–4. See above, regarding the use of rhetorical questions by Joseph's brothers in Gen 37:8.

¹⁴ Shepherd, "Knowing Abner," 216; Buracker, "Abner Son of Ner," 159.

¹⁵ Barbara Green, "Joab's Coherence and Incoherence: Character and Characterization," in *Characters and Characterization in the Book of Samuel* (eds. Keith Bodner and Benjamin J.M. Johnson; London: T. & T. Clark, 2020), 188.

¹⁶ Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, 229.

¹⁷ Vanderkam, "Davidic Complicity"; Wong, "Ehud and Joab."

that the power of the House of Saul lies with Abner, not the puppet king IshBoshet, and that by allying with the general, David will remove the principal threat to his crown. Lemche argues that David accepted Abner's proposal of vv. 12 and 21 in order to orchestrate a situation that Joab will find intolerable, thus guaranteeing Abner's elimination at the hands of his aggrieved general.¹⁸ Similarly, Vanderkam points to David's opportunism, the parallels to Amasa's murder (ch. 20), and David's exaggerated protests of innocence after the murder.¹⁹ These explanations, however, fail to account for what Joab gained by removing his military and political rival as well as his brother's killer. Ishida points out, in fact, that Joab has more to gain from Abner's death than David. For David, Abner's murder is highly problematic in light of the political agreement he has just made. If David hopes to gain the trust of the Benjaminites, he must distance himself from betrayals and political intrigue.²⁰

However, the arguments incriminating David that Lemche and Vanderkam offer are largely based on gaps in the narrative, that is, arguments of omission rather than arguments weighted by positive evidence.²¹ Although David did not plan for Joab to murder Abner, he is culpable for his negligence in terms of the general's intentions.²² Joab's words to David, "What have you done?" indicate a moral claim rather than a political one, and moral indignation is a known motivator in acts of vengeance.²³ A superficial reading of the pericope may allow David's inattention to escape moral judgment, but morphological analysis places it on the level of COMPLICITY: David is COMPLICIT in Abner's murder by allowing Joab to depart without admonition or escort.²⁴ The study of morphology in personal revenge narratives shows that COMPLICITY is not the exception but the norm; thus, David's culpability is increased because he should have anticipated Joab's actions.

Joab sends messengers to retrieve Abner from Bor-hassirah, which was a short distance from Hebron.²⁵ The text notes that David did not know about Joab's actions. The messengers probably did not know the reason for their mission either, which means that Joab has no allies. Identifying this narrative as one of personal revenge and not political assassination sheds light on

¹⁸ Niels Peter Lemche, "David's Rise," *JSOT*, 10 (1978): 16–19.

¹⁹ Vanderkam, "Davidic Complicity in the Deaths of Abner and Eshbaal," 529–33.

²⁰ Tomoo Ishida, "The Story of Abner's Murder. A Problem Posed by the Solomonic Apologist," in *Eretz-Israel: Archaeological, Historical and Geographical Studies: Avraham Malamat Volume* (eds. S. Ahituv and B.A. Levine; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1993), 109–11; Robert P. Gordon, *Hebrew Bible and Ancient Versions: Selected Essays of Robert P. Gordon* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 42–43; Anderson, *Samuel 2*, 61.

²¹ Newkirk, "Just Deceivers," 145; Fokkeman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel*, III, 95.

²² Eschelbach, *Has Joab Foiled David?*, 76:68; Keith Bodner, "Is Joab a Reader-Response Critic?," *JSOT* 27, no. 1 (2002): 26.

²³ Uniacke, "Why Is Revenge Wrong?," 63. This is the standard use of the phrase *מה (זאת) עשית/תם*. See Gen 3:13; 4:10; 12:18; 20:9; 26:10; 29:25; 44:15; Num 22:28; 23:11; Judg 2:2; 8:1; 15:11; I Sam 13:11.

²⁴ Deut 21:1-9.

²⁵ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 7.34.

Abner's subsequent actions, i.e., his unsuspecting return to Hebron. Shepherd contends that Abner is performing noble self-sacrifice²⁶ but because COMPLICITY on the part of an Avenger appears regularly in revenge narratives, we can identify it here, too. Abner's overconfidence, the result of the royal audience he has just enjoyed, is his COMPLICITY in his own death. Despite his political and military experience, Abner fails to assess the danger he faces by meeting with his former enemies, leading some commentators to surmise that Joab must have sent the messengers in David's name.²⁷ The role of David's and Abner's COMPLICITY is highlighted throughout the morphological analysis.

As has been noted, when the structures of narrative are compared, morphological analysis informs what is omitted in the structure as much as it informs what is present. Here, the absence of an INTENT TO AVENGE emphasizes the extent to which Joab conceals his intentions. He conceals his plan from David, his messengers, and the reader. Once David has chosen to not to avenge Asahel's death, Joab recognizes that he must attend to it alone. In this he may be compared to Absalom, who also conceals his INTENT to kill Amnon, although in that case, the text reports Absalom's seething hatred (II Sam 13:22) and here, no mention is made of Joab's emotions. Joab will not compromise his goal by disclosing it. His outrage was expressed to David in terms of national security, but when David failed to repudiate the agreement, Joab will act decisively and alone.

Joab, the consummate military strategist, will not kill Abner just anywhere, as is seen when he draws his enemy aside (2:27ff.).²⁸ He chooses the שַׁלִּי, a *hapex legomenon* often translated as the middle part of the gate, which affords more privacy. Alter, stressing a different aspect of the killing, renders שַׁלִּי "deceptively," based on the hiphil "to mislead."²⁹ In any case, Joab deceived Abner to get him alone under the pretext of wishing for a private conversation. The ruse of conducting a meeting in confidence to lure victims to their demise finds a parallel in Genesis 4:8. Esther similarly invites Haman to a private party in order to effect his downfall.³⁰ This PLAN also includes an ironic element: The city gate is where a true blood-avenger would have taken his case to the local elders.³¹

²⁶ Shepherd, "Knowing Abner," 224.

²⁷ Alexander Francis Kirkpatrick, *The Second Book of Samuel* (Cambridge Bible 10; London: University Press, 1881), 269; Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 312.

²⁸ See Yael Shemesh, "Why Did Joab Kill Abner?(2 Sam 3: 22-27): An Exemplary Representation of a Partial Explanation by the Narrator," *Beit Mikra*, 2003, 152; Vanderkam, "Davidic Complicity in the Deaths of Abner and Eshbaal," 532; Eschelbach, *Has Joab Foiled David?*, 68. all of whom ask the question 'why did Joab wait until now to kill Abner?' It is a valid question, but not one that necessarily points to a motivation other than avenging Asahel. Proper timing, privacy, and a pretext of political expediency in trying to save David's monarchy are all possible reasons for the delayed reaction

²⁹ Alter, *The David Story*, 213. arguing the root שָׁלַח instead of שָׁלַח; HALOT 4:1504, 1527 ; BDB 1017

³⁰ Similarly in the narrative of Ehud and Eglon, though it is not a personal revenge narrative. See Wong, "Ehud and Joab Separated at Birth?" 3.

³¹ Shemesh, "Why Did Joab Kill Abner?," 144–45.

The REVENGE ACT itself also identifies this as an alleged blood vengeance with the inclusion of the *talio* motif, as Joab kills Abner in the חומש, just as Abner had killed Asahel (2:23).³²

Before David's extensive REACTIONS TO THE REVENGE, the text reports an uncharacteristic Recall of the WRONG (v. 27). The attribution of the REVENGE ACT to Abner's killing of Asahel contradicts Joab's stated motivation in his REACTION (vv. 24-25), which immediately precedes the killing of Abner. Furthermore, this Recall of the WRONG eliminates all doubt as to the purpose of Joab's act. He does not seek personal political gain, nor is his aim to protect the House of David, though these may be secondary benefits. The deliberate, almost intrusive, appearance of the narrative voice in vv. 27d and 30 foils any attempts to camouflage Joab's true motivation and establishes that this is a case of blood vengeance, though illegitimate.³³ The slaying of Asahel takes place in war (see the emphasis on במלחמה in 3:30 and in David's condemnation in I Kings 2:5) and is committed in self-defense (II Sam 2:18-22), and is thus outside the realm of allowable blood vengeance.³⁴ Furthermore, the peace established between Joab and Abner (2:26-28) and between Abner and David (3:20-21) nullifies any claim of blood-avenger status.³⁵

The text mentions that Abishai was party to the killing of Abner (v. 30). Abishai's participation in the murder of Abner is unlikely (he is mentioned only in the pursuit scene of 2:24); his name probably appears here to stress that the WRONG being avenged is the murder of Asahel, his brother.³⁶ Despite any additional motives Joab may have had, the narrative is morphologically structured as a revenge narrative, describing an (illegal) REVENGE ACT in which the Avenger sought the legitimacy of the blood vengeance allowances of Exodus 21:12-14 and Deuteronomy 19. The morphology determines that the pericope is a narrative of personal revenge, not a rampage of court intrigue.³⁷ This understanding serves as a foil to the Embedded Narrative and as a background for later assessments of Joab's actions, especially his killing of Amasa (II Sam 20:10).

David's REACTIONS TO THE REVENGE ACT have been criticized by the commentators as inauthentic, especially with regard to the order in which they appear. A closer examination of the morphological structure of this section helps to clarify the multiple factors underlying the event.

³² Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel*/3, 103. Regarding the legitimacy of blood-vengeance, see below under REVENGE ACT.

³³ Wong, "Ehud and Joab Separated at Birth?," 11.

³⁴ Henry McKeating, "Vengeance Is Mine A Study of the Pursuit of Vengeance in the Old Testament," *The Expository Times* 74, no. 8 (1963): 240; Anderson, *Samuel 2*, 44. That wartime killings be avenged under the laws of blood-vengeance would logically be an impossible proposition, leading to an endless cycle of violence on a national scale.

³⁵ Pedersen, *Israel, Its Life and Culture*, 1:388.

³⁶ Anderson, *Samuel 2*, 62. McCarter, *II Samuel*, 110. Emendations have been suggested based on LXX^{LMN} (ארבו) has been recommended) and on 4QSam^a (suggesting צפנו). A figurative usage for הרגו is also possible. See Fuhs, *hāragh* TDOT 3:454.

³⁷ Vanderkam, "Davidic Complicity in the Deaths of Abner and Eshbaal," 529–31.

David's declaration of his and his kingdom's eternal innocence and the cursing of Joab and his descendants seem formulaic, casting suspicion on the sincerity of his REACTIONS. While McCarter claims that vv. 28-29 are a Deuteronomistic insertion (along with I Kings 2:33),³⁸ we must recall that David acts first and foremost as a king whose responsibility is to the stability of his reign and dynasty. Indeed, this was the reason for his alliance with Abner. If David sealed a covenant with Abner and then countenanced his murder, the monarchy would crumble under the stigma of its king being a covenant-breaker.³⁹ David bears "moral responsibility," even if not "actionable culpability,"⁴⁰ and therefore must declare his abhorrence for and innocence of this action.

Furthermore, David must punish Joab in order to substantiate his claim, and this necessity forces on David a painful choice. The monarchy cannot afford to lose Joab at this time, so David must choose between the welfare of his kingdom (which is tantamount to the welfare of the nation) and justice for a murderer. David's solution is to curse Joab and his descendants, insufficient though that may appear in light of the crime. The apparent weakness of his reaction, however, is mitigated by the serious nature of the curse in the ANE, especially when uttered by a person known to be close to the deity.⁴¹ Kitz notes that curses in the ANE were "serious affairs." The curse is an attempt to separate by any means possible the offender from the deity, from the nation, and from life itself. The ritual impurity of a *zav* or a leper requires the afflicted to remain outside of the camp and marks the afflicted as being humiliated by God.⁴² The effeminate nature of "one who holds a spindle" is intended to rule out further violence, as is "falling by the sword," a telling blow to a military family like Joab's. Finally, death and poverty will sever the family from its clan and nation. Kitz notes, "the aim of these kinds of curses is the cumulative effect of ...the many injuries. They seek to erode a person's confidence so as to eventually overwhelm and diminish any hope of life."⁴³ David's pronouncement of such a curse is not an insignificant REACTION although it does not constitute the appropriate corporal punishment.⁴⁴

³⁸ McCarter, *II Samuel*, 118.

³⁹ Robert P. Gordon, "Covenant and Apology in 2 Samuel 3," *Proceedings of the Irish Biblical Association* 13 (1990): 32–34.

⁴⁰ Barmash, "The Narrative Quandary," 10–11.

⁴¹ Joel S. Kaminsky, *Corporate Responsibility in the Hebrew Bible* (London: A&C Black, 1995), 104; Klaus Koch, "Is There a Doctrine of Retribution in the Old Testament?," in *Theodicy in the Old Testament* (ed. J Crenshaw; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1983), 57–58; Delbert R. Hillers, *Treaty-Curses and the Old Testament Prophets* (Biblica et Orientalia 16; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964); Noel Weeks, *Admonition and Curse: The Ancient Near Eastern Treaty/Covenant Form as a Problem in Inter-Cultural Relationships* (London: A&C Black, 2004).

⁴² Anne Marie Kitz, "Curses and Cursing in the Ancient Near East," *Religion Compass* 1, no. 6 (2007): 618–19; Anne Marie Kitz, "An Oath, Its Curse and Anointing Ritual," *JAOS* 124, no. 2 (2004): 8; Kirkpatrick, *The Second Book of Samuel*, 270. Kitz demonstrates that a skin condition is often the physical manifestation of a curse in the ANE.

⁴³ Kitz, "Curses and Cursing in the Ancient Near East," 624.

⁴⁴ On the background of his killing of Amasa (II Sam 20) and David's final instructions to Solomon (I Kgs 2:5-6), the pattern which emerges turns David's appeal to divine justice into a command for earthly punishment.

David's role undergoes a transition from the national leader who must deal with the crime and its perpetrators to the chief mourner among a sea of mourners (v. 31). As he turns his REACTIONS from the Avenger to the Avengee, David singles out Joab and his battalion as being particularly obligated to mourn Abner. Consequently, Joab changes from subject to object. Far from garnering the king's gratitude, his revenge has separated him from David literally when the king chooses to walk after the bier as Joab walks before it.⁴⁵ David leads the nation in wailing, lamenting, and fasting for Abner,⁴⁶ and his efforts bear the desired result. The REACTIONS section of the narrative concludes with another Informative Connective (v. 36-37) stating that David is cleared of involvement in the murder of Abner, information that implies David had been under suspicion before the mourning rites took place.

The phrase כָּל הַעַם, which appears seven times in as many verses, has served its purpose. Having fulfilled his national duties with regard to the killer (vv. 28-29) and the victim (vv. 31-35), David can now mourn the loss of Abner on a personal level (vv. 38-39). David needs no propaganda among his inner circle; his eulogy emanates from the heart of a warrior who recognizes excellence. His lament "Do you not know that a prince and a great man has fallen this day in Israel?" (3:38) may have surprised Joab, as Jacob's excessive mourning for Joseph surprised the brothers (Gen 37:34-35) who may have expected to take Joseph's place in their father's affections. Similarly, based on the Ally's REACTION TO THE REVENGE ACT, Joab's hope to reinforce his position as David's general is unrealized in the wake of the REVENGE ACT.

In addition to his public cursing of Joab, David calls for divine retribution. The king is supposed to administer justice and defend his people in battle. David has largely delegated the second task to Joab and now finds himself caught between his two central obligations.⁴⁷ His only recourse is to appeal to divine justice to requite the evildoer. The morphological analysis highlights a contrast between the REACTION in this narrative and that of Simeon and Levi in Genesis 34. Lest he or his kingdom suffer, David REACTS to an unjust murder veiled as blood vengeance by invoking divine retribution; Dinah's brothers reject all considerations except the honor of the violated VICTIM. David's REACTION TO THE REVENGE ACT resembles Jacob's REACTION in rebuking his sons, reflecting the measured, cautious response of the head of family/state. Contra

⁴⁵ Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel*, III, 108. Sanhedrin 20a discusses the traditional mourning rites and comments that the king traditionally does not follow the bier but stays in the palace to maintain his dignity. David following the funeral procession is thus seen as a special case in which the king needed to placate the nation, and so he is found among the people, demonstrating his distress.

⁴⁶ Anderson, *Samuel 2*, 63 suggests that the offers of food before sunset were intended to test the sincerity of David's mourning, thus demonstrating that this aspect of the mourning, while sincere, was for the consumption of the nation; Eileen F. De Ward, "Mourning Customs in 1, 2 Samuel," *JJS* 23 (1972): 1-2.

⁴⁷ Donald G. Schley, "Joab and David: Ties of Blood and Power," in *History and Interpretation: Essays in Honor of John H. Hayes* (eds. M.P. Graham, W.P. Brown, and J.K. Kuan, JSOTSupp 173, Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 102.

those who see David's actions as a weak monarchical public relations campaign, the tripartite nature of David's REACTIONS portrays a structured response that is at times unsatisfying but demonstrates David's efforts to address the multiple conflicting considerations of bringing Joab to justice, instituting national honor and mourning for Abner, and expressing personal grief over the loss of a great man.⁴⁸ David's call for divine intervention shows his awareness that complete justice has not yet been served.

9.1.2 *Embedded Narrative*

Moving back to the Embedded Narrative (henceforth EN), we will now examine the personal revenge of Abner on IshBoshet. Whereas the earlier discussion looked at Abner's actions on behalf of the house of Saul, the Initial Scene of the current pericope describes how Abner's actions affect his *own* status in the house of Saul.

In a severe breach of conduct, Abner takes Saul's concubine, Ritzpah, an offense known to warrant severe punishment.⁴⁹ However, the general flips the transgression back onto his accuser, Saul's son and heir, IshBoshet, denouncing him for questioning his behavior. Abner's position as kingmaker has grown so strong that even the rightful king cannot cast aspersions on his power base.⁵⁰ Buracker notes the use of the reflexive מִתְּהוֹן (v. 6), indicating a conscious, continual process through which Abner makes himself indispensable to IshBoshet.⁵¹ Had Abner desired to be king, he could have usurped power from the weak IshBoshet, as Morrison notes, "King Ishbaal is a mere pawn that Abner takes and uses to preserve his power in Saul's realm. When King Ishbaal attempts to exercise his authority, the general will remind him that he keeps him on the throne (3:8)."⁵²

Nevertheless, IshBoshet challenges Abner regarding his inappropriate behavior with Ritzpah, Saul's concubine. The nature of the accusation and the question of Abner's guilt are matters for debate,⁵³ but Abner's scorching REACTION TO THE WRONG is unambiguous. He erupts in anger, taking an OATH TO AVENGE, and pledging to transfer power from IshBoshet to David.⁵⁴ While many HB narratives of personal revenge demonstrate extreme violence in the

⁴⁸ Henry Preserved Smith, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Samuel* (ICC 8; London: T.&T. Clark, 1899), 280–81; Lemche, "David's Rise," 16–17; Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, 231; Gordon, *Hebrew Bible and Ancient Versions*, 40–41.

⁴⁹ Cf. the acts of Absalom (II Sam 16:20-23) and Adonijah (I Kgs 2:13-24).

⁵⁰ McCarter, *II Samuel*, 112.

⁵¹ Buracker, "Abner Son of Ner," 142.

⁵² Craig E. Morrison, *2 Samuel* (Berit Olam; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2013), 37--38; Contra Kirkpatrick, *The Second Book of Samuel*, 264; J. Alberto Soggin, *Old Testament and Oriental Studies* (Biblica et Orientalia 29; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1975), 43–46, who argue that Abner wanted the throne for himself. While possible, this is mere conjecture.

⁵³ Matitiah Tsevat, "Marriage and Monarchical Legitimacy in Ugarit and Israel," *JSS* 3, no. 3 (1958): 241; Smith, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Samuel*, 275; Jon D. Levenson and Baruch Halpern, "The Political Import of David's Marriages," *JBL* 99, no. 4 (1980): 507–18.

⁵⁴ Ziegler, *Promises to Keep*, 120:58–60.

REVENGE ACT, Abner's action inflicts damage without the need for violence.⁵⁵ IshBoshet knows his general's capabilities, and his REACTION TO THE REVENGE is utter terror even before the threat is accomplished. He is unable to utter a word in reply, but his silence speaks volumes.⁵⁶

Abner immediately puts his PLAN into action by ascertaining David's interest in an alliance. Some scholars interpret Avner's question "Whose is the land?" as a statement that the land is his, Abner's, the kingmaker.⁵⁷ More plainly, the question can be read as a statement of submission to David, whose acceptance of the offer is dependent on the return of his wife, Michal, Saul's daughter who has been given to another man in David's absence. This is the second appearance in this pericope of an insult involving a woman. The honor surrounding women, particularly regarding men's ability to "possess" women, is well documented in HB and ANE corpora.⁵⁸ David's demand for Michal requires another degradation for the house of Saul: losing Michal to IshBoshet's rival, David.⁵⁹ Although David directs his demand to IshBoshet, Abner will be instrumental in the transfer, marking the first phase of his REVENGE ACT.⁶⁰

In the second phase of his REVENGE ACT, Abner embarks on a public relations campaign on behalf of David, speaking to the elders of Israel and "in the ears of Benjamin," taking pains to locate and persuade those most likely to oppose the alliance. Abner's dedication to the demands of his PLAN is seen in other narratives of personal revenge, such as the years Absalom waited to avenge his sister's rape (II Sam 13). Abner completes his REVENGE on IshBoshet by ratifying a treaty with David and promising to deliver an even greater level of fealty among the populace (3:21).⁶¹

Having achieved his vengeance on IshBoshet, Abner leaves "בשלום." The repetition of this phrase indicates that his DEPARTURE was accompanied by personal and national peace.⁶² Significantly, two of the three times this phrase is mentioned are in the AFTERMATH, when Joab returns from military activity and hears of what has transpired. Taken as an independent unit, this

⁵⁵ This stands in sharp contrast to the Samson narrative, which often employs violence without it qualifying as revenge. See above.

⁵⁶ Cynthia L. Miller, "Silence as a Response in Biblical Hebrew Narrative: Strategies of Speakers and Narrators," *JNSL* 32, no. 1 (2006): 40.

⁵⁷ Hertzberg, *I and II Samuel*, 258.

⁵⁸ Richard L. Rohrbaugh, "Core Value in the Biblical World," in *Understanding the Social World of the New Testament* (eds. Dietmar Neufeld and Richard E. DeMaris; London: Routledge, 2010), 112–13; Gary Stansell, "Honor and Shame in the David Narratives," *Semeia* 68 (1994), 65–68.

⁵⁹ Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel/3 Throne and City* (II Sam 2-8 & 21-24), 84.

⁶⁰ Robert P. Gordon, *1 & 2 Samuel: A Commentary* (Library of Biblical Interpretation; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 218; Kirkpatrick, *The Second Book of Samuel*, 266.

⁶¹ Gordon, *1 & 2 Samuel: A Commentary*, 219; D. J. McCarthy, "Social Compact and Sacral Kingship," in *Studies in the Period of David and Solomon and Other Essays* (ed. Tomoo Ishida, Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1979), 79, discuss whether a formal covenant was effected at this point or if it was a less formal, private agreement. Either way, a certain level of trust had been established, the abrogation of which would have been viewed as betrayal.

⁶² Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel/3 Throne and City* (II Sam 2-8 & 21-24), 92–93.

short pericope might have depicted a nation on the cusp of reconciliation and domestic tranquility. Positioned as it is, however, it highlights conditions for the vengeance of Abner and Joab, which will prove to be obstacles to the unity to which David aspires.

9.2 Context and Analysis

The morphological analysis of the pericope reveals that the revenge story of Abner on IshBoshet is an Embedded Narrative within the larger pericope of Joab's revenge on Abner. Focusing on the acts of personal vengeance within the narrative rather than on other features such as the relative power of the generals or the kings⁶³ clarifies the details of the pericope's structure. Nelles explains that an embedded narrative possesses "strong potential for structural, dramatic, and thematic significance." This is especially true when there is metalepsis, that is, a shift of a figure within a text from one narrative level to another. Metalepsis allows the reader "to cross narrative levels along with the discourse, to read the two connected levels in terms of each other."⁶⁴ This results in a "transgressed boundary" in which characters whom the reader expects to exist on separate levels interact with each other.⁶⁵ The morphological analysis of the two narratives of II Samuel 2-3 exposes an embedded narrative in which Abner crosses the ontological border as he shifts from Avenger and Avenged. Analyzing the corresponding morphological features of the two revenge narratives and evaluating each episode against the background of the other sheds light on facets of the pericope that other analyses have disregarded.⁶⁶

Many studies of Joab's revenge center their attention on the degree of David's involvement,⁶⁷ or explain how David "managed" the deaths of Abner and IshBoshet to his advantage despite not being connected with their murders.⁶⁸ This analysis, however, will treat the narratives as personal revenge stories, focusing on the Avengers, the Avenged, and the narrative structure within the classic revenge framework. Among the elements that will be explored are actions that appear to occur in parallel, such as the silencing of the kings, but are not functionally related; and how the varied forms in which vengeance appears do not affect its identity. Certain functions in one narrative will amplify and clarify their corresponding function in the other

⁶³ David A. Bosworth, *The Story within a Story in Biblical Hebrew Narrative*, (CBQ Monograph Series 45; Washington DC: Catholic Biblical Assoc. of America, 2008) examines this device's appearance and function in Gen 38, I Sam 25, and I Kgs 13. Its presence here is seen only through the examination of the pericope through the lens of personal revenge morphology.

⁶⁴ William Nelles, "Stories within Stories: Narrative Levels and Embedded Narrative," *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 25, no. 1 (1992): 92–94.

⁶⁵ Füredy, "A Structural Model of Phenomena with Embedding in Literature and Other Arts," 758–59.

⁶⁶ See above, note 2.

⁶⁷ Ackroyd, *The Second Book of Samuel*, 46; Anderson, *Samuel 2*, 55; Katherine Doob Sakenfeld, *Faithfulness in Action: Loyalty in Biblical Perspective* (Overtures to Biblical Theology 16; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 14, argues that David was not involved but secretly appreciated Joab's actions

⁶⁸ David Noel Freedman, "The Age of David and Solomon," in *The Age of the Monarchies: Political History* (ed. Avraham Malamat and I. Ephcal, World History of the Jewish People 4; Jerusalem: Masada Press, 1979), 115.

narrative, while others contrast with their counterpart and offer a glimpse of unseen possibilities.

The following table will be of use in the analysis of the functions:

Table 21 Joab & Abner MN - EN functional comparison.

	Main Narrative	Embedded Narrative	Convergence
Initial Scene	In battle, Abner tells Asahel to desist.	Abner is strong in the house of Saul.	Abner is in a position of strength.
WRONG	Abner kills Asahel. (David accepts Abner.)	IshBoshet insults Abner.	Betrayal of a general.
OATH	Joab vows he will get vengeance.	Abner vows to avenge the insult by transferring power to David.	Vengeance may take place over time.
REACTION TO THE WRONG	Joab protests David's acceptance of Abner.	Abner protests his treatment by IshBoshet.	Inappropriate language from a subordinate.
REVENGE	Joab kills Abner.	Abner transfers Michal and the loyalties of the nation to David.	Expectation of positive reaction for a service rendered. Metalepsis of Abner.
REACTION TO THE REVENGE	Public and excessive mourning by David.	IshBoshet is terrified.	Kings are scared of repercussions.

9.2.1 Initial Scene

Both narratives begin with an Initial Scene in which Abner holds a position of strength. In the MN, Abner, an experienced warrior, advises Asahel to stop chasing him, although he would be a prized target. Abner knows he can defeat Asahel, but he does not desire to do so. The Initial Scene of the EN depicts Abner as a man with physical strength and confidence, qualities that are evident in his opposing roles as Avenger in the EN and Avenged in the MN. As he leaves the relative safety of the house of Saul, however, this political and military tactician will encounter those who can and do challenge his position.

9.2.2 WRONG

At first glance, the WRONGS do not appear comparable. The ACTS, the wartime killing of Asahel in the MN and Abner's taking umbrage at IshBoshet's accusation of an inappropriate relationship with Saul's concubine in the EN, have little in common. The nature of the WRONG that triggers the REVENGE ACT in the MN has been widely discussed. The text states that it is blood vengeance (3:27, 30); McCarter declares that "the whole affair is a matter of blood revenge, and Joab is a cold-blooded and skillful avenger," one of the sons of Zeruiah, who are considered reckless, vindictive, and treacherous.⁶⁹ Yet, Joab's tirade to David indicates that he is motivated by

⁶⁹ McCarter, *II Samuel*, 122. I Kgs 2:5 confirms that it was illegal blood revenge.

a desire to protect his king and country (3:24-25).⁷⁰ An analysis of the power struggles involved, combined with Joab's later killing of Amasa (20:12), suggests that Joab is fearful that Abner will replace him as the top military commander.⁷¹ And as mentioned previously, David's seeming indifference to Joab's anguish at having his brother's killer constantly present may have been Joab's primary motivating factor.⁷²

In contrast to the life-and-death components of the MN revenge, the WRONG committed by IshBoshet in the EN that results in Abner's outsized REACTION is the questioning of the propriety of the general's actions with Saul's concubine. Abner's REACTION TO THE WRONG hints at underlying motives, but on the surface, IshBoshet's WRONG is the insult to Abner's honor and status.⁷³ As has been discussed, in an honor-based society, honor is a zero-sum game where an increase in one person's honor means a decrease in his adversary's.⁷⁴ To Abner, IshBoshet's question (3:7) means that his king does not esteem him enough.

The primary WRONG of the MN is Abner's killing of Asahel. Nonetheless, Joab and his brother Abishai are persuaded to halt their pursuit; Joab even takes an OATH to that effect (2:27-28). The WRONG was reawakened within Joab, however, by David's acceptance of Abner at court, which diminished Joab's standing there. Thus both REVENGE ACTS, seemingly disparate, are preceded by WRONGS and recollections of WRONGS concerning honor that cause the generals to challenge their respective kings and replace them on the narrative's center stage. The comparison of the functions in both narratives highlights the fact that the two generals are intoxicated by the power they imbibe; each expects the king to defer to them.⁷⁵

9.2.3 OATH

Once Abner has killed Asahel, Joab and Abishai give chase until Abner's petition to halt the civil war and end the carnage (vv. 24-26). Joab then takes an OATH with the invocation $\eta \eta'$. The enigmatic phrasing of the oath leaves Joab's intention unclear. According to Rashi, Joab would have halted his men in the morning if Abner had called for a ceasefire. Kimchi suggests that Joab is pointing out that if Abner had not suggested the twelve-on-twelve combat, the battle and pursuit

⁷⁰ Jim Rudd, "A Second Look At Joab, Captain of the Guard," n.p., Online: http://keepersoftheway.org/publications/joab2010_a.pdf.

⁷¹ Smith, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Samuel*, 297.

⁷² Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (trans. James Martin; Titus Books, 1989), 306.

⁷³ David M. Gunn, "David and the Gift of the Kingdom," *Semeia* 3 (1975): 17–18, claims that Abner is using this incident as an excuse to jump from the "sinking ship of IshBoshet's kingdom," but there is no textual evidence for this claim. Regardless, this would not negate the WRONG perpetrated by IshBoshet in insulting Abner's honor.

⁷⁴ Pitt-Rivers, *The Fate of Shechem*, 92.

⁷⁵ Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel/3 Throne and City (II Sam 2-8 & 21-24)*, 67ff.; Cat Quine, "Military Coups in Ancient Israel and Their Implications for Conceptions of YHWH's Divine Army," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 34, no. 1 (2020): 31–34; David L. Petersen, "Portraits of David: Canonical and Otherwise," *Interpretation* 40, no. 2 (1986): 136–39.

would not have occurred. Another possibility is that if Abner had not spoken, Joab would only have ceased hostilities in the morning.⁷⁶ What is clear is that by his OATH, Joab blames Abner for the continued fighting and the death of his brother. His vow entails only calling back his forces; he reserves the right to avenge another day. His OATH is to *refrain* from violence, a negative expression of the function of the OATH TO AVENGE. Through his OATH, Joab implies that he holds Abner responsible for the bloodshed in general and Asahel's death in particular. Abner, on the other hand, using the *כה יעשה...וכה יוסיף* formula in his OATH TO AVENGE the insult of IshBoshet, states unequivocally that he will avenge the WRONG of IshBoshet's insult. Regarding the different oath formulations used by the two men, Ziegler explains:

The oath formula *כה יעשה* stakes the oath-taker's own life on the veracity of the pledge, indicating the unswerving commitment of the oath-taker to his promise. In contrast, a speaker who takes an oath using the formula *כה יוסיף* appears to be more restrained. Thus, if *כה יעשה* is taken in the heat of passion or in cases where the events call for the assumption of personal responsibility, the oath formula *כה יוסיף* while still an indication of the seriousness of the pledge being made, is less severe.⁷⁷

This accords with Joab's promise to cease fighting temporarily, without committing himself to any future action. Both men take oaths that cannot be fulfilled immediately. Abner begins at once to build support for David among Saul's followers. Joab restrains his army, saving his revenge for a more opportune moment that does not entail a civil war. This contrast is indicative of the differences between the generals. Joab measures his words so as not to reveal his full intentions, while Abner lets all his emotions fly in his response to IshBoshet. This functional comparison reveals that contra the claims of Buracker, who argues that Abner is an honest broker, Abner delays effectuating God's promise to David until it suits his own agenda.⁷⁸ Eschelbach's observation that Joab acts treacherously is belied by an examination of Joab's OATH. The reversed oath functions show that the actual treachery is committed by Abner when he turns on IshBoshet.⁷⁹

9.2.4 REACTION TO THE WRONG

The parallels between the respective REACTIONS TO THE WRONGS are impossible to ignore. Both generals upbraid their kings as though the kings are their subordinates.⁸⁰ Before taking his OATH TO AVENGE, Abner berates IshBoshet for treating him like a commoner rather than like one who has been loyally supporting the Saulide dynasty for years. Joab's tirade to David cites only the danger Abner poses to David's kingdom and to national security. Joab argues that Abner will be a fifth column in David's court and thrice repeats his opinion of Abner's intentions, which

⁷⁶ Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 302–4; Anderson, *Samuel 2*, 41–46.

⁷⁷ Ziegler, *Promises to Keep*, 93–94.

⁷⁸ Buracker, "Abner Son of Ner," 257–58.

⁷⁹ Eschelbach, *Has Joab Foiled David?*, 34.

⁸⁰ Bodner, "Is Joab a Reader-Response Critic?," 27–28; Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narrative*, 120.

David apparently does not “know” (see on vv. 24-25, below). He says nothing about his brother’s death at Abner’s hands, nor does he mention concern about a potential rival for his position coming to David’s inner circle.

The respective REACTIONS TO THE WRONG manifest the artistry of the EN and the purpose of the structure of the pericope. De Jong enumerates the types of objectives an embedded narrative can fill, such as explanatory, thematic, predictive, persuasive, or distractive. This case encompasses both thematic and explanatory objectives because the EN and MN inform each other and share a common theme.⁸¹ When Joab approaches David in the MN, the reader is aware of his history with Abner. Joab will not be pleased with the current turn of events, but how will he react? The structure of the EN means that the reader hears Joab’s words to David while Abner’s words to IshBoshet are still echoing, imposing one scene on the other. Joab rails about how Abner is a threat to national security, but perhaps he longs, like Abner, to remind the king of his past loyalty. Angry as he is, Joab’s self-control does not permit him to mention his brother, Asahel. Joab can reveal neither the full extent of his anger nor his true intentions to David, but the narrator can utilize the EN as a model “that reflects the relationship which the surrounding narrative is formulating for itself with regard to its audience...” on the level of a self-referential allegory.⁸² The reader cannot hear Joab’s REACTION without hearing Abner’s as well.

Nevertheless, there are important differences between the two REACTIONS. While Abner speaks in self-referential terms, utilizing the first person to describe his deeds on behalf of the house of Saul and his intentions for the future, Joab refrains from any reference to himself, his actions, or his desires:

24 Then Joab went to the king and said, “What have **you** done? Abner came to **you**; why did **you** dismiss him, so that he got away? 25 **You know** that Abner son of Ner came to deceive **you** and to learn your comings and goings and to learn all that **you** are doing.”

8 The words of IshBoshet made Abner very angry; he said, “Am **I** a dog’s head for Judah? Today **I** keep showing loyalty to the house of your father Saul, to his brothers, and to his friends and have not given you into the hand of David, yet you charge **me** now with a crime concerning this woman. 9 So may God do to Abner and so may he add to it! For just what the Lord has sworn to David, that will **I** accomplish for him: 10 to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul and set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan to Beer-sheba.”

This comparison shows how Joab avoids mentioning his sense of being wronged by David as a result of the king’s acceptance of Abner. Only through the morphological analysis is this subtle

⁸¹ Irene JF De Jong, *Narratology and Classics: A Practical Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 34–35.

⁸² Lynn Susan Wells, *Allegories of Telling: Self-Referential Narrative in Contemporary British Fiction* (Costerus New Series 146; Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003), 2–3.

shift detected, revealing an aspect of Joab that refutes McCarter's assessment that he is "fatally careless."⁸³ In fact, the functional comparison highlights Joab's self-mastery and his cautious planning. While Abner's words to IshBoshet are self-centered in terms of his actions and the respect he believes is his due, Joab focuses on David and how he has erred in trusting Abner. The text states that Abner is very angry, but Joab's emotional state, though apparent, is expressed only through his own rhetoric.

Joab's calculated response contrasts with the self-aggrandizing aspect of Abner's REACTION. Abner's abrupt and complete transfer of loyalty, more than his killing of Asahel, may be why Joab suspects Abner's motives. Gunn points out that

In the political world of Joab ... suspicion is the order of the day. An unsolicited offer of friendship belongs to unreality. Reality is the aggressive extension of self-interest, whether political or personal, or preferably both.⁸⁴

An examination of the combined embedding and morphology demonstrates that Joab's actions toward Abner are primarily motivated by *talio*, also with a view of Abner's furious reaction in the EN.⁸⁵ Joab's REACTION is to stifle his personal animosity while he appears to focus on the threat to the king and the monarchy, a tactic that may have had additional benefits, as Nicol asserts: "...Joab created the circumstances under which Israel could come over to David of itself and not out of alliance to its disloyal and unscrupulous general."⁸⁶ This gain notwithstanding, the function reflects back the personal insult in the EN and reminds the reader that the primary affront addressed in the MN is personal. Nevertheless, a crucial distinction remains: Although Joab is incensed at David's making a covenant with Abner, Asahel's killer, he does not threaten David as Abner threatened IshBoshet because David did not perpetrate the primary WRONG against Joab.

9.2.5 REVENGE ACT

Joab's desire for blood vengeance, in which a person avenges their relative's murder, becomes clear in the MN. Blood vengeance was permitted, accepted, and even obligatory in the ANE. Far from being viewed as a villainous act, it was considered to be a requirement for the restoration of the family honor of the slain victim.⁸⁷ Apparently, the concept of *gō'ēl* was at times inappropriately applied to some situations, and this seems to be the case in the current narrative. Joab, as has been mentioned, cannot be accorded blood-avenger status because blood vengeance is

⁸³ McCarter, *II Samuel*, 122.

⁸⁴ David M. Gunn, *The Story of King David: Genre and Interpretation* (JSOTSupp 6; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1978), 97.

⁸⁵ See Ackroyd, *The Second Book of Samuel*, 46; Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel/3 Throne and City* (II Sam 2-8 & 21-24), 98 regarding Joab's primary motivation.

⁸⁶ George G. Nicol, "The Death of Joab and the Accession of Solomon: Some Observations on the Narrative of 1 Kings 1-2," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 7, no. 1 (1993): 142.

⁸⁷ Pedersen, *Israel, Its Life and Culture*, 1:390.

not extended to battle-time killing.⁸⁸ Furthermore, the absence of an emotional aspect to blood vengeance has been discussed in reference to the Gideon narrative.⁸⁹ While there is no narrative assessment of Joab's emotional state, his outburst in vv. 24-25 betrays a lack of the detachment with which the ideal *go'el* dispatches his sacred duty. Against the description of Abner's emotional state in the EN (3:8), to which Joab's use of rhetorical questions (indicating indignation) are compared (3:8; 24-25, see note 3), Joab's true reasons for his revenge are alternately hidden and revealed. On the one hand, the text makes no explicit mention of Joab's emotions. On the other hand, Joab's outburst betrays strong feelings in spite of the care with which he selects his words. Indeed, his efforts to subordinate his emotions to the welfare of the kingdom may indicate that he regards himself as a legitimate blood-avenger. The three-part nature of the Joab's motivation for Abner's murder is clear: He acts to restore the family honor lost when Asahel was killed; he acts to protect David's monarchy; and, like Abner, he acts to protect his own position and honor in the royal court. The repercussions for David that result from the murder of his covenant partner by his general are largely irrelevant to Joab in the light of these other goals.

His long loyalty to the house of Saul and support for IshBoshet notwithstanding (II Sam 2:8-9), Abner is determined to end IshBoshet's monarchy. The EN shows, however, Abner does not want the throne for himself.⁹⁰ Rather, he wants to punish IshBoshet for having attacked his honor. At the same time, Abner seeks to restore his honor by joining David's court as a covenant partner. The corresponding move in the MN is the (perceived) loss of Joab's honor when Asahel is killed, coupled with Abner's ascent to power in David's inner circle and his peaceful departure from the court. Like Abner, Joab wants to restore his lost honor and punish those responsible; he does not want to take the throne (*contra* Green).⁹¹ Killing Abner removes the primary source of Joab's jealousy and dishonor,⁹² but the matter of David allowing Abner to leave in peace still rankles. Moreover, Joab's suspicion regarding Abner exacerbates his need to eliminate the general for the sake of David's safety. Though his method does not eliminate all harm to David, Joab is neither abandoning nor exposing David. Joab's loyalty to David and his throne does not preclude points of conflict between the two men and their differing approaches to securing the monarchy.⁹³ The harm caused by leaving David open to the accusation of colluding in Abner's murder can be compared to a pattern seen in ANE narratives of personal revenge in which those close to the revenge, including Allies on both sides, are negatively affected by the vengeance.

⁸⁸ Ishida, "The Story of Abner's Murder. A Problem Posed by the Solomonic Apologist," 111. See also, I Kgs 2:5.

⁸⁹ Pedersen, *Israel, Its Life and Culture*, 1:379.

⁹⁰ Buracker, "Abner Son of Ner," 143.

⁹¹ Green, "Joab's Coherence and Incoherence," 186.

⁹² Pfeiffer, *Old Testament History*, 261; Noth, *The History of Israel*, 184-185.

⁹³ Schley, "Joab and David," 91.

The comparison between the REVENGE ACTS of the EN and the MN reveals the metalepsis of Abner. Metalepsis, as previously stated, is the shift of an actant within a text from one narrative level to another.⁹⁴ In the REVENGE ACT of the EN, Abner transfers Michal and the loyalties of the nation to David. An additional level of embedding, not connected with vengeance, occurs in this pericope. The narrative of Abner's revenge on IshBoshet includes the brief but poignant story of the return of Michal to David (vv. 14-16), an event that demonstrates Abner's ability to dominate others. As Michal is taken to David, her husband Paltiel follows and weeps for his wife. Abner sends him home with two words, "Go, return," or in the words of Campbell, "Get lost!"⁹⁵ The power wielded by Abner over the unfortunate husband is astonishing; Paltiel immediately obeys him. In the EN, Abner counters IshBoshet's challenge with an alarming threat that terrifies the puppet king and reminds him who has put him and kept him on the throne.

Nevertheless, Abner must appear before David as a supplicant. In the MN, Abner's transition from subject to object is complete; he is powerless to defend himself against Joab. The metaleptic shift between the two levels of narrative consists of Abner's transformation from subject to object, from Avenger to Avengee.⁹⁶ Morphological analysis of the REACTION TO THE WRONG combined with an examination of the embedded texts exposes Joab's anger (not explicitly mentioned) by drawing attention to its correspondence with Abner's anger (see 3:8). Joab's REVENGE ACT here fulfills a similar role. The text states that Joab is retaliating for Abner's killing of Asahel (3:27, 30). However, the reader is primed to see a REVENGE ACT undertaken by a general to restore his honor while advancing or protecting his own career. Abner showed his allegiance to David by delivering Michal as part of his REVENGE ACT against Saul's house. Ironically, Joab attempts to do the same by delivering Abner to David. Despite the clear statement in the text that Joab's REVENGE ACT is for the killing of Asahel, Joab's argument to David concerning the welfare of the kingdom (vv. 24-25) was valid, his loyalty to the house of David unwavering.⁹⁷ In Joab's opinion, removing Abner would increase David's security and that of his kingdom; in addition, Joab would gain personal and professional security.

In one sense, Abner is more honest than Joab. While his REVENGE ACTS would help stabilize David's monarchy, Abner wants to benefit himself and to avenge the insult to his honor.⁹⁸ Joab, in contrast, does not enumerate the benefits he would reap by removing Abner as a rival, nor

⁹⁴ See above, note 38.

⁹⁵ Antony F. Campbell, *2 Samuel* (Forms of the Old Testament Literature; Grand Rapids:Eerdmans, 2003).

⁹⁶ Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, (trans. Jane E. Lewin; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 235, nt. 51.

⁹⁷ Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, 231, describes the sons of Zeruah as "brave, fierce, and loyal."; Perdue, "Is There Anyone Left of the House of Saul...?" 71 asserts that this unwavering loyalty often comes at the cost of Joab's callousness to other considerations.

⁹⁸ Buracker, "Abner Son of Ner," 175 points out that while Abner may be traitorous, he is upfront about his actions.

the satisfaction he would gain by killing his brother's killer. Instead, he addresses David's security as though that is his only concern.

An additional element that comes to light through a morphological comparison is how the direct and violent nature of Joab's REVENGE ACT skews, perhaps unfairly, the assessment of its perpetrator. Abner's revenge on IshBoshet is indirect but nonetheless damaging, even more so than Joab's act in the MN. Furthermore, vengeance against the house of Saul is not criticized except by David. The correspondence between the functions of the MN and the EN facilitates a clearer view of the treachery of the REVENGE ACT in the EN, exposing the betrayal and insubordination of the general.

9.2.6 REACTION TO THE REVENGE

IshBoshet's response to the REVENGE ACT occurs after Abner vows to transfer power to David. IshBoshet, knowing that his general has the resources and the will to effectuate his OATH, is silent, terrified by the wrath he has unleashed. David is also silent in response to Joab's tirade in the MN (3:24-25), but the morphology demonstrates that although the two actions are the same (kings remaining silent after an angry rebuke), only IshBoshet is actually reacting to a REVENGE ACT. David's silence functions as COMPLICITY because he allows Joab to leave, and subsequently kill, Abner. While IshBoshet's silence is due to fear, David's silence — though, unlike IshBoshet's, it is not mentioned explicitly — is portentous in light of his newly formed covenant with Abner.⁹⁹ However, David's observable REACTION TO THE REVENGE in the MN is indeed comparable to that in the EN. David's excessive mourning for Abner, including requiring that Joab and the rest of the nation participate, has been described above. We can presume that at least part of David's motivation is his fear of reprisals from followers of the house of Saul, especially from the tribe of Benjamin, if he were to be implicated in Abner's murder.¹⁰⁰ As an Ally to both the Avengee and the Avenger, David is in danger of a severe political backlash as a result of Joab's revenge on Abner. David's REACTION TO THE REVENGE consists of the proactive measures required to counteract any harm to the monarchy as a result of his association with Joab. The morphological analysis makes clear that both kings' REACTIONS TO THE REVENGE reflect their fear of the consequences of their respective generals' actions.

⁹⁹ Bodner, "Is Joab a Reader-Response Critic?," 26.

¹⁰⁰ Yisca Zimran, "'Look, the King Is Weeping and Mourning!': Expressions of Mourning in the David Narratives and Their Interpretive Contribution," *JSOT* 42, no. 4 (2018): 493 ff.

9.3 *Conclusions*

9.3.1 *Liminality*

The two narratives demonstrate the liminality of Abner, who is transformed from Avenger to Avengee, accomplishing his revenge but not living to enjoy a post-Avenger status. Joab, on the other hand, begins his liminal status only after accomplishing his revenge. David's curse of Joab regarding the *zav* and the leper involves individuals whose status places them outside of society, and can therefore be viewed as the king's attempt to expel Joab and his clan from the nation. Furthermore, Joab will not be buried in his family tomb (I Kgs 2:34), indicating a perpetually liminal state (in contrast to Samson, cf. Jud 16:31).¹⁰¹ Given this significant difference in the beginning and end of the respective Avengers' liminal states, we can conclude that while both generals succeed in their revenge, their secondary goals and their legacies are inverses of each other. Abner avenges IshBoshet's insult by forsaking him, but his attempt to secure his own position in the house of David is thwarted. Joab's revenge on Abner succeeds, thereby restoring the family's honor and securing Joab's position in David's house. With regard to their respective legacies, however, Abner is mourned by the nation and eulogized by David, while Joab is forever cursed.

9.3.2 *Morphological Conclusions*

A thorough morphological analysis of the Main and the Embedded Narratives has clarified numerous features of the pericope. By comparing parallel functions between the two narratives, we see how the EN instructs what is absent from the MN and how the MN reflects back its themes, revealing complexities in the EN which were not otherwise apparent.

Both generals want appreciation and honor from their kings, and both address their kings in the second person with a litany of rhetorical questions and accusations, indicating their lack of deference and creating an impression of general-as-kingmaker. The "play within a play" design of an embedded narrative promotes the use of contrast to highlight key differences amidst the startling similarities of the narratives. Due to the thematic correspondence between the EN and the MN, the functional analysis is essential for comparisons between parallel functions, elucidating both narratives.

Abner upbraids IshBoshet in response to the WRONG he "suffered" regarding Ritzpah, knowing that he could switch his allegiance and feed his ambition in David's kingdom. In

¹⁰¹ Chaim M.Y. Gevaryahu, "The Covenant of David and Abner and the Fate of the General Joab," in *Samuel Yavin Volume: Studies in the Bible, Archaeology, Language and History of Israel* (Jerusalem: Society for Biblical Research, 1970), 145–47.

comparison, Joab was loyal and thus had to be more circumspect, but his relatively restrained language should not be seen as a measure of the offense he felt.¹⁰²

Nevertheless, David is not the primary Avenger, nor is he treated as such by Joab, in contrast to how Abner treats IshBoshet. The murder of Abner satisfies Joab's desire for *talion*, but it also puts David at considerable risk and requires extensive REACTIONS TO THE REVENGE ACT to mitigate the political damage. Just as Abner exposed IshBoshet by stripping him of his military and political protection, Joab exposes David to political danger by killing Abner. Both exposures result in a frightened king. IshBoshet is unable to recover, but David successfully utilizes his statesmanship to regroup, though he leaves Joab's final deserts to Solomon, as he cannot survive without his general. Significantly, David is able to offset the damage because he has not suffered a direct hit; unlike IshBoshet, he is not the Avenger, but rather an Ally.

The morphological analysis of the Embedded Narrative demonstrates that a comparison between corresponding actants aligns Joab, the Avenger of the MN, with Abner, the Avenger of the EN. Both Avengers' REACTIONS TO THE WRONG include disrespectful speech to their kings, but Joab's self-control contrasts favorably with Abner's verbal cruelty toward IshBoshet. Although David is not Joab's Avenger, Abner's vengeance on IshBoshet affects Joab's interactions with David, resulting in an Ally who suffers collateral damage, a familiar trope in the ANE narratives of personal revenge.

The fact that the kings do not fill the same actant position is reflected in the fearful silence of IshBoshet versus the pensive restraint of David. As Ally to both the Avenger and the Avenger, David must tread carefully. As Avengers, both generals want to avenge a WRONG and restore their lost honor, with Abner's sense of betrayal in the EN informing Joab's in the MN. The functional parallels identify Abner as the primary Avenger in the MN, and show how David was affected by his alliance with Abner. Joab displays no contrition for the difficulties his vengeance has caused David, and while there is no hint that he wished to physically harm David or usurp his throne, the scenario is parallel to another one in which a general lashes out and irrevocably injures the king. This does not suggest that Joab wished to remove David from the throne, but that he wanted to secure his own power.

An examination of the REVENGE ACTS calls attention to the lack of violence of the EN compared to the bloody act in the MN. Nevertheless, Abner's Avenger suffers more than Joab's. IshBoshet trembles in fear and is eventually buried in the grave of his Avenger (II Sam 4:12), while Joab's Avenger is mourned by the king and nation and buried in royal fashion. The effectiveness

¹⁰² Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel/3 Throne and City (II Samuel 2-8 & 21-24)*, 97, discusses the discrepancy between the honor David shows to the defecting general (Abner) and his ignoring of the loyal general (Joab).

and terror of a REVENGE ACT is thus shown to be unrelated to the level of violence it entails. The morphological analysis of the entire pericope treats II Samuel 2:12-3:39 as a single unit with an embedded revenge narrative within a larger revenge narrative provides a vital, and at times revolutionary, understanding of the dynamics of power and personal relationships in the houses of Saul and David. The functional comparisons develop the thematic and explanatory objectives of the embedding. Both the EN and MN report that although the REVENGE ACT is accomplished, the Avengers suffer for their actions. Contrasting the morphology of these two narratives of personal revenge also shows that despite their many similarities, their differences demark the line between Avenger and Avengee. The transgressed boundary between the EN and the MN, and the resultant metalepsis of Abner from Avenger to Avengee, demonstrate how easily people can find themselves on the wrong side of vengeance.

Chapter 10

10.0 HB Summary of Findings

The structural analyses of personal revenge narratives in the Hebrew Bible presented in the preceding chapters has demonstrated that it is appropriate to treat these narratives as a group of a single tale-type. While these narratives' structural affinities do not preclude their being grouped with other types of texts, viewing them as a unit within an approach utilizing the definitions of the functions described in the introduction contributes to a deeper understanding of the HB stance on personal revenge. To the best of this author's knowledge, no previous study has examined the HB personal revenge narratives as a single tale-type in an effort to glean from them the ethic of ancient Israelite vengeance as it existed beyond that culture's legal code.¹ The results of the current study facilitate the evaluation of the treatment of revenge in the Hebrew Bible with regard to what induced revenge, how it was carried out, what it was expected to achieve, and how it was accepted.

10.1 Law vs. Narrative

The laws of *talion* (Lev 24:19-21) define maximal punishments. Far from mandating barbaric vengeance as has traditionally been claimed, *talion* has recently been recognized as the legislation of an outer limit for retaliation. Fischer, for example, renders Exod 21:24 as "only an eye for an eye, only a tooth for a tooth," in the understanding that the law was meant to ensure that no more than the initial injury is exacted from the offender.² An examination of the narratives demonstrates that every case of a desire for revenge (with the lone exception of Abner's rebellion against IshBoshet) resulted in murder or a desire for murder. The list of such cases includes Simeon and Levi's destruction of Shechem, Gideon's of Succoth and Penuel, Saul's of Nob, Jezebel's murder of Naboth, Absalom's of Amnon, Joab's of Abner, Samson's of the Philistines, and the brothers' selling of Joseph, in which murder was prevented only by Judah's intervention. The narratives show a divergence from the law; instead of acts of *talion*, revenge that is disproportionate to the offense is sought and usually achieved. Murder is not equivalent to a refusal to sell a vineyard, nor even to the rape of an unmarried woman.³

We should note further that with the possible exception of Gideon's blood vengeance of Zebaḥ and Zalmunna, none of the narratives presented in this study conform to the *talion* category, in which a crime is assessed and recompensed. Joab, for example, regarded his murder of Abner as *talion*, a claim refuted by the wartime circumstances of Asahel's killing. As a result, the avengers in

¹ Including the prohibition against vengeance (Lev 19:18), the Lex Taliones (Lev 24:19-21), and the laws of the cities of refuge (Num 35:11-28, Deut 4:41-43; 19:1-13).

² Eugene J. Fisher, "Lex-Talionis in the Bible and Rabbinic Tradition," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 19, no. 3 (1982): 583.

³ While Deut 22:26 indicates an equivalence between the rape of a betrothed woman and murder, the same cannot be said for an unmarried girl.

these narratives are in violation of the more general injunction, “You shall not take vengeance” (Lev 19:18), but they do not receive the unequivocal condemnation that might be expected for those who violated clear legal injunctions and ethical expectations. In light of this finding, we will now examine the narratives to discover which of their aspects constitute legal infractions, and which are conducive to a positive evaluation of the revenge act and the Avenger despite a legal infraction.

10.2 Impetus to Avenge

To qualify as revenge, an act of violence must be intended to punish the perpetrator of an offense against the avengers or the individuals they represent.⁴ A survey of the narratives included in this study shows that the offenses prompting retaliatory vengeance are of two types: those causing physical harm to person or property and those that injure the honor of the victim.

10.2.1 Physical Harm vs. Violation of Honor

The narratives in this study depict a variety of acts causing physical harm that was subsequently avenged including murder by the Midianite kings (killing Gideon’s brothers in Jud 8:18-19), by the Philistines (killing Samson’s wife and father-in-law in Jud 15:6), and by Abner (killing Asahel in II Sam 2:23), as well as lesser crimes⁵ such as the kidnapping and rape of Dinah by Shechem (Gen 34:2), the rape of Tamar by Absalom (II Sam 13:14), and the torture of Samson by the Philistines (Jud 16:21). Examples of non-violent offenses causing physical harm are Succoth and Penuel’s refusal of material aid to Gideon’s army (Jud 8:6,8) and Ahimelech’s aid to David, Saul’s enemy (I Sam 22:9-10).

Physical affronts are always accompanied by a diminishment of honor, though this is not always explicitly mentioned in the text. (However, the inverse, i.e., that a violation of honor is necessarily accompanied by a physical attack, is not always true.) An offense causing physical harm and one violating honor appear together when the cities refuse aid to Gideon’s army and taunt him, saying, “Do you already have in your possession the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna ...” (Jud 8:6). Another example is when Amnon forces Tamar out of his house after he has raped her (II Sam 13:14, 17). Similarly, Shechem’s offer of exogamous marriages and economic incentives in exchange for Jacob’s daughter after his kidnapping and rape of Dinah (Gen 34:8-12) constitutes a case of “adding insult to injury.” Cases of non-violent acts that offend the honor of the victims and provoke vengeance include Joseph’s arrogant treatment of his brothers (Gen 37:2, 3, 5, 6, 9), IshBoshet’s accusations of sexual impropriety against Abner (II Sam 3:7), and Naboth’s refusal to

⁴ Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations*, 366.

⁵ A “lesser crime” indicates here that the standard punishment for it would be more lenient than the punishment for murder.

sell his ancestral field (I Kgs 21:3). Surprisingly, all these offenses were avenged to the same degree.

10.2.1.1 Honor vs. Dignity

As discussed in the Introduction, honor-based societies measure people's worth by their status and reputation.⁶ In these cultures, injuries to honor resulting from an offense are intangible but nonetheless represent an attack on the victim's integrity and person. People thus injured are like a fortress that has been breached. They are vulnerable to further attack by others, who know they can offend and injure with impunity. In contrast, dignity-based societies measure people's worth by their adherence to a set of principles.

The disparity between these two types of societies is reflective of the disparity between the recorded laws regarding vengeance and the narratives depicting actual instances of vengeance. Legal codes assume an adherence to their underlying principles regardless of popular opinion and thus resemble a dignity-based society. The narratives, in contrast, focus on complex human interactions surrounding offenses to honor and the concomitant feelings of shame, anger, and fear. Leung and Cohen have found that honor societies are the norm when the state is weak; the law is not enforced, so people feel compelled to right the wrongs perpetrated against them rather than becoming a target for further shame. Dignity-based societies rely on a strong rule of law because adherence to principles requires the backing of the state for enforcement, lest the individual risk exploitation.⁷ In the absence of a strong and equitable centralized power, individuals must protect their own interests, whether that involves practical issues such as monetary recompense or deterrence against future harm or restoring their lost honor. In his discussion of the types of injury that can motivate a victim to seek revenge, sociologist Warren TenHouten includes both incidental and intentional acts, be they violations of honor or physical injuries. An encroachment on one's sense of entitlement may trigger a response on par with murder. He reports that in an honor-based society, public insults and the subsequent loss of honor are the strongest motivators for revenge because they cause the victim shame.⁸ Sensitivity to even a slight loss of honor was a prominent feature of ANE cultures, where honor stood in opposition to shame.⁹ Honor was also connected to the purity of women and the loss of public status; the mere perception of a loss of honor was grounds for action.¹⁰ Pitt-Rivers explains that the "ultimate vindication of honor lies in physical violence."¹¹ Avengers viewed the employment of extreme violence to redress acts that injured one's

⁶ Berger, "On the Obsolescence of the Concept of Honor," 341–43.

⁷ Leung and Cohen, "Within-and between-Culture Variation," 509–10.

⁸ Warren D. TenHouten, *A General Theory of Emotions and Social Life* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 146–47.

⁹ Johanna Stiebert, "Shame and Prophecy: Approaches Past and Present," *Biblical Interpretation* 8, no. 3 (2000): 259.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 267; Olyan, "Honor, Shame, and Covenant Relations in Ancient Israel and Its Environment," 217.

¹¹ Pitt-Rivers, *The Fate of Shechem*, 8.

honor, in addition to acts that caused physical injury, as an existential necessity, not hubris. This perspective is essential to understanding the background of HB personal revenge narratives.

The HB legal sections, on the other hand, are anchored in a dignity-based culture, accompanied by a strong monarchy. In the ideal, these conditions prohibit or severely limit acts of personal revenge. The tension generated by the discrepancy between the reality of an honor-based culture and the ideal of a dignity-based culture is at the foundation of the HB narratives of personal vengeance and their reception. The current study examines this tension through a systematic evaluation of those narratives and shows how the ideals, not the reality, are most often reflected in the evaluation of acts of vengeance.

10.2.2 Impetus to Avenge - Summary

As the discussion of honor- versus dignity-based societies shows, factors beyond classifying the offense are involved in the assessment of personal revenge narratives. The morphological analysis undertaken in the preceding chapters enables the comparison of various combinations of these factors to show how vengeance was viewed in ancient Israel.

As we have seen, each revenge narrative contains an Avenger and an Avenged, that is, the subject and object of the act of revenge that is the focus of the narrative. Avenged are the perpetrators of the original injustice and Avengers are their Victims (or the Victim's Ally). These terms do not reflect a mere change in nomenclature but rather a shift in perspective that the narrative's structure promotes. As will be seen, the oscillation of functions often seen in these narratives is an expression of the need to view them from multiple perspectives in order to fully grasp their meaning.

10.3 Complicity

Despite the natural tendency to focus on the Avengers when assessing acts of revenge, the reliable presence of COMPLICITY in HB revenge narratives indicates that Avenged share a degree of responsibility for the act. Examining the role this function plays in the allocation of culpability among the actants provides a nuanced view of HB revenge assessment. The function of COMPLICITY can be filled in numerous ways, sometimes spotlighting the Avenged, sometimes the Avenger, and sometimes other components of the narrative, individually or in combination, with regard to who bears guilt.

10.3.1 Avenged

The degree to which Avenged participate in their own downfall can be assessed by the degree of "foreseeability" of key events surrounding the act of revenge and the degree to which the Avenged "foresees." Shaver, in discussing dimensions of responsibility for an event, includes "foreseeability" among the most crucial elements in assigning blame for an outcome. He explains

that this “dimension of *responsibility* is a continuous scale that represents the perceiver's view of what a reasonable actor *should* have known.”¹² This aspect of Avenged behavior is seen in the HB revenge narratives each time an Avenged walks into a trap set by the Avenger or otherwise aids in his own downfall, and is represented by the function COMPLICITY. In cases where a reasonable observer would expect the Avenged to display caution, carelessness brings censure on the Avenged and mitigates the guilt of the Avenger. The section below examines three types of COMPLICITY in revenge narratives and the effects and roles they have in the text. They are: COMPLICITY that conveys humiliation, COMPLICITY that is achieved through “measure for measure,” and COMPLICITY that serves a metanarrative.

10.3.1.1 Humiliation through Complicity

When Avengeds are oblivious to a threat or danger that they might have been expected to see, they become less sympathetic — humiliated — in the reader's eyes because they played a part in their downfall. Abner, who has ample reason to suspect Joab's intentions, should have been on guard against potential attacks; his return to Hebron at Joab's invitation appears foolhardy and invites the reader's contempt. Readers may feel that moral justice has been served when the confident general, who browbeats his king and behaves callously toward Paltiel, walks blindly into Joab's trap. Knowing Joab's interactions with Abner, David, as Ally, shares COMPLICITY. He is negligent for allowing Joab to leave unsupervised (II Samuel 3), and his apparent lack of attention lowers the reader's opinion of him or brings his motives into doubt. As an Ally, he is not physically affected by Joab's revenge, but his reputation suffers. Similarly, when the king sends Amnon to Absalom's sheep-shearing festival where he is murdered (II Samuel 13), David's judgment and ability to govern his family and inner circle are held up to judgment. Again, David's lack of foresight reflects poorly on him even though he is not the Avenger. Jacob and Joseph both suffer humiliation in the reader's eyes when they fail to notice the dangerous situation to which Jacob sends Joseph and to which Joseph willingly goes (Genesis 37).

10.3.1.2 Measure for Measure

The “measure for measure” aspect of the COMPLICITY adds poetic justice, often in an ironic sense, to an Avenged's failure to foresee, thereby sharpening the reader's assessment of the revenge act.¹³ For example, the vengeance exacted on Shechem for raping Dinah involved making the men physically vulnerable through circumcision (“the offending organ”) and contributes to the reader's sense that justice has been served in an appropriate fashion. When Joab strikes Abner in the

¹² Kelly G. Shaver, *The Attribution of Blame: Causality, Responsibility, and Blameworthiness* (Springer Series in Social Psychology; New York: Springer, 1985), 107.

¹³ Yael Shemesh, “Measure for Measure in the David Stories,” *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 17, no. 1 (2003): 89-92.

same place — the fifth rib — that Abner struck Asahel, the reader perceives that insult is added to the injury of the vengeance. Also, “measure for measure” can serve as a check on hubris, such as the brothers’ revenge on Joseph.¹⁴ When a brother who has consistently been putting himself above his siblings is punished by being “lowered” into a pit and then “taken down” to Egypt, the reader has a sense that Joseph has, to a certain extent, reaped what he sowed.

As mentioned above, irony often has a part in the “measure for measure” aspect of COMPLICITY. Shechem hurries to fulfill the conditions of Simeon and Levi “because he desired the daughter of Jacob” (Gen 34:19); being in haste to satisfy his desires is what led him to kidnap and rape Dinah. Similarly, in the Gideon narrative, an unarmed but well-informed lad aids in the downfall of his own city, thereby aiding in the “measure for measure” vengeance on the Succoth city elders who had doubted Gideon’s prowess as a warrior and a leader but then carelessly allowed the lad to leave the city alone (Jud 8). In the story of the brothers’ revenge on Joseph, the word “brother” is repeated 4 times in 5 verses, indicating that Jacob and Joseph, in spite of evidence to the contrary, believe that a normal brotherly relationship exists. Jacob asks Joseph, whose words are a source of his brothers’ hatred for him (Gen 37:4, 8), to bring back דבר. As mentioned above, these actions show how oblivious both father and favorite son are to the impending danger. The suffering of Jacob, who showed favoritism, and of Joseph, who brought “evil report” and shared his dreams, conveys some satisfaction on the literary and moral levels. Avengers will ultimately be held to account for their actions, but the function of COMPLICITY intimates that the Avenger is not entirely innocent and must also bear some measure of responsibility.

10.3.1.3 Metanarrative

COMPLICITY of the Avenger can also be connected to a metanarrative that encompasses the revenge narrative. Saul’s decision to destroy the “father’s house” of Ahimelech fulfills (partially) the curse on the house of Eli (I Sam 2:27-36),¹⁵ but since Saul was never empowered to actualize the curse, his slaughter of the priests was unjustified. Nonetheless, the priests’ willingness to obey Saul’s call and answer his questions (despite the priests’ inability to know Saul’s mental state) implies that there is some justice to their fate on the level of the metanarrative. Similarly, Joseph’s meeting with his brothers, commanded by his father and aided by the mysterious stranger, hints at the involvement of the divine hand in the larger Joseph narrative, guiding Joseph to his fate. In the local narrative, Joseph is punished for his arrogance, but the metanarrative preserves his role as savior. It should be noted that any benefits to the metanarrative provided by the Avenger’s COMPLICITY do not absolve the Avenger’s actions if they were not justified in the local pericope.

¹⁴ Shemesh, “Punishment of the Offending Organ in Biblical Literature,” 350.

¹⁵ Hutzli, “Elaborated Literary Violence,” 151–55, notes the unique term “ephod bearers” of 2:28, 14:3, and 22:18 as well as other linguistic connections.

While failure to see the unforeseeable generates sympathy for the Avenger, it also results in contempt for an Avenger who uses unfair deception. The priests of Nob assume that Saul is a sane and just king. Ahimelech answers Saul's questions openly; he has no reason to suspect entrapment. Consequently, Saul is seen as harsh and unfair. Using a corrupt trial to convict the innocent is a tactic also used by Jezebel on Naboth. In both of these narratives, the innocent Avengers could not have anticipated their accusers' methods and thus they earn the reader's sympathy.

Assigning COMPLICITY to the Avengers because of their participation in the revenge act highlights the Avengers' fallible human nature. But people's involvement in their own downfall diminishes their honor even before the revenge act is committed, regardless of its outcome, and hints that they are playing a role in a larger drama.

10.3.2 Victim/Avenger

Assigning culpability to the Avenger should not be interpreted as a tendency within the HB to "blame the victim," but rather to its recognition of the complexities of the human condition and that individuals are rarely blameless. At the same time, the current study has revealed many ways in which the HB narratives point to the Avenger's responsibility. Three such ways will be examined below in terms of how they affect the assessment of the revenge: the Avenger's emotive response, the Avenger's use of deception in executing vengeance, and the Avenger's expression of justification. The combination of these three indicators combine with the culpability of the Avenger, discussed above, and utilize the structural analysis to yield an evaluation of personal revenge.

10.3.2.1 Expressive Emotion

Gideon (in the case of the Midianite kings) and Samson are the only Avengers for whom an emotional response to being wronged does not appear in the text. In all other cases, either a narrative or situational description of the Avenger's emotions is recorded. Some descriptions include a qualifier, like Simeon and Levi or Abner being "very angry" (Gen 34:7, II Sam 3:8) or are repeated, as with the hatred of Joseph's brothers (including their jealousy; Gen 37:4, 5, 8, 11), or are accompanied by an intensifying descriptor, as Absalom not only hated Amnon, but would not speak to him (II Sam 13:22). Saul twice refers to his adversaries, Ahimelech and David (I Sam 22:12-13), with contempt, and Joab's indignation is apparent when he berates David for accepting Abner (II Sam 3:24-25).

Ekman and Davidson, emotion theorists, suggest that emotions be analyzed with a "dimensional description" in which emotions such as anger, fear, and disgust are located on axes according to dimensions such as pleasant/unpleasant, approach/avoid, active/passive, and others. Anger, for example, is considered unpleasant, generates an active rather than a passive response,

and usually involves an approach behavior, which results in revenge.¹⁶ Despite its unpleasantness, anger is described as being “constructive *in the right proportions*” (emphasis added).¹⁷ This study has observed that in the revenge narratives in which anger appears, the Avenger is described as being *very* angry, that is, *not* in the “right proportions.” Anger is also a component of other emotions displayed in some of the narratives, such as outrage and shock.¹⁸ An extreme emotional response on the part of the Avenger leads to more revenge than what the law allows. Baloian cites the many warnings throughout the HB against acting out of anger. The wisdom literature, in particular, associates restraint of anger with understanding, such as “Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but one who has a hasty temper exalts folly” (Prov 14:29), and with insight, as in “Those with good sense are slow to anger” (Prov 19:11).¹⁹

The prevalence of anger-related emotional responses among Avengers indicates that the presence of anger and the haste with which it is acted upon are features which negatively mark an Avenger. Gideon (regarding Zebaḥ and Zalmunna) and Samson, the Avengers whose emotional response is not recorded, do not suffer from this detraction. Absalom, despite the explicit mention of his hatred for Amnon, is also singled out for his ability to keep his emotions in check for two years. Moreover, Absalom makes a conscious decision to refrain from speaking to his future Avengee: “But Absalom spoke to Amnon neither good nor bad, for Absalom hated Amnon because he had raped his sister Tamar” (II Sam 13:22). In contrast, Joseph’s brothers were not capable of speaking peaceably to Joseph (Gen 37:4), demonstrating that their behavior, unlike Absalom’s, was dictated by their strong emotions. Thus, while anger does not necessarily signify illegitimate revenge, unrestrained emotions suggest that the revenge is not to achieve justice but to injure the Avengee’s honor and/or raise the Avenger’s honor. The Avenger’s inability to appraise this situation accurately casts a negative hue on the revenge act.

¹⁶ Paul Ekman and Richard J. Davidson, “Affective Science: A Research Agenda,” in *The Nature of Emotion: Fundamental Questions* (ed. Paul Ekman; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 413.

¹⁷ TenHouten, 40-41.

¹⁸ TenHouten lists four pairs of primary emotions, as follows:

Acceptance	Disgust
Joy	Sadness
Anticipation	Surprise
Anger	Fear

All other emotions are combinations of these primary emotions. TenHouten, ch. 3-7. For the relevant combinations of secondary and tertiary emotions experiences in the narratives, most of which contain Anger, see the following table:

Emotion	Primary Emotions
Contempt (Indignation, Scorn)	Disgust + Anger
Shock	Surprise + Disgust
Outrage	Surprise + Anger
Hatred	Anger + Fear
Jealousy	Surprise + Fear + Sadness

¹⁹ Bruce Edward Baloian, *Anger in the Old Testament* (New York: Peter Lang, 1992), 20–21.

10.3.2.2 Deception

Although deception carries a negative stigma in cultures that value truth, Prouser notes that deception in the HB is often used to effect equitable conditions and allow an underdog to reach an otherwise unattainable goal. However, a positive view of deception depends on the nature of the goal in the eyes of the biblical author.²⁰ Shemesh stresses that each case of falsehood in the HB must be evaluated according to its ethical value.²¹ For example, Gideon's employing the element of surprise when he returned to Succoth and Penuel from a different direction and his unexpected attack at Karkor are considered fair by the rules of war and do not cast his legacy in a negative light. The deceptions of Saul and of Jezebel in luring their Avengers to what they thought would be a juridical hearing, or Joab's deception of Abner to get him alone at the gate, crossed the line of acceptable deceptions because the acts were for the aggrandizement of the Avenger's honor; thus, these Avengers' legacies are tarnished.

Another factor mitigating the use of deception is the narrator's informing the reader, thereby bringing the reader into confederation with the Avenger. Before the brothers respond to Shechem's offer of a large bride price for Dinah, the narrator reports that "The sons of Jacob answered Shechem and his father Hamor deceitfully because he had defiled their sister Dinah" (Gen 34:13). Similarly, readers become co-conspirators in Absalom's hatred of Amnon and in his plan for revenge when the narrative reports that "Absalom commanded his servants, saying: "Watch when Amnon's heart is merry with wine, and when I say to you, 'Strike Amnon,' then kill him. Do not be afraid; have I not myself commanded you? Be courageous and valiant" (II Sam 13:28). Knowledge of the deception brings the reader to identify and sympathize with the deceiver, which lessens the possibility that the reader will see the deceiver as having base motives.²² On the other hand, when Joab calls Abner back to Hebron, the reader is unaware of his intentions until after the act:

When Joab came out from David's presence, he sent messengers after Abner, and they brought him back ... Abner returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gateway to speak with him privately, and there he stabbed him in the stomach. So he died (II Sam 3:26-27).

The shock of a calculated, cold-blooded murder incriminates Joab in the eyes of the reader, while the duplicity of Simeon and Levi, as well as that of Absalom, is mitigated by their good intentions (to protect their sisters) and by the reader's having been informed of their deception.

10.3.2.3 Justification

In his discussion on the role of self-justification in human relationships, Aden argues that when people justify their actions, they reinforce their version of the truth and their point of view,

²⁰ Ora Horn Prouser, "The Phenomenology of the Lie in Biblical Narrative" (Ph.D. diss., The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1991), 181.

²¹ Yael Shemesh, "Lies by Prophets and Other Lies in the Hebrew Bible," *JANES* 29 (2002): 83.

²² Pitt-Rivers, *The Fate of Shechem*, 11.

blinding them to any other view and precluding the possibility of genuine dialogue with the other.²³ Saul exhibits this behavior when he proclaims Nob's guilt (I Sam 22:16), as does Jezebel when she says she will acquire the vineyard for Ahab (I Kgs 21:7), and Abner when he states that he will transfer the monarchy from IshBoshet to the house of David (II Sam 3:9-10). By taking an oath, Abner invokes the will of God, giving more weight to his words. Gideon behaves similarly in his threat to the men of Succoth and Penuel although his words do not constitute a formal oath (Jud 8:7, 9).²⁴ Such statements rarely convince anyone of the legitimacy of the action to be taken; rather, they represent the Avengers' need to validate their actions. Declarations of self-justification may even be seen as inversely related to the objective validity of the action.

10.3.3 Complicity – Summary

As demonstrated in the previous discussion, the fixed morphology utilized in HB revenge narratives allows for the expression of varying degrees of accountability on the part of the Avenger, the Avenged, and, occasionally, an Ally. A factor contributing to the culpability of the Avenged is humiliation resulting from their failure to foresee predictable danger; the addition of a measure-for-measure element to the act of revenge underscores their portion of the guilt. With regard to the Avenger, we have seen how an emotional response to the offense, the use of deception, and the justification of the revenge act combine to increase culpability. Avenged who are humiliated through foreseeable COMPLICITY that employs a measure-for-measure punishment bear significant responsibility for their situation. Conversely, Avengers who display extreme emotion, employ unfair deception, and proclaim the justice of their cause lead the reader to question the legitimacy of their revenge. Because of the many factors affecting the assessment of COMPLICITY, each narrative has its own combination of these aspects, presenting a complex picture in which the Avenger and Avenged, nuanced human beings reacting and responding on many levels to many forces, are granted a multivalent evaluation.

An example of how the metrics described above contribute to the evaluation of a revenge act can be seen in the revenge narrative of Samson. Although Samson is COMPLICIT in the extreme (Delilah has declared her willingness to betray him on several occasions), Samson makes no justification for his actions. Before his first revenge act, he speaks without taunts or bravado, saying, "If this is what you do, I swear I will not stop until I have taken revenge on you" (Jud 15:7). He does not offer an excuse for his action; he labels it plainly. His statement in his final act of

²³ L. Aden, "The Role of Self-Justification in Violence," in *The Destructive Power of Religion: Violence in Judaism, Christianity and Islam 2* (ed. J. H. Ellens; Westport: Praeger, 2004), 252–54.

²⁴ Jože Krašovec, *Reward, Punishment, and Forgiveness: The Thinking and Beliefs of Ancient Israel in the Light of Greek and Modern Views* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 151. The fact that God actually does want the kingship transferred to the house of David is irrelevant, as it is clearly not Abner's motivation in taking the oath.

revenge, “Let me die with the Philistines” (Jud 16:30), is one of inner resolve rather than justification. Nor does Samson use deception, although deception is used on him. Furthermore, he expresses no emotions when the Philistines blind and imprison him. All three metrics lead the reader to judge Samson the Avenger favorably: He displays no angry emotional outbursts, does not use deception, and does not justify his actions.

A similarly uniform, though negative, assessment can be given to the revenge acts of Saul on Nob and of Jezebel on Naboth. Both Avengers express anger — or contempt — toward those who “offended” them, both utilize underhanded deception in forcing their Avengees into a rigged trial that they could not have anticipated, and both justify their actions through an inappropriate use of the legal system. Again, all three metrics line up to convey a consistent (negative) impression of the revenge acts.

In many of the other narratives, however, applying the metrics of COMPLICITY generates a mixture of results, leading to more equivocal evaluations. Joseph’s brothers exhibit negative emotions (hatred, jealousy) and justify their actions by objectifying the Avengee (calling Joseph “this dreamer” in Gen 37:19). They also blame their Victim: “we shall see what will become of his dreams” (vs. 20). On the other hand, the Avengee displays hubris and invites a measure-for-measure punishment. The act of vengeance is a stain on the brothers’ characters, but it is mitigated by the actions of the Avengee and his father, Jacob, the Ally of the Avengee, which imparts a sense of just expiation to the episode. This revenge act therefore emerges as one that is not entirely objectionable despite the brothers’ overstepping the law.

The revenge of Joab on Abner yields a similarly mixed evaluation. Joab’s rebuke to David expresses strong emotions, and he uses deceit to entrap Abner. However, Abner displays shocking credulity (or overconfidence) when he returns to Hebron and “goes aside” with Joab. Joab’s actions are condemned, but there is blame on both sides. Ultimately Abner will be assessed more favorably than Joab, but this is more a result of David’s response (discussed below) than the Avengee’s blamelessness.

While vengeance in ancient Israel was forbidden by law, actual acts of revenge existed in reality. Revenge narratives, subjected to structural analysis, reflect an ability to assess each case individually, weighing details in combination to justify, incriminate, exonerate, or convict both Avenger and Avengee. The next section presents an analysis of the HB treatment of the revenge act and its participants beyond the incident and its immediate effects.

10.4 Evaluation

The structural analysis of revenge narratives provides a mechanism for assessing acts of vengeance beyond the culpability of Avenger and Avengee. This assessment does not consider whether the Avenger was successful in bringing justice to the perpetrator of the initial offense but

examines the wider and more lasting effects of the act of vengeance on the Avenger and on society. In the narratives presented, the revenge story is not concluded with the violence or its immediate effects, but with a postscript that provides the details necessary for determining the enduring consequences of vengeance.

10.4.1 Goal Attainment

Acts of vengeance are a means to an end, the end being the defense of the Avenger's honor. Determining the success of an act of vengeance, therefore, involves first identifying the particular manifestation of that honor in a given situation, and then establishing whether or not it was attained.

10.4.1.1 Failure to Attain the Goal

Many revenge acts fail to achieve the goal their avenger desired. The attention and honor that Joseph's brothers hoped to gain from their father by eliminating Joseph did not materialize. Jacob sank into a state of perpetual mourning for his lost son and would not be comforted (Genesis 37). Likewise, Saul's attempt to protect his monarchy by demanding obedience from his subjects fails when David vows to protect Abiathar, the lone survivor of Saul's massacre of Nob. Joab, who sought to eliminate his competition by killing Abner, is forced to publicly mourn his victim, separated from David by Abner's bier (II Samuel 3). Joab's failure to protect his position next to David is reminiscent of Jacob's sons' failure to take Joseph's place in their father's affections. David's actions in the wake of Abner's killing demonstrate his abhorrence for the act and emphasize how Joab lost honor through his act of revenge. Jezebel acquires Naboth's vineyard for Ahab, but the prophet condemns her to a literal fall from her lofty position (I Kgs 21:17-24, II Kgs 9:30-37). These depictions of avengers who "win the battle but lose the war" illustrate the HB disapproval of the use of revenge as a way to attain goals. Even when avengers "succeed," i.e., in carrying out their act of revenge, they fail to achieve their greater aspirations.

10.4.1.2 Success in Goal Attainment

Some Avengers do succeed in attaining both their immediate and long-term goals through their act of revenge. Simeon and Levi act for the honor of their sister and of their mother's house once they see that Jacob will not do so. Despite being rebuked by their father, they stand by their actions regardless of any future consequences (i.e., Gen 49:5-7). They tell their father, in essence, that some causes are worth personal risk. Their indifference to Jacob's words proves that their goal has been achieved. Moreover, they have sent a powerful message to the surrounding nations that the honor of the daughters of Israel shall not be defiled, a message that the text tells us had its desired effect (Gen 35:5). A similar message is sent to King David by his son Absalom once it becomes clear that the king will not punish Amnon for the rape of Tamar. Absalom is willing to risk permanent exile for his sister's honor, and as a result, his exile does not preclude the attainment of

his goal. These narratives demonstrate that in the absence of a ruler who will enforce justice whatever the cost, acts of vengeance will be committed and can attain the desired objectives. Even in such cases, however, the act does not leave the Avenger unscathed.

10.4.2 *Liminal State of the Avenger*

For Todorov, the end of any story is marked by the restoration of the equilibrium that was disturbed at the opening of the narrative.²⁵ In a revenge narrative, that equilibrium includes the physical separation of opposing parties. Atherton notes that in Japanese vendetta fiction, Avengers enter a liminal, or transitional, state in which different rules apply to them; they stand outside of society as they attempt to fulfill their obligations as Avengers.²⁶ The marginalization of the liminal figure ends upon the completion of the task and with the reintegration of the Avenger into the community.²⁷ DEPARTURE thus serves as the function that signifies the dissolution of the individual from the status of Avenger. Mobley points to the opposition field/house as a significant way liminality is expressed.²⁸ If Avengers are liminal figures on a mission, then DEPARTURE from the liminal space in which the revenge occurs signals that the character is no longer an Avenger. If, however, Avengers face consequences of the revenge that hamper their ability to achieve closure, their vengeance has not been entirely successful. The importance of closure in literature in general, and in HB narratives in particular, has been widely addressed.²⁹ The return of the Avenger to the pre-Avenger state is vital to the narrative's return to equilibrium. Nearly all of the HB narratives examined in the current study, however, contain a postscript that continues the narrative to an AFTERMATH, called "anti-closural" by Smith because it disturbs the reader's desire for "wholeness."³⁰ This represents the author's attempt to force the reader to resist simple formulaic endings and wrestle with the narrative's unresolved issues.³¹ Torgovnick defines a "tangential ending" as an addendum that does not provide enough information for a detailed analysis, but enough to indicate that a true equilibrium has not been reached.³²

²⁵ Tzvetan Todorov, "Structural Analysis of Narrative," in *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, 3 (ed. Arnold Weinstein; Duke University Press, 1969), 75.

²⁶ Atherton, "Valences of Vengeance," 78-134.

²⁷ Dean Andrew Nicholas, *The Trickster Revisited: Deception as a Motif in the Pentateuch* (SBL 117; New York: Peter Lang, 2009), 36-38.

²⁸ Mobley, *Samson and the Liminal Hero in the Ancient Near East*, 37-65. Mobley argues that Samson, an eternal avenger, fails when he attempts to leave the liminal space and enter society.

²⁹ See for example, Isaac B. Gottlieb, "Sof Davar: Biblical Endings," *Prooftexts*, 11 no. 3 (1991), 213-24; Marian Broida, "Closure in Samson," *Perspectives on Hebrew Scriptures VII* (2010), 25-59; Susan Zeelander, *Closure in Biblical Narrative* (Biblical Interpretation Series 111; Leiden: Brill, 2011).

³⁰ Barbara Herrnstein Smith, *Poetic Closure: A Study of How Poems End* (Phoenix Books 381; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 234 ff.

³¹ Zeelander, *Closure in Biblical Narrative*, 111:187-94.

³² Marianna Torgovnick, *Closure in the Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 13-14.

The narratives of personal revenge examined here vary greatly with regard to the Avenger's post-revenge status and the "new normal" in the post-revenge setting. Three basic variations in how the crucial post-revenge stage is delineated will shed light on the ways in which revenge narratives reflect the HB perception of personal acts of vengeance.

10.4.2.1 Comings and Goings

Within narratives, exits are often more significant than arrivals. When Simeon and Levi depart with Dinah from the city of Shechem, the site of their vengeance (Gen 34:26), the text makes no specific mention of their destination or, more to the point, their arrival. They have completed their act of vengeance and exited their Avenger state, yet their return home is metaphorically blocked by their father's rebuke. Their honor, lost through their sister's defilement, has been restored, but their position in the family has been lowered as a result of their actions, as indicated in the Epilogue of Jacob's blessing (Gen 49:5-7).

The postscript to the revenge narrative of Simeon and Levi contrasts with that of Gideon, which tells of his arrival at Ofra, his hometown, but not of his exit from the revenge scene (Jud 8:29). On a personal level, Gideon has returned and been reintegrated to his pre-Avenger state, which includes burial in the family tomb. Yet, his legacy is not unstained. The birth of Abimelech, the creation of the ephod, and the presence of idolatry are all mentioned, indicating a lack of closure and leaving a sense of incompleteness. Both of these narratives employ the post-revenge scene to highlight the fact that despite a return home, revenge has been a destabilizing force.

10.4.2.2 Redirection

The narratives of the brothers' revenge on Joseph, Saul's on Nob, and Joab's on Abner fail to mention the Avenger's exit, nor do they mention the Avenger's arrival home. Although the text indicates clearly that the Avengers exited the site of the revenge by noting their location elsewhere in the next scene, the absence of an explicit departure or arrival for the Avenger suggests that the focus of the narrative has shifted, ironically, to the Avenged. The brothers do not attain the love of their father, and the narrative changes its focus to Joseph and his arrival in a new arena where he will rise to stardom (Gen 37:28, 36). Likewise, Saul's exit from Nob is not mentioned, but Abiathar's is. Saul's bid for greater allegiance has failed, and the narrative turns to David, who takes responsibility for Abiathar and thereby gains his allegiance. Finally, Joab's attempt to eliminate Abner succeeds, but Joab does not achieve greater security in his position, and the narrative spotlights the slain Abner's accolades and royal burial. In these cases, the Avenger's ability to exit the Avenger state is compromised by a shift in focus away from the Avenger, illustrating another way in which revenge acts that technically succeed often thwart more important goals.

10.4.2.3 No Way Home

The narratives of Samson's revenge on the Philistines and Absalom's on Amnon feature a dramatic exit that does not enable the Avenger to return to his pre-Avenger life. Samson's revenge is achieved with his death, and Absalom enters an exile of uncertain duration in Geshur. The liminal Avenger status has ended but without a return home. Each Avenger has restored the Victim's dignity, and the narratives contain no anti-closural elements that mitigate the completeness of the revenge. These narratives contain no "but" as has appeared in the narratives mentioned above, although David's subsequent longing for Absalom may be viewed as an "and" that will lead to the restoration of Absalom to David's court. However, the restoration occurs long after the conclusion of the revenge narrative and was not a foregone conclusion at the outset of Absalom's revenge. Samson's burial by his family in his father's tomb and the description of his rule serve a similar purpose: to provide a sense of completion for Avengers who were resolved to a course of action from which they would not return, administered from an ethic of dignity, and in disregard of their honor or their personal fate.

10.4.3 Evaluation – Summary

The discussion of evaluative techniques in revenge narratives illustrates that causing harm to the perpetrator of an injustice does not, by itself, constitute a successful act of revenge. Vengeance does not ensure that the long-term goals and interests of the act will be served, nor that the Avenger will not be damaged beyond redemption in the process. Collateral damage to the Avengers, their families, or society in general limit the level of triumph that the Avenger can claim.

10.5 Conclusions

Comparing the surface structure of narratives provides insights regarding the use and significance of particular elements in each story and imparts a more nuanced reading than examining stories in isolation. While the results of this analysis may challenge certain instinctive reactions regarding the classification of a particular act as vengeance, introducing morphological functions has enabled a systematic examination that is based on what each element does in the narrative. Objective definitions are essential to a consistent analysis of actants' behavior, and thus, the ability to classify an act as revenge is facilitated. Using this methodical process to examine HB narratives affirms Wenham's assertion that narratives serve a didactic purpose, seeking to instill in readers "theological truths and ethical ideals."³³ The principles of the law are present in these narratives, reflected in the success and failure of each individual story. The study of narratives of personal revenge as a tale-type with a uniform morphological structure demonstrates how the

³³ Gordon J. Wenham, *Story as Torah: Reading the Old Testament Ethically* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2004), 3.

meaning of the structure is combined with the surface narrative to better understand the HB approach to revenge. The preservation of honor is less regarded than the preservation of dignity, and the pursuit of revenge is anathema because it flows from a pursuit of honor.

PART II – ANCIENT NEAR EAST¹

Chapter 11

11.0 Introduction – Ancient Near East

11.1 *Ancient Near East Literature as an Entity*

Because ancient Near East literature is the product of a diverse set of cultures that spanned millennia, any study involving these writings must address the legitimacy of treating them as a unified body of work. A number of scholars have pointed out how the “far-reaching supra-regional interrelationships” within the ANE support viewing it as a conglomeration of distinctive societies that operated as a single entity.² Liverani, for example, notes that “when compared to other centers of civilization...the Ancient Near East seems compact enough to allow for a unified treatment because of intensive cross-fertilization.” At the same time, he cautions that the specific features of the individual cultures should not be ignored.³ The present study uniquely benefits from this dual characteristic of ANE literature in that the ANE corpus provides the requisite variety of cases to elicit commonalities on a single theme, which stems from the continuity of literary traditions. As Hallo argues, a contextual approach in comparing and contrasting ANE and HB literature is justified on the grounds of their shared literary and historical milieu, while he acknowledges the cultural diversity of that milieu.⁴ Finally, Holm gives an overview of ANE literature and concludes that despite “the geographical and temporal distance, the literary fabric – from metaphors and alliteration, to the fear of death and the love of life – has remained the same throughout the centuries.”⁵ The present study seeks to analyze those timeless features of the same literary fabric, and thus in the context of its particular focus, will treat ANE literature as an entity.

11.2 *ANE Texts as Literary Compositions that Reflect the Culture*

The cultic nature of many of the ANE texts that will be examined in this work raises the question as to whether they can be examined as structured literary compositions. Berlejung reminds us that the ancient Mesopotamian worldview was complex, mixing and conjoining social, political, religious, and cosmic orders.⁶ Michalowski applies this understanding in a demonstration of the inseparability of the intertextual role of narrative within the literary tradition, including the political

¹ Sources of Ancient Near East translations are cited at the beginning of each chapter. The relevant sections appear at greater length in the appendixes as the end of this work.

² Martin Litchfield West, *The East Face of Helicon: West Asiatic Elements in Greek Poetry and Myth* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), viii–ix.

³ Mario Liverani, “Historical Overview,” in *A Companion to the Ancient Near East* (ed. Daniel C. Snell; Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World; Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 3–4.

⁴ Hallo, *The Book of the People*, 23–25.

⁵ Tawny L. Holm, “Ancient Near Eastern Literature: Genres and Forms,” in *A Companion to the Ancient Near East* (ed. Daniel C. Snell; Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World; Malden: Blackwell, 2005), 264.

⁶ Angelika Berlejung, “Sin and Punishment: The Ethics of Divine Justice and Retribution in Ancient Near Eastern and Old Testament Texts,” *Interpretation* 69, no. 3 (2015): 273–74.

dimensions of its theology.⁷ In the ANE worldview, social crimes are infused with cosmic elements, and cultic material was taught to children so they might be steeped in their culture and its norms.⁸ The narratives examined here, though serving additional functions beyond the didactic, may be utilized to examine the cultural attitudes regarding values and vices.

11.3 Comparing Genres: Revenge of the gods Reflected in the Revenge of Mortals

The current study examines narratives in HB and ANE texts about personal revenge among and between individuals. Because the HB section focused exclusively on narratives of human revenge, we must ask: Does the use of ANE narratives, in which some or all of the actants are fully or partially divine, yield a legitimate basis of comparison for understanding how the cultures' respective attitudes towards vengeance are reflected in these narratives? This question addresses two interrelated concerns: the nature of the genre being analyzed, and the nature of the deities of the ANE. Regarding the first, Greenstein argues that we must divide myth (narratives containing cosmogonic themes) from epic (narratives focused on how human behavior reflects societal conventions) because deities behave more decorously with mortals than with each other. He explains that the behavior of deities in epics is "nothing different from ordinary human behavior" and warns against comparing different genres of literary composition.⁹ However, Greenstein's delineation may not be applicable to all ANE narratives categorized as myths.¹⁰

Sasson argues that the division between myth and epic is not always discernible. He points out that "ANE myths and epics hardly differ in form or structure, and even less so in the character roles of the protagonists."¹¹ Similarly, Foster categorizes Akkadian literature according to its function, though he notes that some compositions may fit into more than one category; for example, myth and epic literature fall into the category of narrative, whose purpose is to tell a story and deepen knowledge, unlike didactic literature, which is intended to convey a lesson.¹² Regarding the question of whether and how myths and epics should be differentiated, Foster observes that "it is

⁷ Piotr Michalowski, "Presence at the Creation," in *Lingering over Words: Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Literature in Honor of William L. Moran* (ed. Tzvi Abusch, John Huehnergard, and Piotr Steinkeller; Harvard Semitic Studies 37; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 393.

⁸ Louise M. Pryke, *Ishtar, Gods and Heroes of the Ancient World* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2017), 164; Meindert Dijkstra, "Some Reflections on the Legend of Aqhat," *UF. Internationales Jahrbuch Für Die Altertumskunde Syrien-Palästinas Neukirchen-Vluyn* 11 (1979): 202.

⁹ Edward L. Greenstein, "The God of Israel and the Gods of Canaan: How Different Were They?," in *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies: The Bible and Its World* (1999), 52–53; Simon B. Parker, *Stories in Scripture and Inscriptions: Comparative Studies on Narratives in Northwest Semitic Inscriptions and the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 6–7.

¹⁰ The behavior of the deities in *Enuma Elish*, for example, is certainly in line with the human behaviors seen in ANE narratives, though the gods possess far greater powers.

¹¹ Jack M. Sasson, "Comparative Observations on the Near Eastern Epic Traditions," in *A Companion to Ancient Epic* (ed. John Miles Foley; Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World; Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 219–20.

¹² Foster's remaining categories include: celebratory (includes commemorative texts in the human sphere and hymnic texts in the divine sphere), didactic (seeking to convey a lesson), effective (incantations, threats, etc.) and expressive (seeking an emotional reaction) texts.

not always clear whether they [the literary works] were primarily mythological in purpose or whether they were simply narrative strategies for authors in a culture that assigned little literary value to what was present and empirically recognizable.”¹³ Because the present work is a narratological study that aims to derive meaning through an examination of surface structure, we will apply Foster’s categorization criteria for the narrative genre to the selection of texts.

The second aspect we must consider when ascertaining the validity of comparing the behavior of divine or semi-divine characters in the ANE narratives with human characters in HB narratives is the nature of the ANE deity. Unlike YHWH of the HB, the ANE gods are numerous, comprising a community with rules by which they are bound; they are gods with limits.¹⁴ This essential fact legitimizes the comparison of the vengeance of the ANE gods to that of humans, while a comparison to an omnipotent monotheistic or monolatric god would not be valid.¹⁵

Kippenburg defines culture as “a model of and for reality.”¹⁶ Given that religion is an integral part of culture, Van Baaren answers the question whether “personal relations between gods can exist that... have no parallel in human relationships” in the negative. The relations among gods, like those among humans, express the structural concepts of the world for a particular society. The divine structure is manifested in the mortal world in one of three ways: 1) It is analogous to existent social reality, 2) it reflects a former reality for society, or 3) it is indicative of possible future relations in that society, particularly those that are desired or feared as conceptions of the future or as eschatological ideas.¹⁷ Accordingly, divine interactions may be seen to lie on a continuum that extends from divine/divine relations to divine/human interactions to human/human interactions, all of which mirror the mortal world.¹⁸ Berman demonstrates this correspondence between the earthly and heavenly realms of the ANE as he distinguishes it from biblical thought.¹⁹ While clearly possessing greater abilities and freedom of will than mortals, the gods portrayed in

¹³ Benjamin R. Foster, *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature* (Bethesda: CDL Press, 2005), 37–43.

¹⁴ Michael Burger, *The Shaping of Western Civilization: From Antiquity to the Enlightenment* (Toronto: Broadview, 2008), 31–32.

¹⁵ Jan Assmann, *Of God and Gods: Egypt, Israel, and the Rise of Monotheism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008), 63, defines monolatry as “a monotheism of cult, worship and commitment,” while Massimo Leone, “Smashing Idols: A Paradoxical Semiotics,” *Signs and Society* 4, no. 1 (2016): 31, underlines the defining feature as avoidance of “any reference to multiplicity of transcendence.” The distinction between a monotheistic vs. monolatric foundation to HB religion is immaterial for the current study, as both definitions posit the absence of competition between YHWH and any other god.

¹⁶ Hans G. Kippenberg, “Introduction: Symbols of Conflicts,” in *Struggles of Gods* (eds. Hans Kippenberg, H.J.W. Drivers, and Y. Kuiper; Religion and Reason 31; Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2019), 2.

¹⁷ Th. van Baaren, “A Few Essential Remarks Concerning Positive and Negative Relations between Gods,” in *Struggles of Gods* (eds. Hans Kippenberg, H.J.W. Drivers, and Y. Kuiper; Religion and Reason 31; Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2019), 6–9.

¹⁸ Brigitte Groneberg, “The Role and Function of Goddesses in Mesopotamia,” in *The Babylonian World* (ed. Gwendolyn Leick; The Routledge Worlds; New York: Routledge, 2007), 321–22.

¹⁹ Joshua Berman, *Created Equal: How the Bible Broke with Ancient Political Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 15–50.

the narratives have needs and wants, they love and covet, they insult and are insulted. When these stories are combined with the narratives of ANE mortals, ample grounds for comparison with the narratives of HB mortals exist. The same cannot be claimed for comparisons with a deity in a monolatric worldview.

11.4 *Revenge in Ancient Near Eastern Literature*

The ANE legal material regarding revenge has been documented, and compared and contrasted with similar HB legislation. Though there is no specific law prescribing revenge, the idea of reciprocity within the law was an established principle in Assyrian and Babylonian societies as evidenced by expressions like *gimilla turru*, “to return the deed,” used to indicate the repayment of a favor, though more often it refers to requiring a wrong.²⁰ The legal codes generally match the punishment to the crime while accounting for parity (or the lack thereof) between the parties,²¹ a tendency also found in funerary inscription curses and international relations.²² Surprisingly little attention was paid to homicide legislation, which Good speculates was due to murder being perceived as a private affair to be addressed by the next of kin.²³ Murder, like adultery, could be addressed by the family, which might exact more lenient penalties, unlike HB law.²⁴ In the Hittite texts, blood vengeance was often demanded by the deities.²⁵ *Gimilla turru* is related to the HB cognate *hēšīb gemûl* or *šalem gemûl*, indicating a reciprocal punishment.²⁶ These HB combinations appear exclusively in cases of a divine response, while *gimilla turru* may have a human subject.²⁷

Though a number of studies on the theme of revenge have examined some of the ANE narratives appearing in this study (some as comparative studies with an HB narrative), none has systematically approached the topic as a tale-type or as a cultural indicator across the corpus.²⁸

²⁰ Marc Van De Mieroop, “Revenge, Assyrian Style,” *Past & Present*, 179 (2003): 12. On the one hand, the gods ask Marduk to return favors (IV, 1.3) while using the same language to encourage Tiamat to avenge Mummu (I, 1.122); Victor Harold Matthews and Don C. Benjamin, *Old Testament Parallels: Laws and Stories from the Ancient Near East* (4th ed., Paulist Press, 2016), 102, 112.

²¹ Roth, Hoffner, and Michalowski, *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor*, p. 121, LH §196-205; p.174 MAL §A50.

²² Van De Mieroop, “Revenge, Assyrian Style,” 13; Mario Liverani, *Prestige and Interest: International Relations in the Near East ca. 1600-1100 BC*, vol. 1 (Padova: Sargon, 1990), 146.

²³ Edwin M. Good, “Capital Punishment and Its Alternatives in Ancient Near Eastern Law,” *Stanford Law Review*, 1967, 952; Raymond Westbrook, “Social Justice in the Ancient Near East,” in *Social Justice in the Ancient World* (eds. Kaikhosrow D. Irani and Morris Silver; Westport, Conn: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1995), 157.

²⁴ Roth, Hoffner, and Michalowski, *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor*, 105, LH §128-129; 158, MAL §A14.

²⁵ Yitzhaq Feder, “The Mechanics of Retribution in Hittite, Mesopotamian and Ancient Israelite Sources,” *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 10, no. 2 (2010): 150.

²⁶ Baruch A. Levine, “The Golden Rule in Ancient Israelite Scripture” in *The Golden Rule: The Ethics of Reciprocity in World Religions* (eds. Jacob Neusner and Bruce Chilton; London: Continuum International, 2008), 18-19.

²⁷ Cf. Isa 59:18, 66:6; Jer 51:6; Joel 4:4; Ps 137:8 for *šalem gemûl* and Joel 4:4,7; Obad 1:15; Pss 28:4, 94:2; Lam 3:64; II Chr 32:25 for *hēšīb gemûl*. Only Prov 12:14 and 19:17 feature these phrases in the context of a repayment of good.

²⁸ Shalom Goldman, *Wives of Women/The Wives of Men, The: Joseph and Potiphar’s Wife in Ancient Near Eastern, Jewish, and Islamic Folklore* (SUNY Press, 2012); Simon B. Parker, *The Pre-Biblical Narrative Tradition: Essays on*

Discussions of the vengeance of the gods have included acts of revenge for offenses against the gods' honor as well as revenge for offenses committed against a supplicant. These discussions are generally part of larger surveys, and none offers a close literary examination of the revenge narratives used as examples.²⁹ The past few decades have seen an increase in thematic studies of ANE literature, many of which are comparative and many of which cross generic, temporal, and geographic boundaries.³⁰ Such studies contribute to our understanding of where the ideologies of ancient cultures intersect and diverge. The current study aspires to this goal.

11.5 Selection of Narratives & Versions Used

The ANE material selected for this study is intended to be representative rather than comprehensive and is brought as a comparative foil. Narratives of personal revenge were chosen without regard to whether the perpetrator or wronged party was human or divine, but necessarily include an individual who was, or was perceived to be, wronged. Some of these narratives involve individuals who, on a mythopoetic level, represent natural forces or astral events. Some of the narratives are propaganda for the earthly government's policies. Regardless of its purpose, a narrative may be included in this study if the story is presented in the form of a personal revenge narrative.

Epic battles between divine or human armies are not included because they do not take the form of a personal revenge narrative, whereas two foiled revenge scenes in *Enuma Elish* and the Hittite *Illuyanka* are included despite their cosmogonic meanings because the narratives are structured around personal insults and family squabbles rather than open warfare between gods or men. Though Marduk, like Jephthah (Jud. 11-12), demands to rule in exchange for fighting the threatening Tiamat, this failed attempt at revenge is included because Tiamat was avenging her husband's murder, a personal offense. The Ba'al Cycle, on the other hand, is not included as it is

the Ugaritic Poems Keret and Aqhat (ed. Dennis Pardee; SBL Resources for Biblical Studies 24; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 129–34; Shirly Natan-Yulzary, "Contrast and Meaning in the Aqhat Story," VT 62, no. 3 (2012): 441; David Pearson Wright, Ritual in Narrative: The Dynamics of Feasting, Mourning, and Retaliation Rites in the Ugaritic Tale of Aqhat (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2001); Baruch Margalit, The Ugaritic Poem of Aqhat: Text, Translation, Commentary (Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 182; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1989), 491 ff.

²⁹ Walton, Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament, 138-145; 149-161; Van der Toorn, Sin and Sanction in Israel and Mesopotamia a Comparative Study, 4–5; 23; Albrektson, History and the Gods, 108.

³⁰ Israel Eph'al, The City Besieged: Siege and Its Manifestations in the Ancient Near East (Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 36; Leiden: Brill, 2009); Jonathan Stökl, Prophecy in the Ancient Near East: A Philological and Sociological Comparison (Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 56; Leiden: Brill, 2012); Daniel C. Snell, Flight and Freedom in the Ancient Near East (Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 8; Leiden: Brill, 2001); Vladimir Sazonov, "Some Remarks Concerning the Development of the Theology of War in Ancient Mesopotamia," in The Religious Aspects of War in the Ancient Near East, Greece, and Rome: Ancient Warfare Series (ed. Krzysztof Ulanowski; Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 84; 2016), 23–50; Hector Avalos, Illness and Health Care in the Ancient Near East: The Role of the Temple in Greece, Mesopotamia, and Israel (Harvard Semitic Monographs 54; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995); Michael D. Fiorello, The Physically Disabled in Ancient Israel According to the Old Testament and Ancient Near Eastern Sources (Bletchley, England: Authentic Media Ltd, 2014).

presented from the outset as a power struggle between the gods for dominance over the other gods.³¹ Likewise, the *Anzu* myth, which depicts a direct attempt to usurp Enlil's power by stealing the Tablets of Destiny³² is not included, nor are other ANE narratives of divine and human war, just as HB battle narratives were not included in the previous section despite a character's wish to avenge an affront by a rival king or nation.³³ The revenge of the *Tukilti-Ninurta Epic*, involving the revenge of the Assyrian king on Kashtiliashu IV of Babylon in the course of war, will not be examined here because it is primarily a political battle. Finally, because this work is a narrative analysis, the non-narrative royal treaties in which vows for revenge for their violation appear, and royal inscriptions that boast of revenge taken on an enemy kingdom, such as the autobiographical statue text of *Idrimi of Alalakh* or the *Apology of Hattushili III*, are omitted.³⁴

A few tales are not included in the current study due to literary categorizations, despite the fact that they contain elements of revenge. *The Poor Man of Nippur*, the story of a man who comically takes revenge after being cheated by the mayor of the town, has been left out due to its being a humorous satire.³⁵ The scene of the serpent and the eagle in the *Etana* narrative has not been included due to its classification as a fable which, like all fables, has a didactic, rather than a narrative, function.³⁶ The Sumerian *Tale of Fish and Bird* is a disputation and is thus omitted. Finally, the Egyptian *Tale of Two Brothers*, in which a brother is falsely accused of trying to seduce his sister-in-law for refusing her advances, is excluded because although the brothers learn the truth and the lying wife/sister-in-law is killed, the story does not focus on revenge but on the reconciliation of the brothers and the elder becoming the prince.³⁷ It is my hope to come back to these tales at a later date in order to analyze the revenge sections they contain and add them to what we have learned from the narrative examples that will be analyzed here.

³¹ Mark S. Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle: Volume I, Introduction with Text, Translation and Commentary of KTU 1.1-1.2* (VTSupp 55; Leiden: Brill, 1994).

³² Stephanie Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 203–27.

³³ See Charlie Trimm, *Fighting for the King and the Gods: A Survey of Warfare in the Ancient Near East* (Resources for Biblical Study 88; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017), 553–625; Sa-Moon Kang, *Divine War in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East* (Beiheft Zur Zeitschrift Für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 177; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1989), 11–110, for examples of divine war in ANE sources.

³⁴ Andrew Knapp, *Royal Apologetic in the Ancient Near East* (Writings from the Ancient World Supplement 4; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 119–59.

³⁵ Foster, *Before the Muses*, 931–36; Jerrold S. Cooper, "Structure, Humor, and Satire in the Poor Man of Nippur," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 27, no. 3 (1975): 163–74.

³⁶ Ronald J. Williams, "The Literary History of a Mesopotamian Fable," *Phoenix* 10, no. 2 (1956): 70–77; Foster, *Before the Muses*, 37–43, for an expansion of the functional literary types.

³⁷ James B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts: Relating to the Old Testament* (3d ed., Princeton: Princeton University Press 1969), 23–25; Alan Dundes, "Projective Inversion in the Ancient Egyptian Tale of Two Brothers," *Journal of American Folklore* 115, no. 457–458 (2002): 382–84. Regarding the possibility that she was attempting to take revenge for being scorned, the text explicitly states that she was afraid the brother-in-law would tell his brother about her proposition. Thus it seems she acted out of fear of reprisals rather than out of revenge. I have omitted the HB narrative of Potiphar's wife for the same reason.

The texts will be analyzed in translation. Because the study focuses on larger structural elements of the text, not vocabulary or grammar, the analysis should not be affected. However, it should be noted that using translations keeps the author one step further from the text than the scholars who translated the works. The standard academic translations are used, and wherever possible, alternate translations have been consulted. Because concrete events are the primary area of interest, any blurring of literary and stylistic qualities will not have an impact on the evaluation of the texts. Where a conflict between translations affects the analysis, relevant lexicons have been consulted, as noted. The initial footnote of each chapter indicates the primary and secondary translations used and provides a brief survey of the motifs addressed in the study of each narrative. Generally speaking, the extant scholarship has not examined the narratives as revenge tales.

11.6 Liminality

Revenge as a liminal event has been discussed in the general introduction and will continue to be examined with regard to ANE narratives. Attention to this aspect of revenge will be heightened by the inclusion of beings that are inherently liminal due to being part-human and part-divine, interactions between divine and mortal beings, and partnerships between humans and animals.³⁸ Furthermore, the liminal space will be increased to include the uninhabited areas of Earth, the Netherworld, and the heavens.³⁹ The liminal nature of females, especially of goddesses and of females in transition rites, will also be examined in this context.⁴⁰ Finally, the concepts of the Avenger as a liminal figure and of liminality as a temporary state will be examined regarding their applicability to the ANE corpus.

11.7 Honor Based Society, Allies, Council, and Praise

The honor/dignity dichotomy discussed in the general introduction is relevant again in the discussion of how the goal of revenge (and its success or failure) depends on the underlying principles of the culture in which it takes place. Neyrey defines honor as measuring an individual's self-worth according to the acknowledgement of others.⁴¹ Such values are indicated through subtle and overt differences in the morphology of these narratives. The appearance in the ANE narratives of the COUNCIL function, in which the potential Avenger seeks approval before commencing the revenge, the elaborate praise for the Avenger, and the use of Allies highlight this focus on the impact of the judgment of others. The ANE focus on honor will be seen to have a dramatic effect on the shape of the narratives.

³⁸ Rivkah Harris, "Inana-Ishtar as Paradox and a Coincidence of Opposites," *History of Religions* 30, no. 3 (1991): 272.

³⁹ Caitlin Barrett, "Was Dust Their Food and Clay Their Bread? Grave Goods, the Mesopotamian Afterlife, and the Liminal Role of Inana/Ishtar," *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 7, no. 1 (2007): 21.

⁴⁰ John Gray, *The Legacy of Canaan: The Ras Shamra Texts and Their Relevance to the Old Testament* (VTSupp 5; Leiden: Brill, 1965), 69, nt. 6, 125.

⁴¹ Jerome H. Neyrey, *Honor and Shame in the Gospel of Matthew* (Loiseville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 15.

Chapter 12

12.0 *Enuma Elish*¹

Enuma Elish, the Babylonian creation epic recovered from the library of Ashurbanipal at Nineveh, has been compared to Genesis 1 and other ancient creation narratives. Foster points out, however, that the real function of the myth is to depict the installation of Marduk as the undisputed head of the pantheon.² This study, therefore, will approach the narrative not as a creation myth but as a narrative containing attempted acts of vengeance. The manner in which these acts are portrayed sheds light on Babylonian attitudes toward revenge, particularly with regard to royalty.

Table 22 Morphology - *Enuma Elish*

FUNCTION	SOURCE	ACTION
EPISODE I		
WRONG	I,21-24	Younger gods disturb Apsu & Tiamat.
REACTION TO WRONG	I,25-26 I, 27-28	Apsu does not act. Tiamat is silent. Tiamat does not wish to destroy them.
COUNCIL	I, 29-46	Apsu consults Mummu. Tiamat is distressed by Apsu's desire to destroy the gods.
INCITEMENT	I, 47-50 I, 51-54	Mummu incites Apsu to avenge the wrong. Mummu & Apsu celebrate the plan for the revenge.
REACTION TO (PROPOSED) REVENGE	I,55-58	The gods learn of Apsu's plan. The gods are frantic, fall silent.
REVENGE FOILED	I, 59-72	Ea kills Apsu and imprisons Mummu.

¹ Translations are taken from Wilfred G. Lambert, *Babylonian Creation Myths* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2013) 45–134 unless otherwise noted. All references may be found in Appendix 1. *Enuma Elish* has been widely studied as a creation account. Representatives of this literature include Richard J. Clifford, *Creation Accounts in the Ancient Near East and in the Bible* (CBQ Monograph Series 26; Washington DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1994); Lambert, *Babylonian Creation Myths*, 2013; Stephen Scully, “The Theogony and *Enuma Elish*: City-State Creation Myths,” in *Cultural Contact and Appropriation in the Axial-Age Mediterranean World* (eds. Baruch Halpren, and Kenneth Sacks; Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 86; Leiden: Brill, 2017), 38–59; For analysis as work of literature, see Benjamin R. Foster, “*Enuma Elish* as a Work of Literature,” *Journal of the Canadian Society for Mesopotamian Studies* 7 (2012): 19–23; Feminist studies include: Zairong Xiang, “Below Either/Or: Rereading Femininity and Monstrosity Inside *Enuma Elish*,” *Feminist Theology* 26, no. 2 (2018): 115–32; Karen Sonik, “Gender Matters in *Enuma Elish*,” in *In the Wake of Tikva Frymer-Kensky* (eds. Steven Holloway, JoAnn Scurlock, and Richard H. Beal; Gorgias Precis Portfolios 4; Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2009), 85–101; Some of the many HB creation/cosmogony comparisons include: Bruce K. Waltke, “The Creation Account in Genesis 1: 1-3,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 132, no. 526 (1975): 327–42; Gerhard F. Hasel, “The Significance of the Cosmology in Genesis 1 in Relation to Ancient Near Eastern Parallels,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies (AUSS)* 10, no. 1 (1972): 1; Susan Niditch, *Chaos to Cosmos: Studies in Biblical Patterns of Creation* (Scholars Press Studies in the Humanities Series 6; Chico: Scholars Press, 1985); Rebecca L. Kirk, “Genesis 1: 1-2: 3 and *Enuma Elish*: Ideological Warfare Between Judah and Babylon” (M.A. thesis, George Fox University, 2005); Babatunde A. Ogunlana, “Inspiration and the Relationship between Genesis 1: 1-2: 4a and *Enuma Elish*,” *Baptist Theological Seminary Kaduna Insight* 13 (2016): 87–105. None of these studies addresses the narratives of revenge in this work.

² Benjamin R. Foster, “Epic of Creation,” in *The Context of Scripture: Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World I* (ed. William W. Hallo; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 390–91; Wilfred G. Lambert, *Babylonian Creation Myths* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 147, comments that the climax of the epic is, in fact, the list of Marduk's fifty names and not his triumph over Tiamat.

AFTERMATH	I, 73-78	Ea rests with Damkina.
EPISODE II		
Initial Scene	I, 79-104	Marduk is born and reared.
WRONG	I, 105-108	Marduk taunts Tiamat.
REACTION TO WRONG	I, 109	Tiamat is frantic.
COUNCIL	I, 110-124	The gods plot what to say to Tiamat and convince her to avenge the death of Apsu as well as the current offense.
ACQUISITION OF ALLY	I,125-II, 3	Tiamat creates an army, with Qingu at its head.
REACTION TO (PROPOSED) REVENGE	II, 4 II, 5-6	Ea learns of the plot. Ea is silent.
COUNCIL	II, 7-70	Ea takes counsel with Anshar.
COUNTERPLAN	II, 71-126 II, 127-162	Ea and then Anu attempt unsuccessfully to appease Tiamat. The gods are afraid. Marduk volunteers if his demands are met.
COUNCIL	III,1-IV, 28	The gods agree to king Marduk in return for his victory against Tiamat.
COUNTERPLAN	IV, 29-34	The gods arm Marduk and send him to defeat Tiamat and her army.
REVENGE FOILED	IV, 35-122	Marduk destroys Tiamat and binds her army.
AFTERMATH	IV, 123-V, 76 V, 77-VII	Marduk creates, using Tiamat's corpse and the remains of her army. Coronation of Marduk, Babylon is capital, creation of mankind, praise of Marduk.

12.1 *Establishing the Morphology*

Both episodes as outlined above involve a perceived WRONG that prompts an attempted REVENGE ACT, which is subsequently discovered and thwarted.

12.1.1 *Episode I*

The episode begins with the Anunnaki's raucous behavior, which disturbs their parents, Apsu and Tiamat (I, 21-24). Jacobsen asserts that the younger gods did not intend to provoke their elders, but that Apsu and Tiamat consistently initiate aggression.³ However, Batto has recently argued for the significance in the ancient Near East of disturbing a god's sleep. Rest is a "divine prerogative," and sleep is seen as a symbol of divine rule.⁴ Disturbing a god's sleep is an act of rebellion that challenges the god's authority and constitutes a WRONG.⁵ Thus the parent gods,

³ Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Religion* (Yale Paperbounds 326; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 187.

⁴ Bernard F. Batto, "The Sleeping God: An Ancient Near Eastern Motif of Divine Sovereignty," *Biblica*, 68, no. 2 1987, 155-56.

⁵ Bernard Frank Batto, *Slaying the Dragon: Mythmaking in the Biblical Tradition* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 34.

Apsu and Tiamat, do not exaggerate or imagine the WRONG; the behavior of their offspring is a genuine affront to the parents' status. The parents have a different REACTIONS TO THE WRONG: Apsu is apparently not capable (I, 25), and Tiamat is not willing (I, 26-28), to punish the rebellious gods to whom they gave life.⁶ Both parents are silent, signifying the gravity of the offense that has been perpetrated.⁷ Apsu and Tiamat are in a position that pits their role as gods against their role as parents. At this point, Tiamat will not consider an assault, but in Episode 2, she is goaded into attacking her own offspring.

Unsatisfied with the state of affairs, Apsu seeks COUNCIL with Mummu, his trusted advisor, in the hopes that the latter will support him as he makes his case before Tiamat. In the meeting, however, Mummu remains silent (I, 29-40). Only after Tiamat rejects Apsu's suggestion of filicide (I, 41-46) does Mummu speak, apparently in private conversation with Apsu, inciting vengeance (I, 47-50). Without Mummu's encouragement, Apsu may not have taken any action.⁸ Accepting ill-considered counsel from an advisor can have devastating consequences, as Apsu will soon learn.

Once Mummu's advice has been offered and accepted, Apsu and Mummu delay the implementation of their PLAN for vengeance (I, 51-54), the details of which do not appear in the text. Instead, a celebration of the intended vengeance, reflecting a misplaced sense of confidence in the plan's success, is described. When the anticipated success is depicted, it is not entirely clear who is kissing whom:

53 Mummu put his arms around Apsu's neck,
54 He sat on his knees kissing him.⁹

Although the kiss could be an expression of friendship, kissing knees or feet was often done to demonstrate submission; here, it is probable that Mummu is kissing Apsu's knees or feet to show fealty.¹⁰ The emotive interlude as a REACTION TO THE (PROPOSED) REVENGE, suggests that Apsu's honor and joy are prioritized over completing the task. Immediate action may not have prevented the gods' discovery of the PLAN, but devoting time to celebrate honor rather than initiating the vengeance enables Ea, one of the offspring who would have been destroyed in the attack, to thwart the PLAN. Moreover, the delay underscores the goal of the attempted vengeance: to reestablish Apsu's honor. This reflects poorly on the would-be Avenger.

⁶ Additional factors include the personal nature of revenge as well as a lack of proportionality or limits. See the introduction for a fuller discussion of this topic.

⁷ Marjo Christina Annette Korpel and Johannes C. de Moor, *The Silent God* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 238.

⁸ Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness*, 171–73.

⁹ Pritchard, *ANET*, 61, nt. 18.

¹⁰ David Sperling, "Genesis 41:40: A New Interpretation," *JANES* 10, no. 1 (1978): 114, nt. 12; Myer I. Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication in the Ancient Near East* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1980), 337.

When Apsu and Mummu are incapacitated through a magic spell, Ea humiliates and emasculates Apsu, his great-grandfather (I, 55-72). Apsu is stripped of his *riksu*, his *agû* and his *melammu* (I, 67-68), a punishment meant to render him harmless. Stripping prisoners to demonstrate their submission is well-documented in ancient Near Eastern sources.¹¹ The removal of the *agû* (crown) represents the removal of power. *Riksu* is alternately translated as “belt or band”¹² and “sinew.”¹³ As an item of clothing, its removal corresponds to removing a crown to dishonor and neutralize the fallen deity. If, as Lambert claims, *riksu* means a body part, then removing it may correspond with the dismemberment of Tiamat in the next episode, adding an element of physical pain and disfigurement to the punishment, and transforming the being’s “active physical form” back to the “original passive state.”¹⁴ In either case, Ea’s goal is not only to eliminate the threat that Apsu’s plot posed to the Anunnaki, but to make an example of those who threaten revenge for personal gain. Those who engage in honor-seeking behavior that does not confer benefit to others will have their own honor diminished.¹⁵

The *agû* and the *risku* are removed or torn from Apsu; their fate is not reported. The *melammu*, defined as “radiance, a supernatural awe-inspiring sheen inherent in things divine and royal,”¹⁶ however, is passed to Ea. This transfer is significant on two levels. First, it symbolizes the final debasement of Apsu before his death. No homage is paid to a god who has been stripped of his radiance, nor can the god inspire awe, respect, or obeisance. Second, having the *melammu* in Ea’s possession increases his cosmic power, enabling him to dethrone a god more ancient than he.¹⁷

Apsu is bound and killed (I, 69), and Mummu is bound and held by a nose-rope (I, 70,72). Because Ea’s incantation had caused Apsu and Mummu to doze, Ea could have killed Apsu without first binding him. Likewise, Mummu could have been locked up without the shame of being led by a nose-rope like prisoners of war and slaves were led to demonstrate their subjugation.¹⁸ The descriptions of Ea’s treatment of Apsu, the would-be Avenger of his own honor, prove that Ea is

¹¹ Karen Sonik, “Bad King, False King, True King: Apsu and His Heirs,” *JAOS* 128, no. 4 (2008): 740–41.

¹² Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, 235; Pritchard, ANET, 68.

¹³ Lambert, *Babylonian Creation Myths*, 2013, 55. See *CAD R*, *risku*, 347-355, a variety of meanings is attested.

¹⁴ Sonik, “Bad King, False King, True King,” 738, nt. 6.

¹⁵ See below in the discussion of REVENGE FOILED.

¹⁶ *CAD M*, part II, 10-12.

¹⁷ Mehmet-Ali Ataç, “The Melammu as Divine Epiphany and Usurped Entity,” in *Ancient Near Eastern Art in Context: Studies in Honor of Irene J. Winter by Her Students* (eds. Jack Cheng, and Marian H. Feldman; Culture and History in the Ancient Near East 26; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 307; A. Leo Oppenheim, “Akkadian Pul (u) ḥ (t) u and Melammu,” *JAOS*, 63, no. 1 (1943), 31.

¹⁸ William W. Hallo, “Sumerian History in Pictures: ‘A New Look at the Stele of the Flying Angels,’” in *An Experienced Scribe Who Neglects Nothing”: Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honor of Jacob Klein* (eds. Jacob Klein and Yitzhak Sefati; Bethesda: University Press of Maryland, 2005), 151–53; John Nicholas Reid, “Runaways and Fugitive-Catchers during the Third Dynasty of Ur,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 58, no. 4 (2015): 592–93; Tallay Ornan, “Who Is Holding the Lead Rope? The Relief of the Broken Obelisk,” *Iraq* 69 (2007): 67–69.

worthy to receive the prestige that was once Apsu's. Ea is adept at casting spells and swift to mete out just punishment. Establishing his new abode on Apsu's remains (I, 71) sends a clear message to all that Ea has triumphed over Apsu.

The episode closes with Ea and his wife Damkina enjoying the privileged rest of the gods (I, 73-78). The AFTERMATH of the failed REVENGE demonstrates that Ea's stability will not be shaken by Apsu's attempted rebellion. Apsu's boasting and overconfidence stand in stark contrast to Ea's silent, solitary action. Not only was the REVENGE foiled, but the foiler enjoyed the serenity that had been so desired by the would-be avenger. Unlike Apsu, Ea did not seek revenge, honor, or any other benefit. He acted to protect the gods, not his own interests.

12.1.2 Episode II

If Episode I can be titled "The Thwarting of Apsu by Ea," then its longer counterpart, Episode II, is "The Thwarting of Tiamat by Marduk." Because establishing Marduk as the preeminent deity is the central purpose of the narrative, a lengthy description of Marduk's birth and rise to prominence is included as a preface (I, 79-108). Physically perfect, with immense strength and superlative abilities his senses, Marduk has been granted the divine aura (*melammu*) and the divine dread (*pul(u)ḥ(t)u*) (I, 103-104).¹⁹ His dotting grandfather, Anu, gives him the winds to play with as a symbol of his dominance (I, 105-108). Wind was considered the breath of the gods, so when Marduk uses the winds to taunt Tiamat, he is not simply disturbing her. Marduk's act, like the young gods disturbing their parents' sleep, is a WRONG, a direct affront to Tiamat's power.²⁰ Tiamat's REACTION TO THE WRONG is uncontrolled agitation that causes her to act without considering the consequences. Her emotional reaction, *ú-dal-làḥ*,²¹ corresponds with the response of the young gods (her offspring) response to Apsu's threat (I, 57, 109).²²

The young gods are as distressed by Marduk's behavior as Tiamat, and the WRONG perpetrated by Marduk evokes the previous WRONG perpetrated by the young gods on Apsu:

109 Tiāmat was confounded; day and night she was frantic.
110 The gods²³ took no rest, they
111 In their minds they plotted evil,
112 And addressed their mother Tiāmat,
113 "When Apsu, your spouse, was killed,
114 You did not go at his side, but sat quietly.

¹⁹ CAD P, 505-509. Other possible meanings include awesomeness, fearsomeness, reverence and respect. Thus the narrative prefaces any action with this weighted description of Marduk, the soon to be savior.

²⁰ Eckhard Unger, "Die Offenbarung Der Gottheit Durch Den Windhauch," *Forschungen Und Fortschritte* 5 (1929): 270-71.

²¹ Philippe Talon, *The Standard Babylonian Creation Myth: Enūma Eliš*, vol. 4, State Archives of Assyria Cuneiform Texts (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2005), 37, line 109.

²² CAD, D, p.43-46, *dalāḥu*. Note especially the meaning "to roil (water) and its special significance in the case of Apsu and Tiamat, gods who are identified with the sweet and salt waters.

²³ Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness*, 173. These gods are the children of Tiamat and Apsu, who "for some reason or other sided with Tiamat."

115 The four dreadful winds have been fashioned
 116 To throw you into confusion, and we cannot sleep.
 117 You gave no thought to Apsu, your spouse,
 118 Nor to Mummu, who is a prisoner. Now you sit alone.
 119 Henceforth you will be in frantic consternation!
 120 And as for us, who cannot rest, you do not love us!
 121 Consider our burden, our eyes are hollow.
 122 Break the immovable yoke that we may sleep.
 123 Make battle, avenge them!
 124 [. . .] reduce to nothingness!”

The young gods are not spontaneously giving vent to their suffering. Rather, they have selected their words to elicit a particular response: Tiamat should end Marduk’s insurgency. This incitement to vengeance is not described in neutral terms, but is labeled *le-mut-ta*, evil, assigning a negative valence to their behavior. Apsu’s unavenged murder is mentioned twice (I, 113,117), as are Mummu’s imprisonment and Tiamat’s isolation (I,118). The young gods’ disrupted sleep and consequent exhaustion is reiterated four times in seven lines and recalls Apsu’s attempted revenge for the same offense. The argument reaches a climax with the demand that Tiamat avenge the collection of wrongs, some of which extend back to the first episode (I, 123-124). The fact that the target of the revenge is Marduk, son of Ea, the Avenger of Apsu, reinforces the desire for his elimination.

Tiamat responds that she will wreak vengeance, but she will not do it alone. The PLAN FOR REVENGE requires an army of allies, which she proceeds to create (I, 125-II, 3). The sleep-deprived allies of Tiamat, having enlisted the Anunnaki, are willing to forgo sleep for their cause (I, 130), plotting day and night to destroy Marduk and his allies, as well as Marduk’s ancestors, Ea, Anu, and Anšar (often referred to as the elder gods, reflecting their importance rather than their age). Marduk’s ancestors had appointed Marduk to foil Tiamat’s revenge and had given him the winds that had disturbed the sleep of Tiamat and her allies. Creating weapons and birthing monsters, Tiamat is terrifyingly focused.²⁴ She imbues her creations with the divine aura, *melammu*, and the divine dread, *pul(u)ḥ(t)u*, to make them worthy Avengers, while Qingu, her newly appointed general, receives the Tablet of Destinies to secure his position of power (I, 148-158).

The PLAN is discovered, and Ea’s REACTION is fearful silence in the face of the impending threat from Tiamat and her army (II, 4-7). In contrast to Tiamat and her unbridled rage, Ea regains his composure, seeking COUNCIL from his father, Anšar (II, 8-48). Anšar, distressed by the threat, places the blame and the responsibility for remedy on Ea’s shoulders (II, 49-56). With his serene manner and logical arguments, Ea restores Anšar to a calmer state, accepts the mission to

²⁴ This flurry of activity is in direct opposition to the passivity of Tiamat in her post-battle state. See Tikva Simone Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses: Women, Culture, and the Biblical Transformation of Pagan Myth* (New York: Free Press, 1992), 75.

placate Tiamat, and formulates a COUNTERPLAN (II, 57-80). Forced to turn back in the face of Tiamat's power, Ea encourages Anšar to persevere and to send someone else to confront her (II, 81-94). Anu is sent, meets the same fate as Ea, and offers the same advice (II, 95-118). Tiamat's PLAN to avenge the WRONG of Marduk's disturbance (as well as the destruction of Apsu in Episode 1) causes Ea, Anu, Anšar, and the assembled gods to fall silent in terror. While Anšar is silent, the Igigi and Anunnaki wait in the assembly.²⁵

Though Marduk's disturbance has precipitated the rebellion, the Council does not call on him to battle Tiamat. Nevertheless, Ea counsels Marduk privately to volunteer his services (II, 129-135), after which Marduk receives the commission from a relieved Anšar and names his price: absolute authority of the pantheon upon returning victorious from battle (II, 136-162).²⁶ A second COUNTERPLAN, the appointment of Marduk, is sent to the COUNCIL. Anšar directs Kaka, his vizier, to present the situation to Laḫmu and Laḫamu (III, 1-124), who in turn present it to the COUNCIL; unlike the private meeting between Apsu and Mummu, this is a true *puḫru* (III, 132).²⁷ The COUNCIL agrees to the COUNTERPLAN, and after Marduk passes a short test, their former cries (III, 125-126) turn to rejoicing (IV, 28). Festivities before victory recall the premature joy of Apsu and Mummu (I, 51-54), but this time the rejoicing celebrates the new king and his subjects' confidence in him as he goes out to battle. The rejoicing, in any case, proves warranted this time. Marduk is given weapons (IV, 29-34) and prepares himself (IV, 35-66) for battle. After initially faltering (IV, 67-74), he attacks Tiamat, first with a scathing indictment that serves as her verdict in an approximation of a trial in which Marduk is prosecutor, jury, and judge (IV, 75-86). In doing so, he provokes the goddess to do battle herself rather than send the army she has prepared, and bolsters his own resolve against the terrifying monster by emphasizing Tiamat's guilt and the injustice that must be corrected (IV, 127).²⁸

²⁵ Anunnaki here refers to the gods of the assembly, while the Igigi refer to the gods who labor for the Anunnaki. These groups are often treated as synonymous. Both are allies of Marduk. Lambert, *Babylonian Creation Myths*, 258–60.

²⁶ The assumption here is that in the aftermath of the decisive battle, all remaining gods, regardless of previous alliances, will join in declaring Marduk's supreme dominion.

²⁷ Thorkild Jacobsen, "Primitive Democracy in Ancient Mesopotamia," *JNES* 2, no. 3 (1943): 165; Vitali Bartash, "Puhru: Assembly as a Political Institution in Enūma Eliš (Preliminary Study)," in *Language in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the 53e Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale* (ed. L. Kogan et al.; University Park, Penn.: Penn State University Press, 2010), 1101.

²⁸ Andreas Johandi, "Public Speaking in Ancient Mesopotamia: Speeches before Earthly and Divine Battles," in *When Gods Spoke: Researches on Religious Phenomena and Artefacts. Studies in honor of Tarmo Kulmar* (ed. Peeter Espak, Mart Laanemets, and Vladimir Sazonov; Tartu, Estonia: University of Tartu Press; 2015), 99–100. discusses the role of public speaking before battle scenes in the ancient Near East. Here Marduk is persuading himself to "fight fearlessly and valiantly" as well as increasing his chances on the battlefield. Though the desired outcome was capitulation rather than battle, we see a similar form of psychological warfare attempted by Rabshakeh in II Kgs 18:17-37. This kind of "trash talk" was common in ANE battle. Lamb, "I Will Strike You down and Cut off Your Head"(I Samuel 17)," 114–25.

Tiamat battles with Marduk but is defeated; her army is taken captive. Having FOILED the REVENGE, Marduk is not satisfied with merely removing the threat and punishing the offender. The AFTERMATH sees the beginning of Marduk's period as creator, using Tiamat's corpse as the primordial cosmic matter that will fashion a new order from the old, much as Apsu's corpse comprised the foundation of Ea's palace. In a show of deference to the elder generation despite his absolute authority, Marduk presents Anu with the Tablet of Destinies that Tiamat had given to Qingu (V, 69-70).²⁹ Once the world is formed and Babylon built, another divine council is called in order to praise Marduk and proclaim him supreme ruler.

12.2 *Analysis and HB Comparisons*

This analysis will examine the narrative on a function-by-function basis, comparing the two episodes and Tiamat's shifting role in them. The form and functions of the two narratives will be compared and contrasted to those of the HB revenge narratives.

12.2.1 *WRONG and REACTIONS TO WRONG*

The revenge narratives in *Enuma Elish* depict Apsu and Tiamat trying to balance their comfort and prestige as elder gods against their parental responsibilities, which require relinquishing comfort and prestige for the sake of society. Parents who destroy their offspring to secure their own power reap condemnation and humiliation, not respect or honor. In the HB, Athaliah meets this fate: She is led to her death through the "horses' entrance" while the people celebrate her downfall and tranquility spreads over the land (II Kgs 11:16, 20). Tiamat sustains a similar outcome and legacy after she shifts from protecting her offspring in the first episode to attacking them in the second.

In the second episode, Tiamat chooses one group of offspring at the expense of another. This surpasses the flawed parenting seen in HB narratives in which a parent's inaction leads to vengeance between siblings. Jacob appears oblivious to the animosity between the brothers when he puts Joseph into harm's way (Genesis 37), as does David when he accedes to Absalom's request that Amnon attend his sheep-shearing festival (II Samuel 13). Such "sins of omission" do not compare to Tiamat's siding with one group of offspring against the other in a cosmic war.

An HB foil to Tiamat is found in the wise woman of Tekoa who is brought by Joab to argue a fictitious case in front of King David. Joab's purpose in bringing her is to persuade the king to allow Absalom (exiled for having killed his brother Amnon to avenge the rape of his sister, Tamar) to return to the palace. On Joab's instructions, the woman explains that she had two sons, one of whom killed the other. The next-of-kin's demand for blood vengeance would leave the woman bereft of both her sons, so she pleads with the king for amnesty for the slayer. When the king

²⁹ Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness*, 188.

agrees, the ruse is revealed (II Samuel 14). David believes the wise woman's story because the maternal sensibilities it portrays are understood to be universal.³⁰ No mother can bear to have her son's murder avenged if it will cause the death of her remaining son, a point noted by Kozlova, who cites HB use of maternal grief over the loss of a child as the paradigm for all travail and woe.³¹ The cases of Athaliah and Tiamat are anathema to this presumably natural instinct.

12.2.2 REACTION TO THE WRONG

In her REACTION to the two WRONGS, Tiamat is both the creator and destroyer of all things.³² Her maternal sensibilities are evident in the first episode when she rejects Apsu's suggestion to avenge the WRONG by killing their noisy offspring.³³ Indeed, it is not until Tiamat's offspring accuse her of lacking motherly instincts that she attempts to avenge Apsu's death at the hands of Ea (I, 120-122).³⁴ Possessed of a complex character, Tiamat is demonized here in order to legitimize her humiliation and destruction after she is goaded into single combat with Marduk.³⁵ Assessments that fail to account for the intricacies of motive and behavior are consistent with Kramer's assertion regarding the Sumerians that "there [is no] attempt at characterization and psychological delineation; the gods and heroes of the Sumerian narratives tend to be broad types rather than recognizable flesh-and-blood individuals."³⁶ Accordingly, the ANE narrative ignores Tiamat's earlier deeds, which facilitates the complete vilification of the goddess in the second episode. This treatment contrasts with the manner in which biblical characters are portrayed. According to Auerbach, they "are not so entirely immersed in [the] present that they do not remain continually conscious of what has happened to them earlier and elsewhere; their thoughts and feelings have more layers, are more entangled..."³⁷

The ethical valence of female avengers in ANE literature is not predetermined. Nonetheless, gender proves a convenient prop to discredit the validity of a revenge act or, in the case of Tiamat, to legitimize the thwarting of an attempted revenge.³⁸ Compared to Ea, Tiamat does not display the calm and stability associated with many leaders. Tiamat creates war in order to establish peace; she plots evil, harbors hatred, and possesses savage fury (II, 3, 11-12). Her jarred nerves (I, 23), her

³⁰ Alter, *The David Story*, 276.

³¹ Ekaterina E. Kozlova, *Maternal Grief in the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford Theology and Religion Monographs; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 36–40.

³² Jordan B. Peterson, *Maps of Meaning: The Architecture of Belief* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 104.

³³ Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, 75.

³⁴ Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness*, 187.

³⁵ Sonik, "Gender Matters in Enma Elis," 94; Foster, "Enuma Elish as a Work of Literature," 2012, 20–21.

³⁶ Samuel Noah Kramer, *The Sumerians: Their History, Culture, and Character* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 171.

³⁷ Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature-New and Expanded Edition* (ed. Edward W. Said; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 12.

³⁸ Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, 118, discusses how societal conceptions of women are cemented by the portrayal of goddesses in the sacred literature of ancient cultures.

outburst at Apsu's suggestion (I, 41-45), her frenzied reaction to Marduk's stirring up of the winds, and her raging nature are uncondusive to ruling (III, 21). Various councils mention her weakness as a woman to assure all that her defeat is a foregone conclusion (II, 92, 116, 144). Marduk also employs this claim in his efforts to enrage her. As an unfaithful wife and unfeeling mother, she has failed in her feminine roles. Having instigated war, she is termed aggressive, arrogant, pitiless, and insane (IV, 79-82). Tiamat's first brood consisted of gods and goddesses, but her second was an army of grotesque monsters.

In short, although an abundance of evidence suggests that Tiamat is unfit to rule, it is her failures in the feminine dimensions that condemn her. On a mythic level, *Enuma Elish* celebrates the triumph of order over chaos, with a female deity representing the forces of chaos.³⁹ The goddess is shown to lack the requisite strength, reason, and justice to prevail. Although vengeance is not perforce a masculine task, women who attempt it risk being transmuted into monsters.

Similarly, female avengers in the HB narratives earn unequivocally harsh and negative judgments, unlike the nuanced outcomes and assessments of male avengers. In Jezebel's revenge against Naboth for not selling his field to her husband, Ahab (I Kings 21), the queen is calm and controlled, not subject to the volatile changes seen in Tiamat. When Ahab returns, disconsolate, from his unsuccessful negotiation with Naboth, Jezebel shows concern for her husband: "Why are you so depressed that you will not eat?" (I Kgs 21:5). Yet her question begins with the form **וַתִּדְבֹר** אֵלָיו rather than **וַתֹּאמֶר**. Meier notes that the use of *dbr* in direct discourse is unusual in this narrative (clustering in vv. 5-6, 19), and when combined with the fact that Jezebel speaks אֵלָיו, at him, rather than to him, suggests a lack of intimacy. Significantly, Potifar's wife addresses her husband with **וַתִּדְבֹר** אֵלָיו when she instructs him to expel Joseph from their household. In fact, Jezebel speaks to her husband in the same manner that Ahab speaks to Naboth (v. 2). On the other hand, when Jezebel speaks about the power she will place in her husband's hands, her speech begins **וַתֹּאמֶר** אֵלָיו (v. 7), indicating that she is more concerned about consolidating power than relieving her husband's state of mind.⁴⁰

Jezebel's speech is unusual for a woman in that it lacks marks of female emotions. Hare notes Jezebel's use of consecutive *wayiqtol* verbs (with Ahab and with the elders of Jezreel), as well as the absence of the particle **וַ**.⁴¹ Her use of **אני** for the first person pronoun instead of **אנכי** (v.

³⁹ Joan O'Brien and Wilfred Major, *In the Beginning: Creation Myths from Ancient Mesopotamia, Israel and Greece* (Aids for the study of religion series, 11; Atlanta: Scholars, 1982), 14.

⁴⁰ Samuel A. Meier, *Speaking of Speaking: Marking Direct Discourse in the Hebrew Bible* (VTSupp 46 Leiden: Brill, 1992), 145-47; Cynthia L. Miller, *The Representation of Speech in Biblical Hebrew Narrative: A Linguistic Analysis* (ed. Peter Machinist; Harvard Semitic Museum Publications 55; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 373-85.

⁴¹ Laura Hare, "Gendered Speech: A Sociolinguistic Study of Conversations between Men and Women in Biblical Narrative" (PhD Thesis, University of Toronto, 2018), 262-63.

7) emphasizes her status and directs attention to her action versus Ahab's inaction.⁴² She remains cool and calculated up to the moment of her own death (II Kgs 9:30-31). Although Jezebel's behavior may reflect desirable traits for a leader, they are not desirable traits for a female. Ultimately she is judged as unfit to rule and is held responsible for her own fate.

Athaliah's actions closely correspond to Tiamat's, although Athaliah is engaged in a coup, not an act of revenge. Without mentioning any speech or hesitation on Athaliah's part, the text states that she destroys her own descendants (II Kgs 11:1). Her ability to instill sufficient awe among her inner circle to attain and keep the throne for six years goes unmentioned: Only when the priests coronate the true heir to the throne is Athaliah deserted. In an attempt to rally her supporters, she tears her clothes and screams "Treason! Treason!" (11:14),⁴³ but the juxtaposition of her cries to the priest's deliberate commands colors her, like Tiamat, as a formerly powerful woman who has lost control politically and emotionally. Her legacy, like Tiamat's, reflects how the narrative shifts attention away from her power. The focus of the story becomes the House of God in which young Joash was hidden and which represents the stability of society. Even Saul, whose lack of emotional control has many witnesses (e.g., I Sam 19:10, 22:8, 16-18), receives a far more sympathetic treatment than the female Avengers. Despite Saul's vendetta against David, whom he repeatedly calls his son (I Sam 24:16; 26:17, 21), his attempts to kill his biological son and heir Jonathan for maintaining an alliance with David (20:33), and his slaughter of the priests at Nob (v. 22), he is mourned by Samuel (15:34-16:1), and avenged and eulogized by David (II Sam 1:13-27).⁴⁴ In spite of his obsession with revenge, Saul

moves from initial success to the final dissolution of his kingship and death, only then granting him renewed stature... In clearly and boldly facing Israel's certain defeat on Mt Gilboa and his own death the fallen Saul attains new stature, and this is underscored by the final honors bestowed upon him in his burial by the men of Jabesh-gilead... In death Saul attains a stature that escaped him in life.⁴⁵

Such a legacy is not granted to female Avengers; rather, they are condemned for their actions and for betraying their womanly nature.

Utilizing the function REACTION TO THE WRONG to identify how an attempted revenge is discredited, *Enuma Elish* presents the trope it shares with the HB, "female avenger as monstrous being," but this is unusual in ANE revenge tales, most of which, like *Aqhat* and *Illuyanka*, do not

⁴² Ernest J. Revell, "The Two Forms of First Person Singular Pronoun in Biblical Hebrew: Redundancy or Expressive Contrast?," *JSS* 40, no. 2 (1995): 202-6.

⁴³ Patricia Dutcher-Walls, *Narrative Art, Political Rhetoric: The Case of Athaliah and Joash* (JSOTSup 209; Sheffield:Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 71-80, details the narrative and associational arguments which condemn Athaliah.

⁴⁴ It should be noted that David does not have a moral problem with avenging wrongs, as is seen from his commands to Solomon on his deathbed regarding his unfinished business (I Kgs 2:1-9).

⁴⁵ W. Lee Humphreys, "The Tragedy of King Saul: A Study of the Structure of 1 Samuel 9-31," *JSOT* 3, no. 6 (1978): 19-24.

villainize the female avenger. Tiamat's dual nature is described by Sonik as a "dutiful and committed wife" and "feminine mother goddess" who becomes a vengeful queen who "takes the mantle of monster." She is villainized as the female orchestrator of the revenge. Ultimately, Tiamat cannot hold both roles at once, and as an avenging goddess, she wreaks more damage than any mortal HB Avenger.⁴⁶

12.2.3 ACQUISITION OF ALLIES

Revenge is discouraged by laws and social custom in HB narratives; ANE narratives reflect more diverse attitudes, including the sanctioning of certain features of vengeance such as the reliance on Allies. In ANE literature, vengeance is not a solitary endeavor, and the ACQUISITION OF ALLIES is more common than in HB revenge narratives. Whether the Ally is preexistent, like Mummu, or specifically acquired or created for the task, as in the creation of Qingu and his army in *Enuma Elish's* second episode, ANE revenge is often accomplished (or fails to be accomplished) because of essential Allies.

12.2.4 COUNCIL

Behavioral ethicists have pointed to the dissonance that arises within individuals when their desire to see themselves as moral conflicts with their desire to profit from unethical behavior. Anticipating this dissonance can lead an offender to create "pre-violation justifications" to mitigate the damage to the moral self that the act will cause.⁴⁷ In the ancient Near East, the assembly of the gods was the recognized authority that conferred kingship and possessed power over life and death.⁴⁸ An unauthorized power grab involving vengeance would therefore be accompanied by self-justification, often before a council, to bestow a sense of legitimacy on the act.

The *Enuma Elish* narrative is replete with instances of advice being offered and sought even by gods high in the pantheon on both an informal, individual basis as well as through the official convening of the divine council (*puhru*). Apsu consults with Mummu to develop a plan of action to punish the unruly Anunnaki and restore calm to his world. He values Mummu's opinion above the objections of his spouse, Tiamat, thereby setting himself against spouse and offspring (I, 29-32; 47-54). This contrasts with Ea's respect for Anšar, which does not waver despite Ea's being "discerning, wise, of robust strength...stronger than...Anšar" (I, 17-20). Ea's interactions with Anšar also uphold the societal value of respecting those who came before you, unlike the behavior

⁴⁶ Sonik, *Gender Matters*, 92-96.

⁴⁷ Rachel Barkan, Shahar Ayal, and Dan Ariely, "Ethical Dissonance, Justifications, and Moral Behavior," *Current Opinion in Psychology* 6 (2015): 159; Shaul Shalvi et al., "Self-Serving Justifications: Doing Wrong and Feeling Moral," *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 24, no. 2 (2015): 126.

⁴⁸ E. Theodore Mullen Jr, *The Assembly of the Gods*, (Harvard Semitic Monographs 24; Ann Arbor: Scholars Press, 1980), 226-27.

of the rebellious Anunnaki.⁴⁹ When the gods approach Tiamat to convince her to avenge the disruption to their lives, the death of Apsu, and the imprisonment of Mummu (I, 110-124), those who are under threat take counsel as well. Ea asks Anšar for advice and approval to act against Tiamat (II, 7-78) and emerges as a wise, capable figure, free of hubris and focused on the good of his society.

Forced to turn back in the face of Tiamat's fury, Ea becomes advisor to Marduk as he coaches his son on how to approach Anšar (II, 129-134). Anšar summons the gods to an official COUNCIL; apparently, Anšar had the power to send potential avengers like Ea and Anu, but the decision to grant supreme authority to Marduk upon his victory requires the consent of all of the gods (III,1-IV, 34).⁵⁰

In fact, Apsu and Tiamat receive advice in unofficial "councils." Mummu, whose suggestion spurred Apsu to initiate the plan that eventually affected the entire Babylonian pantheon, is known as *sukallu*, vizier, (I, 30, 48), thereby indicating that Apsu's title should be *lugal*, ruler. The fact that Apsu is not known by this title shows that Mummu is not an authorized source of counsel.⁵¹ Furthermore, the discussion between Apsu and Mummu is called *puhru*, a term generally reserved for the Council of the gods, but here hinting at Apsu and Mummu's efforts to validate by consensus their decision to avenge. Genuine authority, however, is located in the official councils that appoint Ea and Marduk (in the first and second episodes, respectively) as protectors of order and tranquility. In other words, a true *puhru* in ANE narratives can confirm a king, or pronounce life and death, but would not authorize personal vengeance.⁵²

Although the function of COUNCIL rarely appears in HB revenge narratives, other HB texts depict people asking advice from unofficial channels to achieve the appearance of sanction. In an attempt to assuage the apprehensions of the populace after his father's death, Rehoboam accepts his young friends' counsel, which is aimed at enhancing his own power, over the advice of his elders (I Kgs 12). As Fox explains,

⁴⁹ Levi and Simeon also act contrary to Jacob's will when their beliefs run counter to his. They are duly reprimanded after the incident as well as in the blessings they receive at their father's passing (Gen 34:30; 49:5-7). See above, the chapter on Simeon and Levi's revenge on Shechem.

⁵⁰ Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*, 62-64, points out that "major decisions among the gods were group decisions." Additional councils were called to confirm Marduk as supreme leader as well as to create man. Vitali Bartash, "Puhru: Assembly as a Political Institution in Enūma Eliš (Preliminary Study)," 1101. Only the communal rule of the *puhru* could appoint a new leader and grant him preeminence.

⁵¹ Bartash, "Puhru," 1086, nt. 4; Sonik, "Bad King, False King, True King," 737, nt. 4. Sonik notes the lack of a divine determinative for both Apsu and Tiamat throughout Enuma Elish.

⁵² Mullen Jr, *The Assembly of the Gods*, 226-28. Similar unsuccessful attempts at legitimacy are sought in the HB narratives of Nob (I Samuel 22) and the vineyard of Naboth (I Kings 21) through show trials which take the place of legitimate adjudication.

The usage of *yeladim* ... as a literary device ... refer[s] to the immaturity and impetuosity of the younger advisors, a point the writer no doubt meant to emphasize as part of his ideological justification for the schism of Solomon's kingdom.⁵³

Similarly, Haman takes advice from his wife and loved ones despite their complete lack of authority on the matter (Esth 5:9-14).

As mentioned above, the psychological dissonance that would result from an Avenger's performing an unethical act is circumvented by self-justification through a council, even a council of two. Vengeance narratives depict three methods of achieving pre-violation justification.⁵⁴ The first, ambiguity, or "shuffling the facts," is used in the council of Tiamat's offspring (I, 127, 147-9; II, 11-12). Lying, or creating a fact, before a council is harder to justify than being selective about which facts will be included and which omitted. Avengers who employ ambiguity give the impression of having spoken to a council, thereby allowing them to proceed with the revenge act, while the reader is alerted to the act's questionable status.

Assembling the actual authoritative council entails multiple steps, during which the justification is repeated, conforming to the formal protocol that characterizes the council's function. We see, for example, that Marduk makes a request of Anšar, who sends him to Kaka, who goes to Laḥmu and Laḥamu, who finally convene the council (II, 158; III, 60; 118; 132). The examples of legitimate council in *Enuma Elish* highlight the corrupt nature of the ad-hoc council that is quickly formed by Tiamat and quickly dissolved as Tiamat's followers scatter in the wake of her defeat (IV, 106) and confer on her act of vengeance a negative valence.

12.2.5 COUNCIL - INCITEMENT TO AVENGE

Before accepting advice from an advisor, a leader must weigh its potential negative consequences and consider the advisor's vested interests. Advisors whose advice benefits themselves personally are suspect, particularly when the text explicitly mentions these benefits. Thus, the existence of incitement as part of the council function implies that the leader is weak and may be easily swayed to an unjust action.

One suspect advisor is Mummu, called *sukallu* (vizier), who participates in a *puḥru* (council) with Apsu. The use of these terms exposes his ambition to stand at the side of his lord at the true *puḥru* of the high gods. The placement of this makeshift *puḥru* just before the discovery of the plot (I, 55-56) underscores the irony of Mummu's poor choice. By supporting the wrong side in a struggle for divine dominance, his INCITEMENT TO AVENGE over lost sleep and lost honor

⁵³ Nili S. Fox, "Royal Officials and Court Families: A New Look at the יְלָדִים (Yēlādīm) in 1 Kings 12," *BA* 59, no. 4 (1996): 229.

⁵⁴ Shalvi et al., "Self-Serving Justifications," 127. The three pre-violation justifications which have been studied are: Ambiguity, Self-serving altruism (described below), and Moral licensing. Moral licensing sees the offender recall other, pro-social actions in order to create a positive balance in his moral account which will allow him to take his desired action and still view himself as ethical overall.

leads to the destruction of Apsu and to Mummu's own humiliating imprisonment by Ea. INCITEMENT to unjustified revenge as an element of COUNCIL, or even to revenge that contains ulterior motives, legitimizes the destruction of the advisor-Ally and the Avenger.

A corresponding HB case is seen in the narrative of Ahab and Naboth. A dejected Ahab would likely not have avenged Naboth for denying him the vineyard without the incitement of his ambitious and arrogant wife, Jezebel (I Kings 21). As a result, Jezebel loses her throne, her life, and her legacy. Apsu, like Ahab, is despondent and passive until he is advised to avenge the WRONG. Like Ahab's, Apsu's spirits are temporarily lifted by the advice he receives, but accepting the advice results in his demise, along with the advisor's.⁵⁵ David, on the other hand, learned how to avoid the potentially disastrous consequences of revenge from a wise advisor, Abigail (I Samuel 25), and his caution regarding advice from suspect advisors may have resulted from his early positive experience with the most dedicated and selfless of advisor-Allies, Jonathan (I Sam 20:13).⁵⁶

As seen above, the role of the COUNCIL in ANE narratives reflects the Avenger's need for advisement to justify an act of vengeance in appearance, if not in reality. But the quality of the advice affects the outcome. HB narratives show how reliance on self-interested advisors casts doubt on the validity of the revenge; ANE narratives demonstrate how relying on the counsel of an unofficial body leads to action that will prove the undoing of Avenger and Ally alike. In the ANE narratives, only the advice of an official *puhru*⁵⁷ or a messenger speaking with the king's authority is sanctioned.⁵⁸ The HB analogues to *puhru* are prophets, whose message is considered to be the word of God; a messenger of the heavenly court; or an appointed messenger of the king.

The relationships between Avenger, advisor, and Avengee also pose certain risks. When Avengers' advisors possess intimate knowledge of the Avengee, they can devise incitement that is particularly effective. Blake observes, "Effectively antagonizing the other requires knowing them well: what they hold dear, what is taboo, where is sacred, when they are particularly sensitive to insults."⁵⁹ Advisors who know their superiors well can also use this knowledge to propel them into

⁵⁵ Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 408–9 points out that the party for whom the vengeance is being taken (Ahasuerus, Ahab) here, Apsu, is not warned by his advisor of possible failures nor of the details of the vengeance. The self-serving advisor takes care of the details.

⁵⁶ Ziegler, *Promises to Keep*, 58.

⁵⁷ Unlike the council which Tiamat calls to crown Qingu (I,153) co-opting the name *puhur ilāni* host of the gods to boost its legitimacy.

⁵⁸ John S. Holladay, "Assyrian Statecraft and the Prophets of Israel," *Harvard Theological Review* 63, no. 1 (1970): 31. Holladay warns against a misunderstanding of the royal messenger, "The messenger was an official representative of the sender himself. The royal messenger stood in the court of the Great King, participated in the deliberative processes of the court, received the declaration of the king's wishes from the king's own mouth, and then carried the tablet or sealed roll of papyrus to its destination."

⁵⁹ Jonathan Samuel Blake, "Ritual Contention in Divided Societies: Participation in Loyalist Parades in Northern Ireland" (PhD Thesis, Columbia University, 2015), 269.

action, often using angry or self-righteous tones to convince the leader to avenge the WRONG. Leaders who withstand such incitement, such as David in I Samuel 24 and 26, provide a strong contrast to would-be Avengers who succumb to the pressures of incitement. The role of INCITEMENT at COUNCIL, and a wronged individual's susceptibility to it, highlight the individual's potential suitability as a leader.

12.2.6 COUNCIL (ANTICIPATION OF SUCCESS)

Confidence in battle is an essential ingredient to the successful outcome of any campaign. However, confidence and encouragement are a far cry from the hubris displayed before many violent revenge acts. Apsu and Mummu, for example, display unseemly bravado upon their decision to take vengeance on the noisy gods. Their arrogance, reflecting the "anticipation of success," is vastly different than Ea's reticent FOILING of the revenge. This depiction indicates disapproval of the behavior and attitude of Apsu and his advisor, and adds to the negative valence of Apsu's actions. The inherent presumption of celebrating in anticipation of success is censured in HB narratives. Marked by an interrogative nominal sentence (generally *מָה* or *מַה*), such speech demonstrates a sense of invincibility so deep-seated that the speaker refuses to recognize the other's attributes, contributions, or even existence.⁶⁰ This is seen in Pharaoh's refusal to acknowledge YHWH: "And Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord, that I should heed him and let Israel go?" (Exod 5:2); Gaal's denial of Abimelech's status: "Gaal son of Ebed said, 'Who is Abimelech, and who are we of Shechem, that we should serve him? Did not the son of Jerubbaal and Zebul his officer serve the men of Hamor father of Shechem? Why then should we serve him?'" (Jud 9:28); and Nabal's denigration of David's efforts on his behalf: "And Nabal answered David's servants, and said, 'Who is David? Who is the son of Jesse?'" (I Sam 25:10-11).⁶¹ This stage in the process of revenge, a form of dehumanizing the opponent, reinforces the Avenger's inner resolve to continue with the plan. In contrast, revenge that has a positive valence focuses not on belittling or destroying the adversary but on securing a just outcome. Just as the use of formulaic language to degrade one's enemy is part of the preparation for war,⁶² the anticipation of success as part of the COUNCIL function puts emotional distance between the Avenger and the Avengee so that the Avenger can execute vengeance without being slowed by the pangs of conscience. The hubris of this behavior

⁶⁰ Similar to Anat's reaction in the narrative of Aqhat (1.18,I.22-23), Haman's assumption of future success against the Jews (Esth 3:15; 5:14), and Jezebel's reaction in planning the theft of Naboth's vineyard (I Kgs 21:7).

⁶¹ Cox Dorian G Coover, "The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart in Its Literary and Cultural Contexts," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 163 (2006): 296; George W. Coats, "Self-Abasement and Insult Formulas," *JBL* 89, no. 1 (1970): 15–21.

⁶² Margaret R. Eaton, "Some Instances of Flying in the Hebrew Bible," *JSOT* 19, no. 61 (1994): 12; Coats, "Self-Abasement and Insult Formulas," 21.

reveals the weakness of the Avenger and adds another layer to the negative valence of the act and to the unjust nature of the cause.⁶³

12.2.7 REVENGE FOILED

The FOILING of the revenge in *Enuma Elish* is multi-layered and encompasses goals beyond preventing one specific attack. By humiliating the Avengers as well as blocking their attempt at destruction, FOILING the revenge dissuades would-be Avengers from similar actions in the future, thereby securing the values of society. The details of the consequences to the Avengers in both episodes of *Enuma Elish* highlight the Avengers' and Allies' loss of honor, an ironic consequence for honor-seeking characters. Although Olyan mitigates the negative social value of honor-seeking behavior if the honor sought is concordant with the betterment of the other, such behavior that does not benefit others is doubly despised, even more so in HB narratives than in ANE.⁶⁴

12.2.7.1 Disgrace of Advisors and Allies

Mummu is led away by a nose ring before he is imprisoned; Qingu is stripped of the Tablet of Destiny and his body is used to form mankind (who will become the servants of the gods). The fate of these characters conveys the message that Allies have tied their destiny to their masters' and will suffer the same ignoble end. Like the Avengers, the Allies have sought honor that is not their due and consequently will be brought low. Tiamat's creation of Qingu and the army of monsters, followed by Qingu's destruction, demonstrate the danger of allying with a god in ANE narratives, especially if the god loses the bid for vengeance.⁶⁵ An HB parallel can be seen in Doeg, who informs Saul that Ahimelech has harbored David (I Samuel 21-22). As is typical of an HB Ally, Doeg's fate is not described in the text, but his words are singled out by the psalmist as a warning that an ill-advised Avenger's disgrace will spill onto his advisor. Psalm 52 describes Doeg's actions and, as well, the appropriate punishment for someone who seeks personal gain through alliance with a vengeful king:⁶⁶

⁶³ Andrew Kakabadse, Nada K. Kakabasde, and A.G. Sheard, "Leadership Hubris: Achilles' Heel of Success," in *Global Elites: The Opaque Nature of Transnational Policy Determination* (eds. Andrew Kakabadse and Nada K. Kakabasde; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 308; Russell H. Hvolbek, *Re-Calling the Humanities: Language, Education, and Humans Being* (Berlin: Springer, 2013), 114–15.

⁶⁴ Olyan, "Honor, Shame, and Covenant Relations in Ancient Israel and Its Environment," 203–4.

⁶⁵ In the Illuyanka myth, though Hupašiya is on the "winning" side, he loses on a personal level.

⁶⁶ Due to debates regarding the dating and authorship of the historical superscriptions of the Psalms and Gunkel's focus on determining the original, pre-literary, setting for the psalms, the traditional scholarship has largely ignored the significance of the superscriptions. In the wake of the research of B. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979) and James Sanders, *Canon and Community: A Guide to Canonical Criticism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), more recent scholarship has begun to explore the significance of the superscriptions as part of a deliberate editorial activity of the canonical book. Johnson and Skinner both demonstrate the connections of the superscriptions to the content of the psalms on literary, structural, linguistic and contextual grounds. It is on this

2. Your tongue is like a sharp razor, you worker of treachery. 3. You love evil more than good and lying more than speaking the truth. Selah 4. You love all words that devour, O deceitful tongue. 5. But God will break you down forever; he will snatch and tear you from your tent; he will uproot you from the land of the living. Selah 6. The righteous will see and fear and will laugh at the evildoer.

Marduk's victory does not depend on the destruction of Qingu, but Qingu's death provides a lesson to those who would consider joining in personal vengeance at the cost of cosmic chaos. It is often the most expendable Ally, the alien-Ally, who pays the price.

12.2.7.2 Removal of external symbols of honor

Apsu's attempt at revenge was aimed at increasing his honor through the deference and recognition of others. Honor that is external to its seeker can be stripped away, as symbolized by the *agû*, *riksu*, and *melammu* (crown, belt or sinew, and radiance, respectively; see above for a full discussion) that are so easily removed. Stripping the colorful coat from Joseph before he is thrown into the pit likewise reduces the victim's status (Gen 37:23). Joseph is again stripped of his honor by the wife of Potiphar when she tears his garment (Gen 39:12-16).⁶⁷ Saul and Haman also see their honor diminished through the medium of clothing (I Sam 15:27-28; 24:4, 11; Esth 6:6-12).

Examples from the HB indicate that while external honor can be misappropriated, the divinely approved appointment of power is neither falsely acquired nor improperly withdrawn because it is intrinsic to its possessor.⁶⁸ Saul, rejected by God, continues to beg Samuel for the mere *appearance* of honor (I Sam 15:30). As Tsumura explains, "Instead of honoring God, Saul is concerned with honoring himself." Not only does God regret appointing Saul as king, but God despises him (15:11, 23, 26), and Saul eventually destroys Nob in his quest for vengeance on David and to restore his lost honor (I Samuel 22).⁶⁹ The message is that vengeance attempted by a weak, honor-seeking figure will fail and be swiftly punished; and this is also the crux of Jotham's parable to the men of Shechem (Jud 9:7-21).

In the episodes of *Enuma Elish*, sleep provides an example of external honor sought and lost. As noted above, rest in the ancient Near East was a divine right, and sleep is a recurring motif

basis that I reference Ps. 52:1. See V. Johnson, *David in Distress: His Portrait Through the Historical Psalms* (New York: T & T Clark International, 2009) and J.L. Skinner, "The Historical Superscriptions of Davidic Psalms: An Exegetical, Intertextual, and Methodological Analysis" (Ph.D. diss., Andrews University, 2016).

⁶⁷ Further HB examples of clothing and its removal as an indicator of honor bestowed/denied are: Numbers 5 which discusses the accusation process of the Sotah and II Sam 10:4-5, regarding the Ammonites disgrace of David's messengers by cutting their garments. Ora Horn Prouser, "Suited to the Throne: The Symbolic Use of Clothing in the David and Saul Narratives," *JSOT* 21, no. 71 (1996): 29.

⁶⁸ Examples of (albeit more amiable) transference of power which include a physical aspect include the transfer from Moses to Joshua –of his *hod* and *ruah hochma* (Num 27:15-23; Deut 34:9), as well as Elijah's transfer of his intangible *ruah*, along with his mantle, to Elisha (II Kgs 2:9;13-14). Only God can clothe one in the divine spirit (Gideon, Jud 6:34) or strip one of it if it is misused (Jud 16:20; 13:25; 14:6, 9; 15:14). See also Nahum M. Waldman, "The Imagery of Clothing, Covering, and Overpowering," *JANES* 19, no. 1 (1989): 163-164; and Shawn Zelig Aster, *The Unbeatable Light: Melammu and Its Biblical Parallels* (Alter Orient und Altes Testament, 384; Munster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2012).

⁶⁹ Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, 407–8.

in *Enuma Elish*.⁷⁰ The extent to which the gods are free to enjoy their rest indicates the honor they are due. Because sleep can be taken without consent and needs continuous renewal, it is fleeting and external. Sleep may be viewed as a reward for honorable behavior, but does not by itself confer true honor. Fittingly, there is neither rest nor sleep for Tiamat and Apsu (I, 36, 38).

Sleep in HB narratives is viewed as a vulnerability of human existence; YHWH does not require the cyclical sleep of ANE deities. Therefore, a loss of honor in HB narratives is not associated with interrupted sleep. Instead, a character who is caught sleeping by an adversary loses honor.⁷¹ God is praised as one who neither slumbers nor sleeps (Ps 121:4), but Abner is chided by David for falling asleep while guarding the king, thereby endangering his life (I Sam 26:15).

12.2.7.3 Behavior of Avengers and Foilers of the Vengeance

The behavior of Avengers and Foilers of Vengeance (as well as would-be Avengers and Foilers) is an integral aspect of a revenge narrative. How characters are depicted determines how they will be assessed and, by extension, reflects how their society expects its members to behave and how they might be treated if they violate those expectations. The behavior of Ea in *Enuma Elish* indicates that he is knowledgeable, perceptive, and skilled. His use of a sleep incantation to lull Apsu into sleep after Apsu's lack of sleep had spurred his desire for vengeance (I, 59-65) is satisfying in its talionic nature. As well, Apsu's punishment at Ea's hands provides a clear warning regarding the consequences of undesirable behavior.⁷² Moreover, Ea dispatches his opponents with a minimum of violence, using his intellect instead of force. He achieves the FOILING OF THE REVENGE in total silence; his success is recounted only by the narrator. In the second episode, Ea deflects Anšar's accusations that he was responsible for Tiamat's wrath through logical arguments that convey respect for his ancestor (II, 60-65). His is a silence of action, not paralysis, and constitutes a vivid counterpoint to the agitation of the other gods and later, of Tiamat.⁷³

Marduk's behavior reveals him to be the diametric opposite of Tiamat.⁷⁴ His victory is won through physical might and clever arguments designed to enrage Tiamat, causing her to act impulsively rather than according to her prepared plan. Tiamat's fury is apparent to all and, because it constitutes behavior unbecoming to a leader, contributes to her downfall. Jones notes that leaders in ancient Mesopotamia were expected to exhibit self-restraint, particularly with regard to violence

⁷⁰ Andrzej Mrozek and Silvano Votto, "The Motif of the Sleeping Divinity," *Biblica*, 80, no. 3 (1999): 416–17.

⁷¹ Thomas H. McAlpine, *Sleep, Divine and Human, in the Old Testament* (eds. David J.A. Clines & Philip R. Davies; JSOTSup 38; Sheffield: A&C Black, 1987), 15–17, 194–96.

⁷² Frymer-Kensky, "Tit for Tat"; Shemesh, "'Measure For Measure' in Biblical Law, Compared To The Laws Of The Ancient Near East And Bedouin Law," 148-50.

⁷³ J. Vernon Jensen, "Communicative Functions of Silence," *ETC: A Review of General Semantics*, 30, no. 3 (1973), 255. In Jensen's division, this silence is "activating" and reflects Ea's state of careful reflection as he executes the incantation.

⁷⁴ Note similar descriptions of Solomon, all intended to underline the idea that there could have been no better candidate for the kingship (I Kgs 5:9-14).

against the people, and to make “a crucial contribution to cosmic order.” On the cosmic scale, Marduk prevails by virtue of his ability to tame the chaos wrought by the goddess.⁷⁵ Tiamat impulsively engages in single combat instead of utilizing the army she has prepared because she is not in control of herself.⁷⁶

The need to preserve honor, even at the cost of engaging in battle unprepared, is also seen in HB revenge narratives. Ga'al's boasting drives him to war against Abimelech. Having claimed unearned honor, he will fall to Abimelech after a rebuke from Zebul (Jud 9:38-39). Athaliah's rage, witnessed by all, also constitutes a loss of honor (II Kgs 11:14-15). A mother who risks a breakdown of society to avenge herself on her own descendants, she has become a horrible, vengeful creature that deserves destruction.⁷⁷

Jephthah demands leadership of the Gileadites in an attempt to restore the honor he lost when he was expelled from his father's house. While he retains self-control, his behavior remains self-centered. Assis demonstrates that

Jephthah is driven by clear personal motives. There is no indication that he takes into consideration the national concern of delivering Israel from the Ammonite oppression. The Ammonite story, as far as Jephthah is concerned, is merely a means in the context of his personal story, which is his focus of interest.⁷⁸

Although Marduk, at the suggestion of his father, Ea, also requests supreme leadership in return for filling the role of savior, he is appointed to “bring about annihilation *and re-creation*” (V, 22), unlike Jephthah, who has no constructive cause. Marduk's role is to prevent the vengeance of Tiamat, but also to rebuild on behalf of all the gods, with special deference shown to those who came before him: “In Ešgalla, Ešarra which he had built, and the heavens, He settled in their shrines Anu, Enlil, and Ea” (V, 145-146). Finally, Marduk did not seek honor. Although honor was of great importance in the ANE, especially among the gods, and Marduk's honor is enhanced by his FOILING OF THE REVENGE, honor was not his primary goal.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Philip Jones, “Divine and Non-Divine Kingship,” in *A Companion to the Ancient Near East* (ed. Daniel Snell; Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World; Malden:Blackwell, 2005), 331, 336-338.

⁷⁶ Matthew Michael, “Anger Management and Biblical Characters,” *OTE* 28, no. 2 (2015): 468–69 focuses on the role of anger in pushing a potential Avenger to act, often before he was adequately prepared, in order to ensure the failure of the revenge. For a discussion of rage as a device used to discredit Avengers, specifically female Avengers such as Jezebel, Ishtar and Anat, see the discussion of Female Avengers at the end of this section.

⁷⁷ Benjamin Foster, “Enuma Elish as a Work of Literature,” *Journal of the Canadian Society for Mesopotamian Studies* 7 (2012): 20.

⁷⁸ Elie Assis, *Self-Interest or Communal Interest: An Ideology of Leadership in the Gideon, Abimelech and Jephthah Narratives*, 197. A similar point could be made about Abimelech, though his efforts to obtain power and honor are even more nefarious, Assis, 134-35.

⁷⁹ “[Honor in the ANE] is a commodity of value, actively sought both by deities and by human beings.” Olyan, “Honor, Shame, and Covenant Relations in Ancient Israel and Its Environment,” 204. Nevertheless, “Marduk stands in...contrast to Apsu...indicating a legitimate, wise, martially vigorous, and prosperous rule over the world as he has ordered it.” Sonik, “Bad King, False King, True King,” 742.

Some of the behavior that distinguishes certain Avengers, Allies, and Avengees is connected indirectly with gaining or losing honor. As we have seen, losing emotional control, particularly in the presence of many witnesses, diminishes the honor of that person. Modigliani points to the correlation between feelings of inadequacy and the Embarrassability Scale, arguing that avoiding feelings of personal inadequacy is felt to be essential to self-preservation.⁸⁰ People whose behavior violates social norms through a lack of poise, self-control, or preparedness, become vulnerable to emotional attack: An adversary can draw attention to the behavior in an effort to cause embarrassment and a loss of status. The greater the societal need to protect self-image, the greater degree to which this tactic will be effective.⁸¹

Foiling the planned revenge act has as its immediate aim the removal of an imminent threat. However, the methods the foilers choose to eliminate the threat indicate the presence of additional goals in their minds and hearts. ANE and HB narratives describe symbols of honor such as clothing, ritual objects, and sleep that are not essential to the characters and should not be confused with honor itself. Humiliating would-be Avengers is meant to punish the offender through the loss of honor and to discourage future attacks by opportunists. Seeking honor above that which is due and displaying a loss of emotional control are behaviors by which aggressors delegitimize and embarrass themselves, as the patterns of Foilers' and Avengers' actions make clear.

12.2.8 AFTERMATH

Postscripts to attempted revenge acts in the ANE depict outcomes beyond recording proportionate reward and punishment. Legacies are described, with an emphasis on what the actants will enjoy or suffer for eternity. The characters' defining features are distinguished: Ea, not Apsu, enjoys quiet, calm, and the ability to rest (I, 75), a fitting reward for neutralizing Apsu. The deity who utilizes his knowledge and abilities to conquer fear, who has acted modestly and selflessly, has earned such rest. Marduk continues to show respect for Ea, Anu, and Anšar even after his victory. He presents Anu with the Tablet of Destinies that Tiamat had stolen and given to Qingu (V, 69-70).⁸² Marduk is described as the designated Avenger many times (II, 127, 156; III, 10, 58; IV, 13; VI, 105, 163), but he is equally the upholder of justice; the same term, *gi-mil-ma*, is used to refer to his protection of those who trust in him.⁸³

⁸⁰ Andre Modigliani, "Embarrassment and Embarrassability," *Sociometry*, 1968, 314–16, 320. Embarrassability is one's "general susceptibility to embarrassment" and is a reflection of, among other things, one's self-esteem.

⁸¹ William F. Sharkey, "Use and Responses to Intentional Embarrassment," *Communication Studies* 43, no. 4 (1992): 259; Theodore M. Singelis and William F. Sharkey, "Culture, Self-Constraint, and Embarrassability," *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 26, no. 6 (1995): 624–25.

⁸² The respect Marduk shows for his elders, despite the adoration they show for him, and despite the description that he exceeds them in power, intellect, and strength, demonstrates that he is truly worthy of the *melammu* (I,85-104; II,149; III,55).

⁸³ Van De Mieroop, "Revenge, Assyrian Style," 12. The Akkadian *gimilla* is used to indicate repayment in kind with no specification as to the nature of the act or the repayment. Thus the word indicates justice more than vengeance.

After FOILING THE REVENGE, Marduk, like Ea, rests (IV, 135); indeed, in the aftermath of the cosmic battle, humans are created so that the gods can eternally rest (VI, 8, 36, 129-30) in their palaces which were built with this function in mind (VII, 10-11).⁸⁴ In the HB, Mordechai's legacy after FOILING the planned revenge of Haman indicates the value of his deeds to society (Esth 10:2-3). Mordechai receives power and respect while Haman is hanged on the tree he had prepared for Mordechai; Haman's sons, representing his legacy, are hanged next to him. Like Gideon's, Mordechai's enjoyment of the honor resulting from his success is not seen as corrupt. Unlike Gideon, Marduk has not refused the leadership; on the contrary, it was his condition for going to battle. He retains the role and is praised for guarding the new cosmic order (Jud 6:11-16; 8:22-23; 29-32). As these examples illustrate, the AFTERMATH plays an important role in recalling the ramifications of actions and reinforcing societal values.

12.3 Conclusions

The ancient Near Eastern deities experience and display the spectrum of human emotional responses including avoidance of shame, fear in the face of a threat, and consternation. Like humans, the gods develop social relationships according to acceptable social norms that reflect their values.⁸⁵ Apsu and Tiamat's attempts to wreak vengeance represent violations of societal norms; thus they receive negative judgments, suffer harsh repercussions, and are villainized.

Marduk, on the other hand, rises from "prominence to preeminence."⁸⁶ An ideal antithesis to scoundrels and villains, he is unmatched and unblemished. Kramer points out that Sumerian — unlike Homeric — epics are not concerned with individual characterizations, while Auerbach shows that even Homer depicts complexity of character "only in the succession and alternation of emotions; whereas the Jewish writers are able to express the simultaneous existence of various layers of consciousness and the conflict between them."⁸⁷ Characterization in the HB flows from the concept that although humans were created in the image of a perfect God, their free will leads to complex, unpredictable choices.⁸⁸ Most HB heroes' circumstances and personal characters rise and fall over the course of their lives. For example, Samuel recalls the Saul of his youth and is reprimanded for mourning the loss of Saul's potential kingdom (I Sam 16:1). In contrast, the *Enuma Elish* describes no mourning for the Tiamat of Episode I who protected her offspring from Apsu; there is only Tiamat the vicious monster.

⁸⁴ Batto, "The Sleeping God," 1987, 162–63.

⁸⁵ Marjo Christina Annette Korpel, *A Rift in the Clouds: Ugaritic and Hebrew Descriptions of the Divine* (Munster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1990), 165–85; Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*, 59–62.

⁸⁶ Lambert, *Babylonian Creation Myths*, 2013, 34–35.

⁸⁷ Kramer, *The Sumerians*, 51; Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 13.

⁸⁸ Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 114–15.

The assessment of an act, or intended act, of vengeance depends more on the presence and degree of the Avenger's self-interest than the Avenger's goals. When Apsu's planned revenge is discovered, he is humiliated despite the fact that his attempted vengeance, unlike Tiamat's, does not threaten the order of the cosmos. In the second episode, Marduk's request for unchallenged dominion upon his victory is viewed as justified, unlike similar requests by Jephthah (Judges 11) and Abimelech (Judges 9) because the revenge act will benefit others and not injure them. As Haman learned in the story of Esther, or Ahab in the narrative about Naboth's vineyard, no personal motive can have priority over the welfare of the community. Avengers whose aspirations are self-interested and against the public good are vilified and portrayed as violators of the natural order, leaving no doubt that they have earned their grim deserts. While personal revenge in ancient Near Eastern societies is considered acceptable under certain conditions, *Enuma Elish* shows that personal honor is trumped by the need for order and the good of civilization. The Avengers, wronged as they were, are viewed as villains, while the Foilers of the revenge are heroes.

Sarna writes that *Enuma Elish* is "the myth that sustained Babylonian civilization, that buttressed its societal norms and its organizational structure."⁸⁹ When Marduk prioritizes the community's need for order over the needs of even important individuals, any tactics he requires to thwart the vengeance are justified, and his heroism is ensured.⁹⁰ In this respect, *Enuma Elish* reflects values and attitudes that are closer to those of HB revenge narratives than to those of the ANE, which generally respect the use of revenge to redress personal offenses. The HB characters who are most reviled in revenge narratives are those whose actions harm society in order to serve themselves. ANE heroes can have personal gain without adverse consequences to their reputation, whereas in the HB, "A suitable leader is one who believes in and acts in the name of God, and one who has concern only for the good of the people."⁹¹

⁸⁹ Nahum M. Sarna, *Understanding Genesis* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1966), 7.

⁹⁰ Crouch, *War and Ethics in the Ancient Near East*, 16–19; Glenn Stanfield Holland, *Gods in the Desert* (Religions of the Ancient Near East; Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 125.

⁹¹ Assis, *Self-Interest or Communal Interest*, 247.

Chapter 13

13.0 *Illuyanka*¹

The Hittite Myth of *Illuyanka* describes how the Serpent *Illuyanka* disables the Storm-god, who is subsequently avenged and restored. Nine tablets, each of which contains two versions of this myth, were found at the former Hittite capital Hattusa, but all are damaged in various places such that the myth cannot be read in its entirety.² In both versions, Inara, the daughter of the Storm-god, enlists a human ally to help avenge her father and restore him to his former position.

The *Illuyanka* myth, which is framed in the ritual context of the *Purulli* festival — a springtime celebration whose purpose was to help the land thrive — is a “mythological paradigm” for the annual growth cycle of the crops.³ Reflecting the ethos of its society, the narrative takes the form of a revenge story and is thus included in this study. The morphological analysis will address the myth itself, not the subsequent description of its presentation at the cultic festival.

Table 23 Morphology - *Illuyanka*

FUNCTION	SOURCE ⁴	ACTION
VERSION I		
Initial Scene	§3a	The Storm-god and the Serpent battle.
WRONG	§3b	Serpent smites the Storm-god.
COUNCIL	§4	Storm-god summons the gods, to be led by Inara, to his aid.
PLAN	§5 §6	She prepares a feast. Inara seeks out Ḫupašiya.

¹ Translations are taken from Gary Beckman, “The Anatolian Myth of *Illuyanka*,” *JANES* 14, no. 1 (1982): 11–25; Other translations include Harry A. Hoffner, Jr., *Hittite Myths* (ed. Gary M. Beckman; Writings from the Ancient World 2; Atlanta: Scholars, 1998); Theodor H. Gaster, *Thespis: Ritual, Myth, and Drama in the Ancient Near East* (New York: WW Norton & Company, 1961); Harry A. Hoffner, Jr., “A Brief Commentary on the Hittite *Illuyanka* Myth (CTH 321),” in *Studies Presented to Robert D. Biggs* (ed. Martha T. Roth et al.; Assyriological Studies 27; Ann Arbor: Edwards Brothers, 2004), 119–40. Studies which discuss the rituals of the *Purulli* festival include: Gaster, *Thespis*; Galina Kellerman, “Towards the Further Interpretation of the *Purulli*-Festival,” *Slavica Hierosolymitana*, 1981, 35–46; Gary Beckman, “The Religion of the Hittites,” *BA* 52, no. 23 (1989): 98–108. Ahmet Ünal, “The Power of Narrative in Hittite Literature,” *Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 57 (2000): 99–121 discusses the nature of Hittite narrative. Studies of the activity of the Storm-god include: Alberto R.W. Green, *The Storm-God in the Ancient Near East*, (Biblical and Judaic Studies, U of C, San Diego 8; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003); Daniel Schwemer, “The Storm-Gods of the Ancient Near East: Summary, Synthesis, Recent Studies: Part II,” *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 8, no. 1 (2008): 1–44. Studies of the status of the disabled in the ANE include: Richard H. Beal, “Disabilities from Head to Foot in Hittite Civilization,” in *Disability in Antiquity* (Milton Park: Routledge, 2016), 53–62; Harry A. Hoffner, Jr., “The Disabled and Infirm in Hittite Society,” in *Hayim and Miriam Tadmor* (Eretz-Israel: Archaeological, Historical and Geographical Studies 27; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2003): 84–90. Dragon-slayer myths are discussed by Robert D. Miller, “Tracking the Dragon across the Ancient Near East,” *Archiv Orientalni* 82 (2014): 225–45; Calvert Watkins, *How to Kill a Dragon: Aspects of Indo-European Poetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press on Demand, 1995); Amir Gilan, “Once Upon a Time in Kišškiluša: The Dragon Slayer-Myth in Central Anatolia,” in *Creation and Chaos. A Reconsideration of Hermann Gunkel’s Chaostkampf Hypothesis* (eds. JoAnn Scurlock and Richard H. Beal; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 98–111. The revenge motif as such is not treated in these studies.

² Gary Beckman, “The Anatolian Myth of *Illuyanka*,” *JANES* 14, no. 1 (1982): 12.

³ Beckman, “The Anatolian Myth of *Illuyanka*,” 1982, 24.

⁴ All references are to the notation used by Beckman, op. cit., 18–20.

ACQUISITION OF ALLY	§7-8	Inara requests Ҳупашиya’s help. Ҳупашиya agrees on condition that Inara has relations with him.
PLAN	§9	Inara conceals Ҳупашиya and invites the Serpent to the feast.
COMPLICITY	§10	Serpent and his children attend the feast, become drunk and, unable to return to their hole, fall asleep in the house of Inara.
REVENGE	§11-12	Ҳупашиya binds the Serpent. With the other gods at his side, the Storm-god kills the Serpent.
AFTERMATH	§13-16	Inara builds a house and settles Ҳупашиya in it. She leaves, warning him not to look out the window lest he see his wife and children. After twenty days, he can no longer resist. Upon Inara’s return, he begs to return home. She replies angrily (the exact exchange is not extant).
VERSION II		
WRONG	§21	Serpent defeats Storm-god and steals his heart and eyes.
PLAN	§22	The Storm-god marries a poor man’s daughter.
ACQUISITION OF AN ALLY	§22	They have a son who marries the daughter of the Storm-god.
PLAN (COUNCIL)	§23	Storm-god tells his son to retrieve his heart and eyes from his father-in-law, the Serpent.
COMPLICITY	§24	The Serpent gives him the heart and eyes, which the son then returns to his father.
REVENGE	§25	Storm-god smites the Serpent.
AFTERMATH	§26	The son, loyal to the Serpent, asks to die with his father-in-law. The Storm-god complies, killing his son.

13.1 *Establishing the Morphology*

The two versions of the myth share a number of similarities. Both versions include the Serpent committing a WRONG against the Storm-god by incapacitating him, the successful vengeance of the Storm-god by trapping and destroying the Serpent, and the death of the essential human Ally because he is not loyal to the gods. The differences are described below in two consecutive morphological analyses, one for each version.

13.1.1 *Version I*

The WRONG of this revenge narrative is perpetrated by the Serpent on the Storm-god for reasons that do not appear in the text.

§3 When the Storm-god and the serpent came to grips in [the town of] Kiškilušša, the serpent smote the Storm-god.

The Serpent might have been attempting to usurp or diminish the Storm-god's power. In either case, the attack will be avenged. The Storm-god's REACTION is to summon the other gods to his aid while Inara, his daughter, prepares a feast.

§4 (Thereafter) the Storm-god summoned all the gods (saying): "Come <to his aid>⁵! Inara has prepared a feast!"

The Storm-god's only role in the remainder of the narrative is his act of revenge. The focus now shifts to Inara and the preparations that will facilitate the vengeance. Inara PLANS by preparing a feast (§5)⁶ and then travels to Ziggarratta to seek the human Ḫupašiya (§6), thereby ACQUIRING AN ALLY.

§7 Inara spoke as follows to Ḫupašiya: "I am about to do such-and-such thing—you join with me!"

The nature of their alliance is unclear, but Inara invites Ḫupašiya to "join" her in exchange for his assistance. Hoffman notes the use of *ḫarp-* (A i 23), indicating divorce. Although divorce is not explicitly mentioned, Inara requires Ḫupašiya to leave his family and join her in order to ensure his absolute allegiance in the act of vengeance for which his aid is necessary.⁷ For his part, Ḫupašiya understands the value of his services because Inara has sought him, and he names his price: He will do all that is requested of him provided the goddess has sexual relations with him. She agrees, and their alliance is sealed (§8).

Scholars offer various explanations regarding the significance of Ḫupašiya's terms. Beckman suggests that Ḫupašiya, having been propositions by a goddess, is guilty of unbridled hubris.⁸ However, Ḫupašiya's behavior in the rest of the tale does not bear this out. More plausible is Gaster's suggestion that the terms reflect beliefs about how physical characteristics are transferred. By having relations with Inara, the human Ḫupašiya will acquire godly strength that will protect him in a confrontation with the Serpent,⁹ an event that is likely. After the consummation of their union, Inara transports Ḫupašiya to the gods' feast, concealing him to preserve the element of surprise in the plan.

§9 Then Inara transported Hupaši[ya] and concealed him. Inara dressed herself up and invited the serpent up from his hole (saying): "I'm preparing a feast- come eat and drink!"

⁵ This rendering follows Harry A. Hoffner Jr., "A Brief Commentary on the Hittite Illuyanka Myth (CTH 321)" in *From the Workshop of the Chicago Assyrian Dictionary - Studies Presented to Robert D. Biggs vol. 2*, (eds. Martha Tobi Roth et al.; Assyriological Studies 27; Ann Arbor: Edwards Brothers, 2004), 132. preferring 'coming to someone's aid' or 'joining his side' rather than the invitation to a feast implied by Beckman's "Come in!"

⁶ Hoffner Jr., "A Brief Commentary on the Hittite Illuyanka Myth (CTH 321)," 132.

⁷ Hoffner Jr., "A Brief Commentary on the Hittite Illuyanka Myth (CTH 321)," 133.

⁸ Beckman, "The Anatolian Myth of Illuyanka," 1982, 25.

⁹ Theodor Herzl Gaster and Gilbert Murray, *Thespis: Ritual, Myth, and Drama in the Ancient Near East*, 1281 (Doubleday Garden City, New York, 1961), 257–58.

The assistance of a human Ally in executing revenge is a recurring theme in Hittite literature and throughout the ancient Near East.¹⁰ In the epic of *Aqhat*, the goddess Anat employs the human Yatpan to kill Aqhat. Like Ḫupašiya, Yatpan receives abilities from the goddess that aid in the revenge. (He is transformed into a bird). In *Enuma Elish*, Tiamat also enlists the “other”: an army of fierce monsters of her own creation to carry out her revenge.¹¹ In an act of COMPLICITY, the Serpent and his offspring leave their lair to join the feast. They indulge in the delicacies provided by Inara, especially the alcoholic drinks, and due to their gluttony, their drunkenness, or a combination, they are unable to re-enter their hole and fall asleep in Inara’s abode (§10-11). Ḫupašiya and the Storm-god, working as partners, then take their REVENGE. Ḫupašiya binds the Serpent with cords, and the Storm-god slays him while the other gods look on in a show of solidarity that emboldens the Storm-god. Because no words are spoken, the gods’ presence does not constitute an official COUNCIL, but it does convey support for Storm-god’s actions.

§12 The Storm-god came and slew the serpent. The (other) gods were at his side.

The AFTERMATH of the revenge narrative focuses on the relationship between Ḫupašiya and Inara, who expedited revenge (§13-16). Inara builds a house on a cliff in a remote area for Ḫupašiya to live in and instructs him not to look out the window lest he see his family. After twenty days, he can no longer resist. He looks, sees his family, and is seized with longing to return to them. Inara reacts to his disobedience with great anger¹² and, presumably, punishes him. (The nature of the punishment is not known.) Ḫupašiya has failed to meet the level of devotion that Inara expected of an Ally.

13.1.2 Version II

The second version of the narrative was enacted in place of the first at the *Purulli* festival.¹³ As in the first version, the WRONG is the disabling of the Storm-god by the Serpent, but this version includes the theft of the Storm-god’s heart and eyes (§21’). Loss of the heart, representing the vital essence of a being, cripples the Storm-god and renders him incapable of performing his duties.¹⁴ Blinding was a Hittite punishment for treason and oath breaking; it was also done to captives to prevent escape. Blinding in the ANE meant dependency on others, which caused

¹⁰ Gary Beckman, “The Tongue Is a Bridge: Communication between Humans and Gods in Hittite Anatolia,” *Archiv Orientalní* 67 (1999): 521–22, discusses both specific and general “bargains” that were struck between Hittite gods and mortals for the mutual benefit of both parties.

¹¹ Beckman, “The Tongue Is a Bridge,” 520–21. See also van Dijk-Coombes, ““He Rose and Entered before the Goddess”” for an analysis of Gilgamesh’s interactions with the three goddesses in that epic.

¹² Hans G. Güterbock, “Hittite Mythology,” in *Mythologies of the Ancient World* (ed. S.N. Kramer; Garden City: Doubleday, 1961), 151; Beckman, “The Anatolian Myth of Illuyanka,” 19 assumes he was killed (perhaps as a parallel to the second Illuyanka narrative), though it is possible he was sent home (Hoffner Jr., *Illuyanka*, 128), or exiled.

¹³ Billie Jean Collins, *The Hittites and Their World* (SBL Archaeology and Biblical Studies 7; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 150–51.

¹⁴ Gaster, *Thespis*, 264.

humiliation.¹⁵ In Hittite society (as in other ancient cultures) blindness also carried the figurative meaning of a lack of discernment and understanding.¹⁶ The Serpent, having robbed his opponent of two essential powers, is convinced that the Storm-god has been neutralized and that he lacks the courage and intelligence to recover from such a blow.¹⁷

The Serpent's underestimation of the Storm-god's abilities will prove to be his undoing. In spite of his loss, the Storm-god regains what has been taken through an elaborate PLAN requiring a combination of resourcefulness, knowledge, and patience (§22'). First, the Storm-god marries a poor man's daughter, ordinarily a degradation for a deity but one the Storm-god is willing to endure because his wife's poverty will lead to the restoration of his stolen organs. The marriage is kept secret to maintain the element of surprise.¹⁸ The new couple have a son who, being too poor to pay a bride price, can utilize the *antiyanza* marriage custom by which a poor man was essentially adopted by his wife's family, thus transferring his allegiance from his father to his father-in-law.¹⁹ The son, whose true identity is hidden from the Serpent, marries the Serpent's daughter and becomes a saboteur in his new household:

23' The Storm-god instructed (his) son: "When you go to the house of your wife, then demand from them (my) heart and eyes!"

24' When he went, then he demanded from them the heart, and they gave it to him.

Afterwards he demanded from them the eyes, and they gave these to him. And he carried them to the Storm-god, his father, and the Storm-god (thereby) took back his heart and his eyes.

By returning the heart and eyes to his father through his father-in-law's COMPLICITY, the son restores the Storm-god to his full power and enables him to accomplish the REVENGE act. The son himself is not directly involved in the act, as that would have made him a traitor to his new family. But in the AFTERMATH, the (half) human Ally suffers the vengeance of the gods, as is typical of ANE narratives:

§25' When he was again sound in body as of old, then he went once more to the sea for battle. When he [Storm-god] gave battle to him [Serpent] and was beginning to smite the serpent, then the son of the Storm-god was with the serpent and shouted up to heaven, to his father:

¹⁵ Harry A. Hoffner, "The Disabled and Infirm in Hittite Society," 85–86; Richard H. Beal, "Disabilities from Head to Foot in Hittite Civilization," in *Disability in Antiquity* (ed. Christian Leas; New York: Routledge, 2016), 38.

¹⁶ Ray McAllister, "Theology of Blindness in the Hebrew Scriptures" (Ph.D. diss., Andrews University, 2010), 58–60.

¹⁷ Hoffner Jr., "A Brief Commentary on the Hittite Illuyanka Myth," 137.

¹⁸ Trevor Bryce, *Life and Society in the Hittite World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 119–21, in his former state, the Storm-god would no doubt have commanded a high dowry, whereas now he marries the daughter of a poor man.

¹⁹ Hoffner Jr., "A Brief Commentary on the Hittite Illuyanka Myth (CTH 321)," 135; Harry A. Hoffner, *Hittite Myths* (ed. Gary M. Beckman; SBL Writings From the Ancient World 2; Atlanta: Scholars, 1990), 13; Harry A. Hoffner Jr., "Hittite Mythological Texts: A Survey," in *Unity and Diversity: Essays in the History, Literature, and Religion of the Ancient Near East, The Johns Hopkins Near Eastern Studies* (eds. Hans Goedicke, and J.J.M. Roberts; The Johns Hopkins Near Eastern Studies; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), 137.

§26' "Include me--do not show me any mercy!" Then the Storm-god killed the serpe[nt] and his (own) son. And now this one, the Storm-god [. . .]

Mindful of the *andayantatar* status that binds his allegiance to his new family, the son asks to die. The Storm-god obliges, killing his own son. No tears are shed; apparently the son has been born and raised for this purpose. Like Hupašiya in the first version, the human Ally becomes the tragic figure when the Victim avenges the WRONG.

13.2 Analysis and HB Comparisons

De Vries observes that Hittite literature is generally less expansive than other ANE texts: "The action is described with simple subject-object-verb sentences. The result is a terse, non-descriptive and non-characterized outline of the action."²⁰ Characterization tends to be indirect, derived from the characters' actions. Amir Gilan explores the dragon-slayer myth in its iterations over centuries and observes that while the structure of the myth is usually retained, the meanings the structure conveys vary greatly because of a multitude of factors.²¹ In theme and function the *Illuyanka* narratives resemble other texts connected to agricultural rites such as the "Disappearing Deity Texts."²² Yet despite these similarities and the instruction at the beginning of the text to reenact the narrative at the *Purulli* festival each year, no mention is made of negative communal consequences of the Serpent's having injured and incapacitated the Storm-god. This suggests that the narrative can be primarily designated as a revenge narrative whose focus is the revenge act comprising the Storm-god's effort to regain his power and prestige.

13.2.1 WRONG

The Serpent has no dialogue; hence, assessment of his character is based solely on his behavior. The absence of dialogue and a proper name indicate that to a certain extent the Serpent must be viewed in light of the imagery of the serpent or dragon in the ancient world.²³ The serpent in ANE texts has been described by Green as a metamorphosis of a benevolent and life-sustaining force to one that is hostile and must be kept at bay.²⁴ In a battle that represents the regeneration of

²⁰ Bert De Vries, "The Style of Hittite Epic and Mythology" (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 1967), 66.

²¹ A. Gilan, "Once upon a Time in Kiškiluša—The Dragon-Slayer Myth in Central Anatolia," in *Creation and Chaos: A Reconsideration of Hermann Gunkel's Chaos Kampf Hypothesis* (eds. Richard H. Beal and Jo Ann Scurlock; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 98.

²² Hoffner Jr., "A Brief Commentary on the Hittite Illuyanka Myth (CTH 321)," 129; Esmā Reyhan, "The Missing God Telipinu Myth: A Chapter from the Ancient Anatolian Mythology," *Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi* 28, no. 45 (2009): 86. The Disappearing Deity Texts are a class of texts which seek to explain the cyclical agricultural phenomena through the mythology of an angry god who has inexplicably left his or her post, thus causing a natural disaster or other undesirable occurrence in the natural world.

²³ Katz, "How to Be a Dragon in Indo-European: Hittite Illuyankaš and Its Linguistic and Cultural Congeners in Latin, Greek, and Germanic" and Oettinger, "Die Indogermanischen Wörter Für 'Schlange,'" 279–80 both trace the etymology of Illuyanka to general nouns related to "eel," "snake," or "dragon". Robert D. Miller, "Tracking the Dragon across the Ancient Near East," 226–28; Mehri Bagheri, "The Myth of the Fettered Dragon," in *Dynamics of Tradition: Perspectives on Oral Poetry and Folk Belief; Essays in Honour of Anna-Leena Siikala on Her 60th Birthday* (ed. Lotte Tarkka; Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2003), 186–87.

²⁴ Green, *The Storm-God in the Ancient Near East*, 150–51.

life over chaos, the Serpent's unprovoked attack, which appears in both versions, is assumed to be unjustified and therefore deserving of vengeance.²⁵

As a story with national ramifications playing out in the realm of an individual, the *Illuyanka* narrative is reminiscent of the HB's Samson narrative. Both stories lack any description of the communal consequences to the disabling of the hero; both connect the hero's restoration with communal interests. Furthermore, Hittite documents describe how the blind were forced to take part in degrading religious rituals and were forced to serve in the mills,²⁶ fates that Samson suffered. As mentioned above, both versions of the myth depict the Serpent disabling the Storm-god, reducing his honor and capability. In the second version, the removal of the Storm-god's eyes and heart adds further humiliation. Like Hittite literature, HB narratives portray a blind person as someone who can be easily tricked, as Isaac was by Rebekah and Jacob (Genesis 27). Captives were sometimes punished with blindness as is seen with Samson (Jud 16:21) and King Zedekiah (II Kgs 25:7), and HB imprecations demonstrate that blindness exposed the person to society's unsavory elements:

The Lord will afflict you with madness, blindness, and confusion of mind; you shall grope about at noon as blind people grope in darkness, but you shall be unable to find your way, and you shall be continually abused and robbed, without anyone to help. (Deut 28:28-29)

Listing blindness with confusion and abuse signifies the severity of removing someone's eyes.

13.2.2 COUNCIL

The Storm-god relies on others, even underlings. In the first version, the gods are summoned to Inara's home in order to lure the Serpent to the feast and to show backing for the Storm-god as he battles the Serpent. In the second version, the Storm-god instructs his son to retrieve his stolen organs from the Serpent. Although the Storm-god depends on others' assistance, he does not ask them for advice or approval. Instead of being a source of authorization, COUNCIL serves here as a means of procuring the support of lesser gods or of mortals, much as Jezebel's use of the "scoundrels" from whom she required aid, not approval. The specific circumstances of this tale notwithstanding, consulting with official bodies conveys an appearance of legitimacy, even when authorization or permission is not the purpose.

13.2.3 PLAN

Because the Storm-god's dialogue is limited to a single command in each version of the narrative, he, like the Serpent, must be assessed through his actions. These include the use of deception and trickery, violations of the social code, but his image appears untarnished nonetheless, perhaps because of the ample grounds for his vengeance. Bryce notes that sins against a god would

²⁵ Bryce, *Life and Society in the Hittite World*, 216.

²⁶ Yasemin Arikan, "The Blind in Hittite Documents," *Altorientalische Forschungen* 33, no. 1 (2006): 148–51; Beal, "Disabilities from Head to Foot in Hittite Civilization," 38–40.

incur the god's full wrath; moreover, the Storm-god acts as a god of justice on behalf of others and thus cannot be expected to tolerate offenses to his own honor.²⁷

In HB narratives, deception as a tactic in a REVENGE ACT is often successful, but not without consequences. Simeon and Levi deceive Shechem to retrieve their sister and avenge her rape; they are reprovved by their father at the time (Gen 34:30) and in his final words (Gen 49:5-7). Joab's murder of Abner (II Sam 3:26-27) and Amasa (II Sam 20:9-10) involves deception; he is rebuked by David at the time (II Sam 3:39) and in David's final instructions to his son Solomon (I Kgs 2:5-6). Propp argues that because Absalom used deception — incurring a negative valence — to effect his murder of Amnon in retaliation for the rape of Tamar, his death at Joab's hands is not listed among the crimes for which Joab is to be punished.²⁸

The Storm-god's other tactics invite a positive judgment. In both versions, the PLAN requires wisdom, knowledge of local customs, strategic thinking, and tremendous patience.²⁹ The Storm-god makes use of family members (his daughter Inara in the first version and his son in the second) as essential Allies despite the generations-long planning this entailed. He is willing to marry the daughter of a poor mortal, sire a son, and then bide his time — blind and without a heart — while the son grows up and marries the Serpent's daughter. No HB revenge narrative entails a comparable level of planning, even Absalom's vengeance on Amnon, for which he waited two years. The Storm-god's ability to manage his offended pride and rage is unique among ANE and HB Avengers.

13.2.4 ACQUISITION OF AN ALLY

As the daughter of the disgraced Storm-god, Inara helps her father regain his former stature.³⁰ Inara becomes the protagonist of the story, much like Esther in her role as Mordechai's Ally to thwart Haman's proposed genocide. The narrative is unclear regarding whether the PLAN for the feast of the gods was Inara's or her father's but, like Esther, Inara spares no effort or expense. Inara herself seeks to ACQUIRE AN ALLY, underscoring the importance of this function in ANE revenge narratives. Hupašiya's assistance is crucial to the success of the PLAN, so she, a loyal daughter, readily agrees to the terms he proposes. In the second version, the Storm-god's son serves as an unwitting Ally. Conceived for this purpose, his consent was neither sought nor necessary. As a member of the Storm-god's household, he is loyal to his father, procuring the eyes and heart as requested, but upon his marriage he shifts his loyalty to his father-in-law as the

²⁷ Bryce, *Life and Society in the Hittite World*, 139–40; 218–19.

²⁸ Propp, "Kinship in 2 Samuel 13," 48–53.

²⁹ Collins, *The Hittites and Their World*, 124, details the adoption process of a son-in-law as a son in a family which lacked an heir (see above); Bryce, *Life and Society in the Hittite World*, 140, notes that divine vengeance in the Hittite world could be taken not only on the offending party, but also on his wife, children, slaves or possessions.

³⁰ Hoffner Jr., "A Brief Commentary on the Hittite Illuyanka Myth," 126.

antiyanza marriage custom requires and dies along with the Serpent. The son possesses an Ally's essential quality: loyalty.

As we have seen, HB Avengers do not seek Allies. For example, Saul's revenge on the priests of Nob for their aid to David depends on information Doeg the Edomite offers after Saul's servants fail to provide it (I Sam 22:6-10). Even then, Saul does not enlist Doeg's aid until after his guards refuse his order to kill the priests. Despite having a willing would-be Ally, Saul only accepts his help as a last resort. Gideon does not require the aid of Jether, his young son, and his attempt to make an Ally of Jether ends ignominiously when the lad is too afraid to commit the act (Jud 8:20-21). Absalom recruits groups of anonymous fighters to help him carry out his vengeance, but none receives special mention in the text (II Sam 13:28-29). Jezebel's revenge against Naboth depends on the aid of "scoundrels" who bear false testimony against Naboth, but they, too, are anonymous and their outstanding characteristic is their dishonesty, an undesirable trait in an Ally (I Kgs 21:5-7). These HB cases differ from their ANE counterparts in which the Ally, who is often a dependable advisor to the Avenger, is essential to the success of the revenge. Unlike those HB narratives that do include an Ally, the ACQUISITION OF AN ALLY in ANE revenge narratives is not the natural development of a pre-existing relationship but fills the role specifically for the sake of the revenge act. Allies are sought or created, and are expected to display loyalty to whichever side they are on, even if they are forced to switch sides mid-way through the narrative. The Storm-god displays neither surprise nor dismay at his son's new allegiance; it seems to have been a foregone conclusion. This reflects the perspective of ANE narratives, in which avenging an offense to honor is valued above any person or relationship. Sacrifices are expected from both sides, as is demonstrated by the Storm-god's son, whose marriage to the Serpent's daughter forced him to ally and die with his father-in-law. The ACQUISITION OF AN ALLY solely to achieve revenge displays the aversion in ANE narratives to avenging a WRONG alone. Relying on a human Ally may serve to emphasize the belief that order in the cosmos is achieved by partnership between gods and mortals.³¹ Yet the Ally's demise also highlights the mortal's expendability.

13.2.5 COMPLICITY

The Serpent traditionally represents the forces of darkness, blindness, and evil,³² an image reinforced in the *Illuyanka* narrative by the Serpent's emergence from his hole (§10-11), a dark, dank place that admits neither light nor justice. The Serpent only emerges to attend the feast Inara

³¹ Beckman, "The Anatolian Myth of Illuyanka," 24.

³² Bryce, *Life and Society in the Hittite World*, 216; Ahmet Ünal, "Parts of Trees in Hittite According to a Medical Incantation Text (KUB 43.62)," in *Hittite and Other Anatolian and Near Eastern Studies in Honour of Sedat Alp*, (ed. Heinrich Otten et al.; Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basimevi, 1992), 498-99. Ünal discusses the Hittite belief that fire (often seen as evil due to its destructive potential) hides in darkness and perishes in the Netherworld until it is revived. The lair of Illuyanka has been described as the entrance to this dark realm.

has prepared and falls asleep in his drunkenness, which represents another kind of darkness. He is COMPLICIT in his own downfall, kept “in the dark” regarding the true purpose of the feast in the first version and regarding the true identity of his son-in-law in the second version. His attempt to disable the Storm-god by stealing his eyes is thwarted by his own “blindness” to the trap that the blinded Storm-god has laid for him. In addition, Ḫupašiya is hidden so that the Serpent does not *see* him until Ḫupašiya binds the Serpent. The word for darkness, *kukku*, is used as an appellation for the netherworld, conferring negative valence on the literal and figurative darkness in which the Serpent resides and making him a dark, negative force. This characterization reinforces the notion that the Serpent deserves to be the object of violent revenge.³³

Entering enemy territory and overindulging at the feast, the Serpent is COMPLICIT by making himself helpless and vulnerable. Shechem is similarly COMPLICIT in his own demise at the hands of Simeon and Levi when his blind rush to accept the terms they impose on him renders him and his fellow residents vulnerable to attack (Genesis 34). In addition, alcohol, though used in the rites of nearly all ancient religions, was known to be a source of trouble and cause for poor decision-making; images of drunkenness and gluttony often accompany the downfall of the wicked.³⁴ The Serpent’s over-indulgence at the feast to the point that he can no longer fit into his hole, and his resultant slumber in the home of Inara, gives the impression of a stupid, gluttonous creature who is too greedy for his own good.³⁵

In both versions of the narrative, the Serpent is COMPLICIT in ways that show him to lack intelligence.³⁶ He is incautious despite having enemies. He drinks to excess in the first version and fails to investigate the background of his daughter’s suitor in the second. The failure to be vigilant in HB narratives similarly serves to lessen sympathy for the Avenger. Like Inara, Absalom knows that the Avenger, Amnon, will overindulge at the celebration; his PLAN depends on it (II Sam 13:28). Amnon’s inability to control his physical desires (witnessed in his rape of Tamar) is a character flaw, not a one-time occurrence. Similarly, in spite of his experience with power, intrigue, and betrayal, Haman attends Esther’s parties in a state of inappropriate self-assurance and falls prey to her PLAN. Jael entices Sisera to enter her tent and drink milk, which affects him like an alcoholic beverage, lulling him to sleep (Jud 4:17-21).³⁷ Drinking may be commonplace, but drinking in enemy territory is a fatal error.

³³ Civil et al., *CAD*, 8:498; Sinclair, “Colour Symbolism in Ancient Mesopotamia,” 23, 28; Macqueen, “Hittian Mythology and Hittite Monarchy,” *Anatolian Studies* 9 (1959):172-173.

³⁴ Mark Keller, “A Historical Overview of Alcohol and Alcoholism,” *Cancer Research* 39, no. 7, part 2 (1979): 2823; Choon Leong Seow, “Hosea 14:10 and the Foolish People Motif,” *CBQ* 44, no. 2 (1982): 217.

³⁵ Hatice Gonnet, “Institution d’un Culte Chez Les Hittites,” *Anatolica* 14 (1987): 93–95.

³⁶ Hoffner Jr., “A Brief Commentary on the Hittite Illuyanka Myth,” 125. Hoffner argues against this as it would diminish from the Storm-god’s ultimate victory if his opponent were dense and foolish.

³⁷ See Cant. 5:1, “...I have drunk my wine with my milk...”

In the second version, the Serpent's failure to detect the son of his enemy, his new son-in-law, results in his downfall. A similar lack of due diligence is seen in Haman's failure to uncover Esther's nationality (Esth 7:6) and in Samson's misplaced trust in a member of the Philistine nation (Judges 16). In these cases, the downfall of the Avengees is due at least in part to their COMPLICITY, which accords the reader some satisfaction that justice has been served.

As mentioned above, the Serpent's sleep puts him in a compromised position. Sleep in ANE narratives is seen as a prerogative of the deities; deprivation of rest constituted grounds for revenge.³⁸ Here we see that misappropriated sleep incapacitates the sleeper. The drunken sleep of the Serpent restrains him from action as much as the ropes that Hupašiya uses to bind him. In the HB narrative, Samson's false replies to Delilah regarding the source of his strength edge closer to the truth; both sleep and his hair are mentioned in his third answer, and this indiscretion results in his ruin (Jud 16:4-15). Like the Storm-god literally and the Serpent metaphorically, Samson is blinded, which causes his enemies to underestimate his abilities. The Storm-god and Samson are afforded the opportunity for vengeance despite being blinded, but the Serpent has no second chance at retaliation.³⁹

The Serpent's COMPLICITY in the *Illuyanka* narratives is so far-reaching, extending from sins of gluttony, inebriation, and a lack of caution and due diligence, to sleeping in the enemy's territory, that the Serpent seems like a caricature of a buffoon attacker. HB COMPLICITY, on the other hand, can incriminate an Avengee by showing his contribution to the situation such as a general being overconfident, as with Abner (II Sam 3:26-27), or it can serve as a punishment in itself, even when the punishment (or consequence) seems disproportionate, as with Joseph (Gen 37:16-24). The extreme nature of the Serpent's COMPLICITY suggests that the epic battle is actually between the Storm-god's restraint and knowledge and the Serpent's indulgence and ignorance.

13.2.6 REVENGE ACT

Inara, the Storm-god's daughter, selects Hupašiya to aid in the revenge act. The terms he sets for his cooperation have been alternately explained as hubris or as acquiring the protection he needs to face the Serpent.⁴⁰ These explanations point to a man both confident and cautious, aware of what he needs to vanquish his opponent. Once Hupašiya incapacitates the Serpent, the Storm-god will strike the final blow, but considerable courage is required to bind the Serpent and render him

³⁸ Bernard Frank Batto, "The Sleeping God," 155–56. For more on the motif of divine sleep, see the chapter on Enuma Elish, above.

³⁹ Mobley, Samson and the Liminal Hero in the Ancient Near East, 69.

⁴⁰ See above, Section 13.1.1, note 9.

helpless. This bravery will not last, however, as he ultimately cannot uphold the requirements Inara demands.⁴¹

Binding the Serpent in version 1 fulfills several functions. First, it repays him for having incapacitated the Storm-god. Also, as seen with Marduk's binding of Tiamat in *Enuma Elish*, it humiliates the Avenger. This function — binding to humiliate — appears in HB narratives, often with blinding, but binding is usually committed by the enemy against Israel and does not usually appear in domestic revenge narratives (e.g., Jud 16:21; II Kgs 25:7; Jer 40:1). Hanson observes that the motif of blindness, figurative or literal, is an element of the “punishment” in a divine rebellion and demonstrates that things are not always what they seem. The Storm-god avenges his being blinded by the Serpent by creating a situation in which the Serpent is blind to the trap he has entered. The Serpent's humiliation lies in his failure to see what is before him, as well as in being bound. As the Storm-god proves, those who are worthy see with more than their eyes, whereas the unworthy fail to see even with their eyes.⁴² Revenge in the *Illuyanka* narrative restores the honor and eyes of the Storm-god, but in an important sense, he never loses his vision.

13.2.7 AFTERMATH

Inara's role in upholding principles is reinforced in the AFTERMATH, especially when contrasted to her unfaithful Ally, Ḫupašiya. She shows no emotion when she agrees to Ḫupašiya's condition, and she shows none during his punishment. She defends the honor of her fellow deities, even when Ḫupašiya's loyalty fades. Though courageous in binding the Serpent, Ḫupašiya loses heart when he faces the reality of what he has relinquished in exchange for glory among the gods, and he suffers for his betrayals (first of his wife and children, and then of Inara).

The roles of Ally and Avenger are laden with expectations for conduct, and failure to meet these standards usually results in severe consequences. Atherton, in his discussion of Japanese vendetta fiction, describes the Avenger's liminal state as being “simultaneously of two worlds, but wholly of neither.”⁴³ Ḫupašiya, both mortal and a consort of the gods, is like Samson, the HB Avenger who moves between Philistine and Israelite societies, and he suffers a similar fate.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Ora Brison, “Aggressive Goddesses, Abusive Men: Gender Role Change in Near Eastern Mythology,” *Studi Micenei Ed Egeo-Anatolici* 49 (2007): 69.

⁴² Paul D. Hanson, “Rebellion in Heaven, Azazel, and Euhemeristic Heroes in 1 Enoch 6-11,” *JBL* 96, no. 2 (1977): 222.

⁴³ Atherton, “Valences of Vengeance,” 59. Atherton looks at the disruptive nature of vengeance as seen during the shogunate period in early-modern Japanese fiction (1600-1868) and the ability of the Avenger to rejoin society upon the completion of his task.

⁴⁴ Mobley, *Samson and the Liminal Hero in the Ancient Near East*, 28; Esther J. Hamori, “When Gods Were Men”: The Embodied God in Biblical and Near Eastern Literature, (*Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 384; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), 148.

13.3 Conclusions

The *Illuyanka* revenge narratives illustrate the weight given in that culture to the presence and qualities of Allies. Allies are useful inasmuch as they demonstrate fealty to the Avenger. Even the bonds of family are less powerful than the loyalty of the Ally. Inara does not hesitate to punish Ḫupašiya, and the Storm-god does not withhold death from his son. In both versions of the narrative, the death of the human or half-human Ally occurs despite the essential aid he provided.⁴⁵ A comparable loyalty is expected by the HB Avenger Saul, who demands that his son Jonathan be his Ally in his vendetta against David. When Jonathan refuses, Saul tries to slay his son. Doeg, who offered himself to Saul as Ally, is asked to demonstrate his fealty by murdering the 85 priests of Nob. Unlike Avengers in ANE narratives, Saul did not specifically acquire Doeg or Jonathan, and a negative valence is attached to the expectation of unquestioning loyalty.

Human partners who are ALLIES in ANE revenge narratives are expected to know their place and to be aware of the inherent danger in being familiar with the gods.⁴⁶ Even as it benefits the gods, the participation of mortals in godly acts of revenge endangers their lives. In addition to the dangers posed by the revenge act itself, the human Allies' self-perception becomes distorted, resulting in a presumptuousness that can cause the mortals to forget their place and its attendant limitations. Although largely absent from HB revenge narratives, an easy acceptance of "collateral damage" in the form of unintended casualties, especially of human Allies, appears as an intrinsic aspect of revenge in ANE narratives. The Storm-god's son is bound to his new wife's family and so he perishes with them, with little accompanying emotion. Ḫupašiya fails to grasp that his status is irrevocably altered after his participation in the gods' vengeance, that he cannot return to his former life, and so he, too, perishes.

The ANE revenge narratives emphasize the function of COMPLICITY far more than the HB narratives. The Avenger's gluttony and drunkenness, lack of perception, and incaution juxtapose knowledge and ignorance, directing the readers' (and society's) assessment of the revenge act. COMPLICITY, at its root, is the failure to assess a situation. This failure leads to a power imbalance that the heroes of the narrative must restore.

Though many of its external features mark the *Illuyanka* narrative as a mythological paradigm for the cyclical earthly seasons, its structural details prove it to be the story of a WRONG and its subsequent REVENGE. Elements such as the involvement of human Allies and the harm they incur, the use of deception, and the role of culpability reflect the distinctive ethos and beliefs of

⁴⁵ Walter Burkert, *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual*; (Sather Classical Lectures 47; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 5–10. Burkert comments that the mortal's death is "unique, paradoxical and disconcerting...and [it is not] clear why this was unavoidable." (Ḫupašiya's death is assumed here, see above, note 10. Though even if he were exiled from Inara's home, this still represents an inability to fully integrate into his new reality.)

⁴⁶ Hoffner and Beckman, *Hittite Myths*, 229; Collins, *The Hittites and Their World*, 150–51.

the society in which these narratives developed. HB narratives of revenge likewise reflect their culture's values through their implicit warnings of the effects of revenge on the Avenger and Avengee, the negative valence attached to deception and humiliation, and the absence of any requirement for Allies to comprise part of the Avenger's PLAN. We also see that Avengers in the HB are expected to accomplish their task and return to society. Those who are unable to do so, like Samson, are judged as having failed, at least in part. Likewise, HB Avengers who avenge solely for personal reasons, whatever their social or political standing, face grave difficulties returning to society.

Chapter 14

14.0 *Aqhat*¹

The Ugaritic Tale of *Aqhat* tells the story of the pious but childless Dan'el and his successful application to the gods for a son. The son, Aqhat, is also favored by the gods, but becomes the object of the goddess Anat's jealousy, and ultimately, of her wrathful vengeance. The tale demonstrates a full revenge cycle: Anat's vengeance on Aqhat for refusing her request is repaid by Aqhat's sister, Pughat, who avenges her brother's murder.

The sole copy of the narrative was discovered at Ras Shamras. The text appears on three tablets that are severely damaged, creating lacunae in the narrative. Various attempts to reconstruct the tale have been made using the text itself, biblical narratives, and other ancient Near East narratives texts.² Despite the missing details, the tale's basic structure is complete enough to warrant its inclusion in the present study as an investigation of the "large scale components" of texts that are the elements least affected by the lacunae.³ The presumed revenge and the reactions it elicits are entirely missing in the second episode; however, the tale contains an act of blood vengeance as well as a narrative structure that is consistently maintained until the point where the tablet is broken. Parker shows the close structural parallels of *Aqhat* and the apocryphal *Book of Judith*, and on that basis, concludes that Yatpan is killed,⁴ a more defensible scenario than other proposed endings such as Yatpan killing Pughat or Pughat striking a truce with her brother's murderer.

Table 24 Morphology - *Aqhat*

FUNCTION	SOURCE	ACTION
EPISODE 1		
Initial Scene	1.17.I.1-II.46, 1.17.V.3-39	Dan'el beseeches the gods for a child. Ba'al intercedes, appealing to El, and Aqhat is

¹ I have used the translation of *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, (ed. Simon B. Parker; trans. Mark S. Smith et al.; Writings from the Ancient World 9; Atlanta: Scholars, 1997), 49-80, while also consulting those of Margalit, *The Ugaritic Poem of Aqht*; Natan-Yulzary, "Contrast and Meaning in the Aqhat Story"; Wright, *Ritual in Narrative*; Kenneth T. Aitken, *The Aqhat Narrative: A Study in the Narrative Structure and Composition of an Ugaritic Tale* (Journal of Semitic Studies Monograph Series 13; Manchester: University of Manchester, 1990). Studies of ritual include: Wright, *Ritual in Narrative*; Wayne T. Pitard, "The Reading of KTU 1.19: III: 41: The Burial of Aqhat," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 293, no. 1 (1994): 31-38; For thematic and motif-based comparisons with HB narratives, see Nick Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit* (The Biblical Seminar 53; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2002); Simon B. Parker, "Ugaritic Literature and the Bible," *Near Eastern Archaeology* 63, no. 4 (2000): 228-31; Mark S. Smith, "Biblical Narrative between Ugaritic and Akkadian Literature: Part I: Ugarit and the Hebrew Bible: Consideration of Comparative Research," *Revue Biblique* 114, no. 1 (2007) 5-29. Chloe T. Sun, *The Ethics of Violence in the Ugaritic "Story of Aqhat,"* (Gorgias Dissertations 34; Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2008), discusses violence in general in the narrative, though not exclusively vengeance.

² Margalit, *The Ugaritic Poem of Aqht*, 167-68, utilizes stylistic features such as repetition and patterning, poetic structure and formulaic type scenes, as well as meter and alliteration to justify his more "energetic" "conjectural restorations"; Parker, *The Pre-Biblical Narrative Tradition*, 4-5, argues for a more conservative approach to detailed restorations, and favors broader hypotheses regarding damaged or missing sections of the text.

³ Parker, *The Pre-Biblical Narrative Tradition*, 99-100.

⁴ Parker, *The Pre-Biblical Narrative Tradition*, 131-33.

		conceived and born. Kotharof Khasis presents the gift of a bow to Aqhat.
WRONG	1.17.VI.4-25	Aqhat declines Anat's offer of silver and gold in exchange for his bow.
WRONG	1.17.VI.25-38	Aqhat declines Anat's offer of immortality in exchange for his bow. He claims she is lying, as he will certainly die.
WRONG	1.17.VI.39-41	Aqhat insults Anat, claiming that bows are for male warriors.
REACTION TO WRONG	1.17.VI.41-42 1.17.VI.42-46	Anat laughs while plotting. Anat threatens Aqhat.
COUNCIL	1.17.VI.46-53 1.18.I.6-14 1.18.I.15-20	Anat seeks permission from El to take vengeance on Aqhat. After an apparent refusal, Anat threatens El. El acquiesces to Anat's demand.
PLAN	1.18.I.20-	Anat offers to teach Aqhat how to hunt.
COMPLICITY		Aqhat agrees to go on a hunt with Anat. ⁵
ACQUISITION OF ALLY	1.18.IV.5-15	Anat employs Yatpan the Sutean warrior to ambush and kill Aqhat.
PLAN	1.18.IV.16-27	Anat explains the plan to Yatpan.
REVENGE	1.18.IV.27-37	Yatpan kills Aqhat.
AFTERMATH	1.18.IV.37- 1.19.I.15	Anat expresses remorse and weeps for Aqhat. The bow is broken and lost.
EPISODE 2		
Initial Scene	1.19.I.19-II.25	Dan'el judges at the city gate. Pughat recognizes and weeps over the calamity of the drought. Dan'el tears his robe and entreats the clouds.
WRONG reported	1.19.II.27-44	Messengers arrive with news of Aqhat's murder.
REACTION TO WRONG	1.19.II.45- IV.25	Dan'el cries out and curses those birds that consumed his son's remains. He calls upon Ba'al to help him inspect the innards of the birds for human remains. He finds the remains on the third attempt and reburies them, again cursing any bird that disturbs Aqhat's grave. Dan'el curses three locations in the vicinity of the murder. Dan'el mourns for Aqhat for seven years and then sends the mourners home and brings offerings to the gods.
COUNCIL	1.19.IV.25-40	Pughat requests and receives Dan'el's permission to avenge Aqhat's murder.
PLAN	1.19.IV.41-50	Pughat disguises and arms herself in preparation to avenge her brother's death.
COMPLICITY	1.19.IV.51-61	Yatpan invites Pughat to enter his camp, drinks to the point of intoxication, and boasts of murdering Aqhat.

⁵ The text is absent, but the continuation of the story leaves no doubt that Aqhat willingly accompanied Anat on the hunting expedition.

Here the tablets are broken, and the rest of the tale is lost to us.

14.1 *Establishing the Morphology*

The first episode begins with an extended initial scene that depicts Dan'el as a righteous man who brings offerings to the gods, but who longs for a son. Ba'al intercedes for Dan'el, presenting El with a list of filial duties a son does for his father; the list is repeated four times throughout the narrative (1.17.I.15-33; 42-48; 1.17.II.1-8; 14-23). El agrees, Dan'el is informed and sacrifices to the Katharat, fertility goddesses associated with conception, and finally Aqhat is born to Dan'el and his wife, Danatiya. After a lacuna in the tablets, Dan'el is shown judging cases at the gate, after which the family is visited by Kothar wa-Khasis, the divine craftsman. Dan'el greets Kothar with a respect reminiscent of Abraham's greeting to his divine visitors (Genesis 18), and Kothar presents Aqhat with a bow (1.17.I.1-V.39). This scene establishes Dan'el as a pious individual who does not deserve to suffer and highlights the centrality of intertwining personal and cultic duties.⁶ Ironically, these duties will be fulfilled by Dan'el's daughter, not his son.

Anat, the goddess of war, covets the bow and asks Aqhat to give it to her in return for silver (1.17.VI.4-19):

4-5 [] with salt[ed kn]ife [a cutlet of fatling.]
5-6 She drinks the wine by flagons, the vines' blood from goblets of gold, [-]
10 Raising her eyes she sees, [-]
13[] she longs for the bow
14[] her eye(s) like a snake ...
15-16 On the earth [she empties her flagon(?)], her goblet she pours [on the ground].
15 [She raises her voice] and cries:
16 "Attend, now, [Aqhat the Hero],
17-18 Ask me for silver-I'll give it, [For gold and I'll end]ow you:
18-19 Give [Anat the Girl] your bow, the sister of LIMM your arrows."

Aqhat declines the goddess's offer and advises her to bring the raw materials to Kothar to make her another bow (1.18.VI.20-25). Anat wants Aqhat's bow, and she continues her efforts, next offering immortality (1.18.VI.25-33):

25-26 Anat the Girl answers:
26-28 "Ask for life, Aqhat the Hero. Ask for life. and I'll give it; deathlessness--I'll endow you.
28-29 I'll let you count years with Baal, count months with the offspring of El.
30-31 As Baal revives, then invites, invites the revived to drink,
31-32 Trills and sings over him, with pleasant tune they respond:
32-33 So I'll revive Aqhat the Hero."

Aqhat has no faith in Anat's offers, though it is not clear whether he doubts her intentions — in which case he insults her integrity — or her abilities, in which case he insults her powers as a deity,

⁶ Mark J. Boda, "Ideal Sonship in Ugarit," *UF* 25 (1993): 23; John F. Healey, "The Pietas of an Ideal Son in Ugarit," *Ugarit-Forschungen. Internationales Jahrbuch Für Die Altertumskunde Syrien-Palästinas Neukirchen-Vluyn* 11 (1979): 353-56.

or both (1.18.VI.33-41). In addition, he insults her status as a warrior by claiming that the bow is a man's weapon:

39-41 Bows are [weapons of(?)] warriors. Will womankind now be hunting?"

The refusals and the insults constitute a composite WRONG, an affront to Anat's honor. As noted previously, Propp states that morphological functions may be trebled for purposes of emphasis, as they are here. Even if the WRONG is not cause for wrathful vengeance, Aqhat would have been wise not to provoke the goddess, who is accustomed to having her desires fulfilled and her status honored without question.

Anat begins plotting her vengeance after demonstrating her REACTION TO THE WRONG: derisive laughter and a threat that she will destroy Aqhat. Interestingly, Anat acknowledges his cleverness in their verbal spar and will later mourn the loss of this worthy adversary (1.18.VI.41-45):

41-42 Anat laughed out loud, but inwardly she plotted []:

42-43 "Come back, Aqhat the Hero, come back to me, [I will warn(?)] you:

43-44 If I meet you in the paths of rebellion, [Find you(?)] in the paths of pride,

44-45 I will fell you under [my feet], finest, cleverest of fellows!"

She travels to El's abode for a COUNCIL at which she requests, then demands, permission to avenge (1.17.VI.46-1.18.I.20). Though there is a lacuna in the text, it seems that El's initial reaction was to refuse, and when the text resumes, Anat is threatening El with bloody violence should he not grant her permission: "I'll make [your head] run [with blood], your old gre[y bea]rd with gore" (1.18.I.11-12). El acknowledges that it is futile to refuse his strong-willed daughter, information that is intended for Aqhat and himself. Indeed, Anat is characterized through her words and actions as violent and impetuous, overindulging in alcohol (1.17.VI.5-6) and snakelike (1.17.VI.14) — in short, a self-righteous Avenger.⁷ El finally acquiesces to Anat's request despite his better judgment⁸ because he knows that she will not rest until she is avenged.

By maligning Aqhat and threatening El, Anat receives permission to put her PLAN into action. She befriends Aqhat and teaches him how to hunt; she also ACQUIRES AN ALLY, the human Yatpan, a mercenary who will kill Aqhat for her. Anat informs Yatpan of the PLAN: She will transform him into a bird and drop him into a flock of birds of prey circling above a feast in which Aqhat is a participant, whereupon Yatpan will attack Aqhat and steal his bow. The PLAN is implemented, Aqhat is killed, and the precious bow is either broken or lost. Aqhat's agreement to attend a feast with Anat, thereby exposing himself to Yatpan, constitutes his COMPLICITY, as does his acceptance of Anat's offer of a hunting lesson in which he will use the very bow she so

⁷ Natan-Yulzary, "Contrast and Meaning in the Aqhat Story," 442.

⁸ Kenneth T. Aitken, "Structure and Theme in the Aqhat Narrative" (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1978), 174.

covets. Anat's threats, said directly to Aqhat (1.17.VI.42-46), makes the COMPLICITY of Aqhat all the more damning and indicates that he is guilty of hubris or an unheroic naivete.

The REVENGE is accomplished (1.18.IV.27-37), but the surprising AFTERMATH shows Anat to be remorseful, mourning and performing funerary rites instead of boasting of her superiority (1.19.I.7-19). Margalit suggests that despite Anat's efforts to suppress her feminine side in favor of her warrior identity, she behaves like any woman, growing fond of Aqhat and weeping over his death.⁹ Wright, however, notes that as a warrior, Anat mourns the loss of a future hero who possessed great potential. Moreover, she grieves for the lost bow, but focuses more of her attention on the loss of life and vigor her rage caused.¹⁰

Anat's expressive mourning is unexpected and leads to the transfer of any residual guilt to Yatpan. Like the human ally Hupašiya in the *Illuyanka* myth, Yatpan's involvement with a deity causes him much suffering. In this case, the Ally suffers at the hands of Pughat, Aqhat's sister. Yatpan commits his own act of COMPLICITY by inviting Pughat, who is disguised, into his camp. Ironically, the hubris of men leads to vengeance that demonstrates the valor of women.

The first act of vengeance precipitates a second act of vengeance, depicted in the second episode in which Pughat wreaks revenge on Yatpan for her brother's death. Anat's revenge on Aqhat is considered unjust because in refusing to hand over his bow, Aqhat has not violated a divine law but merely committed a personal affront that does not warrant such a harsh punishment.¹¹ Parallels between the two episodes begin with the Initial Scenes, which testify to the pious nature of Dan'el. In the first episode, he entreats the gods for a son; in the second, he sits at the gate, judging the cases of unfortunate members of society, and unaware of his son's death. His piety underscores the pathos of his son's murder and the justice of his daughter's cause.¹² Pughat, Dan'el's daughter, weeps internally because of the hawks that circle ominously above her father's home. Her heightened sensitivity foreshadows the important role she will play in resolving the crisis.

In the wake of Aqhat's death, a severe drought ensues. Pughat understands that it is a bad omen even before news of Aqhat's death arrives. The drought continues for seven years when Dan'el instructs Pughat to ready the donkey for an inspection of the fields. The father expresses his dual hope for the rejuvenation of the land and the return of his son, but Pughat notices the approaching messengers and the lack of "peace in [their] gait." Only when the messengers proclaim

⁹ Margalit, *The Ugaritic Poem of Aqht*, 337.

¹⁰ Wright, *Ritual in Narrative*, 155-6.

¹¹ Parker, *The Pre-Biblical Narrative Tradition*, 138-39.

¹² O'Connor, "The Keret Legend and the Prologue-Epilogue of Job-A Postscript," 240, points out the affinities between the righteous Job and the pious Danel, both of whom suffer seemingly unjust fates at the hands of a non-human actant.

that “Aqhat the hero is dead!” does Dan’el understand and cry out for his dead son (1.19.I.18-II.48).¹³ An extended REACTION TO THE WRONG extending over four columns includes a variety of funeral rites — the same rites listed in the narrative’s opening scene as part of a son’s duty to his father— performed by Dan’el for his son Aqhat. Vayntrub notes:

The first couplet gives primacy to the most significant of the duties of a son towards his father, the guiding reason for having a son: that he may perform acts of memorialization so that the father’s presence and personhood may persist beyond his lifetime. These are socially meaningful acts that symbolically designate the son as acting, and ultimately existing, *in place* of the father. The first named activity, “rais[ing] up the stela of his father’s god...the votive emblem of his clan,” outlines an act of duty which is the *most enduring*.¹⁴

Because of Aqhat’s murder, the duties of the wished-for son must be carried out by the daughter, Pughat. The poignancy of Aqhat’s death is even greater when contrasted with the expectations established at the beginning of the narrative and serves to legitimize the revenge against Anat and Yatpan.

Still in the field, Dan’el notices the circling birds circling. He pleads with Baal to break their wings; Baal accedes, causing them to fall to Earth whereupon Dan’el splits them open to check for Aqhat’s remains. In his first two attempts, Dan’el finds the birds’ stomachs empty, and as a faithful steward of nature and fairness, Dan’el asks Baal to repair the birds and sends them off again. On the third attempt, however, Dan’el finds Aqhat’s remains, buries them (1.19.II.56-III.41), and then pleads with Baal again to protect his son’s grave by breaking the wings of birds that interrupt Aqhat’s eternal sleep (1.18.42-44). Next Dan’el turns to the three towns in the vicinity of the murder and curses each one with leprosy, famine, and blindness. Finally, Dan’el can return home to begin the formal mourning (1.18.III.45-IV.7), a seven-years’ process, after which he sends the professional mourners home and offers a meal to the gods, signaling the official end of the mourning period (1.19.IV.8-27).

At this point, Pughat approaches Dan’el regarding the possibility of revenge. Her request stands in sharp contrast to Anat’s violent demand of her father, El, in the first episode. Each daughter begs her father for permission to avenge a wrong and receives her father’s blessing to do so. Unlike Anat, however, Pughat approaches her father with deference, following protocol in spite of having waited seven years to avenge her brother’s murder (1.19.IV.28-40).

Pughat develops a PLAN, washing and disguising herself before entering the enemy camp (1.19.IV.40-61). Pughat’s disguise mirrors that of Yatpan, who was disguised as a bird when he

¹³ Sun, *The Ethics of Violence in the Ugaritic “Story of Aqhat,”* 135–36; Wright, *Ritual in Narrative*, 160. discuss the contrast between Pughat’s perceptiveness and Danel’s lack thereof.

¹⁴ Jacqueline Vayntrub, “Transmission and Mortal Anxiety in the Tale of Aqhat,” in *Like ‘Ilu Are You Wise: Studies in Northwest Semitic Languages and Literature in Honor of Dennis G. Pardee*, Oriental Institute Publications., Forthcoming, 15.

killed Aqhat. The final acts of Pughat against Yatpan are unknown because of the damaged tablets, but we know that Pughat's PLAN, like the *Illuyanka* narrative, depends on the COMPLICITY of a human Ally, whose behavior confirms his guilt and the legitimacy of Pughat's impending REVENGE. Like other Allies, Yatpan fails to exercise caution and walks into Pughat's trap. He also boasts of his villainy and claims to be like El, the "master of the camps." Like the Serpent in the *Illuyanka* tale, Yatpan drinks to excess rather than remaining vigilant like a worthy warrior. Despite the similarities in the two episodes, however, the motivations for the respective acts of revenge sharply diverge. One is undertaken for personal gain — the coveted bow — and the second is a familial duty undertaken by a bereaved sister on behalf of her aggrieved father who has spent the past seven years mourning his murdered son.¹⁵

14.2 *Analysis and HB Comparisons*

Although the action in the first episode causes the blood vengeance in the second, the two episodes are separate narratives involving different actants and motivations. This analysis, therefore, will treat each episode separately. Each will be compared to ANE and HB revenge narratives, and then to each other, in order to elucidate the significance of the contrast the author achieved.

14.2.1 *Episode I*

14.2.1.1 *WRONG*

Aqhat's auspicious beginning includes an association with a pious father who is a righteous judge and a list of filial duties that appears many times in the text.¹⁶ These advantages notwithstanding, he denies his bow to the goddess Anat, a perceived WRONG that he exacerbates by replying rudely to her offers. Aqhat's interactions with the goddess show him to be her match in the art of the verbal challenge. He possesses the intellect to ward off her charm, deconstructing each of her proposals and exposing the truth behind her words (1.17.IV.16-41).

Anat, like Jezebel (I Kings 21) is unaccustomed to having her desires go unfulfilled. Although Aqhat, like Naboth, had no obligation to relinquish his prized possession, Anat, like Jezebel, perceives the refusal as insubordination. In denying the request of a deity, Aqhat is deserving of punishment, just as Jezebel believes denying the request of a king is an act deserving of death. Other comparisons can be made with regard to Naboth's "rebellion" against the

¹⁵ Parker, *The Pre-Biblical Narrative Tradition*, 128, notes the elaborate description of the funerary rites and subsequent mourning on the part of Danel as heightening the reader's awareness of the need for vengeance. This is due to the tremendous loss incurred by Aqhat's family.

¹⁶ Healey, "The Pietas of an Ideal Son in Ugarit," 353-354; Boda, "Ideal Sonship in Ugarit" and Rainey, "Family Relationships in Ugarit" demonstrate the inseparable nature of the son's cultic and filial duties. Many of these are explicitly mentioned in the tale and presumably there would be more in the missing columns III-IV of 1.17. Otto Eissfeldt, "Sohnespflichten Im Alten Orient," *Syria* 43, no. 1/2 (1966): 44-45 refers to a "Sohnespflichten-Dodekalog" which the ideal son would be expected to uphold.

monarchy.¹⁷ Ahab is distraught at Naboth's refusal and becomes passive, but the goddess is incensed and springs into action. Both narratives feature an offer to pay for the desired possession (Aqhat's bow, Naboth's field), demonstrating that the individuals who want the object know they don't have the right to confiscate it.¹⁸ While Aqhat, like Naboth, is within his rights to keep his divine gift, his insinuations about Anat's femininity and integrity enrage her (1.17.IV.33-41). Naboth, on the other hand, was comparatively deferential, citing a divine command: "The Lord forbid that I should give you my ancestral inheritance." (I Kgs 21:3). Naboth's refusal was polite but firm; nevertheless, Jezebel's reaction was as harsh as Anat's, demonstrating that while courtesies reflect well on victims, they won't necessarily dissuade aggressors from their course of action. Aqhat's behavior shows him to lack the restraint to hold back until he is confident that he can prevail against the REACTION of a powerful adversary. His boasts are reminiscent of Ga'al's when he attempts to usurp Abimelech's leadership of Shechem. Ga'al's bluff is called by Zebul, administrator of Shechem, who is loyal to Abimelech:

Gaal son of Ebed said, "Who is Abimelech, and who are we of Shechem, that we should serve him? Did not the son of Jerubbaal and Zebul his officer serve the men of Hamor father of Shechem? Why then should we serve him? If only this people were under my command! Then I would remove Abimelech; I would say to him, 'Increase your army, and come out.'" Go out now and fight with them" (Jud 9:28-29, 38).

Ga'al is forced to fight Abimelech in open combat though he is unprepared. This results in the slaughter of many of Ga'al's men. Samson, on the other hand, taunts and provokes the Philistines as a tactic authorized by the Lord: "His father and mother did not know that this was from the Lord; for he was seeking a pretext to act against the Philistines..." (Jud 14:4). Samson is successful in that instance because his provocations, unlike Aqhat's, were divinely sanctioned.

14.2.1.2 REACTION TO THE WRONG

Anat's immediate REACTION TO THE WRONG of being denied the bow and receiving insults to her integrity and status as a warrior demonstrate her self-control. Rather than fly into a rage, she acknowledges the cleverness of Aqhat's verbal spars. At the same time, she promises vengeance, vowing to trample him should they meet again in the future. He is clever, she says, but "not yet wise." Aqhat's focus is on the battle of wits; he does not recognize that his comments have forced the goddess to retaliate.¹⁹ Unlike Tiamat, who erupts in violence upon being goaded by Marduk (*Enuma Elish*, IV, 87-90), Anat's laughter barely conceals her contempt as she threatens

¹⁷ Giorgio Buccellati, "Ethics and Piety in the Ancient Near East," in *Civilization of the Ancient Near East*, vol. 3. (ed. Jack M. Sasson; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2000), 1683.

¹⁸ Sun, *The Ethics of Violence in the Ugaritic "Story of Aqhat,"* 94.

¹⁹ Margalit, *The Ugaritic Poem of Aqhat*, 311.

Aqhat (1.18.VI.41-45). She will not be drawn into battle unprepared, as was Tiamat, but rather makes her threat and waits for a more auspicious moment.

Gideon acts in a similar manner, threatening the men of Succoth and of Penuel for their lack of assistance to his troops. His threat will be fulfilled “when the LORD has given Zebaḥ and Zalmunna into my hand,” (Jud 8:7) in the case of Succoth and “When I come back in peace” (Jud 8:9), in the case of Penuel. Indeed, Gideon fulfills his threats after he is victorious in battle (Jud 8:14-17). Gideon has faith that the Lord would grant him victory and so his threats are not mere boasts. Similarly, Anat’s confidence is based on the imbalance of power between deities and mortals; she possesses the resources to fulfill her threats. Usually, however, threats from future Avengers to Avengees alert the Avengees, enabling them to thwart the revenge; thus, they appear only rarely in HB narratives. Secrecy is considered the wiser strategy in HB narratives, and revealing a plan displays the arrogance and overconfidence that lead to failure. Simeon and Levi, for example, speak to Shechem “with guile” (Gen 34:13), Joseph’s brothers speak only to each other, even developing a cover story to tell Jacob (Gen 37:19-20), and Joab takes Abner to a private spot in order to kill him (II Sam 3:27).

14.2.1.3 COUNCIL

COUNCIL in this episode is comprised of Anat’s request to El for permission to avenge the insults. Her request meets first with refusal but then agreement after Anat issues a threat. COUNCIL in HB narratives takes on a more subtle character because Avengers are unlikely to receive approval. Dinah’s brothers wait for their father, Jacob, to act against their sister’s assailant. When he does not, they apparently conclude that seeking permission will be futile (Gen 34:5, 7, 13, 30). They take matters into their own hands despite the likelihood of incurring their father’s disapproval. When Joab’s complaints about David’s welcoming stance towards Abner fail to elicit the response he wants, he works around the king to achieve his revenge (II Sam 3:24-27). Even Jezebel’s acquiring the king’s signet ring (I Kgs 21:8), though using it is tantamount to the king himself issuing the decree,²⁰ does not constitute receiving permission for a specific act of revenge. Absalom does receive permission after a negotiation-filled COUNCIL, but he does not state the purpose of his invitation (II Sam 13:24-27). David, apparently, is reluctant to deny his children's requests, as shown by his failure to deny Amnon’s request that Tamar come to his room.²¹ Like David, El acquiesces to Anat’s request despite his knowledge that she is capable of destruction on any scale. Unlike David, El has no plausible deniability to hide behind; his decision is the tacit acknowledgement of his daughter’s power and the likelihood that she would disregard his refusal.

²⁰ Sun, *The Ethics of Violence in the Ugaritic “Story of Aqhat,”* 60–61.

²¹ McCarter, *II Samuel*, 334; Alter, *The David Story*, 272 find it unlikely that David was not at least suspicious of the request.

El may also share Anat's divine perspective regarding the punishment Aqhat deserves for his hubris (1.18.I.15-19). El has no desire to fight his daughter over this and therefore blesses the endeavor. David's interactions with his children, on the other hand, reveal him to be passive and weak rather than a strong father figure with deliberate opinions.²²

The nature of a human parental blessing is not, according to Schwartz and Kaplan, "a magic formula"; rather, "The givers instead offer the receivers a show of love, support and confidence...In Genesis, the blessing connects people with their sacred obligations..." A blessing is not a way to get even, but is to serve a higher cause.²³ Children in HB narratives are aware of the negatively valenced societal judgment toward personal vengeance and thus do not bother seeking parental approval or blessing.

14.2.1.4 PLAN

Anat's PLAN requires Aqhat's participation in a hunt, during which she will teach the mortal how best to use his prized bow, a symbol of masculinity in ANE and HB sources.²⁴ Anat, who was enraged by Aqhat's refusal to give her possession of the bow, shows restraint and subterfuge, disguising her true feelings and convincing Aqhat to take part. HB revenge narratives also portray deceptions in which adversaries appear to befriend their opponents. This strategy has remarkable success in several narratives. Shechem, for example, accepts without question the agreement of Jacob and his sons to the alliance he and his father have proposed to allow him to marry Dinah. In spite of Shechem's having kidnapped and raped Dinah, he assumes that the brothers' acceptance of his offer is genuine. Only the reader is told, "Just as the sons of Jacob came in from the field. When they heard of it, the men were indignant and very angry" (Gen 34:7, 13). Amnon is similarly deceived by Absalom, who manages to hide his feelings of anger. Again, in a technique common in HB stories, though not in ANE tales, the reader is told of the Avenger's feelings: "But Absalom spoke to Amnon neither good nor bad; for Absalom hated Amnon, because he had raped his sister Tamar." (II Sam 13:22). Amnon appears to be wholly unaware of his half-brother's intention to kill him. Such PLANS require patience on the part of the Avengers and the ability to mask their true feelings.

²² Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, 82; George Ridout, "The Rape of Tamar," in *Rhetorical Criticism: Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg* (eds. Jared Jackson and Martin Kessler; Pittsburg:Pickwick, 1974), 77. David can't or won't, refuse his children, just as he can't or won't oppose the children of Zeruah (II Sam 3:39).

²³ Matthew B. Schwartz and Kalman J. Kaplan, *Biblical Stories for Psychotherapy and Counseling: A Sourcebook* (New York: Haworth Press, 2004), 134.

²⁴ Delbert R. Hillers, "The Bow of Aqhat: The Meaning of a Mythological Theme," *Orient and Occident*, AOAT 22 (1973): 73.

14.2.1.5 COMPLICITY

Aqhat agrees to go on a hunt with Anat, ignoring or oblivious to the transformation in her attitude towards him. The PLAN requires an ability to dissemble, but it also depends on the COMPLICITY of an unsuspecting Avengee. Aqhat's confidence blinds him to any suspicion regarding Anat's change of heart and, as well, to the foreboding quality of the birds of prey that circle above the banquet to which he is taken:

When Aqhat sits down to sup, the son of Dan'el to dine, the birds circle [above him]. The flock of hawks hovers(?), [among] them Anat circles, over [Aqhat] she aims him, to strike him twice [on the head], three times over the ear, spi[lling] his blood [like] a butcher, [Down to his knees]. like a killer (1.18.VI.29-35).

Aqhat's failure to read the signs in the natural world is accentuated by his sister Pughat's sensitivity to such signs: "The birds circle over her father's house, the flock of hawks soars(?). Paghit weeps... sheds tears in her heart" (1.19.I.32-35). The comparison diminishes the reader's sympathy for Aqhat as an Avengee.

HB Avengees display similar acts of COMPLICITY that serve the Avenger's purpose and reflect poorly on the abilities and judgment of the Avengee. Joseph, as we have seen, is COMPLICIT in his downfall when he shares his dreams with his resentful brothers and when, at his father's request, he seeks out his brothers though he is alone and far from his father's protection (Gen 37:4-18ff.). The text does not state that the brothers had already formulated a PLAN, which leaves open the possibility that Joseph's arrival has presented them with an opportunity they cannot resist. The additional blame this lays at Joseph's feet is countered by the fact that, unlike other Avengees, he has not committed any physical harm to his brothers, the Avengers. The COMPLICITY of Shechem and Amnon, guilty of rape, and Abner, guilty of killing Joab's brother, is greater when they, like Joseph, fail to exercise sufficient caution.

Compared to the HB Avengees, Aqhat's failure to suspect Anat displays an astounding arrogance or naivete. His offenses were grave, and the disparity in status — deity versus mortal — ought to have given him pause even in the absence of an overt threat. Failing to exercise sufficient vigilance is a fatal flaw in a leader. The negative valence of an Avengee whose COMPLICITY was obtained through deception is somewhat mitigated, but that of an Avengee who failed to exercise prudence is not.

14.2.1.6 ACQUISITION OF AN ALLY

Anat ACQUIRES AN ALLY, Yatpan, a Sutean warrior and mercenary, to kill Aqhat so that she may possess his bow.²⁵ As a character, Yatpan is even less developed than Hupašiya in the *Illuyanka* myth. He is valued for his ability to execute commands, not for his intellect; he merely

²⁵ Margalit, *The Ugaritic Poem of Aqhat*, 73, 457.

repeats Anat's words to verify her orders (1.18.IV.11-13). Later, he boasts to Pughat (who is disguised) about having slaughtered Aqhat, claiming that it bodes well for his future performance against the enemies of the Suteans (1.19.IV.58-59). Unlike the other actants in the tale, Yatpan is an outsider, a nomad, and the only character with no family ties. As such, he is eminently disposable. He is reminiscent of Doeg, a rare foreign Ally in an HB revenge narrative. Doeg's end does not appear in the narrative, but Saul, the Avenger who acquired him, is a mortal and thus can suffer his own punishment, unlike Anat and Inara, whose punishments are inflicted on their human proxies.

14.2.1.7 REVENGE

The revenge act in the narrative of *Aqhat* is remarkable for how unremarkable it is. Aqhat offers no resistance nor attempts to defend himself with the famed bow. Given the fact that he was on a hunting expedition with Anat, Aqhat should have held the bow ready. The irony of a hunter being killed by a bird adds to Aqhat's humiliation.²⁶ Like Amnon, Haman, and Illuyanka, Aqhat relaxes his guard during the banquet, allowing his adversary to accomplish her goal.

14.2.1.8 AFTERMATH

Anat the Avenger displays acts of surprisingly intense mourning. Instead of boasting of her superiority over Aqhat, Anat weeps for him and even performs the last rites as described by Aqhat himself when he refused her offer of immortality (cf. 1.17.VI.35-39 with 1.19.I.8-11). Wailing over the bitterness of his death, Anat reverses the reader's condemnation of her actions.²⁷ Demonstrating remorse for vengeful actions appears in HB narratives as a tactic to expunge an Avenger's guilt, as in the case of Joseph's brothers, though their regret comes much later and only when misfortune befalls them (Gen 42:21-22). Performing funeral rites and delivering eulogies are methods by which an adversary can show remorse, as demonstrated by David with Abner, even though David was not the Avenger (II Sam 3:28-39). Despite the fact that he continues his vendetta against David (I Sam 24:16-21; 26:21, 25), even Saul becomes more sympathetic when he expresses regret, thereby inviting the readers' sympathy later when David mourns him (II Sam 1:17-27).²⁸

These HB cases of post-revenge remorse can each be attributed to outside influences: famine in Canaan and misfortune in Egypt in the case of Joseph's brothers, political expediency in the case of David.²⁹ Anat has no such catalyst; her revenge places her in no physical or political danger. Why, then, does she exhibit such extreme regret for her act? Aqhat has upset the natural

²⁶ Parker, *The Pre-Biblical Narrative Tradition*, 119.

²⁷ Cf. II Chr. 33:13, in which the repentance of Menashe allows for a reversal of public opinion regarding his sins, as recorded in the Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 51b.

²⁸ Thomas R. Preston, "The Heroism of Saul: Patterns of Meaning in the Narrative of the Early Kingship," *JSOT* 7, no. 24 (1982): 35.

²⁹ Reuben's distress, as expressed when he returns only to find the pit empty, is more genuine remorse, though it is clear that Reuben did not want to take vengeance on Joseph in the first place (Gen 37:21-22, 29-30).

order as prescribed by El that humans are subordinate to deities. Aqhat refused to give Anat the bow she wanted; he also denied her the obeisance due to a goddess. Nevertheless, her behavior after his death suggests that the vengeance was disproportionate. She shows no satisfaction; on the contrary, she weeps, demonstrating the negative valence associated with the revenge. Revenge narratives offer three (not mutually exclusive) motivations for vengeance, each of which provides the Avenger with satisfaction that justice has been carried out. In the absence of these, Avengers may experience remorse, realizing the futility of their actions.

One motivation for vengeance is the desire to teach the perpetrator a lesson. Gollwitzer, Meder, and Schmitt's "understanding hypothesis" posits that Avengers feel vindicated when Avengees know that their post-revenge circumstances are caused by their own conduct.³⁰ Anat's revenge does not include notifying Aqhat that he would suffer for his behavior and speech toward her, and so she is denied this element of post-revenge satisfaction. Based on the models of vengeance listed by Peels, Anat was exercising retributive vengeance, that is, vengeance whose purpose is to give punishment for an offense, in this case, rebellion.³¹ If Aqhat did not know about the punishment, the vengeance would not teach the lesson.

A second possible explanation for Anat's remorse is her awareness after the revenge that the bow could never be rightfully hers (as evidenced by her earlier offers to pay for it with money or immortality); thus her vengeance was revealed to be futile and her violence accomplished nothing. Vengeance for a misjudged "WRONG," or vengeance that is disproportionate may leave the Avenger with regrets. This is seen in the Saul-David narratives, in which Saul repeatedly expresses remorse for his vendetta against David (I Sam 24:16-20; 26:21).

A third motivation for vengeance is the possibility of deterring other would-be offenders. Here, too, Anat's revenge does not seem to have had the desired result.³² Anat does not attack her victim with a great show of force, nor does she attempt to show her prowess as a warrior in order to refute Aqhat's earlier jabs about her gender. It appears that Anat is not motivated by the desire to teach others a lesson.

One explanation for Anat's excessive regret lies in Thomas's differentiation between guilt, shame, and remorse. Guilt, he explains, depends on an individual's identifying, and then violating, a set of standards. Shame relates to the individual's anticipation of society's reaction and judgment of

³⁰ Mario Gollwitzer, Milena Meder, and Manfred Schmitt, "What Gives Victims Satisfaction When They Seek Revenge?" *European Journal of Social Psychology* 41, no. 3 (2011): 365.

³¹ Peels, *The Vengeance of God*, 266.

³² Sung Hee Kim, Richard H. Smith, and Nancy L. Brigham, "Effects of Power Imbalance and the Presence of Third Parties on Reactions to Harm: Upward and Downward Revenge," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 24, no. 4 (1998): 353-61; Jeffrey M. Osgood, "Is Revenge about Retributive Justice, Detering Harm, or Both?" *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 11, no. 1 (2017): 7-9.

the violation. Remorse, however, is the consequence of irremediable destruction of that which the individual valued and the subsequent grief over the impossibility of repair. Remorse stems from a contemplation of the damage that has been done: “The remorseful individual gains release from his or her emotion by living through a structurally analogous scene to that of the initial trauma.”³³

Anat’s eulogy reflects true remorse and corresponds with her prior threats, whereas the last rites she performs correspond to the murder itself.

14.2.2 Episode II

14.2.2.1 Initial Scene and WRONG

The second episode revolves around the reactions of Dan’el and his daughter Pughat to Anat’s revenge on Aqhat. In the Initial Scene, Dan’el, a model of “meticulous piety,” judges cases of the less fortunate members of society, reinforcing his image as an upstanding member of society (1.19.I.21-25).³⁴ Pughat, his daughter, a “bearer of water/collector of dew from fleece/who knows the course of the stars” (1.19.II.1-3; 5-7; IV.6-38), is revealed to be more than her name (which means “girl”) indicates. She is industrious and honors her father (1.19.II.3-11) as an ideal son would. Her sensitivity to the natural world, celestial (“the course of the stars”) or terrestrial (1.19.I.34-35), demonstrates her attention to detail and to how the world should function. Upon noting the results of the drought and the circling birds above Dan’el’s home, Pughat weeps. Dan’el, in contrast, inspects the fields and does not grasp the significance of what he sees (1.19.I.36-1.19.II.25). It is Pughat, not Dan’el, who observes that the messengers who come with tidings of Aqhat’s death have “no peace in their gait” (1.19.II.27-28).³⁵ Even before the WRONG is reported, she has reacted. In the HB, David shows a similar lack of understanding of natural phenomena: “Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year; and David inquired of the Lord. The Lord said, “There is bloodguilt on Saul and on his house, because he put the Gibeonites to death.” (II Sam 21:1).³⁶ Inattention to and ignorance of the divine messages conveyed through the natural world reflect poorly on a leader. Both Dan’el and David fail to perceive these messages, revealing flaws in their leadership abilities.³⁷

³³ Alan Thomas, “Remorse and Reparation: A Philosophical Analysis,” in *Remorse and Reparation*, (ed. Murray Cox; London: Jessica Kingsley, 1999), 128–33.

³⁴ Parker, *The Pre-Biblical Narrative Tradition*, 107.

³⁵ Natan-Yulzary, “Contrast and Meaning in the Aqhat Story,” 437–38, discusses the contrast between Pughat’s high level of awareness and Danel’s lack thereof.

³⁶ John C.L. Gibson, “Myth, Legend and Folk-Lore in the Ugaritic Keret and Aqhat Texts,” in *Congress Volume*, (ed. G. W. Anderson; VTSupp 28; Leiden: Brill, 1974), 66; Pedersen, *Israel, Its Life and Culture*, 1:378–84. While the famine rages, David is unaware that the land has been defiled through unjust bloodshed and that the famine is the natural consequence.

³⁷ Walter Harrelson, “Famine in the Perspective of Biblical Judgments and Promises,” *Soundings*, 1976, 84–99, discusses the use of famine as a punishment and as means for moving the plot forward. In II Samuel 21 it is used in both ways, demanding both a recognition and an action on the part of David.

14.2.2.2 REACTION TO THE WRONG

Once the WRONG is reported, Dan'el collapses and weeps. Pughat has already cried inwardly. Dan'el's efforts to ensure a proper burial for his son, including cursing of any who would disturb his remains, evoke the actions of Ritzpah in guarding her sons' bodies after David's appeasement of the Gibeonites (II Sam 21:10-14). Dan'el also curses the nearby towns to prevent their escaping any blood guilt.

Pughat knows that she must wait to avenge her brother until the mourning rites have been completed and her father has brought the requisite sacrifices to the gods. Her patience highlights the respect she has for traditions and focuses the reader's attention on her determination to fulfill the familial obligations surrounding her brother's death including observing the mourning customs and bringing the murderer to justice. The second cannot come at the expense of the first; Pughat cannot make a request of Dan'el while he is mourning.³⁸ Pughat's behavior contrasts with both Anat's threats of wild violence and Aqhat's impetuous banter. Her grief is private, and her desire for vengeance is restrained.

14.2.2.3 COUNCIL

Pughat's appeal to Dan'el is the second time in the tale that a daughter asks her father for permission to avenge a WRONG. The purpose of parental blessing and permission in ANE narratives differs from that in HB narratives. In ANE tales, parental approval and permission are crucial to the success of a mission, but in the HB, a parent's blessing serves to pass the responsibilities of leadership of the clan and fidelity to God to the next generation. The immutability of a parent's blessing is demonstrated when Isaac learns he has blessed the wrong son with the blessing of the first-born (Gen 27:33).³⁹ As we have seen, parental approval is not generally sought in HB revenge narratives, but in ANE tales, this approval is essential. Pughat's deference contrasts dramatically with Anat's threats of bodily harm to her father, El. She displays family solidarity, like Inara, who helps her father avenge the Serpent's WRONG, and the Storm-god's son, who sides with his wife's family even when it means his own death. The bond between maternal siblings acts as an incentive for Simeon and Levi's revenge on Shechem for their sister's rape (Genesis 34), for Absalom's revenge on Amnon for the rape of his sister Tamar (II Samuel 13), and for Gideon's revenge on Zebaḥ and Zalmunna for the killing of his brothers (Judges 8).

Dan'el's social status requires him to protect the well-being of his community as well as his own family, and so he allows the revenge for communal and personal reasons. Drought, a consequence of Aqhat's murder, is a common motif in HB legal and narrative sections: "...for

³⁸ Wright, *Ritual in Narrative*, 170–72.

³⁹ Ephraim A. Speiser, "I Know Not the Day of My Death," *JBL* 74 (1955): 252–56.

blood pollutes the land, and no expiation can be made for the land, for the blood that is shed in it, except by the blood of the one who shed it.” (Num 35:33).⁴⁰ Vengeance will cleanse the land of its pollution and end the drought. It will also restore honor and bring to the family of Aqhat.

14.2.2.4 PLAN

Having received her father’s permission, Pughat disguises herself and enters a liminal state just as her father leaves his liminal state as a mourner. Father and daughter are functioning on parallel planes in the wake of Aqhat’s murder and do not intersect as they enter and exit the community. Emphasizing the alien nature of her liminal state, Pughat washes herself and dons both male and female garments, hiding her weapon under her dress (1.19.IV.43-46). Despite her name (“girl”), Pughat does not shrink from a role requiring a male disguise.⁴¹ Judith, too, leaves behind her widow’s garb, washes and beautifies herself, and changes clothing when she enters a liminal state to deceive and kill Holofernes (Jdt 10:20).⁴²

Like Jael (Jud 4:17; 5:26-27), Judith (Jdt 12:20), and Inara in the *Illuyanka* narrative, Pughat intoxicates the enemy to render him helpless. These women demonstrate that appearances can deceive and that physical strength is not an essential element in revenge. Indeed, it is their understanding of human nature that leads to their success. Their Avengees are defeated and, like Abimelech (Jud 9:53-54), suffer the added humiliation of having been defeated at the hands of a woman.

14.2.2.5 COMPLICITY

Yatpan’s assumptions about the disguised Pughat’s identity are not made clear in the text. He may believe she is Anat or another hired woman.⁴³ His boasting makes clear, however, that he regards himself as El’s equal.⁴⁴ His declaration that he has killed Aqhat and will kill thousands more (1.19.IV.57-60) occurs at the same time as his COMPLICITY, thereby reinforcing the justice of Pughat’s revenge. In light of Anat’s remorse in the AFTERMATH of Aqhat’s murder, Yatpan is the tale’s solitary villain.

Other Avengees have boasted just prior to their defeat, such as Ga’al before Abimelech’s revenge (Jud 9:28-41) and Jezebel before she meets Jehu (II Kgs 9:30). Samson suffers from “Israelite hubris” when he reveals the source of his strength to Delilah.⁴⁵ His confident declaration, “I will go out as at other times and shake myself” is followed by the text’s poignant remark, “But he

⁴⁰ See also Jer 12:4; Hos 4:2-3, as well as the revenge of the Gibeonites, discussed above (II Samuel 21).

⁴¹ Margalit, *The Ugaritic Poem of Aqhat*, 365, 386.

⁴² Initially a more passive protagonist, Esther accepts the beauty treatments, though does not request any additional treatments (Esth 2:15).

⁴³ Sun, *The Ethics of Violence in the Ugaritic “Story of Aqhat,”* 211; Wright, *Ritual in Narrative*, 141.

⁴⁴ Sun, *The Ethics of Violence in the Ugaritic “Story of Aqhat,”* 110, nt. 57. The name Yatpan does not appear on any god list.

⁴⁵ Niditch, “Samson as Culture Hero, Trickster, and Bandit,” 616.

did not know that the Lord had left him.” (Jud 16:20). The humiliation of defeat is increased when it is preceded by unseemly presumption.

14.3 Conclusions

The Ugaritic narrative of *Aqhat* provides another example of ANE vengeance in which a deity acquires a human Ally to be the agent of the revenge. Human Allies serve several purposes in these tales. First, deities desire human Allies because they will be, or are presumed to be, subservient to the deity. Second, if the revenge is unjustified, the human Ally can absorb the punishment that results from an unwarranted attack. It should be noted that these tales demonstrate that an act of vengeance is not justified merely by virtue of its being perpetrated by a deity. Furthermore, as noted above, the deity does not generally suffer the most immediate repercussions of illegitimate revenge. In HB tales, Allies also suffer, but their suffering does not constitute a true parallel to the suffering of ANE Allies, who often serve as scapegoats.

The function of COUNCIL differs between ANE and HB narratives. In ANE tales, Avengers seek permission to avenge at COUNCIL, but this element is absent in HB tales. With marked similarities to Propp’s function of the hero’s ACQUIRING A MAGICAL AGENT, Avengers in ANE revenge texts do not act without permission and/or blessing from the gods or a parent; the blessing or permission fulfills the role of the magical agent.⁴⁶ Even when this permission is forced, as it is by Anat from her father El, it is a prerequisite to committing the REVENGE ACT.⁴⁷ Similar behavior is absent in the HB revenge narratives; HB Avengers prefer to act without permission than to act after receiving a negative answer.

The Avenger’s COMPLICITY is emphasized in both episodes of the *Aqhat* narrative. COMPLICITY furthers the plot by positioning the Avenger where the act of vengeance can be performed; as well, it provides a negative evaluation of the Avenger by adding to his culpability and to the validity of the revenge. *Aqhat* enjoys the festivities at a banquet with Anat, whom he has wronged and who has threatened him and who is known to be violent. *Yatpan*, too, relaxes at a banquet, the same place where he killed *Aqhat*. The second episode utilizes the function of COMPLICITY for humiliation and to justify the revenge. The first takes the punishment that results from the COMPLICITY as expiation for the lesser sin of hubris rather than as justification for the undeserved revenge.

The female Avengers in both episodes of the *Aqhat* narrative, like those in *Enuma Elish* and *Illuyanka*, illustrate the tendency to portray women as exhibiting extremes of behavior. Anat embodies impetuosity, while *Pughat* embodies restraint. Anat’s manner toward her father is the

⁴⁶ Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, 43–50.

⁴⁷ Propp, 49. The magical agent may be seized by force if it is not willingly given.

polar opposite of Pughat's deference. Similar excesses in behavior are seen in women in HB revenge narratives where respect for or rebellion against parents and monarchs, and violence or forbearance are pitted against each other.⁴⁸ These traits are displayed by male and female actants in the revenge narratives, but the most extreme behavior is witnessed in the female characters.

The REVENGE ACT in both episodes of the *Aqhat* narrative takes place at a feast. This is also seen in the *Illuyanka* narrative, as well as in the HB narratives of Joseph and his brothers (Genesis 37), Samson and the Philistines (Judges 16), Absalom and Amnon (II Samuel 13), and Esther and Haman (where Haman's revenge attempt is foiled). MacDonald notes the HB motif of "judgment at the table," which applies here in a specialized form.⁴⁹ The use of the banquet, in addition to the use of food and famine in revenge narratives, reinforces the claim that this is a genre of portent.⁵⁰

The two-fold appearance of revenge acts in the *Aqhat* narrative provides a neat juxtaposition of the positive versus negative moral valence of revenge. Blood vengeance, in its most literal form, is nearly absent from the HB despite, or perhaps because of, the laws that regulate it (such as *lex taliones* in Leviticus 24:19-20 and cities of refuge in Numbers 35:11-24).⁵¹ The *Aqhat* narrative offers a glimpse of this most justified of vengeance types alongside a structurally similar, but wholly unjustified case, focusing the reader on the nuances of revenge itself.

⁴⁸ Marten Stol, *Women in the Ancient Near East* (trans. Helen Richardson and Mervyn Richardson; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016), 683–90; Neal H. Walls, *The Goddess Anat in Ugaritic Myth* (SBL Dissertation Series 135; Atlanta: Scholars, 1992), 197.

⁴⁹ Nathan MacDonald, *Not Bread Alone: The Uses of Food in the Old Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 166–95.

⁵⁰ Sharon, *Patterns of Destiny*, 40ff.

⁵¹ Elisabeth Meier Tetlow, *Women, Crime, and Punishment in Ancient Law and Society, Volume 1, The Ancient Near East* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 282, nt. 14.

Chapter 15

15.0 *Epic of Gilgamesh*¹

This chapter will focus on the revenge of Ishtar in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* after which other ANE narratives involving the goddess Ishtar/Inana will be examined. The Sumerian Inana is identified with the Akkadian Ishtar, and though scholars have debated the degree of syncretism between these figures, it has been demonstrated that their personalities are sufficiently coherent to warrant analyzing their vengeance as the acts of a single character.²

Epic of Gilgamesh

The analysis in this section is based on the twelve-tablet Standard Babylonian version (SBV) of the Epic, which dates from the 13th to the 10th century BCE. The SBV contains the attempted vengeance of Ishtar on Gilgamesh, king of Uruk, for refusing her marriage proposal. Ishtar's unsuccessful revenge on Gilgamesh appears between the slaying of Humbaba in the Cedar

¹ I have used the translation of Andrew R. George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic: Introduction, Critical Edition and Cuneiform Texts*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 531-735. Additional translations include: Stanley Lombardo, *Gilgamesh* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2019); Stephanie Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Samuel Noah Kramer and Diane Wolkstein, *Inana, Queen of Heaven and Earth: Her Stories and Hymns from Sumer* (New York: Harper & Row, 1983); Lambert, *Babylonian Creation Myths*; John Maier, "The One Who Saw the Abyss," in *Gilgamesh: Translated from the Sin-Leqi-Unninni Version* (eds. John Maier and John Gardner; New York: Knopf, 1984), 3-54. The development of GE is discussed by Jeffrey H. Tigay, *The Evolution of the Gilgamesh Epic* (Wauconda: Bolchazy-Carducci, 2002); Tzvi Abusch, "The Development and Meaning of the Epic of Gilgamesh: An Interpretive Essay," *JAOS* 121, no. 4 (2001): 614-22; Joseph Blenkinsopp, "The Search for the Prickly Plant: Structure and Function in the Gilgamesh Epic," *Soundings* 58, no. 2 (1975), 200-220; Albert B. Lord, "Gilgamesh and Other Epics," in *Lingering Over Words: Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Literature in Honor of William L. Moran*, (eds. Tzvi Abusch, John Huehnergard, and Piotr Steinkeller; Harvard Semitic Studies 37; Leiden: Brill, 1990), 371-80. Ishtar and feminist studies include: Louise M. Pryke, *Ishtar*, (Gods and Heroes of the Ancient World; London: Taylor & Francis, 2017); Tzvi Abusch, "Ishtar's Proposal and Gilgamesh's Refusal: An Interpretation of 'The Gilgamesh Epic', Tablet 6, Lines 1-79," *History of Religions* 26, no. 2 (1986): 143-87; Sara Mandell, "Liminality, Altered States, and the Gilgamesh Epic," in *Gilgamesh: A Reader* (ed. John Maier; Wauconda: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, 1997), 122-30; Rivkah Harris, "Images of Women in the Gilgamesh Epic," in *Lingering Over Words: Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Literature in Honor of William L. Moran* (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 219-30; Rivkah Harris, *Gender and Aging in Mesopotamia: The Gilgamesh Epic and Other Ancient Literature* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000); Tzvi Abusch, *Male and Female in the Epic of Gilgamesh* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2015); An analysis of heroes and homoerotic themes can be found in: Alhena Gadotti, *Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Netherworld and the Sumerian Gilgamesh Cycle* (Untersuchungen Zur Assyriologie Und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie 10; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014); David M. Halperin, "Heroes and Their Pals," in *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 80-92; Susan Ackerman, *When Heroes Love: The Ambiguity of Eros in the Stories of Gilgamesh and David* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); Karen Sonik, "Gilgamesh and Emotional Excess: The King without Counsel in the SB Gilgamesh Epic," in *The Expression of Emotions in Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia* (eds. Shih-Wei Hsu and Jaume Llop-Radua; Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 116; Leiden: Brill, 2020), 390-409. There have been many studies relating GE to HB and Ancient Greek literature, as indicated throughout this chapter, though the primary focus in these studies is on the Creation and Flood motifs rather than on the revenge which appears in the epic. The following are some recent exceptions: Gerda De Villiers, "Suffering in the Epic of Gilgamesh Epic," *OTE* 33, no. 3 (2020): 609-705; Laura Quick, "Dream Accounts in the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Jewish Literature," *Currents in Biblical Research* 17, no. 1 (2018): 8-32; Saul M. Olyan, *Friendship in the Hebrew Bible* (New Haven: The Catholic University of America Press, 2017).

² Tzvi Abusch, "Ishtar," in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (eds. Karel Van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W Van der Horst; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 452-54; Harris, "Inana-Ishtar as Paradox and a Coincidence of Opposites," 1991, 261-62, nt. 2. I will follow Harris in using "Inana" when discussing the Sumerian language texts, and Ishtar for the Babylonian Gilgamesh text.

Forest by Gilgamesh and Enkidu, and Enkidu's subsequent punishment and Gilgamesh's reaction. The vengeance narrative's location within the larger epic is significant, especially in light of its absence from the Old Babylonian Versions (OBV), and will be discussed in the morphological analysis.³ The Initial Scene and AFTERMATH will be viewed as extended episodes that envelope the revenge scene.

Table 25 Morphology - Gilgamesh

Initial Scene	II, 213-V, 77	After much debate and seeking advice, Gilgamesh and Enkidu travel to the Cedar Forest to kill Humbaba.
	V, 77-302	The pair encounter Humbaba and kill him. They return to Uruk triumphant, with the head of Humbaba and valuable lumber from the Cedar Forest.
	VI, 1-5	Gilgamesh bathes and dresses.
	VI,6-21	Ishtar desires the king and proposes marriage to him.
WRONG	VI,22-79	Gilgamesh refuses Ishtar's proposal, insulting her in the process.
REACTION TO WRONG	VI,80-86	Ishtar ascends in tears to her parents, Anu and Antu, complaining of her mistreatment.
COUNCIL	VI,87-91	Anu attempts to rebuke Ishtar.
ACQUISITION OF AN ALLY/ PLAN	VI,92-114	Amidst threats of mass destruction, Ishtar demands Anu release the Bull of Heaven for her revenge. Upon fulfilment of certain conditions, Anu releases the Bull to Ishtar.
REVENGE ATTEMPT	VI,115-122	Ishtar leads the Bull to Uruk. It wreaks havoc along the way.
COUNTER-PLAN	VI, 123-140	Enkidu and Gilgamesh devise a plan to destroy the Bull and save the people of Uruk.
REVENGE FOILED	VI,141-146	Enkidu and Gilgamesh kill the Bull of Heaven.
AFTERMATH (Regarding the Bull of Heaven)	VI,147-150	They offer the Bull's heart to Shamash.
	VI,151-153	Ishtar wails.
ADDITIONAL WRONG	VI,154-157	Enkidu throws a haunch of the Bull at Ishtar, in addition to insulting her
AFTERMATH	VI,158-159	Ishtar arranges mourning for the Bull.
	VI,160-166	Gilgamesh dedicates the horns to Lugalbanda.
AFTERMATH	VI, 167-179	Gilgamesh and Enkidu return to Uruk amidst great praise and jubilation.

³ George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, 1:3–38 discusses the development of the epic and its many variants. The Sumerian tablets (Ur III) bear witness to a variant tale of Bilgames and the Bull of Heaven, though it is not tied to any other adventure of the king.

(Regarding Enkidu and Gilgamesh)	VI,180-VII,254	Enkidu understands from his dreams that he will die. He regrets his gift to the temple of Enlil and prays to Shamash in his distress.
	VII,255-267	Enkidu dies.
	VII-XI	Gilgamesh mourns Enkidu and begins a self-imposed exile, seeking the key to eternal life.

15.1 Establishing the Morphology

The tale begins by introducing Gilgamesh, king of Uruk, who is the two-thirds divine son of the goddess Ninsun and one-third the son of the part-human Lugalbanda (I, 35-36; 47-48). Powerful and perfect, not unlike Marduk, Gilgamesh behaves cruelly to his subjects. His custom of *jus primae noctis*, having relations with a bride on her wedding night, leads the women to cry to the goddesses, who hear their pleas (I, 74-93). Aruru, the birth goddess, forms Enkidu, a wild man, to provide companionship and act as a foil for Gilgamesh (I, 94-110). Enkidu is civilized by the harlot Shamhat, after which she leads him to Uruk so that he may challenge Gilgamesh.

Meanwhile, the king has a dream about the arrival of Enkidu, which his mother, Ninsun, explains to him. She foresees that the two will become close companions (I, 161-II, 64). When Enkidu arrives, he is enraged by Gilgamesh's *jus primae noctis*, blocks his path, and the two wrestle. Gilgamesh seems to win the battle, and the two become friends as Ninsun foresaw. Subsequently, Ninsun adopts Enkidu, making the two brothers (II, 100-187).

Gilgamesh suggests that he and Enkidu travel to the Cedar Forest to slay the monster-guardian of the forest, Humbaba. Before embarking on their journey, they consult with the people of Uruk (II, 260-III, 12) and ask Ninsun for her advice and blessing. She pleads with Shamash, the sun god, to keep them safe on their journey (III, 13-173). Following protocol, the brothers meet with the elders of Uruk (III, 202-231) and receive blessings. Initially Enkidu is wary of challenging the ferocious monster (II, 213-229), but Gilgamesh convinces him to make the attempt. During the battle, Enkidu encourages Gilgamesh, exhorting him to show no mercy and ignore the monster's pleas to spare his life (V, 156-269). Humbaba is killed and the friends return to Uruk as heroes, bearing valuable cedar for the temple of Enlil (V, 289-302).

The information that appears prior to Gilgamesh's encounter with Ishtar shows Gilgamesh to be a king and hero. He is wise, possessing knowledge of ancient wisdom, and has built Uruk. In addition, he has been granted rest, a gift of the gods.⁴ He is physically superior, having no equal as a warrior; though a ruthless king, he has earned his men's trust (I, 1-92). In spite of his power, however, he honors the wisdom of his goddess mother, and depends on her to interpret his dreams,

⁴ See above, section on the significance of the rest of the gods in the chapter of Enuma Elish.

give him advice, and bestow her blessings (I, 245-298; III, 13-173). These facts establish the background and character development against which Gilgamesh's conflict with Ishtar will occur.

Enkidu, the man created to occupy Gilgamesh and keep him from menacing his people, was raised in the wild. When the trapper whose animals Enkidu released complains to Gilgamesh that the wild man is ruining his livelihood, the king tells the trapper to bring the prostitute Shamhat and lure Enkidu away from the traps. Gilgamesh intimates that "feminine wiles are more than a match for even the strongest of men" (I, 449-452). Ironically, this logic does not work for Ishtar when she attempts to seduce Gilgamesh, demonstrating his self-restraint. Enkidu, civilized by Shamhat but retaining his knowledge of the natural world, serves as a counsellor to Gilgamesh, indicating that even Gilgamesh's knowledge and wisdom are limited, that even the wisest of individuals needs counsel. Gilgamesh's response to the prospect of receiving an advisor is telling:

295 "O mother, by Counsellor Enlil's command may it befall me!
296 I will acquire a friend, a counsellor,
297 a friend, a counsellor, I will acquire."

The king relishes the idea of having a companion who will advise and protect him, accompanying him on his adventures. His energy will not be quashed but guided by someone who can stand up to the powerful king.

After Gilgamesh and Enkidu return from slaying Humbaba in the Cedar Forest, Gilgamesh washes and dresses, transforming himself from adventurer to distinguished monarch (VI, 1-5). The goddess Ishtar sees him and is filled with desire. She proposes marriage to the king through a series of offers:

6 The lady Ištar looked covetously on the beauty of Gilgameš:
7 "Come, Gilgameš, you be the bridegroom!
8 Grant me your fruits, I insist!
9 You shall be my husband and I will be your wife!
10 Let me harness for you a chariot of lapis lazuli and gold,
11 whose wheels are gold and whose horns are amber.
12 You shall have in harness storm-lions, huge mules.
13 Come into our house with scents of cedar!
14 When you come into our house,
15 doorway and throne shall kiss your feet.
16 Kings, courtiers, and nobles shall be bowed down beneath you,
17 they shall bring you tribute, [all the] produce of mountain and land.
18 Your nanny-goats shall bear triplets and your ewes twins,
19 your donkey's foal under load shall outpace a mule.
20 At the chariot your horse shall gallop majestically,
21 at the yoke your ox shall acquire no rival."

Ishtar's proposal to Gilgamesh is similar in form and language to Tiamat's proposal to Qingu in *Enuma Elish*.⁵ The traditional gender roles are reversed: Ishtar initiates the proposal and offers, rather than demands, lavish marital gifts.⁶

Gilgamesh's relationships with his mother and with Enkidu have taught him to value certain features that are notably lacking in the goddess, so Gilgamesh rejects Ishtar's offer. Mere refusal would have constituted an insult, a WRONG justifying vengeance, but Gilgamesh compounds his error. He mocks Ishtar's lack of domesticity, claiming that she will not prepare his food, drink, and clothing, all the duties of a proper wife (VI, 22-31). He derides her failed unions, listing her former lovers and describing how their relationship with the goddess has harmed them (VI, 42-79). He is dismissive of her gifts, although, admittedly, an offer of cedar (IV, 13) is not likely to entice one who slaughtered the guardian of the Cedar Forest and felled many of its trees (V, 262-302), the prevalent role of wood in the ANE notwithstanding.⁷ He even compares her to items that harm, not help, those who rely on them: a drafty door, a shoe that "bites" the wearer's foot, causing pain instead of protection (VI, 32-41). Gilgamesh's invective-filled rejection starts Ishtar on the path to revenge. As witnessed in Anat's response to Aqhat's refusal to give her his bow (a refusal that was also accompanied by insults), Ishtar's REACTION TO THE WRONG is to go to her parents in a fury (VI, 80-86). She appears at COUNCIL before her parents, Anu and Antu, and complains bitterly to her father. Anu attempts to counsel his daughter, placing the blame for the WRONG at Ishtar's feet. Her proposal, he points out, would subordinate Gilgamesh to her and curb his independence to act as he saw fit:

87 Anu opened his mouth to speak,
88 saying to the lady Ištar:
89 "Ah, but did you not provoke King Gilgameš,
90 so then Gilgameš recounted things that insult you,
91 things that insult and revile you?"

Far from checking Ishtar's penchant for vengeance, Anu's rebuke ignites an inter-generational battle of wills. Ishtar attempts to ACQUIRE AN ALLY in the form of the Bull of Heaven, threatening a dire outcome if this is refused:

92 Ištar opened her mouth to speak,
93 saying to her father, Anu:
94 'O father, give me, please, the Bull of Heaven,
95 that I may slay Gilgameš in his dwelling.
96 If you will not give me the Bull of Heaven,
97 I shall smash the underworld together with its dwelling-place,
98 I shall raze the nether regions to the ground.

⁵ EE:I, 154; II, 41; III, 45, 103. Samuel Greengus, "The Old Babylonian Marriage Contract," *JAOS*, 89, no. 3 (1969), 516, nt. 55.

⁶ Harris, "Images of Women in the Gilgamesh Epic," 227.

⁷ J. Hansman, "Gilgamesh, Humbaba and the Land of the ERIN-Trees," *Iraq* 38, no. 1 (1976): 24-25.

99 I shall bring up the dead to consume the living,
100 I shall make the dead outnumber the living.'

Anu manages only to persuade his blood-thirsty daughter not to cause irreparable damage to the people of Uruk. Ishtar confirms that the Bull will not cause widespread famine.⁸ Pryke claims that this concession brings a “social element” to Ishtar’s behavior, limiting the extent of her revenge. Ishtar’s manner recalls Anat’s threats to her father El when she sought his approval for her vengeance on Aqhat.⁹ The goddesses’ actions are not controlled by their fathers; rather, it is they who control the establishment through intimidation. The COUNCIL with Anu is hollow: Ishtar wants the Bull of Heaven but is prepared to achieve this end by force.

After the COUNCIL, the goddess approaches Uruk with the Bull in an attempt to wreak vengeance on Gilgamesh and his city. She is intent on destroying Uruk to avenge the insult to her honor, either by the Bull’s sheer power or the famine that his rampage will cause. However, Ishtar has underestimated Enkidu’s experience with the Bull of Heaven and the ferocity with which he will protect himself and those close to him. Having always depended on might to achieve her goals, she is unfamiliar with the strength of friendship and loyalty; moreover, she fails to take into account the adventures Enkidu and Gilgamesh have had vanquishing their foes in the Cedar Forest. The two develop and implement a COUNTER-PLAN to neutralize the Bull. Enkidu’s question displays his awareness of the public responsibility they share:

130 'My friend, we vaunted ourselves [(...) in our] city,
131 how shall we answer the dense-gathered people?

By spurning the goddess’s advances, Gilgamesh has failed to meet the cultural expectation that the city’s king should marry the goddess of love and war.¹⁰ He is aware, however, of the consequences his words and actions will bring, and he is aware that the people expect their king to provide protection. He and Enkidu fight the Bull according to Enkidu’s instructions and succeed in FOILING THE REVENGE (VI, 141-146).

Discovering how badly she has miscalculated her opponents' strengths, Ishtar flies into a rage, which Enkidu stokes by hurling one of the Bull’s haunches at her along with an insult:

154 Enkidu heard this speech of Istar,
155 he tore a haunch off the Bull of Heaven and threw it down before her.
156 “You too, had I caught you, I would have treated you like it!
157 I would have draped its guts on your arms!”

⁸ See Paul-Alain Beaulieu, *The Pantheon of Uruk During the Neo-Babylonian Period* (Cuneiform Monographs 23; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 111–12. regarding varying views on the lineage of Ishtar/Inana. Anu is regarded as either her father or her great-grandfather.

⁹ Pryke, *Ishtar*, 173; Aqhat 1.18.I.6-14.

¹⁰ Jerrold S. Cooper, “Sacred Marriage and Popular Cult in Early Mesopotamia,” in *Official Cult and Popular Religion in the Ancient Near East* (ed. Eiko Matsushima; Heidelberg: C Winter, 1993), 91–92; Katherine Callen King, *Ancient Epic*, (Blackwell Introductions to the Classical World 35; Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 23.

Enkidu's deed adds another WRONG to his account, and because he did not commit the act in self-defense, he (and by extension, Gilgamesh) will pay dearly for it.

In the AFTERMATH of the FOILED REVENGE, Gilgamesh and Enkidu acknowledge the role of the gods in their victory. The Bull's heart is offered to Shamash and its horns are dedicated to Lugalbanda, Gilgamesh's deity father.¹¹ Ishtar, meanwhile, calls the temple prostitutes to mourn her slain Ally (VI, 147-166). At this point, the revenge narrative seems complete: The revenge is foiled, the loser mourns, the victors celebrate (VI, 167-179). Yet the scene contains a foreshadow of the tragedy to come. In the palace, Gilgamesh and his men ready themselves for sleep:

181 Enkidu was lying down, seeing a dream.
182 Enkidu arose to reveal the dream,
183 saying to his friend:
VII 1 "My friend, for what reason were the great gods taking counsel?"

Thus begins a new, though not unrelated, scene in the epic. Tablet VII tells of Enkidu's death, followed by Gilgamesh's mourning and his search for immortality and for the meaning of life. Following the successful FOILING OF THE REVENGE, the mortal Ally of the semi-divine king suffers the fate of other mortal allies in ANE revenge narratives. In this epic, however, the Ally is a fully developed character whose death will move the narrative forward.

15.2 Analysis and HB Comparisons

15.2.1 Initial Scene

Like many HB revenge narratives, this epic establishes a detailed canvas on which the actions of the Avenger and Avenged can be understood. The description of Gilgamesh's prowess, entwined with details of his indiscretions and cruelties, creates an image depicted in superlatives (I, 2-62). Gilgamesh's wisdom, beauty, knowledge, and strength recall the descriptions of the first kings of Israel (Saul in I Sam 9:2, 10:23-24; David in I Sam 16:18, 17:8-10; and Solomon in I Kgs 3:12-12, 5:9-14). The descriptors build expectations regarding how the kings will respond to threats and interact with their subjects. Failure to employ divinely bestowed gifts and abilities is a failure of character. Throughout the narrative, Gilgamesh remains aware of both his capabilities and his duties.

Gilgamesh's cruel treatment of his subjects does not detract from the general regard of his people (I, 65ff). Though the gods agree that he must change his behavior, Gilgamesh retains his position and the gods send Enkidu to redirect his energies. HB leaders, in contrast, are expected to uphold high moral standards; occasional reminders of those expectations serve to prevent acts of revenge, as seen in the story of David, Abigail, and Nabal (I Samuel 25) and in David's reluctance

¹¹ J. Daniel Bing, "Gilgamesh and Lugalbanda in the Fara Period," *JANES* 9, no. 1 (1977): 2.

to harm God's anointed (I Samuel 24, 26). HB descriptions of valor and prowess in battle are significant only insofar as those traits serve the nation in accordance with the divine moral code.

As the following analysis will show, the absence or presence of praise for Gilgamesh foreshadows the moral valence of the revenge act. In other words, whether the action is viewed positively or negatively depends on the actant's character. This also contrasts with the HB narratives, in which the valence of the revenge act depends on the Avenger's restraint, the nature of the WRONG, and the need for action.

As with other ANE and HB protagonists, Gilgamesh relies upon his mother's judgment and protection. King Solomon also regards his mother as an advisor (I Kgs 2:13 ff.), as does Jacob (Genesis 27). Respect for the wisdom of earlier generations and deference toward elders, as Pughat demonstrates in the *Tale of Aqhat*, is absent in Ishtar's conduct. Ostensibly seeking her father's approval, Ishtar bullies and threatens him to gain possession of the Bull of Heaven.

15.2.2 WRONG

Gilgamesh's refusal of Ishtar's proposal has invited comparisons with Joseph's refusal of Potiphar's wife and her subsequent revenge (Genesis 39).¹² Like Potiphar's wife, Ishtar is unaccustomed to rejection, particularly by a subordinate, and responds with fury. Both narratives show how the woman "raises her eyes" to see the object of her desire within reach (Gen 39:7; GE VI, 6).¹³ Joseph respectfully declines the advances of his master's wife, but nevertheless suffers her false accusations. Gilgamesh's actions are far more egregious: He insults Ishtar's personal qualities and past actions at length. The reversal of the traditional gender roles, i.e., Ishtar offers gifts to Gilgamesh, recalls Jezebel's promises to Ahab regarding Naboth's vineyard (I Kgs 21:7). When such an offer is rejected, the giver suffers shame and a loss of honor.¹⁴ Unlike Joseph's refusal of Potiphar's wife, Gilgamesh's rejection of Ishtar is not governed by morality (although he views marriage to her as immoral), but by self-preservation. The goddess is not trustworthy; the suffering of her former lovers is well-known.¹⁵

Gilgamesh is not tempted by Ishtar's offers of wealth, including cedars. He is capable of acquiring wealth on his own, as evidenced by his foray into the Cedar Forest. The vassal status that marriage to a goddess entails is comparable to certain HB political alliances against which Judah and Israel are warned. Alliances that limit the monarch's ability to act independently (in the case of

¹² Goldman, *Wiles of Women/The Wiles of Men, The*, 79–82; David Tuesday Adamo, "The Nameless African Wife of Potiphar and Her Contribution to Ancient Israel," *OTE* 26, no. 2 (2013): 221–46.

¹³ George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, 1:619, nt. 3.

¹⁴ Gary Stansell, "The Gift in Ancient Israel," *Semeia*, 87 (1999): 65; Victor H. Matthews, "The Unwanted Gift: Implications of Obligatory Gift Giving in Ancient Israel," *Semeia*, 87 (1999): 100–101.

¹⁵ Susan Tower Hollis, "The Woman in Ancient Examples of the Potiphar's Wife Motif," in *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel* (ed. Peggy L. Day; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 36.

the Northern Kingdom, this included limits even on service of God) are proscribed.¹⁶ Abusch theorizes that the proposal was particularly abhorrent to Gilgamesh because it would have made him a functionary of the Netherworld, still under Ishtar's control to some degree.¹⁷ While any rejected party may be insulted to the point of vengeance, Gilgamesh's offense against the goddess is exacerbated by his insults, which are wholly out of place in an interaction between a mortal and a deity.¹⁸

The rejection of gifts in the ANE is an insult that demeans the givers and offends their honor. Therefore it is the giver, not the recipient, who is in a position to gain or lose honor according to the acceptance or rejection of the gift. As Mauss explains, gifts are meant to build solidarity in a community: "In theory these are voluntary, in reality they are given and reciprocated obligatorily."¹⁹ The gift constitutes a challenge: The giver may gain honor, but risks garnering disgrace.²⁰ As we see in the *GE*, the acceptance or refusal of a gift in ANE tales has the potential to damage the status of the giver, the recipient or both.²¹

Gilgamesh's refusal of Ishtar's proposal risks being perceived by his subjects as a failure to fulfill the sacred marriage rite, a dereliction of his royal duties; yet his refusal also reflects an independence of thought regarding how to protect himself and his kingdom, bearing in mind the price to be paid for this independence.²² Gilgamesh's rejection of Ishtar's gifts contributes to the WRONG of his rejection of her proposal. Similarly, Samson's gift of a goat to his wife is refused; also, he is barred from seeing her. The combination of these rejections precipitated his revenge act of burning fields (Jud 15:1-5). Another notable feature these tales share is that the vengeance is perpetrated on a member of the out-group.²³ Fear of the other is part of Gilgamesh's reason for rejecting Ishtar's gift.

¹⁶ Gary N. Knoppers, "'Yhwh Is Not with Israel': Alliances as a 'Topos' in Chronicles," *CBQ* 58, no. 4 (1996): 611–12, 621–22.

¹⁷ Abusch, "Ishtar's Proposal and Gilgamesh's Refusal," 153.

¹⁸ Bruce Loudon, *Homer's Odyssey and the Near East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 130–31.

¹⁹ Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* (trans. W.D. Halls; London: Routledge, 2002), 2.

²⁰ Stansell, "The Gift in Ancient Israel," 69–70.

²¹ Victor H. Matthews, *Old Testament Turning Points: The Narratives That Shaped a Nation* (Ada: Baker Academic, 2005), 30–32; John F. Sherry Jr, "Gift Giving in Anthropological Perspective," *Journal of Consumer Research* 10, no. 2 (1983): 161–62.

²² Neal H. Walls, *Desire, Discord, and Death: Approaches to Ancient Near Eastern Myth* (Boston: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2001), 42.

²³ David's acceptance of Abigail's gift of appeasement (I Samuel 25) and Esau's acceptance of Jacob's offering (Genesis 32-33), offer contrast, as both demonstrate the defusing of a situation as a result of the honor a recipient bestows upon a giver, thus avoiding, or circumventing, a REVENGE ACT. In both of these situations, the acceptance of the gift results in a defusing of the situation, thus avoiding vengeance.

15.2.3 REACTION TO THE WRONG

The HB case of Joseph and Potiphar's wife depicts an angry REACTION to a failed seduction (Genesis 39). Like Ishtar, Potiphar's wife desires a man below her social sphere and both women take umbrage at the refusal. Joseph's circumstances resemble those of Bata in the Egyptian *Tale of Two Brothers*; both rebuffed propositions by the wife of the master and both were punished anyway. Gilgamesh focuses on the material disadvantages of the marriage more than on its possible moral problems,²⁴ which results in a more personal and emotional response on Ishtar's part.²⁵ All three of these cases share the message that a failed seduction conveys humiliation and rage that will result in revenge. Ishtar, Anat, and Potiphar's wife respond to rejection with fury.²⁶ All three male protagonists feel threatened by the woman's offer, and when they refuse it, they suffer the fury of a woman scorned. In the HB narrative, Potiphar replaces the father as the male to whom the scorned woman turns despite, as Redford notes, Potiphar's nature as a woman who is "adulterous, malevolent and contemptuous of her husband."²⁷ Levinson argues that her sexual seduction is a physical manifestation of the "cultural seduction" that Joseph resists. Potiphar's wife, like Ishtar and Anat, represents the "other,"²⁸ which accords with Abusch's suggestion that Ishtar was attempting to lure Gilgamesh to a position of power in the Netherworld. His refusal of her advances, like Joseph's of Potiphar's wife, suggests that by refusing a woman's sexual advances, he is also refusing to join a foreign culture, in this case, a culture of death.

15.2.4 COUNCIL

Ishtar knows that her place in the pantheon requires her to consult with those to whom she is subordinate before embarking on an act of vengeance. While this does not necessarily entail a presentation to a formal council, it does involve a show of respect for hierarchy that was mimicked in the ANE political system.²⁹ Despite her petitions becoming demands and threats, the goddess at least gives the appearance of a superficial deference before avenging the WRONG. Ishtar bullies

²⁴ Goldman, *Wiles of Women/The Wiles of Men*, 32–35. The injury to self as a result of an affair with a married woman is certainly present in both the Egyptian and HB narratives, as is evidenced by the later false accusations, yet this is not presented as the protagonist's reason for refusal in either of these tales.

²⁵ Thorkild Jacobsen, "The Gilgamesh Epic Romantic and Tragic Vision," in *Lingering over Words: Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Literature in Honor of William L. Moran* (eds. Tzvi Abusch, John Huehnergard, and Piotr Steinkeller, Harvard Semitic Studies 37; Leiden: Brill, 1990), 244–45.

²⁶ Hillers, "The Bow of Aqhat," 74–77, cites other narratives that share the theme. He notes, in particular, the outsized rage displayed by Anat and Ishtar.

²⁷ Redford, *A Study of the Biblical Story of Joseph*, 18.

²⁸ Joshua Levinson, "An-Other Woman: Joseph and Potiphar's Wife. Staging the Body Politic," *JQR* 87, no. 3/4 (1997): 274.

²⁹ Jacobsen, *Toward the Image of Tammuz and Other Essays on Mesopotamian History and Culture*, 37–38; 380, nt. 50 discusses the role of judge as advisor, as well as executor of judgements; Malamet, "Kingship and Council in Israel and Sumer," 250–51.

Anu into giving her the Bull of Heaven, a move that corresponds to Propp's ACQUISITION OF A MAGICAL AGENT, which can also be manifested as the ACQUISITION OF AN ALLY.³⁰

Ishtar approaches her father to gain permission to avenge and/or to acquire aid. Unlike female Victims in HB narratives, she does not expect anyone else to avenge on her behalf.³¹ In contrast to ANE revenge narratives, HB revenge narratives reflect the negative view of the REVENGE ACT in ancient Israelite culture. As a result, would-be Avengers requesting aid from their superiors to avenge a personal WRONG frame their appeals in veiled terms to avoid an unequivocal rejection. When Joab confronts David after hearing that Abner is accepted into David's inner circle, the king ignores his concerns. Knowing he will not gain royal approval, Joab does not ask for it; instead, he acts on his own instead of receiving and then disobeying a direct command to leave Abner untouched (II Sam 3:24-25). Similarly, Simeon and Levi observe their father Jacob's failure to act against Shechem. They do not ask for Jacob's approval but, like Joab, implement a revenge plan without apology (Gen 34:13, 31). Absalom also knows that asking his father, King David, to authorize punishment for his half-brother Amnon's rape of Tamar will end with the king's refusal. Although Absalom's plan requires David's assistance, Absalom gains this with guile and subtlety (II Sam 13:24-27). As a foreigner, Jezebel seems aware that ANE revenge acts entail COUNCIL, so she fabricates legal proceedings against Naboth to give the appearance of legitimacy. Like Ishtar, Jezebel is adept at intimidating those around her, the elders and nobles of Jezreel.³² The absence of the COUNCIL function in HB narratives and Jezebel's foreign origins mark her plan with signs of foreign influence (I Kgs 21:8-13).

15.2.5 PLAN/THREAT

Unlike avengers in many HB or ANE revenge narratives, Ishtar announces her PLAN to any who will listen, in and out of COUNCIL. She is certain of her success once she receives the Bull of Heaven. News of the Bull's imminent arrival fills the people with dread, which is part of her PLAN. Ishtar's rage and self-confidence make any attempt at deception superfluous.

HB Avengers often use deception when surprise is needed to ensure that the PLAN will not be thwarted by the Avengee or authorities. Sometimes the deception is mentioned by the narrator, as in the case of Simeon and Levi (Gen 34:13); sometimes the success of the revenge plan requires deception, as with Absalom against Amnon (II Samuel 13). This is also the case in some ANE narratives, as in *Illuyanka*, when Hupašiya is hidden and the Storm-god's son's identity is concealed. A PLAN that uses deception not only traps an unsuspecting target, it helps Avengers avoid overt censure and the possibility that a superior will forbid them to act. Hagan argues that the

³⁰ Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, 43–50.

³¹ This aspect will be discussed at greater length below in the analysis of the *Shukaletuda* narrative.

³² Dutcher-Walls, *Jezebel*, 48–51.

need for deception is a sign of weakness in HB narratives and gives prominence to God's hand in a given victory.³³ Ishtar's actions, on the other hand, are not circumscribed by any authority, nor do they reflect any concern on her part that her reputation will be tarnished by the use of disproportionate force acquired through illegitimate means.

15.2.6 *REVENGE ACT*

Ishtar's revenge inflicts collateral damage on bystanders and property. She takes the Bull of Heaven to Uruk to bring drought and destruction upon the citizens, whose only crime is having Gilgamesh as their leader. Anu does not permit the wholesale destruction of Uruk. He also requires that Ishtar take measures to prevent famine and then, despite his misgivings, he hands the goddess the Bull of Heaven, which begins to drain the water sources, causing hundreds of men to die (VI, 92-114). The destruction of Gilgamesh's city, whose protection is his responsibility, is a significant part of Ishtar's revenge. Despite Ishtar's assurances of Ishtar to Anu, she brings great harm to Uruk, which, like the impending death of Enkidu, may be a greater punishment than harm to himself. Additionally, because the protection of his subjects is a king's responsibility, harm to the people is tantamount to an attack on the king's reputation, a stain on his honor.

When the innocent suffer from an act of revenge, the lack of proportionality and collective punishment for a personal insult cannot go unnoticed. Haman's attempt to avenge himself for Mordechai's offense by killing an entire nation (Esth 3:5-6) is a comparable event, as is Saul's wholesale destruction of Nob (I Samuel 22). David's subsequent guilt does not absolve Saul of his killing of innocent people. Even when punishing others is intended by the Avenger to inflict suffering on the Avengee, collective punishment still imposes a heavy ethical weight when the ethical valence of the revenge is assessed.³⁴

15.2.7 *AFTERMATH*

As will be seen again in other Ishtar/Inana narratives, the actions that follow the goddess's revenge acts can be divided into categories, each of which sends a message regarding the revenge act and its legitimacy (and thus its valence) and the goddess's character. These categories will be explored below, as will significant acts perpetrated by the Avengees or intended Avengees.

15.2.8 *Praise*

Ishtar often reacts with anger when others fail to show adequate honor and fealty. Indeed, she demands complete subordination, and thus it is not surprising that narratives in which she is cast as an Avenger sing her praises at their conclusion. In the *GE*, however, Gilgamesh, not Ishtar, is

³³ Harry Hagan, "Deception as Motif and Theme in 2 Sm 9-20; 1 Kgs 1-2," *Biblica* 60, no. 3 (1979): 324-25.

³⁴ For a fuller discussion of collective punishment in the Ishtar/Inana narratives as compared to the HB narratives, see the discussion at the end of the ANE section.

praised for having foiled her revenge attempt, thereby saving Uruk from complete destruction (VI,172-178).

15.2.9 *Suffering of Allies*

Like other ANE narratives, the *GE* emphasizes the role of the Ally. Enkidu is developed as a full character in a lengthy introduction. Created by Aruru by command of Anu to direct Gilgamesh's behavior, his arrival is foretold by Ninsun, Gilgamesh's mother, and anticipated by Gilgamesh himself. Shamhat the prostitute civilizes him, whereupon he establishes a close partnership with Gilgamesh that is depicted through their sparring and escapades. Ninsun formally adopts Enkidu, and the two friends become brothers. The high level of character development makes the loss of Enkidu especially poignant; the suffering caused by his death is far greater than the often perfunctory treatment of other suffering Allies.

George points out that the episode involving Ishtar's proposal, Gilgamesh's refusal, and the killing of the Bull of Heaven is absent from the OBV of the epic, appearing first in the Hittite version and then in the SBV.³⁵ The Hittite version shows Anu insisting that either Enkidu or Gilgamesh must die because they killed Humbaba *and* the Bull of Heaven.³⁶ Setting aside the question of culpability for the killing of Humbaba, these two offenses — killing Humbaba and killing the Bull — are separate incidents. The SBV seeks to connect Enkidu's death to Ishtar's foiled revenge so that both Enkidu and Gilgamesh will be punished in spite of having evaded her vengeance.³⁷ Enkidu's death raises the motif of the suffering Ally to new heights by making the Avenger himself suffer through the loss of a cherished Ally. HB narratives, in contrast, show how anyone close to the Avengee suffers when vengeance is perpetrated. Jacob, for example, suffers when Joseph is lost, even though the brothers did not intend to cause their father to suffer (Gen 37:19-20). Enkidu, on the other hand, is specifically targeted so that both he and Gilgamesh will be punished. This episode is strategically placed to convey the message that thwarting Ishtar carries a high price. The death of Enkidu is Ishtar's true revenge because it devastates Gilgamesh and ends his indifference to human suffering. The AFTERMATH shows how a typically "stock" character can be raised to an Ally whose loss utterly vanquishes the hero.

15.2.10 *Lament & Mourning*

For all her violent tendencies, Ishtar cares deeply for those close to her. She mourns her Ally, the Bull of Heaven, which perished at the hands of Gilgamesh as he protected his city from its rampage. Unlike HB revenge narratives, not only do Ishtar's victim and his allies suffer, but Ishtar

³⁵ George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, 1:23–33; 308, nt. 37.

³⁶ Ruggero Stefanini, "Enkidu's Dream in the Hittite Gilgamesh," *JNES* 28, no. 1 (1969): 45.

³⁷ Louis L. Orlin, *Life and Thought in the Ancient Near East* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), 105.

herself pays a painful price for her vengeance. This conveys a divergent message than the HB narratives of Joab's revenge on Abner, Absalom's on Amnon, or the brothers on Joseph. All of these cases involve mourning for the deceased (or presumed deceased) Avengee on the part of the Avengee's allies (though this is forced in the case of Joab). Ishtar's failed revenge attempt demonstrates that there can be suffering on both sides in the wake of an act of vengeance.

15.3 Conclusions

The analysis of Ishtar's attempted revenge on Gilgamesh reveals the significance of morphological structures in revenge narratives and how alterations from what is expected can highlight underlying themes of the story. In particular, the ways in which the functions are filled and which functions are absent reflect choices that convey the cultural values of the milieu of the narrative in its current form.

In the Initial Scene, both direct and indirect characterization present the reader with ample material for a multi-layered assessment of the protagonist. Gilgamesh's physical prowess is lauded, as is his ability to rule Uruk, yet his negative traits are acknowledged, leading to Enkidu's creation. Gilgamesh's cruel actions do not negate his value as a leader, unlike certain actions of HB rulers (most notably Saul). Enkidu and his development are described in rich detail, and he impresses the reader as possessing a strong moral compass despite his origins as a wild man.³⁸ The early characterizations of these figures ensure that the reader is drawn into their inner worlds before Ishtar enters the narrative. Despite some dubious actions, they are firmly in the "hero" column, and vengeance against them will carry a strong negative valence. Joseph shares some of these qualities, but HB narratives generally rely more on indirect characterization as the narrative progresses than on initial descriptors by the narrator.³⁹ Saul, Joab, and Absalom all fall from positions of power when they misuse the natural abilities that the text has conveyed through direct characterizations.

In addition to the initial characterizations of the heroes, the nature of the WRONG helps determine the valence of the revenge act. Ironically, the accusation Gilgamesh hurls at Ishtar, that those involved with her suffer harm, is manifested later in the demise of the Bull of Heaven, her Ally. Refusing to accept her gifts and proposal constitute an insult that can be compared to HB instances of in-group and out-group acceptance or rejection of gifts. Rejecting gifts from the "other" due to the in-group's safety concerns risks offending the giver. Great care is taken to accept the gifts within the kinship group in order to avoid revenge within the clan.

The rage displayed by Ishtar and Potiphar's wife indicate that their offers were not to strengthen or expand kinship bonds but to maximize their own benefit, that is, reflecting "negative

³⁸ Mobley, "The Wild Man in the Bible and the Ancient Near East," 221–23 describes both Enkidu's transformation and how, once civilized, he utilizes his past to his and Gilgamesh's advantage.

³⁹ Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, 53–86.

reciprocity.”⁴⁰ Because of his position as leader, Gilgamesh is too incensed at Ishtar’s proposal to exercise courtesy or caution; he insults Ishtar at length in considerable detail. Joseph, on the other hand, a slave propositioned by his master’s wife, represents the HB ideal of self-preservation without antagonization. The result is that Joseph’s loss of his freedom is temporary as opposed to Gilgamesh’s loss of Enkidu, which haunts him for the rest of his life.

Seeking permission in a formal or informal COUNCIL distinguishes the ANE revenge narrative from its HB counterpart. The HB requirements of the child honoring the parent, as well as the hierarchy of unequal covenant relations, are familiar analogues. Assmann’s description of *Ma’at* as the strict adherence to the societal hierarchy of values (“truth, justice, law, order, wisdom, authenticity and sincerity”), seen in both ancient Egypt and ancient Israel, is balanced in the HB literature by an additional Deuteronomic trend to level hierarchies.⁴¹ HB narratives see this vertical Solidarität begin to bend as the family unit gains prominence, often at the expense of the larger, societal, hierarchical unit.⁴² This leads to a tension in which HB narratives often portray Avengers who desire parental or monarchical approval, but prefer to eschew that approval rather than receive (and refuse) their superior’s order to refrain from vengeance. We have seen this pattern in the HB narrative of Simeon and Levi, who implement their revenge act without consulting their father. Similarly, Joab acts independently when he avenges his brother’s death, as does Absalom when he avenges Tamar’s rape in the face of King David’s failure to act. The conflict between the desire for vengeance and the obligation to defer to authority is often solved through deception or, at the least, a lack of the transparency evident in many ANE revenge narratives. The expectation of official approval prior to taking vengeance is absent from HB revenge narratives. Ishtar’s seeking out permission, even permission that is forced, is typical of ANE revenge narratives. Moreover, she is careful to present the appearance of “duty to superiors” before she acts.⁴³ It is interesting to note that Jezebel also “forces the system” when she acts against Naboth, twisting the trappings of justice so that she can achieve her goal.

The rage that comprises Ishtar’s REACTION TO THE WRONG is reminiscent of Tiamat’s tirades in *Enuma Elish*. While positively valenced ANE revenge such as Pughat’s on Yatpan in the *Aqhat* narrative mirror the restraint of HB Avengers, Ishtar’s REACTION more closely resembles the negatively valenced HB revenge acts of the non-Israelite Jezebel or Haman. Nevertheless, the

⁴⁰ Marshall Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2017), 177–78.

⁴¹ Olyan, “Honor, Shame, and Covenant Relations in Ancient Israel and Its Environment,” 204–7; Mark A. Leuchter, “The Priesthood in Ancient Israel,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 40, no. 2 (2010): 108.

⁴² Barton, *Ethics in Ancient Israel*, 79; Jan Assmann, *Ma’at: Gerechtigkeit Und Unsterblichkeit Im Alten Ägypten* (Beck Reihe 1403; München: CH Beck, 2006), 9, 248ff.

⁴³ S. Todd Lowry, “Social Justice and the Subsistence Economy: From Aristotle to Seventeenth-Century Economics,” in *Social Justice in the Ancient World*, (eds. Kaikhosrow D. Irani and Morris Silver; Global Perspectives in History and Politics 354; Westport: Greenwood, 1995), 10–11.

goddess is not punished for her behavior. On the contrary, Enkidu and Gilgamesh suffer for actions connected to the revenge act, indicating that her violent behavior was not the decisive factor in the failure of the revenge.⁴⁴

The ANE motif of the suffering Ally appears in this narrative in a highly developed form on both sides of the revenge. Ishtar mourns the Bull's demise, directing her women to take up the lament (VI, 147-159); Gilgamesh is crushed by the death of Enkidu, his Ally and brother. Owing to the solitary nature of HB vengeance, this motif is virtually absent from HB narratives, and even Gideon's effort to draw his son into the circle of vengeance for family honor meet with failure (Jud 8:20-21). The AFTERMATH of this tale, which describes how the Avenger suffers in spite of having escaped the attempted vengeance, inverts those HB cases in which the Avenger completes the revenge but suffers due to a miscarriage of justice. This is seen in the revenge of Jezebel on Naboth, Abimelech on the people of Shechem, Saul on the priests of Nob, and Joab on Abner. Each culture demonstrates in its own way the fact that justice is an ideal that becomes complicated in practice. The HB tendency to depict the implementation of an unwarranted revenge that inflicts unwarranted punishment on an Avenger may be contrasted with a tale in which Ishtar's failure to carry out an unwarranted revenge act is followed by the unwarranted punishment of Enkidu and Gilgamesh. The inversion demonstrates how the responses in the AFTERMATH of a revenge act reflect the values of the culture in which the narrative developed. This particular case showcases the HB theology of human free choice regarding sin and its attendant consequences. Avengers whose cause is unjust are not punished before they commit an act for which they will, later, be punished.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ The connection or lack thereof of the Avenger's rage to the valence of the revenge will be explored further in the Inana narratives.

⁴⁵ Douglas A. Knight, "Jeremiah and the Dimensions of the Moral Life," in *The Divine Helmsman: Studies on God's Control of Human Events, Presented to Lou H. Silberman* (eds. J Crenshaw and L.H. Silberman; New York: Ktav, 1980), 100-102.

Chapter 16

16.0 Inana & Shukaletuda¹

The myth of *Inana and Shukaletuda*, or Inana and the Gardener, found in fragmentary form at Sumer, tells the story of Shukaletuda the gardener, a mortal, who finds a goddess sleeping in his garden and rapes her. The goddess, Inana, avenges the offense by hunting down Shukaletuda and killing him. The tale, though concise, follows the basic morphology of other ANE revenge narratives, as the table below demonstrates:

Table 26 Morphology - Inana & Shukaletuda

Initial Scene	1-22	Inana's powers are praised. She returns from her travels and falls asleep.
	91-111	Descriptions of the poplar tree and of Shukaletuda.
WRONG	112-126	Shukaletuda rapes Inana.
REACTION TO THE WRONG	127-130	Inana considers her situation and the form her vengeance will take.
PLAN	131-138	Inana replaces all of the water in the land with blood. It does not yield her aggressor.
COUNCIL(Shuk)	139-184	Shukaletuda seeks & receives advice from his father.
PLAN	185-193	Inana brings a storm to the land.
COUNCIL(Shuk)	194-213	Shukaletuda seeks & receives advice from his father.
PLAN	214-220	Inana blocks the highways of the city.
COUNCIL(Shuk)	221-238	Shukaletuda seeks & receives advice from his father.
COUNCIL(Inana)	239-250	Inana asks Enki to help her. Threatens to abandon E-ana should he not help. Enki agrees.
REVENGE ACT	250-261	Inana locates and curses Shukaletuda.
COMPLICITY	262-289	Shukaletuda confesses.
SECONDARY REVENGE ACT	290-309	Shukaletuda is informed that his name will live on in song. Shukaletuda is presumably killed.
AFTERMATH	310	Inana is praised.

¹I have used ETCSL translations, Black, J.A., Cunningham, G., Ebeling, J., Flückiger-Hawker, E., Robson, E., Taylor, J., and Zólyomi, G, (1998-2006). <https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.1.3.3#> but have chosen the more common English spellings of *Shukaletuda* and *Inana*, rather than the formal transliterations Cu-kale-tuda or Šu-kale-tuda. The political as well as the astral aspects of Inana in this narrative have been discussed in Jerrold S. Cooper, "Literature and History: The Historical and Political Referents of Sumerian Literary Texts," in *Proceedings of the XLV Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale* (ed. Tzvi Abusch et al.; Historiography in the Cuneiform World; Bethesda: CDL Press, 2001); Konrad Volk, *Inana Und Šukaletuda: Zur Historisch-Politischen Deutung Eines Sumerischen Litaraturwerkes*, *Santag* 3 (Otto Harrassowitz, 1995); Ingrid E. Lilly, "Conceptualizing Spirit: Supernatural Meteorology and Winds of Distress in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East," in *Sibyls, Scriptures and Scrolls: John Collins at Seventy* (eds. Joel Baden, Hindy Najman, and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar; Supplements for the Journal for the Study of Judaism 175; Leiden: Brill, 2017), 826–44; Jeffrey L. Cooley, "Inana and Šukaletuda: A Sumerian Astral Myth," *Kaskal* 5 (2008): 159–72. Aspects of the rape and the status of women have been examined in Alhena Gadotti, "Why It Was Rape: The Conceptualization of Rape in Sumerian Literature," *JAOS* 129, no. 1 (2009): 73–82; Alhena Gadotti, "The Feminine in Myths and Epic," in *Women in the Ancient Near East* (ed. Mark Chavalas; New York: Routledge, 2013), 40–70. In studies of the *Shukaletuda* narrative, the focus has been primarily on historical-political and women's studies rather than on the motif of revenge.

16.1 *Establishing the Morphology*

Shukaletuda is an unsuccessful gardener for whom nothing grows except a poplar tree whose shade never changes regardless of the time of day. One day, beneath the shade of this tree, the goddess Inana falls asleep after her morning survey of the Earth. Shukaletuda recognizes the goddess and is amazed at her appearance in his garden (91-116). He does not seize the opportunity to request divine aid in his agricultural efforts but instead commits a WRONG, raping the goddess as she sleeps (117-126). In the human realm, the rape of a female by a male is an offense in all ANE societies, incurring punishment from a monetary fine to the woman's father or owner if the woman is unmarried, to the death penalty if she is married.² The rape of Inana by Shukaletuda is deeply presumptuous given that Shukaletuda knew his victim was divine:

He saw a solitary ghost. He recognized a solitary god by her appearance. He saw someone who fully possesses the divine powers (*mes*). (103-105)

Though Inana is known as a goddess of sex, her favors are a gift to be given by her and treasured (as is seen from her fury at Gilgamesh's refusal), not taken by force. The penalty for such a violation was severe.³ When Inana awakens and realizes that she has been violated, her REACTION TO THE WRONG conveys her sense of the magnitude of the crime perpetrated against her:⁴

When day had broken and Utu had risen, the woman inspected herself closely, holy Inana inspected herself closely. Then the woman was considering what should be destroyed because of her genitals; Inana was considering what should be done because of her genitals. (127-130)

Without seeking COUNCIL, the goddess devises a PLAN to flush out the mortal who wronged her. She brings a plague to the city, replacing all potable water with blood (131-138). When the first plague does not succeed, she considers her next move and brings fearsome storms, including a dust that blocks out the sun and decimates the land (185-193). When this fails to work, she considers what to do for the third time and decides to block the streets of the city, preventing the flow of necessary goods (214-220). Prior to each new attempt to draw out her assailant, Inana considers "what should be destroyed because of her genitals" (129, 185, 214).

Shukaletuda, panicked, runs to his father, describes his crime in detail, and seeks COUNCIL, hoping to evade the goddess and avoid the consequences of his action. His father advises him to hide among his brothers, city-dwellers in the mountains, in order to avoid detection (139-184). This interaction is repeated almost verbatim after each plague (194-213; 221-238).

² Stephanie Lynn Budin, "Sexuality: Ancient Near East (except Egypt)," in *The International Encyclopedia of Human Sexuality* (ed. Patricia Welchan and Anne Bolin; Chichester: John Wiley & sons, 2015), 4; Stol, *Women in the Ancient Near East*, 254-64.

³ Leick, *Sex and Eroticism in Mesopotamian Literature*, 52-53, comments that Inana is the initiator of all sexual acts in which she takes part and that she is not to be taken advantage of as "an object of phallic impulse."

⁴ Gadotti, "Why It Was Rape," 77-78.

Shukaletuda is oblivious to the suffering that results from his refusal to confess; he is only aware of the goddess's relentless search. In this, his myopic view mimics Inana's own preoccupation.

The text does not mention that the people are aware of Shukaletuda's offense, nor that they understand that their misfortune is due to Inana's quest for vengeance. Indeed, it is not immediately evident how Inana's strategy will expose the guilty party. Perhaps the plagues will cause the people to flee, enabling the goddess to identify the rapist in some way that the text does not disclose. Regardless of the mechanism, the people function as Shukaletuda's unwitting Allies, shielding him by their multitudes.

Frustrated by her lack of success in locating her aggressor and despite her capabilities, Inana seeks COUNCIL with her father, Enki,⁵ a course of action that appears in other revenge narratives featuring this goddess. Just as her father helps her in *The Descent of Inana* and in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, here, too, Inana receives his aid. She declares that he is responsible for compensating her for the WRONG perpetrated against her (239-250) and, characteristically, she phrases her request as a threat: If he does not give her permission to locate her attacker, she will abandon her temple in E-ana. As this would bring the city's ruin, Inana's threat was not an empty one.⁶ Because of the infraction committed against his daughter, Enki does not attempt to dissuade her from revenge as An did in *GE* and *Ebih*. Enki gives permission, and Inana exits, stretching herself across the sky like a rainbow in order to find her rapist (251-255).

On earth, Shukaletuda attempts to blend in with the masses, as his father suggested, but the goddess finds him among the mountains. In lines that are nearly illegible, Inana's revenge begins with a series of insults against this violator of a goddess:

Holy Inana now spoke to Cu-kale-tuda: How? dog! ass! pig!" (256-261).

Perhaps in an effort to gain her mercy, Shukaletuda makes a full confession. He repeats what he told his father earlier, but this does nothing to mitigate the goddess's desire for revenge (262-289). The REVENGE act itself is not extant, though it is possible that Inana transformed Shukaletuda to humiliate him before she killed him.⁷

She (?) determined his destiny, holy Inana spoke to Cu-kale-tuda: "So! You shall die! What is that to me? Your name, however, shall not be forgotten. Your name shall exist in songs and make the songs sweet. A young singer shall perform them most pleasingly in the king's palace. A shepherd shall sing them sweetly as he tumbles his butter churn. A young shepherd shall carry your name to where he grazes the sheep. The palace of the desert shall be your home." (290-310)

⁵ Enki in *Shukaletuda*, An in *Descent* and *GE*. Regarding Inana's lineage, see *GE*, p.244, Section 15.0.

⁶ Daniel E. Fleming, "Ur: After the Gods Abandoned Us," *The Classical World* 97, no. 1 (2003): 8.

⁷ George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, 2:836, supports the suggestion that he was diminished in size, transformed into a dwarf, though the lacuna in the text does not allow for certitude regarding the exact nature of Shukaletuda's punishment.

Before exacting her revenge, Inana not only informs Shukaletuda that he will die for his crime, but outlines what his legacy will be. He will die, but surprisingly, his name will live on in songs that will be sung in the king's palace and the shepherd's pasture. This unusual fate may be due to his having desired the goddess enough to violate her; however, as will be seen in the next section, it may also be part of Inana's revenge. The narrative concludes with praises to Inana: "Because destiny was determined, praise be to Inana!" (311), a fitting AFTERMATH in an episode that offended her honor.

16.2 Analysis & HB Comparison

16.2.1 Initial Scene

The tablets containing the tale of *Inana and Shukaletuda* begin with glowing descriptions of the goddess (1-22). Her power (the *mes*), her prowess in battle, her strength, and her magnificent, if terrifying, nature are detailed. She is lauded for her crusade for justice in avenging the WRONGS perpetrated against her:

The mistress who, having all the great divine powers, deserves the throne-dais; Inana who, having all the great divine powers, occupies a holy throne-dais; Inana who stands in E-ana as a source of wonder -- once, the young woman went up into the mountains, holy Inana went up into the mountains. To detect falsehood and justice, to inspect the Land closely, to identify the criminal against the just, she went up into the mountains. (1-9)

Metcalf explains how hymn-like introductions to narrative compositions reveal a culture's values.⁸ HB narratives sometimes contain praise for characters' attributes or actions, but such descriptions do not comprise the entirety of an Initial Scene as is done here. Prefacing a revenge narrative with the Avenger's accolades foreshadows, even dictates, the valence of the revenge act; nearly any means are justified to recalibrate the scales of justice. Shukaletuda, on the other hand, is described in negative terms. He is a failure who actively destroys the plants he is supposed to be cultivating. His eradication of living things portends his role in the narrative as one who brings disaster:

Cu-kale-tuda was his name., a son (?) of Igi-sigsig, the, was to water garden plots and build the installation for a well among the plants, but not a single plant remained there, not even one: he had pulled them out by their roots and destroyed them (91-97).

Positive HB character descriptions may be followed by a negative valence, but the praises of Inana frame the narrative and preclude any criticism of the goddess or her actions.⁹ Bar-Efrat notes that while HB characters are presented on a continuum of complexity, the uniformity of characterization here reflects "a static definition of characters which avoids conflict, vacillation, and development,

⁸ Christopher Metcalf, *The Gods Rich in Praise: Early Greek and Mesopotamian Religious Poetry* (Oxford Classical Monographs, 2015), 42, 102.

⁹ See, for example, character descriptions of Saul (I Sam 9:1-2; 10:24), David (I Sam 16:7, 12, 18; 17:42; 18:6-7; 29:9) Absalom (II Sam 14:25-27); and Solomon (I Kgs 3:28; 5:1-14) detailing the kings' physical appearance, wealth and wisdom. Nevertheless, HB narratives of their problematic actions are portrayed negatively.

such as are natural to legendary structure, [however, this static definition] does not predominate in the Old Testament world of legend.”¹⁰ The praises of Inana indicate absolute endorsement of her actions.

16.2.2 *WRONG*

The perception that the rape of a woman is a *WRONG* deserving revenge is familiar from the HB narratives of Dinah and Shechem and of Tamar and Amnon, as well as from various laws prohibiting rape.¹¹ Drawing on the story of the concubine of Gibah (Judges 19) and certain legal passages, Gravett describes HB rape as a forced sexual act that “violates the man who holds the rights to a woman’s sexuality” rather than as a violation of the woman herself.¹² This is not the case with Inana. She has no guardian; as her response indicates, the offense was against her and her genitals (168-170, 185-187, 214-216). Unlike the responses of men and women in HB rape narratives, Inana is not concerned with her purity or the value attached to virginity, but with the breach of her autonomy over her body. The narrative includes the additional factor of Inana’s having been raped by the “other,” a human, which recalls the rape of Dinah by an uncircumcised member of an out-group who was perceived to be beneath her status.¹³ The HB term ענה for rape is not “a technical term,” as Ullendorff notes, “for it is used in many other contexts connoting ‘to inflict pain, to humiliate,’” and may be applied here.¹⁴ The rape of Inana is not a violation of virginal or marital status; rather, the act confers humiliation because of the absence of consent and because it was perpetrated by an individual of inferior status.

16.2.3 *REACTION TO THE WRONG*

Unlike Dinah, who has no voice of her own, or Tamar, who can only protest before and cry after the act, Inana is both Victim and Avenger, an example of Greimas’s actantial syncretism, in which one actor can represent more than one actant.¹⁵ Inana’s REACTIONS TO THE WRONG reflect both these roles. As Victim, she repeatedly considers “what should be done because of her genitals” and is dismayed at the violation. This REACTION differs from Tamar’s distress, which Absalom attempts to calm before he proceeds methodically with a course of action (II Sam 13:19-22). Inana does not wail, and she is not comforted by others. Instead, she considers, presumably

¹⁰ Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, 91; Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 20.

¹¹ Genesis 34, II Samuel 13, Deut 22:22-30.

¹² Sandie Gravett, “Reading ‘Rape’ in the Hebrew Bible: A Consideration of Language,” *JSOT* 28, no. 3 (2004): 280–81.

¹³ Rofé, “Defilement of Virgins in Biblical Law and the Case of Dinah (Genesis 34),” 370–71. Contrasting biblical law regarding the rape of non-betrothed girls to the narrative, in which נאנח is used three times, Rofé attributes the corresponding revenge to the foreign, defiling element.

¹⁴ Edward Ullendorff, “The Bawdy Bible,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, 42, no. 3 (1979), 436–37.

¹⁵ Greimas, “Structural Semantics,” 174–85; Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, 80–81. See the introductory section on semiotics for a brief explanation of Greimas’ actantial system, pp. 8-9, Section 0.4.1.

subordinating her emotions to the implementation of her PLAN. As Avenger, Inana responds to the violation with outrage like that of the male Avengers in HB tales of rape, asking herself, “what should be *destroyed* because of her genitals.” Inana’s REACTION appropriately shifts from a Victim’s response to an Avenger’s. Like Absalom in the wake of Tamar’s rape, Inana carefully considers what to do. Absalom, like Simeon and Levi, disguises his true emotions in order to effect a successful revenge. Despite his hatred of Amnon, Absalom does not speak of the matter, but waits patiently for two years until an opportunity for vengeance presents itself. Both HB revenge narratives portray a PLANS that require the Avengers to disguise their rage (Gen 34:13-17, II Sam 13:22-23). Inana’s initial restraint and reflection are even more impressive than the HB avengers’ because she is the Victim, not the next-of-kin.

Shukaletuda’s HB counterparts show REACTIONS TO THE WRONG they have committed. Shechem loves Dinah and tries to marry her. Amnon throws Tamar out of his room and locks the door, disgusted with what he once desired. However, whereas the HB characters focus on the act (the WRONG) and on the Victim, Shukaletuda thinks only of his own safety. He runs to his father for advice without considering the nature of what he has done, the harm he may have caused the victim, or the danger his presence poses among the townspeople. Technically, Shukaletuda is not displaying a REACTION TO THE WRONG, but fleeing from the threat of REVENGE. Though terrified of the potential consequences, the gardener expresses no remorse for the WRONG.

16.2.4 PLAN

The narrative depicts Inana announcing her desire for revenge, thinking aloud, and considering her PLAN to locate the rapist. Unlike HB narratives of revenge that often require deception in order to succeed, Inana makes no attempt to hide her PLAN, nor does she worry that her openness will bring failure. With the onset of the first plague of blood (168-176), the entire populace is terrified, and whether or not the people are aware of the cause, Shukaletuda clearly is. The PLAN is deliberate, and the destruction that is unleashed at each step is not the result of fury but of calculation. Prior to each curse is the refrain:

Then the woman was considering what should be destroyed because of her genitals; Inana was considering what should be done because of her genitals. (129-130, 168-9, 185-6, 214-5)

The three-fold repetition of morphological functions that Propp describes appears here as Inana repeatedly tries and fails to locate, identify, and capture her assailant.¹⁶ The repetition heightens the urgency of the hunt, emphasizes Inana’s determination, and broadcasts the message that she will not abandon her quest for justice.

¹⁶ Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, 74–75.

The public nature of Inana's actions are wholly unlike the deceptions carried out by Jezebel or Simeon and Levi. Her numerous and wide-reaching attempts can be compared to Saul's multiple and public efforts to slay David (I Samuel 18-24) but with notable differences. While Inana retains her equanimity despite her failures, Saul becomes increasingly volatile, and as a consequence, his attempts at vengeance affect an increasing number of people. When placing David in harm's way in battle against the Philistines does not achieve his goal (I Samuel 18), Saul demands that his son Jonathan and daughter Michal demonstrate loyalty to their father by betraying David (chs. 19-20). The priests of Nob die for their imagined disloyalty (ch. 22), followed by the residents of Ke'ilah and Zif (chs. 23-24). Saul's repeated failures to capture David reinforce the sense that his mission lacks legitimacy, a point he ultimately acknowledges (26:21, 25), though not before his reputation and legacy have been marred. Unlike the clear-minded Inana, Saul suffers from delusional thinking, and his public pursuit of David provides ample opportunities for David to escape. Inana, on the other hand, seeks to drive her prey into the open, and given her divine abilities and those of her father, her confidence is well-founded.

Though the plagues sent by Inana cause great suffering to the city dwellers among whom Shukaletuda dwells, the goddess is untroubled. In contrast, positively valenced HB Avengers seek to target their vengeance only on the offenders. Gideon, the HB avenger, takes pains to identify and punish only the guilty parties, the elders of Succoth and the residents of Penuel in accordance with their treatment of him (Jud 8:5-9, 15-17).¹⁷ Broader strokes of revenge, such as the massacre of the city of Shechem after Dinah's kidnapping and rape, are attributable to the residents' collusion and to the avengers' desire to eliminate the possibility of retaliation. Inana, however, considers as acceptable any and all means by which her honor may be restored. A similar indifference for collateral damage is seen in the goddess's attempted revenge against Gilgamesh, when the citizens of Uruk were terrorized by the Bull of Heaven. Furthermore, a public and dramatic show of force can serve to warn others who might contemplate action against her in the future. Inana's ability and willingness to disrupt the natural resources upon which the people depend is a reminder that the goddess's honor is not to be trifled with.

16.2.5 COUNCIL

Having made three attempts without result, Inana, still calm and methodical, realizes she must turn to Enki for help:

¹⁷ The liquidation of the armies of Zebaḥ and Zalmunna at Karkor is in the context of war and does not seem related to the vengeance taken on the kings.

"Ah, who will compensate me?¹⁸ Ah, who will pay for what happened to me? Should it not be the concern of my own father, Enki?" (242-4)

Unlike female victims in HB narratives, Inana does not expect anyone else to avenge on her behalf. The fact that Inana seeks help only when her own strategies have failed, however, calls into question her dedication to the principle of honoring ancestors and deferring to superiors. In fact, her lack of success may be connected to her initial failure to fulfill the requirement of COUNCIL. It is worth noting that her revenge only succeeds after she turns to her father, albeit with threats instead of requests or supplications:

Holy Inana directed her steps to the abzu of Eridug and, because of this, prostrated herself on the ground before him and stretched out her hands to him: "Father Enki, I should be compensated! What's more, someone should {pay (?)} for what happened to me! I shall only re-enter my shrine E-ana satisfied after you have handed over that man to me from the abzu." Enki said "All right!" to her. He said "So be it!" to her. With that holy Inana went out from the abzu of Eridug. (240-250)

The HB tale of Dinah's abduction and rape depicts Simeon and Levi initially remaining silent before their father, indicating either their filial piety or their expectation that he will defend their sister's honor. When Jacob also remains silent, they formulate and implement their revenge act (Genesis 34). Similarly, Absalom acts against Amnon only after he witnesses David's passivity (II Samuel 13). These HB Avengers act without permission or help only when it becomes apparent that neither is forthcoming. As has been discussed elsewhere, the absence of COUNCIL in HB vengeance signifies the Avengers' preference for avoiding overt defiance of their parents or monarch. As we have seen, the conflict between an HB Avenger's parental loyalty and duty to avenge is often resolved by deception and subterfuge. Pryke points out that for Ishtar, "asking for permission is more important than gaining it." The same cannot be said for HB Avengers, for whom honoring parents, or at least not openly disobeying them, leads to revenge without COUNCIL.¹⁹

16.2.6 REVENGE ACT

Once Inana receives Enki's permission and help, the rapist is located. He attempts to defend himself, but clearly his actions are inexcusable, and Inana decrees that he will die (295-309). She assures Shukletuda, however, that his name will live on in song, a surprising legacy in light of his offense against her (256-261). The significance of this legacy has been a point of contention and confusion among scholars. Promising such an "amelioration of punishment" is out of the goddess's character and does not align with her *modus operandi* of avenging those who wrong her. The harsh punishment meted out to Bilulu and her cohorts for the murder of Dumuzi is just one example.²⁰ A

¹⁸ Stol, *Women in the Ancient Near East*, 254–65, discusses various ANE laws regarding compensation for rape committed under varied circumstances.

¹⁹ Pryke, *Ishtar*, 87. See Exod 20:11, Deut 5:16; 27:16, Prov 1:8 on the centrality of honoring and heeding parental advice in HB legal sections and wisdom literature.

²⁰ See below & Pryke, *Ishtar*, 172.

more likely explanation, in keeping with the history of the tale and with Inana's behavior, is that the pronouncement constitutes an additional layer of punishment. It must be recalled that not all memorials are complimentary and not all songs praise the deceased.²¹ Thus it seems likely that Inana's promise to Shukaletuda to preserve his name in song is tantamount to using his name as a warning to would-be offenders and as praise of the goddess' victory over the violator.²²

The specific nature of the memorial songs might be connected to the traditional rivalry between farmer (or gardener) and shepherd, as seen, for example, in the tale of Dumuzid and Enkidu.²³ Robertson reviews the antagonism in the ANE between village farmers, pastoral nomads, and city dwellers, as represented by the upper-class rulers and royalty.²⁴ That the singers of the memorial songs are identified as shepherds, i.e., the gardener's rivals, provides another clue regarding the purpose of this legacy. Another clue appears when Enki, knowing Inana's fondness for butter cakes, directs his servant to prepare them in honor of her arrival.²⁵ Shepherds' butter-churning songs, sung to pass time as the butter was churned, are a familiar genre in both the ancient world and in more recent times,²⁶ and butter was enjoyed by humans and deities, as is evidenced by the prescribed offerings, particularly to Inana.

The goddess knows that Shukaletuda will soon be dead and will dwell among the *galla*, demons who "know no food, know no drink, eat no flour offering, drink no libation," in stark contrast those who will experience the joy brought by the food and all of its socio-religious-cultural aspects.²⁷ As Grahn explains,

[Inana] adds what for him must have been a bitter, ironic twist. His name alone will live on, ... his name will be used to sweeten a song, and the song will be sung by a shepherd, not by a farmer. The song, in other words, will further the goddess, and her enterprise of sexuality as joy and celebration. ...she is condemning Shukaletuda to be misrepresented by his rival, and not celebrated as antihero by his own farmer people. The song will be sung even in the palace

²¹ Karen Rhea Nemet-Nejat, *Daily Life in Ancient Mesopotamia* (Westport: Greenwood, 1998), 66–70, discusses many of the varied genre of poetry and song.

²² For a comparison to the HB command to remember to wipe out the memory of Amalek, see the discussion of name erasure, pp.280-282 – Section 17.2.7.2.

²³ ETCSL <https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.4.08.33#>; Samuel Noah Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology* (Pennsylvania paperbacks 47; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972), 61; Frederick E. Greenspahn, *When Brothers Dwell Together: The Preeminence of Younger Siblings in the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 91, nt. 26.

²⁴ John Robertson, "Social Tensions in the Ancient Near East," in *A Companion to the Ancient Near East* (ed. Daniel C. Snell; Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World; Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 199–205.

²⁵ Inana and Enki, ETCSL <https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.1.3.1#>, Segment C, 6-13; 15-21.

²⁶ In the Lament for Sumer and Urim, ETCSL <https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.2.2.3#>, line 46, part of the destruction is, "that the song of the churning should not resound in the sheepfold." Ted Gioia, *Work Songs* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 72–73; Amjad Daoud Niazi, "Plague Epidemic in Sumerian Empire, Mesopotamia, 4000 Years Ago," *Iraqi Academic Scientific Journal* 13, no. 1 (2014): 86, argues that the cessation of such activities as butter churning indicate an epidemic level plague, as it was so central an activity that its interruption would have been calamitous.

²⁷ Stefan Nowicki, "Menu of the Gods. Mesopotamian Supernatural Powers and Their Nourishment, with Reference to Selected Literary Sources," *Archiv Orientalni* 82, no. 2 (2014): 212–13. Inana's Descent, ETCSL <https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.1.4.1#>, 296; 360.

of the King. As for Shukaletuda, his palace will be the desert—the lifeless place, infertile and dry, from which he will never return.²⁸

The astral movements of Inana in *Shukaletuda* (also in *Ebih* and *Inana's Descent*) have been shown to be metaphors for the celestial movements of Venus.²⁹ While the contents of the memorial songs are not presented, the possibility remains that the songs will *reference* Shukaletuda but will be *about* Inana — her celestial movements and her prowess as an Avenger — songs of tribute to the goddess, not an elegies for the criminal Shukaletuda. In other words, the song that comprises Shukaletuda's legacy may be no more in praise of the gardener than Deborah's song was in praise of Sisera (Judges 5). The gardener's dwelling place will be the desert, ensuring that he will be eternally associated with his failure in his field. Moreover, desert skies are usually clear, ensuring that Inana's heavenly progression will be fully displayed, furthering the Avenger's retribution. The idea of a name representing a legacy is bound to Inana's obsessive pursuit of honor; thus, besmirching the name is a lasting form of vengeance, as seen in the narrative of *Bilulu*. Shukaletuda's name will not be erased, but his legacy suffers nevertheless.

In addition, the songs serve as an additional REVENGE ACT, a doubling of the function, enacted separately and in perpetuity. The doubling of the REVENGE ACT function in this narrative differs from the revenge of Simeon and Levi in which they first slaughter the males of the city and then kill H̄amor and Shechem (Gen 34:25-26). These acts are multiple facets of the same REVENGE ACT, the physical destruction of the city. Inana's revenge on Shukaletuda consists of two separate actions by the same Avenger on the same Avenged: Inana slays the gardener and uses the gardener's name in song. An authentic doubling such as this does not appear in HB revenge narratives except at the national level regarding Amalek (Deut 25:17-19). However, it appears in the ANE narrative *Enuma Elish* in the use of Tiamat's corpse to form the heavens and in the post-mortem elimination of Bilulu's name.³⁰ HB personal revenge narratives focus on bringing justice and eradicating potential threats, not on perpetuating punishment like Inana, who ensures that Shukaletuda's name will go down in infamy.

²⁸ Judy Grahn, "Ecology of the Erotic in a Myth of Inana," *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies* 29, no. 2 (2010): 65; Dominique Charpin, "'I Am the Sun of Babylon': Solar Aspects of Royal Power in Old Babylonian Mesopotamia," in *Experiencing Power, Generating Authority. Cosmos, Politics, and the Ideology of Kingship in Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia* (eds. J. A. Hill, P Jones, and A.J. Morales; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 73, identifies kingship with shepherding, thus the image of kings as well as shepherds reciting the song may be rhetorical parallelism.

²⁹ Cooper, "Literature and History: The Historical and Political Referents of Sumerian Literary Texts," 142–44; Cooley, "Inana and Šukaletuda," 170.

³⁰ Penelope Wilson, "Naming Names and Shifting Identities in Ancient Egyptian Iconoclasm," in *Negating the Image: Case Studies in Iconoclasm* (eds. Jeffrey Johnson and Anne McClanen; New York: Routledge, 2016), 114–16, describes physical erasure of images and names from various stelae by later generations or competing rulers.

Yamada notes that in HB narratives, rape evokes a violent response even when less bloody options exist and when social fragmentation will follow.³¹ The narrative of *Inana and Shukaletuda* describes the suffering of the townspeople that results from Inana's indiscriminate efforts to locate her attacker. The revenge act itself perpetuates extreme duress on the people and the gardener even after the gardener is dead. The acceptance of collateral suffering for a personal crime of a sexual nature is present in both corpora (though it must be noted that Absalom's vengeance for the rape of Tamar was comparatively targeted). However, unlike HB narratives, ANE literature involving rape is less concerned with the violations of sexual purity than with the coercive nature of the attack.³²

16.2.7 AFTERMATH

Though the last several lines of the narrative are damaged, the final line is legible: "Because destiny was determined, praise be to Inana!" (310). As we have seen, successful ANE revenge acts require that the Avengers be praised from those who worship them. Now that her revenge has been commemorated in song, Inana is assured that she will receive even more praise and honor than she had received prior to her act.

16.3 Conclusions

The tale of *Inana and Shukaletuda* employs the morphological structure common to other ANE revenge narratives. Propp's discussion of the trebling of a function can be seen in Inana's sending three curses on the land to locate her aggressor.³³ Milne describes the effect of the three-fold function as adding "dramatic emphasis" to the act and praising the one who finally achieves it after multiple attempts.³⁴ In this narrative, the divine powers Inana displays during these attempts bolster the awe and honor due her, restoring what the rape had diminished. Moreover, the three-fold cursing alerts Shukaletuda that he is being hunted. While HB and some ANE narratives of revenge require the use of deception along with COMPLICITY on the part of the Avenger, here the goal is to instill terror while increasing Inana's honor. Hagan also points out that deception in HB narratives is used when a less powerful party is trying to avenge a wrong (as in Simeon and Levi's revenge on Shechem).³⁵ The narratives of *Shukaletuda* and *Bilulu* demonstrate Inana's ability to locate and punish without "help" (COMPLICITY) from the Avenger; her superior status is evident to all.

³¹ Yamada, *Configurations of Rape in the Hebrew Bible*, 133.

³² Jacob J. Finkelstein, "Sex Offenses in Sumerian Laws," *JAOS* 86, no. 4 (1966): 368–69.

³³ Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, 74–75.

³⁴ Pamela J. Milne, *Vladimir Propp and the Study of Structure in Hebrew Biblical Narrative* (Bible and Literature Series 13; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988), 212.

³⁵ Hagan, "Deception as Motif and Theme in 2 Sm 9-20; 1 Kgs 1-2," 322–25; Niditch, *Underdogs and Tricksters* has indicated as much in her title.

The actantial syncretism in the narrative, in which the roles of Victim and Avenger are filled by the same character, facilitates the show of power that is expected when a goddess is wronged. Unlike Dinah and Tamar, Inana does not wait for a man to avenge the offense committed against her. She becomes her own Avenger, her wrath evoking fear among those who would stand in her path. Though conscious of human and divine societal norms, she pushes the boundaries; yet, her revenge is positively valenced. The permission she receives from her father at COUNCIL comes after she threatens to abandon her temple, yet it still satisfies the technical requirement, as even deities are not exempt from abiding by convention.³⁶ Inana's desire for perpetual revenge is reflected in a secondary REVENGE ACT that does not constitute a Proppian trebling of the initial REVENGE ACT but achieves her secondary goal of destroying the gardener's legacy. Furthermore, it serves as a reminder that revenge is not only a matter of short-term punishment; it must affect the offender's legacy. This feature is seen in other ANE revenge narratives such as *Enuma Elish*, *Bilulu*, and *Gilgamesh*.³⁷ Functional doubling is absent from HB narratives, which may relate to the varied foci of revenge in the two corpora, as will be discussed in the ANE section summary.

An additional structure in this narrative is informing the Avenger of the reason for his suffering. This occurs with Shukaletuda (290-309) and Bilulu and her cohorts (*Bilulu* 98-110), whom Inana tells just prior to their punishment. Likewise, Gideon tells the kings Zebaḥ and Zalmunna before he strikes them down, "They were my brothers, the sons of my mother; as the Lord lives, if you had saved them alive, I would not kill you" (Jud 8:19), to ensure that the Avengees are aware of the deed that brought their downfall. This may occur in any narrative in which the revenge's success does not depend on surprise. Unlike an omniscient narrator informing the reader of the act's justification, which has a purely edifying purpose, informing the Avenger augments the Avenger's humiliation. Furthermore, because a damaged legacy is tantamount to eternal punishment for a temporal crime, informing Avengees of this heightens their pain and furthers the vengeance. An HB parallel to this is found in the wiping out of familial-monarchical lines as indicated by the phrase 'if I leave a single male' (I Sam 25:22, 34; I Kgs 14:10; 16:11; 21:21; II Kgs 9:8). With the exception of David's aborted revenge on Nabal in I Samuel 25, we do not see such a threat in non-political HB narratives. The informing aspect of the REVENGE ACT function in both HB and ANE tales means that the Avenger will not rise again.

³⁶ Harris, "Inana-Ishtar as Paradox and a Coincidence of Opposites," 269–72, discusses Inana/Ishtar's awareness of boundaries as she both works within as well as shatters them.

³⁷ Agata Maria Catena Calabrese, "The Ancestor Worship in the Third Millennium BCE," in Proceedings of the fifth "Broadening Horizons" Conference, vol. 1: From the Prehistory of Upper Mesopotamia to the Bronze and Iron Age Societies of the Levant (ed. Marco Iamoni; West & East Monografie, 2; Trieste: Edizioni Università di Trieste, 2020), 231–32. writes, "These common ancestors... created a common system of beliefs and cultural cohesion within the community which could be used to decrease the risk of social disintegration." If so, Shukaletuda's legacy could be adding to the cohesion of his own out-group.

The response to rape in HB and ANE narratives is more severe than prescribed by the legal codes of the respective corpora.³⁸ The tale of *Inana and Shukaletuda* is no exception, and its structure informs our understanding of how rape is regarded and responded to in each culture. Though brief, this tale also adds to an understanding of how morphology may adhere to traditional revenge narrative formats while shaping a specific revenge narrative. The morphological structure and the content of each function illustrate the distinctive ANE influence on the tale-type.

³⁸ Yamada, *Configurations of Rape in the Hebrew Bible*, loc. cit.

Chapter 17

17.0 *Inana and Bilulu*¹

The narrative of *Inana and Bilulu* describes Inana's vengeance on Bilulu and her son, Ĝirĝire, for killing Dumuzi, the goddess's husband.² The damaged section at the beginning of the tablet seems to have been a lament (or perhaps two separate laments) that is not part of the narrative and does not impact our ability to analyze the section containing the revenge tale.³ This narrative differs from other revenge tales in which Inana is the Avenger in that it depicts Inana as a blood-avenger, taking vengeance for a WRONG perpetrated on another.

Table 27 Morphology - *Inana and Bilulu*

COUNCIL	31-45	Inana seeks & receives permission from her mother to join Dumuzi in the sheepfold.
WRONG	46-73	Inana learns of Dumuzi's murder and the theft of the sheep.
REACTION TO THE WRONG	74-80	Inana sings a lament for Dumuzi.
Informative Connective	81-87	Theft of sheep and grain by Ĝirĝire is detailed, as are his other murders.
Informative Connective	88-89	Širru is introduced as Ĝirĝire's friend and confidant.
PLAN	90-97	Inana's intent to kill Bilulu is revealed. She travels to the desert for that purpose.
REVENGE ACT	98-99	Bilulu, Ĝirĝire, and Širru are killed by Inana's word.
SECONDARY REVENGE ACT	100-101	Their names will be destroyed.
TERTIARY REVENGE ACT	102-121	Transfiguration.
AFTERMATH	122-124	Inana tenderly touches Dumuzi's corpse.

¹I have used ETCSL translations Black, J.A., Cunningham, G., Ebeling, J., Flückiger-Hawker, E., Robson, E., Taylor, J., and Zólyomi, G, (1998-2006). <https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.1.4.4#>. There are not many studies dedicated solely to the myth of *Bilulu*, as such see: Thorkild Jacobsen and Samuel N. Kramer, "The Myth of Inana and Bilulu," *JNES* 12, no. 3 (1953): 160–88; Jean Bottéro and Samuel Noah Kramer, *Lorsque Les Dieux Faisaient l'homme: Mythologie Mésopotamienne* (Paris: Gallimard, 1993), 330–37. The myth is studied in its relation to other Inana and Dumuzi narratives in an effort to understand the nature of their relationship as well as their individual idiosyncrasies. Renate Marian van Dijk-Coombes, "'Lady of Battle, His Beloved Spouse': The Relationship between the Body of Inana/Ištar and Her Spheres of War and Love from the Jemdet Nasr to the Old Babylonian Period," *Die Welt Des Orients* 50, no. 1 (2020): 146–76; Yitschak Sefati, *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature. Critical Edition of the Dumuzi-Inana Songs* (Bar-Ilan Studies in Near Eastern Languages and Culture; Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1999); Thorkild Jacobsen, "Toward the Image of Tammuz," *History of Religions* 1, no. 2 (1962): 189–213. A focus on the liminality of Inana and her actions in this narrative can be found in Karen Sonik, "Breaching the Boundaries of Being: Metamorphoses in the Mesopotamian Literary Texts," *JAOS* 132, no. 3 (2012): 385–93; Gadotti, "The Feminine in Myths and Epic."

²F. Wiggermann, "The Image of Dumuzi, A Diachronic Analysis," in *Gazing on the Deep: Ancient Near Eastern and Other Studies in Honor of Tzvi Abusch* (eds. J. Stackert, B.M. Porter, D.P. Wright; Bethesda: CDL Press, 2010), 327–50; Bendt Alster, "Tammuz," in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (eds. Karel Van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W Van der Horst; Leiden: Brill, 1995) discuss the identification of Dumuzi with Tammuz.

³Jacobsen and Kramer, "The Myth of Inana and Bilulu," 163, based on comparisons with the lament at the end of the tablet.

AFTERMATH	137-161	The francolin summons Geštinana, Dumuzi's sister, to lament him.
AFTERMATH	162-165	Praise of Inana.
AFTERMATH	166-173	Lament repeated.
AFTERMATH	174-177	Praise of Inana.

17.1 *Establishing the Morphology.*

After two lacunae, the text opens with a scene describing Inana pacing in her mother's chamber as she awaits the return of her husband, Dumuzi:

The goddess The maiden Inana She was pacing to and fro in the chamber of her mother who bore her, in prayer and supplication, while they stood in attendance on her respectfully (31-36).

Though not yet aware of Dumuzi's demise, Inana seeks COUNCIL, asking her mother's permission to check on Dumuzi in the sheepfold. Her mother's knowledge of Dumuzi's fate is not mentioned, but she grants permission to her daughter, and Inana leaves for the sheepfold:

"O my mother with your permission let me go to the sheepfold! ... My father has shone forth for me in lordly fashion Suen has shone forth for me in lordly fashion" Like a child sent on an errand by its own mother, she went out from the chamber... (37-45).

As she is not yet aware of her husband's murder, Inana does not ask for permission to avenge, but she clearly has her mother's support for her actions. Inana continues to act as though she has this support even after she discovers the WRONG. There is another lacuna in the text where the WRONG would have appeared, but presumably Dumuzi has been killed for his sheep by Bilulu and/or her son, Ĝirĝire: Inana finds her deceased husband in the sheepfold, his head beaten, and is told by a servant that the murder occurred during a theft (71-73).

Unlike other Inana revenge narratives, there is no violent REACTION TO THE WRONG, only a sorrowful song eulogizing Dumuzid as a faithful shepherd to the sheep:

The lady created a song for her young husband, fashioned a song for him, holy Inana created a song for Dumuzid, fashioned a song for him: O you who lie at rest, shepherd, who lie at rest, you stood guard over them! Dumuzid, you who lie at rest, you stood guard over them! Ama-ucumgal-ana, you who lie at rest, you stood guard over them! Rising with the sun you stood guard over my sheep, lying down by night only, you stood guard over my sheep!(74-80)

Suter explains that the lament is "memorializing the heroic deeds" of the deceased, but it also functions "as a tool to galvanize others to action." In this case, Inana stirs herself to vengeance.⁴

Her emotional REACTION serves to justify both the revenge and her role as blood-avenger.

Though Inana also portrays herself as a Victim, having lost her husband and her sheep, she emerges as an Avenger after the lament.

⁴ Ann Suter, *Lament: Studies in the Ancient Mediterranean and Beyond* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 25, 93.

The text shifts its attention to Ġirġire, who is “filling pen and fold with his captured cattle and stacking his stacks and piles of grain” (82-86).⁵ As Ġirġire tallies the spoils from his various raids, his companion, Širru of Edin-lila, joins him. It becomes apparent that Dumuzi is not Ġirġire’s first victim:

Then the son of old woman Bilulu, matriarch and her own mistress, -- Ġirġire, a man on his own, fit for prospering and a knowledgeable man -- was filling pen and fold with his captured cattle, and was stacking his stacks and piles of grain. He quickly left scattered his victims struck down with the mace. Širru of the haunted desert, no one's child and no one's friend, sat before him and held converse with him. (81-89).

This scene intensifies the WRONG by revealing that Dumuzi has died at the hands of a common criminal. Each detail of Ġirġire’s wealth incriminates him further and spurs the Avenger to violence; in addition, the description ensures that the vengeance is positively valenced. Bal notes the narrative effect of focalization, that is, directing readers’ attention to a scene unknown to the protagonist. This device heightens the readers’ reaction, causing them to identify with the protagonist.⁶ The description of the murderer’s ill-gotten loot is not a function but an Informative Connective that arouses the reader’s anticipation of the coming revenge.

Unlike the *Shukaletuda* narrative, no search for the culprit is needed here, for the identity of these criminals is apparently known:

That day what was in the lady's heart? What was in holy Inana’s heart? To kill old woman Bilulu was in her heart! To make good the resting place for her beloved young husband, for Dumuzid-ama-ucumgal-ana -- that was in her heart! My lady went to Bilulu in Edin-lila. Her son Ġirġire like the wind there did Širru of Edin-lila, no one's child and no one's friend, (90-97).

Inana’s thoughts and feelings are described vividly. She does not erupt in anger as she does in narratives where her honor has been offended, but addresses what must be done and the reason for doing it. Like Pughat in the vengeance of Aqhat, mourning and lament are followed by revenge, the overall aim being to make the victim’s final resting place comfortable.⁷

Inana finds Bilulu in the alehouse and takes REVENGE there.⁸ That the killers are drinking at their customary place indicates that they are accustomed to committing murder and theft with impunity. Not expecting retaliation, they do not guard against it, displaying tremendous hubris.

For her part, Inana is not content to destroy Bilulu and Ġirġire and their names; she is concerned with justice and with Dumuzi’s honor in the afterlife. She curses mother and son with a transfiguration curse (98-110), which Sonik notes is tantamount to the “complete effacement of

⁵ Jacobsen and Kramer, “The Myth of Inana and Bilulu,” 163.

⁶ Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 18–20.

⁷ Jacobsen and Kramer, “The Myth of Inana and Bilulu,” 184, nt. 65.

⁸ It is possible to assess the presence of Bilulu and her accomplices as COMPLICITY due to complacency, though this was not a trap that Inana set for them. They did not, however, take any precautions against reprisals despite having carried out murder on multiple occasions.

what had previously existed, such that nothing of the original remains.”⁹ The *dingir.ša.dib.ba* incantations signify the transfiguration of a lesser deity or a human to an animal, a curse imposed by the gods for insolence and ritual violations. Enacting a transfiguration from human or a possible deity (the identity of Bilulu is uncertain) to inanimate object is a radical punishment.¹⁰ Not only will Bilulu and her son (representing the continuation of her line) cease to exist and have their names destroyed, they will also become the medium through which their victim is mourned and praised: desert demons, the *udug* and the *lama*. When the *udug*, which has a protective role, appears with the *lama*, it acquires a benevolent role that it does not have when appearing alone. The *udug* is “nameless and formless,” which underscores Inana’s intention to wipe out the identities of the perpetrators and force them into roles that aid in the exaltation of their victim.¹¹ Furthermore, they will lend protection to the desert travelers they once attacked. Ĝirĝire’s ally, Širru, who has no functionary role in the tale, is swept up in the punishment with Bilulu and Ĝirĝire. He dies with them and must “walk in the desert, keeping count of the flour,” demonstrating again that even for an Ally like Širru, who does not participate in the WRONG, proximity to Avengees brings harm. For all eternity, the trio will call honor to their victim whenever desert travelers offer libations. The revenge is comprised of the villains’ destruction and the rehabilitation of Dumuzi through the transfiguration.

In the AFTERMATH of the revenge, Geštinana, Dumuzi’s sister, recites a lament for Dumuzi that also praises Inana as his equal and Avenger:

Let me utter the lament for you, the lament for you, the lament! ... How truly the goddess proved the equal of her betrothed, how truly holy Inana proved the equal of the shepherd Dumuzid! It was granted to Inana to make good his resting place, it was granted to the goddess to avenge him! ... How truly she proved the equal of Dumuzid, avenging him; by killing Bilulu, Inana proved equal to him! (155-176)

Tinney provides the following idiomatic translation of the last lines:

Thus she evens the score for Dumuzi, having avenged him.
Bilulu is dead! Inana evened the score!¹²

The AFTERMATH reinforces the positive valence of the revenge act. Dumuzi is mourned, and his honor is restored. Inana is established as a formidable opponent who will avenge the injury of those close to her. The success of the revenge act is untainted by any negative repercussions. Moreover,

⁹ Sonik, “Breaching the Boundaries of Being,” 390–91; Jacobsen and Kramer, “The Myth of Inana and Bilulu,” 167 argues for identification of Bilulu with the male deity En-bilulu, a god of “fructifying waters,” which would be a connecting factor with the transfiguration to a water-skin. Ĝirĝire means “flash of lightning,” the punishment would thus reduce mother and son to ensure the desert traveler does not come to harm.

¹⁰ Hector Avalos, “Nebuchadnezzar’s Affliction: New Mesopotamian Parallels for Daniel 4,” *JBL* 133, no. 3 (2014): 503.

¹¹ Gina Konstantopoulos, “Shifting Alignments: The Dichotomy of Benevolent and Malevolent Demons in Mesopotamia,” in *Demons and Illness from Antiquity to the Early-Modern Period* (eds. Siam Bhayro and Catherine Rider; *Magical and Religious Literature of Late Antiquity* 5; Leiden: Brill, 2017), 25–34.

¹² Steve Tinney, “‘Dumuzi’s Dream’ Revisited,” *JNES* 77, no. 1 (2018): 88.

Inana's actions are not only favorably regarded, they have elevated her own status as well. The factors accounting for this wholly positive assessment include the fact that the WRONG was an unprovoked offense to the moral system, that there was no violent emotional expression on the part of the Avenger, and that the Avenger's primary motive was not the defense of her own honor, even if her honor was raised as a consequence of her efforts.¹³

17.2 Analysis & HB Comparisons

17.2.1 Initial Scene

The Initial Scene depicts a dutiful daughter who will not leave her mother's chamber without permission, an image strengthened by the description of Inana's exit upon receiving permission: "Like a child sent on an errand by its own mother, she went out from the chamber; like one sent on an errand by Mother Ningal, she went out from the chamber" (41-42). The mission to avenge her husband is thus associated with obedience to a parent, adding legitimacy and approval to the act. The "house of the mother" in HB and ANE sources "suggests women's autonomy to claim space as their own."¹⁴

As we have seen, strong connections among siblings of the same mother are evident in HB and ANE narratives alike. Revenge is initiated by Simeon and Levi, Dinah's maternal brothers, and by Absalom, Tamar's maternal brother. Gideon informs Zebaḥ and Zalmunna that the men they killed were his maternal brothers (Jud 8:19). In the ANE tales, Pughat and Aqhat share a mother, and the *Bilulu* tale opens with a description of a strong mother-daughter relationship. Inana's connection to her mother is seen in the poem "The Wiles of Women," in which Inana convinces Dumuzi to propose marriage to her mother instead of to her. A similar theme is seen in "The Manchester Tammuz."¹⁵ Inana's family connection is mentioned before she discovers her husband's murder, which has the effect of placing Dumuzi under the protection accorded by close kinship ties even though he is not a member of Inana's mother's household, and contributes to the positive valuation of Inana's actions.

17.2.2 WRONG

Inana arrives at the sheepfold to find that Dumuzi has been beaten to death. Like Aqhat,

¹³ Whitley RP Kaufman, "Motive, Intention, and Morality in the Criminal Law," *Criminal Justice Review* 28, no. 2 (2003): 317–20, distinguishes between the importance of motive in assessing moral culpability (as opposed to criminal liability). Given that Inana's revenge is judged only in the court of reader opinion, the motive of ensuring a comfortable eternal resting place to Dumuzi is enough to judge her actions favorably, despite any additional honor she may gain from such an action.

¹⁴ Chapman, *The House of the Mother*, 89–90.

¹⁵ Jacobsen, *The Harps That Once... Sumerian Poetry in Translation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 10–12; Alster, "The Manchester Tammuz," 19, lines 23-25:

"In my mother's gate he stands, indeed. I, with joy, I the lady, am coming. Let the man speak a word to my mother. Let our neighbor sprinkle water on the ground for the lady. For my mother, Ningal, let the man add more words."

Dumuzi has been murdered for his possessions, his family left to discover the body and avenge the murder. Freedman explains that murder is defined by the following requirements: 1) The victim must not be a foreign enemy combatant, 2) the death cannot have resulted from suicide, capital punishment, defense of self or others; nor can it have been caused by an accident.¹⁶ HB prophet Jeremiah's exhortation to the people to stop murdering and committing other crimes against God and man (Jer 7:6-11) may have been referring to unprovoked acts of violence for material gain, such as the *Bilulu* narrative depicts, or to the oppression of the poor that led to their demise, as verse 6 indicates: "if you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, and the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own hurt." Cases of murder in HB narratives focus more on honor and power than on material gain (cf. Saul, Joab). A partial exception is seen in Jezebel, whose motives are mixed: She wants to assert monarchical strength as much, if not more, than acquire the field her husband covets.

17.2.3 REACTION TO THE WRONG

We have seen that Inana rages when she is the Victim and when she performs the function of COUNCIL. Here, however, she is restrained. She displays sorrow, not fury, following Dumuzi's murder at the hands of Bilulu and Ĝirĝire. Her lament expresses sadness (76-80), and even the stated purpose of the planned revenge is "To make good the resting place for her beloved young husband ... that was in her heart!" (93-96), not to restore her honor. In light of the prolonged mourning rites of Pughat and Dan'el for Aqhat, we can surmise that lamenting the fallen prior to taking vengeance raises the probability that the Avenger is primarily motivated by the desire to restore the honor of the Victim.¹⁷ Similar laments appear in HB narratives such as King David's elegy for Saul (though this occurs after David kills the Amalekite youth in II Sam 1:13ff.) and Abner. In the latter case, David commands his son Solomon to avenge Abner's death at Joab's hands (II Sam 3:33-34; I Kgs 2:5-6). However, the motivation for these laments has a political component that likely dampened any emotionally driven desire for vengeance.¹⁸ In contrast, Inana's laments are private, reflecting her grief at her husband's death and increasing the positive valence of the revenge.

17.2.4 COUNCIL

Inana seeks and receives permission to leave her mother's house and go to the sheepfold; however, she is unaware of the murder and does not seek specific approval for the revenge once she learns that Dumuzi has been killed. It is unclear whether Ningal is aware of the crime before she

¹⁶ David Noel Freedman, *The Nine Commandments: Uncovering the Hidden Pattern of Crime and Punishment in the Hebrew Bible* (ed. Astrid B Beck, AB Reference Library; New York: Crown, 2002), 112-13.

¹⁷ Wright, *Ritual in Narrative*, 170-72.

¹⁸ Lemche, "David's Rise," 17-18.

grants Inana leave. Nonetheless, Inana receives her mother's blessing to go to her husband's aid before leaving home, and thus the function of COUNCIL is fulfilled.

17.2.5 PLAN/THREAT

Following Inana's discovery of Bilulu and Ĝirĝire's crime and her lament, the text asks, "What was in holy Inana's heart?" The answer is: "To kill old woman Bilulu was in her heart! To make good the resting place for her beloved young husband ... that was in her heart!" (91-94). No elaborate strategy is needed to carry out her vengeance; Inana only needs to travel to the desert abode of Bilulu, Ĝirĝire, and Širru.

17.2.6 COMPLICITY

The function COMPLICITY is absent in the Inana/Ishtar narratives. Although Bilulu lacks discretion, boasting and appearing in a public place, this hubris is too indirect and passive to be termed COMPLICITY. Furthermore, the Avenger takes no part in these actions, such as luring the Avenged into a compromising position.

17.2.7 REVENGE ACT

The tale of *Inana and Bilulu* is about blood vengeance that retaliates for murder that was motivated by material gain. Blood vengeance is a common event in ANE narratives, and Inana's revenge resembles that taken by Pughat, Aqhat's sister, for her brother, murdered by Anat in her quest for this bow. The vengeance acts of Pughat and Inana are morally justified because the murders of their next-of-kin were unprovoked. Nonetheless, the acts contravene the procedure described in Mesopotamian legal codes for punishing a murderer. Laws varied according to locale and time, but no institution of blood feud existed in the ANE, though in the Neo-Assyrian law, the family of the victim initiated the process by which the murderer would be held accountable and was often consulted with regard to punishment.¹⁹ The narratives featuring Pughat's and Inana's revenge more closely resemble the blood-avenger requirement of the HB legal sections, in which the next-of-kin is permitted to avenge the death of the relative according to *lex taliones*. It should be noted that the murders depicted in these narratives did not involve unintentional killing, as HB legal sections require.

Although the Avengers in the two ANE narratives do not conform to ANE law, the stories contain no hint of negative judgment regarding their actions. Similarly, Simeon and Levi and Absalom violate HB legal codes with a measure of impunity. Simeon and Levi are rebuked (Gen 34:30, 49:5-7); yet they are rehabilitated, not permanently rejected for their revenge act. In fact, Levi's descendants serve as the priestly class. Absalom is exiled, but is brought back to court (II

¹⁹ Pamela Barmash, *Homicide in the Biblical World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 26–31.

Sam 13:37-38).

17.2.7.1 *Suffering of Allies*

The revenge on Bilulu and Ġirġire affects Širru although he was not involved in the murder or theft. Indeed, the text makes no mention of any advice or support he provided; his only role seems to be keeping his friend company as he organizes his stolen goods. Nonetheless, he perishes along with his companions and shares the same eternal punishment. Širru's involvement recalls that of Haman's friends and family who attend Haman when he returns home irritated by Mordechai's disobedience (Esth 5:9-14). However, only Haman's sons are punished with Haman; they are named individually, presumably because they participated in their father's war against the Jews. HB advisors who assist the Avengees in committing the WRONG, such as Jonadab (II Samuel 13) or Ahithophel (II Samuel 15-17) are not punished in the revenge act as long as they do not pose a threat to the Avenger. The HB Allies, unlike Širru and other ANE Allies, generally escape the vengeance unscathed.

17.2.7.2 *Wiping out the Name and Transfigurations*

Inana's secondary revenge acts against Shukaletuda and Bilulu, Ġirġire, and Širru fulfill similar goals, in spite of differences concerning the Avengees' legacies. Shukaletuda, punished for violating Inana's body, is told:

Your name, however, shall not be forgotten. Your name shall exist in songs and make the songs sweet. A young singer shall perform them most pleasingly in the king's palace... (*Shuk.* 295-310)

As has been discussed, the song, which comprises part of the punishment for the WRONG Shukaletuda has perpetrated, will utilize his name as an eternal source of derision and eternal praise for the goddess. A similarly harsh punishment is meted out to Bilulu and her cohorts in the wake of Dumuzi's murder.²⁰ Before Inana destroys the murderers, she informs them, "Begone! I have killed you; so it is indeed, and with you I destroy also your name" (100-101). Bilulu and her son are cut off with no remembrance, while Shukaletuda is mocked for all eternity.

In much of the ancient world, names were thought to be linked to the soul; eradicating the name, like eradicating a person's offspring, represented severe punishment.²¹ HB cases often involve the eradication of a line (generally monarchical), as is seen in I Sam 25:22, I Kgs 16:1, and II Kgs 9:8. This fate was sometimes the punishment for sinful behavior and sometimes the result of a new monarch eliminating potential challenges to the throne. HB revenge narratives also include curses that sought to wipe out the adversary's name and genealogical line, reflecting a nationalistic desire for victory and the elimination of an offender's existence.

²⁰ Pryke, *Ishtar*, 172.

²¹ Seymour, "Personal Names and Name Giving in the Ancient Near East," 110-12.

The Inana narratives, on the other hand, portray the goddess as not infrequently inflicting this fate — the elimination of a line — as a secondary REVENGE ACT. For Inana, wiping out the Avengees' legacy is more significant than ending their lives. Inana informs the Avengees just prior to their deaths that their names will be wiped out, ensuring that their final moments are spent hearing of their permanent eradication.

Bilulu and Ĝirĝire suffer an additional punishment, which may be understood through a mythopoetic view of the tale. As we have seen, a three-fold appearance of a function heightens the suffering of the Avenged:

May you become the waterskin for cold water that is used in the desert! May her son Ĝirĝire together with her become the protective god of the desert and the protective goddess of the desert! May Širru of the haunted desert, no one's child and no one's friend, walk in the desert and keep count of the flour, and when water is libated and flour sprinkled for the lad wandering in the desert, let the protective god of the desert and the protective goddess of the desert call out: "Libate!" Call out: "Sprinkle!" and thereby cause him to be present in the place from which he vanished, in the desert! Let old woman Bilulu gladden his heart! And immediately, under the sun of that day, it truly became so... Inana put out her hand to the lad on the ground, put out her hand to Dumuzid on the ground, his death-bound hands (100-124)

Jacobson and Kramer identify Bilulu with a male deity known by the name El-Bilulu, a "god of the fructifying waters," and thus the punishment involves a transfiguration from a thunderous rain cloud to a waterskin, a degradation. It is "...in this new and lowly form Bilulu now pays homage to Dumuzi, whom she killed, whenever libations are poured to him by the traveler in the desert." Ĝirĝire and Širru are also forced to safeguard the desert traveler whom they once ambushed.²² The transfiguration, joined to the eradication of their names, effects a greater humiliation on the offenders than merely killing them.

Forcing defeated enemies to render service and praise to their conquerors is seen in both HB and ANE narratives. Tiamat's corpse is used as a vessel to contain the waters of heaven, the dwelling place of Ea and Marduk (EE, IV, 137-146). David compels Joab to mourn and eulogize Abner (II Sam. 3:31-33) which in some aspects resembles Balaam's involuntary blessing of the Israelites after Balak has hired him to curse them (Num 23-24).²³ Haman is commanded to lead Mordechai on the king's horse; later, he and his sons are hanged on the tree that he had prepared for Mordechai's execution.²⁴

²² Jacobsen and Kramer, "The Myth of Inana and Bilulu," 166–69; Julia M. Asher-Greve and Joan Goodnick Westenholz, *Goddesses in Context: On Divine Powers, Roles, Relationships and Gender in Mesopotamian Textual and Visual Sources* (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 259; Fribourg: Academic Press/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Gottingen, 2013), 50.

²³ A variation on this theme can be seen in the revenge of the brothers on Joseph (Gen. 37). Years later, the brothers unknowingly bow to their former victim in Egypt (Gen. 42:5; 43:26).

²⁴ Yael Shemesh, "Measure for Measure in Biblical Narrative," *Beit Mikra*, 44, no. 3 (1999), 262.

An HB parallel to permanent eradication as an extreme and eternal punishment is intentional forgetting, as in “you shall blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; do not forget.” (Deut. 25:19). Levene notes that most forgetting is inadvertent.²⁵ A ruler in the ancient world who wanted his enemy’s memory erased might assume this would occur within a few generations. Accidental forgetting, however, fails to educate and warn in the way that prescribed acts of intentional “forgetting” do. Flower has coined the term “memory sanctions” to connote intentional acts of forgetting that serve as admonitions regarding the loss of legacy for future offenders. “Memory sanctions” wipe out or degrade actions that the offender had intended to be accolades. Through the application of memory sanctions, victims are celebrated, the “forgotten” ones become bywords, and the past is redefined.²⁶

17.2.8 *AFTERMATH*

The narrative of *Inana and Bilulu* concludes with a joint lament for Dumuzi by his sister, Geshtinana, and Inana. The song praises the widowed goddess: “How truly she proved the equal of Dumuzid, avenging him; by killing Bilulu, Inana proved equal to him! An *ulila* song of Inana” (174-177). The word *ulila*, which has no parallels in HB narratives, is explained by Jacobson and Kramer as a song that takes a “middle position between lamentation and praise,” a space including the goddess’s quest for vengeance, on the one hand, and grief for her deceased husband, on the other.²⁷ The celebration of Inana’s vengeance is combined with her having proved herself Dumuzi’s equal. In contrast, HB revenge acts are not the focal point of praise even when they are seen in a positive light.

17.3 *Conclusions*

17.3.1 *Lament as REACTION*

The use of lament as a REACTION to the WRONG is not seen in HB narratives of revenge. Joab’s revenge of his brother, Asahel, for example, is neither preceded nor followed by a lament, nor does Gideon lament his slain brothers before killing Zebah and Zalmunna. HB laments for individuals are rare, and do not appear between the WRONG and its subsequent REVENGE. The presence of a lament before and after Inana’s revenge signifies the narrative’s attention to the WRONG as a source of grief rather than anger. Inana mourns the loss of her husband more than she waxes indignant over her offended honor; thus performing the lament takes precedence over performing the vengeance.

²⁵ Levene, “You Shall Blot Out the Memory of Amalek,” 217.

²⁶ Harriet I. Flower, *The Art of Forgetting: Disgrace & Oblivion in Roman Political Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 2–15.

²⁷ Jacobsen and Kramer, “The Myth of Inana and Bilulu,” 161.

17.3.2 *Complicity*

As noted previously, COMPLICITY as a function is absent from the Inana narratives. While Bilulu and cohorts facilitate their capture by frequenting their customary alehouse, they do not fall into a trap set by the Avenger. In the *Shukaletuda* tale, the lack of COMPLICITY is due to the gardener's terror at being caught and his subsequent hiding amongst the people. In the *Bilulu* tale, the bandits are either unaware that they have committed a punishable offense or have grown so accustomed to a life of crime with impunity that they feel no need for concealment. Though the Avengees in these narratives display wholly disparate emotions and actions, neither is tricked into taking part in the revenge act.

Avengers in many ANE narratives show a propensity informing the Avengees of their impending fate. Most HB Avengees have the potential to resist the intended revenge; thus HB Avengers often preserve the element of surprise. In a rare parallel to ANE revenge narratives, Gideon, whose army has captured Zebah and Zalmunna and will prevent any attempt at escape, announces the reason for the kings' impending death (Jud 8:19). His pronouncement may indicate his confidence that his vengeance will succeed. Another HB parallel is seen when an Avengee, Jezebel, remains where she is expected to be found, much like Bilulu and her fellow offenders do (II Kgs. 9:29-30). As Jehu advances, Jezebel even glances down at him with an arrogance akin to the hubris Bilulu displays by engaging in public revelry after committing the WRONG.

17.3.3 *Trebling of Revenge Acts*

Inana's secondary revenge act — declaring that Shukaletuda's name will be remembered in song fulfills the same function-doubling as the elimination of Bilulu's name. These acts strengthen the justification of the revenge while damaging the Avengees' legacy and making their memory a warning against similar future action. In the *Bilulu* narrative, the revenge has a tertiary act, a true trebling of the function. In addition to losing their lives and legacies, the offenders are forced, through a humiliating transfiguration performed by Inana, to praise their victim. Such Proppian trebling of the revenge function does not appear in HB revenge narratives, indicating that HB revenge actions achieve justice for the Avenger without also serving as admonitions for future generations.

The HB command to wipe out the memory of the offender is reserved for the nation of Amalek (Exod 17:14); however, other texts attest to the perceived severity of this action. David invokes God's wrath upon his enemies, "May his posterity be cut off; may his name be blotted out in the second generation." (Ps 109:13), apparently in retaliation for his enemies' desire to afflict him with the same fate: "My enemies wonder in malice when I will die, and my name perish.?" (Ps 41:5). Although HB supplicants ask God to act against those who deserve to be erased, the mandate to destroy comes only by divine decree and is reserved for those with whom coexistence is deemed

an impossibility because of a fundamental conflict in worldviews; it is not used in personal revenge narratives.²⁸ The Inana narratives, in contrast, include destroying the name as part of the REVENGE ACT. The idea of a name representing one's legacy is tied to the pursuit of honor that is Inana's obsession, and is thus the most severe revenge that she can enact.

Like other ANE revenge narratives, the *Bilulu* tale includes an Ally who suffers as a byproduct of the revenge. Ḫupašiya and the son of the Storm-god in the *Illuyanka* narratives, Yatpan in the *Aqhat* legend, Qingu in *Enuma Elish*, and Enkidu in *Gilgamesh* are Allies who do not fare well. Little is known about Širru other than his keeping Ĝirĝire company and providing conversation while Ĝirĝire herds the stolen sheep and stores the stolen grain (87-89). Though no crime on Širru's part is mentioned, he suffers with Bilulu and Ĝirĝire and is forced to participate in the desert traveler's praises to Dumuzi (111-124). Allies as collateral damage, punished incidentally with the guilty, do not appear in HB narratives as part of the REVENGE ACT function.

²⁸ As has been mentioned, destruction of a monarchial line and its memory as a measure of self-protection by the new ruler is not included in erasure as part of personal vengeance.

Chapter 18

18.0 *Inana and Mt. Ebiḫ*¹

This poem, like the tale of *Inana and Shukaletuda*, begins with an introductory hymn of praise to the goddess Inana that serves as the background against which the mountain, Ebiḫ, fails to show sufficient respect to the goddess. Inana then avenges her lost honor by destroying the mountain.

Table 28 Morphology - *Inana and Mt Ebiḫ*.

Initial Scene	1-24	Praise of Inana
WRONG	25-32	Mt. Ebiḫ does not show respect to Inana
REACTION TO THE WRONG	33-35	Indignation.
PLAN/THREAT	36-48	Inana details her plan for war against the mountain and its destruction.
CURSE	49-52	Ebiḫ shall not be restored.
COUNCIL	53-111	Inana approaches An for permission to attack Ebiḫ.
	112-130	An attempts to dissuade Inana from attacking the mountain.
REVENGE ACT	131-151	Ignoring An's words, Inana begins her assault on the mountain and demolishes it.
AFTERMATH	152-159	Inana justifies her revenge
	160-170	REVENGE ACT is detailed.
	171-175	Reports of Inana's power and glory.
	176-181	Review of the REVENGE ACT.
	182-184	Praise of Inana and Nisaba

18.1 *Establishing the Morphology*

The initial lines of the poem describe Inana's divine powers (the *mes*) and the bloody wars she has won due to her weapons and her prowess in battle. The goddess's terror and brilliance are compared to the lion and the bull:

Goddess of the fearsome divine powers, clad in terror, riding on the great divine powers,
Inana, made perfect by the holy a-an-kar weapon, drenched in blood, rushing around in

¹ I have used ETCSL translations Black, J.A., Cunningham, G., Ebeling, J., Flückiger-Hawker, E., Robson, E., Taylor, J., and Zólyomi, G, (1998-2006). <https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.1.3.2#>. See also: Bottéro and Kramer, *Lorsque Les Dieux Faisaient l'homme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1993), p.219-229; Pascal Attinger, "Inana et Ebiḫ," *Zeitschrift Für Assyriologie Und Vorderasiatische Archäologie* 88, no. 2 (1998): 164–95; M Jaques, "Inana et Ebiḫ: Nouveaux Textes et Remarques Sur Le Vocabulaire Du Combat et de La Victoire," *Zeitschrift Für Assyriologie* 94 (2004): 202–25. Discussions of possible political and astral understandings are undertaken by Annette Zgoll, "Ebeh Und Andere Gebirge in Der Politischen Landschaft Der Akkadezeit," in *Landscapes: Territories, Frontiers and Horizons in the Ancient Near East, II: Geography and Cultural Landscapes* (ed. L Milano et al.; History of the Ancient Near East/Monographs 3, 2; Padova: Sargon, 1999), 83–90; Claus Wilcke, "Politische Opposition Nach Sumerischen Quellen: Der Konflikt Zwischen Königtum Und Ratsversammlung: Literaturwerke Als Politische Tendenzschriften," in *La Voix de l'opposition En Mesopotamie*, (ed. A Finet; Brussels: Institut des hautes etudes de Belgique, 1973), 37–65; Cooley, "Inana and Šukaletuda"; Fumi Karahashi, "Fighting the Mountain: Some Observations on the Sumerian Myths of Inana and Ninurta," *JNES* 63, no. 2 (2004): 111–18.

great battles, with shield resting on the ground (?), covered in storm and flood, great lady Inana, knowing well how to plan conflicts, you destroy mighty lands with arrow and strength and overpower lands.

In heaven and on earth you roar like a lion and devastate the people. Like a huge wild bull you triumph over lands which are hostile. Like a fearsome lion you pacify the insubordinate and unsubmissive with your gall.

My lady, on your acquiring the stature of heaven, maiden Inana, on your becoming as magnificent as the earth, on your coming forth like Utu the king and stretching your arms wide, on your walking in heaven and wearing fearsome terror, on your wearing daylight and brilliance on earth, on your walking in the mountain ranges and bringing forth beaming rays, on your bathing the girin plants of the mountains (in light), on your giving birth to the bright mountain, the mountain, the holy place, on your, on your being strong with the mace like a joyful lord, like an enthusiastic (?) lord, on your exulting in such battle like a destructive weapon -- the black-headed people ring out in song and all the lands sing their song sweetly.

I shall praise the lady of battle, the great child of Suen, maiden Inana. (1-24)

These accolades convey the impression that Inana is worthy of respect and deference, setting the stage for the next scene. The reference to “lands which are hostile” may be a foreshadowing of Inana’s actions against Ebiḫ.

The goddess, lauded in the introduction, walking on Earth and in Heaven, is neither greeted nor treated with respect by the mountain of Ebiḫ. The goddess exclaims over this WRONG three times:

When I, the goddess, was walking around in heaven, walking around on earth, when I, Inana, was walking around in heaven, walking around on earth, when I was walking around in Elam and Subir, when I was walking around in the Lulubi mountains, when I turned towards the centre of the mountains, as I, the goddess, approached the mountain it showed me no respect, as I, Inana, approached the mountain it showed me no respect, as I approached the mountain range of Ebiḫ it showed me no respect.(25-32)

This three-fold repetition of the mountain’s offense magnifies the WRONG in the ears of the listeners, inviting them to share Inana's outrage. Identified with Kur, the mountain is “an inimical land” regarded as sentient and thus is held responsible for the insult to the goddess.² Nevertheless, the mountain is silent and remains so throughout the tale. The text offers only Inana’s perspective of the revenge and its justification. Accordingly, this tale may be viewed as a polemic, warning against any, even the inanimate, who would stand tall in her presence.

Inana’s REACTION TO THE WRONG is a clear declaration of the fealty and deference she expects. She issues a dire threat, then presents a PLAN detailing how she will destroy the mountain: She will make the mountain a battlefield, and what survives the battles will be consumed in flames. Watercourses will be diverted, turning the lush landscape into an arid heap that will never rise

² Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology*, 82–83.

again. Her intention is to force the mountain to tremble with fear in her presence and offer the honor to which she is entitled (33-52).

According to the usual morphological structure of the ANE revenge narrative, Inana is expected to seek COUNCIL before announcing her PLAN. However, she requests permission from An only after she has created and announced her revenge, indicating her low regard for the pantheon members. Her adherence to protocol is scanty, extending only as far as it will facilitate her goals. Inana offers the requisite sacrifices and praise to An before asking his permission to attack Ebiḫ in revenge for its disrespectful behavior. Full of righteous indignation, she warns that she will carry out her actions regardless of An's answer, but she assumes he will take her side and grant permission immediately to implement the plan she has prepared:

... Like a city which An has cursed, may it never be restored. Like a city at which Enlil has frowned, may it never again lift its neck up. May the mountain tremble when I approach. May Ebiḫ give me honor and praise me. (89-111)

An, however, is unconvinced that vengeance is warranted. At the risk of enraging Inana, he mentions the mountain's strength, its "radiance and fear," and the abundant flora and fauna, known throughout the land, that it shelters. He concludes:

You cannot pass through its terror and fear. The mountain range's radiance is fearsome. Maiden Inana, you cannot oppose it. (127-129)

Inana reacts in "rage and anger," although she does not threaten An for his refusal as she does in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. Despite her failure to procure An's approval at the COUNCIL, she proceeds with her revenge plan, which suggests that receiving permission is not an integral part of the revenge action, even if appearance before COUNCIL is. Pryke, in fact, suggests that the request, not the authorization, is the required step.³

Inana C, another hymn of praise to the goddess, refers to the struggle with Ebiḫ after describing the divine rights that An passed to Inana:

The Anuna gods bow down in prostration, they abase themselves. ... Great An feared your precinct and was frightened of your dwelling-place. He let you take a seat in the dwelling-place of great An and then feared you no more, saying: "I will hand over to you the august royal rites and the great divine rites." The great gods kissed the earth and prostrated themselves. ... The high mountain land, the land of cornelian and lapis lazuli, bowed down before you, but Ebiḫ did not bow down before you and did not greet you. Shattering it in your anger, as desired, you smashed it like a storm. Lady, pre-eminent through the power of An and Enlil, Without you no destiny at all is determined, no clever counsel is granted favor. (*Inana C*, 102-114)⁴

³ Pryke, *Ishtar*, 168.

⁴ ETCSL, Black, J.A., Cunningham, G., Ebeling, J., Flückiger-Hawker, E., Robson, E., Taylor, J., and Zólyomi, G., (1998-2006) <https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.4.07.3#>

The hymn implies that An and Enlil have apportioned certain power to Inana that she can use as she sees fit, even against those who gave it to her. Inana gives formal recognition to the source of her power through requests for permission and aid to defend her honor. Her outward show of deference may also be intended to placate the older gods so they will overlook her disobedience. She openly admires the power of An and Elil, expressing her wish to follow in their footsteps by describing how she imagines An or Enlil would treat an insubordinate city (49-52).

Inana attacks the mountain, exploiting her physical power as well as the natural forces under her control to reduce Ebiḫ to a pile of rubble. The REVENGE ACT diminishes Ebiḫ's stature and destroys its beauty, transforming it from a majestic mountain to a barren wasteland.

In the AFTERMATH, Inana elaborates on the reasoning, methods, and results of her revenge. Addressing the ruined mountain, she says:

Mountain range, because of your elevation, because of your height, because of your attractiveness, because of your beauty, because of your wearing a holy garment, because of your reaching up to heaven, because you did not put your nose to the ground, because you did not rub your lips in the dust, I have killed you and brought you low. (153-159)

Inana's vengeance stemmed from two causes: First, she was jealous of the mountain's physical grandeur, which she perceived as mocking even in its silence. Second, Inana was outraged at the meager honor paid her by the rebellious Ebiḫ. Having presented her reasons, the goddess describes how she carried out her revenge and how she envisions the mountain's miserable future:

As with an elephant I have seized your tusks. As with a great wild bull I have brought you to the ground by your thick horns. As with a bull I have forced your great strength to the ground and pursued you savagely. I have made tears the norm in your eyes. I have placed laments in your heart. Birds of sorrow are building nests on these flanks. (160-5)

What becomes of one who does not show honor to Inana? The goddess has given her answer: an eternity of sorrow, barrenness, and isolation. Inana concludes by praising her military skills, which she attributes to Enlil's approval and the establishment of her palace and throne.⁵ Proclaiming her own part as well as that of her adversary, she tells and retells of her victory over Ebiḫ, after which praises for the goddess are presented. This revenge narrative serves to warn would-be rebels what to expect if they fail to honor the goddess. After being diminished in might and beauty, such rebels lose their voice; their story will only be told from the vantage point of the goddess.

18.2 Analysis and HB Comparisons

Some interpret *Inana and Mt. Ebiḫ* as a political commentary in which Inana's victory over the mountain reflects the ascendancy of Akkad over Sumer.⁶ The astral aspect of Inana's

⁵ Laura Feldt, "Religion, Nature, and Ambiguous Space in Ancient Mesopotamia: The Mountain Wilderness in Old Babylonian Religious Narratives," *Numen* 63, no. 4 (2016): 19, asserts that the palace and throne were on Ebiḫ itself, based on lines 171-175, this is subject to debate.

⁶ Wilcke, "Politische Opposition Nach Sumerischen Quellen: Der Konflikt Zwischen Königtum Und Ratsversammlung: Literaturwerke Als Politische Tendenzschriften," 47-50.

disappearance and resurgence, as in *Inana and Shukaletuda*, has also been analyzed.⁷ However, these readings do not account for the structure or content details of the narrative.⁸ An act of vengeance against an inanimate object is unique in the body of revenge tales featuring Inana and must be examined in that context and in comparison with other ANE and HB revenge narratives as well.

18.2.1 Initial Scene

Like the Initial Scene in *Shukaletuda*, *Inana and Ebiḥ* begins with a hymn to Inana that focuses on her military skills, her devastating strength, and her terrifying magnificence. As has been noted, HB character descriptions that precede action scenes are limited in scope; the analysis and praise of the action comes after salvation has been achieved. Bar-Efrat notes, “There are not many instances of direct characterization by the narrator in biblical narratives. What is evident is that the trait noted by the narrator is always extremely important in the development of the plot.”⁹

Balentine observes that prayer in the HB may serve to provide insight into God’s identity.¹⁰ Similarly, the hymn to Inana that lays the foundation for the *Ebiḥ* narrative underscores Inana’s identity as a warrior and a destructive force. The praise of Inana mirrors that in the *Shukaletuda* narrative, including her astral journey. Delnero describes this as the “same description in two very different narrative contexts,” although both cases deal with the Initial Scene of a revenge narrative.¹¹ These Initial Scenes establish the power of Inana and testify to the importance of her honor, both of which indicate that her vengeance will have a positive valence regardless of the mountain’s guilt.

18.2.2 WRONG

The exact nature of the mountain’s offense is not mentioned in the text, but Inana’s tirade suggests that Ebiḥ has stunted in its obeisance. The failure to pay sufficient honor to the goddess recalls Dumuzi’s failure to display adequate submission through mourning (*Descent of Inana*).

In his refusal to grant Inana permission to destroy the mountain, An describes the mountain’s verdant beauty and its role as a home for wild animals (121-126). It serves as a natural habitat for flora and fauna because of its inaccessibility, the feature that so infuriates Inana, who fears the chaotic, natural regions that lie outside her control. She regards the mountain’s lack of

⁷ Cooley, “Inana and Šukaletuda”; Paul Delnero, “Inana and Ebiḥ and the Scribal Tradition,” in *A Common Cultural Heritage: Studies on Mesopotamia and the Biblical World in Honor of Barry L. Eichler* (ed. Karen Sonik, Grant Frame, and Erle Leichty; Bethesda: CDL Press, 2011), 135.

⁸ Walter Burkert, *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual* (Sather Classical Lectures 47; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 4–5.

⁹ Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, 53.

¹⁰ Samuel Eugene Balentine, *Prayer in the Hebrew Bible: The Drama of Divine-Human Dialogue* (Overtures to Biblical Theology; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 89.

¹¹ Delnero, “Inana and Ebiḥ and the Scribal Tradition,” 135.

order as insubordination.¹² The view of the wilderness as an “opponent monster,” seen in Gilgamesh’s and Humbaba’s foray into the Cedar Forest, is not shared by HB descriptions of wild places.¹³ On the contrary, the HB treats wild places as refuges for those in need, and this facet may contribute to Inana’s frustration.¹⁴ Not only is Ebiḥ inaccessible, it provides sanctuary for those seeking refuge, placing them beyond Inana’s reach as well.¹⁵

18.2.3 REACTION TO THE WRONG

Smith distinguishes between HB prostration as a formal part of worship and a form of social subservience.¹⁶ While many HB texts discuss the appropriate time and place for the faithful to prostrate themselves before God, the prohibition against prostration before foreign deities is treated far more severely.¹⁷ The indignation expressed by the goddess at the inadequate display of honor, particularly the absence of bowing, recalls HB narratives where offense was given and revenge taken after inadequate displays of honor to a human leader. Haman, for example, is enraged when Mordechai refuses to bow to him (Esth 3:2), and the implication in Joseph’s dream that his brothers and parents would bow to him infuriates Jacob and his sons (Genesis 37). In these cases, the “wronged” humans plot to avenge the insult to their honor.

18.2.4 PLAN

Inana enumerates her reasons for indignation (25-32) and then announces her intention to destroy the mountain. She elaborates on the destructive methods she will use: fire, avalanche, and changing or damaging the watercourses that flow through the land (35-48). She repeats this to An when she requests permission to avenge (89-111), but when he declines to approve her plan, Inana nevertheless implements her revenge and the mountain is destroyed. The goddess expresses her desire that the destruction be permanent as an eternal homage to her (49-52), an imprecation similar to Joshua’s injunction against rebuilding the city of Jericho, which carries a curse on anyone who violates it (Josh. 6:26).¹⁸ The curse has been interpreted as a warning of what befalls an evil city as well as a “first fruits” offering as the Israelites enter the land: a reminder that the land belongs to

¹² Feldt, “Religion, Nature, and Ambiguous Space in Ancient Mesopotamia,” 366–67.

¹³ Laura Feldt, “Wilderness and Hebrew Bible Religion—Fertility, Apostasy and Religious Transformation in the Pentateuch,” in *Wilderness in Mythology and Religion: Approaching Religious Spatialities, Cosmologies, and Ideas of Wild Nature* (ed. Laura Feldt, Religion and Society 55; Boston: De Gruyter, 2012), 82, note 65.

¹⁴ Leal, *Wilderness in the Bible*, 173–79.

¹⁵ HB protagonists often find refuge in the wilderness from those wishing to avenge crimes, whether real or imagined. See, for example, David (I Sam 22-24,26), Elijah and the prophets of God (I Kgs 18:3-4).

¹⁶ Andrew C. Smith, “Furthering Prostration in the Hebrew Bible: A Non-Denotative Analysis of Hištaḥāwah,” *JSOT* 41, no. 3 (2017): 264–66.

¹⁷ A. Graeme Auld, *Life in Kings: Reshaping the Royal Story in the Hebrew Bible* (Ancient Israel and Its Literature 30; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017), 135–36. Deut 26:10; II Kgs 17:36 stand out as directives to prostrate, though they lack any consequences for a failure to do so.

¹⁸ Stanley Gevirtz, “Jericho and Shechem: A Religio-Literary Aspect of City Destruction,” *VT* 13, no. 1 (1963): 53ff. discusses the ANE use of imprecation against one who would rebuild a destroyed city. The case of Ebiḥ is unique in that the space in question was in its natural state.

God whose rules must be obeyed.¹⁹ It is important to note an important distinction between the examples, however: The destruction of Jericho seeks to influence human behavior, whereas the destruction of Ebiḥ seeks to influence the land itself. The custom of ANE conquerors to sow the earth with salt (also done by Abimelech) ensured that the conquered land would be ruined forever, an action that either obviated the need for a curse or served as a human-inflicted curse in perpetuity. Similarly, the destruction of Shechem's fertility is a punishment of its inhabitants (Jud 9:45).²⁰ Regarding the land itself, the HB narrative of the Deluge included God's statements that the land should be rehabilitated at the first opportunity, that nature should not suffer for the sins of humankind (Genesis 8).

18.2.5 COUNCIL

Inana's adherence to the custom of COUNCIL is perfunctory. She wants parental blessing and aid but will use threats if her requests are not granted. Inana ignores An's response that the mountain is too powerful to be challenged and his reference to the goddess as "my little one," exiting his chamber and immediately commencing her attack. This contrasts with her behavior in *GE* when she threatened Anu with raising the dead from their graves.

Inana's fidelity to the letter, but not the spirit, of customs illustrates her attempt to lend her behavior the cover of legitimacy. Jezebel also makes duplicitous use of society's legal structure, though under guise of a different function (I Kgs 21:8-14). The ANE narratives, in contrast to their HB counterparts, preserve the presence of a function prior to the REVENGE ACT, a function that is abused by Avengers who want the stamp of approval on their vengeance. Unlike the threats she makes in *GE* when her request for the Bull of Heaven is initially refused, Inana makes no protest when faced with An's refusal, perhaps because of his prominent position in the pantheon or perhaps because she is not asking for material aid, only approval. The seeking of permission, encouragement, or material assistance for a revenge act is expected in ANE narratives in spite of occasional refusals, as the invariable presence of the COUNCIL function demonstrates.

18.2.6 REVENGE ACT

HB narratives often include destruction of the natural world as a punishment to humanity for the misuse of divinely-given resources (e.g., the Deluge, the destruction of Sodom & Gomorrah, many of the Plagues of Egypt). Here, Inana punishes a natural feature for disobedience. The

¹⁹ Jerome FD Creach, *Joshua: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 64–65; Richard Hess, Daniel I. Block, and Dale W. Manor, *Joshua, Judges, and Ruth* (ed. John H. Walton; Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary 2; Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2016), 31.

²⁰ F. Charles Fensham, "Salt as Curse in the Old Testament and the Ancient Near East," *BA* 25, no. 2 (1962): 48–50; Daniel I. Block, *Judges, Ruth: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture* (NAC 6; Nashville: B&H, 1999), 300

mountain Ebiḥ is presumed to be sentient, and Inana holds the mountain to blame for its actions (or inaction). A corollary of this worldview is that the CURSE that Ebiḥ will remain forever desolate is a punishment directed only at the mountain, not the people. These actions have no parallel in HB revenge narratives.

18.2.7 AFTERMATH

The AFTERMATH of Inana's revenge on the mountain can be divided into two categories: praise of the goddess and a didactic lesson.

18.2.7.1 Praise of Inana

Inana is brought to anger when others fail to accord her appropriate honor and fealty; hence, her revenge narratives conclude with praises to her as a sign that the lesson has been learned as is seen in *Ebiḥ* (182-183) and *Shukaletuda* (*Shuk.* 310). In *Ebiḥ*, Inana details how she accomplished her feat, adding to the epilogue's general praise (160-165, 171-181). Her victory is made apparent, her honor restored, by the Avenger's state of destruction. The fact that her reputation remains intact after her actions testifies that her vengeance was positively valenced. Her desire for honor and her willingness to take it by force contrasts with the HB Avenger Gideon who avenges the murder of his brothers and the lack of fealty of Succoth and Penuel. He, too, is victorious, but unlike Inana, he declines the honors he is offered (Jud 8:23).

18.2.7.2 Explanation of Suffering

Suffering in a revenge act serves to educate and punish. Avengers' suffering at the hands of the Avengers is a direct consequence of their own actions, and Avengers want the Avengees to be aware of that fact.²¹ The didactic role of the revenge act affects how Avengers see themselves and how they appear to others.²² On a practical level, this serves as a deterrent to future wrong-doers. Inana explains at considerable length why she performed her revenge acts. In *Ebiḥ*, before describing what she did, the goddess justifies her actions to the mountain (152-159): It will suffer because it displayed inadequate honor to Inana and because of her jealousy of its splendor. Ebiḥ as an inanimate object of vengeance means that Inana can avenge herself and still gloat to the mountain about her victory. Even in its state of ruin, it remains sentient.

Humiliating an adversary teaches the Avenger, in a way that destruction cannot, that the power dynamic has shifted.²³ In the cases of revenge connected to political rivalry, permanent physical damage serves as a permanent mark of shame, inferiority, and the consequences of

²¹ Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations*, 368–76.

²² Neil Vidmar, "Retribution and Revenge.," in *Handbook of Justice Research in Law* (eds. Joseph Sanders and V. Lee Hamilton; Springer: Kluwer Academic, 2001), 51–54; Julian Alfred Pitt-Rivers, "Honor and Social Status," in *Honor and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society* (ed. J. G. Peristiany; London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1965), 43.

²³ Tracy M. Lemos, "Shame and Mutilation of Enemies in the Hebrew Bible," *JBL* 125, no. 2 (2006): 230.

refusing to submit. We see, for example, the disfigurement of Adoni-Bezeq together with admission that this was how he had treated rival kings (Jud 1:1-7). Similarly, the blinding of Samson (Jud 16) and of Zedekiah (II Kgs 25:7) permanently disfigures and humiliates the former leaders. Their suffering is prolonged; as well, they serve as warnings to would-be rebels. As Gilmore notes, “shame is, above all, visual and public.”²⁴ Ebiḥ, too, is “brought low,” an indication that Inana’s revenge is intended to warn others even as it shames the mountain, aspects she amplifies by building her palace on its ruins.

HB Avengers declare the purpose of the revenge to a third party, as in the case of Simeon and Levi. After the revenge act, they tell their father, Jacob, “Should our sister be treated like a whore?” (Gen 34:31). This is said in defense of their actions to a third party rather than to the Avenger because the warning it is intended to carry is directed at the reader rather than the Avenger. As we have seen, HB revenge narratives in which the Avenger wishes to both impart a lesson and avenge an offense are limited to cases in which the revenge act does not require surprise. These cases may include an explanation by the Avenger to the Avenger, but usually the finality of most HB revenge dictates that such statements be given prior to the act. Thus the Avenger or narrator tells them to a third party or to the reader before, during, or after the revenge.²⁵

18.3 Conclusions

The narrative of *Inana and Ebiḥ*, contains structural irregularities, an inanimate actant, and multiple declarations on the part of the Avenger, all of which contribute to our understanding of the nature of revenge in ANE narratives. The Avenger announces her PLAN before going to COUNCIL; she is refused permission but implements her PLAN nonetheless. The text gives no indication that the Avenger will be dissuaded from her PLAN if she is denied permission, nor that there will be consequences to her ignoring a directive contrary to her wishes. These features combine to present a focus on process over result with regard to the COUNCIL function.

The attention to displays that show honor to the goddess, specifically prostration, and the goddess’s jealousy over the beauty and splendor of the mountain are reminiscent of HB human dynamics, particularly interactions that are negatively valenced. This tale, however, contains no hint that Inana’s RESPONSE TO THE WRONG was inappropriate, other than An’s refusal to grant her permission for the act. An’s objections, however, are more practical than principled. The mountain is fearsome and supports flora and fauna, says An; Inana is unlikely to succeed in destroying it, and

²⁴ David D. Gilmore, “Honor, Honesty, Shame: Male Status in Contemporary Andalusia,” in *Honor and Shame and the Unity of the Mediterranean* (ed. David D. Gilmore, A special publication of the American Anthropological Association 22; Washington DC: American Anthropological Association, 1987), 101.

²⁵ Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, 26–3,1 notes that the narrator is capable of dispassionately presenting the evidence to the reader, whereas the Avenger emphatically offers his or her own assessments and instructions regarding how others should act and be treated in the future.

even if she does succeed, its destruction will have negative repercussions. An cites no moral imperative to refrain from vengeance against the mountain.

Although it serves as a personification of nature, the mountain is mute throughout the narrative. Ebiḥ is unique in being an Avenger that is destroyed but remains “alive” enough to suffer the humiliation and degradation that was Inana’s goal and to be aware of its downfall. This differs from the revenge of Gideon, an HB case of revenge in which the edification of the Avengers is not accompanied by a desire for honor (Jud 8:10-23). *Inana and Ebiḥ* portrays an Avenger forced to suffer eternal humiliation because the Avenger is not satisfied with a revenge act that only serves to warn others; she also desires the Avenger’s permanent suffering and ignominy for its failure (through its existence) to show the goddess sufficient honor.

Inana as a liminal individual is discussed at length and summarized by Harris.²⁶ Ebiḥ, too, represents a liminal space. Mobley notes the significance of Samson’s relative success in the liminal spaces of field and forest than in cities.²⁷ Inana’s behavior in this pericope demonstrates her desire to be the only liminal being, a desire evidenced in her relation to An: She desires his approval but is willing to do without it. She flouts the older god with impunity because the social norms are suspended for those in the liminal space that Inana occupies. She cannot bear the idea of others sharing this role that exists between worlds; she insists on being its sole occupant. Thus the mountain, an epitome of untamable wild space that could serve as a potential refuge for other liminal characters, must be destroyed.

²⁶ Harris, “Inana-Ishtar as Paradox and a Coincidence of Opposites,” 262–65.

²⁷ Mobley, *Samson and the Liminal Hero in the Ancient Near East*, 37–65.

Chapter 19

19.0 Descent of Inana¹

The *Descent of Inana* records Inana's voluntary descent to the Netherworld. The reason for her journey is not mentioned; it appears to have been a power play against the ruler of the realm, her sister Ereškigal.² Inana is permitted to return to the land of the living on condition that she supply a replacement. She returns to her realm to find that her husband, Dumuzi, has not responded appropriately to her absence and imprisonment in the Underworld. She avenges this offense by selecting him to take her place in the Netherworld. Although Inana's descent is told in great detail, this analysis will focus on the second half of the narrative, which describes Inana's vengeance on Dumuzi.

Table 29 Morphology - Descent of Inana

Initial Scene	1-289 290-305 306-347	Inana's preparation and descent to the Netherworld, followed by her rescue by Enki and her subsequent return. Inana is followed by the <i>galla</i> who will secure her replacement. Inana protects those loyal to her from the <i>galla's</i> clutches.
WRONG	348-353	Dumuzi has not mourned Inana while she was in the Netherworld.
REACTION	354-356	Inana reacts with great anger upon seeing Dumuzi.
REVENGE ATTEMPT	357-367	Inana shouts and instructs the <i>galla</i> to take Dumuzi
REVENGE FOILED	368-381	Dumuzi escapes the <i>galla</i> .
REVENGE ACT	382-383?	Dumuzi is recaptured and brought to the Netherworld.
AFTERMATH	384-393 394-403 404-410	Inana mourns Dumuzi. A fly helps Inana locate Dumuzi. Inana arranges for Geštinana to take the place of Dumuzi in the Netherworld for half the year.

¹ I have used ETCSL translations Black, J.A., Cunningham, G., Ebeling, J., Flückiger-Hawker, E., Robson, E., Taylor, J., and Zólyomi, G., (1998-2006). <https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.1.4.1#>. The much more detailed, Sumerian version, as opposed to the later, shorter, Akkadian version, will be referenced here. Other translations which have been consulted include: Kramer and Wolkstein, *Inanna, Queen of Heaven and Earth*, Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, and William R. Sladek, "Inanna's Descent to the Netherworld." (Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University, 1974). Studies on the Descent narrative have included Inanna's often dichotomous personality, her obsession with acquiring the *mes*, control in the Netherworld, as well as Dumuzi's annual regeneration. Some of these studies incorporate aspects of Inanna's vindictive nature, though none focuses on the aspects revealed through a narrative analysis. These include: Bendt Alster, "Inanna Repenting: The Conclusion of Inanna's Descent," *ASJ* 18, no. 1 (1996): 1–18; Samuel Noah Kramer, "The Death of Dumuzi: A New Sumerian Version," *Anatolian Studies* 30 (1980): 5–13; Rodrigo Cabrera, "The Three Faces of Inanna: An Approach to Her Polysemic Figure in Her Descent to the Netherworld," *JNSL* 44, no. 2 (2018): 41–79; Johanna Stuckey, "Inanna, Goddess of 'Infinite Variety,'" *MatriFocus. Cross-Quarterly for the Goddess Woman* 4, no. 1 (2004): 1–7; Rivkah Harris, "Inanna-Ishtar as Paradox and a Coincidence of Opposites.": 261–78; Leana Wessels, "An Analysis of the Extent to Which the Trickster Archetype Can Be Applied to the Goddess Inanna/Ishtar," *Journal for Semitics* 22, no. 1 (2013): 35–55; Dina Katz, "How Dumuzi Became Inanna's Victim: On the Formation of Inanna's Descent," *Acta Sumerica* 18 (1996): 93–103; Dina Katz, "Inanna's Descent and Undressing the Dead as a Divine Law," *Zeitschrift Für Assyriologie Und Vorderasiatische Archäologie* 85, no. 2 (1995): 221–33.

² Sladek, "Inanna's Descent to the Netherworld.," 17. See also Enlil's response to Ninšubur (190-194).

19.1 *Establishing the Morphology*

Knowing that those who descend to the Netherworld usually do not return, Inana prepares for this eventuality by issuing instructions to her loyal servant, Ninšubur: If Inana does not return within three days, Ninšubur should mourn her and then entreat the gods to rescue her. Inana fails to return within the prescribed time, so Ninšubur follows the goddess's directions, begging help first from Enlil and Nanna, who refuse her, before proceeding to Enki, who agrees to help.

Inana had suspected that Enlil and Nanna would not help, but protocol required that they be asked nonetheless. It is Enki, says Inana, who will restore her to the land of the living (28-67). The efforts of Inana's loyal servant allow her to return safely despite having been turned into a corpse and hung on a hook to rot (168-172). Because no one is allowed to leave the Netherworld, Inana's release is conditional on her providing a replacement to dwell there in her place.

Ereškigal, Inana's sister and queen of the Netherworld, sends two demons called *gallas* to accompany Inana and stay with her until they receive the substitute. The *galla* are beings without allegiance; they have neither children, nor lovers, nor parents. They do not care who replaces Inana, and their lack of connection is juxtaposed with Inana's strong alliances, both actual and expected. The goddess rejects outright the *gallas'* suggestions that they take her loyal servant Ninšubur or either of her faithful sons, Šara and Lulah (306-345). When Inana encounters these individuals, she is greeted with customary deference. It is evident that they have been mourning her: They are wearing mourning clothes, they prostrate themselves in the dirt before her feet. Her husband Dumuzi, in contrast, seems not to have noticed Inana's absence. His attire and seat are *mah-a*, exalted or magnificent. Milk in his churns testifies that he has not changed his diet, and his instruments lay within easy reach, indicating that he has not stopped playing music (348-352). Dumuzi's failure to observe mourning rituals constitutes the WRONG and is intolerable to the goddess.³ Such observance glorified the deceased and was considered their final honor.⁴

Inana's REACTION TO THE WRONG is emotional:

She looked at him, it was the look of death. She spoke to him (?), it was the speech of anger. She shouted at him (?), it was the shout of heavy guilt: "How much longer? Take him away." Holy Inana gave Dumuzid the shepherd into their hands. (354-358)

In this brief revenge scene, there is no COUNCIL and no PLAN. All that constitutes the REVENGE is Inana's handing over of Dumuzid to the *galla*, her unexpected emissaries, who trap

³ Charles Penglase, *Greek Myths and Mesopotamia: Parallels and Influence in the Homeric Hymns and Hesiod* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 18–19.

⁴ Yael Shemesh, *Mourning in the Bible: Coping with Loss in Biblical Literature (Hebrew)* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2015), 75–78.

Dumuzi and deliver him to the Netherworld. However, Dumuzi engages Utu as an Ally, is transformed into a snake-like creature, and escapes, temporarily FOILING THE REVENGE before he is finally caught.⁵

In spite of her fury at her husband's betrayal, Inana is unable to bear Dumuzi's suffering. In the AFTERMATH of the REVENGE, she wails over her husband's fate (384-393).⁶ Suffering and loneliness replace her rage and indignation, a response reminiscent of how Anat mourns over Aqhat after she has avenged his refusal to part with his bow. In lines similar to Canticles 5:2-8, Inana yearns for what she has denied herself. She bargains with a fly to discover Dumuzi's whereabouts and arranges to have Dumuzi's sister, Geštinana, take his place in the Netherworld for half of the year so that he can rejoin Inana in the upper realm during this time.⁷ Though Geštinana shares none of Dumuzi's culpability in dishonoring Inana, as the Ally of the Avenger she shares his punishment, as is so often the case in ANE narratives.

Inana's Descent has mythological significance with regard to the cycles of the seasons and the moon. As a narrative, it is notable for its portrayal of Inana as a vengeful goddess whose zealotry for her honor comes at the expense of her happiness.

19.2 Analysis and HB Comparisons

19.2.1 Initial Scene

Inana's Descent begins with a description of the goddess's preparations for her descent. The depiction of her adornment, makeup, and garments constitutes praise of the goddess and symbolizes her power.⁸ The Netherworld, ruled by Inana's sister, Ereškigal, allows no one to exit, and none are (usually) willing to enter. Yet Inana flouts the laws, implying that they do not apply to her, and when Ninšubur asks Enlil and Nanna to help her effect a rescue, they refuse. Inana deserves to languish there, they suggest, for attempting to take honor and power that are not hers by right:

My daughter craved the great heaven and she craved the great below as well. Inana craved the great heaven and she craved the great below as well. The divine powers of the underworld are divine powers which should not be craved, for whoever gets them must remain in the underworld. Who, having got to that place, could then expect to come up again? (191-194, 205-208)

Like Jezebel, who acquired a vineyard by twisting the legal system to her advantage (I Kings 21) or Saul, who ordered the slaughter of the priests of Nob (I Samuel 22), Inana suffers as a result of her attempts to manipulate the rules to achieve her goal. Enlil and Nanna attribute Inana's plight to her

⁵ Alster, "Inanna Repenting: The Conclusion of Inanna's Descent," 13. See also, *Dumuzi's Dream*, ETCSL 1.4.3, 165-180 for a comparable transfiguration of Dumuzi by Utu. The relevant lines in *Inanna's Descent* are damaged.

⁶ Sandra Bart Heinmann, *The Biography of Goddess Inanna; Indomitable Queen of Heaven, Earth and Almost Everything: Her Story Is Women's Story* (Bloomington: Balboa Press, 2016).

⁷ Sandra Bart Heinmann, *The Biography of Goddess Inanna; Indomitable Queen of Heaven, Earth and Almost Everything: Her Story Is Women's Story* (Bloomington: Balboa Press, 2016).

⁸ Pryke, *Ishtar*, 108.

own overreaching and deny her their aid. Enki finally comes to her rescue, as Inana knew he would, but his help is due to his parental sensibilities and is not intended to convey his justification of her actions.

19.2.2 *WRONG*

The *WRONG*, Dumuzi's failure to honor the goddess, appears in other narratives featuring Inana. Like the mountain Ebiḫ, Dumuzi receives the full force of Inana's wrath when she discovers the extent of his infraction. From Inana's perspective, the wealth of natural beauty the mountain enjoys and the luxuries Dumuzi enjoys are an affront to the goddess because Ebiḫ and Dumuzi should be using those resources to honor her. A similar pursuit of, and sensitivity to, personal honor is seen in the Esther narrative when Haman attempts to take vengeance on the entire Jewish nation for Mordechai's refusal to bow to him (Esth 3:2 ff.). Likewise, in an effort to prevent retaliation from Abner's followers and family for Abner's murder by Joab, David requires the nation, including Joab, to observe elaborate funerary rites honoring Abner (II Sam 3:31-39). The display of honor or its absence can often ward off or precipitate an act of *REVENGE*.

19.2.3 *REACTION TO THE WRONG*

Inana's anger at Dumuzi includes the "look of death," the "speech of anger," and the "shout of guilt" (354-358). These actions, especially the use of the evil eye, are intended by *AVENGERS* to strike fear in their opponents, and they often succeed.⁹ Dumuzi weeps, wails, and calls to Utu to save him (368-369). In other narratives, Inana turns her rage against Ebiḫ and Gilgamesh. In the HB, Saul is furious with Jonathan for his alleged disloyalty (I Sam 20:27-33) and against the priests of Nob for theirs (I Sam 22:12-16). Similarly, Jezebel waxes indignant over Naboth's refusal of Ahab's request (I Kgs 21:7).¹⁰

19.2.4 *COMPLICITY*

Dumuzi's seeming indifference to Inana's demise and her speedy revenge with the help of the *galla* permit no opportunity for *COMPLICITY*. In light of Dumuzi's knowledge of common mourning rituals and of Inana's sensitivity regarding her honor, it can be argued that his behavior contributed to his demise, just as Bilulu's situating herself in a pub after her *WRONG* allowed for her easy capture. However, this is not an active *COMPLICITY* in which Avengees unwittingly assist in their own demise by walking into a trap.

19.2.5 *REVENGE ACT*

Condemning Dumuzi to the Netherworld is a punishment that resembles the transfiguration of the once fertile Ebiḫ to lifeless devastation. The revenge on Dumuzi was intended to render him

⁹ Zacharias Kotzé, "The Evil Eye of Sumerian Deities," *Asian & African Studies* 26, no. 1 (2017): 108–10.

¹⁰ Karahashi, "Fighting the Mountain," 118.

a hopeless, lifeless form that would never leave the dominion of Ereškigal. This threat elicited his desperate request that Utu change him into a snake. Sonik understands permanent metamorphosis to be the “complete effacement of what had previously existed, so that nothing remains of the original form.”¹¹ This may explain why Dumuzi did not remain permanently in serpent form to evade the *galla* — his identity would have been lost. Transfiguration entails a conversion from animation to something akin to lifelessness, an eradication of the previous identity that is worse than death and at least as grim as banishment to the Netherworld. Thus Dumuzi’s temporary FOILING of the REVENGE ACT was its own punishment. An HB parallel is seen in Samson, whose haircut transformed him from a hero of supernatural strength to a humbled and blinded prisoner. Samson’s fate was, indeed, a punishment worse than death; hence his final prayer to “die with the Philistines” (Jud 16:30).

19.2.6 AFTERMATH

Although Inana contrived the revenge on Dumuzi, she is overcome with grief when her husband is languishing in her sister’s realm. She performs mourning rituals — weeping, lamenting, and tearing out her hair — despite the fact that Dumuzi did not perform these courtesies for her (384-393). Geštinana, Dumuzi’s sister, agrees to take his place in the Netherworld for half the year, suffering because of her association with him (404-410) in a repetition of the motif of the suffering Ally in ANE revenge narratives.

19.3 Conclusions

Inana’s proclivity for rage and undisciplined revenge often results in consequences she did not foresee and is not prepared for. Nonetheless, she does not refrain from fiercely avenging offenses to her honor even when she will suffer. *Inana’s Descent* shows her in the roles of Victim, Avenger, and Ally of the Avenger; the conflict of interest inherent in these roles does not occur to her until it is too late. The self-punishment aspect of Revenge is also seen in the *Aqhat* when Anat becomes the weeping Ally of the Avenger, mourning Aqhat even though it was she who killed him.

The speed with which vengeance is taken is not surprising given Inana’s history and the impatience of the *galla*, and it results in a REVENGE ACT with no COUNCIL or PLAN. The absence of COMPLICITY seen in other Inana narratives is here as well; the mechanics of the plot do not allow time to guard against the *galla*. Inana does, however, inform Dumuzi of the reason for his imminent demise, and the goddess’s angry words echo those used by the Anuna judges who condemn Inana to death in the Netherworld and foreshadow the existence Dumuzi faces.

¹¹ Sonik, “Breaching the Boundaries of Being,” 390–92.

Terrified, Dumuzi seeks aid in avoiding his punishment, and like Shukaletuda, succeeds in evading the goddess at first. Ultimately, though, Dumuzi cannot escape Inana's wrath. She will not be denied her vengeance even if it comes at a cost. Katz argues that *Inana's Descent* combines two previously independent narratives in a single storyline with the structure of a revenge narrative. The death of Dumuzi, told in other narratives, is connected in this tale with his betrayal of Inana and her response.¹² The current form presents a causal relationship between the descent of Inana to the Netherworld and Dumuzi's six-month stay there, and incorporates the vengeance theme that is consistent with the character of Inana and her thirst for honor.

¹² Katz, "How Dumuzi Became Inanna's Victim," 100–102.

Chapter 20

20.0 Summary of Findings – Ancient Near East

The following summary will examine the morphology and character development of ANE revenge narratives in order to better understand the customs and values related to vengeance in that culture. The details, variety, and range of options regarding the ways functions are filled in these narratives will be reviewed, with particular attention paid to differences in the narrative structure, as they are reflected in the characters' choices. Finally, the group of narratives will be examined as a whole to shed light on the cultural expectations regarding vengeance.

20.1 Characterization through the Initial Scene

The Initial Scene, while not defined as a morphological function, presents background information necessary for understanding the tale and the fundamental characteristics of the actants. This characterization, whether positive and negative, provides the first clues about the nature and moral valency of the WRONG and the REVENGE. The valuation of the REVENGE ACT is often foretold in an Initial Scene in which either the Avenger or Avengee is praised, as indicated in the following table:

Table 30 Initial Scene in ANE Narratives

Narrative	Initial Scene
<i>Enuma Elish</i> (I)	No character description of Apsu or Tiamat.
<i>Enuma Elish</i> (II)	Marduk is described in superlative terms.
<i>Illuyanka</i>	No character descriptions.
<i>Aqhat</i> (I)	Dan'el's service to the gods is described. Anat's physical reactions to her coveting the bow are described.
<i>Aqhat</i> (II)	Dan'el judges at the city gate. Pughat recognizes and weeps over the calamity of the drought. Dan'el tears his robe and entreats the clouds.
<i>Shukaletuda</i>	Inana praised.
<i>Bilulu</i>	Inana praises Dumuzi, prays and shows deference to her mother.
<i>Descent</i>	Description of Inana's powers and garments.
<i>Ebih</i>	Inana is praised for her might and her destructive powers.
<i>Gilgamesh</i>	Gilgamesh is praised for his physical perfection.

In the narratives in which the REVENGE ACT is viewed positively (with the exception of the brief *Illuyanka*), the revenge is preceded by a positive description of the Avenger, a negative assessment of the Avengee, or both. Negatively assessed acts, such as Anat's murder of Aqhat, are preceded by a positive description of Aqhat's father, Dan'el, as well as by negative descriptions of Anat and her behavior. Thus the descriptors can be utilized to foreshadow the nature of the vengeance that follows.

20.2 Impetus to Avenge

20.2.1 Physical Harm vs. Breach of Honor by means of the WRONG

The infractions that society deems severe enough to justify an act of revenge vary from culture to culture, and the types of offenses that brought vengeance from humans and deities in the ancient Near Eastern are long and varied. While obvious breaches of physical autonomy are included in this group, an even greater number of WRONGS involve offense to the honor of the Avengers or their Allies. The following table provides a breakdown of the types of violations that require vengeance. Although a breach of physical autonomy constitutes a violation of the victim's honor (in addition to constituting "physical damage"), such offenses will appear only in the "physical damage" column:

Table 31 Damage to Honor vs. Physical Damage in ANE Narratives

Damage to Honor	Physical Damage
<i>Enuma Elish</i> (I) – Sleep of Tiamat and Apsu is disturbed	<i>Illuyanka</i> I & II – Storm-god is injured(I)/eyes and heart are stolen(II).
<i>Enuma Elish</i> (II) – Tiamat is taunted by Marduk.	<i>Enuma Elish</i> (II) – Apsu is murdered. ¹
<i>Aqhat</i> (I) – Anat's request for the bow is refused. She is insulted by Aqhat	<i>Aqhat</i> (II) – Aqhat is murdered. ¹
<i>Descent</i> – Dumuzi does not mourn for Inana.	<i>Shukaletuda</i> – Inana is raped.
<i>Ebih</i> - The mountain does not respect Inana.	<i>Bilulu</i> – Dumuzi is murdered.
<i>Gilgamesh</i> – Gilgamesh refuses Inana's proposal.	

The distribution in the table above shows that in the ANE narratives, attacks "only" on the victim's honor are as likely to provoke revenge attempts as physical attacks on one's person or property. Honor, we have seen, exists through the acknowledgement of others. Actants' claim to honor, whether assigned by others or achieved through their own merits and abilities, must be recognized by others to be valid. Inana and Anat feel themselves dishonored when their propositions are refused (to Gilgamesh and Aqhat, respectively), and the insults about their qualities as wives, warriors and/or hunters that follow the refusal deepen the offense. Both desire validation of their right to vengeance, i.e. the offense to their honor, and resort to threats to obtain it.

Foster argues that honor is a "limited good," that is, it is in limited supply; as with all such goods, an increase for one person causes a decrease for someone else.² Offenses to honor are therefore a WRONG that must be rectified in any society in which worth is determined by honor because there is no other way for victims to regain their status. Group association is key to

¹ While these murders occurred in the first episode of their respective narratives, the revenge occurs in the second.

² Foster, "Peasant Society and the Image of Limited Good," 296–97.

assessing honor; it is inherently collective. Furthermore, honor matters most to those who highly value the opinion of the other.³ The ANE pantheon existed on a continuum from animal to human to divine. Upon this continuum the gods and goddesses existed in an honor-based society that included human and divine worlds as well as their intersection. A reduction of honor in any way, such as a mountain that will not bow, a husband who does not mourn, or children who will not be quiet, lower the status of the Victim. This is intolerable in an honor-based culture and is therefore seen as cause for revenge.

20.2.2 Restoration of Honor by means of the REACTION TO THE WRONG

The immediate REACTIONS of the Victims and their Allies to the WRONGS they suffer fall into three categories: 1) Allies who become the Avenger lament their loss and then seek vengeance; 2) Victims who display (generally extreme) emotion; 3) Victims who proceed directly to the planning and execution of their revenge. This is shown in the following table:

Table 32 Restoration of Honor in ANE Narratives

LAMENT	EMOTIONAL REACTION	NO REACTION
<i>Aqhat</i> (II) -Dan’el mourns. Pughat waits to avenge.	<i>Enuma Elish</i> (I) – Apsu is distraught with the gods’ behavior.	<i>Enuma Elish</i> (I) – Tiamat does not want to react despite Apsu’s urging.
<i>Bilulu</i> – Inana sings a lament for Dumuzi.	<i>Enuma Elish</i> (II) – Tiamat is confused and frantic.	<i>Illuyanka</i> (I & II) – No reaction.
	<i>Aqhat</i> (I) – Anat laughs ironically and threatens Aqhat	
	<i>Ebih</i> - Inana publicizes the mountain’s offense indignantly.	
	<i>Descent</i> – Inana angrily acts against Dumuzi.	
	<i>Gilgamesh</i> – Ishtar, furious, runs to her parents in tears.	
	<i>Shukaletuda</i> – Inana contemplates her plan as she emphasizes that something must be done.	

Solomon argues that “[emotions are] an active way of structuring our experience, a way of experiencing something.”⁴ The ancient Near Eastern texts tend to describe the physical actions accompanying emotions rather than naming the emotion itself. It is the “gestures and postures as well as the mental states conveyed by those body movements” that indicate the emotion being

³ Neyrey, *Honor and Shame in the Gospel of Matthew*, 15–29.

⁴ Robert C. Solomon, “Nothing to Be Proud Of,” *Bowling Green Studies in Applied Philosophy* 1 (1979): 31.

experienced in the ancient world.⁵ The texts emphasize the characters' physical reactions, but these should be seen as bodily sensations representing emotional states.⁶

The most prevalent REACTION to a WRONG in the ANE narratives is an intense emotional outburst expressing the inner turmoil caused by the WRONG. The WRONG is often publicized to gain support for the eventual revenge. Of the narratives studied, only the Hittite *Illuyanka* lacks any mention of the Victim's REACTION, perhaps because the narrative focuses on the Storm-god's victorious restoration. Hittite literature in general tends to show less sophistication in its structure and development than other ANE tales.⁷ In cases of murder, blood-avengers lament before performing their familial duty, a custom that requires the Avengers to temporarily subordinate their anger to the need to observe proper mourning rituals. Perhaps counterintuitively, more immediate and volatile reactions appear in reaction to insults to honor than for taking a life.

The various forms of REACTION functions demonstrate that avenging the WRONG is only a part of the message revenge narratives convey. In addition, the suffering of the Victims/Avengers must be witnessed in order to justify and legitimize the act of vengeance.

20.2.3 *Strength of the Avenger as seen through COMPLICITY*

A corollary to Inana's lack of deception in many of the tales is her Avengees' lack of COMPLICITY. Bilulu, Ġirġire, and Širru (*Bilulu*), as well as Dumuzi (*Descent*), may be thought of as passively complicit as they enjoy life's pleasures without any concern for their crimes or the goddess's wrath. However, they do not actively facilitate the REVENGE ACT by walking into the Avenger's trap. Other narratives, in contrast, utilize COMPLICITY to emphasize the trait that lies at the root of the Avengee's offense, whether gluttony, drunkenness, hubris, or stupidity. The Inana narratives focus on Inana's vigorous defense of her honor; introducing the didactic themes associated with COMPLICITY would distract from the goddess's power.

The dialectic between COMPLICITY and deception shifts the positive valence between the Avengees and the Avenger. While COMPLICITY heaps humiliation on the Avengees, deception can be seen as a weakness of the Avenger. That is, Avengers who lack strength or Allies or other sources of power must "resort" to deception to achieve vengeance, contra Fontaine, who argues that females are by nature more deceptive than males.⁸ Avengees whose own failings facilitate their demise are accorded an additional layer of shame, especially when those failings were hubris or misplaced confidence. Even passive COMPLICITY such as that displayed by Bilulu or Dumuzi

⁵ Myer I. Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication in the Ancient Near East*, 9.

⁶ Françoise Mirguet, "What Is an 'Emotion' in the Hebrew Bible?: An Experience That Exceeds Most Contemporary Concepts," *Biblical Interpretation* 24, no. 4–5 (2016): 451.

⁷ Trevor Bryce, *Life and Society in the Hittite World*, 217–19.

⁸ Carol Fontaine, "The Deceptive Goddess in Ancient Near Eastern Myth: Inana and Inara," *Semeia* 42 (1988): 86–88.

indicates that the Avengers are oblivious to their own behavior, that is, to the attitudes and habits that led to their committing the WRONG. Not only have they failed to mend their ways, they have failed to even perceive that their ways need mending. COMPLICITY of this nature serves the narrative in a didactic capacity.

20.2.4 Weakening and Humiliation of the Avenger as seen through the REVENGE ACT and AFTERMATH

The methods used to avenge WRONGS in the ANE narratives are as varied as the WRONGS themselves. Though ANE legal codes include humiliation as punishment, it was not generally added to capital punishment.⁹ The table below notes the punishments that augmented capital punishment:

Table 33 Humiliation in ANE Narratives

Narrative	Additional Punishment	Doubling of revenge/Regret	Praise of Avenger?
<i>Enuma Elish</i>	(I) Ea binds Apsu (II) Tiamat's body is transformed.	(I) Ea on Apsu & Mummu. (II) Marduk on Tiamat.	Yes.
<i>Illuyanka</i>	(I) Inara presumably kills Hupašiya (Ally of Avenger). (II) Storm-god kills his son.	Two versions.	-----
<i>Aqhat</i>		(I) Anat on Aqhat (II) Pughat on Yatpan	Regret
<i>Gilgamesh</i>		(I) Ishtar on Gilgamesh (failed) {(II) Death of Enkidu}	(Praise of Gilgamesh)
<i>Shukaletuda</i>	His name will live on in ignominy.		Yes.
<i>Bilulu</i>	Name destroyed. He will be transformed.		Yes.
<i>Ebih</i>		Description of the destruction is repeated by Inana.	Yes.
<i>Descent</i>		Regret of Inana.	

ANE revenge narratives shame offenders prior to killing them through acts such as: binding offenders even when there is no risk that they will escape (*Illuyanka*, *Enuma Elish*), a mortal defeating a superhuman being (*Illuyanka*), eradicating the name (*Shukaletuda*, *Bilulu*), or transfiguration (*Bilulu*, *Enuma Elish*). These actions indicate the fervor with which Avengers sought to warn others of the fate that awaited those who trifled with their honor, person, or

⁹ Westbrook, "Introduction," 75; Sophie Lafont, "Middle Assyrian Period," both in *A History of Ancient Near Eastern Law* (ed. Raymond Westbrook; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 557.

property. Not only would the offenders lose their lives, but their legacies would be eradicated. Harming a close Ally of the Avenger (as opposed to harming a stock character), as in the case of Enkidu, is another way Avengers harm Avengees. However, Dumuzi's banishment to the Netherworld punishes Inana, the indignant Avenger, as well as Dumuzi, the Avenger. Likewise, the murder of Aqhat by Anat for his refusal to give his bow causes Anat, the Avenger, to mourn the Avenger and regret her actions. Clearly, the REVENGE ACT is not only a vehicle for eliminating the offender but serves valuable educational goals that are sometimes accomplished by a declaration before or after the act, and sometimes through additional actions that are not required for the technical success of the REVENGE. As we have seen, some of these actions serve as a warning to future offenders for whom the loss of their eternal legacy would provide a strong deterrent. In other cases, harm to the Avenger extends to the surrounding community, such as the drought in *Aqhat* and the plagues in *Shukaletuda*. It is important to note that such "harm by proximity" effects are not synonymous with collective punishment that is inflicted deliberately in order to punish the Avenger, as was done in *Gilgamesh* when the people of Uruk were destroyed.

The classic revenge cycle is characterized by a revenge begetting another revenge because each party believes that the wrong it experienced is more severe than what it inflicted and thus deserves more vengeance.¹⁰ In this group of ANE narratives, however, the frequency of structural doubling in the REVENGE ACT function hints to the existence of a different type of revenge cycle that displays an intensification of revenge in a variety of forms. Some resemble the classic cycle of revenge, as in *Aqhat* or *Enuma Elish*, while others present multiple versions of the same revenge. *Gilgamesh* insinuates retribution without comprising an additional revenge narrative. The Inana narratives of *Shukaletuda*, *Bilulu*, and *Ebih* demonstrate a doubling or trebling of REVENGE ACTS in which the Avengees are repeatedly punished for their offenses. *Descent* alone sees none of these variations. Interestingly, the Avenger in *Descent* expresses remorse for her act and attempts to reverse it, at least partially, by replacing Dumuzi with Geshtinana in the Netherworld for half the year.

Narratives that depict the revenge as multiple actions testify to the complications inherent in restoring honor without causing disproportionate harm to the Avenger. Multiple actions taken as recompense for the same WRONG indicate that the Avenger is not satisfied with destroying the offender; cycles of revenge indicate that neither side can tolerate a loss of honor without swift reprisal. The AFTERMATH generally includes praise for the Avenger, often accompanied by rest,

¹⁰ Maartje Elshout, Rob MA Nelissen, and Ilja van Beest, "Your Act Is Worse than Mine: Perception Bias in Revenge Situations," *Aggressive Behavior* 43, no. 6 (2017): 553–54.

the reward of the powerful. Praise and rest enhance the Avenger's honor, confirming that the revenge succeeded and was justified.

20.3 Allies and Community Support for Revenge

20.3.1 As seen Through COUNCIL

Seeking permission to enact revenge is nearly universal in ANE revenge narratives. The Council from which permission is sought may be official or may comprise an unofficial meeting in which counsel is given. Sometimes the Avenger is denied permission, which provokes protest or threats. The table below delineates the use and result of the COUNCIL function.

Table 34 COUNCIL in ANE Narratives

Narrative	Was permission granted?	Material help rendered?	Council heeded?
<i>Enuma Elish (I)</i>	Mummu encourages Apsu to revenge	No.	Heeded.
<i>Enuma Elish (II)</i>	Younger gods goad Tiamat to avenge Apsu's death and Marduk's taunts.	The gods form the basis of Tiamat's army.	Heeded.
<i>Illuyanka (I)</i>	-----	----- -	-----
<i>Aqhat (I)</i>	Anat secures El's permission.	No.	El tries to dissuade Anat. He relents only in the face of her violent threats.
<i>Aqhat (II)</i>	Pughat secures Dan'el's permission.	No.	Heeded.
<i>Shukaletuda</i>	Inana seeks permission from Enki.	No.	Enki acquiesces to Inana's threats.
<i>Bilulu</i>	Inana receives her mother's permission to go to Dumuzi.	No.	Heeded.
<i>Ebih</i>	Inana seeks permission from An. He does not grant his approval.	No.	No.
<i>Descent</i>	-----	----- -	----- -
<i>Gilgamesh</i>	Ishtar seeks permission from Anu and Antu.	Bull of Heaven is given.	An tries to dissuade Ishtar. He relents only in the face of her violent threats.

Pryke notes Inana’s desire to seek permission before acting and argues that she is seeking community support for her response to the threat.¹¹ This function is not only a characteristic of this actant, but typifies ANE vengeance narratives as a whole.

The significance of COUNCIL in an honor-based society cannot be overstated. Before the Avenger implements the REVENGE ACT, others must acknowledge that the Victim’s honor has been offended. Lacking this, no restoration of honor is possible because honor exists only through the recognition of others. Requesting permission to avenge is necessary to restore honor, but so is the recognition that a WRONG has been perpetrated. COUNCIL is no mere formality, but an indispensable validation of the right to use vengeance in order to rectify a WRONG. In the *Ebih* narrative, Inana was denied permission but implemented her revenge anyway, demonstrating the fact that she did not need assistance to achieve her goal. Nonetheless, the story emphasizes her repeated attempts to receive permission from COUNCIL even though she did not require assistance to achieve her goal. The threats Inana utters when permission is withheld underscore the importance of receiving another’s acknowledgement that the Victim suffered a WRONG.

20.3.2 As seen Through PLAN and ACQUISITION OF ALLY

The PLAN of a REVENGE ACT can take any of an array of forms. As discussed above, revenge is intended to be a liminal act in which the Avenger operates outside the confines of society during the time of the vengeance.¹² Avengers are supposed to reintegrate into society upon the completion of the revenge, thereby shedding their liminal status.¹³ Inana, however, is a permanently liminal figure who does not seek to return to society after the revenge act.¹⁴ She poses an unusual case in the collection of ANE revenge narratives, as is shown in the following table:

Table 35 Allies in ANE Narratives

Narrative	Deception in PLAN?	Ally (to Avenger)	Ally (to Avengee)	COMPLICITY
<i>Enuma Elish (I)</i>	Plan is conceived in secret.	Mummu	-----	-----
<i>Enuma Elish (II)</i>	Plan is conceived in secret.	Qingu and the other monsters.	-----	(Tiamat’s rage plays into Marduk’s counter-offence.)
<i>Illuyanka (I)</i>	Inara deceives Illuyanka by inviting him to a feast.	Ḫupašiya	-----	Illuyanka gets drunk at the feast.

¹¹ Pryke, *Ishtar*, 167–69.

¹² Atherton, “Valences of Vengeance,” 55.

¹³ Turner, *The Ritual Process*, 94–95.

¹⁴ See Harris, “Inana-Ishtar as Paradox and a Coincidence of Opposites,” in which she discusses Inana’s many contradictions which lead to her status as a liminal being.

<i>Illuyanka (II)</i>	Storm-god's son marries Illuyanka's daughter.	Son	-----	Illuyanka gives the heart and eyes to his son-in-law.
<i>Aqhat (I)</i>	Offer to teach Aqhat to hunt.	Yatpan	(Anat)	Aqhat goes hunting with Anat.
<i>Aqhat (II)</i>	Pughat disguises herself.	-----	Yatpan	Yatpan invites Pughat to drink with him.
<i>Shukaletuda</i>	No.	-----	Townspeople	-----
<i>Bilulu</i>	No.	-----	Širru	-----
<i>Ebih</i>	No.	-----		-----
<i>Descent</i>	No.	-----	Inana	-----
<i>Gilgamesh</i>	No.	-----	Enkidu	-----

Inana's strength and her conviction that her vengeance is justified enable her to embark on REVENGE ACTS without ruse or, sometimes, without a PLAN. With the exception of the Bull of Heaven in *Gilgamesh*, she relies on her own power, with no need for tactical allies. As a result, casualties of the revenge are limited to the Allies of the Avengees (again, with the exception of the Bull of Heaven, which is destroyed in Inana's revenge attempt against Gilgamesh). Narratives with other Avengers demonstrate that deception is required to achieve vengeance; in addition, Allies of the Avenger are often harmed or killed because of their proximity to the act of vengeance. The use of deception in this function shows how revenge, because it often lies outside formal jurisprudence, must rely on deception for its success. The frequent harm to those in the proximity of the revenge suggests that a societal animus toward revenge existed, despite its general acceptance.

20.4 Summary

Through an analysis of the characters and structures of ANE revenge narratives, patterns have been identified that reflect certain principles regarding the treatment and values of vengeance in the societies from which these narratives came.

20.4.1 Character Development

The direct and indirect characterization that begins in the Initial Scenes forms a strong basis upon which the revenge act and the Avenger will be assessed, especially in light of the relative absence of character development in these tales. ANE Avengers resemble Auerbach's description of Homeric characters in that they become more static over time,¹⁵ and therefore the Avenger's sense of outrage, combined with the perceived virtue of the Victim, direct the valence accorded the

¹⁵ Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 20–26; Irene JF De Jong, "Auerbach and Homer," in *Euphrosyne. Studies in Ancient Epic and Its Legacy in Honor of Dimitris N. Maronitis* (eds. John Kazazis and Antonios Rengakos; Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1999), 155–62.

vengeance more than any objective standard of justice regarding the WRONG. An additional factor contributing to the significance of the initial characterization — and the absence of character growth — is the liminal state the Avenger which is often retained even after the act of revenge is complete (see below on liminality).

20.4.2 Significant Functions and their Application - COUNCIL & COMPLICITY

The COUNCIL function nearly always appears in ANE revenge narratives, even when the council is an informal one, indicating its significance in ANE societies. Honor-based societies with a strong regard for hierarchy generally include this function as the principal means by which revenge achieves the restoration of the Victim's honor. As has been discussed above, honor depends on the validation of others; hence, others' acknowledgement of the Victim's right to avenge is essential — even more than the receipt of any “magical agent,” as Propp labeled it — to the functioning of the underpinnings of honor-based cultures. The function of COMPLICITY, on the other hand, is more selectively applied. It is reserved for narratives in which the Avenger is less powerful than the Avengee. In the Inana narratives, for example, the goddess's superiority negates the need for this function.

20.4.3 Repetitive Functions – REVENGE ACT & AFTERMATH

The doubling and trebling of the REVENGE ACT, declarations reviewing what has occurred, and praises of the Avenger are included in the AFTERMATH in order to reinforce the grievous nature of the offense to the Victim. The morphological analysis highlights the narrative choices that reflect and strengthen societal values, beliefs, and customs.

20.4.4 Allies Harmed/Collateral Damage

ANE vengeance may be compared to a vortex that draws in all those in proximity to the event, whether Allies of the Avenger, Allies of the Avengee, innocent bystanders, or the community at large. Those who are in the vicinity of an act of vengeance, willingly or not, connected or not, are in harm's way because of the incendiary nature of revenge. This is especially true of mortals who become involved with the vengeance of deities.

20.4.5 Gender & Liminality as Factors of Revenge

Gadotti has demonstrated that “the divine feminine replicates on a divine level the biological, social, and cultural roles women [in the ancient Near East] had in ‘real life.’” Furthermore, the portrayal of women in the extant Sumerian corpus, while sparse, reflects the actual roles of women of the ANE.¹⁶ The involvement of females (both mortals and deities) in ANE revenge narratives, despite females' relative absence in the ANE corpus as a whole, is suggestive of

¹⁶ Gadotti, “The Feminine in Myths and Epic,” 28; Alhena Gadotti, “Portraits of the Feminine in Sumerian Literature,” *JAOS* 131, no. 2 (2011): 203–4.

a tendency to correlate women with revenge, primarily, though not exclusively, in the role of the Avenger. Even the role of blood-avenger, typically a male role, is filled by female next-of-kin, as in the cases of Inana and Pughat.

Revenge, a liminal act, is expected to impose a temporary transition on the Avenger, to be reversed once the revenge is complete, after which the Avenger is reintegrated into society. In fact, the successful reintegration of the Avenger is held as a measure of success for an act of vengeance.¹⁷ Stetkevych describes the *ṣa' ālīk* of pre-Islamic Arabia, unfortunates who were banished from their tribes because of their sullied lineage and who vowed to exact vengeance against the tribe. They became “permanent liminal entities” that would never be able to reintegrate into the tribe. As perpetual Avengers, they were never granted the equanimity that a traditional Avenger achieves upon completion of the revenge.¹⁸ Some suggest that the liminal nature of unmarried women (Ortner would argue, all women) in the ANE accounts for the preponderance of female actants in the ANE revenge narratives.¹⁹ The description of Inana as a confluence of contradictions and a perpetually liminal figure supports this idea.²⁰ The Inana narratives illustrate both a fierce drive to protect honor and an insatiable drive to acquire it that together take precedence over completing the revenge and returning to society.

The transfiguration element of revenge also serves to extend the act to an everlasting remembrance that prevents the possibility of closure for Avengers. For the Avengers, the Avengees remain a constant and permanent reference point. The valence test of their REVENGE ACTS is manifested in the praise of the Avenger after the destruction of the Avengee, not by a return to equilibrium. Collateral damage in the form of allies or innocents harmed does not detract from the success of the act. REVENGE ACTS that include transfiguration and the eradication of names and legacies indicate vengeance that requires an irreversible crossing of boundaries and precludes a return to the previous life, not only for the Avengee, but for the Avenger as well.

¹⁷ Atherton, “Valences of Vengeance,” 93.

¹⁸ Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, *The Mute Immortals Speak* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), 87; Turner, *The Ritual Process*, 95.

¹⁹ Stol, *Women in the Ancient Near East*, 60–61; Sherry B. Ortner, “Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?,” in *Woman, Culture and Society*, vol. 1 (eds. Michelle Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere; Stamford: Stamford University Press, 1974), 83–86.

²⁰ Harris, “Inana-Ishtar as Paradox and a Coincidence of Opposites,” 265.

Chapter 21

21.0 Conclusions: Results of the Morphological Analysis: Comparing HB and ANE Genres

The results of the analysis of HB and ANE personal revenge narratives will be compared and contrasted in this chapter. One essential difference between the corpora is that the ANE narratives describe the superhuman acts of gods while the HB narratives describe the acts of humans. Gunkel's assertion that no HB myths exist rested on the traditional definition of myth as "stories about gods," a definition that has been called into question as myth is redefined.¹ Rogerson defines myth functionally, i.e., by the way it is used and by the way it shapes its societies.² Ballentine strengthens this point, arguing that a myth's function in shaping the ideology of its society is a critical aspect of the genre.³ Thus, despite the fundamental differences in the abilities of HB humans and ANE superhuman deities, which allow for larger-scale, more destructive acts on the part of the deities, both sets of revenge narratives reveal important aspects of the foundational tenets of their respective cultures.

21.1 Duration & Scope of the Revenge

The next section will examine the respective structures, foci, and components of the REVENGE ACTS of HB and ANE texts in order to shed light on the goals and relationships each has within its culture.

21.1.1 Duration

21.1.1.1 Narrative Time

Genette distinguishes between story-time, the sequence of events and the length of time that passes in the story, and discourse-time, the length of time that is taken up by the telling of the story in the narrative.⁴ Discourse time reflects the desire to emphasize or deemphasize aspects of the story. The discourse-time of the REVENGE ACTS of HB and ANE narratives differs sharply. Generally, such acts in the HB are told in abbreviated form, while those in many ANE narratives are stretched and slowed in order to dwell on the details of the revenge.⁵

REVENGE ACTS as described in HB narratives are characterized by a minimum of background details, only what is needed to make the act clear and plausible. The revenge of Simeon and Levi on Shechem, for example, typifies this:

¹ Herman Gunkel, *Genesis* (trans. Mark E. Biddle; Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1997).

² John W Rogerson, "Slippery Words: Myth." In *Sacred Narrative. Readings in the Theory of Myth* (ed. Alan Dundes; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 62-71.

³ Deborah Scoggin Ballentine, *The Conflict Myth and the Biblical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 12-13.

⁴ Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 86-112.

⁵ Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 68-75.

25 On the third day, when they were still in pain, two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, took their swords and came against the city unawares and killed all the males. 26 They killed Hamor and his son Shechem with the sword and took Dinah out of Shechem's house ... (Gen 34:25-26)

The revenge of Absalom on Amnon is not even mentioned directly: "So the servants of Absalom did to Amnon as Absalom had commanded" (II Sam 13:29). Other HB narratives are similar, with the exception of Abner's revenge on IshBoshet. This REVENGE ACT could only be completed after Abner persuaded the people to accept David as king (II Sam 3:12-19) and was therefore a lengthy process. Furthermore, as will be discussed at the end of this section, this particular act had consequences for the Davidic monarchy that warranted its being told at length and in detail.

The ANE narratives, on the other hand, feature detailed descriptions of the REVENGE ACT, such as Anat's gory depiction of how Yatpan will kill Aqhat, which appears before and after the act (I.18.IV.16-37). Similarly, the tale of *Inana and Mt. Ebiḥ* includes a detailed description of the destruction of Mt. Ebiḥ which, as in *Aqhat*, is repeated before and after the act (96-110, 131-151). Similarly extensive, often bloody, descriptions of the REVENGE ACTS appear in the other narratives.

The use of extensive description and repetition in narrative does appear in HB narrative (cf. Eliezer acquiring a wife for Isaac in Genesis 24 or Pharaoh's dreams in Genesis 41, to name only two); yet this literary technique is not used in REVENGE ACTS.⁶ The more expansive detail that appears in ANE revenge narratives is not merely a reflection of the general tendency toward protracted description in ANE compared to the HB. As we have seen, HB narratives often include lengthy descriptions. Rather, the difference between the relative length and amount of description in ANE versus HB revenge narratives reflects the ANE desire to elaborate on the deserved or desired suffering of the Avengees, whereas HB revenge narratives, even those with a positive valence, tend not to glorify the revenge act or to repeat or dwell on its details.

21.1.1.2 Additional Aspects of Revenge

The REVENGE ACTS of HB narratives are almost exclusively restricted to killing. Other acts of violence do not constitute separate acts of revenge: The pillaging of Shechem after the murder of its inhabitants was not carried out by Simeon and Levi, the destruction of the house of Dagon by Samson was the means of the revenge on its occupants, and the destruction of Nob was considered by Saul to be part of the revenge against the priests. ANE narratives, however, diverge from this pattern and incorporate additional measures to humiliate the Avengees before they are killed. Some offenders are bound even when there is no risk of escape (e.g., enacted by Ḥupašiya to

⁶ See Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*, 73–79; Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 387 ff. for discussions of the use of repetition in HB narrative.

Illuyanka and by Ea to Apsu). Another tactic used to inflict humiliation is using a mortal Ally to defeat a superhuman being, as Inara did in *Illuyanka*. These actions ensured that the Avengees would suffer shame as well as death.

Another aspect of the REVENGE ACT unique to ANE stories is extending the vengeance beyond the death of the Avengee into eternity. Tiamat, for example, is not only destroyed, but her body is transfigured into the primordial cosmic matter in *Enuma Elish* while Bilulu is transfigured into a water skin. We have seen that transfiguration is an existential punishment in which the Avengee becomes the medium through which the Avenger is praised, thus bringing further punishment to the Avengee while honoring the Avenger. An additional source of humiliation was the perpetual association of an Avengee's name with the offense. Similarly, eradicating the Avengee's name, as was done to Bilulu, or using the name to praise the Avenger and mock the Avengee, as was done in *Shukaletuda*, enacts perpetual punishment on the Avengees and serves as an example to others not to commit similar offenses lest they suffer the same fate.

In addition to serving as warnings about specific acts, the "eternal" punishments carried out in ANE revenge narratives serve to perpetuate a collective memory of the vengeance. The HB avoids this aspect in accordance with its aversion to vengeance (aside from a few specific exceptions). It is interesting to note that the HB places a premium on preserving the collective memory of other events such as the Exodus or the Sinaitic revelation (Deut 4:9ff., 16:3). One HB act of revenge that receives singular treatment in terms of its length and detail is Abner's revenge on IshBoshet (II Samuel 3), which effected the transfer of the monarchy to David, a legacy the HB author would want to perpetuate in order to legitimize the Davidic line.

21.1.2 Scope

21.1.2.1 Allies

Virtually every ANE narrative in this study features Allies who are attached to the Avenger, the Avengee, or both. These Allies are invariably caught in the revenge because of their proximity to the act. For example, Mummu, advisor to Apsu in *Enuma Elish*, is led with a nose-rope to his incarceration. Qingu, Tiamat's chief warrior, is destroyed by Marduk when he destroys Tiamat. Likewise, Ḫupašiya, Ally of Inara, and the son of the Storm-god in the two versions of *Illuyanka* are killed after the REVENGE ACTS. Širru, Ally of Ĝirĝire, dies during Inana's revenge on Bilulu. In the *GE*, both the Bull of Heaven, brought by Ishtar, and Enkidu, confidant of Gilgamesh, are killed. By contrast, few of the Allies in HB narratives are killed even when they are directly involved with the revenge act. The death of Doeg, for example, is not mentioned after his vengeance on Nob. Neither Delilah nor the "scoundrels" who help Jezebel convict Naboth suffer for their actions.

The reason for the difference in the fates of ANE and HB Allies may lie in the difference in the way the narratives function in each culture. In the honor-based societies of the ANE, no offense can go unpunished. The goal of vengeance is to restore the honor of the offended party; an Ally who is even tangentially connected to that offense cannot be spared. In contrast, the negative attitude toward personal revenge held in HB culture means that HB Avengers are already objects of suspicion. As a result, HB Avengers focus on the immediate target rather than expanding the theater of their revenge activities. The narrator directs the reader's attention to the goal, rather than to the revenge itself, as in Samson's revenge on the Philistines or the perversion of justice by Saul and by Jezebel.

21.1.2.2 Responsibility

In two notable cases of HB revenge, Allies are harmed, though not physically. Jacob and David serve as Ally to their sons. Each father helps to create, and then ignore, conditions that lead to revenge. Jacob failed to perceive the degree to which his other sons hated Joseph. David did not refuse Amnon's request that Tamar serve him nor Absalom's request that Amnon attend his festival. As a result, the fathers suffer when violence breaks out among their offspring.

21.1.3 Duration & Scope of the Revenge – Summary

Revenge in the ANE is neither anathema nor a necessary evil but comprises a practical tool to restore honor through the humiliation of the Avenger. Further, it serves to educate would-be offenders by extending the vengeance within the narrative and showing how its effects, particularly the consequences of a WRONG, can last an eternity. HB vengeance, on the other hand, is limited in scope and purpose. The content and form of HB personal REVENGE ACTS reflect no desire to perpetuate the memory of vengeance or to serve as a warning to others. The HB legal code, rather than the actions of renegade Avengers, is the preferred means of deterrence.

21.2 Social Support

As discussed in the General Introduction, societies display a range of opinions regarding the role of vengeance as a method for conflict resolution. Three factors that recur in the narratives underscore these perspectives and point to distinctive characteristics in the ANE and HB cultures.

21.2.1 Council

The function COUNCIL appears consistently among the ANE narratives independent of the Avenger's need or desire for material support to accomplish the revenge act. Only in *Gilgamesh*, when Ishtar pleads with Anu and Antu for the Bull of Heaven, does a COUNCIL function appear in which the Avenger seeks help that is necessary for the success of the revenge.⁷ COUNCIL may be

⁷ In *Enuma Elish*, the young gods call Tiamat to a council in order to convince her to avenge Apsu's murder and Marduk's taunts, but this is not a case of the primary Avenger seeking aid.

official, as when Anat obtained El's permission to avenge Aqhat's refusal of the bow, or it can be unofficial, as when Inana sought her mother's permission to go to her husband Dumuzi in *Bilulu* or when Pughat asked her father Dan'el for permission to avenge her brother in *Aqhat*. Permission to avenge may be granted freely or after threats and tantrums, as was seen by Anat in her council with El in *Aqhat* or with Inana in her council with Enki in *Shukaletuda*. Permission may also be denied and that denial ignored, as happened when Inana asked An to avenge the insult of Ebiḫ. These cases demonstrate that the council's role is to show that the Avenger's petition has been heard and is legitimate. Without a societal bias against vengeance, gathering social support helped Avengers gain the public support (both emotional and physical) they needed to show that their efforts were justified.

In HB narratives the COUNCIL function does not appear, with the possible exception of the informal council taken by Ahab with Jezebel in the case of Naboth's vineyard, though Jezebel initiated this when faced with Ahab's despondence. The absence of COUNCIL is conspicuous in the case of Simeon and Levi, who witness their father's passivity in the wake of their sister's kidnapping and rape. Nevertheless, the brothers do not ask Jacob for permission to avenge because denial would put them in the position of having to directly disobey their father. Similarly, Absalom does not seek COUNCIL with David regarding the revenge he seeks against Amnon, nor does Joab ask David's permission to avenge his brother's death. Neither Absalom nor Joab wanted to be in the position of violating the king's command, thus they did not seek his approval. The contrast between the ANE and HB narratives in this regard points to a fundamental distinction in the cultures' approaches to revenge. The emotional and physical support that could be expected in the ANE would not be forthcoming in ancient Israel, even in those narratives in which the vengeance is accepted as legitimate.

21.2.2 *Allies*

As has been seen, Allies of Avengers and Avengees are apt to be swept up in the violence of ANE vengeance. The preponderance of Allies in the ANE revenge narratives should also be noted, particularly regarding the diversity of the relationships they have with the other actants. Apsu celebrates his imminent (and ultimately unsuccessful) revenge with his vizier Mummu, Tiamat relies on her newly created general/husband Qingu, and Inana relies on Ḫupašiya, her chosen helper. Gilgamesh the hero has faithful Enkidu, Ĝirĝire the thug has Širru as his confidant. Inana serves as the Ally against her own Victim, Dumuzi, who is also her husband. These Allies do not merely provide tactical aid. Rather, in the revenge setting they offer full social support that does not appear in the HB narratives. Jonadab, for example, advises Amnon, but only to effect a private meeting with Tamar. He does not advise, nor does he offer assistance with any crime; moreover, Amnon was the eventual Avengee, not the Avenger. Doeg, despite being named in the text, functions as a

stock character, like the scoundrels who falsely testify against Naboth and the “lads” who help Gideon and Samson. The absence of HB Allies reflects the negative assessment of personal revenge: Avengers do not invite their friends and associates to participate in an activity that may invite censure.

21.2.3 *Complicity*

The various uses of the COMPLICITY function in the HB narratives have been analyzed above.⁸ The frequency with which this function appears in this corpus may signify the degree to which Avengees are seen to bear some measure of guilt for their own downfall. On some occasions, the guilt is due to the Avengee’s wrongful actions, as with Shechem. In other cases, the Avengee demonstrates some flaw of character, as in the hubris of Abner and of Joseph. Complicity is also used to highlight the Avengers’ deceptive tactics such as the rigged trials carried out by Saul against Nob and Jezebel against Naboth. Such tactics cast the vengeance in a negative light.

ANE narratives, on the other hand, utilize the function of COMPLICITY only when the Avenger is too weak to act without deception. When COMPLICITY appears in these narratives, the Avengees receive a negative valence; they deserve their punishment because they have failed in some way, perhaps as a result of their gluttony or stupidity, like Illuyanka who fell into a drunken sleep in the home of Inara. In cases where the revenge is foiled, as happens in *Enuma Elish*, the COMPLICITY of Tiamat, Avenger turned Avengee, is utilized to a similar end. The different uses of COMPLICITY in the two corpora provides another lens through which we can view the ways vengeance was perceived in the two cultures. ANE Avengees are portrayed as lacking essential qualities or skills and are thus deserving of revenge, whereas HB narratives weigh the relative guilt of the Avengee against that of the Avenger.

21.2.4 *Social Support – Summary*

The above discussion indicates that the cultures’ divergent attitudes toward revenge are manifested in the divergent structures in the narratives. The ANE narratives illustrate the perception that personal revenge for private wrongs is acceptable; Avengers can gain social support for their actions from social superiors at Council or from Allies offering technical help or encouragement. Depicting ANE Avengees who are duped into COMPLICITY as morally or mentally deficient ensures that they will not receive social support or sympathy. HB Avengers, on the other hand, know that they take enormous social risks by attempting acts of vengeance; thus they do not dare reveal their intent to Allies or at Council until the deed is done.

⁸ See the Summary of HB findings for a full discussion.

21.3 Avenger Attributes

A review of HB and ANE Avengers reveals attributes that enhance our understanding of the Avengers as individuals and of salient traits of the group as a whole. This, in turn, sheds light on how vengeance was regarded in each culture.

21.3.1 Gender

The majority of Avengers in the ANE narratives examined in this study are female. We see, for example, that Tiamat attempts to avenge Apsu's murder in *Enuma Elish*, Pughat avenges her brother's murder in *Aqhat* after Anat took revenge on Aqhat for the refusal to part with his bow. Ishtar storms Uruk with the Bull of Heaven in order to avenge Gilgamesh's insulting refusal to marry her, and Inana avenges her own rape in *Shukaletuda*, her husband's murder in *Bilulu*, her husband's insulting behavior in *Descent*, and the mountain's lack of respect to her in *Ebih*. The notion that vengeance is the domain of males is cultural, and it is not borne out by the ANE narratives of personal revenge.⁹ The HB narratives studied, on the other hand, depict females as Victims in the rape of Tamar and of Dinah; each woman is dependent on her brother to avenge the WRONG. In the revenge of Abner on IshBoshet, Michal is a pawn who helps Abner enter a covenant with David (II Sam 3:14). The only female Avenger of note in the HB narratives is Jezebel, a foreigner who operates according to the norms of her native land.¹⁰ Pughat's blood vengeance for Anat's murder of her brother, Aqhat, and Simeon and Levi's vengeance on Shechem and his city for the kidnapping and rape of their sister Dinah, constitute a striking contrast. Both narratives share the theme of a sibling avenging the family honor, yet Pughat takes action, even though a male relative (Aqhat and Pughat's father) is living and, presumably, capable of avenging his son, while Dinah is passive and silent. In fact, women in HB revenge narratives are usually passive (like Dinah and Tamar) or, at most, ancillary, as when Abigail convinced David not to avenge the insult of Nabal. We may conclude that an Avenger's gender depends not on objective measures but on cultural norms. We will now examine the relationship between the gender and liminality of Avengers and how this bears on the act of revenge.

21.3.2 Liminality

Acts of vengeance remove Avengers from the constraints of society. The Avenger's life is divided into its pre- and post-revenge periods, with the revenge act occurring in what Turner first described as the liminal state of "transition." Transition generally takes place in a liminal space,

⁹ Marguerite A. Tassi, *Women and Revenge in Shakespeare: Gender, Genre, and Ethics* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2011), 31–54. discusses the "cultured norms of gendered behavior" which were defied by female avengers on stage in Renaissance England while in classical Greek writings, women served as inciters to revenge and also as occasional avengers.

¹⁰ See the chapter on Jezebel and Naboth in which Jezebel's Ba'al worship in addition to her land management policies reflect her foreign upbringing.

outside of normal societal activities.¹¹ While the women of ancient Israel and the ANE in general did act in the public sphere, their main interests were expected to be in the home with their family.¹² This meant that most women occupied the non-liminal space of their homes and represented a grounding force for society.¹³ This reality is reflected in the fact that women are not Avengers in HB revenge narratives. The ANE narratives, however, did not promote such an ethic in spite of the centrality of marriage and homemaking in those societies. The liminal role of Avenger is often taken by unmarried females who are generally classified as liminal due to their singlehood and can more easily enter the physical and metaphorical liministic space of vengeance.

21.3.3 *Avenger Attributes - Summary*

The preponderance of female Avengers and the duration of vengeance in ANE narratives testify to that culture's embrace of liminality. As we have seen, the HB narratives include a DEPARTURE and AFTERMATH in which Avengers seek a post-liminal state that facilitates their return to the community, parallel with Van Gennep's "incorporation" back into society. ANE narratives, in contrast, take no issue with Avengers who retain indefinitely their identity as Avenger. Similarly, ANE acts of revenge often include a perpetual aspect, such as a transfigured Avenger, who serves as a continual reminder of the revenge. As such, when an AFTERMATH appears in an ANE narrative, it often consists of praise for the Avengers' deeds rather than a description of their abdication of the Avenger role. Thomassen explores the ideas of Turner in which a liminal character becomes "stuck" in a liminal state, thereby becoming a permanently liminal character who continues to function outside of society.¹⁴ This is appropriate to ANE revenge narratives in which the Avenger is praised upon completion of the revenge act, as is seen repeatedly in the Inana narratives. Inana contrasts with a serial HB Avenger like Samson, who desperately and repeatedly attempts to shed his liminality, and only succeeds in doing so through his death and burial. The generally negative HB attitude toward revenge is expressed in its insistence that the Avenger state be temporary; an Avenger who is "stuck" in the liminal state is considered to be a tragic character.

¹¹ Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, 10–11.

¹² Hennie J. Marsman, *Women in Ugarit and Israel: Their Social and Religious Position in the Context of the Ancient Near East* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 153 ff.

¹³ Mobley, *Samson and the Liminal Hero in the Ancient Near East*, 108.

¹⁴ Victor Witter Turner and Edith LB Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 105–6; Bjorn Thomasson, "Thinking with Liminality: To the Boundaries of an Anthropologist Concept," in *Breaking Boundaries: Varieties of Liminality* (eds. Agnes Horvath, Bjorn Thomasson, and Harald Wydra; New York: Berghahn Books, 2015), 48 ff.

21.4 Significance of Findings

21.4.1 HB Revenge on the Background of Current Revenge Research

Current trends in Western cultures tend towards a negatively valenced view of vengeance, such that the mere mention that an individual took revenge generates feelings of discomfort among audiences.¹⁵ As discussed in the Introduction, however, revenge is not inherently immoral, perverse, or indicative of an evil, vindictive streak in the Avenger, although vengeance can have immoral, perverse, or evil results.¹⁶ The personal revenge narratives in the HB are multivalent, as is the contemporary literature on vengeance. Researchers have explored three areas, outlined below, that inform and are informed by HB narratives of personal revenge.

One area of research explores the relationship between vengeance and justice. Jacoby exposes the common fallacy that revenge and justice are mutually exclusive,¹⁷ whereas Minow notes that forgiveness, while often a laudable goal, entails an exemption from punishment that sacrifices justice by institutionalizing the forgetting of the wrong.¹⁸ The narratives of the revenge of Simeon and Levi on Shechem and Absalom on Amnon have been examined in this vein. The Avengers in these cases concluded that without revenge, there would be no justice. Gideon's blood vengeance on the kings, in which he became the blood-avenger tasked with executing justice, reflects similar concerns. Joab may have viewed himself in a similar role when he slayed Abner in the face of David's refusal to bring him to justice, but as the analysis demonstrated, Joab erred in his assessment of his rights and responsibilities, and the term "blood-avenger" cannot be applied to him.

The next area concerns the question of proportionate response to an offense. Does revenge necessarily lead to excessive retaliation because of the "human tendency to magnify [perpetrated] wrongs out of all reasonable proportion"?¹⁹ Vengeance is thought to unleash a response of the wrong magnitude, thereby perpetuating injustice and leading to a "cult of violence" as "equity of suffering" is sought.²⁰ This kind of response is seen in the brothers' attack on Joseph, Gideon's annihilation of Succoth and Penuel, Saul's attack on Nob, and Jezebel's murder of Naboth. All of these cases witnessed extreme reactions to an offense or imagined offense to the honor of the Avenger. According to the law, the Avengees would have been punished far more leniently, if they

¹⁵ Jacoby, *Wild Justice*, 4.

¹⁶ Barton, *Getting Even*, 9–11.

¹⁷ Jacoby, *Wild Justice*, 3–6.

¹⁸ Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness*, 25.

¹⁹ Jeffrie G. Murphy, *Getting Even: Forgiveness and Its Limits* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 91.

²⁰ Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz, *The Art of Forgiveness: Theological Reflections on Healing and Reconciliation* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1997), 19.

were punished at all. In fact, as we have seen, the incident at Succoth and Penuel occurred when Gideon was already in a liminal Avenger state and perhaps not concerned with proportionality.

The third area involves vengeance and the dynamics of power. What is the nature of revenge that is enacted by a powerful individual against a less powerful one? Murphy points out that committing a wrong creates an imbalance of power because the wrong reduces the victim's standing relative to the offender, as if to say, "that I [the victim] am less worthy than he [the aggressor] is, so unworthy that he may use me merely as a means or object in service to his desires..."²¹ When those with high status, who feel themselves deserving of great honor, perceive some slight to their honor, they can easily abuse their power in their attempts to retaliate. The phenomenon of aggressors seeing themselves as victims is well documented.²² Such a case is seen with Saul on Nob. Saul, the king of the land, identifies himself as the injured party in order to justify his disproportionate revenge. Similarly, Jezebel reinforces Ahab's sense of victimhood when he is denied Naboth's vineyard before she uses the power of the kingdom to kill Naboth. These abuses of official power in the name of justice contribute to the sense of revulsion most Western societies feel toward revenge.

Examining HB revenge narratives through a morphological lens reveals that although the basic elements of revenge remain consistent across stories, each case stands on its own or is placed in a dialectic with the others, while differences in the ways functions are filled contribute to the revenge acts' varying moral valences. Minow warns that while vengeance may restore to the Victims or their families what was taken from them, it carries the potential for great instability.²³ This instability has been seen in the failure of certain Avengers to depart from their liminal state and return to their pre-revenge lives. The honor-shame culture of the ANE places a higher value on honor than stability and chooses volatility as a path to honor. Taken as a group, HB narratives warn against this path. Like the current-day debate regarding how much revenge, if any, to allow into the justice system, the HB revenge narratives grappled with the same questions, one case at a time.

21.4.2 Benefits of Morphological Analysis

21.4.2.1 Benefits of a Morphological Analysis for HB Revenge Studies

The morphological analysis of HB revenge narratives reveals the subtle motivating factors underlying the actions of the Avengers. Applying this analysis has been particularly helpful in cases with ambiguity or a combination of national and personal motives, as was seen with Gideon and Samson. In such cases, the morphology was successfully employed to identify these stories as

²¹ Murphy, *Getting Even*, 35.

²² Jacoby, *Wild Justice*, 172–73 cites the Nazi inversion of the victim-aggressor roles in order to rally their people to the war effort.

²³ Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness*, 20–21.

narratives of personal revenge. The desire to return to a post-liminal life in society rather than remain in the liminal state of Avenger also clouds the issue of motivation, revealing attempts to mix or disguise self-interest with national interest, as was seen with Gideon and Joab. The paucity of descriptions of violence in HB narratives is consistent with the HB interest in diverting attention away from bloodshed and toward the values that are being trampled. The application of a structural model has also helped to identify various narratological features like embedded and split narratives that enhance the understanding of the pericope in question.

21.4.2.2 *Benefits of Morphological Analysis for HB Studies*

Applying a syntagmatic, structuralist analysis to these pericopes has helped to identify a tale-type that can be labeled “personal revenge narratives.” The functional analysis of the stories and the comparison of how each function is used across the corpora have revealed the benefits of this categorization for the study of HB and ANE attitudes toward personal revenge. Studying narrative is essential to understanding how vengeance was perceived and implemented in ancient Israel. Janzen even refers to the “demotion” of the legal sections to a subordinate level, leaving the narratives ascendant for the transmission of HB values.²⁴ Composing a story in which all the nuances of a given ethic are incorporated is not feasible; nonetheless, a composite can be made by assembling comparable stories and then systematically comparing and contrasting them. Such was the goal of this study. The morphological sequencing and its variations, uniquely applied in a study of many stories of the same genre, clarified questions of motivation and outcome.

Propp’s original *Morphology of the Folktale* did not attempt to relate the morphology to Russian values or culture as a whole.²⁵ He did, however, intend that anthropologists would forge such connections in order to “shed light on its causes.”²⁶ The significance of the tale-type and its morphology to the original and present-day audience belongs to the realm of social semiotics. The examination of the “similarity between things that are ... written in different texts about the same aspect of reality” develops a model based on the social practices that inspired the narratives.²⁷ Comparing structural aspects of texts is one way to investigate the nature of the society that produced those texts. A focus on what the text *does*, i.e., its function in social interactions, is the goal of this type of investigation.²⁸ The varied use of the same function in different stories juxtaposes the different revenge acts and the ways in which society is expected to react to

²⁴ Waldemar Janzen, *Old Testament Ethics: A Paradigmatic Approach* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 64–65.

²⁵ Alan Dundes, Introduction to *Morphology of the Folktale*, by Vladimir Propp, xi–xvii.

²⁶ Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, 112.

²⁷ Theo Van Leeuwen, *Introducing Social Semiotics* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 95–104.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 122.

them. In other words, the ways in which the same function is filled in different narratives highlights the options available to Avengers and the ways their society will react to their choices.

This study adds to the body of work that asserts that the idealized norms indicated in the legal sections of the HB were often ignored or modified by individuals, though these actions are not intended to invalidate the HB's stated ethical code. The narrative compilation of individuals' struggles with legal principles, and their resultant success or failure, must accompany the legal sections with the goal of refining and reinforcing an understanding of ancient Israelite norms as well as the penalties for evading or breaching those laws.

21.4.2.3 Benefits of Structural Analysis for Comparative Studies

This study compares the personal revenge stories of the HB and ANE through a structural analysis of each narrative. Comparing the structures has resulted in an understanding of HB personal revenge against the background of vengeance in ANE narratives. Such an analysis has not previously been undertaken and has provided important insights including the relatively narrow focus of HB revenge on the offender as opposed to the tendency of ANE revenge to affect everyone in its vicinity. In addition, the social acceptability of personal revenge in the ANE stands in stark contrast to the abhorrence with which it was viewed in ancient Israel. Finally, the ANE narratives see in revenge a value that transcends the Avenger's reintegration into normative society. HB narratives, on the other hand, place a higher premium on the Avenger's re-entry to society than on any aspect of revenge. These observations reflect the ANE's placement of honor above all else, as opposed to the dignity culture promoted in the HB, which posits placing value on independent principles instead of on others' esteem. A corollary of this focus on the dignity and integrity of those connected to vengeance is that HB Allies are more likely to be scarred emotionally than physically. The application of a common measure for the narratives of both corpora has facilitated the development of these conclusions. It is only through developing a common measure against which the narratives of both corpora could be measured that such conclusions can be drawn.

21.5 Areas of Future Study

This study has successfully identified a morphology that can be applied to HB and ANE narratives of personal revenge. Future work may use this morphology to identify partial revenge narratives or allusions to revenge that are embedded in another tale-type, thereby enabling the reader to view such stories in the light of the personal revenge tale-type.²⁹ Studying revenge narratives of other times, places, and cultures, particularly ancient Greece, would add to the growing body of revenge studies. The use of a syntagmatic structural analysis provides an objective

²⁹ Sharon, *Patterns of Destiny*, 174-189 discusses deriving cultural or theological significance from such fragments of an already identified tale-type.

measuring tool for evaluating narrative action and for identifying and comparing tale-types. In addition, it contributes to an understanding of the individual narratives, to the genre as a whole, and to interdisciplinary cross-cultural studies like the current project.

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Appendix 1 - *Enuma Elish*¹⁰⁰⁶

Tablet I

21 The divine brothers came together,
22 Their clamour got loud, throwing Tiāmat into a turmoil.
23 They jarred the nerves of Tiāmat,
24 And by their dancing they spread alarm in Anduruna.
25 Apsu did not diminish their clamour,
26 And Tiāmat was silent when confronted with them.
27 Their conduct was displeasing to her,
28 Yet though their behaviour was not good, she wished to spare them.
29 Thereupon Apsu, the begetter of the great gods,
30 Called Mummu, his vizier, and addressed him,
31 “Vizier Mummu, who gratifies my pleasure,
32 Come, let us go to Tiāmat!”
33 They went and sat, facing Tiāmat,
34 As they conferred about the gods, their sons.
35 Apsu opened his mouth
36 And addressed Tiāmat. . . .
37 “Their behaviour has become displeasing to me
38 And I cannot rest in the day-time or sleep at night.
39 I will destroy and break up their way of life
40 That silence may reign and we may sleep.”
41 When Tiāmat heard this
42 She raged and cried out to her spouse,
43 She cried in distress, fuming within herself,
44 She grieved over the (plotted) evil,
45 “How can we destroy what we have given birth to?
46 Though their behaviour causes distress, let us tighten discipline graciously.”
47 Mummu spoke up with counsel for Apsu—
48 (As from) a rebellious vizier was the counsel of his Mummu—
49 “Destroy, my father, that lawless way of life,
50 That you may rest in the day-time and sleep by night!”
51 Apsu was pleased with him, his face beamed
52 Because he had plotted evil against the gods, his sons.
53 Mummu put his arms around Apsu’s neck,
54 He sat on his knees kissing him.
55 What they plotted in their gathering
56 Was reported to the gods, their sons.
57 The gods heard it and were frantic.
58 They were overcome with silence and sat quietly.
59 The one who excels in knowledge, the skilled and learned,
60 Ea, who knows everything, perceived their tricks.
61 He fashioned it and made it to be all-embracing,
62 He executed it skillfully as supreme—his pure incantation.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Translations are taken from Wilfred G. Lambert, *Babylonian Creation Myths*, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2013) 45–134 unless otherwise noted. I have included translations of the first four tablets, as these are most relevant to the revenge narrative.

63 He recited it and set it on the waters,
64 He poured sleep upon him as he was slumbering deeply.
65 He put Apsu to slumber as he poured out sleep,
66 And Mummu, the counsellor, was breathless with agitation.
67 He split (Apsu's) sinews, ripped off his crown,
68 Carried away his aura and put it on himself.
69 He bound Apsu and killed him;
70 Mummu he confined and handled roughly.
71 He set his dwelling upon Apsu,
72 And laid hold on Mummu, keeping the nose-rope in his hand.
73 After Ea had bound and slain his enemies,
74 Had achieved victory over his foes,
75 He rested quietly in his chamber,
76 He called it Apsu, whose shrines he appointed.
77 Then he founded his living-quarters within it,
78 And Ea and Damkina, his wife, sat in splendour.
79 In the chamber of the destinies, the room of the archetypes,
80 The wisest of the wise, the sage of the gods, Bēl was conceived.
81 In Apsu was Marduk born,
82 In pure Apsu was Marduk born.
83 Ea his father begat him,
84 Damkina his mother bore him.
85 He sucked the breasts of goddesses,
86 A nurse reared him and filled him with terror.
87 His figure was well developed, the glance of his eyes was dazzling,
88 His growth was manly, he was mighty from the beginning.
89 Anu, his father's begetter, saw him,
90 He exulted and smiled; his heart filled with joy.
91 Anu rendered him perfect: his divinity was remarkable,
92 And he became very lofty, excelling them in his attributes.
93 His members were incomprehensibly wonderful,
94 Incapable of being grasped with the mind, hard even to look on.
95 Four were his eyes, four his ears,
96 Flame shot forth as he moved his lips.
97 His four ears grew large,
98 And his eyes likewise took in everything.
99 His figure was lofty and superior in comparison with the gods,
100 His limbs were long, his nature was superior:
101 'Mari-utu, Mari-utu,
102 The Son, the Sun-god, the Sun-god of the gods.'
103 He was clothed with the aura of the Ten Gods, so exalted was his strength,
104 The Fifty Dreads were loaded upon him.
105 Anu formed and gave birth to the four winds,
106 He delivered them to him, "My son, let them whirl!"
107 He formed dust and set a hurricane to drive it,
108 He made a wave to bring consternation on Tiāmat.
109 Tiāmat was confounded; day and night she was frantic.
110 The gods took no rest, they
111 In their minds they plotted evil,
112 And addressed their mother Tiāmat,

113 “When Apsu, your spouse, was killed,
 114 You did not go at his side, but sat quietly.
 115 The four dreadful winds have been fashioned
 116 To throw you into confusion, and we cannot sleep.
 117 You gave no thought to Apsu, your spouse,
 118 Nor to Mummu, who is a prisoner. Now you sit alone.
 119 Henceforth you will be in frantic consternation!
 120 And as for us, who cannot rest, you do not love us!
 121 Consider our burden, our eyes are hollow.
 122 Break the immovable yoke that we may sleep.
 123 Make battle, avenge them!
 124 [. .] reduce to nothingness!”
 125 Tīāmat heard, the speech pleased her,
 126 She said, “Let us do now all you have advised.”
 127 The gods assembled within her.
 128 They conceived [evil] against the gods their begetters.
 129 They and took the side of Tīāmat,
 130 Fiercely plotting, unresting by night and day,
 131 Lusting for battle, raging, storming,
 132 They set up a host to bring about conflict.
 133 Mother Hubur, who forms everything,
 134 Supplied irresistible weapons, and gave birth to giant serpents.
 135 They had sharp teeth, they were merciless
 136 With poison instead of blood she filled their bodies.
 137 She clothed the fearful monsters with dread,
 138 She loaded them with an aura and made them godlike.
 139 (She said,) “Let their onlooker feebly perish,
 140 May they constantly leap forward and never retire.”
 141 She created the Hydra, the Dragon, the Hairy Hero,
 142 The Great Demon, the Savage Dog, and the Scorpion-man,
 143 Fierce demons, the Fish-man, and the Mighty Bull,
 144 Carriers of merciless weapons, fearless in the face of battle.
 145 Her commands were tremendous, not to be resisted.
 146 Altogether she made eleven of that kind.
 147 Among the gods [Tiamat’s allies]¹⁰⁰⁷, her sons, whom she constituted her host,
 148 She exalted Qingu, and magnified him among them.
 149 The leadership of the army, the direction of the host,
 150 The bearing of weapons, campaigning, the mobilization of conflict,
 151 The chief executive power of battle, supreme command,
 152 She entrusted to him and set him on a throne,
 153 “I have cast the spell for you and exalted you in the host of the gods [Tiamat’s
 allies].
 154 I have delivered to you the rule of all the gods [Tiamat’s allies].
 155 You are indeed exalted, my spouse, you are renowned,

¹⁰⁰⁷ The term *ilāni*, gods, is used throughout the epic without consistency regarding which group of gods is being referred to. Being that the groups are all offspring of Tiamat and Apsu (with the exception of Qingu and the other beasts created by Tiamat to fight Marduk), I have marked the text to indicate the allegiance of the gods in question.

156 Let your commands prevail over all the Anunnaki.¹⁰⁰⁸
157 She gave him the Tablet of Destinies and fastened it to his breast,
158 (Saying) “Your order may not be changed; let the utterance of your mouth be firm.”
159 After Qingu was elevated and had acquired the power of Anuship,
160 He decreed the destinies for the gods, her sons:
161 “May the utterance of your mouths subdue the fire-god,
162 May your poison by its accumulation put down aggression.”

Tablet II

1 Tiāmat gathered together her creation
2 And organized battle against the gods, her offspring.
3 Henceforth Tiāmat plotted evil because of Apsu.
4 It became known to Ea that she had arranged the conflict.
5 Ea heard this matter,
6 He lapsed into silence in his chamber and sat motionless.
7 After he had reflected and his anger had subsided
8 He directed his steps to Anšar his father.
9 He entered the presence of the father of his begetter, Anšar,
10 And related to him all of Tiāmat’s plotting.
11 “My father, Tiāmat our mother has conceived a hatred for us,
12 She has established a host in her savage fury.
13 All the gods have turned to her,
14 Even those you (pl.) begat also take her side.
(Lines 15-48 are verbatim I,139-162)
49 Anšar heard; the matter was profoundly disturbing.
50 He cried “Woe!” and bit his lip.
51 His heart was in fury, his mind could not be calmed.
52 Over Ea his son his cry was faltering.
53 “My son, you who provoked the war,
54 Take responsibility for whatever you alone have done!
55 You set out and killed Apsu,
56 And as for Tiāmat, whom you made furious, where is her equal? ”
57 The gatherer of counsel, the learned prince,
58 The creator of wisdom, the god Nudimmud
59 With soothing words and calming utterance
60 Gently answered [his] father Anšar,
61 “My father, deep mind, who decrees destiny,
62 Who has the power to bring into being and to destroy,
63 Anšar, deep mind, who decrees destiny,
64 Who has the power to bring into being and to destroy,
65 I want to say something to you, calm down for a moment
66 And consider that I performed a helpful deed.
67 Before I killed Apsu
68 Who could have seen the present situation?
69 Before I quickly made an end of him
70 What were the circumstances were I to destroy him?”

¹⁰⁰⁸ Jeremy Black, Anthony Green, and Tessa Rickards, “Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia: An Illustrated Dictionary,” 1995, 34. The use of this term is not consistent throughout the ANE corpus, changing with locale and era, but here it indicates the younger gods who are loyal to Tiamat.

71 Anšar heard, the words pleased him.
72 His heart relaxed to speak to Ea,
73 “My son, your deeds are fitting for a god,
74 You are capable of a fierce, unequalled blow . . [. . .]
75 Ea, your deeds are fitting for a god,
76 You are capable of a fierce, unequalled blow . . [. . .]
77 Go before Tiāmat and appease her attack,
78 Though her anger be [. . .], expel it quickly? with [your] incantation.”
79 He heard the speech of Anšar [his father],
80 He took the road to her, proceeded on the route to her.
81 Ea went, he perceived the tricks of Tiāmat,
82 [He stopped], fell silent, and turned back.
83 [He] entered the presence of august Anšar
84 Penitently addressing him,
85 “[My father], Tiāmat’s deeds are too much for me.
86 I perceived her planning, but [my] incantation was not equal (to it).
87 Her strength is mighty, she is full of dread,
88 She is altogether very strong, none can go against her.
89 Her very loud noise does not diminish,
90 I became afraid of her cry and turned back.
91 My father, do not lose hope, send a second person against her.
92 Though a woman’s strength is very great, it is not equal to a man’s.
93 Disband her cohorts, break up her plans
94 Before she lays her hands on us.”
95 Anšar cried out in intense fury,
96 Addressing Anu his son,
97 “Honoured son, hero, warrior,
98 Whose strength is mighty, whose attack is irresistible,
99 Hasten and stand before Tiāmat,
100 Appease her reins that her heart may relax.
101 If she does not harken to your words,
102 Address to her words of petition that she may be appeased.”
103 He heard the speech of Anšar his father,
104 He took the road to her, proceeded on the route to her.
105 Anu went, he perceived the tricks of Tiāmat,
106 He stopped, fell silent, and turned back.
107 He entered the presence of Anšar, the father who begat him,
108 Penitently addressing him.
109 “My father, Tiāmat’ s [deeds] are too much for me.
110 I perceived her planning, but my [incantation] was not [equal] (to it).
111 Her strength is mighty, she is [full] of dread,
112 She is altogether very strong, no one [can go against] her.
113 Her very loud noise does not diminish,
114 I became afraid of her cry and turned back.
115 My father, do not lose hope, send another person against her.
119 Anšar lapsed into silence, staring at the ground,
120 Nodding to Ea, shaking his head.
121 The Igigi and all the Anunnaki had assembled,
122 They sat in tight-lipped silence.
123 No god would go to face . . [. . .]

124 Would go out against Tiāmat [. . .]
 125 Yet the lord Anšar, the father of the great gods¹⁰⁰⁹,
 126 Was angry in his heart, not summoning any one.
 127 A mighty son, the avenger of [his] father,
 128 He who hastens to war, the warrior Marduk,
 129 Ea summoned (him) to his private chamber
 130 To explain to him his plans.
 131 “Marduk, give counsel, listen to your father.
 132 You are my son, who gives me pleasure,
 133 Go reverently before Anšar,
 134 Speak, take your stand, appease him with your glance.”
 135 Bēl rejoiced at his father’s words,
 136 He drew near and stood in the presence of Anšar.
 137 Anšar saw him, his heart filled with satisfaction,
 138 He kissed his lips and removed his fear.
 139 “My father do not hold your peace, but speak forth,
 140 I will go and fulfil your desires!
 141 Anšar, do not hold your peace, but speak forth,
 142 I will go and fulfil your desires!
 143 Which man has drawn up his battle array against you?
 144 And will Tiāmat, who is a woman, attack you with (her) weapons?
 145 [My father], begetter, rejoice and be glad,
 146 Soon you will tread on the neck of Tiāmat!
 147 Anšar, begetter, rejoice and be glad,
 148 Soon you will tread on the neck of Tiāmat!”
 149 “Go, my son, conversant with all knowledge,
 150 Appease Tiāmat with your pure spell,
 151 Ride the storms, proceed without delay,
 152 And with an appearance which cannot be repelled turn her back.”
 153 Bēl rejoiced at his father’s words,
 154 With glad heart he addressed his father,
 155 “Lord of the gods, Destiny of the great gods,
 156 If I should become your avenger,
 157 If I should bind Tiāmat and preserve you,
 158 Convene an assembly, and proclaim for me an exalted destiny.
 159 Sit, all of you, in Upšukkinakku with gladness.
 160 And let me, with my utterance, decree destinies instead of you.
 161 Whatever I instigate must not be changed.
 162 Nor may my command be nullified or altered.”

Tablet III

1 Anšar opened his mouth
 2 And addressed Kaka, his vizier,
 3 “Vizier Kaka, who gratifies my pleasure,
 4 I will send you to Laḥmu and Laḥamu.
 5 You are skilled in making inquiry, learned in address.
 6 Have the gods, my fathers, brought to my presence.
 7 Let all the gods be brought,

¹⁰⁰⁹ *Ilāni rabūti*, the “great gods” is a reference to his descendants of note. Namely, Anu, Ea (=Nudimmud), and Marduk.

8 Let them confer as they sit at table.
 9 Let them eat grain, let them drink ale,
 10 Let them decree the destiny for Marduk their avenger.
 11 Go, be gone, Kaka, stand before them,
 12 And repeat to them [all] that I tell you:
 13 ‘Anšar, your son, has sent me,
 14 And I am to explain his plans.
 15 “[Thus], Tiāmat our mother has conceived a hatred for us,
 16 She has established [a host] in her savage fury.
 (Lines 17-52 are verbatim I,139-162)
 53 I sent Anu, but he could not face her.
 54 Nudimmud¹⁰¹⁰ took fright and retired.
 55 Marduk, the sage of the gods, your son, has come forward,
 56 He has determined to meet Tiāmat.
 (Lines 57-64 are verbatim II, 155-162)
 65 Quickly, now, decree your destiny for him without delay,
 66 That he may go and face your powerful enemy.’”
 67 Kaka went. He directed his steps
 68 To Laḥmu and Laḥamu, the gods his fathers.
 69 He prostrated himself, he kissed the ground before them,
 70 He got up, saying to them as he stood,
 71 “Anšar, your son, has sent me,
 72 And I am to explain his plans.
 (Lines 73-110 repeat Tiamat’s preparations = I,139-162)
 (Lines 111-124 repeat the request that Marduk be sent = III, 53-66)
 125 When Laḥḥa and Laḥamu heard, they cried aloud.
 126 All the Igigi moaned in distress,
 127 “What has gone wrong that she took this decision about us?
 128 We did not know what Tiāmat was doing.”
 129 All the great gods who decree destinies
 130 Gathered as they went,
 131 They entered the presence of Anšar and became filled with [joy],
 132 They kissed one another as they . [. .] in the assembly.
 133 They conferred as they [sat] at table,
 134 They ate grain, they drank ale.
 135 They stuffed their bellies with sweet cake,
 136 As they drank beer and felt good,
 137 They became quite carefree, their mood was merry,
 138 And they decreed the destiny for Marduk, their avenger.

Tablet IV

1 They set a lordly dais for him
 2 And he took his seat before his fathers to receive kingship.
 3 (They said,) “You are the most honoured among the great gods¹⁰¹¹,
 4 Your destiny is unequalled, your command is like Anu’s.
 5 Marduk, you are the most honoured among the great gods,
 6 Your destiny is unequalled, your command is like Anu’s.
 7 Henceforth your order will not be annulled,

¹⁰¹⁰ Another name for Ea.

¹⁰¹¹ See above, II,125.

8 It is in your power to exalt and abase.
9 Your utterance is sure, your command cannot be rebelled against,
10 None of the gods will transgress the line you draw.
11 Shrines for all the gods need provisioning,
12 That you may be established where their sanctuaries are.
13 You are Marduk, our avenger,
14 We have given you kingship over the sum of the whole universe.
15 Take your seat in the assembly, let your word be exalted,
16 Let your weapons not miss the mark, but may they slay your enemies.
17 Bēl, spare him who trusts in you,
18 But destroy the god who set his mind on evil.”
19 They set a constellation in the middle
20 And addressed Marduk, their son,
21 “Your destiny, Bēl, is superior to that of all the gods,
22 Command and bring about annihilation and re-creation.
23 Let the constellation disappear at your utterance,
24 With a second command let the constellation reappear.”
25 He gave the command and the constellation disappeared,
26 With a second command the constellation came into being again.
27 When the gods, his fathers, saw (the effect of) his utterance,
28 They rejoiced and offered congratulation: “Marduk is the king!”
29 They added to him a mace, a throne, and a rod,
30 They gave him an irresistible weapon that overwhelms the foe:
31 (They said,) “Go, cut Tiāmat’s throat,
32 And let the winds bear up her blood to give the news.”
33 The gods, his fathers, decreed the destiny of Bēl,
34 And set him on the road, the way of prosperity and success.
35 He fashioned a bow and made it his weapon,
36 He set an arrow in place, put the bow string to it.
37 He took up his club and held it in his right hand,
38 His bow and quiver he hung at his side.
39 He placed lightning before him,
40 And filled his body with tongues of flame.
41 He made a net to enmesh the entrails of Tiāmat,
42 And stationed the four winds that no part of her escape.
43 The South Wind, the North Wind, the East Wind, the West Wind,
44 He put beside his net, winds given by his father, Anu.
45 He fashioned the Evil Wind, the Dust Storm, Tempest,
46 The Four-fold Wind, the Seven-fold Wind, the Chaos-spreading Wind, the....Wind.
47 He sent out the seven winds that he had fashioned,
48 And they took their stand behind him to harass Tiāmat’s entrails.
49 Bēl took up the Storm-flood, his great weapon,
50 He rode the fearful chariot of the irresistible storm.
51 Four teams he yoked to it and harnessed them to it,
52 The Destroyer, The Merciless, The Trampler, The Fleet.
53 Their lips were parted, their teeth bore venom,
54 They were strangers to weariness, trained to sweep forward.
55 At his right hand he stationed raging battle and strife,
56 On the left, conflict that overwhelms a united battle array.
57 He was clad in a tunic, a fearful coat of mail,

58 And on his head he wore an aura of terror.
 59 Bēl proceeded and set out on his way,
 60 He set his face toward the raging Tiāmat.
 61 In his lips he held a spell,
 62 He grasped a plant to counter poison in his hand,
 63 Thereupon they milled around him, the gods milled around him,
 64 The gods, his fathers, milled around him, the gods milled around him.
 65 Bēl drew near, surveying the maw of Tiāmat,
 66 He observed the tricks of Qingu, her spouse.
 67 As he looked, he lost his nerve,
 68 His determination went and he faltered.
 69 His divine aides, who were marching at his side,
 70 Saw the warrior, the foremost, and their vision became dim.
 71 Tiāmat cast her spell without turning her neck,
 72 In her lips she held untruth and lies,
 73 “[.]
 74 In their [.] . they have assembled by you.”
 75 Bēl [lifted up] the Storm-flood, his great weapon,
 76 And with these words threw it at the raging Tiāmat,
 77 “Why are you aggressive and arrogant,
 78 And strive to provoke battle?
 79 The younger generation have shouted, outraging their elders,
 80 But you, their mother, hold pity in contempt.
 81 Qingu you have named to be your spouse,
 82 And you have improperly appointed him to the rank of Anuship.
 83 Against Anšar, king of the gods, you have stirred up trouble,
 84 And against the gods, my fathers, your trouble is established.¹⁰¹²
 85 Deploy your troops, gird on your weapons,
 86 You and I will take our stand and do battle.”
 87 When Tiāmat heard this
 88 She went insane and lost her reason.
 89 Tiāmat cried aloud and fiercely,
 90 All her lower members trembled beneath her.
 91 She was reciting an incantation, kept reciting her spell,
 92 While the battle-gods were sharpening their weapons of war.
 93 Tiāmat and Marduk, the sage of the gods, came together,
 94 Joining in strife, drawing near to battle.
 95 Bēl spread out his net and enmeshed her;
 96 He let loose the Evil Wind, the rear guard, in her face.
 97 Tiāmat opened her mouth to swallow it,
 98 She let the Evil Wind in so that she could not close her lips.
 99 The fierce winds weighed down her belly,
 100 Her inwards were distended and she opened her mouth wide.
 101 He let fly an arrow and pierced her belly,
 102 He tore open her entrails and slit her inwards,
 103 He bound her and extinguished her life,
 104 He threw down her corpse and stood on it.

¹⁰¹² Though Marduk is “younger” chronologically, line 79 refers to the rebellious allies of Tiamat. Marduk, on the other hand, fights for the “elders”, here represented by Anšar.

105 After he had killed Tiāmat, the leader,
106 Her assembly dispersed, her host scattered.
107 Her divine aides, who went beside her,
108 In trembling and fear beat a retreat.
109 They . . . to save their lives,
110 But they were completely surrounded, unable to escape.
111 He bound them and broke their weapons,
112 And they lay enmeshed, sitting in a snare,
113 Hiding in corners, filled with grief,
114 Bearing his punishment, held in a prison.
115 The eleven creatures who were laden with fearfulness,
116 The throng of devils who went as grooms at her right hand,
117 He put ropes upon them and bound their arms,
118 Together with their warfare he trampled them beneath him.
119 Now Qingu, who had risen to power among them,
120 He bound and reckoned with the Dead Gods.
121 He took from him the Tablet of Destinies, which was not properly his,
122 Sealed it with a seal and fastened it to his own breast.
123 After the warrior Marduk had bound and slain his enemies,
124 Had . . . the arrogant enemy . . . ,
125 Had established victory for Anšar over all his foes,
126 Had fulfilled the desire of Nudimmud,
127 He strengthened his hold on the Bound Gods,
128 And returned to Tiāmat, whom he had bound.
129 Bēl placed his feet on the lower parts of Tiāmat
130 And with his merciless club smashed her skull.
131 He severed her arteries
132 And let the North Wind bear up (her blood) to give the news.
133 His fathers saw it and were glad and exulted;
134 They brought gifts and presents to him.
135 Bēl rested, surveying the corpse,
136 In order to divide the lump by a clever scheme.
137 He split her into two like a dried fish:
138 One half of her he set up and stretched out as the heavens.
139 He stretched the skin and appointed a watch
140 With the instruction not to let her waters escape.
141 He crossed over the heavens, surveyed the celestial parts,
142 And adjusted them to match the Apsu, Nudimmud's abode.
143 Bēl measured the shape of the Apsu
144 And set up Ešarra, a replica of Ešgalla.
145 In Ešgalla, Ešarra which he had built, and the heavens,
146 He settled in their shrines Anu, Enlil, and Ea.

Appendix 2 - *Illuyanka*¹⁰¹³

§1 (This is) the text of the *purulli* (festival) for the [. . .] of the Storm-god of Heaven, according to Kella, [the "anointed priest"] of the Storm-god of Nerik: When they speak thus-

§2 "Let the land grow (and) thrive, and let the land be secure (lit. 'protected')!"-and when it (indeed) grows (and) thrives, then they perform the festival of *purulli*.

§3 When the Storm-god and the serpent came to grips in (the town of) Kiškilušša, the serpent smote the Storm-god.

§4 (Thereafter) the Storm-god summoned all the gods (saying): "Come in! Inara has prepared a feast!"

§5 She prepared everything in great quantity-vessels of wine, vessels of (the drink) *marnuwan* (and) vessels of (the drink) [*wa*]lhi. In the vessels she ma[de] an abundance.

§6 Then [Inara]went [to] (the town of) Ziggarratta and encountered Hupašiya, a mortal.

§7 Inara spoke as follows to Hupašiya: "I am about to do such-and-such a thing-you join with me!"

§8 Hupašiya replied as follows to Inara: "If I may sleep with you, then I will come and perform your heart's desire!" [And] he slept with her.

§9 Then Inara transported Hupaši[ya] and concealed him. Inara dressed herself up and invited the serpent up from his hole (saying): "I'm preparing a feast- come eat and drink!"

§10 Then the serpent came up together with [his children], and they ate (and) drank-they dra[nk] up every vessel and were sated.

§11 They were no longer able to go back down into (their) hole, (so that) Hupašiya came and tied up the serpent with a cord.

§12 The Storm-god came and slew the serpent. The (other) gods were at his side.

§13 Then Inara built a house on a rock (outcropping) in (the town of) Tarukka and settled Hupašiya in the house. Inara instructed him: "When I go out into the countryside, you must not look out the window! If you look out, you will see your wife (and) your children!"

§14 When (Inara went away and) the twentieth day had passed, he looked out the win[dow] and [saw] his wife (and) [his] children.

§15 When Inara returned from the countryside, he began to whine: "Let me (go) back home!"

§16 Ina[ra sp]oke as follows [to Hupašiya: " ...] away [. . .] . . . [. . . "] with anger [. . .] the meadow of the Storm-god [. . .] she [. . . killed?] him.

§17 Inara [went] to (the town of) Kiškil[ušša] (and) set her² house and [the river²] of the watery abyss² [into] the hand of the king-because (in commemoration thereof) we are (re-)performing the first *purulli*-festival--the hand [of the king will hold² the house²] of Inara and the

¹⁰¹³ Translations are from Gary Beckman, "The Anatolian Myth of Illuyanka," *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 14, no. 1 (1982).11-25

riv[er²] of the watery abyss²

§18(The divine mountain) Zaliyanu is fir[st] (in rank) among all (the gods). When he has alloted rain in (the town of) Nerik, then the herald brings forth a loaf of *harši*-bread from Nerik.

§19 He had asked Zaliyanu for rain, and he brings it to him [on account of²] the bread . . .

(several damaged lines followed by a gap of about 40 lines)

§20' This [. . .]

§21' Because² [. . .] spoke. The ser[pent] defeated the Storm-god and took (his) h[ear]t and eyes.] And him the Storm-god [. . .]

§22' And he took as his wife the daughter of a poor man, and he sired a son. When he grew up, he took as his wife the daughter of the serpent.

§23' The Storm-god instructed (his) son: "When you go to the house of your wife, then demand from them (my) heart and eyes!"

§24' When he went, then he demanded from them the heart, and they gave it to him. Afterwards he demanded from them the eyes, and they gave these to him. And he carried them to the Storm-god, his father, and the Storm-god (thereby) took back his heart and his eyes.

§25' When he was again sound in body as of old, then he went once more to the sea for battle. When he gave battle to him and was beginning to smite the serpent, then the son of the Storm-god was with the serpent and shouted up to heaven, to his father:

§26' "Include me--do not show me any mercy!" Then the Storm-god killed the serpe[nt] and his (own) son. And now this one, the Storm-god [. . .]

§27' Thus says Kella, [the "anointed priest" of the Storm-god of Nerik:" . . .] when the gods [. . .

(gap of about 40 lines--insert §§27'a-27'c?)

§27'a [. . .] and to him to ea[t ...] back to Ner[ik ...] he releases.

§27'b [. . .] (the god) Zašhapuna [. . .] (s)he [. . .]ed, and the Storm-god of Nerik [and . . .] went. And Zali[yanu . . .] gave back [. . .]

§27' c [. . .] then he trans[port²ed?? ... t]o² Ne[rik² . . .

Appendix 3 – *Aqhat*

4. First Tablet Column I

(Ca. ten lines missing.)

0-2 [Now Daniel, man of Rapiu,]
The hero, [man of the Harnemite,]

2-3 Girded, gives food to the gods,
[Girded, gives drink to] the deities,

3-5 Throws down [his garment] and lies,
Throws down [his cloak] for the
night.

5-6 One day passed, [and a second-]

6-8 [Girded,] Daniel gives food,
[Girded,] gives food to [the gods],
Girded, [gives drink to the] deities,

8 A third day passes, a fourth-

9-11 [Girded,] Daniel gives food,
Girded, gives food [to the gods],
Girded, gives drink to the [deities],

11 A fifth day passes, a sixth

11-13 Girded, Daniel gives food,
Girded, gives food to the gods,
[Girded,] gives drink to the deities,

13-15 Daniel throws down his garment,
Throws down his garment and lies,
[Throws down] his cloak for the
night.

15-16 "Then on the seventh day
Baal draws near in compassion:

16-18 "The longing of Daniel, man of
Rapiu!
The moan of the hero, man of the
Harnemite!

18-19 Who has no son like his siblings,

No offspring like that of his fellows.

20-21 Will he have no son like his siblings,
No offspring like that of his fellows,

21-22 Who, girded, gives food to the gods,
Girded, gives drink to the deities?

23-23 Bless him. Bull, El my father,
Prosper him, Creator of Creatures.

25-26 Let him have a son in his house.
Offspring within his palace.

26-27 To set up his Ancestor's stela,
The sign of his Sib in the sanctuary:

27-28 To rescue his smoke from the
Underworld,
To protect his steps from the
Dust;

28-29 To stop his abusers' spite,
To drive his troublers away;

30-31 To grasp his arm when he's
drunk,
To support him when sated with
wine;

31-32 To eat his portion in Baal's
house,
His share in the house of El;

32-33 To daub his roof when there's
[mu]d,
To wash his stuff when there's
dirt."

34 El takes [a cup l in his hand.

34-36 He blesses [Dani]el. man of Rapiu,
Prosper the hero, [man of the] Harnemite:

36-37 "By my life, let Daniel, [man of]
Rapiu, thrive,
By my soul. the hero, man of the
Harnemite!

38 [...] flourish

38-39 Let him mount his couch [...]

39-40 In kissing his wife, [conception]!
In embracing her, pregnancy!

41-42 [...]birth
Pregnancy [... man] of Rapiu

42-43 And a son he will have [in his
house.
Offspring] within his palace,

44-45 [To set up] his Ancestor's [stela.
The sign of his Sib] in the
sanctuary:

45-46 To rescue [his smoke from the]
Underworld,
To protect his steps [from the
Dust];

47-48 [To stop his abusers' spite,
To drive his] troublers away;

[To grasp his arm when he's
drunk,
To support him when sated with
wine;

To eat his portion in Baal's
house,
His share in the house of El:

To daub his roof when there's
mud,
To wash his stuff when there's
dirt."]

(Ca. twenty lines are missing,
the first of which would have
contained the remainder of the
list of filial duties as above, and
the last of which would have contained
the birth announcement
and first part of the same list, but
with second person suffixes, as
follows.)

*(Baal goes, or El sends another deity, to
announce to Daniel the good news of El's*

blessing.)

Column II

[Like your siblings, a son's to be
born you,
An offspring like that of your fellows,

0-1 To set up your Ancestor's stela,
The sign of your Sib in the sanctuary;

1-2 To rescue your smoke from the
 Underworld],
[To protect your steps] from the
Dust;

2-3 [To stop] your abusers' spite,
To drive [your troublers away];

4-5 To eat your portion in [Baal's]
house,
[Your share] in the house of El;

5-6 To grasp your arm when [you're
drunk),
To support you when sated with
wine;

6-8 To daub your roof when there's
mud,
To wash your stuff when there's
dirt."

8-9 Daniel's face beams,
His brow above lights up;

10-12 He breaks out into laughter,
Sets his foot on the footstool,
Raises his voice and cries:

12-14 "Now I'll sit down and rest,
In my breast my heart will rest.

14-15 Like my siblings, a son's to be
born me,
An offspring like that of my fellows,

16-17 To set up my Ancestor's stela,
The sign of my Sib in the sanctuary;

17 < To rescue my breath from the
Underworld,>
To protect [my] steps from the
Dust;

18-19 To stop my abusers' spite,
To drive my troublers away;

19-20 To grasp my arm when I'm
drunk,
To support me when sated with
wine;

21-22 To eat my portion in Baal's
house,
My [share] in the house of El;

22-23 To daub my roof when there's
mud,
To wash my stuff when there's
dirt."

24-25 Daniel comes to his house,
Daniel arrives at his palace.

26-27 The Katharat enter his house,
The moon's radiant daughters.

27-29 Now Daniel, man of Rapiu,
The hero, man of the Harnemite,

29-31 Slaughters an ox for the Katharat.
Dines the Katharat,
And wines the moon's radiant daughters.

32 One day, and a second,

32-34 He dines the Katharat,
And wines the moon's radiant
daughters.

34 A third. a fourth day,

34-36 He dines the Katharat,
And wines the moon's radiant
daughters.

36-37 A fifth, a sixth day,

37-38 He dines the Katharat,

And wines the moon's radiant
daughters.

39 Then on the seventh day,

39-40 The Katharat leave his house,
The moon's radiant daughters.

41-42 [] the joy of the bed []
The delights of the bed of childbirth
[]

43-45 Daniel settles to count her months.
A month, []
A third, a fourth []

46 Months com[e]

(Ca. ten lines are missing from
the bottom of the column.
Columns III and IV are completely
missing. There is a further
gap of some eleven lines at
the beginning of column V.)

*(Aqhat is born to Daniel and his wife.
Whatever else the missing columns III and
IV recounted, the origins of the bow that
appears in column V would have been
included.)*

Column V

2-3 ["] I will bring the bow,
I will convey there many arrows."

3-4 Then, on the seventh day,

4-5 Now Daniel, man of Rapiu,
The hero, man of the Harnemite,

6-7 Gets up and sits by the gateway,
Among the chiefs on the threshing
floor;

7-8 Takes care of the case of the widow,
Defends the need of the orphan.

9-10 Raising his eyes, he sees

At one thousand rods. ten thousand furlongs,

10-11 Observes the coming of Kothar,
Observes the march(?) of Khasis.

12-13 Here they bring the bow,
Here he conveys many arrows.

13-15 Now Daniel, man of Rapiu,
The hero, man of the Harnemite,

15-16 Calls out aloud to his wife:
"Attend, Danatiya the Lady:

16-19 Prepare a lamb from the flock
For the relish of Kothar and
Khasis,
For the hunger (?) of clever
Hayyan.

19-21 Dine and wine the gods,
Uphold and honor them.
The lords of Memphis, allotted by
El(?)."

21-22 Danatiya the Lady attends.

22-25 She prepares a lamb from the flock
For the relish of Kothar and Khasis,
For the hunger (?) of clever Hayyan.

25-26 After Kothar and Khasis arrive,

26-28 They hand Daniel the bow,
On his lap they lay the arrows.

28 Now Danatiya the Lady

29-31 Dines and wines the gods,
Upholds and honors them
The lords of Memphis, allotted by
El(?).

31-33 Kothar left for his tent,
Hayyan left for his dwelling.

33-35 Now Daniel, man of Rapiu,
The hero, man of the Harnemite,

35-36 Strings(?) [and bends(?)] the bow,

[Draws(?)] near to Aqhat:

37-39 "The best of your bag, my son,
[] the best of your bag,
Look, [] the bag in [his/her]
temple

(Approximately twenty lines are
missing between the last preserved
part of column V and the
first preserved part of column VI.)

*(With appropriate counsel, the bow is
bestowed upon Aqhat, a development that
apparently comes to the attention of the
goddess Anat.)*

Column VI

1 ...

2

3-4

4-5 [] with salt[ed kn]ife [a cutlet of
fatling.]

5-6 She drinks the ·wine by flagons,
The vines' blood from goblets of
gold,

6

7

8

9

10 Raising her eyes she sees,

11

12

13 [] she longs for the bow

14 [] her eye(s) like a snake ...

15-16 On the earth [she empties her
flagon(?)],
Her goblet she pours [on the
ground].

15 [She raises her voice] and cries:

16 "Attend, now, [Aqhat the Hero],

17-18 Ask me for silver-I'll give it,
[For gold and I'll end)ow you:

18-19 Give [Anat the Girl] your bow,
The sister of LIMM your arrows."

20 Aqhat the Hero answers:

20-23 "From the Lebanon the strongest
trees,
From the buffalo the strongest
sinews,
From the ibex the strongest horns,
From the bull's heels <the
strongest>(?) tendons,
From the great brake the strongest
canes

24 Give to Kothar and Khasis:

24-25 Let them make a bow for Anat,
Arrows for the Sister of LIMM."

25-26 Anat the Girl answers:

26-28 "Ask for life, Aqhat the Hero,
Ask for life. and I'll give it,
Deathlessness-I'll endow you.

28-29 I'll let you count years with Baal,
Count months with the offspring
of El.

30-31 As Baal revives, then invites,
Invites the revived to drink,

31-32 Trills and sings over him,
With pleasant tune they respond:

32-33 So *I'll* revive Aqhat the Hero."

33 Then Aqhat the Hero answers:

34-35 "Maid, don't beguile me:
To a hero your guile is slime.

35-36 In the end a man gets what?
A man gets what as his fate?

36-37 Glaze is poured on the head,
Lye all over the skull.

38 [] the death of all I shall die,
I too shall die and be dead.

39 And another thing I will say:

39-41 Bows are [weapons of(?)] warriors
Will womankind now be hunting?"

41-42 Anat laughed out loud,
But inwardly she plotted []:

42-43 "Come back, Aqhat the Hero,
Come back to me, [I will warn(?)]
you:

43-44 If I meet you in the paths of rebellion,
[Find you(?)] in the paths of pride,

44-45 I will fell you under [my feet],
Finest, cleverest of fellows!"

46 [She takes to her hee]ls and the earth
shakes.

46-48 Then [she sets her fa]ce
Toward El at the springs of the
rivers,
[Among the strea]ms of the deeps.

48-49 She proceeds to the precinct of El,
[Comes to the c]amp of the King, the
Father of Years.

50-51 [At the feet of El she] bends and
bows,
Prostrates her[self and pays] him
[respect].

51-52 She denounces Aqhat the Hero,
[Maligns(?) the child] of Daniel, man of
Rapiu.

52-53 Then [Anat the Girl] speaks up,
[She raises] her voice and cries:

53-54

54 ...

55

(About twenty lines are missing
at the end of the column. On the
left edge of the tablet::

*(Anat's first speech maligning Aqhat and
Els first response would have followed in
the gap. On the left edge of the tablet is
the remains of a colophon: [Scribe: Ilimalku.
Shubbanite, student of Attenu,]
diviner.)*

5. Second Tablet

Column I

1-3

4 ...

5-6

6 And [Anat the Girl] replies:

7-8 ["In] your [], El,
[In your do not rejoice,]
Do not rej[oice in your] .

9

10 ...

11 [] your head []

11-12 I'll make [your head] run [with
blood],

Your old gre[y bea]rd with gore.

12-14 Then [cry to(?)] Aqhat to rescue
you.
To [Daniel's] son to save you
From the hand of [Anat] the Girl!"

15 Then the Kind One, El the Compassionate,
replies:

16-17 "I know you, daughter, as desperate,
[Among goddesses no]thing resists
you.

17 Go off, daughter, haughty of heart,

17-19 [Lay] hold of what's in your liver,
Set up the[in] your breast.

19 To resist you is to be beaten."

19-20 Anat the Girl [departs(?)].

20-22 Now she sets [her face],
[Towards A]qhat the Hero,
At one thousand ro[ds, ten thousand]
furlongs.

22-23 Then [Anat] the Girl laughs loud,
[She raises] her voice and cries:

23-24 "Attend, [Aqhat the H]ero,

24 Come, brother, and I []

25 ...

26

27 ... you go on a hunt. ..

28

29 ... I will instruct you ...

30-31] the town of Abiluma,
A[biluma, town of Prince] Yarikh,

31 Where a tower ...

32

33 ...

34

(Approximately twenty lines are missing from the bottom of column I, and the entirety of columns II and III is lost.)

(Anats preliminary preparations for revenge on Aqhat must have occupied the following gap, which extends over the remaining lines of this column and two completely missing columns.)

Column IV

1

2[he breaks []

3 ...

4[] Anat the [Gi]rl to all []

5-6 Anat the Girl now [lea]ves,
[Now she sets her face]
Toward YTPN, the Sut[ean] warrior.

6-7 [She raises her voice] and cries:

7-8 "Let ITPN turn []
[] the town of Abiluma,
Abiluma, [town of Prince Yarikh.]

9-11 How will Yarikh not be renewed?
In [] in his right horn,
In the waning [] his head."

11 YTPN[, the Sutean warrior,] replies:

12 "Attend, Anat the Girl,

12-13 [For his bow] you strike him down.
For his arrows take his life.

14-15 The fine hero has laid a meal,
 ..."

16 Anat the Girl replies:

16-17 "Turn here, YTPN, and [I'll
teach(?)] you,

17-18 Put you like a bird in my be[lt].
Like a hawk into my sheath.

18-19 [When] Aqhat [sits down] to sup,
The son of Daniel to dine,

19-21 The birds will circle [above him],
[The flock of h]awks will hover(?).

21-22 Among the birds I will circle,
Over Aqhat I will aim you,

22-23 To strike him twice on the head,
Three times over the ear,

23-24 Spilling his blood like a butcher,
Down to his knees, like a killer,

24-26 Let his life go off like a breath,
His soul like a sneeze(?).
From his nose like smoke,

26-27 ... I shall take his life."

27-29 She takes YTPN, the Sutean warrior,
Puts him like a bird in her belt,
Like a hawk into her sheath,

29-30 When Aqhat sits down to sup,
The son of Daniel to dine,

30-31 The birds circle [above him].
The flock of hawks hovers(?)

31-33 [Among] them Anat circles,
Over [Aqhat] she aims him,

33-34 To strike him twice [on the head],
Three times over the ear,

34-35 Spi[l]ling his blood [like] a butcher,

[Down to his knees]. like a killer.

36-37 [His] life went off like a breath,
His soul [like a sneeze](?),
From [his nose] like smoke.

37-39 [] Anat in the slaying,
Her warrior []
[] Aqhat, and she wept.

39 ...

40

40-41 "And for your b[ow I struck you
down]
[For] your arrows I took your li[fe]."

41-42 ...

Third Tablet

Column I

*(The first line is a colophon. The second
line continues the narrative from the end of
column IV of the second tablet.)*

1 [Belonging to] Aqhat

2-3 ... [] into the waters,
It falls [] ...

4-5 The bow is broken ...
[As?] is broken.

5 Anat the Girl [-s]

6 ...

7-8 Her hand strikes like [a bard?].
Like a singer her fingers the lyre.

9

10

11 ...

39-40 Adjures the clouds in the awful heat,

40-42 "Let the clouds make rain in the
summer,
the dew Jay dew on the grapes."

42-44 Seven years Baal is absent,
Eight, the Rider of Clouds:

44-46 No dew, no downpour,
No swirling of the deeps,
No welcome voice of Baal.

46-48 Torn indeed is the mantle of Daniel,
man of Rapiu,
The robe of the hero , man of the
Har[nemite].

49 [Daniel calls] to [his] daugh[ter]:

Column II

1-3 "Listen, Paghit, bearer of water,
Collector of dew from the fleece (?),
Who knows the course of the stars:

3-5 Lead the donkey, rope up the ass,
Lay on my silver harness(?),
my golden bridle(?)."

5-7 Paghit att[ends], the bearer of water,
Collector of dew from the [flee]ce(?),
Who knows the course of the stars.

8-9 Weeping, she leads the donkey,
Weeping, ropes up the ass,

9-10 Weeping, she lifts up her father,

10-11 Onto the back of the donkey,
The shapely back of the ass.

12 Daniel goes round the brush,

13-14 Sees the stalks in the brush,
Sees the stalks in the thicket,

14-15 Embraces and kisses the stalks:

15 "Let me console the sta[lks],

16-17 Let the stalks shoot up in the
brush.
The wild plants sprout in the
thicket,

17-18 The hand of Aqhat the Hero collect
you,
Place you inside the storehouse."

19 Daniel goes round his cracked earth,

19-20 Sees the ears in the cracked earth.
Sees the ears in the dried land,

21-22 Embra[ces] and kisses the ears,

22 "Let me console the e[ars],

23-24 Let the ears shoot up in the
cracked earth,
The wild plants sprout [in the
dr]ied land.

24-25 The hand of Aqhat the Hero collect
you,
Place you inside the storehouse."

26 The words have not left his mouth,
Nor his speech his lips,

27 When, raising her eyes, she sees

27-28 No pe[ace(?) in] the messengers' gait.

28-29 They mo[ve away(?) from each other,
One over here, one there,

29-30 Striking t[wice] on the head,
Three times over the ear.

31 [] their brows []

32 On the brow []

32-34 [] their tresses and flows.
Tears like quarter shekels.

34

35 ...

36

37 I will tell you both: Dani[el,]

38 ...

38-39 She expelled his life like a breath,
His soul like a sneeze(?),
From his nose like smoke."

40 They come, raise [their] voices. [and
cry]:

41 "Attend, Daniel, man of [Rapiu]:

42 Aqhat the Hero is dead!

42-44 Anat the Girl [has expelled]
[His life] like [a breath],
His soul like a sneeze(?)."

44-47 [Below. his feet] tremble,
Above, [his face perspires],
[Around], his loins cr[ack],
[The joints of his loins shake],
[Those of his back] give way.

47-48 [He raises his voice] and cri[es]:

(Six lines missing)

*(Daniel's initial response to the news of
Aqhat's murder would have been included
in the several missing lines here.)*

56-57 Raising [his eyes, he sees],
[Notes the birds] in the clouds.

Column III

1 [He raises his voice} and cries:

1-3 "Let Baal break [their wings],
Break [the birds' pinions],

So they fall beneath my feet.

3-4 I'll spli[t their bellies and] look.

4-5 If there's fat,
If there's bone,

5-6 I'll weep and bury him,
Place him in the earth-gods' caves."

7 The words have not left his mouth,
Nor his speech his lips,

8-10 When Baal breaks their wings,
Breaks the birds' pinions,
So they fall beneath his feet.

10 He splits their bellies [and looks].

11 There's no fat!
There's no bone!

11-12 He raises his voice and cries:

12-13 "Let <Baal> mend their wings,
Mend the birds' pinions.

13-14 Birds, take wing and fly!"

14-15 Raising his eyes, he sees,
Notes Hargub, Father of Birds.

16 He raises his voice and cries:

16-18 "Let Baal b[rea]k Hargub's wings,
Let Baal break his pinions,
So he falls beneath my feet.

18-19 I'll split his belly and look.

19 If there's fat,
If there's [bone],

20-21 I'll weep and bury him,
Place him in the [earth-]gods'
caves."

21-22 [The words have not left his mouth],
Nor his speech his [lip]s,

22-24 When Baal breaks Hargub's wings,
Baal breaks his pinions.
So he falls beneath his feet.

24 He splits his belly and looks:

25 There's no fat!
There's no bone!

25-26 He raises his voice and cries:

26-27 "Let Baal mend Hargub's wings,
Let Baal mend his pinions.
Hargub, take wing and fly!"

28-29 Raising his eyes, he sees,
Notes Samal, Mother of Birds.

30 He raises his voice and cries:
30-32 "Let Baal break Samal's wings,
Let Baal break her pinions,
So she falls beneath my feet.

32-33 I'll split her belly and look:

33-34 If there's fat,
<If> there's bone,

34-35 I'll weep and bury him,
Place him in the earth-gods' caves."

35-36 The words have not left his mouth,
Nor his speech his [lip s,

36-38 When Baal breaks Samal's wings,
Baal breaks her pinions,
So she falls beneath his feet.

38 He splits her belly and looks:

39 There is fat!
There is bone!

39-40 From them he takes Aqhat-
does not wake; he wails.

40-41 He weeps and buries him
Buries him in MDGT, in KNRT.

42 He raises his voice and cries:

42-44 "Let Baal break the birds' wings,
Let Baal break their pinions,

44-45 If they fly over the grave,
To deprive my son of his sleep."

45-46 He curses QR-MYM ...

46-47 "Woe to you, QR-MYM,
Near which Aqhat was slain:

47 May El clothe you in leprosy(?)

48 Now, and fleet time for ever,
Now and all generations."

49 He gestures with Fate, his staff.

50 He comes to MRRT TGHLL BNR.

51 He raises his voice and cries:

51-53 "Woe to you, MRRT TGHLL BNR.
Near which Aqhat was slain:

53-54 May your root not sprout in the
earth,
Your head droop as you're plucked.

55-56 Now, and fleet time for ever,
Now and all generations."

56 He gestures with Fate, his staff.

Column IV

1-2 He comes to the town of Abiluma.
town of Prince Yarikh.

2-3 He raises his voice and cries:

3-4 "Woe to you, town of Abiluma,
Near which Aqhat was slain:

5 May Baal strike you blind

5-6 From henceforth and for ever,
From now and through all generations."

7 He gestures with Fate, his staff.

8-9 Daniel comes to his house,
Daniel arrives at his palace.

9-11 The weepers come <into his house>,
The mourners into his palace.
Those breaking their skin to his
court.

11-13 He weeps for Aqhat the hero,
Sheds tears for the child of Daniel. man
of Rapiu.

13-15 From days to months,
From months to years,
To seven years,

15-17 He weeps for Aqhat the hero,
Sheds tears for the child of Daniel. man
of Rapiu.

17-18 Then, in the seventh year,

18-20 Daniel, man of Rapiu, speaks,
The hero comes back. the man of the
Harnemite,
He raises his voice and cries;

20-22 "G[o from my house], you weepers.
Hence from my palace. you mourners,
You. breaking your skin, from my
court."

22-25 He pres[ents] a meal for the gods,
Into the heavens sends incense.
[To the] stars the Harnemite's
incense .

25-27 ...
[Cym]bals, castanets of ivory ...

28 Then Paghit, bearer of water. answers:

29-31 "My father's presented a meal for the
gods,
Into the heavens sent incense,
[To the] stars the Harnemite's
incense.

32-33 Bless me-I would go blessed!

Empower me-I'd go empowered!

34-35 I would slay the slayer of my sibling,
finish [who] finished my brother. "

35-36 Then [Dan]iel, man of Rapiu,
answered:

36-38 "By my life, let [Paghit], bearer of
water. live,
Collector of dew from the fleece(?).
Who knows the course of the stars.

39 ... flourish!

39-40 May she slay the slayer of [her sibling],
finish who finished [her] brother. "

40-41 [] in the sea

41-43 She washes [] and [].
Rouges herself with shellfish,
Whose source is far in the sea.

43-46 She puts on a hero's outfit [below?].
Places a knife(?) in her belt(?),
In her [scabbard] places a sword,
A woman's outfit on top .

46-50 As Shapshu, the gods' lamp, departs,
Paghit [approached] the encampment,
As Shapshu, the gods' lamp, sets,
Paghit arrived at the tents.

50-51 Word was brought to YTPN:

51-52 "The woman we hired is come to
your camp,
[] is come to the tents."

52-53 Then YTPN, Sutean [warrior] replies:

53-54 "Take and drink the wine,
Ta[ke] the cup from my hand,
The goblet from my fingers."

54-56 Paghit takes and drinks it,
Tak[es the cup from] his hand,
The goblet from his fingers.

56-57 YTPN, Sutean warrior, replies:

57-58 "By the wine that is drunk I'll
defeat the god ...
The god who is master of camps.

58-59 The hand that slew Aqhat the Hero
Slay foes by the thousand!

59-60 . . . enchanter to the tents."

60-61 His heart ... like a ram,
His feces ... like a snake.

61 Twice she gives the mixed wine,
Gives to him the drink...

On the (left) edge of column IV,
beginning opposite line 23

*On the side of the tablet where the plot
resumes after the interruption caused by
Daniel's rituals following Aqhat's death:*

And here one returns to the story.

Appendix 4 – *Gilgamesh Epic*

Tablet VI

1 He washed his matted hair, he cleaned his equipment,
2 he shook his locks down over his back.
3 He cast aside his dirty things, he clothed himself with his clean things,
4 he wrapped himself in cloaks, tied with a sash.
5 Gilgames put on his crown.
6 The lady Istar looked covetously on the beauty of Gilgames:
7 'Come, Gilgames, you be the bridegroom!
8 Grant me your fruits, I insist!
9 You shall be my husband and I will be your wife!
10 Let me harness for you a chariot of lapis lazuli and gold,
11 whose wheels are gold and whose horns are amber.
12 You shall have in harness "storm-lions", huge mules.
13 Come into our house with scents of cedar!
14 When you come into our house,
15 doorway and throne shall kiss your feet.
16 Kings, courtiers and nobles shall be bowed down beneath you,
17 they shall bring you tribute, [all the] produce of mountain and land.
18 Your nanny-goats shall bear triplets and your ewes twins,
19 your donkey foal under load shall outpace a mule.
20 At the chariot your horse shall gallop majestically,
21 at the yoke your ox shall acquire no rival.'
22 [Gilgames] opened his mouth to speak,
23 [saying] to the lady Istar:
24 '[If indeed I were] to take you in marriage,
25 [.....] myself and my clothing,
26 [.....] my food and my sustenance?
27 [*Will you feed me*] bread fit for a god?
28 [*Will you pour me ale*] fit for a king?
29 [.....] *should I bind,*
30 [.....] *should I pile high?*
31 [*Would . . .*] *wrap [...]* in a cloak?
32 [*Who . . .*] would take you in marriage?
33 [(You), ... that does not solidify] ice,
34 an *arkabinnu-door* [that does not] block breeze and draught,
35 a palace that massacres [(...)] :warriors,
36 an elephant [that ...] its coverings,
37 bitumen that [*soils*] him who carries it,
38 a waterskin that [*wets*] him who carries it,
39 a block of limestone that [...] a wall of stone,
40 a battering ram that destroys the [*walls off*] the enemy land,
41 a shoe that bites the foot of its owner!
42 What bridegroom of yours endured forever?
43 What brave warrior of yours is there [who] went up [*to heaven?*]
44 Come, let me count [the numbers] of your lovers.
45 As for him of. [...] his arm.
46 To Dumuzi, the husband of your youth,
47 to him you have allotted perpetual weeping, year on year.
48 You loved the speckled *allallu-bird*,

49 you struck him and broke his wing,
 50 (now) he stands in the woods crying, "My wing!"
 51 You loved the lion, perfect in strength,
 52 seven and seven pits you have dug for him.
 53 You loved the horse, famed in battle,
 54 to him you have allotted whip, spurs and lash.
 55 To him you have allotted a seven-league gallop,
 56 to him you have allotted muddy water to drink.
 57 To his mother Silili you have allotted perpetual weeping.
 58 You loved the shepherd, the grazier, the herdsman,
 59 who regularly piled up for you (bread baked in) embers,
 60 slaughtering kids for you every day.
 61 You struck him and turned him into a wolf,
 62 so his own shepherd boys drive him away,
 63 and his dogs take bites at his thighs.
 64 You loved Isullanu, your father's gardener,
 65 who regularly brought you a basket of dates,
 66 daily making your table gleam.
 67 You looked at him covetously and went up to him:
 68 "O my Isullanu, let us taste your power!
 69 Put out your hand and stroke our vulva!"
 70 Isullanu spoke to you:
 71 "Me! What do you want of me?
 72 Did my mother not bake? Did I not eat?
 73 Am I one that eats bread of insults and curses?
 74 Shall I let rushes be my covering against the cold?"
 75 You heard what [he had to] say,
 76 you struck him, you turned [him] into a *dwarf*
 77 You sat him in the midst of his labours,
 78 he cannot go up to the ... , he cannot go down to the ... [...]
 79 And you would love me and [*change me*] as (you did) them?"
 80 When Istar [heard] this,
 81 Istar was furious and [went up] to heaven.
 82 Istar went [weeping] before her father, Anu,
 83 her tears flowing before Antu, her mother.
 84 'O father, Gilgames has been heaping abuse on me,
 85 Gilgames kept recounting things that insult me,
 86 things that insult and revile me.'
 87 Anu opened his mouth to speak,
 88 saying to the lady Istar:
 89 'Ah, but did you not provoke King Gilgames,
 90 so then Gilgames recounted things that insult you,
 91 things that insult and revile you?'
 92 Istar opened her mouth to speak,
 93 saying to her father, Anu:
 94 'O father, give me, please, the Bull of Heaven,
 95 that I may slay Gilgames in his dwelling.
 96 If you will not give me the Bull of Heaven,
 97 I shall smash the *underworld* together with its dwelling-place,
 98 I shall *raze* the nether regions *to the ground*.

99 I shall bring up the dead to consume the living,
 100 I shall make the dead outnumber the living.'
 101 Anu opened his mouth to speak,
 102 saying to the lady Istar:
 103 'If you will ask of [me] the Bull of Heaven,
 104 for seven years let the widow of Uruk gather chaff,
 105 [and the farmer *of Uruk*] grow hay.'
 106 [Istar opened her mouth] to speak,
 107 [saying to] her father, Anu:
 108 '[.....] I stored up,
 109 [.....] I made grow.
 110 [For seven] years the widow [of Uruk has] gathered chaff,
 111 the farmer [*of Uruk* has grown] hay.
 112 At the wrath of the Bull of Heaven I shall (make) him [...]'
 113 Anu heard this speech of Istar,
 114 [and] he placed in her hands the nose-rope of the Bull of Heaven.
 115 Istar [...] and was leading it on:
 116 when [it] reached the [land] of Uruk,
 117 it dried up the woodland, *the marshland* and the reeds,
 118 it went down to the river, (the level of) the river was reduced by seven cubits.
 119 At the snort of the Bull of Heaven a pit opened up,
 120 a hundred men of Uruk all fell into it.
 121 At its second snort a pit opened up,
 122 two hundred men of Uruk all fell into it.
 123 At its third snort a pit opened up,
 124 Enkidu fell in up to [his] waist.
 125 Enkidu sprang out and seized the Bull of Heaven by [its] horns;
 126 the Bull of Heaven spat slaver at his face,
 127 with the tuft of its tail [...] ... [...]
 128 · Enkidu opened his mouth [to speak,]
 129 saying to Gilgames:
 130 'My friend, we vaunted ourselves [(...) *in our*] city,
 131 how shall we answer the dense-gathered people?
 132 My friend, I have experienced the might of the Bull of Heaven,
 133 [... its] strength [and] learning [*its*] *mission*.
 134 I will once again [*experience*] the might of the Bull of [Heaven,]
 135 behind [the Bull] of Heaven I shall [...],
 136 I will seize [it by the tuft of its tail.]
 137 I will set [my foot *on the back of* its hock,]
 138 in ... [... *I will* . .. it.]
 139 Then [you] like a [butcher(...), brave and] skilful,
 140 press home your knife between the yoke of the horns and the slaughter-spot.'
 141 Enkidu circled round behind the Bull of Heaven,
 142 he seized it by the [tuft] of its tail.
 143 [He set] his foot *on [the back of]* its hock,
 144 [in *he*] ... it.
 145 Then Gilgames like a butcher[(...)], brave and skillful,
 146 [pressed home] his knife between the yoke of the horns and the slaughter-spot.
 147 After they had slain the Bull of Heaven,
 148 they took up its heart and set it before Samas.

149 They stepped back and prostrated themselves before Samas,
 150 both of them (then) sat down together.
 151 Istar went up on to the wall of Uruk-the-Sheepfold,
 152 she hopped and stamped, she uttered a woeful wail:
 153 'Woe to Gilgames, who vilified me, (who) killed the Bull of Heaven!'
 154 Enkidu heard this speech of Istar,
 155 he tore a haunch off the Bull of Heaven and threw it down before her.
 156 'You too, had I caught you, I would have treated you like it!
 157 I would have draped its guts on your arms!'
 158 Istar assembled the courtesans, prostitutes and harlots,
 159 she instituted mourning over the Bull of Heaven's haunch.
 160 Gilgames summoned the craftsmen, all the smiths,
 161 for the craftsmen to praise the thickness of its horns.
 162 Thirty minas of lapis lazuli each was their mass,
 163 two minas each their *rims*,
 164 six kor of oil was the capacity of both.
 165 He dedicated (them) for the anointing of his god, Lugalbanda,
 166 he took (them) in and hung (them) in his bed-chamber.
 167 They washed their hands in the River Euphrates,
 168 they took each other (by the hand) to go forward.
 169 As they drove along the street of Uruk,
 170 the people of Uruk were gathered to look [at them.]
 171 Gilgames spoke a word to the serving girls of [*his house:*]
 172 'Who is the finest among men?
 173 Who is the most glorious of fellows?'
 174 'Gilgames is the finest among men!
 175 [Gilgames is the most] glorious of fellows!'
 176 '[... *whom*] we knew in our fury!'
 177 '[... in] the street he has none that defames him,
 178 [...] ... [...] way of his[...]'
 179 Gilgames made merry in *his* palace.
 180 The men were lying down, that were asleep on beds for the night,
 181 Enkidu was lying down, seeing a dream.
 182 Enkidu arose to reveal the dream,
 183 saying to *his* friend:
 VII 1 'My friend, for what reason were the great gods taking counsel?'

Appendix 5 – *Inana & Shukaletuda*

Its shade was not diminished in the morning, and it did not change either at midday or in the evening.

[112-128](#). Once, after my lady had gone around the heavens, after she had gone around the earth, after Inana had gone around the heavens, after she had gone around the earth, after she had gone around Elam and Subir, after she had gone around the intertwined horizon of heaven, the mistress became so tired that when she arrived there she lay down by its roots. Šu-kale-tuda noticed her from beside his plot. Inana the loincloth (?) of the seven divine powers over her genitals. the girdle of the seven divine powers over her genitals with the shepherd Ama-ušumgal-ana over her holy genitals Šu-kale-tuda undid the loincloth (?) of seven divine powers and got her to lie down in her resting place. He had intercourse with her and kissed her there. After he had had intercourse with her and kissed her, he went back to beside his plot. When day had broken and Utu had risen, the woman inspected herself closely, holy Inana inspected herself closely.

[129-138](#). Then the woman was considering what should be destroyed because of her genitals; Inana was considering what should be done because of her genitals. She filled the wells of the Land with blood, so it was blood that the irrigated orchards of the Land yielded, it was blood that the slave who went to collect firewood drank, it was blood that the slavegirl who went out to draw water drew, and it was blood that the black-headed people drank. No one knew when this would end. She said: "I will search everywhere for the man who had intercourse with me." But nowhere in all the lands could she find the man who had had intercourse with her. -- Now, what did one say to another? What further did one add to the other in detail?

[139-159](#). The boy went home to his father and spoke to him; Šu-kale-tuda went home to his father and spoke to him: "My father, I was to water garden plots and build the installation for a well among the plants, but not a single plant remained there, not even one: I had pulled them out by their roots and destroyed them. Then what did the stormwind bring? It blew the dust of the mountains into my eyes. When I tried to wipe the corner of my eyes with my hand, I got some of it out, but was not able to get all of it out. I raised my eyes to the lower land, and saw the high gods of the land where the sun rises. I raised my eyes to the highlands, and saw the exalted gods of the land where the sun sets. I saw a solitary ghost. I recognised a solitary god by her appearance. I saw someone who possesses fully the divine powers. I was looking at someone whose destiny was decided by the gods. In that plot -- had I not approached it {five or ten} {(1 ms. has instead:) three or six hundred} times before? -- there stood a single shady tree at that place. The shady tree was a Euphrates poplar with broad shade. Its shade was not diminished in the morning, and it did not change either at midday or in the evening."

[160-167](#). "Once, after my lady had gone around the heavens, after she had gone around the earth, after Inana had gone around the heavens, after she had gone around the earth, after she had gone around Elam and Subir, after she had gone around the intertwined horizon of heaven, the mistress became so tired that when she arrived there she lay down by its roots. I noticed her from beside my plot. I had intercourse with her and kissed her there. Then I went back to beside my plot."

[168-176](#). "Then the woman was considering what should be destroyed because of her genitals; Inana was considering what should be done because of her genitals. She filled the wells of the Land with blood, so it was blood that the irrigated orchards of the Land yielded, it was blood that the slave who went to collect firewood drank, it was blood that the slavegirl who went out to draw water drew, and it was blood that the black-headed people drank. No one knew when this would end. She said: "I will search

everywhere for the man who had intercourse with me." But nowhere could she find the man who had had intercourse with her."

[177-184.](#) His father replied to the boy; his father replied to Šu-kale-tuda: "My son, you should join the city-dwellers, {your brothers} {(1 ms. has instead:) who are your brothers}. Go at once to the black-headed people, your brothers! Then this woman will not find you among the mountains." He joined the city-dwellers, his brothers all together. He went at once to the black-headed people, his brothers, and the woman did not find him among the mountains.

[185-193.](#) Then the woman was considering a second time what should be destroyed because of her genitals; Inana was considering what should be done because of her genitals. She mounted on a cloud, took (?) her seat there and The south wind and a fearsome storm flood went before her. The pilipili (one of the cultic personnel in Inana's entourage) and a dust storm followed her. Abba-šušu, Inim-kur-dugdug, adviser Seven times seven helpers (?) stood beside her in the high desert. She said: "I will search everywhere for the man who had intercourse with me." But nowhere could she find the man who had intercourse with her.

[194-205.](#) The boy went home to his father and spoke to him; Šu-kale-tuda went home to his father and spoke to him: "My father, the woman of whom I spoke to you, this woman was considering a second time what should be destroyed because of her genitals; Inana was considering what should be done because of her genitals. She mounted on a cloud, took (?) her seat there and The south wind and a fearsome storm flood went before her. The pilipili (one of the cultic personnel in Inana's entourage) and a dust storm followed her. Abba-šušu, Inim-kur-dugdug, adviser Seven times seven helpers (?) stood beside her in the high desert. She said: "I will search everywhere for the man who had intercourse with me." But nowhere could she find the man who had intercourse with her."

[206-213.](#) His father replied to the boy; his father replied to Šu-kale-tuda: "My son, you should join the city-dwellers, your brothers. Go at once to the black-headed people, your brothers! Then this woman will not find you among the mountains." He joined the city-dwellers, his brothers all together. He went at once to the black-headed people, his brothers, and the woman did not find him among the mountains.

[214-220.](#) Then the woman was considering a third time what should be destroyed because of her genitals; Inana was considering what should be done because of her genitals. She took a single in her hand. She blocked the highways of the Land with it. Because of her, the black-headed people She said: "I will search everywhere for the man who had intercourse with me." But nowhere could she find the man who had intercourse with her.

[221-230.](#) The boy went home to his father and spoke to him; Šu-kale-tuda went home to his father and spoke to him: "My father, the woman of whom I spoke to you, this woman was considering a third time what should be destroyed because of her genitals; Inana was considering what should be done because of her genitals. She took a single in her hand. She blocked the highways of the Land with it. Because of her, the black-headed people She said: "I will search everywhere for the man who had intercourse with me." But nowhere could she find the man who had intercourse with her."

[231-238.](#) His father replied to the boy; his father replied to Šu-kale-tuda: "My son, you should join the city-dwellers, your brothers. Go at once to the black-headed people, your brothers! Then this woman will not find you among the mountains." He joined the city-dwellers, his brothers all together. He went at once to the black-headed people, his brothers, and the woman did not find him among the mountains.

[239-255](#). When day had broken and Utu had risen, the women inspected herself closely, holy Inana inspected herself closely. "Ah, who will compensate me? Ah, who will pay (?) for what happened to me? Should it not be the concern of my own father, Enki?" Holy Inana directed her steps to the abzu of Eridug and, because of this, prostrated herself on the ground before him and stretched out her hands to him: "Father Enki, I should be compensated! What's more, someone should {pay (?)} {(1 ms. has instead:) make up} for what happened to me! I shall only re-enter my shrine E-ana satisfied after you have handed over that man to me from the abzu." Enki said "All right!" to her. He said "So be it!" to her. With that holy Inana went out from the abzu of Eridug. She stretched herself like a rainbow across the sky and reached thereby as far as the earth. She let the south wind pass across, she let the north wind pass across. From fear, {(1 ms. adds:) solitary} Šu-kale-tuda tried to make himself as tiny as possible, but the woman had found him among the mountains.

[256-261](#). Holy Inana now spoke to Šu-kale-tuda: "How? dog! ass! pig"

1 line missing

"

[262-281](#). Šu-kale-tuda replied to holy Inana: "My lady (?), I was to water garden plots and build the installation for a well among the plants, but not a single plant remained there, not even one: I had pulled them out by their roots and destroyed them. Then what did the stormwind bring? It blew the dust of the mountains into my eyes. When I tried to wipe the corner of my eyes with my hand, I got some of it out, but was not able to get all of it out. I raised my eyes to the lower land, and saw the exalted gods of the land where the sun rises. I raised my eyes to the highlands, and saw the exalted gods of the land where the sun sets. I saw a solitary ghost. I recognised a solitary god by her appearance. I saw someone who possesses fully the divine powers. I was looking at someone whose destiny was decided by the gods. In that plot -- had I not approached it three or six hundred times before? -- there stood a single shady tree at that place. The shady tree was a Euphrates poplar with broad shade. Its shade was not diminished in the morning, and it did not change either at midday or in the evening."

[282-289](#). "Once, after my lady had gone around the heavens, after she had gone around the earth, after Inana had gone around the heavens, after she had gone around the earth, after she had gone around Elam and Subir, after she had gone around the intertwined horizon of heaven, the mistress became so tired that when she arrived there she lay down by its roots. I noticed her from beside my plot. I had intercourse with her and kissed her there. Then I went back to beside my plot."

[290-310](#). When he had spoken thus to her, hit added (?) changed (?) him She (?) determined his destiny, holy Inana spoke to Šu-kale-tuda: "So! You shall die! What is that to me? Your name, however, shall not be forgotten. Your name shall exist in songs and make the songs sweet. A young singer shall perform them most pleasingly in the king's palace. A shepherd shall sing them sweetly as he tumbles his butter churn. A young shepherd shall carry your name to where he grazes the sheep. The palace of the desert shall be your home."

5 lines unclear

Šu-kale-tuda

1 line missing

Because destiny was determined, praise be to Inana!

Appendix 6 – *Inana & Bilulu*

Inana and Bilulu: an ulila to Inana

1-5. She can make the lament for you, my Dumuzid, the lament for you, the lament, the lamentation, reach the desert -- she can make it reach the house Arali; she can make it reach Bad-tibira; she can make it reach Du-šuba; she can make it reach the shepherding country, the sheepfold of Dumuzid

20 lines fragmentary or missing

26. she broods on it:

27-30. "O Dumuzid of the fair-spoken mouth, of the ever kind eyes," she sobs tearfully, "O you of the fair-spoken mouth, of the ever kind eyes," she sobs tearfully. "Lad, husband, lord, sweet as the date, O Dumuzid!" she sobs, she sobs tearfully.

31-36. Holy Inana

1 line fragmentary The goddess The maiden Inana She was pacing to and fro in the chamber of her mother who bore her, in prayer and supplication, while they stood in attendance on her respectfully:

37-40. "O my mother with your permission let me go to the sheepfold! O my mother Ningal with your permission let me go to the sheepfold! My father has shone forth for me in lordly fashion Suen has shone forth for me in lordly fashion"

41-45. Like a child sent on an errand by its own mother, she went out from the chamber; like one sent on an errand by Mother Ningal, she went out from the chamber. Full knowledgeable my lady was, and also she was full apt, full knowledgeable holy Inana was, and also she was full apt. Beer stored in remote days, in long past days

approx. 19 lines missing

65-70. from the sheepfold.

1 line missing

..... to the house of old woman Bilulu (source, erroneously: Belili) . There the shepherd, head beaten in,, Dumuzid, head beaten in,, Ama-ušumgal-ana, head beaten in,

71-73. "The sheep of my master, of Dumuzid, in the desert O Inana, a man who was not the shepherd was returning beside my master's sheep!"

74-75. The lady created a song for her young husband, fashioned a song for him, holy Inana created a song for Dumuzid, fashioned a song for him:

76-80. "O you who lie at rest, shepherd, who lie at rest, you stood guard over them! Dumuzid, you who lie at rest, you stood guard over them! Ama-ušumgal-ana, you who lie at rest, you stood guard over them! Rising with the sun you stood guard over my sheep (?), lying down by night only, you stood guard over my sheep (?)"

81-89. Then the son of old woman Bilulu, matriarch and her own mistress, -- Ġirġire, a man on his own, fit for prospering and a knowledgeable man -- was filling pen and fold with his captured cattle, and was stacking his stacks and piles of grain. He quickly left scattered his victims struck down with the mace. Širru of the haunted desert, no one's child and no one's friend, sat before him and held converse with him.

90-97. That day what was in the lady's heart? What was in holy Inana's heart? To kill old woman Bilulu was in her heart! To make good the resting place for her beloved young husband, for Dumuzid-ama-ušumgal-ana -- that was in her heart! My lady went to Bilulu in the haunted desert. Her son Ġirġire like the wind there did Širru of the haunted desert, no one's child and no one's friend,

98-110. Holy Inana entered the alehouse, stepped into a seat, began to determine fate:

"Begone! I have killed you; so it is indeed, and with you I destroy also your name: May

you become the waterskin for cold water that is used in the desert! May her son Ġirġire together with her become the protective god of the desert and the protective goddess of the desert! May Širru of the haunted desert, no one's child and no one's friend, walk in the desert and keep count of the flour, and when water is libated and flour sprinkled for the lad wandering in the desert, let the protective god of the desert and the protective goddess of the desert call out: "Libate!", call out: "Sprinkle!", and thereby cause him to be present in the place from which he vanished, in the desert! Let old woman Bilulu gladden his heart!" 111-124. And immediately, under the sun of that day, it truly became so. She became the waterskin for cold water that is used in the desert. Her son Ġirġire together with her became the protective god of the desert and the protective goddess of the desert. Širru of the haunted desert, no one's child and no one's friend, walks in the desert and keeps count of the flour, and when water is libated and flour sprinkled for the lad wandering in the desert, the protective god of the desert and the protective goddess of the desert call out: "Libate!", call out: "Sprinkle!", and thereby cause him to be present in the place from which he vanished, in the desert. Old woman Bilulu gladdens his heart. Inana put out her hand to the lad on the ground, put out her hand to Dumuzid on the ground, his death-bound hands

approx. 11 lines missing

1 line fragmentary

137-148. The francolin to the of its The francolin to the birthplace of Dumuzid. Like a pigeon on its window ledge it took counsel with itself; the francolin in its shelter took counsel. Only his mother Durtur can gladden my master! Only his mother Durtur can gladden Dumuzid! My goddess, born in Kuara, the maiden who is the crown of all, the admiration and acclaim of the black-headed people, the playful one who also voices laments and the cries, who intercedes before the king -- Ġeština-ana, the lady, did

1 line fragmentary

150-154. The maiden the admiration. Ġeština-ana The sacred one, Inana in her hand. together. replied:

155-161. "Let me utter the lament for you, the lament for you, the lament! Brother, let me utter the lament for you, the lament! let me utter the lament for you, the lament! Let me utter the lament for you, the lament in the house Arali! Let me utter the lament for you, the lament in Du-šuba! Let me utter the lament for you, the lament in Bad-tibira! Let me utter the lament for you, the lament in the shepherding country!"

162-165. How truly the goddess proved the equal of her betrothed, how truly holy Inana proved the equal of the shepherd Dumuzid! It was granted to Inana to make good his resting place, it was granted to the goddess to avenge him!

166-173. "Let me utter the lament for you, the lament for you, the lament! Let me utter the lament for you, the lament for you, the lament! In the birthplace let me utter the lament for you, the lament! In the desert, O Dumuzid, let me utter the lament for you, the lament! In the house Arali let me utter the lament for you, the lament! In Du-šuba let me utter the lament for you, the lament! In Bad-tibira let me utter the lament for you, the lament! In the shepherding country let me utter the lament for you, the lament!"

174-176. How truly she proved the equal of Dumuzid, avenging him; by killing Bilulu, Inana proved equal to him!

177. An ulula song of Inana.

Appendix 7 – *Inana & Ebiḫ*

1-6. Goddess of the fearsome divine powers, clad in terror, riding on the great divine powers, Inana, made perfect by the holy a-an-kar weapon, drenched in blood, rushing around in great battles, with shield resting on the ground (?), covered in storm and flood, great lady Inana, knowing well how to plan conflicts, you destroy mighty lands with arrow and strength and overpower lands.

7-9. In heaven and on earth you roar like a lion and devastate the people. Like a huge wild bull you triumph over lands which are hostile. Like a fearsome lion you pacify the insubordinate and unsubmitive with your gall.

10-22. My lady, on your acquiring the stature of heaven, maiden Inana, on your becoming as magnificent as the earth, on your coming forth like Utu the king and stretching your arms wide, on your walking in heaven and wearing fearsome terror, on your wearing daylight and brilliance on earth, on your walking in the mountain ranges and bringing forth beaming rays, on your bathing the girin plants of the mountains (in light), on your giving birth to the bright mountain, the mountain, the holy place, on your, on your being strong with the mace like a joyful lord, like an enthusiastic (?) lord, on your exulting in such battle like a destructive weapon -- the black-headed people ring out in song and all the lands sing their song sweetly.

23-24. I shall praise the lady of battle, the great child of Suen, maiden Inana.

25-32. (Inana announced:) "When I, the goddess, was walking around in heaven, walking around on earth, when I, Inana, was walking around in heaven, walking around on earth, when I was walking around in Elam and Subir, when I was walking around in the Lulubi mountains, when I turned towards the centre of the mountains, as I, the goddess, approached the mountain it showed me no respect, as I, Inana, approached the mountain it showed me no respect, as I approached the mountain range of Ebiḫ it showed me no respect."

33-36. "Since they did not act appropriately on their own initiative, since they did not put their noses to the ground for me, since they did not rub their lips in the dust for me, I shall fill my hand with the soaring mountain range and let it learn fear of me."

37-40. "Against its magnificent sides I shall place magnificent battering-rams, against its small sides I shall place small battering-rams. I shall storm it and start the 'game' of holy Inana. In the mountain range I shall start battles and prepare conflicts."

41-44. "I shall prepare arrows in the quiver. I shall slingstones with the rope. I shall begin the polishing of my lance. I shall prepare the throw-stick and the shield."

45-48. "I shall set fire to its thick forests. I shall take an axe to its evil-doing. I shall make Gibil, the purifier, do his work at its watercourses. I shall spread this terror through the inaccessible mountain range Aratta."

49-52. "Like a city which An has cursed, may it never be restored. Like a city at which Enlil has frowned, may it never again lift its neck up. May the mountain observe (?) my conduct. May Ebiḫ give me honour and praise me."

53-58. Inana, the child of Suen, put on the garment of royalty and girded herself in joy. She bedecked her forehead with terror and fearsome radiance. She arranged cornelian rosettes around her holy throat. She brandished the seven-headed šita weapon vigorously to her right and placed straps of lapis lazuli on her feet.

59-61. At dusk she came forth regally and stood in the street at the Gate of Wonder. She made an offering to An and addressed a prayer to him.

62-64. An, in delight at Inana, stepped forward and took his place. He filled the seat of honour of heaven.

65-69. (Inana announced:) "An, my father, I greet you! Lend your ear to my words. An has made me terrifying throughout heaven. Owing to you my word has no rival in heaven or on earth. At the limits of heaven are the silig weapon, the antibal and mansium emblems."

70-79. "To set the socle in position and make the throne and foundation firm, to carry the might of the šita weapon which bends like a mubum tree, to hold the ground with the sixfold yoke, to extend the thighs with the fourfold yoke, to pursue murderous raids and widespread military campaigns, to appear to those kings in the of heaven like moonlight, to shoot the arrow from the arm and fall on fields, orchards and forests like the tooth of the locust, to take the harrow to rebel lands, to remove the locks from their city gates so the doors stand open -- King An, you have indeed given me all this, and"

80-82. "You have placed me at the right hand of the king in order to destroy rebel lands: may he, with my aid, smash heads like a falcon in the foothills of the mountain, King An, and may I your name throughout the land like a thread."

83-88. "May he destroy the lands as a snake in a crevice. May he make them slither around like a saḡkal snake coming down from a mountain. May he establish control over the mountain, examine it and know its length. May he go out on the holy campaign of An and know its depth. I want to surpass the other deities, since the Anuna deities have"

89-95. "How can it be that the mountain did not fear me in heaven and on earth, that the mountain did not fear me, Inana, in heaven and on earth, that the mountain range of Ebiḥ, the mountain, did not fear me in heaven and on earth? Because it did not act appropriately on its own initiative, because it did not put its nose to the ground, because it did not rub its lips in the dust, may I fill my hand with the soaring mountain range and make it learn fear of me."

96-99. "Against its magnificent sides let me place magnificent battering rams, against its small sides let me place small battering rams. Let me storm it and start the 'game' of holy Inana. In the mountain range let me set up battle and prepare conflicts."

100-103. "Let me prepare arrows in the quiver. Let me slingstones with the rope. Let me begin the polishing of my lance. Let me prepare the throw-stick and the shield."

104-107. "Let me set fire to its thick forests. Let me take an axe to its evil-doing. Let me make Gibil, the purifier, do his work at its watercourses. Let me spread this terror through the inaccessible mountain range Aratta."

108-111. "Like a city which An has cursed, may it never be restored. Like a city at which Enlil has frowned, may it never again lift its neck up. May the mountain observe (?) my conduct. May Ebiḥ give me honour and praise me."

112-115. An, the king of the deities, answered her: "My little one demands the destruction of this mountain -- what is she taking on? Inana demands the destruction of this mountain -- what is she taking on? She demands the destruction of this mountain -- what is she taking on?"

116-120. "It has poured fearsome terror on the abodes of the gods. It has spread fear among the holy dwellings of the Anuna deities. Its fearsomeness is terrible and weighs upon the Land. The mountain range's radiance is terrible and weighs upon all the lands. Its arrogance extends grandly to the centre of heaven."

121-126. "Fruit hangs in its flourishing gardens and luxuriance spreads forth. Its magnificent trees, a crown in the heavens, stand as a wonder to behold. In Ebiḥ lions are abundant under the canopy of trees and bright branches. It makes wild rams and stags freely abundant. It stands wild bulls in flourishing grass. Deer couple among the cypress trees of the mountain range."

127-130. "Its fearsomeness is terrible -- you cannot pass through. The mountain range's radiance is terrible -- maiden Inana, you cannot oppose it." Thus he spoke.

131-137. The mistress, in her rage and anger, opened the arsenal and pushed on the lapis lazuli gate. She brought out magnificent battle and called up a great storm. Holy Inana reached for the quiver. She raised a towering flood with evil silt. She stirred up an evil raging wind with potsherds.

138-143. My lady confronted the mountain range. She advanced step by step. She sharpened both edges of her dagger. She grabbed Ebiḥ's neck as if ripping up esparto grass. She pressed the dagger's teeth into its interior. She roared like thunder.

144-151. The rocks forming the body of Ebiḥ clattered down its flanks. From its sides and crevices great serpents spat venom. She damned its forests and cursed its trees. She killed its oak trees with drought. She poured fire on its flanks and made its smoke dense. The goddess established authority over the mountain. Holy Inana did as she wished.

152-159. She went to the mountain range of Ebiḥ and addressed it: "Mountain range, because of your elevation, because of your height, because of your attractiveness, because of your beauty, because of your wearing a holy garment, because of your reaching up to heaven, because you did not put your nose to the ground, because you did not rub your lips in the dust, I have killed you and brought you low."

160-165. "As with an elephant I have seized your tusks. As with a great wild bull I have brought you to the ground by your thick horns. As with a bull I have forced your great strength to the ground and pursued you savagely. I have made tears the norm in your eyes. I have placed laments in your heart. Birds of sorrow are building nests on these flanks."

166-170. For a second time, rejoicing in fearsome terror, she spoke out righteously: "My father Enlil has poured my great terror over the centre of the mountains. On my right side he has placed a weapon. On my left side a is placed. My anger, a harrow with great teeth, has torn the mountain apart."

171-175. "I have built a palace and done much more. I have put a throne in place and made its foundation firm. I have given the kurḡara cult performers a dagger and prod. I have given the gala cult performers ub and lilis drums. I have transformed the pilipili cult performers."

176-181. "In my victory I rushed towards the mountain. In my victory I rushed towards Ebiḥ, the mountain range. I went forward like a surging flood, and like rising water I overflowed the dam. I imposed my victory on the mountain. I imposed my victory on Ebiḥ."

182-183. For destroying Ebiḥ, great child of Suen, maiden Inana, be praised.

184. Nisaba be praised.

Appendix 8 - *Inana's Descent to the Netherworld*

1-5. From the great heaven she set her mind on the great below. From the great heaven the goddess set her mind on the great below. From the great heaven Inana set her mind on the great below. My mistress abandoned heaven, abandoned earth, and descended to the underworld. Inana abandoned heaven, abandoned earth, and descended to the underworld. 6-13. She abandoned the office of en, abandoned the office of lagar, and descended to the underworld. She abandoned the E-ana in Unug, and descended to the underworld. She abandoned the E-muš-kalama in Bad-tibira, and descended to the underworld. She abandoned the Giguna in Zabalam, and descended to the underworld. She abandoned the E-šara in Adab, and descended to the underworld. She abandoned the Barag-dur-ĝara in Nibru, and descended to the underworld. She abandoned the Ḫursaĝ-kalama in Kiš, and descended to the underworld. She abandoned the E-Ulmaš in Agade, and descended to the underworld. {(1 ms. adds 8 other lines:)} She abandoned the Ibgal in Umma, and descended to the underworld. She abandoned the E-Dilmuna in Urim, and descended to the underworld. She abandoned the Amaš-e-kug in Kisiga, and descended to the underworld. She abandoned the E-ešdam-kug in Ĝirsu, and descended to the underworld. She abandoned the E-šeg-meše-du in Isin, and descended to the underworld. She abandoned the Anzagar in Akšak, and descended to the underworld. She abandoned the Niĝin-ĝar-kug in Šuruppag, and descended to the underworld. She abandoned the E-šag-ḫula in Kazallu, and descended to the underworld.}

14-19. She took the seven divine powers. She collected the divine powers and grasped them in her hand. With the good divine powers, she went on her way. She put a turban, headgear for the open country, on her head. She took a wig for her forehead. She hung small lapis-lazuli beads around her neck.

20-25. She placed twin egg-shaped beads on her breast. She covered her body with a pala dress, the garment of ladyship. She placed mascara which is called "Let a man come, let him come" on her eyes. She pulled the pectoral which is called "Come, man, come" over her breast. She placed a golden ring on her hand. She held the lapis-lazuli measuring rod and measuring line in her hand.

26-27. Inana travelled towards the underworld. Her minister Ninšubur travelled behind her.

28-31. Holy Inana said to Ninšubur: "Come my faithful minister of E-ana, {my minister who speaks fair words, my escort who speaks trustworthy words} {(1 ms. has instead:)} I am going to give you instructions: my instructions must be followed; I am going to say something to you: it must be observed}."

32-36. "On this day I will descend to the underworld. When I have arrived in the underworld, make a lament for me on the ruin mounds. Beat the drum for me in the sanctuary. Make the rounds of the houses of the gods for me."

37-40. "Lacerate your eyes for me, lacerate your nose for me. {(1 ms. adds 1 line:)} Lacerate your ears for me, in public.} In private, lacerate your buttocks for me. Like a pauper, clothe yourself in a single garment and all alone set your foot in the E-kur, the house of Enlil."

41-47. "When you have entered the E-kur, the house of Enlil, lament before Enlil: "Father Enlil, don't let anyone kill your daughter in the underworld. Don't let your precious metal be alloyed there with the dirt of the underworld. Don't let your precious lapis lazuli be split there with the mason's stone. Don't let your boxwood be chopped up there with the carpenter's wood. Don't let young lady Inana be killed in the underworld.""

48-56. "If Enlil does not help you in this matter, go to Urim. In the E-mud-kura at Urim, when you have entered the E-kiš-nu-ĝal, the house of Nanna, lament before Nanna:

"Father Nanna, don't let anyone kill your daughter in the underworld. Don't let your precious metal be alloyed there with the dirt of the underworld. Don't let your precious lapis lazuli be split there with the mason's stone. Don't let your boxwood be chopped up there with the carpenter's wood. Don't let young lady Inana be killed in the underworld." 57-64. "And if Nanna does not help you in this matter, go to Eridug. In Eridug, when you have entered the house of Enki, lament before Enki: "Father Enki, don't let anyone kill your daughter in the underworld. Don't let your precious metal be alloyed there with the dirt of the underworld. Don't let your precious lapis lazuli be split there with the mason's stone. Don't let your boxwood be chopped up there with the carpenter's wood. Don't let young lady Inana be killed in the underworld.""

65-67. "Father Enki, the lord of great wisdom, knows about the life-giving plant and the life-giving water. He is the one who will restore me to life."

68-72. When Inana travelled on towards the underworld, her minister Ninšubur travelled on behind her. She said to her minister Ninšubur: "Go now, my Ninšubur, and pay attention. Don't neglect the instructions I gave you."

73-77. When Inana arrived at the palace Ganzir, she pushed aggressively on the door of the underworld. She shouted aggressively at the gate of the underworld: "Open up, doorman, open up. Open up, Neti, open up. I am all alone and I want to come in."

78-84. Neti, the chief doorman of the underworld, answered holy Inana: "Who are you?" "I am Inana going to the east." "If you are Inana going to the east, why have you travelled to the land of no return? How did you set your heart on the road whose traveller never returns?"

85-89. Holy Inana answered him: "Because Lord Gud-gal-ana, the husband of my elder sister holy Ereškigala, has died; in order to have his funeral rites observed, she offers generous libations at his wake -- that is the reason."

90-93. Neti, the chief doorman of the underworld, answered holy Inana: "Stay here, Inana. I will speak to my mistress. I will speak to my mistress Ereškigala and tell her what you have said."

94-101. Neti, the chief doorman of the underworld, entered the house of his mistress Ereškigala and said: "My mistress, there is a lone girl outside. It is Inana, your sister, and she has arrived at the palace Ganzir. She pushed aggressively on the door of the underworld. She shouted aggressively at the gate of the underworld. She has abandoned E-ana and has descended to the underworld."

102-107. "She has taken the seven divine powers. She has collected the divine powers and grasped them in her hand. She has come on her way with all the good divine powers. She has put a turban, headgear for the open country, on her head. She has taken a wig for her forehead. She has hung small lapis-lazuli beads around her neck."

108-113. "She has placed twin egg-shaped beads on her breast. She has covered her body with the pala dress of ladyship. She has placed mascara which is called "Let a man come" on her eyes. She has pulled the pectoral which is called "Come, man, come" over her breast. She has placed a golden ring on her hand. She is holding the lapis-lazuli measuring rod and measuring line in her hand."

114-122. When she heard this, Ereškigala slapped the side of her thigh. She bit her lip and took the words to heart. She said to Neti, her chief doorman: "Come Neti, my chief doorman of the underworld, don't neglect the instructions I will give you. Let the seven gates of the underworld be bolted. Then let each door of the palace Ganzir be opened separately. As for her, after she has entered, and crouched down and had her clothes removed, they will be carried away."

123-128. Neti, the chief doorman of the underworld, paid attention to the instructions of his mistress. He bolted the seven gates of the underworld. Then he opened each of the doors of the palace Ganzir separately. He said to holy Inana: "Come on, Inana, and enter."

129-133. And when Inana entered, {(1 ms. adds 2 lines:) the lapis-lazuli measuring rod and measuring line were removed from her hand, when she entered the first gate,} the turban, headgear for the open country, was removed from her head. "What is this?" "Be silent, Inana, a divine power of the underworld has been fulfilled. Inana, you must not open your mouth against the rites of the underworld."

134-138. When she entered the second gate, the small lapis-lazuli beads were removed from her neck. "What is this?" "Be silent, Inana, a divine power of the underworld has been fulfilled. Inana, you must not open your mouth against the rites of the underworld."

139-143. When she entered the third gate, the twin egg-shaped beads were removed from her breast. "What is this?" "Be silent, Inana, a divine power of the underworld has been fulfilled. Inana, you must not open your mouth against the rites of the underworld."

144-148. When she entered the fourth gate, the "Come, man, come" pectoral was removed from her breast. "What is this?" "Be silent, Inana, a divine power of the underworld has been fulfilled. Inana, you must not open your mouth against the rites of the underworld."

149-153. When she entered the fifth gate, the golden ring was removed from her hand. "What is this?" "Be silent, Inana, a divine power of the underworld has been fulfilled. Inana, you must not open your mouth against the rites of the underworld."

154-158. When she entered the sixth gate, the lapis-lazuli measuring rod and measuring line were removed from her hand. "What is this?" "Be silent, Inana, a divine power of the underworld has been fulfilled. Inana, you must not open your mouth against the rites of the underworld."

159-163. When she entered the seventh gate, the pala dress, the garment of ladyship, was removed from her body. "What is this?" "Be silent, Inana, a divine power of the underworld has been fulfilled. Inana, you must not open your mouth against the rites of the underworld."

164-172. After she had crouched down and had her clothes removed, they were carried away. Then she made her sister Ereškigala rise from her throne, and instead she sat on her throne. The Anuna, the seven judges, rendered their decision against her. They looked at her -- it was the look of death. They spoke to her -- it was the speech of anger. They shouted at her -- it was the shout of heavy guilt. The afflicted woman was turned into a corpse. And the corpse was hung on a hook.

173-175. After three days and three nights had passed, her minister Ninšubur {(2 mss. add 2 lines:) , her minister who speaks fair words, her escort who speaks trustworthy words,} {carried out the instructions of her mistress} {(1 ms. has instead 2 lines:) did not forget her orders, she did not neglect her instructions}.

176-182. She made a lament for her in her ruined (houses). She beat the drum for her in the sanctuaries. She made the rounds of the houses of the gods for her. She lacerated her eyes for her, she lacerated her nose. In private she lacerated her buttocks for her. Like a pauper, she clothed herself in a single garment, and all alone she set her foot in the E-kur, the house of Enlil.

183-189. When she had entered the E-kur, the house of Enlil, she lamented before Enlil: "Father Enlil, don't let anyone kill your daughter in the underworld. Don't let your precious metal be alloyed there with the dirt of the underworld. Don't let your precious lapis lazuli be split there with the mason's stone. Don't let your boxwood be chopped up there with the carpenter's wood. Don't let young lady Inana be killed in the underworld."

190-194. In his rage Father Enlil answered Ninšubur: "My daughter craved the great heaven and she craved the great below as well. Inana craved the great heaven and she

craved the great below as well. The divine powers of the underworld are divine powers which should not be craved, for whoever gets them must remain in the underworld. Who, having got to that place, could then expect to come up again?"

195-203. Thus Father Enlil did not help in this matter, so she went to Urim. In the E-mud-kura at Urim, when she had entered the E-kiš-nu-ġal, the house of Nanna, she lamented before Nanna: "Father Nanna, don't let your daughter be killed in the underworld. Don't let your precious metal be alloyed there with the dirt of the underworld. Don't let your precious lapis lazuli be split there with the mason's stone. Don't let your boxwood be chopped up there with the carpenter's wood. Don't let young lady Inana be killed in the underworld."

204-208. In his rage Father Nanna answered Ninšubur: "My daughter craved the great heaven and she craved the great below as well. Inana craved the great heaven and she craved the great below as well. The divine powers of the underworld are divine powers which should not be craved, for whoever gets them must remain in the underworld. Who, having got to that place, could then expect to come up again?"

209-216. Thus Father Nanna did not help her in this matter, so she went to Eridug. In Eridug, when she had entered the house of Enki, she lamented before Enki: "Father Enki, don't let anyone kill your daughter in the underworld. Don't let your precious metal be alloyed there with the dirt of the underworld. Don't let your precious lapis lazuli be split there with the mason's stone. Don't let your boxwood be chopped up there with the carpenter's wood. Don't let young lady Inana be killed in the underworld."

217-225. Father Enki answered Ninšubur: "What has my daughter done? She has me worried. What has Inana done? She has me worried. What has the mistress of all the lands done? She has me worried. What has the mistress of heaven done? She has me worried." {(1 ms. adds 1 line:) Thus Father Enki helped her in this matter.} He removed some dirt from the tip of his fingernail and created the kur-ġara. He removed some dirt from the tip of his other fingernail and created the gala-tura. To the kur-ġara he gave the life-giving plant. To the gala-tura he gave the life-giving water.

226-235. {Then Father Enki spoke out to the gala-tura and the kur-ġara:} " {(1 ms. has instead the line:) One of you sprinkle the life-giving plant over her, and the other the life-giving water.} Go and direct your steps to the underworld. Flit past the door like flies. Slip through the door pivots like phantoms. The mother who gave birth, Ereškigala, on account of her children, is lying there. Her holy shoulders are not covered by a linen cloth. Her breasts are not full like a šagan vessel. Her nails are like a pickaxe (?) upon her. The hair on her head is bunched up as if it were leeks."

236-245. "When she says "Oh my heart", you are to say "You are troubled, our mistress, oh your heart". When she says "Oh my body", you are to say "You are troubled, our mistress, oh your body". (She will then ask:) "Who are you? Speaking to you from my heart to your heart, from my body to your body -- if you are gods, let me talk with you; if you are mortals, may a destiny be decreed for you." Make her swear this by heaven and earth.

1 line fragmentary"

246-253. "They will offer you a riverful of water -- don't accept it. They will offer you a field with its grain -- don't accept it. But say to her: "Give us the corpse hanging on the hook." (She will answer:) "That is the corpse of your queen." Say to her: "Whether it is that of our king, whether it is that of our queen, give it to us." She will give you the corpse hanging on the hook. One of you sprinkle on it the life-giving plant and the other the life-giving water. Thus let Inana arise."

254-262. The gala-tura and the kur-ġara paid attention to the instructions of Enki. They flitted through the door like flies. They slipped through the door pivots like phantoms. The

mother who gave birth, Ereškigala, because of her children, was lying there. Her holy shoulders were not covered by a linen cloth. Her breasts were not full like a šagan vessel. Her nails were like a pickaxe (?) upon her. The hair on her head was bunched up as if it were leeks.

263-272. When she said "Oh my heart", they said to her "You are troubled, our mistress, oh your heart". When she said "Oh my body", they said to her "You are troubled, our mistress, oh your body". (Then she asked:) "Who are you? I tell you from my heart to your heart, from my body to your body -- if you are gods, I will talk with you; if you are mortals, may a destiny be decreed for you." They made her swear this by heaven and earth. They

273-281. They were offered a river with its water -- they did not accept it. They were offered a field with its grain -- they did not accept it. They said to her: "Give us the corpse hanging on the hook." Holy Ereškigala answered the gala-tura and the kur-ĝara: "The corpse is that of your queen." They said to her: "Whether it is that of our king or that of our queen, give it to us." They were given the corpse hanging on the hook. One of them sprinkled on it the life-giving plant and the other the life-giving water. And thus Inana arose.

282-289. Ereškigala said to the gala-tura and the kur-ĝara: "Bring your queen, your has been seized." Inana, because of Enki's instructions, was about to ascend from the underworld. But as Inana was about to ascend from the underworld, the Anuna seized her: "Who has ever ascended from the underworld, has ascended unscathed from the underworld? If Inana is to ascend from the underworld, let her provide a substitute for herself."

290-294. So when Inana left the underworld, the one in front of her, though not a minister, held a sceptre in his hand; the one behind her, though not an escort, carried a mace at his hip, while the small demons, like a reed enclosure, and the big demons, like the reeds of a fence, restrained her on all sides.

295-305. Those who accompanied her, those who accompanied Inana, know no food, know no drink, eat no flour offering and drink no libation. {They accept no pleasant gifts. They never enjoy the pleasures of the marital embrace, never have any sweet children to kiss. They tear away the wife from a man's embrace. They snatch the son from a man's knee. They make the bride leave the house of her father-in-law} {(instead of lines 300-305, 1 ms. has 2 lines:) They take the wife away from a man's embrace. They take away the child hanging on a wet-nurse's breasts}. {(1 ms. adds 3 lines:) They crush no bitter garlic. They eat no fish, they eat no leeks. They, it was, who accompanied Inana.}

306-310. After Inana had ascended from the underworld, Ninšubur threw herself at her feet at the door of the Ganzer. She had sat in the dust and clothed herself in a filthy garment. The demons said to holy Inana: "Inana, proceed to your city, we will take her back."

311-321. Holy Inana answered the demons: "This is my minister of fair words, my escort of trustworthy words. She did not forget my instructions. She did not neglect the orders I gave her. She made a lament for me on the ruin mounds. She beat the drum for me in the sanctuaries. She made the rounds of the gods' houses for me. She lacerated her eyes for me, lacerated her nose for me. {(1 ms. adds 1 line:) She lacerated her ears for me in public.} In private, she lacerated her buttocks for me. Like a pauper, she clothed herself in a single garment."

322-328. "All alone she directed her steps to the E-kur, to the house of Enlil, and to Urim, to the house of Nanna, and to Eridug, to the house of Enki. {(1 ms. adds 1 line:) She wept before Enki.} She brought me back to life. How could I turn her over to you? Let us go on. Let us go on to the Šeg-kuršaga in Umma."

329-333. At the Šeg-kuršaga in Umma, Šara, in his own city, threw himself at her feet. He had sat in the dust and dressed himself in a filthy garment. The demons said to holy Inana: "Inana, proceed to your city, we will take him back."

334-338. Holy Inana answered the demons: "Šara is my singer, my manicurist and my hairdresser. How could I turn him over to you? Let us go on. Let us go on to the E-muš-kalama in Bad-tibira."

339-343. At the E-muš-kalama in Bad-tibira, Lulal, in his own city, threw himself at her feet. He had sat in the dust and clothed himself in a filthy garment. The demons said to holy Inana: "Inana, proceed to your city, we will take him back."

344-347. Holy Inana answered the demons: "Outstanding Lulal follows me at my right and my left. How could I turn him over to you? Let us go on. Let us go on to the great apple tree in the plain of Kulaba."

348-353. They followed her to the great apple tree in the plain of Kulaba. There was Dumuzid clothed in a magnificent garment and seated magnificently on a throne. The demons seized him there by his thighs. The seven of them poured the milk from his churns. The seven of them shook their heads like They would not let the shepherd play the pipe and flute before her (?).

354-358. She looked at him, it was the look of death. She spoke to him (?), it was the speech of anger. She shouted at him (?), it was the shout of heavy guilt: "How much longer? Take him away." Holy Inana gave Dumuzid the shepherd into their hands.

359-367. Those who had accompanied her, who had come for Dumuzid, know no food, know no drink, eat no flour offering, drink no libation. They never enjoy the pleasures of the marital embrace, never have any sweet children to kiss. They snatch the son from a man's knee. They make the bride leave the house of her father-in-law.

368-375. Dumuzid let out a wail and wept. The lad raised his hands to heaven, to Utu: "Utu, you are my brother-in-law. I am your relation by marriage. I brought butter to your mother's house. I brought milk to Ningal's house. Turn my hands into snake's hands and turn my feet into snake's feet, so I can escape my demons, let them not keep hold of me."

376-383. Utu accepted his tears. {(1 ms. adds 1 line:) Dumuzid's demons could not keep hold of him.} Utu turned Dumuzid's hands into snake's hands. He turned his feet into snake's feet. Dumuzid escaped his demons. {(1 ms. adds 1 line:) Like a saḡkal snake he} They seized

2 lines fragmentary Holy Inana her heart.

384-393. Holy Inana wept bitterly for her husband.

4 lines fragmentary She tore at her hair like esparto grass, she ripped it out like esparto grass. "You wives who lie in your men's embrace, where is my precious husband? You children who lie in your men's embrace, where is my precious child? Where is my man? Where? Where is my man? Where?"

394-398. A fly spoke to holy Inana: "If I show you where your man is, what will be my reward?" Holy Inana answered the fly: "If you show me where my man is, I will give you this gift: I will cover"

399-403. The fly helped (?) holy Inana. Young lady Inana decreed the destiny of the fly: "In the beer-house, may bronze vessels for you. You will live (?) like the sons of the wise." Now Inana decreed this fate and thus it came to be.

404-410. was weeping. She came up to the sister (?) and by the hand: "Now, alas, my You for half the year and your sister for half the year: when you are demanded, on that day you will stay, when your sister is demanded, on that day you will be released." Thus holy Inana gave Dumuzid as a substitute

411-412. Holy Ereškigala -- sweet is your praise.

מחקר זה עוסק בנקמה אנושית כפי שהיא מוצגת בסיפורי המקרא לאור סיפורי המזרח הקדום. לנקמה כביטוי חיצוני של רגש יש השלכות מרחיקות לכת על החברה ככלל, ועל היחסים בין יחידים וקבוצות חברתיות בפרט. היחס למעשי נקם אינו אחיד כלל וכלל, הן בעולם העתיק והן בעולם המודרני, במגוון התחומים שבהם מטופלת התופעה – פוליטיקה, פסיכולוגיה, פילוסופיה ותיאולוגיה. אריסטו ראה בנקמה היבט עקרוני ביכולת של האדם לשכך את כעסו לאחר שנפגע, ובכך ייחס ערך חיובי לנקמה. לעומת זאת, מחקרים מודרניים בפסיכולוגיה ופיתרון סכסוכים תומכים בעמדה הפוכה. על פי התפיסה האפלטונית, רק ענישה מניעתית היא רציונלית – ובהתאם, הואיל והנקמה פונה לעבר, ואת העבר לא ניתן לשנות – הנקמה אינה רציונלית ויש להימנע ממנה. היחס לנקמה בחברה מסוימת בא לידי ביטוי בחוק, בספרות, ובאמנות, ומשתקפת בו במידה רבה האתיקה של אותה חברה. סיפורים מבטאים באופן מיוחד את האמונות והנחות היסוד של החברה בפועל, ולא רק בתיאוריה. סיפורים ככלל משקפים את האידיאולוגיה של החברה. הגורמים שאותם בוחרת חברה לכלול בסיפורים משמעותיים לקביעת המרקם המוסרי של אותה חברה. על מנת להעריך עמדה כזו באופן מדויק, יש לבחון סיפורים רבים מאותו סוג, או סיפורים שעוסקים בנושאים דומים. לשם קביעת מגמות, ולא רק ציטוט של אנקדוטות, נדרש מחקר כמותי. מהשוואת התוצאות לתרבויות אחרות תעלה תמונה ברורה עוד יותר של הממצאים המשתקפים בסיפורים.

עד היום, לא נערך מחקר כמותי מעמיק בסיפורי נקמה אנושית במקרא ובספרות המזרח הקדום. מחקר זה מבקש למלא את החלל בתחום. המחקר מוכיח את קיומו של סוג ספרותי במקרא ובספרות המזרח הקדום שלא הוגדר עד כה: סיפורי נקמה אנושית. בכל סיפורי הנקמה האנושית יסודות מבניים משותפים, המאששים את קיומו של הסיווג הספרותי, המאפשר ניתוח של הגישה לנקמה בכל תרבות, כפי שהיא משתקפת בסיפורים. הואיל והנרטיב משתמש באופן מכוון במבנה ובסמלים לשיקוף העומק והאופי של ערכי החברה, חשוב במיוחד לבחון את הנרטיב כדי להבין את האתוס התרבותי של החברה.

זיהוי של רשימה יציבה של מרכיבים מבניים שמופיעים בסדר קבוע יחסית מאפשר בחינה של שלושה מעגלים: ראשית, ניתן לבחון כל סיפור על רקע מבנה שטח. ניתוח כזה מציג תמונה ברורה של האופייני והחריג בטקסט המקראי על רקע דוגמאות אחרות של סוג הסיפור. שנית, בתוך כל קורפוס ניתן לבחון את הנרטיבים כקבוצה, על מנת להעריך את עמדתה של התרבות המיוצגת בסיפור בנוגע לנקמה. שלישית, מחקר בין-תרבותי מאפשר לנו לקבוע את הדמיון והשוני בין שתי התרבויות מתוך יחסן לנקמה. סיווג המוטיבים הסיפוריים של סוגת המעשייה מאפשר הבנה טובה יותר של תכני הנרטיבים כתוצאה מקישור התוכן והצורה בשלושת המעגלים הללו.

מחקר זה בוחן את הסיפורים המקראיים הבאים: בראשית לד (שמעון ולוי בשכם), בראשית לז (בני יעקב ביוסף), שופטים ח (גדעון בסוכות ופנואל), גדעון בזבח וצלמונע), שופטים יד-טז (שמשון בפלישתים), שמואל א, כב (שואל בנוב), שמואל ב, ב-ג (יואב באבנר, אבנר באישבשת), שמואל ב, יג (אבשלום באמנון), מלכים א, כא (איזבל בנבות), ואת הסיפורים הבאים מן המזרח הקדום: אנומה אליש (אפסו באלים הצעירים, טיאמט האלים), מיתוס אילוינקה (אל הסערה באילוינקה), אגדת אקהת (אנת באקהת, פועת ביטפן), עלילות גלגמש (אשתר בגילגמש), איננה ושוכלתודה (איננה בשוכלתודה), איננה ובילולו (איננה בבילולו וגירגירה), איננה והר אביח' (איננה באביח'), וירידת איננה לשואל (איננה בדומוזי). כל אלה נחקרים תוך שימוש במתודולוגיה שפיתח ולדימיר פרופ בספרו *Morphology of a Folktales*. המודל של פרופ, שבחן סיפורי עם רוסיים, זיהה רצף של 31 תפקידים ופעולות (פונקציות), שהופיעו בכל

האגדות בקורפוס שבדק. תוך התאמת המודל של פרופ לכלי לבחינת סיפורי נקמה מן המקרא והמזרח הקדום, זיהיתי רשימה של פונקציות שמופיעות באופן עקבי בסיפורי נקמה אנושית. הפונקציות הן: **עֲוֹלָה, תגובה לעוֹלָה, ייזום נקמה, שותפות לפשע, פְּנִיָה/שבועה לנקום, התייעצות, הכנה/ציווי לנקום, מעשה הנקמה, תגובות למעשה הנקם, עזיבה, ותוצאה**. כמו בקורפוס המקורי של פרופ, הפונקציות הללו מופיעות בדרך כלל בסדר הזה בסוג הספרותי. חריגות מן הרצף נבחנות בכל מקרה לגופו, והמשמעות של החריגות המורפולוגיות נידונה בניתוח של כל סיפור.

המחקר הניב תוצאות חשובות בכל אחד משלושת המעגלים שהוזכרו לעיל. כל סיפור נותח בפני עצמו כתוצאה מחריגות מורפולוגיות, ובכללן מחיקות, חזרות, ותנודות בפונקציות, שכולן מצביעות על שימוש במבנה ליצירת משמעות. שלושה סיפורים ראויים לציון באופן מיוחד, משום שסייעו בזיהוי מבנים נרטולוגיים בתוך הסיפורים. הראשון הוא מחזור סיפורי שמשון בשופ' יד-טז. היכולת להגדיר ולתחום כל מעשה אפשרי של נקמה על בסיס המבנה המורפולוגי מאפשר סיווג ברור של סיפורי שמשון, ומסייע לסיווג של האפיזודות שמתאימות ושאינן מתאימות למורפולוגיה. כתוצאה, מתברר שהדמות של שמשון והמבנה של מחזור סיפורי שמשון מורכבים יותר ממה שנהוג לחשוב, ויש בכך כדי לשלול הנחות מקובלות אודות אופיו הנקמני וכישלונותיו האישיים והמנהיגותיים. השני הוא הסיפור הכפול על נקמת גדעון בשופ' ח. שזירת הסיפורים זה בזה היא בחירה מודעת של המחבר, על מנת ליצור את הרושם שגדעון נפל לתוך מלכודת של נקמה. התוצאה של הסיפור המפוצל היא לכידת הקורא, שנאלץ לקרוא סיפור אחד על רקע השני ולהיפך, ובסופו של דבר מתגלה מנהיג מסוכסך, שמתנדנד בין האגו שלו לבין הרצון לשרת את האל. המקרה השלישי שעלה בעקבות המחקר המבני הוא סיפור מוטמע בתוך מעשה יואב ואבנר בשמ"ב ב-ג. הזיהוי של מיז-אנ-אבים מאפשר להצביע על מבנים מקבילים בין הסיפור המוטמע וסיפור המסגרת בנרטיב הנקמה של יואב ואבנר. בכך מתפרשת הנקמה של כל אחד משרי הצבא על רקע השני, והנקמה "הנקייה" של אבנר נתפסת כאכזרית לא פחות מזו של יואב.

התחום הבא שבו עוסק המחקר הוא ניתוח התוצאות שהצטברו בכל קורפוס ביחס לגישה של כל תרבות לסוגיית הנקמה. בקורפוס המקראי, עולה בעקביות נושא השותפות – מעשה שבו מושא הנקמה מסייע לנוקם בבלי דעת ומקדם את הנקמה נגדו – כפונקציה שבכוחה (בהתאם לאופי השימוש) להפיל את הנוקם, את מושא הנקמה, או את שניהם, במעשה הנקמה. שכם מסכים ברצון לתנאים של שמעון ולוי, ומקל עליהם בכך שנכנס היישר למלכודת הנקמה שלהם (בר' לד). בדומה, אבנר, ששמו כשר-צבא מנוסה הולך לפניו, שב לחברון לבדו בלי הגנה, היישר לידי יואב (שמ"ב ג). פעולות כאלה, שמופיעות באופן קבוע בסיפורי נקמה מקראיים, מטילות אשמה במושא הנקמה, ואילו הנוקם נתפס כמי שהניח מלכודת שאינה הוגנת בפני יריבו.

ההתמקדות בתגובות למעשה הנקם מורה שבזמן שהנקמה לא בהכרח נתפסת כשלילית, האינדיקציה למעשה נקמה מוצלח בישראל הקדומה היא חזרה של הנוקם לשגרת החיים, כאשר מצבו כנוקם נתפס כזמני. לעומת זאת, מדיקת הקורפוס של סיפורי נקמה במזרח הקדום עולה התמקדות בנוכחותם של בעלי ברית, והופעה חוזרת של פונקציית התייעצות, שבה הנוקם מבקש עזרה או אישור לפעולתו מאת בעל סמכות, וכן שילוש של מעשי נקמה. נראה שנוקמים בסיפורי המזרח הקדום מחפשים רשות או תמיכה למעשה הנקם לפני ביצועו, לעיתים קרובות מגורמים רשמיים או מהורה; לדוגמא, פועת מבקשת רשות מאביה, דנאל, לפני שהיא נוקמת את דמו של אחיה באגדת אקהת. באגדת איננה ובילולו, סירו – ידידו של בילולו, שהיה הגנב ורוצחו של דומוזי, נספה בעוון ידידו כאשר איננה נוקמת את דמו של דומוזי, על אף שהוא עצמו היה נקי מעוון. בסיפור ההוא, נקמה ברוצחים לא הייתה עונש מספק; האשמים גם עברו שינוי צורה, ושמן נמחה. אמצעים קיצוניים כאלה, שאינם מופיעים בסיפורי המקרא, מצביעים על האופי של הנקמה באותה חברה, ועל

קבלת הנקמה כנורמה חברתית. בכך מתברר שקבלת הנוקם אל חיק החברה לא נתפסה כערך אובייקטיבי להערכת מעשה הנקם.

מהשוואת סיפורי הנקמה האנושית במקרא ובמזרח הקדום עולה ההבחנה בין הערכים התרבותיים של כל חברה. האידיאל של מצב הנקמה במקרא נתפס כלימינלי או חולף – הן במשך הזמן, והן בעובדה שהחברה כמעט ואיננה תומכת בנוקם; המסקנה המתבקשת מכך היא שלמרות שהמקרא מכיר בצורך בנקמה אנושית מפעם לפעם, יש העדפה משמעותית לקיצור משך הזמן והגבלת ההיקף של הנקמה ככל האפשר. זהו ניגוד חד לקורפוס סיפורי הנקמה במזרח הקדום, שמהם עולה שעל אף הסכנה החברתית הטמונה בנקמה, שבאה לידי ביטוי בתדירות שבה בעלי הברית נפגעים בשל קרבתם למעשה הנקם – אין כל בסיס תרבותי להתנגדות לנקמה הברית (כגון בילולו שהוזכר לעיל, או חופְּשָׁה, בעל בריתו בן-התמותה של אל הסער, שנידון לסבל בעקבות מעורבותו בנקמה במיתוס אילוינקה). יתר על כן, נוקם שאינו משיל את זהותו כנוקם איננו סובל בשל כך. אשתר/איננה (בבבל/בשומר), האלה הידועה במשיכתה לאהבה ומלחמה, חוזרת ומופיעה כנוקמת בסיפורים רבים (עלילות גלגמש, ירידת איננה לשאול, איננה ושוכלתודה, איננה ובילולו, איננה והר אבה), ובסוף כל סיפור זוכה לשבח והלל. נראה שכאן משתקף ההבדל המשמעותי בין תרבות הכבוד (honor) והדרת-הכבוד (dignity) במקרא, המבוסס על ערכים פנימיים-אובייקטיביים, לעומת תרבות הכבוד במזרח הקדום, המבוסס על הסכמה ותמיכה חיצונית.

לממצאים של מחקר זה השפעה על המחקר הנרטיבי במקרא, על מחקר תרבותי השוואתי, ועל חקר הנקמה. כבר הוכח שבזמן שהחוק מעצב את ערכי החברה, הסיפורים מעצבים את הבנת הנורמות והציפיות התרבותיות של החברה. זיהוי הסוג הספרותי על סמך מבנה השטח של הסיפור, מאפשר הבנה מורכבת של ערך חברתי נתון (במקרה הזה, נקמה), והשוואה למקרים פרטניים מאותו הסוג, אשר מניבים תובנות חדשות אודות הסיפורים השונים על רקע מכלול הפרטים. מתודה זו עשויה לשמש בזיהוי וניתוח סוגי סיפורים נוספים במקרא עם מבנה שטח דומה, תוך מיקוד הפרשנות של כל תכונה חברתית ברזולוציה גבוהה יותר. ההשוואה בין ניתוח מן הסוג הזה לניתוח דומה של קורפוס של חברה אחרת – הן עתיקה והן מודרנית – מאפשרת הרחבה של המכנה המשותף שמעודד הבנה טובה יותר של הדמיון והשוני בין תרבויות, ומדגיש את הייחוד של כל תרבות. תנועה זו תמשיך לחדד את ההבנה של ערכי כל חברה, במקום למצוא נקודות השוואה נפרדות בין סיפורים בודדים.

לבסוף, המחקר משפיע על התחום הרחב של חקר הנקמה. בעוד שהמרכיבים היסודיים של הנקמה נותרים אחידים בסיפורים, כל סיפור עומד בפני עצמו, וגם מתכתב עם סיפורים אחרים. יש פונקציות שחוזרות על עצמן, בעוד שאחרות מושמטות, או משתנות בזמן שהסיפור הולך ומתפתח. נראה שהדבר נכון גם בנקמה במציאות. בזמן שפילוסופים, פסיכולוגים, ומשפטנים מתלבטים האם ובאיזו מידה נכון שחברה תקבל את מושג הנקמה, מחקר זה מחזק את מגוון השיקולים השונים בהערכת מעשה הנקמה.

i.....	תקציר	
1	מבוא כללי	
1	נקמה	0.1
1	הפסיכולוגיה והפילוסופיה של הנקמה	0.1.1
4	הגדרת נקמה	0.1.2
4	המטרה של הנקמה: כבוד-בושה/ הדר-אשמה	0.1.3
6	המצב הלימינלי	0.2
7	חוק מול נרטיב	0.3
7	מתודולוגיה	0.4
7	מורפולוגיה - ניתוח סינטגמטי	0.4.1
9	שינויים במבנה המורפולוגי של פרופ	0.4.2
10	היקף המחקר	0.4.3
12	ספרות השוואתית	0.5
13	סמיולוגיה חברתית	0.6
13	הצורך במחקר הנוכחי	0.7
15	חלק I - סיפורי תנ"ך	
15	פרק 1	
15	מבוא	1.0
15	הצורה הסופית של הטקסט	1.1
15	המחקר על נקמה בתנ"ך	1.2
18	בחירת הנרטיבים לעיון	1.3
19	השימוש במתודולוגיה של פרופ בחקר התנ"ך	1.4
21	פרק 2	
21	שמעון ולוי בשכם (בר' לד)	2.0
21	ביסוס המורפולוגיה	2.1
27	ניתוח והקשר	2.2
27	סצנה ראשונית	2.2.1
27	עוללות	2.2.2
28	תגובות לעוללות	2.2.3
30	ייזום נקמה	2.2.4
30	שותפות לפשע	2.2.5
31	מעשי הנקמה	2.2.6
31	עזיבה	2.2.7
32	תגובות למעשה הנקם	2.2.8
33	מסקנות	2.3
33	תיאורי דמויות ויחסיהם	2.3.1
34	לימינליות	2.3.2
34	מסקנות מורפולוגיות	2.3.3
35	אפילוג	2.3.4
36	פרק 3	
36	בני יעקב ביוסף (בר' לז)	3.0
38	ביסוס המורפולוגיה	3.1
42	ניתוח והקשר	3.2
42	סצנה ראשונית	3.2.1

43	עוולות ותגובות לעוולות	3.2.2
47	שותפות לפשע	3.2.3
48	כוונה/שבועה לנקום	3.2.4
48	הכנות ומעשי הנקמה	3.2.5
51	תגובות למעשה הנקם	3.2.6
52	תוצאה	3.2.7
52	מסקנות	3.3
52	לימינליות	3.3.1
53	מסקנות מורפולוגיות	3.3.2
55	פרק 4	
55	אבשלום באמנון (שמ"ב יג)	4.0
56	ביסוס המורפולוגיה	4.1
60	ניתוח והקשר	4.2
60	סצנה ראשונית	4.2.1
61	רכישת בעל ברית	4.2.2
61	עוולה	4.2.3
63	תגובה לעוולה	4.2.4
63	ייזום נקמה ושותפות לפשע	4.2.5
65	מעשה הנקמה	4.2.6
65	דיווחים ותגובות למעשה הנקם	4.2.7
66	עזיבה ותוצאה	4.2.8
66	מסקנות	4.3
66	מסקנות מורפולוגיות	4.3.1
69	פרק 5	
69	שאול בנוב (שמ"א כב)	5.0
70	ביסוס המורפולוגיה	5.1
72	ניתוח והקשר	5.2
72	סצנה ראשונית	5.2.1
72	עוולה	5.2.2
73	ייזום נקמה ושותפות לפשע	5.2.3
76	כוונה/שבועה לנקום	5.2.4
76	ציווי וכשלון רכישת בעל ברית	5.2.5
78	ציווי ומעשה הנקמה	5.2.6
80	עזיבה	5.2.7
81	תגובות למעשה הנקם	5.2.8
81	תוצאה	5.2.9
81	מסקנות	5.3
81	לימינליות	5.3.1
81	בני ברית	5.3.2
82	מסקנות מורפולוגיות	5.3.3
85	פרק 6	
85	איזבל בנבות (מל"א כא, מל"ב ט, ל-לז)	6.0
86	ביסוס המורפולוגיה	6.1
89	ניתוח והקשר	6.2
89	סצנה ראשונית	6.2.1
90	עוולה ותגובה לעוולה	6.2.2
90	התייעצות	6.2.3
92	ייזום נקמה	6.2.4

95	שותפות לפשע	6.2.5
95	מעשה הנקמה	6.2.6
96	תוצאה	6.2.7
97	מסקנות	6.3
97	לימינליות	6.3.1
98	מסקנות מורפולוגיות	6.3.2
100		פרק 7
100	גדעון בסוכות ופנואל, גדעון בזבח וצלמונע (שופ' ח)	7.0
102	ביסוס המורפולוגיה	7.1
102	גדעון בזבח וצלמונע (שופ' ח, ד-ה; י-יב; יח-כא)	7.1.1
104	גדעון בסוכות ופנואל (שופ' ח, ד-ט; יג-יז)	7.1.2
106	סגירת מעגל (שופ' ח, כב-לה)	7.1.3
107	ניתוח והקשר	7.2
107	סצנה ראשונית	7.2.1
107	כוונה/שבועה לנקום	7.2.2
108	שותפות לפשע	7.2.3
108	תגובה לעוולה	7.2.4
109	עוולה	7.2.5
112	תוצאה, תגובה למעשה הנקמה, ועזיבה	7.2.6
113	מסקנות	7.3
113	לימינליות	7.3.1
113	מסקנות מורפולוגיות	7.3.2
117		פרק 8
117	שמשון בפלישתים (שופ' יד-טז)	8.0
119	ביסוס המורפולוגיה	8.1
119	אפיזודה 1: החתונה (יד, א-כ)	8.1.1
120	אפיזודה 2: שועלים ולפידים (טו, א-ה)	8.1.2
123	אפיזודה 3: הריגת אשתו וחתנו של שמשון (טו, ו-ח)	8.1.3
124	אפיזודה 4: טבח ברמת לחי (טו, ט-כ)	8.1.4
125	אפיזודה 5: הזונה בעזה (טז, א-ג)	8.1.5
125	אפיזודה 6: שמשון בבית דגון (טז, ד-לא)	8.1.6
129	ניתוח והקשר - סיכום	8.1.7
131	אפיזודות 1 & 4	8.1.7.1
132	אפיזודות 2 & 5	8.1.7.2
132	אפיזודות 3 & 6	8.1.7.3
133	אפיזודות הנקמה: ניתוח והקשר	8.2
133	סצנה ראשונית	8.2.1
134	עוולה	8.2.2
134	תגובה לעוולה	8.2.3
135	שותפות לפשע	8.2.4
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עבודה זו נעשתה בהדרכתו של
פרופ' יהושע ברמן

מן המחלקה לתנ"ך ע"ש זלמן שמיר
של אוניברסיטת בר-אילן

נקמה אנושית בסיפורי התנ"ך לאור סיפורי המזרח הקדום

חיבור לשם קבלת התואר "דוקטור לפילוסופיה"

מאת

דבורה גלר

המחלקה לתנ"ך ע"ש זלמן שמיר

הוגש לסנט של אוניברסיטת בר-אילן

סיון, תשפ"ב

רמת גן